



THE TWELVE DATES OF CHRISTMAS

The background features two champagne flutes filled with bubbly champagne on a rustic wooden surface. To the left are two Christmas ornaments, one red and one gold. In the background, a Christmas tree with lights is visible through a window. The scene is decorated with falling snow and sparkling light effects.

*The  
Christmas Pact*

N.A. JAMESON

# The Christmas Pact

N.A. Jameson

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Stalk Me

*For my Dad.*

*I miss you like crazy.*

*Thank you for making Christmas such a magical time.*

*And thanks for the reindeer ornaments.*

# New Member Profile



**Welcome to Love-N-Shenanigans, the last dating app you'll ever need. Your best match (or matches) are just a few clicks away!**

## **Basic Information**

Name: Nova Lane

Age: 33

Species: Human

Job Description: Owner of The Icing on Top

Marital Status: Single

Dependants: None

Describe yourself using ten words or less: Hard Working, Loyal, Creative, Grieving, Alone, Drunk.



Person who referred you: Bree from Serendipity

**Additional Information**

Sexual Designation: Female

Sexual Orientation: Straight

Are you Monogamous, Swinger, or Polyamorous? Single AF

Are you willing to date outside of your species? This is a weird fucking question... but no.

Hobbies: Baking

Do you have any kinks you would like to be taken into consideration? Not that I know of.

Please describe your perfect partner/partners: Kind.

**Additional Notes**

I am looking for someone interested in a platonic arrangement. I find myself alone for the holidays and want someone to do holiday activities with.

# Chapter 1

## Nova

### 37 Days until New Year's Eve

Sighing, I slumped against the front counter of my cupcake shop, The Icing on Top. It was Thanksgiving, and I was waiting for the last of my customers to pick up their orders. Not that I had any special plans to rush home to. Unless you considered a bottle of wine special plans. My eyes drifted to the box of Christmas decorations against the wall. Since I would be here for the next few hours, I might as well do something useful. I moved the box to a table and opened it. The outdoor decorations would be handled tomorrow, but there wasn't any reason why I couldn't get the inside of the cupcake shop festive.

I was still decorating long after the final customer picked up their order. Just as I taped off the end of the silver garland I had lined the counter with, the door opened, and Bree walked in. I wouldn't consider us best friends, but we were friendly

enough. She worked across the street at Serendripity, a popular coffee shop.

“Nova, what are you still doing at work?” she asked. “Even we’ve closed up shop for the day,” she said as she held out a to-go cup to me. “I saw you were here and thought I would give you your final pumpkin fix until next year.”

I took the cup from her and held it under my nose, inhaling the delicious smell of the pumpkin spice latte. “You’re a gem,” I told her, taking a tentative sip. “I still maintain that pumpkin is a Christmas flavor, too.”

She rolled her eyes at my familiar argument. She had heard it many times before, usually around this time of year. “Unfortunately for you, the owner disagrees. Now, don’t avoid the question. Why are you still here? That cute boyfriend of yours must be waiting for you at home.”

I grimaced. “The only thing waiting for me at home is a chicken and a bottle of wine,” I told her.

She tilted her head curiously. “What happened to the boyfriend?”

“He decided two days ago that he wasn’t interested in continuing our relationship.”

“That bastard. And he had this epiphany right before Thanksgiving?”

“Yup.” I took another sip of my coffee and decided that Bree was right. It was time to go home.

“Well, he’s a fucking idiot, and he never deserved you,” she stated.

I smiled at her support. “Thanks, girl, and thanks for the coffee. You should get to your holiday plans, though. I’m going to lock up and go home.”

Bree stepped forward and gave me a quick hug. “Happy Thanksgiving, Nova.”

“You too, Bree.” I watched her leave and then gathered my purse. I ensured the back door was locked, everything was turned off, and I stepped outside. I inhaled the cool air deeply. It smelled like snow. As I was closing the door, Bree appeared beside me.

“So, maybe you aren’t ready yet, but I thought I would give this to you.” I took the business card from her and looked at it.

“Love -N- Shenanigans?”

“It’s a dating app that the coffee shop is promoting. You should think about creating a profile. Find someone who deserves you and will make you happy.”

“Umm, thanks, Bree, but I don’t think I really want to date right now,” I said as I tried to return the card to her.

She held her hands up and backed away from me toward her car. “No takebacks,” she laughed. “If you don’t want anything serious, say that on your profile, but you should try to find someone to keep you company for the holidays. Especially this year.”

I shook my head at the girl as she retreated to her car and drove away before I could respond. I slipped the card into my back pocket and went home. I let myself into the silent house, immediately turning on the lights and pulling up a Spotify playlist to drown out the quiet. This had been my childhood home. My mom had died when I was younger, so it was just me and my dad for most of my life. Peter moved in with us a couple of years ago, much to my dad's concealed annoyance. He tried, but he never really liked Peter. He might have been on to something.

Now, it was just me. Dad died eight months ago in a car accident. I'll never forget the day the police came into the shop to tell me the news. Peter had been on a business trip then, so I had to face the initial pain alone. For months, I had a tough time coping with the loss. And Peter had a hard time dealing with me. He started going on more and more business trips until it felt like he was gone more than he was home.

In the last month, I had just started to come out of the fog. I still felt like screaming over the loss, but I was trying to pull myself together and function better. I knew that's what my dad would have wanted. I tried to reconnect with Peter when he was home. He had pushed me away with disgust or laughter on more than one occasion. Then he would ask me why I thought he would want to touch me after turning into a blimp. I knew I had gained some weight but hadn't thought I was repulsive. Apparently, in his eyes, I was. Finally, he came home two days ago and packed his belongings.

He had tried to do it while I was at work, but knowing he had come home, I left early to surprise him. Truth be told, I had intended to seduce him. Imagine my shock when I came home to find him placing the last box into his car. He had the good sense to look slightly ashamed at being caught trying to sneak off. When asked if he planned to tell me, he responded, “I figured you’re a smart girl and would have figured it out. You had to know that this was coming. I haven’t touched you in months. This isn’t working. I need someone by my side that I can be proud to look at, that is desirable, and unfortunately, with your dad dying, you’ve just let yourself go.” He left after that. Leaving me standing in my driveway with my mouth open, dumbfounded.

I broke myself out of my reverie and looked at my plate of half-eaten chicken. I shoved the plate away in disgust and reached for my wine glass instead, gulping down its contents and pouring myself another glass. I guess I’ll be drinking my dinner tonight. Objectively, I could see how this was probably for the best. If Dad were here, he would be thrilled to see Peter walking out of our lives. But it wasn’t easy to think objectively. Peter was safe, and his presence kept me from feeling like I was all alone in the world. Even if his presence was more in spirit than physical. The only silver lining was that I learned in the last two days that maybe I didn’t love Peter as much as I thought.

I met Peter shortly after he moved to town to work at Triple Tech, the largest company in town. He had come into the shop to order cupcakes to bring to work to impress his coworkers. I

hooked him up, and he asked me out on a date. Living in a small town like Fort Veyelsa, strangers didn't tend to stick around. Most were tourists here to ski and visit our picturesque little town. So I felt lucky that the new guy in town was interested in me. A year later, he moved in with us, and I thought my life was perfect and my future was set. And now, I'm all alone, and it will be the first Christmas without my dad.

I stood to bring my plate to the sink and had to grab the island to steady myself as the effects of the wine made themselves known. Deciding to leave my plate, I emptied the remaining wine into my glass, grabbed it and my phone, and went to the couch. Sipping my wine, I looked around my living room. If Dad were here, he would already be decorating. We would drink egg nog every Thanksgiving night, put on A Christmas Carol, and decorate the Christmas tree. I had always longed for a real tree, but Dad preferred the artificial trees because they didn't make the mess a real tree did.

Spending Christmas alone sounded dreadful, but I knew I couldn't ignore the season. I loved Christmas, and so did my Dad. It was his favorite holiday, and to turn my back on it felt like I was turning my back on him, too. An idea came to me, and I reached into my back pocket and fished out the business card that Bree had given me earlier. I studied the card thoughtfully as I tapped my finger against the edge. The card read, 'Let fate find your match!' What could it hurt? Maybe fate could find someone to do all the Christmas traditions with.

I sat up, opened the laptop on the coffee table, and pulled up the website. I entered my email, and a questionnaire filled the screen. I filled out the essential information and paused at the question to describe myself in ten words. I hated this kind of thing and almost shut the laptop. Instead, I took another fortifying gulp of my wine and powered through. I didn't come up with ten words, but I did my best.

The next question that made me pause was the monogamous, swinger, or polyamorous one. Polyamory was becoming more mainstream, though I knew some people still didn't approve of it. In my own opinion, love was love, and someone else's love life wasn't any of your damn business. As for myself, I didn't have an answer to that, and it didn't matter because I wasn't looking for love, just company. I snickered as I answered the question but became immediately stumped by the next one.

Am I willing to date outside of my species? What the fuck kind of question was that? I grabbed my wine glass and read the question several times, searching for its hidden meaning. Maybe it was a clever way to ask about some weird sex thing I didn't know. Then again, perhaps they're asking if I am open to dating a dog. Either way, the answer is a solid no, and I quickly lost faith in this dating site.

The rest of the questions were mundane after the species question, so I could answer them easily. In the additional comments section, I said I wasn't looking for anything romantic. I just wanted someone to spend the holiday with. I finished my wine as I hovered over the submit button. Using my liquid courage, I clicked the button and quickly closed my



laptop. Well, now that I had put my future in the hands of fate, it was time to go to bed. I grabbed a glass of water to take to bed with me as I turned off all the lights. I had a feeling that tomorrow was not going to be pretty.

## Chapter 2

### Grant

I wrinkled my nose at my cafeteria sandwich. We needed to start planning dinner so we didn't have to be subjected to the unique cuisine prepared downstairs. Or we could consider hiring better chefs. I took a bite and then pushed the sandwich away in disgust. Nope. I'd eat when we went home, whenever that would be. We were in the final preparations for releasing our latest fitness tracker in January, just in time for all the New Year's resolutions to exercise more. Though, to be fair, even if we weren't preparing for a product launch, we usually pulled long hours at the office. My foster brothers, who happened to be my best friends, and I built Triple Tech from the ground up, and we admittedly had difficulty leaving work at the office, if we left at all.

"How can you eat that?" I asked Lincoln as he took another large bite of his sandwich.

He shrugged. "Food is food, and this is all that is available."

"Food is fuel," Benjamin corrected, "you both should have gotten a salad like I did."

I rolled my eyes at him. He never missed an opportunity to lecture us on our eating habits. As Triple Tech's Chief Operations Officer and our fitness tracker and app creator, he felt it was essential to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Lincoln, Triple Tech's Chief Executive Officer and face of the company stuck his tongue out at Ben. If I didn't step in soon, things would decline quickly. Before I could change the subject, our assistant entered the board room.

"I just wanted to let you know I'm taking off," Joel announced. I was surprised that he had stayed this long since it was Thanksgiving. Then again, we paid him handsomely to keep him at our beck and call.

"Thank you, Joel. I hope we didn't completely ruin your holiday plans," I told him.

"Nothing that a Christmas bonus won't fix," he winked. "I didn't have anything major going on this year. My parents flew to Seattle to spend Thanksgiving with my sister and her family. My only plans today were to go to the club tonight."

"A club on Thanksgiving?" Ben asked.

"It's better than spending the night at the office," he responded pointedly. "Besides, where else will all the wayward souls without families to spend time with go? You guys should join me," he suggested.

"Why on earth would we want to do that?" Linc asked.

"Maybe because the three of you have to find dates for the New Year's Eve party, and I know you haven't," Joel

reminded us.

I groaned. “Why do we have to bring dates? It’s our fucking party.”

“Because Triple Tech urges their employees to have a healthy home/work balance, and as the owners, you should lead by example,” he replied. Another reason we paid him so much was that he wasn’t afraid to tell it to us straight. Often, his input in company policy and projects was considered and valued. He made sure to keep us grounded. “Honestly, you three work too damn much. If you ask me, you need to start living a little. Go out. Meet some nice girls and start thinking about your future outside of work.”

Ben scoffed. “We don’t have the time to maintain relationships right now.”

“That’s my point,” Joel lectured, “make the time.” We didn’t respond, and he sighed. This wasn’t the first time he had this discussion with us recently. “Just think about it. You must have dates, and most eligible women in Fort Veyelsa will be at the club tonight. Maybe you won’t find the women of your dreams tonight, but you could at least find some suitable women to bring to the party.” He left, his words hanging in the air. As much as I didn’t like it, we did need to find dates.

“Why don’t we hire a few discreet escorts for the night?” Ben suggested. “It would be the easiest solution to our problem with the least effort.”

“I can see the headlines now,” Linc said sarcastically. “Triple Tech owners hire prostitutes.”

“I have to agree with Linc,” I said, “I don’t see that being a viable option.”

“Hey, what about a dating app?” Linc suggested. “One of the baristas at Serendipity gave me a card for this new dating site called Love -N- Shenanigans. We could make a profile together and find one girl to come as our date. Strictly platonic and just for one night. That would solve our problem without being... scandalous.”

“How is that any different than getting escorts?” Ben asked.

“We wouldn’t be paying this girl,” Linc replied.

“Come on, guys,” I said. “How hard can it be to go out and meet a few girls? I think we should go to the club tonight like Joel suggested.”

They both looked at me silently for several seconds. “You’re serious,” Linc finally said with surprise.

“I am. It’s the most conventional way to solve our problem. We don’t have to fall madly in love with them. We don’t even have to like them all that much. We just need to be able to tolerate them for a handful of nights leading up to the party and then the party itself.”

“I mean, I guess it’s worth a try,” Ben agreed.

“Good. Then it’s settled. We’ll finish up here and then head to the club.” Once upon a time, we went to clubs and did our fair share of partying. This should be simple.



This was a mistake. A terrible, terrible mistake. For one, the club was filled with just barely twenty-one-year-olds. These are the members of society who still think they're invincible and don't have many responsibilities. While we may have been these people at one time, we were so far beyond this scene, over a decade beyond this scene. Secondly, we were recognized when we stepped through the doors, and young hopefuls have been flocking to us ever since. That should have made attaining our goals easier. Unfortunately, we were looking for a more... classy type of woman.

Joel approached our table and took the empty seat. "I can see you judging from across the bar," he chastised.

"We aren't trying to judge," I defended. "But I think this was a mistake."

A blonde in a short blue dress fell into my lap just then. “Hey, hot stuff,” she purred. “My friend told me you’re one of the richest men in town.”

“I might be,” I replied as I tried to remove her from my lap. A feat I was finding difficult as she had latched herself to me like a baby monkey. I looked over and saw her girlfriends giggling at her behind their hands.

“What will it take to get you to take me somewhere a bit more quiet?” she asked as she pawed at my tie.

“How old are you?”

“Twenty-two,” she said proudly. Jesus. I was fifteen years older than her and was a million different life experiences more mature.

“About eight years,” I replied, finally getting her to her feet.

“Oh, come on, sexy,” she coaxed. “Everyone knows younger is better.”

“Not always,” I replied stiffly. I looked at my brothers across from me, who were trying to hide their laughter. Assholes.

“Sasha,” Joel said, “beat it. They aren’t interested, and you’re embarrassing yourself.”

“Whatever,” she sneered. “Probably can’t get it up anymore anyway.” She stomped back to her friends, who dissolved into giggles as she reported on her attempt at seduction.

“We’re not that old,” Linc grumbled.

I finished my drink and set the empty glass on the table. “I’m calling it. This wasn’t the right move.”

“Ok, fine,” Joel said, standing. “Maybe this isn’t your scene, but you still have a problem to solve, so I suggest you come up with something else.” He saluted us with one finger before rejoining his friends.

When we got home, I poured three scotches and handed Ben and Linc theirs before falling into my recliner with a large sigh.

“Joel has a point,” Ben announced from the couch beside Linc after taking a sip. “What are we going to do about dates?”

“Or just one date. Singular,” Linc replied.

God, I hope I didn’t end up regretting this. “Ok, Linc. You win. We’ll try the dating app thing. But make sure you are clear that we are looking for a companion for all three of us for New Year’s Eve. That’s it. Nothing romantic, and nothing long term.”

“You got it,” he grinned, setting his glass down and running out of the room. He returned less than a minute later with his iPad. I joined them on the couch, and Ben and I looked over his shoulder as he pulled the website up and began filling out the questionnaire. “This thing has some weird questions,” he commented as he typed, “but it doesn’t matter with what we want to get out of this.”

“Don’t put our names or who we are,” Ben said.



“And make sure you put that we’re looking for someone in their thirties,” I added, thinking back to Sasha. “Someone at least in the same decade as us.”

“Got it and got it,” Linc replied. “Ok, last chance to back out of this. Are we all on board? This is what we want to do?” When we both nodded, Linc clicked the submit button. “Done.”

He went to place the iPad down when it dinged. He looked at the screen and then at both of us with surprise. “Well, that was fucking fast.”

“No way,” I replied, grabbing the iPad to look at the screen. “We seriously already have a match?”

“Yep!” Linc replied with a grin. “Let’s see who the lucky lady is.”

He clicked on the notification, and Ben and I leaned closer to read over his shoulder. This might be easier than I thought it would be.

# Chapter 3

## Nova

### 36 Days until New Year's Eve

I moaned in pain as my alarm clock blared. I reached a hand out to feel around for it and hit the snooze button before rolling over and stuffing my head under my pillow. It felt like I had tiny little people in my head with pickaxes trying to excavate their way out. Too much wine, not enough solid food. At thirty-three, I don't handle my alcohol like I used to. Gone are the days when I woke up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed after a night of drinking sans hangover.

The alarm blared again, and I quickly silenced it, the sound making my head throb. I feel around for my phone and emerge from my pillow cave to see if I have any missed notifications. I was confused for a few minutes when I saw the Love -N- Shenanigans email that I had a match. The memory of signing up for the dating app came back to me. While I planned to

ignore it, curiosity had me opening the email anyway. I clicked the link to see my match, bringing me to the website.

The profile picture was of a champagne flute instead of a person, which was already suspect. However, I had little room to talk since my wine-addled brain made my profile picture a Christmas tree last night. I read through the profile and what they were looking for. This looks promising, I thought as I sat up in bed. Three men needed a date to a New Year's Eve party. They weren't looking for anything long-term. I noticed the little red envelope in the top corner and clicked it, finding a message from my match. The message said they would like to meet to discuss terms and find out if this was an arrangement we could all benefit from, as I wasn't looking for anything long-term either.

I chewed on my bottom lip as I contemplated my choices. I knew nothing about these men, but one date was a pretty easy trade-off for the company during the holidays. I could do one date. Before I could chicken out, I replied to the message with my name, the address for Icing, and that I'd be there all day and would love to meet. Dropping my phone onto the mattress beside me, I hoped I hadn't just made a big mistake.

I spent more time than I should have in the shower trying to wash away the hangover, but soon, I found myself in my bakery kitchen. My home away from home. I loved this kitchen. My hangover turned into a dull roar as I concentrated on baking the cupcakes we would need for the day and preparing the fillings and icing. I always made my signature breakfast cupcakes fresh each morning. I had cinnamon roll

cupcakes, french toast cupcakes, and a cheesy eggs and bacon cupcake for those who preferred a more savory treat. I could have gone the simple route and provided muffins, but this wasn't a muffin shop; it was a cupcake shop.

The Icing on Top was known for its unique cupcakes. I even had a dill pickle cupcake. People tended to turn their noses up at it until coerced into trying it. Seeing the surprised look on their faces never got old. Today, in protest of Serendipity dropping all of their pumpkin products, I was also making a pumpkin spice cupcake.

A couple of hours later, Stef, one of my employees, came through the kitchen door holding two to-go cups of coffee. "Sup, boss?" the teenager greeted cheerfully. "I know how you feel about pumpkin, but I thought I would bring you your first peppermint mocha of the season." She set the cup on the table next to me and looked around as I thanked her and took a sip.

I moaned as the delicious combination of mocha, peppermint, and coffee slid across my tastebuds and down my throat to warm my belly. It wasn't that I didn't like other flavors. It's that I preferred pumpkin spice above all others.

"Looks like you got a good start on the baking today. Need help, or do you want me to start filling the display?" she asked.

"If you could start filling, that would be great," I answered. "I'm running out of space and have a few dozen more to decorate."

"You got it, boss. Is Jared coming in today?"

“No, he asked for the day off. He’s still out of town with his parents. Just us today,” I replied. I employed two high schoolers, and they were lifesavers. They allowed me to stay in the kitchen and bake or leave early if I chose, a flexibility I didn’t have when I opened the shop eight years ago.

I finished up my baking and then helped Stef with the morning rush. Black Friday tended to bring in a heavier crowd. Once the morning rush was over and everyone returned to their shopping, I decided to use the opportunity to decorate the outside of the shop for Christmas. I hauled out the ladder and the box of lights from the closet and dragged them outside.

“After last year, don’t you think you should hire someone to do that?” Stef asked, not bothering to hide her laugh at the memory.

Last year the lights and I got into a slight scuffle, and I somehow tied myself to the damn ladder. I stuck my tongue out at her as I shoved the door open. “I’m perfectly capable of hanging Christmas lights on my own,” I replied.

“I’m not so sure of that,” she called after me as the door fell shut.

Little brat. I was smart when I took the lights down last year and put them away neatly so they didn’t tangle. Smiling at my brilliance, I opened the box and then stared down at the contents, my smile turning to dismay. How the hell did that happen? The strings of lights were not neatly waiting in the box. They were a rat’s nest of knots. Seriously, is there some

anti-Christmas gremlin that sneaks around throughout the year tangling lights? An elf that got fired and made it his life's mission to inconvenience others trying to display their holiday spirit?

I pulled the ball of lights out of the box and started the untangling process. A look to my left showed Stef inside, laughing. At least this time, I wasn't trying to untangle them while on the ladder. As I worked, my mind wandered to my Dad. He always helped me hang the lights. His absence last year had been a fluke. He didn't usually go Black Friday shopping, but one of the ads caught his eye, and he decided to go to the mall in the next town. He had a good laugh when he heard what had happened.

Fuck, I missed him. I missed his laugh and the sparkle he got in his eyes when he was teasing someone or trying to pull a fast one. I missed how I could talk to him about anything I wanted, and he would sit quietly and listen without judgment and then offer his advice. I knew if he were here, he'd be telling me to pick myself up and that Peter had never been worth my time to begin with. Then he would remind me that I was a strong, independent woman, a business owner of one of the most successful shops on Main Street, and I didn't need a man to increase my value. Dad was always my biggest supporter, and he loved Christmas.

I finally got enough untangled lights to start hanging them on the gutter. Buying new lights was probably easier, but here we were. I was getting the last lights hung when a man spoke from below me.

“Should you be up there?” he asked with concern. Truthfully, probably not. We had gotten an overnight winter mix, and the sidewalks were still a little slushy, but I was being careful.

“I’m perfectly fine, thank you,” I replied without looking at him as I stretched to get the last lights hooked.

“If you’re certain,” he replied doubtfully. “My name is Lincoln West. This is Grant Cromwell and Benjamin Ashford. We’re meeting Nova Lane here. Would that be you?”

My hand froze partway to its destination as my head whipped around to look down at them in shock. Sure enough, I was looking down at the three billionaire owners of Triple Tech. The three of them were crowded around the bottom of the ladder, looking up at me with varying degrees of amusement. I got the impression that they knew very well that I was Nova.

Lincoln, easily the tallest of the three men, was the closest to me, with his hands on the ladder to steady it. His short blond hair fluttered in the slight breeze as he looked up at me with those baby blues and had a tan that you don’t usually see this time of year in the mountains. Benjamin was positioned behind me, and it looked like he was getting ready to insist I come off the ladder. His buzzed light brown hair and fair skin made his deep brown eyes pop. Eyes that were watching me like a hawk. To escape his scrutiny, my eyes shifted to the final man who made up this influential trifecta. Grant Cromwell was standing further back between the others. Expression guarded, his olive-toned skin, hazel eyes, and wavy black hair

that flirted around his ears made him look quite broody. He was the shortest of the three, but not by much.

They were the three most eligible bachelors around, and I could understand why. My heart pounded in my chest as I studied them. Never mind their money; they were sex on a cracker made of sex. There wasn't a woman around who hadn't fantasized about them at some point, myself included. It was the oldest story in the book. A hot, rich man swoops in and sweeps the girl off her feet. I felt a little tingly at the thought of them being here for me until a cool dose of reality washed over me. It was a fantasy.

Well, this was a waste of everyone's time. I felt a little disappointed, but I knew there was no way they would be interested in a lump like me. I continued my descent, and because the universe had to get its laughs in, I lost my balance. Lincoln quickly acted and caught me as I fell off the ladder. Embarrassed, I tried to wiggle out of his arms. "You can put me down," I told him as my cheeks reddened. "I'm too heavy for you to hold me like this."

His arms wrapped around me tighter, halting my movements. "I don't know," he purred, "I think you're perfect, and I'm rather enjoying myself. However, it might be a little soon for you to fall for me. We've only just met."



## Chapter 4

### Lincoln

**N**ova groaned at my joke as I reluctantly put her down, letting her body slide against mine and enjoying how she felt in my arms. We knew when we arrived who she was. Giving us her name and place of employment made it all too easy to look her up. We found a picture posted in the newspaper from when she first opened her shop. The short, blue-eyed blonde had gained weight in the last eight years, but I preferred the curvier version. Looking at my brothers, I could tell that they did as well.

As soon as her feet were on the ground, she hastily stepped back to put some distance between us and promptly slipped on a patch of ice. I grinned as she found herself in Grant's arms, and he caught her before she could fall again. She nervously tucked a stray lock of hair that had escaped the bun on the top of her head behind her ear as Grant made sure she was steady on her feet before releasing her. "That's twice now, Sugar," I teased.

“Why don’t I finish hanging these for you?” Ben suggested as he climbed the ladder and got the rest of the lights secured to the gutter. Once he was done, we grabbed the ladder and the box containing more tangled Christmas lights and followed Nova inside. I couldn’t help admiring her ass as I did. I was looking forward to getting my hands on her. The purpose of this might not be to form romantic attachments, but that didn’t mean we couldn’t enjoy each other’s company to the fullest.

Grant elbowed me hard in the side. “Focus, asshole,” he whispered. I winked at him but got my mind back to the task at hand. We were here for a reason. Nova was obviously flustered as she motioned to a table near the back of the shop and offered us coffee or cupcakes.

“The coffee here isn’t as good as Serendipity, but it’s hot,” she said apologetically. The shop smelled divine. I hadn’t ever been here before, but I knew I was about to become a regular customer. I noticed a teenager behind the counter with her nose in her phone, trying not to make it evident that she was watching us. When she looked up from her phone again furtively, I caught her eye and winked at her, making her blush. No doubt, the teenage rumor mill of Fort Veyelsa was already buzzing with the news that we were meeting with Nova.

“We’re fine, thank you,” I replied as we sat at the table. Nova remained standing as she wrung her hands nervously while biting her bottom lip. I watched as her lip slid from between her teeth, and the tip of her pink tongue peeked out to lick her lips. I groaned internally. I had made jokes that she

was falling for us, but I was pretty sure that it was me who was already falling for her. Everything about her that I have seen so far captivated me.

“Listen,” she finally said, raising her eyes to look at each of us. “You don’t have to keep up the pretense of this meeting for my sake. I understand you aren’t interested now that you’ve met me.”

I shared confused looks with my best friends. Was she turning us down already without even giving us a chance to discuss the terms of our arrangement?

“Why would you think that we wouldn’t be interested?” Grant asked.

“Have you seen yourselves? Look at me,” she blurted, gesturing to herself.

“Oh, I am, Sugar,” I replied. “I haven’t stopped since we got here.” I studied the woman standing before us, closer, past the brave facade. Someone had hurt her deeply. Tore her confidence down and made her feel like she was lacking. That couldn’t be further from the truth, and as I shared another look with Grant and Ben, I knew I wasn’t alone with the newfound goal to show her just how perfect she was and help her build her confidence.

“Why don’t you let us decide if you’re who we are looking for?” Ben suggested.

I pulled out the empty chair beside me. “Take a seat, Nova,” I said softly. “We have no intentions of leaving this shop any

time soon.” She didn’t look convinced as she took a seat, willing to play along. Now that I had her closer, I reached out and tugged the hair tie out, sending her blonde locks cascading past her shoulders in delicate waves. Nova looked at me in surprise, and I winked at her as I slipped the hair tie onto my wrist. It was mine now. The familiar pretty pink blush that has been coloring her cheeks almost constantly since we arrived appeared again.

“Why don’t we start with what we are looking for?” Grant suggested. “We host our company’s annual New Year’s Eve party at our mountain cabin. We’re expected to have dates for the party but rarely find the time to cultivate relationships. We want to propose that you accompany us as our collective date.” Grant pulled out the contract he had our lawyers draw up, listing our expectations and Nova’s obligations. It wasn’t completed as we needed to add her expectations and obligations of us to it, but it would give her the terms to read in black and white. He slid it across the table to her, and she stared at it like it would bite her before looking up at him in confusion.

“Wait. You’re still interested?” she asked with surprise. This sweet, adorable woman didn’t have a clue about herself.

“Very interested,” Grant replied, his lips pinching together to keep the smile from spreading across his face. She would have likely thought he was laughing at her.

Nova picked up the contract and started to read through it. There wasn’t anything too earth-shattering on there that hadn’t

already been said. “So all you want is for me to come to the party as the date for all three of you? Just one night?”

“Correct,” Grant replied.

“Well, let’s make sure to leave it open for more in case we need her for something else between now and then,” Ben interjected. I nodded in agreement. I already knew I’d be needing her for something else. I wasn’t sure what that was, but I’d find something.

“So this isn’t a romantic thing. Strictly business,” she confirmed, relaxing back into her seat. She seemed more accepting of this than us being attracted to her.

“We aren’t looking for any long-term relationship,” Grant confirmed.

“But we’re all consenting adults,” I added smoothly. “I wouldn’t rule anything out.”

“Yeah, right,” Nova scoffed. That sounded too much like a challenge. I loved a good challenge.

“What are you looking to get out of this arrangement?” Grant asked, redirecting the conversation back to the topic at hand.

# Chapter 5

## Nova

**W**hat was I looking to get? Honestly, I was still floored that these three men wanted to spend any time with me, let alone bring me to a big fancy party for their employees to see them with me. It still wasn't making sense to me. I looked at the three men sitting around the table. Lincoln looked like a bronzed Adonis. Benjamin was toned, and I was pretty sure there wasn't an ounce of fat on his body. Grant was by far the bulkiest of them. His muscles had muscles. And then there was me. Short, overweight, and average. I did not look like the woman that should be on any of their arms, let alone in them.

I took a deep breath and then started to talk. "Um, well, my father died in a car accident about eight months ago. It... I haven't been the same since. Because of this, my live-in long-term boyfriend broke up with me a few days ago. So now I am alone for the holidays and don't think I'm ready to face that reality yet." I expelled a breath of air, and they waited

patiently for me to continue. Come on, Nova. You got the hard parts out.

“So I’d like someone, or I guess, in this case, someones, to do all of the traditional holiday things with. Baking Christmas cookies, decorating the Christmas tree, watching Christmas movies....” I trailed off as I heard the words coming out of my mouth. I sounded so childish, and there was no way these successful billionaires who didn’t even have the time to date in their league had the time or desire to do these things with me.

“Why did you stop?” Lincoln asked.

“I’m sorry. I just realized how silly this must sound to you. You’re too busy for nonsense like this,” I replied, feeling my cheeks heat in embarrassment again.

“I don’t think it sounds silly,” Benjamin replied. “We grew up together in foster care. We didn’t have traditions like that. It might be nice to partake in the holiday festivities this year.”

I lifted my hopeful eyes to him. Did he mean that, or was this entire thing just a joke to them? He seemed sincere. I looked at Lincoln, who was smiling at me. This man hadn’t stopped staring at me since I sat down, and what the hell was the deal with my hair tie?

Grant smiled as he pulled a pen from his breast pocket and placed it in front of me. “Write it all down, and I’ll make sure to include it in the final draft,” he instructed.

I took the pen and listed all the traditions I didn’t want to do alone this year. There were eight items on the list. I chewed on

my bottom lip as I looked over the list. This didn't seem fair. Suddenly, Linc reached over and placed his thumb on my lip, saving it from the punishment I was giving it.

“What's got you worried, Sugar?” he asked softly.

I ignored the butterflies that fluttered in my stomach at his nickname. “This doesn't seem fair to you all. You get one night from me, and I get what will amount to multiple days with you. It isn't even.”

“Nonsense,” Grant replied. “We'll have the same amount of days together. And I think, considering we're asking you to come to a big party with the three of us, a handful of activities probably isn't a fair trade-off, all things considered.”

I wasn't sure about that, but so be it if it didn't bother them. I capped the pen, placed it on the contract, and slid it back to Grant. “What happens when you change your mind and want to bring someone else?”

“We don't go back on our word,” Grant replied, “but I can add in a clause that if either party doesn't uphold their end of the contract, they will pay the other party compensation for their time in the amount of twenty dollars a date. Does that sound good?”

I nodded. I didn't plan on collecting.

“I'll get your requirements added to the contract and have it brought to you tomorrow to sign,” Grant advised me, folding the contract and placing it and the pen back in his jacket pocket.



I nodded nervously as silence fell across the table. Now what were we supposed to do?

“I guess that concludes our first meeting,” Ben announced as he stood.

“Yes, umm, thank you. I look forward to spending more time with you,” I said as I awkwardly held my hand out to shake. Ben and Grant accepted the uncomfortable handshake, but Linc brushed my hand aside as he wrapped his arms around me for a hug.

“This is going to be fun, Sugar,” he purred. Pressed against him like this, I could almost let myself pretend it was real and made sense, but I knew better.

“I’m sure it will,” I replied, gently extracting myself from his arms. He winked at me, and I watched them leave the shop.

What the fuck did I just get myself into? I didn’t have much time to analyze that because Stef immediately came from behind the counter, chattering like an overexcited... well... teenager.

“Oh my God, Nova. Do you know who they were? Why were they here? What did you talk about? Why did Lincoln West keep touching you?” The girl was bouncing on her toes excitedly as she rattled off question after question.

“Stef!” I yelled, interrupting her, “Not everything is your business.”

“Don’t try to pull that on me,” she persisted as she followed me into the kitchen. “To my knowledge, you’ve never had any

interactions with them in the past. So what's the deal? Why so chummy now?"

I sighed as I opened the closet and pulled out another box of decorations. There wasn't any point in keeping the information from her. They were going to be around a lot more in the next month. "If you must know," I said as I pushed past her to go back to the front of the shop, "we entered into a business arrangement of sorts."

"What kind of arrangement?"

"As you know, Peter broke up with me," I started.

"I always hated that scumbag," Stef interrupted vehemently.

"So, I didn't want to do all of the Christmas things alone," I continued without commenting on her outburst. "Bree gave me a card for a dating app, so I signed up looking for companionship. As it so happens, they also need someone to bring to their New Year's Eve party, so we've agreed to help each other out." I dragged the tables in front of the windows away and grabbed the can of fake snow while Stef stood frozen with her mouth open in shock.

I started spraying the edges of the glass and made it halfway around the first window when Stef shrieked, making me jump.

"OMG! OH-EM-GEEE!" She screeched as she jumped up and down. Her shining green eyes were practically popping out of her head in excitement as her brown ponytail swung around haphazardly, smacking her in the face on more than

one occasion, not that she noticed. “Do you know what this is?”

I looked at her cautiously. “It’s a platonic business arrangement,” I told her before she could get carried away.

“No, it’s the start of your fairytale happily ever after! Three incredibly sexy, insanely rich bachelors want to bring you to the year’s biggest party as their *shared* date! While also agreeing to do a bunch of romantic Christmas things with you. It doesn’t matter how you look at it. That’s hot!”

“Stef,” I warned in an attempt to reel the girl’s overactive imagination in. “This isn’t a Hallmark movie. We agreed that it was strictly platonic. They aren’t looking for anything long-term, and neither am I.”

“We’ll see,” she grinned. “Christmas is a magical time of year, after all. You never know what could happen.”

“Stef,” I said in exasperation at her unwillingness to accept the facts of the matter. “I’m not their type. We aren’t even playing the same game, let alone in the same league.”

“Please,” she scoffed, “as if they could find someone better than you. Peter really fucked with your head. You don’t even realize how much of a bombshell you are. And don’t forget that I was here to witness your meeting. I saw how they looked at you, and believe me, there wasn’t a single platonic thought in their minds.”

Before I could reply, a group of customers entered the shop, and she danced back behind the counter to assist them. Was

she right? I rolled my eyes and shook my head as I dismissed the thought. There was no way such sought-after bachelors would be interested in me past what we had agreed upon. Though Linc seemed awfully suggestive, a small voice popped up to say. He was just being nice, I said to myself with a nod. That's all there was to it.

I continued decorating the shop, and when I finished, I stood back to admire my work. I had to admit that having the shop decorated for Christmas helped to lift my spirits. They immediately plummeted again when my phone rang, and I saw who it was on the Caller ID.

“Hello?”

“Nova, it's Peter.” I rolled my eyes.

“What do you want, Peter?”

“Did I leave my good jacket at your house? I can't find it.”

“I haven't seen it,” I replied. And if I had, I would have tossed it into the fireplace.

“Well, can you look?” he demanded, sounding annoyed.

“Sure,” I agreed, wanting to get him off the phone as quickly as possible. “I'll check when I get home.”

“Fine. Talk to you then,” he said as the line went dead.

I shook my head. Now that we weren't together, I was beginning to see what everyone else seemed to notice—a privileged, selfish little weasel. I hoped I found the jacket so that I could burn it.

# Chapter 6

## Benjamin

### 35 Days Until New Year's Eve

I rubbed my eyes and then tried to refocus on the same line of code that I had been staring at for the last ten minutes. Instead of getting through my work, my mind wandered to a curvy cupcake shop owner. Something about her instantly made me want to learn everything about her. There wasn't any detail too small.

The intercom on my phone on my desk beeped before Grant's voice came through the speaker. "Ben, do you have a minute to come to my office?"

"Yep, I'll be right there," I replied, relieved for the break from pretending to work. I left my office and went to the office next to mine. Linc was already there.

"I think we need to discuss Nova and make sure we're all on the same page before we sign the contract," Grant said as I

closed the door. “Have either of you had time to think it over?”

“I haven’t been able to think of anything else,” I admitted as I sat.

“You, too?” Linc asked, grinning at me from his perch on the window sill. Together, we looked at Grant.

“Me three,” he sighed.

“So what exactly does that mean for us? We should talk about it, lay down some ground rules or something. This could get tricky if we’re all attracted to her,” I said.

“Why not just share her?” Linc suggested.

“You mean... intimately?” Grant clarified. Images of Nova writhing between us on a bed flashed through my mind, and I shifted in my chair as my dick twitched. That interested me far more than I expected it to.

“Yeah,” Linc said, excitedly pacing the room. “Think about it. We already share every other aspect of our lives. We’re already sharing her as a date for the party. If she’s willing, why not share her in other ways?”

“While I’m not opposed to the idea,” Grant replied, “you two do remember that this is only until New Year’s, right? This is temporary. It’s back to business as usual once New Year’s Eve is over.” We both agreed though Linc looked like he was up to something as he signed the contract and then handed me the pen to sign.

“Great,” Grant said as he signed it and slid it into a yellow envelope. “I’ll tell Joel to have a messenger pick this up to

deliver to her this afternoon.”

I returned to my office and tried to focus on my work. We had a new fitness tracker with an updated app scheduled to be released at the beginning of January. I was supposed to review the new coding to ensure everything worked seamlessly, but my mind was still drifting to Nova. I wasn't looking for anything long-term. We were always working, and it wouldn't be fair to subject someone to that, constantly waiting for me to spare the time for them. But I also had a hard time ignoring the potential perks of our arrangement with Nova, especially if she was interested in a more casually intimate relationship with us.

I took out my phone and pulled her up on social media again, not expecting to find anything different from the last time. Her accounts were frozen in time with no activity since her father had passed. It had been evident in our interactions with her yesterday that she was self-conscious about her weight. While she could probably lose a few pounds, she was still drop-dead gorgeous. Besides, almost everyone could stand to lose a few pounds.

Deciding I needed answers, I left my office and went to see Joel. I looked around to make sure that Grant and Lincoln weren't lurking nearby and then dropped my voice so that I wouldn't be overheard. “Do you have that envelope that is going to Nova Lane?” I asked him.

“Yeah, I do,” Joel said, holding it up. “The courier is coming to pick it up in a couple of hours. Why?”

I snatched the envelope from him, making his eyebrows raise. “I have to run into town, so I may as well drop it off. Save us a few bucks,” I explained.

“Right,” Joel said. Clearly, he didn’t believe my explanation but wouldn’t press me for details.

I left the office quickly and hopped into my car to drive to Icing. I parked in front and noticed the additional decorations she had added after we had left yesterday. The decorations were tastefully charming and inviting. I entered the shop and noted that more people were there today than yesterday. The same girl from yesterday was behind the counter as I approached, and she was grinning ear to ear.

“Hello, Mr. Ashford. Are you here to see Nova?” she asked.

“I am. I wanted to drop some papers off with her,” I replied, holding the envelope. “Is she around?”

“She’s in the back decorating cupcakes.”

“Oh, well, I don’t want to disturb her,” I said with disappointment.

“You aren’t. You can go back if you want,” she said, gesturing to the door behind her.

“Are you sure that’s allowed?” I asked.

“I won’t tell if you don’t,” she winked.

Cheeky kid. I returned her wink and stepped around the counter. Nova didn’t notice me as I entered the kitchen. She had earbuds in her ears and was dancing along to whatever



music she was listening to as she decorated cupcakes. A streak of flour was on her cheek, and she wore a pink apron over her clothes. I snuck over to the table behind her and sat on it as I watched her work. The strings of her apron framed her legging-clad ass, drawing my attention.

I watched her for several minutes until she finally sensed my presence. Nova turned and shrieked when she saw me, squeezing the piping bag in her hand reflexively, causing pink frosting to squirt all over my shirt. We both froze in shock before bursting out in laughter.

“What are you doing here, Ben?” she asked as she removed the earbuds from her ears. I caught movement by the door and looked over in time to see the cashier ducking out of view from where she had probably been watching through the porthole window in the door.

I held up the envelope, swiped frosting off my shirt with my finger, and popped it in my mouth. I moaned as the sugary concoction melted in my mouth. I didn't let myself splurge on sugary things too often, so this was quite the treat. Nova tracked my movements as my finger dipped into the icing again, bringing it to my lips. Her tongue darted out to lick her lips as I licked the frosting off. I couldn't resist doing it again, appreciating how her face flushed as her eyes became hungry. Hopefully, hungry for something other than frosting.

“Keep looking at me like that, sweetheart, and we're going to be making an even bigger mess,” I promised as images of painting her body in frosting and licking it off her played

through my mind. I'd happily consume more sugar if I could use her as my plate. Knowing that we could have an audience in the form of her nosey employee at any moment was the only thing that kept me from following up on that promise as Nova continued to stare.

# Chapter 7

## Nova

**H**is words hung between us, slowly permeating my head and finally making me snap out of the spell he seemed to put on me. My face heated as I went over to the sink and got him a wet rag to clean up the mess I made of his shirt. I didn't even want to think about how much the shirt probably cost. I cleared my throat as I handed the rag to him.

“I thought the contract was being sent over?”

“It was, but I wanted to see you, so I volunteered to bring it over myself,” he answered as he wiped the frosting off his shirt and tossed the rag onto the table next to him.

“Why did you want to see me?” Why me at all? This entire thing has me feeling very perplexed. “There has to be someone more your caliber that you could bring as your date instead of me.” I had spent most of last night trying to figure out why they picked me.

He whistled low as he brushed my cheek with his thumb. “Your ex really did a number on you, didn't he?”

“What makes you think my ex did anything to me?” I asked defensively.

“I took a shot in the dark,” he replied. “Am I wrong?”

“No, just perceptive,” I admitted.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“There isn’t much to say,” I told him as I turned back to my cupcakes so that I didn’t have to see the agreement look in his eyes. “After my Dad died, I let myself go, and he couldn’t stand to look at me anymore. He hadn’t touched me in months and was embarrassed to be seen in public with me.”

“Well, he’s a dumbfuck because I can’t stop looking at you or thinking about all the ways I want to touch you,” he replied. My heart thundered in my chest as I heard him get off the table, and I jumped slightly when he continued speaking, his mouth inches from my ear. “Neither can my brothers. We think you’re sexy as hell and had a conversation about wanting to share you if you were interested in that.”

I couldn’t help but scoff at his words. “Pretty words,” I replied.

He moved to my side, grabbed my free hand, and brought it to cup the front of his pants. “Does this feel like pretty words?”

I gulped. He was rock-hard inside his pants. I couldn’t stop myself as my hand trailed down this length, getting a better feel of his penis. He was big, far bigger than Peter.

Ben moaned and thrust himself against my hand. My eyes widened and met his as he watched me. He reached out and gripped the back of my neck, dragging my face closer to his and capturing my lips in a hungry kiss. He nipped lightly at my bottom lip before coaxing it open to slide his tongue inside. I whimpered as he claimed my mouth confidently. The kiss softened before he slowly retreated.

“I know I started it, but if you don’t let go of my cock I’m going to have to spread you across this table and eat you up bite by sweet bite,” he said against my lips.

I realized that I still had a death grip on him and ripped my hand back immediately, making him chuckle.

“Listen, Nova,” he said softly, his fingers tracing patterns on my neck, making me squirm. “Could you lose a few pounds? Everyone could, but only if it makes you feel better about yourself. I think you’re beautiful just the way you are, but if that interests you, I’m more than happy to help. We could work out together if you want. I won’t miss an opportunity to see you in tight workout clothes. I can even get you a prototype of our new health tracker to beta test if you would like.”

His words flattered me, and the steel snake in his pants was indisputable proof of his attraction to me. He made me feel desired, and I hadn’t felt that in quite some time. “I think I would like that,” I answered honestly.

“I’ll take care of it then,” he replied. He kissed my forehead and then stepped back to put some much-needed distance

between us before I let him do whatever he wanted to me. Ben pulled out a pen and held it out to me. “Ready to sign?”

Nodding, I turned to the abandoned envelope and removed the contract. I read through it quickly, seeing everything was in order, and signed both copies. Sliding one of the copies back into the envelope, I handed it to him with his pen. He grinned at me as he took them.

“As much as I’d like to stay and play, I have to return to work,” he said reluctantly. I nodded, and he bent down to steal a quick kiss. He winked at me and swatted my ass with the envelope as he walked past me. “I’ll be in touch,” he said as he left.

I slumped against the work table and let out a breath I didn’t realize I was holding. Holy fuck was I out of my league with these men. And if I understood correctly, all three were interested in this being a more physical arrangement. They wanted to share me. What did that even mean? Share as individuals... or as a... group? I fanned my face with my hand as I thought about being the center of that grouping.

A throat cleared, and I looked toward the door to see Stef standing half in the kitchen with a smug look. “Uh-huh. Platonic, my ass.” She returned to the front, closing the door before I could reply.

I was pretty sure she was right. Platonic had just flown out the window. I tried to shake off all the butterflies as I returned to my cupcakes. As I worked, my mind drifted to ideas of our first Christmas tradition now that the contract was signed.



I didn't hear from any of them for the rest of the weekend. Monday morning, I was working up the courage to ask them if they were free that night for dinner, Christmas cookie baking, and a Christmas movie. I dialed the number on the contract and worried my bottom lip between my teeth as I waited for someone to answer.

“Triple Tech, this is Joel speaking. How may I help you?”

I had expected the number to belong to one of them and was slightly taken aback by someone else answering.

“Hello?”

“Sorry,” I said. “Can I speak to Lincoln, Benjamin, or Grant?”

“They're in a meeting. I'm their assistant. I can help you.”

“Oh, well, ok. My name is Nova Lane. I was calling to see if they were free for Christmas cookies and—”

“Just send us two dozen cookies and instructions on where to donate,” Joel interrupted.

“Oh, I think you misunderstood me,” I explained.

“Listen, I don’t mean to be rude, but they are very busy and don’t have time to waste talking about Christmas cookies. Have a nice day.” Joel hung up before I could utter another syllable, and I stared at my phone dumbfounded.

God, I felt like an idiot. Why did I think they would be free last minute to spend time with me doing something so trivial? The next time I spoke to one of them, we would have to discuss the parameters of our arrangement and when they would be available. Just because they agreed to do these things with me doesn’t mean they will drop whatever they are doing to do them.



# Chapter 8

## Grant

### 33 Days Until New Year's Eve

**W**e sat in the conference room at the end of the day, reviewing the launch schedule and the big sponsor we had lined up to market it. This would be one of our biggest launches, and everything had to be perfect.

“We’re in the last stages of testing,” Ben reported. “So far, everything seems to be working seamlessly.”

I nodded as I reviewed the latest financial report before relaying it to them. As the Chief Financial Officer, it was my job to keep track of the money we were spending and how it was projected to give us positive returns. “And how are we doing with Midland Sports Media?” I asked Lincoln. MSM was our biggest sponsor for this launch, and getting them to confirm their sponsorship proved tricky. We needed them for

the publicity they would bring to the tracker by putting it on the wrist of all of their athletes, and they knew it.

“As of right now, we’re back on track as planned. That doesn’t mean that they won’t try to squeeze us some more before the launch, though,” Linc sighed. “They have a new guy calling the shots over there, and it seems like he’s trying to make a big splash on the first jump. We may need to discuss where to draw the line soon.”

I nodded. This wasn’t the first time big shots from other companies came in needing to show us how big and bad they were, and it wouldn’t be the last.

Joel came into the conference room with fresh cups of coffee. “These are for you. I feel compelled to tell you it’s five o’clock somewhere, and you should go home. That’s where I’m going. That said, Lincoln, don’t forget you have the ribbon cutting at that orphanage tomorrow. Grant, you have a ten A.M. meeting tomorrow with the legal team. Ben, the product assembly dropped this off for you. They said it is fully functional according to your specifications, and if you need anything else, let them know. Someone called to talk to one of you about Christmas cookies. I told her you were too busy and to send along two dozen and where to donate, so we should be getting cookies soon. That’s all I have for you. Good night.”

I exchanged looks with the others. “Wait! Do you know who the woman was that called?” I asked Joel before he could leave.

He looked down at the tablet strapped to his hand and clicked on it several times with his stylus. “Umm, her name was Nova something I think. Why?”

“Nova Lane?” Lincoln asked.

“Yes!” Joel said with a smile and a snap of his fingers. “Come to think of it. Her name was Nova Lane.”

We all cursed as we jumped from our chairs and grabbed our things. “The next time she calls, you hear her out and adjust our schedules for whatever she wants,” I growled at him as I brushed past him. “And if there is absolutely no way to do that, you put her through to one of us immediately. No fucking excuses.”

“Ok, I will,” Joel said, hurrying behind us to the elevators. “But who is she?”

“She’s—,” Lincoln started to answer.

“None of your fucking business,” I barked, cutting him off as we stepped onto the elevator. “Just do as you’re told.” I glared at him until the elevator doors closed. “We need to call her.”

“I already tried,” Ben replied. “She didn’t answer.”

I cursed as I led the way to my Mercedes. We checked Icing first, but the shop was dark. “Does anyone have her address?”

“Yeah, just a second,” Ben replied. “Ok, head to the end of the street and make a left.” Ben guided me to her house, and I pulled into the driveway of a charming ranch-style home. I felt relieved when I saw the lights were on inside. If she wasn’t home, I didn’t know where we would have tried to look next.

We went to her door, and I mashed the doorbell with my finger.

It took far longer than I would have liked for her to open the door, and when she finally did, I could see the surprise on her face at finding us on her doorstep. Without waiting for an invitation, I pushed past her, my brothers following.

“By all means, come in,” she said sarcastically.

“I’m sorry about the mix-up with our assistant,” I told her. “He hadn’t been made aware of our arrangement before you had called. He is now.”

“Next time, Sugar,” Lincoln added, “just call one of us directly. Fuck what the contract says.”

“Let’s not get too carried away,” I said.

“Joel said something about cookies?” Ben asked, peeking around her house.

“Well, I had called to invite you over for dinner, Christmas cookie baking, and, if we have time, a Christmas movie, but I understand if you’re too busy,” Nova explained softly. “Joel said you were. I don’t even have dinner started or anything prepped because I wasn’t expecting you.”

“Why don’t you let us take care of dinner, and then we can jump right into baking?” Linc suggested.

She smiled shyly and nodded her agreement.

“I’ll make the call,” I said as I walked back outside. I called the local diner and ordered cheeseburgers and fries for

everyone to be delivered. When I returned inside, Nova was in the kitchen with Ben and Lincoln, explaining the recipes.

“You will each get your own recipe, and I’ll help you as you go along. Grant, you can take the chocolate chip cookies. Lincoln will do the butter cookies. That leaves Ben with the thumbprints.” She handed each of us a large mixing bowl, and we started mixing our ingredients. I wished I had been assigned the thumbprint cookies as it was a more technical recipe; therefore, Ben got more assistance from Nova. I was struggling to thoroughly mix the dough when Nova came to stand beside me.

“It’s easier if you use your hands,” she told me as she took the spoon from my hands. She rolled up my sleeves for me, placed her hands over mine, and shoved them into the bowl. She showed me how to mix and then smiled up at me. “Good job. Once fully mixed, you can add your chocolate chips and then form the dough into one-inch balls and place them two inches apart on the baking sheet.”

“Kinda messy,” I commented, trying not to show how much I disliked this.

Her smile shifted to a full grin. “I know. I hate mixing it by hand, but it produces the best cookies.” I was momentarily blinded by the radiance that came with a genuine smile from her. Getting my hands all goopy was worth seeing her like that.

“Umm, Nova?” Ben called over. “Help.” I looked over at the evident distress in his voice and laughed. As messy as my

cookies were, they had nothing on his.

“Oh, Ben! You’re supposed to refrigerate the dough first. Didn’t you read that part?” Nova asked as she rushed over to him with my spoon. She scraped the sticky dough covering his hands into the bowl.

“I thought it was just a suggestion,” he admitted.

“It’s necessary if you want to be able to shape the dough into balls,” she huffed. She nudged him toward the sink and turned the water on for him. After squirting some soap into his hands, she grabbed the roll of cling wrap and cut a piece off.

“How am I doing?” Linc asked as she moved the contents of Ben’s bowl onto the plastic.

“You’re doing great, Lincoln,” she replied approvingly. “Your dough is ready to chill as well. Why don’t you grab a piece of plastic wrap and do what I’m doing.”

He followed her example as best he could as she expertly shaped the dough into a log and wrapped it. Pinching the loose ends with her fingers, she lifted the log and began twirling it like a mini jump rope, causing the ends to twist. Lincoln tried to copy her and nearly sent his dough log flying into the living room. She giggled as she helped him get a hold of his dough. Instead of doing it for him, she placed his fingers where they needed to be and guided his movements. This time, the dough didn’t go flying, though it lacked the perfection of hers.

She placed both in the fridge and then turned to look at me. “How is your dough coming?”

I looked down at the dough I hadn't been mixing and started going on it again. "Almost ready for chocolate chips," I said with more confidence than I felt. When I was satisfied that all the ingredients were mixed, I added the amount of chocolate chips the recipe said to add.

Nova came over while I was mixing them in and added another cup. "Always add an extra cup over what it says. That's how you get the gooey cookies everyone likes."

As she helped Linc and Ben finish their cookies, I anxiously watched mine bake. Needing to distract myself, I decided to learn more about our host and what she had planned for us.

"What other Christmas traditions did you want to accomplish?" I knew I could read the contract, but wanted to hear it from her. She didn't disappoint as she launched into an explanation about what she wanted to do and added small memories and anecdotes as she went explaining why she wanted to do each activity.

"Oh, but my favorite tradition was..." She trailed off, getting our attention.

"What is it?" Linc asked.

"Nothing. I think it might be asking too much from you," she admitted as she brushed me aside to pull a tray of cookies from the oven and replace them with a fresh batch.

"Tell us," I ordered.

"Well, every year on December twenty-eighth, the town holds a gingerbread house decorating contest at the high

school. Dad and I would plan our design for weeks and loved competing. We never won, but each year, he would tell me that next year would be the year.” Her eyes had a sad, faraway look in them. “I never thought that one day there wouldn’t be a next year,” Nova said quietly.

Well, now we had to do it. Even if it were too much of her to ask, which it wasn’t, we would be doing the contest. And this year, we would bring home that win for her and her Dad.

“Sounds like fun,” Ben said. “I’m in.” Linc and I both agreed as well, and Nova glowed with excitement.

“If you’re sure, I’ll start designing our entry!” Fuck, making her happy was becoming an addiction.

Shortly after the cookies were finished baking, dinner was delivered. While we ate, Ben gave her the fitness tracker he had brought, and we told her about our latest launch.

Halfway through dinner, Nova perked up as she sipped the wine she had brought out for us. “Ok, tell me about your Christmas traditions.”

“Well,” Linc started, “we grew up in the system, so we don’t have any.”

“That’s not true,” I said. “Don’t you remember? Mama Clair used to let us decorate our own stockings on Christmas Eve after dinner.”

“Oh, yeah!” Ben said. “I had completely forgotten about that! You always stole the blue glitter glue and never let Linc or me use it.”



“I love that idea!” Nova exclaimed. “We’ll add it to the list.”

A short time later, Nova convinced us to stay for a Christmas movie, and as Bing Crosby started singing, I pulled out my phone. There were a bunch of important emails waiting for me. I glanced from my cell phone to Nova, sitting between me and Linc, her lips moving along with the movie. I smiled softly as I pocketed my phone. The emails could wait. This was far more important.

# Chapter 9

## Nova

### 32 Days Until New Year's Eve

I slipped the last tray of cupcakes into the display and then leaned against the back counter, stifling a yawn. I blinked my eyes rapidly to try and clear the blariness from them. The previous night had been a late night, but more fun than I have had in a long time. It made me excited for other Christmas traditions we would be having together. It made me excited for Christmas. I looked at the fitness tracker on my wrist as it beeped to tell me to drink water. I stooped down to pull a bottle of water from the fridge under the counter as I tried to remember the last time I had drank plain water.

The bell on the door chimed, signaling that Stef had just walked in. “Stef, you’ll have to stay on top of things today. I’m afraid I might not be of much use. I had a pretty late night last night.”

“So you’re feeling extra sleepy today, too?” Lincoln asked.

I stood and turned to face him in surprise. The golden God was standing in a fitted suit at the counter, looking entirely too delicious. “Lincoln! I didn’t expect to see you this morning. I thought you were Stef.”

“I needed a little extra help getting going this morning,” he replied, “I thought you might, too.” He held out his hand, and I noticed he was holding two cups of coffee. I hadn’t seen them, but I wasn’t exactly looking at his hands.

I looked at the unopened water bottle in my hand and then at the coffee he offered. “Coffee is water, right?” I asked. I returned the water and thanked him as I traded it for the magic bean juice he brought.

“Depends on who you ask,” he laughed. “Ben would definitely tell you that it isn’t, but I won’t tell if you won’t.” He winked as he sipped his coffee and held his now empty hand out to me. I took his hand, and he led me around the counter to a table. “I also wanted to ask if you would be interested in accompanying me to an event this afternoon. We’re opening a new orphanage in the next town over. Usually, I do these things alone, but I would love the opportunity to spend more time with you.”

I blushed as his words sent a pack of butterflies aflutter in my stomach. “I’d love to,” a grin split across his face, “but I don’t know if I have anything appropriate to wear.”

“Sugar, if you want to wear jammies, then I say go for it. There will be reporters taking pictures, so you might not want

to go that exact route, but my point is wear whatever makes you feel comfortable to be photographed in. You're going to look beautiful no matter what you choose."

"I think I can handle that. What time should I expect you?"

"I'll pick you up from your house at two. Will that work for you?" The door chimed again, and this time it was Stef. Her eyes popped open wide when she saw Lincoln.

"Two will be fine," I told him while giving her a look that told her to keep her comments to herself.

"Excellent," Linc replied as he stood. "I look forward to it. See you later, Sugar." He bent down to leave a peck on my cheek and left the shop, leaving even more butterflies than before.

"What are you doing later?" Stef asked.

"Putting a help wanted sign in the window," I teased.

"As if you could survive without me," Stef scoffed. "Fine. Keep your secrets."



I spent a few more hours at the shop before I went home to get ready. I dug through my closet, looking for a dress that didn't make me feel like a blob. I finally found a charcoal grey long-sleeved sweater dress that stopped just above my knees. I paired it with black leather booties with a one-inch heel and decided this was the best I could do. I swept my hair into a twist and secured it with a clip at the last minute. There. That made me look more professional and put together. If I were a little skinnier, I would look like I belonged at Lincoln's side.

Two o'clock on the dot, I heard the roar of an engine outside. I grabbed my purse and quickly left my house so that I didn't keep him waiting. Lincoln met me halfway, looking dismayed. Was I not dressed right?

"I wanted to pick you up properly," he pouted. "Next time, let me show you that I'm a gentleman, and wait for me to

knock.” He brandished a deep red rose from behind his back and handed it to me. “You look beautiful, Nova.”

“Thank you,” I replied shyly as I accepted the rose. He placed his large hand on my lower back to escort me around his flashy, cherry-red sports car and opened the door so I could get in. Once he shut me in the car, he went around the front, sliding across the hood with a grin, and joined me. He leaned over me, his lips a breath away from my own. He brushed the tip of his nose lightly against mine and then retreated, pulling the seatbelt across my body as he did and clicking the buckle in place.

“You ready to burn some rubber, Sugar?” he asked. He didn’t give me a chance to recover from his invasion of my space or respond as he revved the engine once and then peeled away from the curb, sending the car shooting down the road and making the tires chirp. I laughed out loud as the force pressed me into the buttery leather seat. He laughed with me as he turned onto the highway that led to the next town and smoothly shifted the car into high gears as the engine roared, the vibrations traveling through my body. I never thought I could get turned on by a car, but I understood the phrase “really got my motor running” a little better.

“So tell me about this orphanage,” I said to keep my mind from wandering into dangerous territory.

Lincoln smiled the kind of smile you only have for something you are passionate about. The kind of thing that is so much a part of you that it shapes the person you are. “This

is the second one we've opened with the Triple Tech Foundation. Since we all grew up together in foster care, we understand better than most of the challenges the system faces. Finding good foster parents is difficult, and funding isn't always what it should be. Often, foster kids are seen as more of a paycheck than a person."

Lincoln glanced at me and smiled sadly. He reached over and grabbed my hand as if he had sought comfort as he continued speaking. "We always knew that one of the things we wanted to do once we became successful was to give back to the community. We were lucky to have a wonderful woman who cared for and loved us unconditionally, but we knew that not every foster kid was as lucky as us. These orphanages are privately funded through Triple Tech and private donations. We ensure the kids brought to our homes are safe and cared for. We don't let them fall through the cracks and ensure they have every opportunity available to make them successful members of society once they age out of the system."

I was speechless. Few people would care so much about where they came from or the people still living there. I was sure there were cynical people out there who assumed their work with the orphanage was a publicity stunt and a good tax write-off, but I could tell from listening to him speak that this was a passion project for them. This was a priority. I tried not to swoon at their altruism. "That's amazing," I finally managed to get out. "And sexy." I slapped my hand over my mouth before anything else could fall out. What the fuck, Nova?

Lincoln's eyes snapped to mine as I turned red. A slow grin spread across his face as his thumb stroked my hand. "Well, looking sexy wasn't meant to be a result, but I like that you think that, and I'm happy I decided to share this with you. I thought I'd have to pull out all the stops to seduce you," he teased. He didn't miss it when I shifted uncomfortably in my seat. He got a serious look as he said, "I know you have a hard time accepting that we're attracted to you, Nova. Ben filled us in on what you shared with him about your ex."

I tried to pull my hand from his, but he squeezed it tighter, refusing to release it. "I think your ex is a fucking moron for letting you go, but his loss is our gain, and I won't let you go so easily. I don't think I've ever wanted to be with someone as much as I do with you, and I don't just mean physically. You're special, Nova, and I intend to show you just how much until you start to believe it, too." He lifted my hand to his lips and kissed it before relaxing his hold on my hand to allow me to retreat if I still wanted to. I found that I didn't, and he winked at me when I continued to hold his hand.

We didn't speak for the rest of the drive, and soon, we stopped. "A church?" I asked.

"The church relocated to a larger building and was selling this one for cheap. We bought it and did some major renovations and expansions to turn it into what we needed," Lincoln replied as he turned off the car. "Come on. I can't wait to show you," he said excitedly. Local news stations were already setting up outside the front steps and rushed over as Lincoln got out and came around to my side of the car to open



the door. I took his extended hand as he helped me out of the car. Cameras flashed as reporters shouted out questions.

“I’ll answer all of your questions at the ribbon cutting,” he told the reporters calmly as he guided me through the crowd and up the steps. “First, I’ll tour the facilities with my companion, Nova Lane.” The reporters hadn’t paid me any attention, but I blushed as their interest shifted to me.

“Was that necessary?” I hissed as we made it past the barrier and out of the crowd of reporters.

“No,” he replied, “but I wanted them to know who the beauty on my arm is and who she belongs to. I don’t want anyone to get any ideas about whisking you away from me.” I shook my head as a woman in her late forties exited the church and beamed at Lincoln.

“Mr. West, I’m so happy to have you with us today. I never thought we’d get here, and I can’t wait to show you the completed project,” she said as she shook his hand first and then mine.

“Nova, this is Gail Johnson, the program director here. Mrs. Johnson, this is Nova Lane. She owns Icing on Top, a successful cupcake shop in Fort Veyelsa.”

“Pleasure to meet you,” I said.

“Pleasure is all mine. Welcome to Clair Farrow’s Youth Home.” I looked at Lincoln curiously.

“Clair Farrow was our foster mom,” he explained.

“It’s incredibly sweet that you named the place after her,” I replied.

“She deserves it,” he said, a mixture of pride and sorrow on his face. It was clear that he cared deeply for his former caretaker. We followed Gail inside, and she immediately launched into her tour of the facilities. I was impressed by how much they could fit into the building. The common areas were fully equipped, and everything was top-of-the-line. Two leisure rooms had over-stuffed couches, bean bag chairs, and large-screen TVs. There was a library that doubled as a tutoring room with brand-new computers lining one wall. Each dorm room fit four children and had a private bathroom attached.

“We can comfortably fit fifty full-time residents,” Gail said as she led us through the cozy-looking dining hall to the kitchen. “We have additional room for up to six more children for emergencies. Those tend to be temporary placements until the child’s situation can be determined and permanent housing found for them.”

I whistled as I stepped into the kitchen. It was nicer than mine and had several stations scattered around the large room for what I assumed must be group classes.

“As you can see, Triple Tech spared no expense,” Gail said proudly. “Besides tutoring and academic assistance, we will also provide essential living courses, such as cooking classes, budgeting, and the importance of maintaining good credit. We want our kids to be able to thrive once they leave us. They’re

already starting at a disadvantage, according to society. We also want to ensure they don't dig themselves into a hole."

"If you have room on the calendar, I'd love to come in and host baking classes," I offered. I glanced at Lincoln nervously, hoping I wasn't crossing a line, but I shouldn't have worried. He was giving me a brilliant smile.

"I love that idea," he said.

"So do I!" Gail replied. We immediately began discussing the details, and I felt my heart warming at the idea of being a part of this beautiful place.

# Chapter 10

## Lincoln

**I** listen as Nova and Gail talk excitedly about baking classes for the kids.

“You could even bring the kids to visit Icing to see how the shop runs. Or we could have a baking contest for them. Oh!” Nova exclaims, her eyes lighting up. “What if we have a Christmas festival in town for the kids? That would be so much fun. We haven’t had one in years, but I bet I could get local businesses to chip in and help.”

“That would be amazing,” Gail replied, equally excited. “I know the kids would enjoy something like that.”

I was amused by Nova’s excitement and sudden grand plans to do something nice for the kids. I was also turned on as hell by her passion. This was an important cause for me and my brothers. Seeing her excited about it and wanting to give back made me harder than a rock. Fuck it, I decided as I strode over to her with large purposeful steps. I’m the CEO, and I do what I want.

I swept her into my arms and sealed my lips over hers mid-sentence, swallowing whatever she was about to say. She melted into my arms with a breathy moan that had me deepening the kiss as I pulled her body tighter against mine. I ground my erection into her stomach, and when I felt her body move against mine in response, I growled into her mouth as my hands dropped to her ass to lift her so that she could wrap herself around me. I'd find the nearest wall and fuck her against it.

Gail clearing her throat behind us is what made me pause and remember where we were. I broke the kiss, pressing my forehead against hers as we caught our breath. I squeezed her ass, painfully aware that all that separated my hands from her bare skin was the fabric of her dress. I could barely resist pulling it up to sink my hands between her legs to feel the heat of her core on my fingers. I knew I would find her wet and ready for me, and I wouldn't be able to stop myself from dragging her into the first private space I could find and having my way with her if I did.

Instead, I lifted my hands to her hips and pulled her against me again before stepping back. I wasn't sure if Nova was flushed from embarrassment or being turned on. Likely, it was a bit of both. Regardless, she looked stunning. I didn't remember touching her hair, but some of it had fallen from that damn clip she had holding it up. I liked seeing her mussed and craved seeing her like this more often. The only reason I hadn't immediately stolen it was because I could tell she had put time into doing her hair up, and I knew with cameras being

here, she would want to look her best. Before I dropped her off later, that clip would be mine.

I wondered if I could sneak into her bathroom and steal all her hair ties and clips the next time I was over. Concentrating on that went a long way toward helping my hard-on go down. Even so, I couldn't resist teasing us both a little more. I leaned down so that my lips brushed her ear. "If we didn't have an audience and obligations, I'd be taking you up against the wall right now, Sugar." Her breath hitched, making me smile. "When I get you alone, you're mine."

Linking my fingers through hers, I turned to face Gail, who was watching us with amusement. I gave her a big Cheshire Cat grin, refusing to feel embarrassed or ashamed at our public display. I wanted Nova, and I didn't give a fuck who knew it.

"Why don't we get to the ribbon cutting?" I suggested.

"I'll let them know you're ready," Gail replied. "Nova, we can talk more during the week about the festival and scheduling classes. I look forward to working with you."

"So do I," Nova replied, regaining her composure. I couldn't have that. I wanted her as on edge as I was, so while we waited inside the doors for everything to get set up outside, I bent behind her as if I were tying my laces, even though I didn't have any. We were alone, so I trailed my hand up her inner leg and beneath her dress when I stood. She tensed when she felt my hand, and I kissed the back of her neck as my fingers brushed against her wet panties, teasing her lightly.

“Linc,” she hissed between her teeth as she tried to take a step away from me. I quickly wrapped my free arm around her to hold her in place.

“I have to touch you,” I whispered. “I have to make sure that you want me as much as I want you.” I slipped a finger beneath her panties and pushed it inside her. “Fuck, Sugar, I can’t wait to feel this tight pussy wrapped around my cock. I don’t think I’ll be able to wait until I get you home.” That wasn’t just dirty talk. I already knew I wouldn’t and was mentally running through the route home to find an excellent place to stop where we wouldn’t be bothered.

Nova moaned as I slowly fingered her, her hands gripping my arm like it was her anchor, nails biting into my skin. I relished the pain. She could mark my body and draw my blood any time she wanted as long as it meant I could feel her like this.

I had half a second’s warning to withdraw my finger and make sure her dress was in place before the doors opened and the cameras started clicking. That was probably closer than it should have been but fuck if this woman didn’t make me throw all caution to the wind. I stuck my hand in my pocket, wishing I could suck her juices off my finger instead as I smiled for the camera and pulled her forward with me. Nova moved toward the side, and I could see she still had a dazed look in her eyes.

I made my speech, barely able to tear my eyes from her. As soon as I cut the ribbon, I grabbed her hand and pulled her

toward my car. Unfortunately, it took longer than I would have liked because we kept getting stopped to be photographed and questioned by the reporters. I was ready to explode by the time we reached it, and as much as I wanted to press her against it and kiss her silly, I didn't think Nova would appreciate me doing so in front of the reporters.

As soon as I got behind the wheel, I tore away from the crowd, my engine roaring and gravel flying as we sped away. Neither of us spoke as I drove toward the place I had in mind. The sexual tension between us was stifling as I reached the turn-off I was looking for about halfway back to town. I pulled into the familiar lookout point I hadn't visited since I was a teenager and slammed the car in park. I was over the console before the car had stopped rocking.

My lips covered hers in a feral kiss that she matched. "I need to be inside you," I moaned as I trailed kisses down her neck.

"Yes, please," she pleaded.

My fingers fumbled to get my pants undone, and I sighed with relief when my heavy cock sprung from its confines to land against her thigh, leaving a smear of precum. I felt a deep satisfaction from seeing it on her. I reached for the lever to lean her seat back and lifted her knees toward her chest to open her up for me. As much as I wanted to take my time and worship her as she deserved, I couldn't wait any longer, and from the lust I saw in her eyes, neither could she.

I moved her panties to the side and guided myself inside her, my eyes on her face as I entered. Her eyes widened slightly,



and she moaned as I sunk my cock halfway. “Fuck, Nova. You feel so good, Sugar,” I gasped as I withdrew and pushed back in. I growled after several attempts to go deeper. My car was not meant for these activities, and I couldn’t get the right angle. I fumbled for the door handle as I pulled out of her. She gave me a confused look as I tumbled from the car.

“What’s happening?” she asked as I reached in and pulled her out with me. I pulled her to the front of my car and backed her onto the hood, kissing her hungrily.

“It’s too cramped in there for me to fuck you properly,” I mumbled as our tongues twisted together. Pushing her dress up to her waist and pulling her panties off, I pocketed them before getting rid of the offensive hair clip. Instead of tossing it into the bushes and littering, it went in my other pocket as my free hand combed through her hair, letting it spread across my hood.

I crouched down to swipe my tongue through her lips and across her clit, needing to taste her once before I lined myself back up at her core and plunged into her. Nova moaned loudly as my balls bounced off her ass. “That’s it, Nova, let me hear you. Let the world hear you.” I set a punishing pace, promising myself the next time would be slower.

“Fuck, Linc, don’t stop,” Nova begged as her head thrashed.

I loved seeing her spread out across the hood of my car, and even though she just asked me not to stop, I paused long enough to pull her dress off. I shoved it under her head and

resumed pumping into her. My hands traveled up her body, pushing her bra out of the way to cup her breasts.

“You are so fucking beautiful,” I moaned. She cried out as I plucked her nipples. Needing more, I moved her further up, following her onto the hood. The metal buckled beneath us, and I hoped we left the hood dented from our lovemaking—a permanent reminder of this moment. I bent down and swirled my tongue around one of her nipples before sucking as much of her breast into my mouth as possible.

Her walls fluttered around my cock, and I felt my balls tighten. We were both close, and as much as I wanted to draw it out, I also wanted to feel her come apart on my cock. “Are you going to be a good girl and come for me, Nova,” I asked, increasing my pace and force. The only thing keeping her from sliding across the smooth metal was her damp skin as we worked up a sweat.

“I’m so close,” Nova moaned. “Lincoln, please. Oh, God, please. Fuck me harder.”

How could I refuse when she asked so sweetly? I gripped her hips to hold her in place and shifted to get a better angle as I pounded into her even harder, eliciting a throaty moan each time our bodies slammed together. I felt my balls churn, and in a moment of clarity, I tried to hold my release off. “Are you on birth control?” I panted. Please let her be on birth control. I didn’t know if I had the willpower to pull out, and I liked the idea of breeding her and planting my baby inside her too much to test it.

“Yes,” she moaned. “I’m on birth control. Come in me. Fill me up with your hot cum.”

I grunted as her pussy tightened around me, and she screamed as she came, pulling me over the ledge with her. I collapsed on top of her, burying my face in her neck as my hips continued to pump as I filled her with my cum. She was fucking perfect, and I bit my tongue to keep myself from begging her to marry me. She wouldn’t take the proposal seriously, and I was shocked by how serious I was. The guys weren’t going to be happy about this new revelation.

Reluctantly, I pulled out of her and stood so I didn’t crush her more than I already had. As she regained her senses, she blushed and sat up quickly, trying to cover herself as she scrambled for her dress.

“Hey,” I said softly, stepping back between her legs and halting her movements before she could put the dress on. “You’re fucking stunning and have no reason to be embarrassed about being naked. If I had my way, I’d never let you wear a stitch of clothing. Then again, that would allow other men to see what’s mine, and I can’t have that.”

Nova snorted. “Right, like they wouldn’t be disgusted.”

I sighed and tilted her chin up to make her look at me. “You don’t understand how fucking sexy you are, Nova. I wish you could see yourself how we see you, how most people see you. I think you’d be surprised how many people desire you.” Her blush deepened, but she didn’t reply as I helped her dress.

Once her bra was back in place and the dress was down to her waist, she held her hand out expectantly.

“Panties?” I wasn’t planning on giving them back, but as my cum began to pool on the hood of my car, I decided that it was a necessary sacrifice to keep it inside her longer. I don’t know what it was about her, but she brought to life kinks that I didn’t even know I had. But only for her, I realized as I slid her panties up her legs and helped her stand to pull them on the rest of the way. The idea of filling another woman with my cum wasn’t nearly as appealing as it was with her. At all. She looked around once her dress was in place before holding her hand out again. “Hair clip?”

This time, I scowled at her. There was no chance in hell she was getting that back. “It’s mine now,” I growled, leading her to the passenger seat. The door was still flung open from when we exited the car, and I wondered if we accidentally killed the battery. I shrugged. If we had, that meant we would have time for another round before someone could come out and rescue us.

“You have a weird obsession with my hair,” Nova commented.

Before she could get in the car, I tangled my hand in her hair and pulled her against me. “I’m finding that’s not the only thing I’m developing an obsession for,” I growled. “It’s taking all of my restraint not to bend you over and fuck you again. Knowing that your little pussy is filled with my cum turns me on in the worst way.”

I felt her shudder in my arms. “Fuck,” she whined.

“You better get in the car, Nova, before I decide we live here now,” I warned. I released her hair and slapped her ass to get her moving. Once she was in, I shut the door and rounded my hood, grinning as I saw the dent and the fluids. On impulse, I snapped a quick picture of the evidence, with a thoroughly fucked Nova in the background, and sent it to my group chat with Ben and Grant. My phone was going off before I got into the car.

**Ben: You fucking bastard! You couldn't wait, could you?**

**Grant: Sneaky fuck. No wonder you were all too happy to go to the ribbon cutting alone.**

**Linc: I didn't plan for this to happen, but you know what they say, carpe diem, boys.**

**Ben: My fist is going to carpe diem you in the dick.**

**Linc: Kinky, but only if Nova joins us.**

**Grant: Just remember that we aren't keeping her.**

I rolled my eyes. Grant couldn't resist ruining a good moment. While I know that's what we agreed to, in my heart of hearts, I knew that letting Nova go was no longer an option for me.

**Linc: We'll see.**

I chuckled as I pocketed my phone and tried not to be disappointed when my engine started.

“What's so funny?” Nova asked with a playful smile.

“My brothers are jealous,” I said smugly.

“You told them?” she asked in shock.

“Of course. We don't have secrets,” I replied with a shrug.

“And they're... ok with it?” she asked hesitantly.

I looked over at her, grabbed her hand, and lifted it to my lips. “They're more than ok with it, Sugar. Don't forget, we grew up together and are really good at sharing.” I winked at her and returned my attention to the road, leaving that thought to marinate in her mind.

# Chapter 11

## Nova

### 31 Days Until New Year's Eve

I came into work early to get a jump start on the day to focus more on the festival I wanted to plan. After finishing all the baking work, I retired to my office. Instead of getting to work, I've daydreamed about Lincoln and his hands on my body. Lincoln inside me. I shifted in my seat as I felt myself get wet. Sex had never been that good for me before. Lincoln made sex with Peter downright laughable. And I had a feeling his brothers would be just as talented. I spent half the night thinking over Linc's comment on sharing and ultimately decided that he was the one who told them, so if they weren't concerned about how this would work out, I wouldn't be either. Or at least I would try not to be.

Shaking myself from my thoughts, I checked the time and called the Mayor. His secretary put me through, and he greeted me warmly when he answered.

“Nova! How are you this morning? I wasn’t expecting a call from you, was I?” I smiled at his question. He was intelligent and good at business but a little scatterbrained sometimes.

“No, you weren’t. I had an idea that I wanted to pass by you,” I replied. I launched into explaining the orphanage and my idea to host a Christmas festival.

“Personally, I love the idea,” he replied when I had finished, “but we stopped having the annual festival because attendance remained low, and it was costing the town too much to continue.”

“What if I get the local businesses to sponsor it?”

“If you can get businesses to sponsor the cost, and it doesn’t cost the town money, I’ll approve any permits you need,” he promised.

“Thank you, Mr. Mayor. That’s all I needed to hear,” I said excitedly.

“Good luck, Nova. If there is anything I can do to help, please let me know. I hope you can pull this off,”

I hung up with him and immediately called the newspaper to place an ad for local businesses to meet at Icing’s next week. It would be a mad dash to get it all done in time, but it would be worth it. I made a list of what I wanted to have at the festival if we could afford it. We needed a massive tree for a tree-lighting ceremony—cookie decorating, maybe even a contest. We would need a Santa to attend, and perhaps we could even put up an ice skating rink.



I spent the rest of the morning researching the different things I wanted to do and sourcing what we would need to pull it off so that I had a detailed proposal for the rest of the businesses at the meeting next week. People are always more inclined to contribute when they know where their money will go. I would need to sit down with my finances later and determine how much I could contribute. I was pretty sure that Triple Tech would be willing to put up what we couldn't, but I didn't want this just to be a Triple Tech funded project. It was time our community remembered its roots.

I was so lost in what I was doing that I was bleary-eyed and somewhat confused when Stef knocked on my door. "Peter is here to see you and doesn't look happy."

"What on earth could he want?" I asked. I took a sip of my cold coffee and sighed. "Send him back."

She disappeared, and Peter came storming into my office thirty seconds later with a piece of paper in his hand. "Care to explain what the fuck this is about?" he yelled, throwing the paper at me. I caught it and looked at it. It was a printout of an article about the ribbon cutting yesterday and a large picture of Lincoln and me together. The caption read, "Triple Tech CEO and The Icing on Top owner attend ribbon cutting ceremony together to open a new orphanage."

"It's a press release," I replied, holding the paper out for him to take back.

He slapped it out of my hand. "I know what the fuck it is," he yelled. "It's on Triple Tech's home page. I mean, why the

fuck were you there with my boss? Is this your way of getting back at me for leaving you?"

"Lower your fucking voice," I growled. "And not that it is any of your business what I do, but we're dating."

Peter's eyes bugged out of his head before he doubled over in laughter. "Right," he said once he had composed himself enough to speak, "you're dating. God, you're fucking delusional. Why the fuck would one of the richest men in town want to date a worthless cow like you when he could have anyone he wanted? You aren't even good enough for me."

"Do not call her a cow, you piece of shit!" Stef yelled, stomping around the corner where she had clearly been standing as she listened to our conversation. "You're the one who isn't good enough for her!"

"Stef!" I reprimanded. "Back out front, this doesn't concern you."

"I'm sorry, Nova, but he shouldn't talk to you like that," she replied, glaring daggers at Peter as she retreated.

"It's time for you to leave, Peter," I said firmly.

"Fine. But whatever the fuck is going on here, end it. You better not fuck up my career, or you'll be fucking sorry!" I watched him storm out of the kitchen, shut my office door, and sank into my chair.

I took several deep breaths as I tried to keep the tears at bay. I didn't want him to be right, but he voiced every insecurity I had already been thinking. What the fuck were any one of

them doing with me when there were far skinnier and far sexier women they could have at the snap of their fingers? It didn't make sense. Hating how Peter's words and my thoughts tainted my time with Lincoln yesterday, I decided to channel all of my feelings into Espresso Cupcakes.

I didn't make them often since they took much longer than other cupcakes. I loved their challenge with all the steps and precise measurements needed to make them correctly. It forces my chaotic brain to settle down. Usually, by the time I've finished making them, I've calmed down enough to make more rational decisions. Plus, they're really pretty and absolutely divine.

# Chapter 12

## Benjamin

I pulled up to the curb outside of Icing. I left work early, hoping to convince Nova to play hooky with me and work out to test the fitness tracker I had given her. I couldn't stop thinking of her in stretchy workout clothes. I also couldn't stop thinking about her out of them. Maybe bent over the weight bench while I plowed into her from behind. I shook myself from my thoughts as I followed one of her employees into the shop. I had only seen him around a couple of times, and I couldn't remember his name.

Stef was behind the counter when we entered. I could remember her name because she never took her eyes off us whenever we were here. I almost ran into the kid as he sniffed the air and stopped dead in his tracks.

"Uh, oh," he said. I sniffed the air as well and bit back a moan. It smelled like the best cup of coffee man has ever made here.

"Yep!" Stef said angrily.

“What upset her this time?” the teenager asked as he grabbed a cupcake behind the counter. He took a large bite and moaned.

“Who else? Peter. He saw the picture of her from yesterday and came in to scream at her,” Stef replied.

I approached the counter and noted the kid’s name tag said Jared. I was pretty sure they were talking about Nova, and now I needed to know who the fuck came in and yelled at her. Neither of them paid me any attention as Jared took another bite of his cupcake.

“I hate it when she gets like this, but God is the result delicious,” Jared mumbled.

“What’s the deal with the cupcakes?” I asked.

“When Nova gets upset, and her mind is all over the place, she makes Espresso Cupcakes,” Jared explained.

“What are you doing?” Stef hissed, glaring at me. “He’s one of the reasons she got yelled at.”

“I thought it was one of the other guys in the picture with her?” Jared asked, confused.

“It was, but he’s sniffing around her too. And let me tell you something,” she growled, stabbing her finger toward me. “If you really are playing games with her, I will make sure you pay! She is not a fucking cow!”

“Who the fuck said she was?” I asked, my anger rising.

“Her scum bag ex did after he saw the picture of her and Lincoln on your website. He came here accusing her of trying to ruin his career and told her that Lincoln wouldn’t date a cow like her!”

I tried to reel in my anger so that I didn’t take it out on Stef, even though she was taking hers out on me. She may be in high school, but I appreciated that she had Nova’s back regardless. “So he is a Triple Tech employee? What’s his name, and where is Nova?” I would find out everything there was to know about this cocksucker. If he thought his career was in jeopardy before, it certainly was now.

“His name is Peter Altman, and she isn’t here. I assume she went home,” Stef replied. I turn to leave without another word. I needed to find Nova and repair the damage this asswipe did.

“If she isn’t home, check the park bridge,” Jared called after me. “She likes to go there to think.” I heard a smack. “Ouch! What the fuck was that for, Stef?”

“Maybe she doesn’t want to be found. Did you ever think of that?” Stef replied with a huff.

As angry as I was, I couldn’t help but smile at her steadfast loyalty to our girl. I liked that kid. I jumped in my car and headed to Nova’s to check for her there first. On the way, I called Joel to pull Peter’s employee file. Nova’s car wasn’t in her driveway, so I went to the park next. I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw her car in the lot. I parked and hurried to the bridge. I slowed my approach once I saw her leaning on the railing, watching the creek babble with a to-go cup of coffee in

her hand. I pause to watch her, stunned once again by her beauty. She looked like someone kicked her puppy.

She turned to look at me as my feet hit the wooden boards of the bridge. “What are you doing here?”

“I stopped by your shop, and your employees told me where to find you. They also told me about the espresso cupcakes and your ex stopping by for a visit,” I replied as I leaned against the railing facing her.

“My employees need to learn to keep their traps shut,” she huffed.

“They care about you and were worried. Believe me, Stef gave me an ass chewing.”

“Still. They need to learn to mind their businesses instead of mine.”

“You’re not a cow!” I blurted. Her eyes widened, and she looked taken aback by my bluntness. Distrust and confusion swirled within her baby blues. “Fuck, Doll. The four of us are the only ones whose opinions matter in this relationship. And of the four of us, you’re the only one who has a problem with your weight. If you’re unhappy about how you look, I am more than willing to exercise with you, but only if it’s something you want to do to feel better about yourself. Don’t do it for anyone but you because we like you just the way you are, and fuck what that asshole has to say about it.”

Doubt still lingered in her eyes, and I was at a loss of how else to convince her that we meant what we said and weren’t

fucking with her. All we could do was show her repeatedly that we desired her. I just hoped she would still let us.



# Chapter 13

## Nova

**B**en's words seem genuine. Can I believe him? Linc certainly didn't have an issue touching me yesterday. You can't fake how hot we were for each other, can you?

"I... I think I would like that," I replied. "It would be nice to feel good about myself again. Because, apart from how you guys have made me feel over the last week, I haven't for a long time," I admitted. "I don't know when Peter's words started breaking me down, but one day, I realized that I could barely stand to look at myself in the mirror."

Ben's hands moved toward me, then dropped as if he changed his mind before he cursed softly and wrapped his arms around me to pull me tight against him. I let myself relax into his embrace and take comfort from it. "I'm sorry he treated you so poorly and made you feel like this. I'm going to do everything in my power to help you see yourself how we see you," he whispered into my hair. Tears sprung to my eyes, and I blinked them away, stubbornly refusing to let them fall. No more self-pity. As if he sensed my struggle, his arms

tightened more. “The plus side to this is working out together will help me test the tracker. That was why I had initially stopped by, to begin with. I wanted to see if you were up for some testing. Plus, I wanted to see you in yoga pants.”

I giggled at his comment, and he chuckled with me.

“That’s better. I hate seeing you sad,” he said, kissing my cheek and stepping back to look at me. He held my hand and tugged it to get me to follow him back to the parking lot. “So, if you’d like to start today, we have a home gym in our basement. You could come over, and we could work out and then have dinner with us. I’ll cook!”

“You can cook?” The surprise in my voice was evident. I just didn’t peg any of them as the domestic type.

“Of course I can cook,” he teased. “We weren’t always rich. If you want to eat, you must know how to cook.”

“Well, that sounds lovely. I’ll run home and change and meet you there?”

“Can’t wait,” Ben replied, kissing me softly before opening my door.

I drove home feeling better than I had going out to the park. It was time to stop letting Peter dictate my self-worth. I felt empowered and chose workout clothes that were a little tighter than I should probably be wearing, but I refused to let myself change. I grabbed leggings and an oversized sweater to change into after the workout and followed my GPS to their house.

The gate was open when I arrived, which was good because Ben hadn't given me a code. They lived in a mansion, which I had known, but I'd never been beyond the gate before. A large manicured lawn surrounded the large drive that led to the house. I drove around the angel fountain and parked near the steps leading to the door.

I climbed the steps, wondering why the hell I was so nervous, and rang the doorbell. Seconds later, Ben swung the door open, and his eyes widened when he saw me. I had a moment of uncomfortableness before he dragged me inside and pressed me against the door.

“Fucking hell, I wasn't ready for you to come dressed like this, Doll. What do you say we skip the traditional workout for a more natural form of cardio?” His hands trailed from my hips over my ass and then up my torso to rest on my rib cage, grazing the bottom of my breasts.

“I think we better focus on the purpose of my visit and maybe revisit your suggestion later,” I replied, determined to see this through.

“Ok. Either way, I get to make you sweat. And anticipation is half the fun anyway,” he replied. I tried not to gawk at their house as he led me through it to the basement steps. These weren't your usual creepy, dark, rickety basement steps either. The stairwell was wider, like you might find in an office, and bright white. I followed him down the steps and through a door halfway down the hall. My jaw dropped as I took in the room. When someone says “home gym,” you generally

envision a weight bench, treadmill, and other equipment like an elliptical. This was not that gym.

Their home gym was a state-of-the-art masterpiece. I couldn't find better equipment at an actual gym within fifty miles at least. It had every piece of exercise equipment you could think of, and at least two of each. All three men could easily work out down here without stepping on each other's toes. I spotted a sauna in the back and a massive shower with a glass door next to it. The walls were floor-to-ceiling mirrors with TVs mounted around the room.

"Holy shit," I said as I sat my bag against the wall.

"Do you like it?" Ben asked excitedly. "I spent a lot of time designing this space to ensure it had everything we would need."

"And then some," I commented. "It looks great."

"Thanks," he said, clapping his hands together. "Ok, I thought we'd start easy today. I want to run you through each machine to see if the tracker can differentiate the different exercises on its own. Why don't we start with the treadmill?"

I got on the treadmill, and he got behind me, pushing close behind me to hit a few buttons. Once the machine started running, he hopped off. He looked at his watch and noted the time on his tablet. He had set the machine briskly, and I tried to focus on not tripping and busting my ass. It wasn't easy because my eyes drifted to the mirror and Ben's reflection as he stood behind me, off to the side, and stared at my ass the entire time.

His chest was bare, and the hard lines of his muscles made him look like Michelangelo himself had sculpted him. His gray sweatpants did very little to hide his growing erection, and I stumbled slightly, catching myself on the railings, when he palmed it. His eyes jumped to mine in the mirror, and he grinned shamelessly at me for catching him.

The rest of the workout went like this. He would have me move to another machine. Press against me teasingly as he got the machine running, then stood back and watched me, sometimes while casually fondling himself. It was fucking hot. I had never felt more desired. If he could look at me like that when I looked like an overstuffed sausage and was a sweating, heaving mess, maybe they were telling the truth.

“Ok, last exercise, and then you can shower while I start dinner,” Ben announced as he guided me to the weight bench. I laid on it, and he got into position to spot me, and I found myself looking up at his raging hard-on. He smirked down at me but didn’t comment as I reached up to grasp the bar. He adjusted my grip and then guided me through the first rep. I was only half listening to him, unable to tear my eyes from the view.

When I finished the first rep, I shook out my hands. When I raised them again, instead of gripping the bar, I went for his cock. It was for me, after all, right? I pulled the waistband of his sweatpants down to release his heavy cock as my other hand wrapped around it. My fingers could almost touch as I stroked him slowly. I squeezed a drop of pre-cum out and pulled the head down to lick it off.

“Nova,” Ben groaned, slumping forward on the bar above me to give me a better angle.

I swirled my tongue around the tip and traced the vein on the underside of his dick before sucking it into my mouth. Head was the one thing Peter always had time for if I was willing, so my skills were more than proficient. Unfortunately, once he came, that was the end of our liaison. I had a feeling that wouldn't be the case with Ben.

He flipped the barbell from its stand to the side out of the way as he leaned over me, thrusting himself deeper into my mouth as he ran a hand down the center of my body and into my pants. I moaned as his fingers dipped into my wetness and then circled my clit slowly.

“Your mouth feels so fucking good, Nova,” he praised. He continued slowly pushing into my mouth, rubbing my clit in time with his strokes. I felt like I would combust if he didn't go faster when he suddenly moved away entirely.

A small yelp escaped me when he yanked me to my feet and kissed me hard. While we kissed, his hands were busy pushing my pants down. “I need to taste you, too,” he said, breaking the kiss and shoving his sweats off before yanking my tank top over my head. I wanted faster, and I got it. Before I knew it, he was stretched out on the bench and had pulled me over him so that I was straddling his head. I felt a little uneasy in this position. I had no way of supporting my weight, so I didn't smother him. It was either stand over him or kill him with my pussy.

“Maybe we should move this to the floor,” I hedged.

“Not a fucking chance,” he growled. He tapped my legs to get my knees to buckle and moaned into my pussy when it landed on his face. Reflexively, I rotated my hips at the vibration as his tongue slid through my arousal. His hands moved to the back of my thighs and effortlessly lifted me off of him enough to say, “Swallow my fucking cock, baby,” before diving back in and making me moan. It wasn’t until he smacked my ass that I guided his dick back into my mouth.

I didn’t have anything except him to brace myself on, which made me feel extra vulnerable and self-conscious, but his talented mouth didn’t let me stay in that headspace for long, and I planted my hands on his hips and began bobbing on his cock. My movements rocked my body against his, adding extra friction as I gave myself over to the highs we were chasing as I doggedly worked to take all of him into my mouth.

He groaned as the head slipped into my throat, sending delicious tingles across my body. This was the second time in as many days that I was being ravished, and the fact that it was by two different men didn’t bother me much. Plenty of women would kill to be in my position, and that thought alone spurred me on as my confidence blossomed. They picked me for whatever reason, and maybe it was time to stop questioning that so much.

Ben slipped two fingers into me and massaged the front wall of my pussy, making me whimper and moan around his cock.

He groaned in response and repositioned me. “I’m almost there, Nova. Come for me, baby.” I doubled down on my efforts as his lips sealed around my clit and sucked it into his mouth. Between his fingers, mouth, and the heady feeling of empowerment, my orgasm hit me hard as I screamed around his cock, and my hips bucked as I frantically rode his face.

I cupped his balls in my hand and felt them tighten as he spurted ropes of cum down my throat. I had to swallow rapidly to keep up without choking or spilling a drop. We licked each other lazily to clean up any messes as we recovered.

When he was done, Ben lifted me enough to shimmy from beneath me and sit me on the bench. He looked up at me from between my spread legs and grinned. “That was amazing! Let’s end all workout sessions like that.”

I giggled as he sat up and spun around to face me. He pulled my legs over his and pulled me into his lap to kiss me. I wasn’t used to being manhandled so easily, so it caught me off guard. Even at my smallest, Peter just wasn’t the manhandling type. He rarely let me sit in his lap even. All of this was completely new and sometimes unsettling.

Sensing that I might need some space, Ben ended the kiss with a kiss on my shoulder and then set me back down. “I should let you shower. We should shower together to conserve water, but I think I’ll give you a moment to yourself this time.”

He walked over to get the shower running while I grabbed my bag from where I had left it against the wall.



I approached the shower apprehensively. “Is it possible to use a shower with more privacy?” I asked. Ben grinned again and then hit a button inside the shower. Instantly, the shower door turned opaque. “You thought of everything,” I laughed.

“You think I want to see Grant and Lincoln showering? Hell no,” he said with horror, making me laugh harder.

“Then why get a glass door to begin with?” I asked.

He wrapped his arms around me and kissed my neck. “Because I knew one day I’d get someone in here that I wouldn’t mind watching. And one day, you aren’t going to want to press that button, and that’s going to be hot as fuck.” He released me and went to a cabinet to pull out a towel and hang it on the hook outside the shower. “Come on up when you’re ready.” With a final tender kiss, he slapped my ass, making me yelp, and left the gym with a chuckle.

I indulged in a more extended shower than I usually took. I wasn’t trying to avoid him. It was just that the shower was heavenly, and I couldn’t make myself get out. Once dry and dressed, I wandered back upstairs, towel-drying my hair. Lincoln and Grant sat at the oversized marble island while Ben stood at the stove. As soon as Lincoln saw me, he rushed over and swept me into his arms for a long, slow kiss, leaving my body on fire and ready for another round. I had to shake my head a couple of times to clear it.

“Hey, Sugar. Have a good workout?” Lincoln teased knowingly. “You all hopped up on endorphins now?”

“It keeps going like this, and I might need rehab,” I joked. “Where should I put my towel?” Linc took it from my hands and disappeared. I looked at Grant shyly. We interacted less, so I wasn’t as comfortable with him as with the other two. He reached for me as I approached, tugging me between his legs, and kissed my cheek. He then pulled the seat Linc had vacated and lifted me onto it.

“How are you today, Nova?” He asked politely. He wasn’t displeased that I was there, just more reserved than the others. I felt he was trying to calculate how much of a wrench I would be in their lives.

“I’m good. I made a lot of calls this morning about the Christmas Festival.” He looked confused, so I filled him in on what I was trying to do after visiting the orphanage the day before. When Lincoln returned, he pulled the empty stool on my other side closer to me and sat.

“Well, Triple Tech is more than willing to help with anything you need to pull this off. Why don’t you stop by sometime this week to discuss it more? I love the idea,” Grant replied. “And then, whether physical or financial, just call Joel; he’ll get you what you need. Speaking of,” Grant pulled an envelope out of his briefcase and slid it toward Ben. “Here’s the file you asked Joel to pull. Why do we care about a Peter Altman?”

My eyes widened, and Ben looked at me sheepishly. “That’s my ex. Why are you looking into him? How did you even know who he was?”

“Stef told me who he was this morning. I just wanted to know more about the idiot that let you go,” Ben replied.

“Please don’t do anything to him,” I plead. “He loves working for you and was so happy when you sent him on business trips. I don’t want to be the reason he has problems at work.” The three men looked at each other and then at me with confusion.

“We’ve never sent him or any other employee on a business trip, Sugar,” Lincoln said.

His words and their meaning slowly sank in. At best, Peter lied to me to get away from me. At worst, he was cheating on me.

“Oh.”

# Chapter 14

## Grant

I watched Nova's face as she put the pieces together. Hurt bloomed across her face and conveyed in one tiny word.

“Oh.”

At that moment, I would have happily strangled her ex with my bare hands for causing her pain.

“We should fire his fucking ass,” Ben growled. I could tell she had planted herself under his skin as well. I would be suspicious of her intentions if it weren't glaringly obvious how oblivious she was about the depth of my brothers' feelings for her.

“N-no, please, not because of me,” Nova said. “I don't want that on my conscience.”

I hated the wounded look on her face. I absolutely hated it. I had planned on keeping it platonic between us since my brothers were already a lost cause. I understood why that was the case. I couldn't lie and say I wasn't also intrigued and surprised by my reaction to her pain. I knew I was starting to

sound like a broken record, reminding them that we had a contract and that our time with her was temporary. One of us needed to keep our head on straight.

“She’s right. We can’t just fire him without reason,” I said.

“Don’t worry, Sugar,” Lincoln assured her, “we’ll make sure he gets what he deserves.”

I rolled my eyes and glared at him until he met my eyes over Nova’s head. As much as I wanted to avenge her honor, it wasn’t our business and definitely wasn’t good business practice.

Ben changed the subject to the festival before I could get into it with Lincoln. I gave him a look to say that this wasn’t over. We will be discussing it further. After dinner, we watched another Christmas movie. This time, Nova chose “It’s a Wonderful Life,” and I tried not to draw similarities between my current mood and the old guy in the wheelchair. When the movie ended, Lincoln and Ben walked her to her car while I went back into the kitchen and started flipping through Peter’s file.

“You two need to fucking chill,” I said when they returned. “She isn’t ours to keep or protect.”

“Uh huh,” Linc replied. “If you feel that way, why are you reading that douchebag’s file?”

“I was curious. I wanted to know what kind of man throws away a girl like Nova.”

“He went to see her this morning after he saw the picture of her and Linc,” Ben said. “Caused a scene and called her a cow.”

My fists clenched at that information. “I’m sure we can find something to give us grounds for termination,” I growled.

“That’s what I thought,” Linc said. “You aren’t immune to her charms either. You just hide it better.”



## **29 Days Until New Year’s Eve**

I tried to concentrate on my work, but my mind constantly wandered to Nova. She didn’t contact any of us yesterday, and I was annoyed that I didn’t like it. I was brainstorming an excuse to see her when Joel buzzed.

“Sir, Nova Lane is here to see you.”

My heart leaped in my chest and began to race. “Send her in,” I replied calmly. I sat back in my chair to wait for her arrival and then scrambled to move to one of the seats facing my desk. Finally, I stood to greet her at the door. Fuck, why was I so fucking nervous? I was acting like a teenager about to get his dick touched for the first time. Where the hell did that thought come from? She isn’t here to touch my dick. Jesus, I was a mess.

I opened the door as Nova lifted her hand to knock, startling her. She opened her mouth to speak, but I cut her off. For reasons I wasn’t willing to analyze, I didn’t want my brothers to hear her and come running.

“Hi, won’t you come in!” Tone it the fuck down, Grant, I chastised myself. She was positively glowing as she brushed past me and entered my office. I closed the door behind her, silently locking it, as I turned to watch her. Her skirt bounced teasingly with each step she took, and I had to bite back a groan as I kept getting flashes of her creamy upper thighs. If the skirt was a little shorter, I might have been able to see more. “I was beginning to get worried when we didn’t hear from you yesterday,” I said, clearing my throat and trying to get my mind off what was under her skirt. Why the hell did I tell her that?

Her eyebrow raised, and her lips turned up into a teasing smile. “I didn’t realize I was supposed to check in daily.”

“You don’t,” I hurried to say.

She still looked amused but was gracious enough to change the subject. “I came by to let you know that I met with the other business owners who are on board with the Christmas Festival. I’m still hashing out all the financial details, but I thought you would like to know that.”

“That’s great news! As I told you, we’ll be happy to help however you need,” I replied. I made a mental note to have Joel arrange transportation for the orphans.

“And I appreciate it. While all of the businesses are dedicated to seeing this come to fruition, their funds are limited. Triple Tech may have to plug a lot of holes to get this done, so I wanted to ask if you wanted to have one of the events or attractions officially sponsored by Triple Tech?”

My eyes were on her mouth, and my mind was on plugging holes, so I took a minute to respond. “What did you have in mind?”

“Well, there’s Santa’s Village, the ice skating rink, the Christmas tree,” she replied, ticking each option off with her fingers.

“The Christmas tree,” I said. “Triple Tech would love to sponsor the tree and the lighting ceremony. If you’d let me, I’d like to handle the logistics with the lighting and such if you can handle sourcing the tree. I know a guy who works with lighting whose company could use the boost a job like this could provide.”

“Absolutely! It’s important to support small businesses when you can,” Nova replied.



My hands were gripping the arms of my chair to keep them off of her, and part of me was amused by how oblivious she was to my struggle. It wasn't until she smiled at me with pride in her eyes because I wanted to give a buddy a job that I broke.

I stood and yanked her to her feet. My hands instantly tangled in her locks as I held her head in place. "This is a mistake, but I need to taste you. My brother's got to, so it's only fair," I said desperately. It wasn't until I held her in my arms and her tongue slid against mine that I realized I'd fucked up.

# Chapter 15

## Nova

Grant kissed me breathless as he turned us, lifted me onto his desk, and filled the space between my legs. He pushed his hardness against my core, and I moaned into his mouth. My moan spurred him on as he shoved everything behind me off his desk and lowered me to it. I heard the dragging sounds of the chair as he moved it between my legs and sat. Pulling me to the edge, he didn't bother trying to tease me as he pushed my panties to the side and plunged his tongue between my folds. His intensity rocketed me higher, and I covered my mouth with my hand to muffle my moans. I didn't want the entire office to hear me come, but he stood just as I was about to. He fisted my shirt and pulled me up to crush his lips to mine in a passionate kiss.

I slid my hands down his chest and into his pants to stroke his rock-hard cock. Grant groaned into my mouth as his hands released me and began to fumble with his pants. He broke our kiss with a sound of frustration as he looked down to get his pants undone. He finally loosened them enough to shove them

off his hips and free his erection. He stepped closer, and I guided the tip to my center, teasing us both as I moved the head through my arousal. Just as I got him lined up and he grasped my hips tightly to keep me in place as he plunged into me, there was a knock on the door.

We freeze and look at each other. I can see in his eyes that he doesn't intend to stop, and I don't want him to. "It's locked," he whispers hoarsely. He presses into me slowly, but the continued knocking, followed by the jiggling of the handle, halts his progress.

"Grant? Why is the door locked?" Ben asks from the other side.

"Joel said Nova was here," Linc chimed in, "What are you doing in there?"

We didn't answer, but I could tell that our fun time was abruptly ending. Ben confirmed as much when he said, "Open the door, or we are letting ourselves in."

Grant slumps against me and groans into my neck, making me giggle at his disappointment. "Fucking cock-blocking assholes," he growled. He stepped back and pulled his pants back up as I hopped off his desk and adjusted my clothes. "Hold the fuck on," he shouted toward the door as he scooped up all the papers he had shoved off the desk from the floor. I retook my seat, and with a final look around, he went and unlocked the door. He returned to his seat behind the desk as Linc and Ben followed him in.

They both looked at me knowingly as Ben closed and locked the door.

“Hey, Sugar,” Linc purred. “Fancy meeting you here.” He sauntered over and hauled me to my feet. Every inch of my body was pressed against his as he captured my mouth in a teasing kiss. Ben pressed against my back, sandwiching me between them as he brushed the hair off my shoulder and started nibbling on my neck.

“Did you guys eat?” Ben asked.

“Oh, I ate,” Grant said smugly.

I broke the kiss as I turned to look at Grant with surprise at his comment and blushed when I met his smoldering gaze. “Naughty girl,” Linc murmured. “There isn’t a limit to how much I would pay to see you spread across this desk with Grant between those sexy thighs.” Their hands tease my body as they roam. When Ben lifted the front of my skirt, bunching the fabric in one of his hands on my belly, Linc fell to his knees. “We’re hungry too,” he says seductively as his nose rubs against my clit.

Grant pulled his cock back out and stroked it as Ben grinds his against my ass. Linc flashes me a wicked smile as his finger dips into my panties and moves them aside. Just as his tongue swirls around my clit there is another knock at the door.

“Go the fuck away!” Grant shouts.

“Believe me,” Joel says from the other side, “the last thing I want to do is interrupt, but you all have a meeting in fifteen minutes that you can’t miss.” The men all groan together as Linc reluctantly moves my panties back into position, and Ben lets my skirt drop.

“As much as we hate to stop, he’s right,” Ben sighed. “We can’t miss that meeting.”

I nod and try to get my hormones in check. “Business comes first,” I reply.

Ben turns me to face him. “We’ll see you tonight and make it up to you,” he promises. He kisses me deeply, which does nothing to help cool the need inside my body. Then Linc kisses me, and finally, Grant. As I open the office door to leave, I’m almost shaky with need. I look back at them again and can’t help but smile with relief to see that they feel the same way I do. I left their office and went straight home. I probably should have returned to work but was entirely too turned on to function.

I stripped off my clothes and climbed onto my bed when I got home. I dug into my nightstand drawer and pulled out my trusty vibe. I pulled up Literotica on my phone and found a story about office sex. Just as I am about to orgasm, a text message pops up on my screen.

**Ben: What are you doing?**

I was so surprised to see the text message that I lost my grip on my phone and dropped it on my face. How the hell does he know? And why the hell can't I manage one fucking orgasm without interruption?

**Nova: Nothing.**

**Ben: Weird. The tracker is going crazy, but it can't identify the workout.**

I feel my face heat and look at the snitching little tracker on my wrist with mortification. Oh God, this is embarrassing.

**Nova: You're monitoring me?!**

**Ben: Not like that. I was looking up stats on testing for the meeting and noticed the problem. Why won't you tell me what you are doing?**

**Nova: It's personal.**

**Ben: Personal? Are you masturbating?! Send me a picture!**

Send him a picture? I couldn't send him a picture, could I? Why couldn't I? I took a deep breath for courage and swiped

to my camera. It took several tries, but I finally took one decent enough to send. Butterflies were doing acrobats in my stomach as the seconds ticked by. What if he didn't like it? Finally, my phone dinged, and I raised it to read his reply.

**Ben: Fuck, baby. Look at you. Did we leave you like that? Poor baby. Touch yourself for me, Nova. Pretend it's me touching you. Fuck, I wish it was.**

I contemplated my response as I abandoned my vibe for my fingers and started circling my clit.

**Nova: So do I.**

I closed my eyes and concentrated on my pleasure while waiting for him to respond. Knowing he was meeting with his brothers and God knows who else while sending me dirty texts was hotter than I thought. I looked at the full-length mirror in the corner of the room as a wicked idea came to me. Could I be that bold?

I scrambled off the bed, sat in front of the mirror with my back against my bed, and spread my legs wide. I flipped to video with my phone and tried not to feel silly as I began to record myself.

**Ben: Are you doing it? Are you touching yourself?**

I stopped recording and sent him the short clip. I felt frozen as I waited for his response, unable to continue until I knew what he thought. Was it a turn-on for him? If I had sent Peter something like that, he would have gotten angry and lost his shit for sending him filth. But this wasn't Peter. My phone dinged, and I took a fortifying breath before I read his reply.

**Ben: OH FUCK NOVA. My dirty little girl. That is so sexy! Send me more. I want to see you come for me. Slide two fingers inside that sweet little pussy and fuck yourself.**

**Nova: Yes, sir.**

His response was everything I needed at that moment, and I quickly switched back to video and moaned as I did what he ordered. I didn't need to finish my story or read any more of his texts. Knowing he was waiting for my next video kept me going. The heel of my hand rubbed against my clit as I continued to pump my fingers in and out. My phone dinged again, and his final order sent me over the edge.

**Ben: Come. NOW!**



I moaned through my orgasm, calling out his name, uncaring if others heard me when he played the video. Feeling like someone else, I looked at the camera in the mirror, brought my fingers to my mouth to suck my juices off them, and moaned again like the wanton hussy I was. I then blew a kiss and ended the video. I sent the video before I could second-guess myself.

I tossed my phone on the bed, got up, and went to the bathroom to clean myself up and wash my hands. I heard it ding again but took my time getting back to my phone. Even though I knew it was what he wanted, I still had Peter's voice in my head telling me that nobody would ever want to see that. I really hated that fucking voice.

When I returned, I grabbed my phone and snuggled under my blankets. I allowed myself to open Ben's text message only when I settled.

**Ben: Good girl. That was so hot! I had my AirPods in, and fuck, I love to hear my name on your lips. I'm so hard right now, baby. When we get out of here, we'll pick up where we left off in the office today. Give you more than just your fingers to come on.**

**Nova: I'm going to hold you to that.**

**Ben: Trust me, there's nowhere else I'd rather be.**

**Nova: I'll make dinner.**

**Ben: Sounds perfect. See you later, baby.**

I couldn't have stopped smiling if someone paid me to as I drifted off to sleep.



Several hours later, I blinked my eyes sleepily as I looked around my room, trying to calibrate. I didn't usually take naps, so my brain was confused. As it woke up, another smile spread across my face. I hadn't felt this happy in a really long time. I jumped out of bed excitedly to start dinner. I had a few hours until they arrived and wanted to ensure everything was perfect.

I didn't know exactly what was on the agenda for the night, but by all indications, it was about to be a plug-the-holes type of situation. While this thought terrified me, the new version of myself I was trying to embrace almost shook with excitement.

I decided meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and green beans were a good enough dinner, so I cut the onions and mixed the ingredients into the meat. I topped my loaf off with a ketchup and brown sugar glaze and popped it in the oven. I would prepare the rest of the food after preparing myself.

I showered, shaved, and polished every inch of my skin and then took the time to blow out my hair until it fell in long, silky tresses down my back. I knew Linc had a thing for my hair and preferred to see it down. I dressed in a lacy lingerie set and squeezed myself into a little black dress that might have been a size or two too small, but the material was stretchy enough that it worked. I didn't think the guys would mind all that much either way.

I finished the potatoes and green beans by the time the meatloaf was done and set the table. I contemplated making dessert and decided they could have me for dessert instead. With visions of being spread across the table and devoured, I sat at the table and waited for them to arrive.

And waited.

And then I waited some more.

After an hour, I finally made myself a plate of food and zapped it in the microwave since everything was cold.

After two hours, I told myself they got a little delayed at work and would be along at any moment.

After three hours, I felt like an idiot as I put dinner away, locked up the house, and went to bed. I tried to tell myself something came up, but I kept circling back to one simple fact: they would have called if they cared. I must remember that lust didn't equate to love or even a tiny degree of caring. This was business; if we had a little fun with our business, so be it. We were all consulting adults, but just because they wanted me sexually and enjoyed spending time with me didn't mean I was a priority in their lives.

# Chapter 16

## Lincoln

### 28 Days Until New Year's Eve

I was angry, beyond angry. I barely managed to not slam my mug down on the counter and shatter it. Grant raised his eyebrows at me as he filled my mug. We hadn't gotten home until close to five in the morning, and it was only eight now. I was still tired and pissed. We stood up Nova. Maybe not intentionally, but it happened.

"This is why relationships don't work for us," Grant stated as Ben walked in looking gloomy. "We don't have the time, and things come up at the drop of a hat that we can't ignore."

"I told her we would be over for dinner," Ben said. "She cooked for us, and we didn't show."

"I knew you two were getting too close to her," Grant said. I scoffed as he continued speaking as if he wasn't lost in Nova's

orbit. “You need to remember that this is temporary. It is a business contract, nothing more.”

“Bullshit,” I replied. “You tell yourself whatever you need to not feel as shitty about last night as we do, but I still call bullshit.” I gulped my coffee while Ben nodded in agreement.

“You’re just as hooked on her as we are,” he added, “you just don’t want to admit it.”

“It isn’t important,” Grant said. “The fact of the matter is, we aren’t able to maintain a long-term relationship with anyone.”

“I refuse to believe that,” I argued. “We have to be better. For Nova. Hell, for us. Other people can balance their work and personal lives, why can’t we?”

“He has a point,” Ben said.

“We busted our asses to grow Triple Tech to where it is today, and you want to throw it away for some woman?” Grant asked incredulously.

“We didn’t say that,” Ben replied calmly. “We said we want a healthier life/work balance.”

“And she isn’t ‘some woman,’” I growled. “She is *the* woman. The only woman. I know it, Ben knows it, and I think somewhere deep inside, past the stubborn muleheadedness, you know it too.”

“I don’t know what I know anymore,” he sighed, “except we have an apology to make.”

We finished our coffee, got ready, and then went to Icing. When we walked in, Stef was behind the counter as usual, except this time, she glared daggers at us.

“I don’t know what you did to her,” she hissed as we walked by her to go to the kitchen, “but you had better fix it.” She was only a high schooler, but I can honestly say she terrifies the hell out of me.

We walked into the kitchen, and the only indication Nova gave that she saw us come in was a brief pause in her movement. She was decorating cupcakes, and I could tell that she was upset.

“Hey, Sugar,” I said tentatively as we approached her.

“Good morning,” she replied coolly, making me wince. I had grown used to the almost shy, blushing greetings she gave whenever she saw us. I looked at Ben and nodded toward her for him to try.

“Listen, baby. About last night,” he started.

“No explanation necessary,” she said, cutting him off. “A heads up would have been nice since I waited three hours for you to show, but I don’t need your explanations. I’m busy. We will have to talk another time.” Even Grant winced at her tone this time.

“Can we see you later, then? After work? You usually leave by three, right?” Grant asked.

“I’m not sure,” she replied stiffly. “Are you sure you remember how to get to my house?”

“Cute,” I replied. “We’ll be waiting for you to get home. Then maybe you will let us explain.”

“Listen,” she said, finally putting down the damn piping bag and looking at us. I almost wish she hadn’t because behind the cool veneer she was projecting was an ocean of hurt. And we put it there. How fucking hard would it have been for one of us to call or text her? God, we fucking suck. “I understand you are busy men. But my time is valuable, too. Maybe you shouldn’t make plans you aren’t capable of keeping. Last night fell outside our contract’s purview, so you weren’t obligated to show up. If you could just let me know you can’t make our plans in the future, I would appreciate it.”

“We’re going to show up this time,” I told her. “Promise.”

“You’ll understand if I don’t hold my breath.” Fuck she wasn’t holding her punches, and we deserved every one of them. She picked the piping bag up, silently dismissing us, so we left the store.

“We need to figure out how to make it up to her. She isn’t just pissed, she’s hurt,” Ben said when we walked outside.

“I know. I feel like an even bigger asshole now,” I replied.

“So how do we fix it?” Ben asked.

“I think I have an idea,” Grant answered. “Come on, we need to do a little research before this afternoon.”





We were waiting on her doorstep when Nova pulled into her driveway later that afternoon. She looked surprised to see us but was still guarded.

“You’re actually here,” she commented as she unlocked her door. We followed her inside, and there was an awkward silence before Ben launched into our apology.

“Nova, we had every intention of coming over last night, and I’m sorry that we didn’t. We had a problem with a large shipment to Japan that was being held up in customs, and it was all hands on deck to get the products through before they shipped them back to America. Still, that isn’t an excuse for not letting you know that we wouldn’t be able to make it.”

“We fucked up,” I said bluntly, making the corner of her mouth twitch slightly. “We aren’t used to worrying about anything outside of our company and each other, but we want

to be better. We will be better because I don't want to live like that anymore. You're important to us, and it won't happen again."

Her eyes shifted to Grant. I knew he wouldn't apologize or make promises, not after Ben and I had covered everything already, and I hoped she didn't need a third apology because it wouldn't happen.

"To make up for our oversight," Grant said, "we're taking you on a surprise outing. You'll probably want to shower first."

Her eyes sparkled with interest as a small smile spread across her face. "What should I wear?"

"You get in the shower. We'll pick out your clothes," I replied. We followed her into her bedroom, and while she went into the bathroom to shower quickly, I started going through her drawers. I grinned at my brothers as I pulled a lacy scrap of fabric from her underwear drawer. I found the matching bra and set it on the bed. "Done," I announced.

"She needs more than that," Grant replied, rolling his eyes. He entered her closet and pulled out a pair of jeans and a flannel shirt. Ben found socks and a pair of boots and set those out as well.

"There," he said. "Now we're done."

I flopped onto her bed to wait for her to come back out. Ben sat on the edge of the bed, and Grant leaned against the doorframe. The water shut off, and we perked up a little in

anticipation. The door opened, and a small cloud of steam poured out, followed by Nova wrapped in a fluffy pink towel. Drops of water beaded on her skin before gravity took over and caused them to drip down. I felt my dick stir to life in my pants at the sight of her.

“You know,” I said, sliding off the bed and sauntering over to her, “we could just stay in instead of going out. I can think of plenty of fun things to do inside.” I started tugging at her towel playfully while I bent down to lick water from her shoulder. “You wouldn’t even have to get dressed.”

“Oh, no,” Nova laughed as she squirmed away from me. “You had your chance to stay in last night and stayed away instead. Today, we’re going out.” She started shoving me toward the door and veered off to grab Ben and pull him off her bed. “Out! I need to get dressed, and if you stay here while I do, we’ll never leave this room.”

“Is that supposed to be a bad thing?” Ben asked.

“Out!”



Big fat snowflakes started falling when we stepped out of Nova's house. "Dibs on the backseat with Nova!" I yelled as soon as we were outside.

"Dammit!" Grant complained. "I was just about to say that."

"You snooze, you lose," I laughed as I held the back door open for her. Nova climbed in the Jeep, and I slid beside her while Grant and Ben sat up front.

"So where are we going?" Nova asked as Ben pulled away from her house.

"It's a surprise," Grant replied, a teasing lilt to his voice.

"I had better distract you so that you don't figure out where we're going," I told her. I pulled her into my lap, and when she tried to protest, I covered her mouth with mine. As my tongue twisted with hers, my fingers were busy with the buttons on

her shirt. I didn't break the kiss until I had her shirt spread open. Pulling her closer, I bent my head to capture a taut nipple with my teeth, moving my tongue against the imprisoned bud through the sheer lace.

Nova moaned as she arched her back to give me better access. Grant twisted around in his seat at the sound.

"You couldn't have sat on the other side of the car so that I could watch?" He grumbled.

"There's room in this backseat for another," I suggested as I moved to Nova's other nipple.

"Don't you dare!" Ben growled as Grant twisted to climb into the backseat. "I'm serious. I'll pull over and make you two sit in the back alone. Linc, knock it off!"

I sighed with defeat. I knew that tone, and Ben could be a royal pain in the ass when he sounds like that. I did not doubt that he would pull over and refuse to drive until Nova was sitting up front with him and out of our reach. At least this way, I could still snuggle with her. "You're a real pest sometimes, you know that?" I said to him as I rebuttoned Nova's shirt. "Sorry, Sugar. My brother is being a real cock block right now. Any frustration you're feeling can be directed toward him." I moved Nova off of my lap and onto the seat beside me. I threw my arm around her and pulled her into my side before she could scoot to the other side of the car.

A comfortable silence fell over the car as we drove. Nova perked up when Ben slowed and turned onto a gravel road. We had thoroughly researched this place, and I hoped she hadn't

been here before. When she didn't indicate that she knew where she was, I knew she hadn't. The Christmas trees of all sizes surrounding either side of the road should have tipped her off to what we were doing, but it wasn't until the road opened up to a large lot that she squealed with glee.

“Are we getting a Christmas tree?” Nova asked excitedly.

“Surprise, Sugar,” I replied.

“We thought we owed you a big Christmas tradition after standing you up,” Grant told her. I smirked to myself at the smile on his face at her excitement. He could say this was just business until he was blue. The only person he was fooling was himself.

# Chapter 17

## Nova

I jumped out of the car as soon as Ben parked. It was still snowing, and as I took in the cute little buildings and people milling about, I felt Christmas magic wrap around me like a comforting blanket. I took a deep breath and exhaled happily, the smells of the trees, nature, and hot chocolate warming my heart. Ben exited the car and linked his fingers with mine as we joined the crowd. It took a little while to get set up for our adventure. While Grant and Lincoln got in line to rent the side-by-side vehicle and chainsaw we would need to cut our tree down, Ben pulled me to the hot chocolate line. We got four hot chocolates, and soon Lincoln was tearing through the snowy forest, away from everyone. He stopped the little buggy, and we got out to hunt down the perfect tree.

“I can’t believe you guys did this,” I said honestly as I sipped my hot chocolate.

“We want to make you happy,” Ben replied, wrapping his arms around me from behind. “I know we fucked up, but

everyone makes mistakes. Hopefully, you can forgive us for ours. Plus, this was on your list, right?”

“It is, but I figured we would just go down to the tree lot and pick one out. I didn’t expect you to be willing to get all rugged and cut one down.”

“There’s more to us than meets the eye,” Linc winked as he slung the chainsaw over his shoulder. “Now, Nova Lane, which tree do you want?”

I stepped out of Ben’s arms and began to weave through the trees, eyeing them critically. Picking out the perfect tree wasn’t a simple task. You had to consider the height, fullness, health, and branch strength. The last thing you wanted to do was get the tree home and find out it couldn’t support any of your ornaments, and I had a lot.

“What about this one?” Grant asked, standing next to a gorgeous fir.

“While it’s beautiful, it’s about a foot too tall,” I told him.

“This one is shorter,” Ben said from several rows away. We followed the sound of his voice and stood around the tree he suggested.

“The height is perfect, but it’s too fat around,” I replied. “It will take up my entire living room.”

We continued wandering through the forest until I stopped before a promising tree. It was slightly shorter than the tree Ben had found and had the perfect cone shape that I was looking for. It was a deep green color without browning to the



branches, which meant it was at peak health. I tested some branches as I circled the tree to ensure it had no holes or noticeable imperfections. The branches seemed strong. I stepped back and grinned at the guys.

“This is the one!”

“Are you sure?” Grant asked.

“Positive! Cut that baby down and wrap her up.”

Lincoln fired up the chainsaw while Grant helped move higher branches out of the way so that he could cut off the lower branches more easily to get to the trunk.

“Want to play a game?” Ben whispered in my ear.

“What kind of game?”

“You run and hide. If I can’t catch you in ten minutes, you win. If I can, I win,” he replied, continuing to whisper so that he didn’t attract the attention of the others.

“What are we playing for?” I asked, my excitement growing.

“Winner’s choice. Are you in?”

“Yes!”

He squeezed my hips and hummed approvingly. “Good.” He held his watch up so that we could both see the time. “Run!”

I dropped my hot chocolate and took off, mentally reminding myself to collect it later. I heard Linc and Grant’s surprised questions as I ran, but I didn’t have time to answer them. I was glad the snow hadn’t left enough dusting to show my tracks as I weaved through the trees. When I felt I had gotten far

enough, I began to circle back toward where I started, hoping he wouldn't expect me to double back.

I was breathing heavily and tried to get it steady as I picked a large tree and squeezed into the branches at the base of the tree. My breath had just evened out when I heard a twig break nearby.

“Nooovaaaa,” Ben called, sending a thrill down my spine.

I glanced at my watch and saw I still had five minutes until I won. Ben was several rows away and continued to move further into the forest and away from me. I breathed a silent sigh of relief. So far, so good. My ears tracked his movements as he moved around the woods like a Yeti in a snowglobe shop. He passed by my tree several times, muttering to himself. At one point, he had stopped nearby, and if he had just turned his head, he would have seen me.

I contemplated moving after his fourth pass but decided to stay put. This tree was working for me, and there was no sense in fixing it if it wasn't broken. I watched the time tick down on my watch and felt triumphant at the thirty-second mark. Then suddenly, Ben was in front of me, and I screamed in surprise as he grabbed my ankle and dragged me from the tree.

“Gotcha!” He cheered. I struggled to escape him as he pinned me to the ground and tickled me. We were both laughing when his laugh flowed into a throaty growl. “Now for my prize.” His lips slammed over mine hungrily with enough force to make them throb as we kissed. He grabbed my hips and pulled my core against his hard dick.

I whimpered into his mouth, and he backed up enough to look at me.

“You’re so fucking beautiful, Nova. Tell me you want this too,” he pleaded.

“I want this too.”

He groaned as he started undressing me hastily, peppering kisses onto my skin as he uncovered it. “I haven’t been able to think of much else after watching you come for me on that video.”

My body was on fire as he stripped my clothes off and then his own. When he finally sheathed himself inside of me, I moaned in relief. Ben’s haste didn’t slow as he took me there on the forest floor. Skin slapping against skin echoed through the trees as he fucked me into the ground.

“Don’t stop,” I gasped.

“Never,” Ben grunted above me. “You feel so fucking good wrapped around me, Nova. You’re taking my cock so well.”

I moaned again in agreement. I love how full I felt and the way the large head of his cock dragged against my walls.

The sound of a high-pitched horn echoed around us, making Ben chuckle. “It seems they’ve got the tree cut down. I guess we’d better finish so we don’t keep them waiting too long.” Even though he said we needed to hurry, his pace didn’t quicken, and his dark brown eyes twinkled as he steadily worked us closer to our orgasms. If anything, he might have even slowed down a fraction as he kissed me lazily. He

swallowed my moans greedily, keeping my pleasure and this moment between us and the trees.

A few minutes later, the horn sounded again, and with a devilish grin, he began to pound into me rapidly. I guess he decided they had waited long enough.

“Touch yourself, Nova,” he ordered. “Let me see the show first hand.”

I complied and rubbed my sensitive clit. My pussy walls fluttered around him as my orgasm started, making him groan as he slammed into me one last time and came with me. He collapsed on top of me, and I relished the feel of him on me and in me, his dick still twitching. Panting, he rolled off me and I fought the urge to pull him back. I wanted more, but we were in the middle of a Christmas tree forest, and anyone could stumble upon us at any time. Not to mention, Lincoln and Grant were impatiently waiting for us.

We stumbled and giggled as we quickly redressed, almost falling several times in our attempt. Ben tried picking all the twigs from my hair when we were finally clothed.

“You better get all of it. Lincoln is not going to be happy that you got dirt and twigs in my hair,” I teased.

“In that case, I should probably leave a couple,” Ben replied, immediately stopping. Hand in hand, we walked back to where they were waiting for us. “Who knew shopping for a Christmas tree could be so much fun?”

# Chapter 18

## Benjamin

I felt pretty proud of myself and couldn't keep the smug look from my face when Lincoln and Grant came into view. They were leaning against the side-by-side we rented, pouting. The tree they cut down while I was stalking and fucking Nova was in the wagon hitched to the buggy. Nova's steps faltered as we approached, and I gave her hand a reassuring squeeze.

"Carpe Diem, boys," I said as we stopped before them.

Linc's lips twitched before returning to their scowl as he glared at the twigs in Nova's hair. "Cocky bastard," he replied as he pushed off the buggy and moved behind her to pick the debris from her hair.

Grant laughed bitterly as he scrubbed a hand down his face. "I really hate you two, you know that?"

I ground my teeth together as I saw Nova pale and shrink into herself at his words.

“I was ready to carpe diem in my office,” Grant continued, not noticing Nova’s reaction, “and you two cock-blocking fuck wads interrupted us. It’s rather unfair. I have half a mind to run away with Nova and not return until I’ve had my fill, which could take a while.”

I knew his statement of hate hadn’t been about her, but Nova hadn’t. I was pleased to see her shoulders relax when she did. Even so, it needed to be addressed. “Nova? Did you think Grant meant you when he said he hated us?”

She looked at me guiltily and nodded. Lincoln stepped around her to see her face as Grant’s eyes widened in horror.

“I could never hate you,” he assured her.

“Why would you think that, Sugar?” Linc asked softly as he tucked a strand of hair behind her ear.

Nova cleared her throat as she stared down at her hands. “I thought he was mad that Ben and I had sex while he was cutting down the Christmas tree for me.”

Grant stepped in front of her, causing Lincoln to step back. He placed a finger under her chin and lifted it until she made eye contact. “Understand something Little Star. I will never be mad at you for being with one of my dipshit brothers. Ever. However, I reserve the right to get pissy with them for it after they interrupt my time with you. Ok?”

Nova nodded and graced us with a smile. “This is all new to me. I’ve never considered this type of... situationship before.”

I bent down to kiss the side of her head. “This is new for us too. We’ve never shared a woman before.”

“We’ve never wanted to share a woman before,” Linc elaborated. “You’re special, Nova. Some wrinkles might still need ironing, but we’ll figure it out together.”

“That sounds good,” she agreed.

“Ok. What do you say we get this show on the road and decorate a Christmas tree?” I asked, ushering them toward the cart. Linc drove us back to the lot, where they wrapped the tree and secured it to the roof of my Jeep for us. I ensured that Nova sat in the front with me for the drive back to her house to prevent any fooling around while I drove. I was ok with the hypocrisy, which Grant spent half the drive lecturing me about.

When we got to her house, we carried the tree inside, and Grant and I got it set up in the corner Nova directed us to while she and Linc went to the basement to bring up the decorations. When they brought up the last of the boxes, I saw that Nova looked a little flushed, and Lincoln looked far too pleased with himself. That meant they had been naughty downstairs, and I honestly loved it. I loved how happy Nova looked and how relaxed my brothers were around her. How relaxed I was. When the four of us are together, we forget that we have a billion-dollar company to run and a million balls in the air. All of that fell away as we focused on living in the present. Lincoln figured it out first, but she is good for us. Walking away from her was a dwindling option.

I met Linc's eyes as I took the box from Nova, and a grin split across his face. We set the boxes down, and he clapped me on the back.

"Good to have you on board, brother," he said quietly.

"We have our work cut out to get Grant on board," I replied.

"Oh, I don't think it will be as difficult as you think," Linc replied, nodding his head for me to turn around.

I did and couldn't help but smile at the scene before me. Grant smiled at Nova, genuine happiness shining from within him that I wasn't sure I had ever seen. Nova laughed as she tried to untangle herself from the Christmas lights he kept looping around her.

"Grant! They're supposed to go on the tree," Nova chastised playfully.

"They look better on you," he replied.

"See what I mean," Linc said low enough so they couldn't hear him.

"Yeah, but he's still hung up on that damn contract."

"He's more hung up on her. I can tell. The challenge is to get him to admit it to himself, stubborn ass." Linc said the last two words loud enough for Grant to hear. His eyes flicked to us and narrowed.

The distraction allowed Nova to escape from her festive coils, and she whooped triumphantly as she scampered out of



his reach. “Ha! Now we can put them where they belong and get this show on the road.”

He glared at us for ruining his game, then smiled at Nova as he handed her the lights, took the end, and draped them across the tree branches. Once the lights were done, I stepped forward with the garland and helped her hang the fluffy silver rope on the tree. Once that was done, we moved on to the ornaments, and Nova chatted excitedly as each one was pulled out. She shared the stories attached to them as they were hung, sharing a piece of her heart with us. I could see the sadness in her eyes at times, but she kept smiling as she brought her father’s memory to life for us.

“These must have a good story,” I said as I pulled a few plastic reindeer ornaments out of the box. The old ornaments had seen better days. The velvet “fur” mainly had been rubbed off of them. One was missing a leg; another one was missing an ear. Grant and Lincoln’s expressions matched my feelings towards the ratty ornaments: time for the trash.

Nova looked at them with adoration as if they were the most important treasure she owned. “They have the best story,” she replied. She took them from me and cradled them gently in her hands. She stood silently stroking the one remaining ear on the one with her fingertip.

“When I was six years old, we were poor. And when I say poor, I mean we hardly had two pennies to rub together. Everything my parents earned went toward bills and food. That Thanksgiving, my dad pulled out our old Christmas tree

and the few decorations that we had so that we could put the tree up, as was tradition.

“There is something about plugging Christmas lights in for the first time that instantly makes it feel like Christmas—an excitement shared with a grin between parent and child. Well, when Dad plugged the lights in that year to test them, they didn’t light up. After an hour of searching for a blown fuse or bulb, he finally conceded that the old lights must have reached their permanent demise.

“I was so young, but I knew we didn’t have many things like other families. I knew that we wouldn’t be able to have lights on our tree that year. So, I was stunned when my dad suddenly tossed the busted lights to the side and told me to get my shoes and jacket. He said that we were going to the store for more lights.”

Nova laughed softly as she paused in her story to hang one of the deer on the front of the tree.

“My mom tried to question him about it, urging him to think it through instead of making a rash decision. He told her it would be a cold day in Hell before he had a Christmas tree without Christmas lights. He took my hand, and we left. We sang Christmas carols all the way to Walmart, and by the time we walked through the doors, I was shaking with excitement. Hand in hand, we walked past countless items we probably needed to the Christmas department. Dad looked at my wide eyes as we walked through the aisle and told me I could pick out three ornaments. I think he got additional boxes of

ornaments and lights and then waited patiently as I made the most difficult decision of my young life.”

She hung the other two reindeer on the tree and spent time adjusting them so they hung just right before stepping back and admiring her work. “In the end, I chose these three reindeer. A mama, a daddy, and a baby,” she said, pointing to each. “One for each of us. I don’t know what got into him or how we could afford them, but Dad was a man on a Christmas mission that night. He had no idea at the time, and I’m not sure he ever did know how much that night meant to me or how it would become such a treasured memory.”

Knowing the memory attached to them, I looked at the ornaments with different eyes. They didn’t seem like they belonged in the trash anymore. Sliding my arms around her waist, I pulled Nova closer to me to nuzzle her neck. “Thank you for sharing your stories with us. Your dad sounds like he was an amazing man.”

“He was. Like everyone, he could be rough around the edges, but he did his best, and he loved me and my mother with everything he had,” Nova replied. She turned in my arms as she spoke and snuggled into my chest. She took a shaky breath and stepped back. She wiped away the tears that threatened to fall and tried to smile. “I’m sorry. Here I am going on about my dad and my childhood and being sad when you guys didn’t have that, did you?”

“First,” Lincoln said, kissing her forehead, “don’t ever apologize to us for your feelings. You’re allowed to be sad

about your dad without any guilt because we grew up in a foster home.”

“Second,” Grant continued as he sat on the ottoman and pulled her into his lap. “We never knew our parents. We were all in the system before we turned three. As we got older, we were moved to different families until we were ten. That’s when we were placed in the same house that became our forever foster home. Ultimately, we had a good childhood. It was just missing some of the more traditional things you experienced.”

“And our foster mom was an angel,” I chipped in. “She would have adored you.”

Nova blushed slightly and hid her face in Grant’s neck. Grant held her tighter and looked up at me with a panicked look. Something just clicked in his head, perhaps his heart, and he was about to lose it.

“Linc, why don’t you and Nova finish the tree while Grant and I figure out where to order from?” I asked, keeping my voice even and calm for Nova’s sake. Linc picked up the difference in my tone and gave me a questioning look before looking at Grant and snapping into motion.

“Love to!” he exclaimed as he whisked Nova off Grant’s lap and back toward the tree.

I grabbed Grant and lightly shoved him toward the front door to get some air. As soon as the front door closed behind us, he bent over at the waist with his hands braced on his knees.

“Oh, God,” he croaked. “What are we going to do?”

“About what, buddy?” I asked, genuinely concerned.

“Nova. What are we going to do about Nova?” He straightened, and the desperation in his eyes surprised me.

“Walk me through it,” I prompted, not understanding what had him so freaked out.

“You’re right. Mama Clair would have loved her. What are we doing here? We have a contract, but Linc has dropped hints that he wants more. I can see it in your eyes that you want more, too, but we have a contract. We don’t have time for a relationship. That’s why we had to make this arrangement to begin with.”

“Forget about the damn contract for a minute. What do you want? How do you feel?” I pressed. My brother had some hang-ups. One was unplanned things cropping up. It’s why he was such a meticulous planner. He needed the structure to function. He told Nova we had a good childhood, and we did, but he left out the part where we each had some baggage when Mama Clair took us in. Grant had been through far more homes than Linc and I put together. Because of that, he developed an almost OCD-level need for everything around him to be perfectly planned. The contract with Nova was just the tip of the iceberg. It has served us well in business but wreaked havoc on our personal lives at times. He’s learned to manage it better as an adult, but stressful situations tend to send him into a spin.

“I want her,” he admitted somewhat aggressively. “And I don’t want to walk away from her after New Year’s, but...”

He trailed off, and after a minute of silence, I prompted him to continue. “Buuut...”

“But what if we hurt her?” The desperation in his eyes gave way to sadness. “We don’t know how to have a functioning relationship.”

“So we take it one day at a time. We don’t have to have it all figured out right now, Grant.” I hugged my brother. He was so bossy that I sometimes forget that his bossiness was a way to deflect others from discovering his vulnerable side and seeing the hurting little boy inside. He relaxed in my embrace for a moment before stiffening and stepping back.

“We can take it one day at a time, but I won’t agree to entertain a future with her unless I know we can do that. I won’t let us hurt her too. She’s too important,” he said firmly.

I shook my head and pulled out my phone as my brother walked back inside. It was good to see his shields were operating at one hundred percent again.

I chose a contact and pressed call, lifting the phone to my ear. “Charlie! I need to order some food, and I’m craving your salmon.”

# Chapter 19

## Nova

Lincoln and I were consolidating the empty boxes to return to the basement when Grant came storming back into the house like a man on a mission. He stomped over to me, and I glanced at Linc nervously moments before Grant grabbed my shoulders and planted a hard kiss against my lips that instantly ignited a fire inside me. Before I could react to the kiss, he ended it.

“I fucking like you, ok?” he said, almost like an accusation.

Linc snorted beside me as he gathered the boxes and left us alone.

“I like you, too?” I was at a loss for how to respond to his energy.

“I wasn’t supposed to like you as much as I do.”

“I’m sorry?” I tried to pull out of his grasp, but instead, he pulled me in for a hug, softly embracing me.

“I think I’m fucking this up,” he admitted.

“I don’t even know what this is,” I laughed nervously.

He leaned back as one of his hands raised to cup my face. “Why don’t I try again?” he whispered before lowering his mouth to mine.

This time, the kiss started soft and tentative as his lips slid across mine, sweetly coaxing my mouth to open. I sighed and melted into him as his tongue dipped inside to play with mine. Each lazy twist of his tongue stoked the embers burning inside me. Too soon, his lips retreated, and I moaned in disappointment as mine tried to follow. His hand still cupped my face, and his thumb brushed against my lower lip as he waited for my eyes to clear and lift to his.

“I care about you more than I ever expected to, Nova Lane. You’ve gotten under my skin like no woman ever has. I don’t know what to do about it, but I’ve been advised to take it one day at a time and see where it leads us, so that’s what I plan to do.”

I had to check myself mentally before I swooned in his arms. I don’t think anyone had ever said something so sweet to me. “I care about you, too. All three of you, but I’m scared,” I admitted.

“That makes two of us, but those assholes seem to be sure everything will work out fine.”

I jumped in his arms as the front door slammed shut. “Ok, the food is on its way,” Ben announced as he returned inside.



Grant winked before releasing me. Ben watched us curiously but didn't say anything. "Shall I start a fire?" Grant asked.

I smiled at him. "A fire sounds perfect! I'll go make the egg nog!" I went into the kitchen, stopping briefly when Ben wrapped an arm around me to pull me in for a kiss before releasing me. I pulled out the rum, vanilla ice cream, egg nog, and milk and dumped the ingredients into the blender. As a child, my parents always used rum extract, but I found that as long as you weren't too heavy-handed with the rum, it tasted better with alcohol.

Linc came back upstairs and helped me set the table. After we ate, I made another batch of egg nog, and we turned out all the lights until it was just the tree and the fire illuminating the room. The four of us snuggled on the couch, quietly sipping our drinks. My eyes bounced between the tree and the fire contentedly.

"It's beautiful. Thank you for taking me to get a tree and spending the day with me. Today was perfect."

"We should thank you for sharing this tradition with us," Ben replied.

"I can think of a way to make it even more perfect," Linc said as he reached over Grant and slid his hand up my thigh.

"Oh no, you don't," Grant said, slapping his hand away. "Neither of you get to touch her until I've had my fill. You can watch."

"Oh, really?" I teased.

Grant turned toward me, took my glass, and handed it to Lincoln with his own. “Really,” he growled lightly as his knees hit the carpet before me. He leaned over me, pressing me into the couch, and kissed me. The kiss was brief as his lips trailed down my neck. His fingers quickly unbuttoned my shirt, his lips following their path as new skin was exposed. He nuzzled my breasts as he reached behind me to undo my bra. Benjamin and Lincoln helped remove the clothing until I was bare before them from the waist up.

“So fucking beautiful,” Grant murmured as his hands slid up my body to cup my breasts. “Maybe you can touch a little,” he conceded. He held my breasts for his brothers as they each sucked a nipple into their mouths. I moaned, and my back arched as pleasure zipped through my body and made my clit tingle. “You make such sweet sounds for us,” Grant praised as he unbuttoned my jeans and pulled them and my panties off. He pulled my ass to the edge of the couch and spread my legs open with his large hands. He kissed my inner thighs, biting into them softly, causing another moan to fall from my lips. “Your ex is a fucking moron to turn this body down.”

“Grant,” I pleaded.

“I’ve got you, Star,” he assured me as he attacked my pussy with a hunger that I was beginning to equate with him.

His tongue was everywhere, and having all of their mouths on me at once proved to be too much. Quickly, I felt myself spinning into the euphoria of my first orgasm of the night. Grant licked at my pussy with slow strokes as I came back

down to earth. Once I had recovered, he pulled me off the couch to straddle him on the floor.

“Ride me. Show my brothers how well you take my cock,” Grant ordered.

I was so desperate to have him inside me that I didn’t have time to feel self-conscious about being naked. The fire and the tree lights reflected off our glistening skin as I lifted myself and guided Grant to my entrance. Achingly slow, I lowered myself, my pussy sliding down his shaft, making us both groan as he filled me. When I was fully seated on him, I didn’t move to let myself adjust to his cock. Grant’s hands slid up my thighs to my hips and started to lift me.

“I’m sorry! Am I too heavy?” I said in a panic as I moved to get off him. Before I could get far, his hands tightened, and he yanked me down his cock so hard that I couldn’t stop the moan that fell from my lips.

“Where do you think you’re going?” he growled. “You aren’t too fucking heavy, you feel amazing, I just needed you to move before I went crazy. Now, ride me, Nova, fuck, please,” he begged.

I stared at him in shock, unaccustomed to being desired like this. I felt empowered. I controlled his pleasure. When I didn’t immediately start moving, Grant cracked his palm across my ass, causing my pussy to squeeze around him.

“Oh, fuck, Nova! You liked getting spanked, didn’t you?” Grant asked as he swatted my other cheek.

I blushed but nodded. I leaned forward, bracing my hands on his broad chest as I lifted my hips and began to ride him. I whimpered and closed my eyes, my nails digging into his skin. Pleasure radiated through me as he hit all the right spots.

“Eyes on me, Nova,” Grant ordered. “Let me see you.”

My eyes met his as I increased my speed. “I feel so full,” I moaned.

“You look so good on Grant’s cock, Sugar,” Lincoln praised behind me. My eyes widened at his voice. I had forgotten he and Ben were still with us.

Grant sat up suddenly and wrapped his arms around me. Holding me to him tightly, he turned us around so that I was facing the couch. “Look at how much they want you, Nova. Show them how much you love my cock.”

At some point, they had shed their clothes and were now sitting on my sofa, stroking their hard cocks while they watched me ride their brother. I eyed them hungrily as I bounced on Grant’s cock. I could feel another orgasm building as Grant began to thrust into me from below, adding to the sensations. I met Grant’s eyes again with a pleading look. I wanted all of them. I needed all of them.

Grant smiled in understanding. “Boys, I think our cock-hungry girl needs more.”

That was all the invitation Ben and Lincoln needed. Lincoln was a blur as he jumped off the couch and moved into position behind me while Ben stood in front of me.

“Don’t fucking step on me, asshole,” Grant hissed as he moved into position.

Ben grinned at me but didn’t respond to him. He stroked himself just out of reach, a bead of precum growing on the tip. I licked my lips as I watched it form. Ben moved close enough to brush it against my lips, teasing me. “Beg for it, Baby.”

“Ben, please,” I said, licking his taste from my lips. Before I could get what I wanted, my attention was immediately diverted to Linc as he brushed a wet finger against my third hole. I squeaked in surprise as my hips jerked forward, away from the foreign touch.

“Easy, Sugar,” Lincoln soothed, running a comforting hand up my spine. “Has anyone ever been in here before?” he asked as his fingertip probed my ass gently.

I shook my head. *Crack*. I looked at Grant in surprise.

“Use your words,” he said sternly.

“No,” I gasped as Grant rewarded me by rubbing my clit lightly. “But I want to.”

The men groaned at my words. Lincoln leaned over me, pressing me flat against Grant. “Good girl,” he growled in my ear. “Next time, we can try it. For now, I need to be in your sweet little pussy. Hold still.”

My eyes widened as I comprehended his intention. Surely, he didn’t think he and Grant could fit inside me at the same time? Grant felt my body tense, and as Lincoln’s weight lifted, he guided my lips to his.

“Just relax. We’ve got you,” Grant whispered against my mouth before drawing me into a panty-melting kiss. His mouth distracted my brain as I felt the pressure as Linc started to work his cock in alongside Grant’s.

“I have to watch,” Ben said.

The head of Linc’s cock popped in, and I whimpered into Grant’s mouth as Linc steadily pushed inside me.

“Fuck, look at you taking them together,” Ben said from behind me. “That looks so sexy, Baby.”

“Shit, that feels good,” Grant rasped as he broke our kiss.

A deep moan that felt like it came from my soul was pulled out of me. I was stretched so tightly around them that I could feel the throbbing from the blood pumping through their dicks. I could feel Lincoln pressed against my ass which meant he had gotten his length inside me. I panted with need as my hips shifted, causing both men to moan. “I need to move. Please,” I begged, “fuck me. Oh, God, please.”

Linc slid out halfway and then pushed back in slowly. It wasn’t enough. Fuck I felt like I would spontaneously combust. “More. I said fuck me, Linc,” I snapped.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” he gritted between clenched teeth.

“You won’t. Please.” Ben stepped back in front of me, and I pushed myself up slightly so that I could reach his dick. Grant helped support me as I reached for Ben’s cock. I met his eyes as I brought him to my mouth.

“Do it, bro. She needs it. I can see it in her eyes,” Ben ordered.

Grant’s chuckle turned into a moan as Lincoln pulled out and pushed back in more forcefully. “Such a cock-hungry baby girl,” he grunted.

I swirled my tongue around the head of Ben’s dick before sucking him into my mouth. Linc’s thrusts pushed me further on Ben, and I let him set the pace for all of us, concentrating on caressing the underside of his dick with my tongue and relaxing my throat as the head batted against it. I knew the rest of us wouldn’t last long, and I wanted to make it good for Ben. Ben was stroking my hair and praising me, but I couldn’t concentrate on his words as I fell into a delirious fuzzy headspace of pure bliss. I could barely form coherent thoughts as they rocked my entire world, shifting it off its axis. I felt like the only thing keeping me from floating away was the three dicks impaling me.

“Fuck, I’m going to come,” Grant grunted.

“Me too,” Linc hissed.

All I could do was whimper around Ben’s cock as someone’s fingers found their way to my clit.

“Come with us, Nova,” Grant ordered.

It was like my body had been waiting for permission because his words opened up the floodgates as the most powerful orgasm of my life ripped through me. Ben pulled from my mouth, letting my scream ring out as everything went white

for a few seconds. I felt Linc and Grant pulse inside me as they came with shouts of pleasure. My entire body was trembling, and if it weren't for the men holding me up, I would have collapsed.

Once I had regained some of my composure, Ben pushed back into my mouth, and his nails dug into my scalp as he held my head in place and started fucking my mouth. "That's it, Baby. Swallow this cock like a good girl."

I was still stuffed with cock, my body trembling around them, while Lincoln and Grant stroked me soothingly.

"You're doing so good, Sugar," Linc praised as he trailed kisses along my spine.

"I'm close," Ben groaned. "A little bit longer."

"You better swallow every drop of his cum, Nova," Grant ordered. "I'll turn that ass red if a single drop lands on me."

I moaned, and my pussy flexed around them, making them moan as well.

"Fuck, bro. I don't think that's the best way to punish her. She wants it," Linc laughed. "Besides, I think we're a little past avoiding each other's cum." He pressed into me to drive his point home. They had both cum inside me and all over each other's dick.

I would have giggled if Ben hadn't chosen that moment to slam his cock as far down my throat as he could with a loud moan. "Fuck, here it comes. Swallow it."



A hand wrapped around my throat, massaging it as Ben came. "I can feel him coming," Grant said, a hint of wonder in his voice.

Ben pulled partially out of my mouth, stroking his cock to milk the last of his cum onto my tongue. When he pulled out completely, Linc pulled me against him and turned my head to kiss me. His tongue played with mine, swirling Ben's cum around my mouth.

"That shouldn't be fucking hot, but it is," Grant stated.

When Linc ended the kiss, he winked at me as he licked his lips and shrugged. He pulled his softened cock from me and fell on his back next to Grant.

"Did you enjoy my cum, brother?" Ben asked.

"If it's served on Nova, I'll eat anything," Linc replied.

"That was amazing," I said as I collapsed to the side, wedging myself between Linc and Grant. Ben joined us on the floor, and we became a tangle of limbs as we fell asleep by the fire under the glow of the twinkling Christmas lights.

I wasn't sure how long we slept, but the fire had died down to barely glowing embers, and my shiver roused the guys.

"Let's get you to bed, Baby," Ben said as he scooped me into his arms to carry me to bed.

"Wait, I can walk. I'm too heavy for you to carry," I said quickly, wiggling to get my feet on the floor.

*Crack.*

“I’m getting tired of hearing you talk about yourself like that,” Ben growled. “It’s starting to piss me off. You are not too fucking heavy. Period. End of fucking story, understand?”

I nodded, my ass stinging from his slap. He kissed my forehead as he carried me to my room. When we crossed the threshold, he set me down, and I ran to the bathroom to relieve myself. While I was there, I cleaned up all the cum, feeling much fresher when I emerged from the bathroom. All three men were in my bed, and Linc sleepily patted the space between him and Ben. Once I climbed between them, he covered us with the blanket, and we were soon back in dreamland.

# Chapter 20

## Nova

### 21 Days Until New Year's Eve 1 Week Later

Stepping back, I looked at my work. I had given myself most of the day off to work on my design for the gingerbread house competition. I was sure we would win this year with my design. It was a little ambitious, but nobody ever won by playing it safe. After today, I will be in full swing set up and planning for next weekend's festival. Everything was lining up, and I was confident it would go off without a hitch. So many people in town have volunteered their time to ensure it did. My most pressing task next week will be baking the hundreds of sugar cookies we need for the decorating competition.

A throat cleared behind me, making me jump as I whirled around. All three men were standing in the dining room doorway, watching me. "Your door was unlocked," Ben explained. "We knocked, but you must not have heard us."

“Sorry. I guess I was a little in the zone,” I laughed. I looked at the three men that I had grown to consider mine over the past week. I knew that I shouldn’t. While I knew they cared for me, that didn’t mean they wanted a future with me past New Year’s Eve. They had been super busy all week preparing for the new product launch in January, so this was the first time since Christmas tree shopping that I had been with all of them at the same time. Even with how busy they’ve been, they ensured one of them was with me every night. It gave me hope that we could find a way to make this work. I ignored the voice that told me to cut my losses now, more so because I couldn’t stand the idea of never seeing them again.

“What are you working on?” Linc asked as he approached. He bent to kiss me hello, followed by his brothers while he looked over my sketches.

“My plans for the gingerbread house competition.”

He looked at the papers spread across my dining room table and then at me. “Sugar, this isn’t a house. This is Main Street.”

“Too much?” I asked, nervously biting my bottom lip.

“It’s perfect,” Ben assured me as he wrapped his arms around me. “If that’s what you want to do, then we will do it. I’m sure between the four of us, we can get it done.”

“Thank you,” I replied, twisting to kiss his cheek. “So what brings you guys by? I thought you were busy with work.”

“We are,” Grant replied, “but we missed you and needed a break. So do you. You up for an adventure?” His eyes

twinkled as he waited for my reply, and I knew there wasn't any way I would ever say no to him. I was so screwed.

“Always.”

“Good. Dress warmly. We'll be playing in the snow.” Grant pulled me from Ben's arms and turned me toward the bedroom, swatting my ass to get me moving.

Excitement spurred me to move quickly as I pulled on a pair of fleece-lined jeggings, a long-sleeved shirt, fuzzy socks, and snow boots. I knew it was pointless, but I pulled my hair into a high ponytail, securing it with two separate hair ties and wrapping a pink scrunchy around them. That gave me three layers of protection from Linc. Just in case, I grabbed a handful of hair ties and ran to the front door. I shoved them into the pocket of my coat hanging by the door before he could see them.

When I looked up, Grant was watching me. Busted. Instead of ratting me out, he grinned and winked. It would be our secret. We left the house, and it didn't take long to figure out where they were taking me. The ski lodge was a popular hangout spot for locals during the winter months. It used to be a popular tourist spot as well. Hopefully, with the proper marketing and reigniting of the festival, we will be able to attract tourists to our winter wonderland again.

Linc grabbed my hand when we were out of the car and dragged me toward the sledding hill. “I haven't been sledding since I was a kid,” he said excitedly. When we stopped, he swiped the scrunchy from my hair, and I had to bite my cheek

to keep from laughing at the disgruntled scowl he had looking at my intact ponytail.

“It’s been a few years for me. I used to love coming out here,” I replied wistfully once I had myself under control.

“Do you ski?” Ben asked when they joined us in line.

“Of course! You can’t grow up here without learning how to ski and snowboard. I can ice skate, too. Though honestly, I haven’t done any of them in some time, so I’m out of practice,” I admitted as I accepted a metal disc from the lodge employee.

“No more than two at a time,” the employee informed us. “Space yourself out, be safe, and have fun. Someone will collect your sleds at the bottom.”

Linc and I went first, taking our positions at the top of the hill. I felt too big for the sled, but I kept my feelings to myself. If one of them spanked my ass in public, I would have to move.

“On three,” Linc said. “One, two, three!”

On three, we both pushed off, and a scream ripped from me as we hurdled to the bottom of the hill. Linc’s laughter reached me across the breeze, and my own joined his. I had forgotten how exciting sledding was. When we reached the bottom of the hill, I lost my balance and went tumbling into the soft snow at the bottom. I was still laughing as a worried Lincoln appeared above me. As soon as he saw I was fine, he laughed

with me as he pulled me to my feet so we could get out of the way for Grant and Ben to join us.

As we stood off to the side and watched them mount their sleds, Lincoln brushed the snow from my clothes. I didn't miss it when his fingers slid to my hair and silently removed the hair tie.

“What the fuck?” he asked when he discovered there was another. “Did you booby trap your hair?” he accused.

“I Linc proofed it,” I laughed. “Oh, here they come!” As Ben and Grant rocketed toward us, I took advantage of Linc's distraction to replace the extra hair tie he had removed. They wiped out like we did and joined us, laughing and clearly enjoying themselves. I was getting a rare glimpse into the men behind the business owners and how they must have been as boys together. We walked back up the hill to get in line again. I went down the hill several more times, taking turns with each of them. At every chance, Lincoln stole a hair tie. When he finally caught on to what I was doing, he pinned me down in the snow and swiped my stash with a triumphant cheer.

I shook my head at him.

“You realize you have a fucking problem, right?” Grant asked him as he helped me off the ground.

I brushed myself off and then looked at the hill with a sigh. The path was well-worn and easily trekked, but it was uphill, and I wasn't looking forward to another trip up. I was out of shape and feeling the burn in my legs.

“Hop on,” Ben said, bending down before me.

“Are you crazy?” I asked incredulously. “There is no way in hell you can—”

“I wouldn’t finish that sentence if I were you,” Grant growled in my ear.

I sighed in defeat as I climbed on Ben’s back. This was ridiculous. He looped his arms under my knees and stood. I clung to him tightly. “I don’t want to hear it if you can’t walk tomorrow,” I mumbled.

*Crack.*

“Son of a bitch!” I yelped.

“You were warned,” Grant replied as Lincoln snickered.

Ben bounced me on his back. “This is nothing. Stop worrying,” he instructed as he climbed the hill with Grant and Lincoln trailing behind us.

“I gotta say, I’m loving this view,” Lincoln commented.

When we reached the top, Ben set me down, and was barely winded. “See,” he said.

“Yeah, yeah. I need hot chocolate.” We started walking toward the lodge, and I slowed my pace enough to let them get ahead. Stooping down, I grabbed a handful of snow and formed a ball. Considering my options, I decided to throw it at Grant for slapping my ass earlier.

The snowball landed in the center of his back with a wet plop. He froze and turned toward me slowly, eyes narrowed.



When Ben and Linc saw the snow on his back, they laughed.

“You’re dead,” he stated. I scrambled behind a safety guidelines sign as a snowball just missed me and slammed into it.

I scooped snow into balls as Lincoln landed beside me, making me scream. I went to mash snow in his face, but he caught my hand.

“I come in peace!” he yelled. “I’m on your side!”

I accepted his answer and peeked around the sign to see that Grant and Ben had worked quickly to pile snow to hide behind. Once we had some snowballs built up, I launched one toward them and laughed in glee as it landed where they were crouched.

“Nice shot!” Lincoln commended.

Because of where we were hidden, Linc and I had the advantage. They managed to get some over the top of the sign, but most didn’t make it. After trading several volleys, things went quiet. I peeked around the sign and screeched when I saw they were almost on us, opting for hand-to-hand combat. I scurried from behind the sign but didn’t make it far before I was tackled into the snow.

I laughed as the three men tickled me relentlessly as we rolled around in the snow. “Traitor!” I sputtered at Lincoln through a face full of snow as I crawled away from them on all fours.

“Sorry, Sugar. When it comes to rolling around with you, I can’t resist,” Linc replied as he tackled me again, grinding his hardening cock against my ass. If we didn’t take this somewhere private, we would put on a show none of us planned.

“Truce!” I yelled when I escaped his clutches again. I was out of breath as I rolled to my back and stared at the blue sky. The others collapsed around me, breathing heavily as well.

“Can we do that again, but in the privacy of your backyard?” Lincoln asked.

“Ours would be more private,” Grant replied.

“You want to have a snowball fight in your backyard?” I asked.

“Not exactly, Sugar,” Linc laughed.

“But there will be balls,” Ben commented. There was a beat of silence before we all started laughing.

“I’m picking up what you’re throwing down now,” I replied. They wanted to have snow sex. It sounded cold, but it might be fun if we ensure nobody gets frostbite.

“Nova?”

I groaned at the sound of Peter’s voice. Of course, he was here. Two sets of feet appeared next to my head as he blocked my view of the sky. One set was female. The guys jumped to their feet, immediately helping me up and brushing me off.

“Hello, Peter,” I said politely. He looked surprised and slightly annoyed to see me here with his bosses. I held his gaze, refusing to be the first to speak. I didn’t owe him an explanation. My eyes shifted to the woman by his side, who looked confused as her eyes bounced between us. The awkward silence stretched, so I broke it by introducing myself.

“Hi. You must be Peter’s ‘business trip,’” I said, making air quotes before holding my hand to shake hers.

“What?” she asked.

“How did you...” Peter trailed off from his questions but continued to sputter nonsense. He didn’t expect me to know the truth and didn’t want to say too much to risk his relationship or employment.

“I’m Nova.”

“Brandy. Nice to meet you,” the thin, perky blonde replied.

“How long have you love birds been together?” I asked. I felt my men crowd around me in silent support.

“Six months. It started as a long-distance relationship, but I recently moved to town.”

I looked at Peter, and he had the good sense to look slightly ashamed. “You’re pathetic,” I told him.

“Wait!” Brandy exclaimed. “Did you say that your name was Nova? As in, the owner of Icing on Top and coordinator of the Christmas festival?”

“That’s me,” I replied, slightly taken aback by her excitement at meeting me, considering she was sleeping with my boyfriend.

“If you need help or more volunteers, please let me know! I would love to help out!” she gushed.

“Umm, Bunny,” Peter interjected. “We should probably get going. I’m sure Nova and her friends have important plans to get to.”

He ushered her away before any more words could be exchanged. When he was a short distance away, he looked back at us, an unreadable expression on his face.

“Just look at how jealous he is,” Grant whispered as he hugged me from behind.

“She had no idea who you were to him,” Lincoln commented. “He never told her about you.”

“I should probably warn her, but it’s not my business,” I replied as I watched them walk away.

“You did good,” Ben praised. “I’m proud of you.”

“Thanks.” I shivered from the cold. “Let’s go get that hot chocolate.” That chapter of my life was over.

# Chapter 21

## Grant

### 17 Days Until New Year's Eve

**M**y mind wandered as I sat listening to my legal team go over the terms and conditions for the new tracker. I would love to be anywhere but here. Given a choice, I'd rather be between Nova's warm thighs. Unfortunately, today wasn't my day with her because I was swamped with work. One of my brothers would get that honor tonight. My phone beeped, and I smiled when I saw I got a text from Nova. She must have known I was thinking about her. I opened the text message and froze.

**Nova: 9-1-1. Icing. I need you.**

Worried, I jumped up. "Sorry, I have to go. Something has come up that needs my attention. Send me the document when

you've finished." I raced to the cupcake shop. Nova wasn't an alarmist, so whatever it was had to be serious. As I parked, I was relieved it didn't appear on fire. I rushed inside, and Stef pointed toward the kitchen.

"She's losing her shit," Stef advised me as I passed her.

I rushed into the kitchen and found Nova in her office. Nova is frantic as she paces the small office. I grab her and check her over, searching for any injuries. When I am sure she isn't physically hurt, I will myself to relax so that I can figure out what the problem is. Nova is babbling, and I can't understand what she is saying. Not knowing what to do, I pinched her lips closed with my fingers.

"Stop. Breathe. Relax. Whatever it is, we'll fix it. But you need to calm down so I can figure out what needs to be fixed." Nova melted into me, and I held her close. "Start at the beginning," I said when I felt she had calmed down enough to communicate better.

"I don't have a tree!" Nova exclaimed as she pulled away from me and began to pace again. "We're having a tree lighting ceremony in three days, and I don't have a tree!"

I grabbed her and sat in her desk chair with her in my lap. "I thought you had that squared away?"

"I did! I had a gorgeous nineteen-foot Noble Fir from up north scheduled to be delivered Friday," she replied, swiping her hair from her face angrily. "They just called me to tell me that it won't be coming. The tree hasn't been cut yet, and now, with the blizzard that just hit them, they can't get out there to

cut it. Not that it would matter if they could because, thanks to the blizzard, the roads are too much of a mess for them to truck it here safely. What am I going to do? There isn't enough time to source another large tree."

I contemplated the problem for a minute and realized that it might be one I could solve. "Ok. Let me make some calls. I'll get you a tree if I have to steal one," I joked.

She rolled her eyes, but the corners of her mouth twitched into a brief smile, which was what I was looking for. "How?"

"You don't accumulate as much money as I do and not meet some useful people along the way as well. I have connections all over for all sorts of things." I pulled out my phone and scrolled through my contacts until I found the one I was looking for. Mick was a helicopter pilot and a damned good one. He answered on the second ring.

"Holy shit. Grant Cromwell, is that really you on the other end of my line?"

"It's me, Mick."

"Who died?"

"What? Nobody died."

"Then who needs to die? The only reason you're calling me is if you need help with a dead body or making a body dead." Mick laughed at his joke, making me roll my eyes.

"You always have enjoyed your humor more than anyone else. I need a favor."

“What kind of problem could Grant Cromwell have that he needs my help with?” Mick asked with genuine curiosity. It was usually him needing a favor from me.

“The kind that involves a blizzard and a nineteen-foot Christmas tree stuck out in the forest,” I replied. Dead silence was on the line for thirty seconds before he started to chuckle. Mick’s laugh was infectious, and I couldn’t help the smirk that crept across my face.

“Who is she?” he asked.

“Who is who?” I replied, trying to deflect. Nova stiffened in my lap, and I rubbed her back to reassure her. I wasn’t dodging the question because I was ashamed. I was avoiding the questions because sometimes Mick didn’t know how to shut the hell up.

“This has something to do with a woman. No way in hell that it doesn’t. Spill or my answer is no,” Mick said, serving his ultimatum with glee.

I sighed. He just had to be difficult. “Her name is Nova. She owns the local cupcake shop and is coordinating the Christmas festival this weekend.”

“Well, I’ll be damned. You’re serious. What’s she like?”

I looked at Nova, still perched in my lap. She returned my gaze, and I could see the curiosity in her eyes over how I would answer. “She’s perfect. Everything I didn’t know I needed. Now, if we could get back to that favor.”

“What do your brothers think?”



“You really are a nosy mother fucker, you know that? They feel the same way I do,” I replied.

His laughter over my statement died as the meaning behind my answer sank in. “She must be one hell of a woman to put up with all three of you.”

“She is. Now, can we get to the purpose of my call, or do you want to continue to gossip like a teenage girl?”

“Lay it on me,” he replied. I explained the situation we found ourselves in and had Nova relay the specifics to him.

“Do you think you can do it and have it here by Friday?” I asked.

“Sure can. I know a guy who likes risky ventures and can chop down a tree. I’ll call this tree company and tell them to get out there and mark the tree off in a way that is visible from the air, or I’m flying up there and taking the biggest tree I can find. You’ll have your Christmas tree in time,” he assured me.

“Thanks, Mick. You’re a lifesaver. Just send the bill to Triple Tech and make it worth your while. We’ll pay.”

“Nope. Consider this a pro-bono favor for the woman who took three of the richest reclusive bachelors off the market. I look forward to meeting her on Friday,” he replied firmly.

“Mick, while I appreciate the gesture, I can’t let you do that.”

“Sure you can. I’ll tell you what: if you’re so intent on spending your money, take what you think you should pay me, add a zero, and give it to the kids in my name. And stop

arguing with me about it. I choose whether to accept your money or not.” He hung up before I could reply—stubborn asshole.

“Done,” I said to Nova as I laid my phone on her desk.

“Thank you!” she replied, peppering my face with kisses. I managed to capture her lips with mine and deepened the kiss. It might not be my day with her, but I wasn’t passing up the opportunity. What was our new motto? Carpe Diem.

## Chapter 22

### Nova

I melted into the kiss, offering no resistance. I couldn't get enough of these men. "I've never had sex in the bakery before," I admitted when there was a break in the kiss.

"We should do something about that," Grant replied as he stood. I wrapped my arms and legs around him and expected him to sit me on my desk. Instead, he pressed me against my office door. We continue to kiss as he grinds his hard cock against my core. Finally, I drop my legs so that he has to put me down. Once on my feet, I turned so that his back was against the door and fell to my knees before him. I hold his gaze with mine as I deftly undo his belt and pants. Once loosened, I reach in and pull his cock and balls out.

I loved his cock. It was the perfect size and fit in my mouth like it belonged there. I didn't tease him first. I just slid my mouth down his cock and started sucking for all I was worth. There was a game I liked to play when I was giving them head. Trying to make them come down my throat before they couldn't take it and had to fuck me. I never won, but then

again, I never lost either. Sex with them was definitely a two-way street, and all the roads led to me. They weren't happy getting off unless I did first. Even knowing that, I loved to see how close to the edge I could push them.

Grant's moans flowed into each other as I worked him over. I cupped his balls, massaged them, and started doing a mental happy dance when I felt them tighten. I was going to win for once! I should have known it wouldn't be that easy. With a roar, Grant pulled me off of him by the hair, nearly losing himself down my throat.

"Naughty girl," he growled. He bent down to kiss my pouting lips and then hauled me to my feet. He undressed me and then cleared everything from my desk and lifted me onto it. After stripping off his clothes, he climbed on top of me and sank into my pussy. "Fuck you feel so good, Nova. It feels like coming home. This is where I belong, between your thighs, dragging moans and orgasms out of you until you have no more to give."

I moan at his words. His dirty talk always turned me on, and coupled with his perfect dick pounding into my core, he never had any trouble making me come. We didn't have time for multiple orgasms this time, so instead of withdrawing when I reached my release, he fucked me through it, letting himself fall over the edge as well. We basked in the afterglow for several minutes before he climbed off me, and we got dressed. Once we were decent again, he kissed me goodbye and opened the office door. Standing on the other side, not hiding the fact

that they knew exactly what we had been up to were Lincoln, Stef, and Jared.

“You big, dirty cheater!” Linc accused Grant.

“Carpe Diem, brother,” Grant replied with a smirk as he turned and kissed me goodbye. “Talk to you later, Star.”

I turned to greet Linc, who gave me a smoldering look. “My turn.” He pushed me back into the office, his lips already on my neck.

“Get back to work,” I yelled to Stef and Jared over his shoulder as the door slammed shut.



### **14 Days Until New Year's Eve**

I looked around, pleased with how everything had come together. Mick delivered the Christmas tree yesterday as promised, and the man was even more entertaining in person

than he was over the phone. He had gone to college with my men and enjoyed regaling me with every embarrassing story about them that he could think of. Grant's lighting guys were currently stringing lights and decorations on the tree and were confident they would have everything done in time for the lighting tonight. The ice skating rink had been set up yesterday and already had skaters enjoying it. All participating businesses and vendors had their stalls running, and I swung by the cookie decorating tent to make sure Stef and Jared had everything ready. We spent countless hours baking cookies and making the icing that would be used to decorate them.

My last area to double-check was Santa's Village. This was where Peter cornered me. After I assured Santa, the elves, and the photographer had everything under control, I stepped out of the area and ran right into him. He had to have been waiting for me.

"Just the little Christmas whore I was waiting for," he sneered as he grabbed my arm in a bruising grip and yanked me off to the side behind the Christmas Village sign. "I thought I fucking told you to break shit off with my bosses? How fucking dumb do you have to be to see that they're fucking using you?"

"You mean like you were? Maybe you're incapable of seeing my worth, but they aren't. Business trips, my ass. You've never been sent on a business trip. I wonder what else you've lied about," I replied heatedly.

“You listen to me, you fat slut,” he spit, getting in my face, “if you tell Brandy the truth, I’ll—,” he was cut off as an arm reached over me and shoved him backward into Ben’s chest. I didn’t know where they had come from, but I was certainly glad to see them.

Peter’s demeanor immediately changed as the anger seeped out of him. “I didn’t mean anything. I wouldn’t do anything to her,” he said quickly.

“I’ll tell you what, Peter,” Lincoln said, stepping between us. “Come near Nova again, and you will find yourself unemployed. You’ve both moved on. She’s happy. Leave her alone.”

“Whatever. As if I would want her when you’re done with her,” he snapped. He turned and walked away quickly.

When he was about ten steps away, Lincoln called after him, “As if we’re stupid enough to let someone like her go in the first place.”

“You ok?” Grant asked as I leaned my back against his chest.

“Yeah,” I replied as he rubbed my arms. I winced as he applied pressure to the spot that Peter had grabbed. Grant didn’t notice, but Ben had been watching me and didn’t miss it. He stepped in front of me and cradled my arm in his hand gently as he lifted the sleeve of my sweater. A hand-shaped bruise was already forming.

“I’ll fucking kill him,” Ben said, turning red.

“Let it go. Please, just let it go,” I pleaded. “I don’t think he will bother me anymore now that you’ve threatened his job. He isn’t worth it.”

“Fine,” Ben agreed begrudgingly. “But if he steps a single toe out of line, he will be fired.”

“That’s fair,” I replied, standing on my toes to kiss him softly. I checked the other two to ensure they had their anger in check. I could tell that they were pissed but didn’t want to upset me further, so they were managing it. “Thank you for coming to my rescue.”

“Any time, Nova. Every time,” Grant swore.

“Why don’t you put down that clipboard and come enjoy the festival you put together with us?” Linc suggested.

“I don’t know. Something could go wrong.”

Ben snatched the clipboard from me and handed it to one of the volunteers passing by. “Here ya go, buddy. You’ve been promoted. If you can’t solve the problem, find someone else. Nova is officially off duty.”

“Ben!” I scolded.

“Sorry, Sugar. I realize that my mistake was framing it as a question. I meant it’s time to put the clipboard down and enjoy yourself.”

I glared at Lincoln, but I couldn’t hold it for long when he smiled that twinkling smile at me. At this point, I wasn’t sure who had who wrapped around their little finger, me or them.



“Fine. Let’s dive into the Christmas spirit,” I concede.

We hit the vendors first, and we made sure to buy something from each of them as a way of thanking them for donating their time to the festival. When I dragged them to the ice skating rink, things got comical.

“I don’t know about this, Sugar,” Linc said as I glided out onto the ice. Ben and Grant followed me easily, but Linc was still at the entrance.

“You have skated before, right?” I asked.

“Yeah, but I’m not very good,” he replied.

Grant and Ben snickered behind me. “That’s the understatement of the year,” Grant said.

“By not very good,” Ben added, “he means he falls down a lot.”

I skated back to him poorly hiding my amusement. “You mean to tell me there’s something you aren’t good at?” I teased. “Come on,” I said, holding out my hands, “I’ll help you.”

He took my hands and gingerly stepped onto the ice. I began to skate backward, pulling him with me, and he was good for about ten seconds. Then his legs started flailing, and suddenly he was on his ass, pulling me down on top of him. Grant and Ben were laughing as they skated over to help us.

“What the hell happened?” I laughed. “You were doing so good!”

“Ice. Ice happened. Who the hell thought sticking knives on the bottom of your boots to slide around on ice was a good idea?” Linc complained.

“Someone with far better balance than you,” I replied as Ben lifted me to my feet. Once I was up, he and Grant got Lincoln standing again. “Do you know how to roller skate?”

“Yeah. I’m good on wheels,” Linc replied.

“It’s practically the same thing!” Grant exclaimed.

“The hell it is. This is ice; ice is the devil,” Linc lamented dramatically.

I held my hands out to him again. “Boys, stick to his sides in case he tries to go down again. Linc, just do what you would do if you were skating on wheels.”

It took some time, but by the time we called it quits, Linc was managing to stay up and even did a couple of laps on his own. Once we were done with skating, we headed over to the cookie decorating tent to help the foster kids decorate cookies.

Seeing them with the kids did something to my insides. This was their true purpose in life. Helping kids in need. Their patience and the way they coaxed smiles from each child was captivating, and how much they cared about the kids radiated from them.

When we were done decorating cookies, I convinced them to take a picture with Santa with me.

“Is this really necessary?” Grant grumbled.

“Yes. It’s the perfect way to remember the day. Besides, pictures with Santa are crucial. How else are you going to tell him what you want for Christmas?” I asked, poking him in the stomach as we waited in line.

I squealed as he grabbed me and wrapped me in a bear hug. “Maybe I already have what I want for Christmas,” he growled into my neck, making my stomach flip-flop.

“Well, then you should say thank you,” I replied. When it was our turn, we stepped up to Santa, and I went to sit in his lap.

“What the hell are you doing?” Grant asked as he grabbed my hand before I could sit.

“Sitting on Santa’s lap,” I replied, confused.

“The hell you are!” I looked from him to Linc and Ben, who were hiding their smiles behind their hands. Was he serious?

“Oh, lighten up, Scrooge,” Lincoln finally said. “It’s Santa. And it will only be for a few seconds. Unclench.”

Ben smacked his hand away from me and helped me into Santa’s lap while Linc moved Grant into position next to Santa’s chair.

“Thanks for being here, Santa,” I said to the elderly man as the photographer positioned Linc and Grant.

“Happy to be here!” the jolly old man exclaimed. “I hope this will become an annual event again. I’ve missed it.”

“It will be if I have anything to say about it,” I assured him. We smiled for the camera, got our picture taken, and went to the photo pick-up spot to wait for our copy. Well, most of us smiled. I burst out laughing when I saw that Grant was glaring at Santa in the picture. “This is amazing. It’s definitely getting hung on the wall.”

Grant’s cheeks turned pink with embarrassment. “We can go back and get a better one if you want,” he said sheepishly.

“Nope,” I said, holding the picture to my chest protectively. “This one’s a keeper.”

As the sun began to set, the tree-lighting ceremony started. The Mayor got up and thanked me for organizing the festival, which he hoped would become an annual town event again. There seemed to be a consensus on that. He thanked the other businesses for their contributions and then thanked Triple Tech for sponsoring the Christmas tree. He then called the three winners within their respective age groups from the cookie decorating contest to join him on stage. We counted from three, and the winners flipped the switch to the lights. Thousands of lights lit at once, illuminating the square and causing a collective gasp from the group.

Someone started singing “O Christmas Tree,” with everyone present joining in. It was cheesy and an absolutely perfect moment.

# Chapter 23

## Lincoln

### 11 Days Until New Year's Eve

I spun in my office chair, bored out of my damn mind. Things were crazy around the office, as it usually is before a big product launch. Unfortunately, I had nothing to do, but I couldn't leave in case something cropped up that needed my attention. I went to the window, watching the snow fall gently. My mind wandered to Nova as it always did lately when I wasn't occupied with work. I couldn't remember the last time we had such a festive holiday season, and it was all thanks to Nova. She brought so much joy into our lives in the last month. The contract was almost completed, and I had started having a recurring nightmare that when the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve, Nova disappeared in a cloud of smoke, taking her Christmas magic with her.

While I knew we were all in love with Nova, we hadn't discussed what would happen after New Year's. Grant made it

clear that he wouldn't pursue a permanent relationship with her without figuring out how we would balance work and Nova. But then they didn't discuss it again, which drove me crazy. I knew what I wanted. Nova. But I couldn't ignore Grant's logic. We would only end up hurting her if we couldn't find a viable solution, but I didn't know that I had the strength to walk away from her. Not anymore.

"Fuck it," I swore as I grabbed my coat and keys. I needed to see her- now. If they need me, they can get ahold of me on my cell phone. I drove by Icing first and saw her car. I park behind her and go inside. By now, Stef barely batted an eye when I came in. I winked at the kid as I passed her, ringing up a customer, and went into the kitchen. I smiled as soon as my eyes landed on Nova. As predicted, she was decorating cupcakes and dancing to the music. I didn't know exactly what the future would hold, but for now, she was still mine.

I walked up behind her and wrapped my arms around her, moving my hips with hers as I kissed her neck. She melted into me, and a heat spread through my chest. The way her body responded to my touch would never get old.

"This is a pleasant surprise," she said as she set her piping bag down and turned in my arms to kiss me.

"I was bored out of my mind at work and desperate to see you," I told her. "What are you working on?"

"I'm getting the last of the Christmas orders filled. Want to help?"

"I don't want to mess anything up."

“Nonsense. I’ll give you the easy tasks.” She went over to the wall and grabbed an apron to toss at me. “Put that on and go wash your hands.”

When I rejoined her at the table, she showed me how to sprinkle candy cane crumbles on the cupcakes she had iced. We worked together for the rest of the afternoon, decorating and packaging the cupcakes. When my cell phone started ringing, I groaned. I knew they’d call me back eventually.

“Sorry, Sugar. That’s my cue. I have to get back to the office,” I said as I removed the apron and hung it on the wall.

“I understand,” she assured me. “Thank you for coming and helping. I enjoyed and appreciate your help. If Triple Tech doesn’t work out, you have a job here.”

I laughed as I hauled her against me and captured her lips with mine. She tasted sweeter than any cupcake she could bake. “I’ll be glad when this tracker launches and I have more time to spend with you.” I felt her stiffen slightly. I knew it was because of the casual way I mentioned time after New Year’s. A conversation that was long overdue to be had with her. All we ever offered her were subtle hints. We needed to figure this out sooner rather than later.

“The tracker launches in January, right?” Her question confirmed my previous thoughts about her reaction.

“It does.” I stepped back so that I could look at her. “We don’t have it all figured out yet, Nova, but we will.”

She gave me a small, hopeful smile. That smile stayed with me the entire drive back to my office. As I pulled into the lot, I made a decision. No matter what, I would make sure I made time for Nova and developed a healthier work/life balance. I'm not letting her go, and my brothers better get on board and figure their shit out, or I'll keep her for myself.



# Chapter 24

## Nova

### 8 Days Until New Year's Eve

The sound of car doors had me running to look outside, hoping to see the guys had gotten here, but it was just the neighbor's kid coming to visit. They were late. We were supposed to go Christmas shopping and buy my dress for the New Year's Eve party. I had confirmed with them last night that we were still on for today, but now they were forty-five minutes late. I sent another text to Lincoln asking where they were as I made myself sit on the couch instead of obsessively watching the street. A few minutes later, my phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Sugar," Linc said. I could already hear the regret in his voice.

"You aren't coming," I stated.

"I'm sorry," he apologized. "Something blew up in production, literally, and we're trying to figure out how far

back this will set us.”

“And you just figured out that you weren’t going to make it?” I cringed at the snap in my tone but didn’t apologize for it.

“Well, we got focused on the problem and lost track of time,” he replied lamely. “We’ll make it up to you.”

I sighed. “You always do. But if you just showed up when you said you would to begin with, there wouldn’t be anything to make up for.”

“You’re right. I know you are. We’re going to figure this out, Nova,” he assured me.

I had my doubts. I was also painfully aware that I didn’t have any right to demand their time. We weren’t even in an official relationship. “Listen, it’s fine,” I finally said when the silence had stretched. “It’s probably for the best. Now I can get your presents without you trying to peek. And now you won’t be able to see the dress until New Year’s. That’s your punishment.”

“Aww, man,” he said with disappointment. “I guess that’s fair. Talk to you when you get back? Maybe we can grab dinner.”

“Yeah, sure. I’ll call you when I’m home,” I replied. “Oh, and Linc? Did you ever consider that the problem won’t be solved any faster with you guys breathing down their necks rather than letting the people you hired do their job? Something to think about.”

I hung up the phone and grabbed my purse. As I steered the car toward the highway, I thought about the guys. This wasn't the first time they had to cancel our plans, and it wouldn't be the last. It was frustrating that they completely forgot about the plans altogether. When they were with me, they were attentive, considerate, and present in the moment. The problem was all the other times. Was this something I could constantly deal with?

I thought back to what Lincoln said the other day at the bakery. Could he mean he wants to keep seeing me after New Year's? What about the other two? Could I be with only one of them? I wasn't sure. What I was sure of was that walking away from them would be torture. However, I couldn't seem to silence the little voice inside me that asked if staying was any better.

What would I do if I wasn't given a choice? Without anything or anyone to stay here for, maybe it will be time to move on. I could open a bakery anywhere. That was something to put a pin in for consideration if things didn't work out with the guys. My thoughts of the future halted as I pulled into the mall. I had a long list of gifts to purchase. I also needed to find a dress for New Year's Eve.

I shopped for the dress first and was pleased with the one I found. It was more daring than I would usually wear, but I couldn't wait to see the guys' faces when they saw me in it. My next stop was gifts for Stef and Jared. They would be getting a cash bonus from me for all of their hard work this year, but I wanted to get each a small gift as well. Shopping

for teenagers proved more difficult than expected, but I got Jared a new Xbox controller and a game. I got Stef a new bullet journal and new pens. That girl loved her stationery.

I shopped for the guys next. One of the times I had been at their house, I had done a little snooping and found a picture of them in cap and gown with Mama Clair stuffed in a box. I pulled the folder I had placed the picture in from my bag as I walked into the photography store. I explained that I wanted the picture blown up and selected a pretty cherry wood frame to go in. They assured me that it would be done in a few hours, which left me plenty of time to finish the rest of my shopping.

I picked out engraved cufflinks for the guys. It was the best that I could come up with. What do you get men who lack for nothing and can buy whatever they need? The next item on my list was to find matching pajamas. I went to one of the department stores for them and found super cute green and red plaid bottoms with matching white long-sleeve shirts with the plaid pattern in a wreath on the front. We were going to look so fucking cute.

Feeling hungry, I headed toward the food court but stopped outside Victoria's Secret. I chewed my lip indecisively. It had been a while since I bought myself any nice lingerie. My eyes fell on a red number with white feathery trim. Very festive. Feeling brave, I went in and purchased one in my size after trying it on and feeling sexy in it. Sexier than I had felt in a long time. Leaving the store feeling good about myself, I didn't notice the woman walking in until she called my name.

“Nova?”

I turned, and it took me a moment to place her. “Brandy, hi. How are you?”

“I’m doing good. I’m just finishing up my holiday shopping,” she replied.

“Same,” I said, holding up my bags. I’m not sure if it was my boosted confidence or the Christmas Spirit, but I heard myself invite her for a cup of coffee. In my heart of hearts, I knew that I had to tell her about Peter. She deserved to know the facts, and if she still wanted to be with him, then that was her choice.

We got our coffee and sat awkwardly while I built the courage to open my mouth. “Listen, Brandy. You seem like a nice person. This isn’t my business, but you should know that Peter and I were together for three years. He moved out shortly before Thanksgiving. When he told me he was traveling for business, he would see you.”

She took a sip of her coffee and set it on the table. “He told me you would say that,” she replied calmly. “He warned me that you had a hard time letting go, and while he broke it off months before we met, it took all that time for you to accept it.”

Laughter bubbled out of me, surprising her. “Of course, he did, the little egotistical lying cockroach. You can believe what you wish. If you’re happy with that little weasel, then congratulations. I truly wish you a lifetime of happiness, but I wouldn’t have been able to live with myself if I didn’t tell you

the truth. I hope he can be a better man for you than he was for me.”

“I appreciate your concern. Whatever the truth is, he loves me and treats me like a princess.”

“Good. I’m glad.” We sat in silent contemplation as we sipped our coffee.

“You know,” she said after some time, “your version of events does explain why he is so upset about you dating the owners of Triple Tech. He rants about it often, and I couldn’t figure out why he cared so much if it was over so long ago.”

“Yes. He expressed his anger to me at the festival. Hopefully, he can move past it.”

Brandy nodded. “Thank you for telling me and for the coffee. You’ve given me something to think about.”

We stood, and on impulse, I hugged her. “If you ever need to talk or just need a cupcake to improve your day, you know where to find me.”

“Thanks.”

I watched Brandy walk away and hoped things would work out for her. She did seem like a nice woman. Maybe even someone I could be friends with one day. I finished shopping, grabbed stocking stuffers, and picked up the picture. On the way home, I stopped at the craft store for stockings and supplies to decorate with them. I pretended that I hadn’t purchased ten new rolls of wrapping paper. In my defense, you can never have too much pretty paper.

# Chapter 25

## Benjamin

### 6 Days Until New Year's Eve

I finished wrapping the final gift we had gotten Nova for Christmas and checked my watch. We needed to get to her house and were dangerously close to running late. “Guys! Let’s go!” I yelled. I rolled my shoulders to relieve some of the tension in them. We have been working long hours preparing for the launch, and I was looking forward to having two days off to spend with Nova. Christmas was finally here, meaning it was only a week until New Year’s, and we hadn’t figured anything out yet. I wasn’t going to focus on that right now. I was going to focus on Christmas with our little Christmas star.

Lincoln and Grant finally came downstairs with their overnight bags. I grabbed mine, and we each grabbed some gifts, loaded up the Jeep, and left. When we got there, we let ourselves into Nova’s house and were greeted by Christmas music and delicious smells.

“Hey guys!” she called from the kitchen as we brought everything in. Grant took our bags to her bedroom while Linc and I added our gifts to the ones already under the tree.

“Smells amazing, Baby,” I told her as I wrapped my arms around her.

“Thanks.” The alarm on the stove beeped. “Can you dump the lasagna noodles into the strainer in the sink for me?” Nova reached into the fridge and pulled out a charcuterie board she had already made for us to snack on.

“Sure can.” I grabbed the pot holders and carefully poured the boiling water through the strainer, avoiding the steam.

“Do we have to go caroling tonight?” Grant grumbled as he entered the kitchen and swept Nova into a kiss, dipping her playfully.

“Yes! It will be fun,” she admonished him when he released her.

“Fine. But I’m only doing this for you.”

“And I appreciate it. I’ll make sure to reward you properly later.”

“Oh, really? Well, I like the sound of that.” He reached for her again, but she skipped out of reach.

“You have to earn it first,” she teased.

A loud pop startled all of us and had us looking in Linc’s direction. He stood there with a bottle of champagne and four glasses in front of him. “What?” he asked.



“Champagne? This early in the day?” Nova asked.

“It’s a holiday! We deserve to celebrate!” Linc explained.

“Plus, it will help us get through caroling,” Grant added sullenly.

Nova rolled her eyes as she accepted a champagne flute from Lincoln. “To a happy Christmas,” Nova toasted, raising her glass. We all clinked glasses, and she briefly sipped hers before putting the glass down and returning to the food preparations. Watching her assemble the lasagna for tonight’s dinner was like watching an artist at work. She added the ingredients layer by layer, using more cheese than I suspected the recipe usually called for until the disposable aluminum pan was nearly overflowing.

“How on earth will you get that into the oven without the pan bending and spilling?” Grant asked.

Nova winked at him as she pulled out a baking sheet. With practiced moves, she slid the lasagna from the counter and onto the baking sheet without spilling a drop. “And now we can easily put it in the oven or anywhere else without losing it,” Nova announced. She covered it loosely with aluminum foil and popped it into the oven. “Ok. We have about an hour to get some caroling in. Come on!” she said excitedly as she downed the rest of her champagne and rushed to the door.

“Am I the only one that isn’t looking forward to this?” Grant asked quietly as we followed her to the door.

“Are you kidding me?” I asked incredulously. “I am fucking dreading this. This is a living nightmare, but look at how happy she is. If I have to do this to put that smile on her face, I’ll do it every fucking day for the rest of my life with a smile.”

Grant sighed in defeat as we stepped outside. “I’m being an ass again, aren’t I?”

“Yes,” Lincoln answered as he squeezed between us to run ahead and join Nova.

Thankfully, we weren’t the only ones out caroling. Apparently, it was an annual thing that some of the neighbors on her street got together to do. We caught up to Nova and Lincoln and blended into the rest of the crowd. “As long as we sing loud enough for Nova to hear us, we’ll be good,” I whispered to Grant. He nodded in agreement as our pack of merry singers stopped at a house. A little girl in a red dress ran up to the door and knocked three times before running back to her mother, grinning widely.

“Awww. She’s so adorable,” Nova gushed. I looked at Nova as the thought of children crossed my mind for the first time. Did she want kids? Did I want kids? I glanced at my brothers to gauge their reaction. Lincoln was practically drooling as he stared at her, so I guess that meant he was interested. I looked at Grant and barked a laugh that quickly became a cough. His face was white as his eyes bounced between Nova and the little girl. So the thought hadn’t occurred to him either. Good to know.

I didn't get the chance to broach the subject because the moment the front door opened and its occupants stepped onto the porch, the group launched into "Jingle Bells," complete with actual jingle bells that someone had brought along. When the song ended, we transitioned into "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" as we walked to the next house. We didn't need to knock at this house, as the elderly couple were already on their front steps waiting for us.

By the fourth house, the three of us were some of the loudest in the group as we got caught up in the festivities. I couldn't remember ever experiencing anything like this before. Spreading joy and seeing how much people were enjoying our singing was infectious. When it was time to return to the house for dinner, Nova had to drag us away physically.

"Ok, I hate to admit it, but that was a lot more fun than I thought it would be," Grant said.

"I told you it would be fun," Nova laughed.

"We'll never doubt you again, doll," I told her. When we stepped into the house, I breathed deeply and exhaled with a moan. "That smells fantastic!" I exclaimed as my stomach rumbled in agreement.

"Ok, while I get the rolls in the oven, can you guys get the table set?" Nova asked. "There is a salad in the fridge as well."

"We're on it, Sugar," Linc replied, kissing her cheek.

Thirty minutes later, we were sitting down to eat. Grant refilled our champagne flutes as I took a piping hot bite of

lasagna. “Fuck that is good,” I said around my food, causing Nova to beam happily. As we ate, we discussed the festival and what changes should be made for next year, then the conversation shifted to the gingerbread contest.

“Are you sure you will be able to get off?” Nova asked. She was worried about it, and I couldn’t blame her. Each day, we were spending longer hours at the office.

“Positive,” I assured her. Come hell or high water, we would be there.

“I’m really looking forward to it,” Lincoln said excitedly. “I’ve never made a gingerbread house before.”

When dinner was finished and cleaned up, Nova returned to the dining room with bags and a giant grin. “So I remembered that you guys said that Mama Clair had you decorate your stockings every Christmas Eve,” she said. “So when I went Christmas shopping the other day, I stopped at the craft store and got us stockings to decorate. Are you interested?”

“Hell, yes!” Lincoln said excitedly.

Grant and I exchanged grins as we grabbed the bags from her. We hadn’t decorated stockings since Mama Clair died, but up until then, even as adults, she had insisted we participate in the tradition. It felt like we were reclaiming a piece of our childhood as we spread out the supplies and got to work. I dutifully showed Nova the best way to apply the puff paint to the felt material of the stocking. By the time we were all done, glitter covered us and the table, but we had four new stockings to hang over the fireplace. I wish I could say that our

techniques had improved since we were kids, but they hadn't. Nova's was the only stocking that didn't look like a six-year-old had decorated it. She had the unfair advantage of working with frosting and being artistic.

"Thank you for this," I told her as I pulled her into my arms after we had hung them.

"Thank you for sharing your tradition with me," she replied, relaxing against me. It made me smile. A month ago, she wouldn't have allowed herself to lean on anyone because she thought she was too heavy. Now, she leaned against me without giving it a thought.

"Now what?" I asked.

"Now for my next surprise," she said excitedly, dashing from the room again.

"She's a little too happy; something's up," Grant said, eyeing the hallway warily.

"Who cares," Linc replied, playfully bumping him with his shoulder. "It's Christmas Eve! Santa's coming tonight!"

"I hope he won't be the only one," Nova joked as she returned to the room wearing cute pajamas. When she pulled three boxes from behind her back, I groaned. The boxes were clothing boxes, and that could only mean one thing. I accepted the box and opened it to find a white shirt with a plaid wreath in my size.

"Matching jammies!" Lincoln cheered. Grant and I looked at him in shock.

“Who the fuck are you, and what have you done with my brother?” Grant asked. “If I told you a month ago that we’d be wearing matching pajamas, you would have told me to fuck off.”

“That’s you. If you told me tomorrow that we’d be wearing matching pajamas, I would tell you to fuck off,” Linc replied. “This isn’t for you; it’s for Nova, and I’ll do anything she wants if it will make her happy.”

I rolled my eyes at him. He’s always been a fucking suck up.

“Thank you, Lincoln,” Nova said as she kissed him. When she went to break the kiss, he grabbed her and deepened it. While he occupied her mouth, he flipped us off behind her back.

“Asshole,” I muttered under my breath as I stripped down to my boxers and started pulling on the pajamas. Grant followed suit, and we were both dressed by the time Lincoln finally released her.

“Look how cute we look!” Nova gushed as Linc rushed to change. “Ok! Milk, cookies, the fire, and “A Christmas Carol” to finish the evening.”

We piled onto the couch with Grant and me on either side of her and Lincoln on the floor between her legs. “Do you know who he reminds me of?” I whispered to Nova as we watched Scrooge bark at his employee for trying to add more coal to the fire. When she looked at me, I pointed at Grant, who kept pulling at the collar of his shirt and scowling at his milk.

Nova started giggling, capturing his attention, and his face immediately smoothed. Weren't the three of us just a bunch of smitten kittens? As Nova's attention returned to the movie, I continued to watch her. Lincoln was practically purring as she ran her hands through his hair. Not that she noticed. Her eyes were glued to the screen, her lips sometimes moving along with the dialog. She has likely seen the movie once or twice a year throughout her life, but it still held magic for her.

“What do you think about dragging your mattress out and sleeping here tonight?” Grant asked her when the movie ended.

“Oh, yes. That's a wonderful idea, Grant,” Nova replied as she climbed into his lap and kissed him.

He smirked at us as Nova got up. “You're not the only one that can be all cutesy,” he told Lincoln when she was out of earshot.

“Whatever, man, let's just get the couch moved out of the way and the mattress relocated,” Lincoln told him as he jumped to his feet. While they moved the couch, I followed Nova into the bedroom to get the bedding off so we could move the mattress more easily.

“Nova?” I called when I found the bedroom empty.

“In here,” she replied from behind the bathroom door. “You guys set the bed up, and I'll be out in a few minutes.”

“Everything ok?” I asked, worried that she wasn't feeling well.

“Yep!” she assured me. I shrugged and left her to handle her business as I scooped all the blankets and pillows off the bed and carried them to the living room. I passed Grant and Lincoln on the way, and it was only a minute or two before they were following me back out, carrying Nova’s queen mattress between them. We were getting the blankets and pillows set up when Nova returned.

“Do you guys want to be naughty and open a present early?” Nova purred. Our heads lifted, and my jaw dropped at the vision before me. Nova was wearing a red negligee with white trim, sheer red thigh-high stockings, and the sexiest pair of heels I’d ever seen. That could have to do with the woman wearing them, though.

“Holy shit,” Grant whispered.

“Merry Christmas to us,” Lincoln added, just as quiet.

I still couldn’t form words as I stared at her in awe. It wasn’t just the lingerie but the confidence that radiated from her. I was so proud of how far she had come.



# Chapter 26

## Nova

**M**y heart pounded as I waited for them to say or do something. It had taken every ounce of courage I had to walk out here, even after seeing my reflection and deciding that I looked fucking hot.

Just as I was about to cave and run back to my room in mortification, Benjamin suddenly jumped to his feet and rushed to me so fast I wasn't sure his feet touched the carpet. Before I could react, he wrapped an arm around me and hauled my body against his, slipping a large thigh between my legs and crashing his lips to mine.

I whimpered as his thigh pressed against my core, and my hips rotated against him, seeking more friction. In response, he pulled me even higher so that more of my weight pressed against him.

Hands that didn't belong to him landed on my hips, pushing and pulling so that my pussy slid against Ben's thigh. The barely there fabric of my panties did little to protect me from

the material of his pants. “That’s it, baby,” Grant whispered, his hot breath caressing my ear. “Ride his thigh.”

My moan broke the kiss as my head fell back against Grant’s shoulder. Benjamin didn’t skip a beat as his lips trailed down my neck. My eyes fluttered open as I searched for Lincoln. I found him leaning against the wall next to me, stroking his bulge through his pajamas. I met his eyes, and he smiled.

“Don’t worry about me, Sugar,” he said as he lifted his other hand to show me the small bottle of lube he had fetched from somewhere. “I’ll have my fun soon enough.”

I felt my blood turn to lava at his words and their meaning. I hadn’t had anal sex before, but that was going to change tonight. Fuck, I hope I can take him. I had an unwavering craving to have all three of my men in all three of my... holes..., and if that made me a wanton slut then I accept that. I’ll be their wanton slut.

Sensing my mind had wandered, Ben bit my shoulder hard enough to make me gasp, bringing my mind back to the present. “We aren’t taking this any further until you come for us, Nova,” Ben promised. “So if you want to feel our cocks inside you, I suggest you focus.”

I moaned as I continued to grind my clit against him while Grant’s hands slid up my body to cup my tits. He took a step back so that my body leaned back further. “Taste her, brother,” Grant ordered as he guided my nipple to Ben’s waiting mouth.

“Oh, yes,” I whined

“She likes that,” Lincoln commented. “Try the other one.”

Ben’s mouth trailed across my chest to the other nipple Grant held for him. Ben’s tongue flicked out against it shortly before his teeth closed around the bud, holding it in place as his tongue continued teasing.

“Please,” I begged, needing more.

“You know what you need to do, Sugar,” Lincoln said.

My hips moved faster, chasing an orgasm that still felt out of reach. One of Grant’s hands slid down my stomach and into my panties.

“Why don’t I help you with that, Little Star?” he whispered. His fingers dipped inside me, and he moaned into my neck. “So fucking wet for us already.” He used his fingers to drag my arousal to my clit, moving them in tight circles over my sensitive button. Pleasure radiated through my body, catapulting me toward an orgasm. I didn’t stop moving my hips, and together, we tipped me over the edge. Moans fell from my mouth uninhibited as I came.

“Fuck, I love to hear you come, baby,” Ben said as he nipped my neck.

“Why don’t we move this to the bed,” Lincoln suggested.

Grant lifted me into his arms bridal style and carried me over. “Who do you want where, Nova?” he asked as he lowered me to the mattress.

I bit my lip as they stood around me, stripping their clothes and stroking their cocks. I don’t know when I became God’s

favorite, but I wasn't complaining.

"Tell us what you want," Grant instructed.

"I want you in my mouth," I replied. A slow grin spread across his face.

"I've been waiting to fuck that pretty mouth," he said huskily.

I licked my lips as my heart tried to jump out of my chest. "I want Ben in my pussy," I continued, shifting my eyes to him.

"Which leaves your ass for me," Lincoln finished. "Now that everyone knows where they will be, Grant, on your back. You're going to eat that pretty little pussy while I get her ready for me."

Ben helped me remove my lingerie as Grant moved into position. Once I was naked, I crawled over Grant eagerly until I was hovering above his face. I met his eyes, and he winked at me before wrapping his arms around my thighs and pulling me down. I moaned as his wicked tongue snaked its way through my folds, sliding everywhere but where I wanted it most.

Lincoln's hand pressed between my shoulder blades, urging me to bend forward so that I was on all fours. "Good girl," he praised as his hand slid to my ass. He caressed my cheeks lightly before spreading them. I gasped a moment later when I felt something warm and wet slide against my rosebud. Lincoln was licking my ass! I tried to shift away from him as my face heated with embarrassment.

That was when Ben sat cross-legged before me, gently pushing me back again by my shoulders. His hands ran through my hair in feather-light touches, helping to distract me from what was happening behind me. “You are so fucking beautiful, Nova Lane,” he murmured to me before closing his mouth over mine. My lips parted, allowing his tongue to slip inside and lazily slid against mine. A part of my mind idly took note that all three of their tongues were in me at the same time, just like their cocks would be soon.

I gave myself over to Ben’s kiss and didn’t notice that Lincoln’s tongue was missing until I felt the cool lube as he probed my entrance. “Grant,” Lincoln said. I was confused for a moment until Grant’s wayward tongue curled around my clit, and he started sucking on it as Lincoln slipped the tip of his finger into my ass.

“Relax, baby,” Ben urged when he stopped kissing me. My head hung between my shoulders as I willed my body to relax around Linc’s digit. Grant worked me toward my next orgasm as Ben played with my nipples, and Lincoln worked his finger deeper into my ass, adding more lube as he went. Just as it was about to crest, Grant released my clit, gently lapping at my entrance.

“Noo,” I cried in frustration. Chuckles filled the room at my impatience. Jerks.

“Ok, Sugar. Time to try two,” Lincoln warned seconds before I felt a second finger press in next to the first. Grant

moved back to my clit, and I panted as my pleasure spiked again.

“You are doing so good, baby. I’m so proud of you,” Ben whispered before sucking my earlobe into his mouth. I was so close, and I whimpered as Lincoln’s fingers scissored inside me, gently spreading me open.

“Make her come,” he ordered.

Fingers plunged into my pussy, curling and pressing against my g-spot as Grant sealed his lips around my clit and tried to suck my soul from my body. I screamed as I came as the strongest orgasm I had ever felt without a cock inside me wracked my body in steadily building waves. My scream turned into a high-pitched whine as my limbs gave out on me. Ben’s strong arms caught me before I hit the mattress, holding me suspended above it as I rode out my orgasm on Grant’s face.

“I think she’s ready,” Lincoln chuckled as his fingers withdrew. Tremors were still running through me as they manipulated my body where they wanted me. Lincoln was now on his back as I was positioned, facing away from him. I could hear the wet sounds as he slicked his cock with lube. “Ok, Sugar. In this position, you’ll be able to control the pace and depth a little better. Then, Ben can join us when you’re ready, ok?” I gave a shaky nod. He kissed my back. “Such a good girl. Spread your cheeks open for me.”

I reached back and did as he asked, supporting myself on shaky knees. I wasn’t sure how much I’d be able to control

since my body still felt like jelly, but I trusted him to support me if they failed me. I felt the head of his cock press against my rosebud and braced myself.

“You have to relax, baby,” Ben reminded me as he knelt before me and moved my hands to his shoulders to brace myself. Grant knelt at my side, and his hand slid between my legs again to stroke my clit.

“You can do this, Nova,” Grant encouraged. “I know you can. You were made for us, and we were made for you. We fit together perfectly.”

I nodded as I concentrated on channeling the properties of a wet noodle. Once I had relaxed enough, I felt the head push past the tight ring. I let out a distressed yelp at the sudden invasion.

“Fuck, you’re strangling my cock, Sugar. You feel so good. It’s up to you now. If you want to stop, we can.” I shook my head. No. I wanted this. I just had to go slow. When I had adjusted to him, I moved my hips, taking him a fraction of an inch deeper. Slowly I worked his cock inside me, fueled by sheer determination. The guys showed endless patience and encouraged me with tender touches and praise. When Lincoln was fully seated inside me, I grinned at Ben proudly.

“I did it,” I rasped.

“You sure did, baby,” he praised as he brushed the hair from my sweaty brow. “Ready for me now?” I nodded but couldn’t see how this would work in our current positions.

Lincoln sat up, bracing himself on one arm. “Lean back on me, Sugar. Give Ben room to work.” His free arm wrapped around my body, bringing my back to his chest, and we moaned together as he shifted inside of me. I adjusted myself so my feet were on the mattress, and I was sitting in Lincoln’s lap.

Ben took over from there, his large hands spreading my thighs wider. “Fuck, baby,” he growled, “you have no idea what seeing you stretched around Linc’s cock does to me.” I watched as he gripped his dick and guided the head to my entrance. “Eyes on me, Nova. I want to see your eyes as I fill you.”

My eyes snapped to his, and he made an approving sound in his throat as he slowly sank inside me. “Oh, God,” I moaned as my pussy stretched around him. “It’s too much, oh shit, fuck, Ben!”

He stopped halfway inside me as he studied my face with concern. “Nova, do you want me to stop?” He started to slide out of me, so I dug my fingers into his sides and pulled him closer.

“Don’t you fucking dare,” I growled. “More, I need fucking more!”

“So hungry,” Grant praised as he turned my head toward him. “Here you go, Little Star, I’ll give you more.” He fed his cock into my waiting mouth, muffling my scream as Ben slammed home in one thrust. After only a couple of pumps, I came undone. The orgasm short-circuited my brain, and I felt



like I was floating. They continued to move me between them, using my body for their pleasure. All I could do was hold on and fight to stay conscious, desperately clawing against the dark so that I didn't miss the best sex of my life.

“Fuck, I'm going to come,” Linc said through gritted teeth.

“Me too,” Ben grunted. His thrusts sped up and became more erratic, rocking me faster on Lincoln's cock.

Grant hissed as he tangled both hands in my hair and held me in place as he fucked his way into my throat. “Keep moaning, Star. Don't fucking stop moaning. It feels so good on my cock.” Had I been able to think or talk, I would have told him I didn't have much choice in the matter.

Even though they were all close, there seemed to be an unspoken agreement that I had to come one more time. I wasn't one to look a gift horse in the mouth, but I wasn't sure I had another orgasm left in me. I was wrong. I just needed to hear the magic words.

“Come for us, Nova,” Ben ordered as Grant's hand slid to my neck, squeezing lightly, and Linc's hand slid between me and Ben to rub my clit. “Be a good girl and give us one more, Baby. We need it, just like we need you.”

That was all the permission my body needed to fall apart one last time so that they could put me back together again. We came together, and I let the darkness take me this time. When I came to, I was feeling empty and had Ben and Linc wrapped around me as Grant cleaned between my legs with a warm cloth.

“There you are,” Lincoln said smugly. “I was beginning to think we broke you.”

“You did,” I croaked. A glass of water appeared above me, and with their help, I sat up and took it from Ben with a grateful hum. I chugged the entire glass to replace all the fluids I’d lost. I was breathless as I handed the glass back to Ben. “I don’t think I can do that every night, but we are definitely doing that again.”

I fell flat against the mattress and reached for Grant as the other two wrapped around me again, pulling him to lay between my legs with his head resting on my stomach. I felt him kiss my belly as my eyes fell closed, and sleep claimed me.



**5 Days Until New Year’s Eve**

When I woke up the following day, the sky was starting to lighten. I stifled a groan as I maneuvered my way from between my still-sleeping hunks. Every muscle in my body was screaming in protest as I hobbled toward my room. I took a quick shower, redressed in the matching pajamas, and then dug into the back of my closet, where I had hidden the stocking stuffers. After ensuring they were still asleep, I collected and filled the stockings, leaving them resting against the gifts under the tree.

Once I had finished playing Santa Claus, I went into the kitchen and got the oven heating. After popping the breakfast casserole I had prepped into it, I focused on getting the turkey into the roaster. Most people only do turkey at Thanksgiving, but not in my house. My dad wasn't a fan of ham, so we did turkey for both holidays. This turkey took three days to get onto the table, but it was worth it. It was brined, smothered in a bacon herb butter, and then had a woven blanket of bacon placed over it. Once it was done cooking, the meat would fall off the bone. Hands down, it was the juiciest and most flavorful turkey I'd ever had.

Once I wrangled the turkey into the roaster, I chopped the onions and celery for the stuffing. The only downside to the bacon turkey was that you couldn't stuff it. The bacon and butter added too much salt to the juices, ruining the stuffing as they flowed through it and rendering the juices useless for making gravy. We learned that from experience the first year we tried the recipe.

When the breakfast casserole was done, I brewed a pot of coffee, and my men stirred like a siren to a sailor. I watched them from the kitchen as they pulled on their pajama bottoms, hauled my mattress back to the bedroom, and put the living room back together. They ventured into the kitchen to greet me only when everything was in order.

“Morning, Star,” Grant said as he hugged me from behind and kissed my neck. His voice was still gravelly from sleep, making my insides all tingly.

“Morning. Merry Christmas!”

“Merry Christmas,” they replied together.

Grant reached for his coffee, keeping one arm firmly locked around me. “Mmmm,” he said as he took a sip. “You make the best coffee. What smells so good?”

“I made breakfast!” I tried to move away from him to get plates and a spatula to serve them, but his arm tightened around me.

“Where do you think you’re going?” he asked. “You sit. We’ll get the food.” He set his mug down and lifted me onto the stool beside us. He braced his arms on the counter on either side of me and leaned in. “That’s an order,” he growled into my neck playfully. “Boys, get the food,” he said, sitting beside me.

I giggled at the looks on their faces. They grumbled under their breath, calling him all sorts of names, but didn’t protest as Ben grabbed the casserole and a spatula and laid them on

the island while Linc got plates and forks. They each gave me a morning kiss before taking their seats across from us. Grant cut each of us a piece of the French toast bake I had made us, and I moaned when I took a bite, the cinnamon and maple syrup flavors exploding on my tongue.

“How are you feeling, Sugar?” Lincoln asked, wagging his eyebrows suggestively.

I blushed and quickly took another bite to give myself time to take stock and answer him. “Sore but satisfied,” I finally replied. “What about you guys?”

“I feel fucking fantastic,” Ben said cheerily.

“Looking forward to next time,” Grant replied, giving me a heated look.

“Why not now?” Linc asked. “I’ve got the time.”

I snickered at his excitement, which rolled into a full laugh when Ben smacked him in the back of the head. “She said she was sore, dumbass. Give her time to recover.”

“Besides, you may have the time, but I don’t. We have to open presents, and then I have more cooking to do to eat at a decent hour.”

“I wish you would have agreed to let us order Christmas dinner instead of slaving away in the kitchen all morning,” Grant grumbled.

“I don’t mind,” I replied honestly. “I enjoy cooking Christmas dinner for the people I love. It’s a lot of work, but it’s made with love, and that is what matters.” All three of

them froze and looked at me, and it wasn't until I thought about what I had said that I realized what I'd done. How the fuck did I let that four-letter word fall so casually from my mouth? "Umm. I just meant that you've become important to me, and I like cooking for you," I said quickly. I grabbed my plate to take it to the sink and escape their eyes, but Grant's hand covered mine, stopping my retreat.

"Nova," he said, the demand to look at him clear in his voice. I looked up at him through my lashes, worrying my lip between my teeth. "My brothers and I have a lot to talk about after the New Year, but we care about you too. Far more than I could have ever anticipated. I never saw you coming, Little Star, and we must discuss changes we need to make before we can act on our feelings."

"Give us a little time, Sugar," Lincoln added softly.

Ben stretched his arm across the island and held his hand open for me to take. His thumb stroked my fingers as he squeezed them softly. "We just want to ensure we can be what you deserve."

I smiled at them and nodded. "I get it. There's no rush. We have all the time in the world to figure out the specifics together, right?" They nodded, relieved I wasn't pressing for more than they could give me now. "Thank you for letting me know where you stand. It's good to know there is a possibility after New Year's and the contract expiration." Grant and Ben released me, and I gathered our plates and brought them to the sink.

“Present time?” Lincoln asked excitedly.

“Present time,” I confirmed.

We brought our coffee into the living room and settled on the floor around the tree. I gave them their stockings and scrambled for my phone to take a picture of the excitement on their faces as they tore into them like kids. They insisted that I open the first official present, and a gasp fell from my lips as I opened the small box to reveal a small heart-shaped silver locket with a picture of me and my dad in front of a Christmas tree in it.

“Guys! It’s lovely,” I told them as I stroked the locket’s edge with a single finger and tried to hold back my tears. Fuck, I missed my dad. Grant took the box from me and twirled his finger to signal me to turn for him. I did and held up my hair as he secured the locket around my neck. I placed my hand over it as I turned back around. “I love it. Thank you.”

I had them open the cufflinks next, not that they in any way equaled the thoughtfulness of the locket. “We can wear these to the New Year’s Eve party,” Ben said after they had thanked me. My next gift from them was a new chef’s coat in a soft pink color with the Icing’s logo and my name on it.

“We couldn’t help but notice that you didn’t have one, and your aprons had seen better days,” Grant explained.

“It’s beautiful. Thank you!” I had never bothered to splurge for a chef’s coat, and I certainly never would have gotten one as nice as this. “I think you guys might be better at the gift giving than me,” I joked. “But this one will hopefully close the

gap a little,” I said as I pulled the large wrapped picture from behind the tree. “This is for all of you. I hope you like it.” I watched nervously as they opened the gift and stared at it. “If you don’t, you don’t have to hang it up,” I rambled. “I just noticed that you didn’t have a group picture with Mama Clair displayed. I found that one in a box and thought it was too good a picture to be hidden away.”

“We love it,” Lincoln said as they finally looked up from the picture.

They gently placed the picture on the couch as Ben reached for me and pulled me into their laps. “It’s the perfect gift,” he assured me.

“I had forgotten all about that picture,” Grant admitted, his voice choked with emotion.

“I’m afraid we have one more gift for you,” Lincoln said, leaving our little huddle to grab the last gift under the tree—or rather gifts since it was two boxes stacked together and secured with a ribbon. “And it’s going to blow the gap you just closed wide open.”

I opened the top box; this time, it was my turn to stare speechlessly. I can’t even wrap my head around how they managed to do it. I gently lifted the reindeer ornaments from the box. They were pristine and looked precisely how mine had looked the day I picked them out at the store. “How?” I finally managed to ask, looking from the ornaments to them and back again in wonder.

“It wasn’t easy,” Ben admitted.



“That’s an understatement,” Grant snorted. “We had a hell of a time tracking them down, but seeing the look on your face was more than worth it.”

“Open the second one,” Lincoln urged.

I opened the next box and looked at them in confusion. I wasn’t sure how to react or what the clear box was for. Ben smiled at me and then stood, carefully removing my reindeer ornaments from the tree. He sat back down on the floor as Grant took the box from me and lifted the lid off.

“We know how important these ornaments are to you. How special they are,” Lincoln explained as Ben carefully secured the ornaments to the bottom of the box with the clear embedded brackets. “So we got you new ones to still be on your tree and a display box to protect the originals from further damage.”

If I was surprised by the locket’s thoughtfulness, I was gobsmacked over this gift. I didn’t know how to express how much I loved it. “I don’t know what to say,” I said honestly. “It’s the most perfect gift there ever was. It isn’t something I had ever thought of doing. Thank you.” I wrapped my arms around them as best I could as the tears I had been holding back finally fell. I had been terrified of facing my first Christmas without my dad, and these men fell into my lap and made it one of the best I’d ever had.

I cried for what seemed like forever, but it was only a few minutes. My tears were from a mix of emotions. Grief as I mourned my dad. Joy for finding such incredible men to love

and love me back. Who reminded me of my self-worth and helped me find my confidence again. Even if this ended up only being for the season, I'd forever be grateful to them for the new memories they gave me.

# Chapter 27

## Grant

### 2 days Until New Year's Eve

I sat in my office staring at my computer screen without seeing the documents I was supposed to review. I glanced at my watch again to check the time. The gingerbread contest started at three, and I wanted to ensure we arrived early. We still had a couple of hours until we had to leave to pick up Nova. I meant what I had said to her Christmas morning at breakfast. I hadn't seen her coming. I wasn't prepared for the extent of my feelings for her. I craved her every minute that I was away from her. The contract was up in two days, meaning we had that many days to make a plan to keep her.

I pressed a button on my phone. "Joel?"

"Yes, sir?" Joel's voice replied through the speaker.

"Can you ask Lincoln and Benjamin to come to my office? We'll be in a private meeting for the rest of the afternoon until we have to leave. Hold all of our calls unless it's Nova."

“Yes, sir.”

It only took my brothers a few minutes to get to my office. “Lock the door and take a seat,” I instructed.

“What’s wrong?” Lincoln asked. “Is Nova ok?”

“Nova is fine,” I assured him, “but this is about her. We need to figure out how to keep our company going by working fewer hours. We all agree that we want to be with Nova, so we need to figure out how to do that. We can’t always be working. She deserves to be a priority.”

“Agreed,” Ben replied. “Letting her go isn’t an option for me anymore. And if I can’t have her to myself, I couldn’t think of two better people to share her with.”

“It’s kind of fitting, really,” Lincoln said. “We’ve always done everything together. Maybe that’s why relationships have never worked for us before. It needed to be a group effort to work.”

“We can discuss why later,” I said, getting us back on track. “It’s the how we’re here to discuss.”

“I’ve been thinking about that,” Lincoln said. “It’s pretty obvious, isn’t it? We need to promote people. We have plenty of employees that we trust who could do the job. We’ve never been willing to hand over the responsibilities of the day-to-day operations before.”

“Then let’s talk management. Who are our top choices for each department?” I asked, leaning forward to get to work. We developed a new management structure, allowing the most

effortless power transfer. We would remain the heads of the company and still plan to work closely on each new project, but on a more big-picture scale. We had just started to discuss specific employees for the new positions we were creating when there was a knock on my door.

“Guys?” Joel called through the door. Ben looked puzzled as he went to let our assistant in. He never interrupted our private meetings unless it was an emergency. “Sorry!” Joel said as he rushed in. “We have a problem. A big problem. Midland Sports Media is here, waiting for you in the conference room.”

“What do they want?” I asked with a growing feeling of dread.

“They want to renegotiate their contract, or they’re backing out completely,” Joel informed us.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Lincoln exclaimed. “We’re days away from product launch, and now they want to renegotiate their signed contract?”

“Yep. And they informed me that they’d pay the breach of contract fee if you refuse,” Joel continued.

“We’re busy this afternoon. Tell them we will meet with them in the morning,” I ordered.

“I did. They said they won’t be back if you don’t meet with them today.”

“Those fucking bastards,” I growled. Joel looked like he was ready to throw up, so I tried to rein in my anger. It wasn’t his fault.

“Thanks, Joel,” Ben said. “Let them know that we will be there shortly.” Joel nodded and hurried from the office. “They’re our biggest sponsor. We can’t brush them off.”

“I know that,” I snapped. Never mind that they were our biggest sponsor. We already had millions sunk into the completed ad campaigns set to launch soon. The fuckers had us between a rock and a hard place, and they knew it.

Ben sighed. “I’ll text Nova and tell her something came up, and she’ll have to meet us at the school.”

“We can’t miss this,” Lincoln reminded us. “She’s been planning this for weeks.”

“We won’t,” I growled as I stood, whipped my suit jacket off my chair, and put it on. “Let’s get this over with.”

# Chapter 28

## Nova

I shifted foot to foot in front of the school, clutching my blueprints. I rechecked the time. They had five minutes to get here. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. They would be here. They promised they would be able to get off, and they knew how important this was to me. I needed them to participate. The rules stated it had to be teams of two or more. After a couple of minutes, I started to pace as I anxiously watched for their car to enter the lot. A throat cleared behind me, and I turned to see the Mayor standing there with a sympathetic look.

“I’m sorry, Nova. We can’t wait any longer,” he said. “If your team isn’t here, you won’t be able to enter the contest.”

“They’ll be here. They just got caught up at work,” I assured him. “What if I got started and they join me when they do? It won’t be but mere minutes.” I hoped.

“I’m sorry,” he said again. “It’s against the rules. There’s always next year.” He squeezed my shoulder and then returned

inside. My shoulders sag in defeat as I drop to the bench nearby. Well, that was that.

I was still sitting on the bench when Ben's jeep came speeding into the parking lot. I checked my watch. It was four-thirty. They were an hour and a half late. I used that time to think about my life and future and made some important decisions. I stand as the Jeep screeches to a halt at the curb, and they pour out of it before it has stopped rocking. They were falling over themselves with apologies and explanations, all talking simultaneously.

Finally, I held up my hand to silence them and took a fortifying breath. "I get it. I'm a business owner, too. I know that sometimes, things come up that can't be avoided. Fires need to be put out, and your business should come first. You've worked hard for your success." I tried to smile but knew I wasn't very successful. "I'm not even mad. I'm just disappointed."

"Sugar," Linc said as he tried to hug me.

I held up my hand to stop him and took two steps back. If I let him touch me, I will lose my resolve, and I won't be able to do what needs to be done. "While I understand, this isn't what I want. Always being second to Triple Tech isn't how I want to live."

"Baby," Ben interrupts.

"I'm not done talking," I snap before continuing. "That feels entirely too much like settling, and I refuse to settle anymore."



I look at Grant, expecting him to try to interrupt next, but he's just glaring at me. He can see what's coming and is already building walls between us. It hurts, but I get it. I wish I could build walls so quickly. It would make this next part hurt less. I can feel the emotions threatening to choke me, and I know I have to get it out before they take over. I would do this without letting them see me cry.

I focus on a general spot between them. "Your part of the contract is complete. You don't owe me any more of your time. I will hold up my end of the contract as we agreed, but —" I stop to blink back tears as a sob threatens to erupt. "But I don't think we should see each other as we have been anymore. Th-thank you for giving me the magical Christmas season that I wanted." I start walking to my car without looking at them to see their reactions or give them a chance to reply.

"Nova!" Linc calls after me. I can hear the emotions in his voice, and it almost makes me turn back around until I hear Grant.

"Let her go," he orders darkly.

Those three words felt like a shot to my heart, but they kept me moving toward my car. I get in my car and leave the parking lot, not even allowing myself one more glance at them in my rearview mirror. I manage to hold it together until I am out of sight. Sobbing, I drive to the park and stop near the bridge. I sit in my car and cry until I can't cry anymore. I loved them, but love isn't always enough. I pull myself

together and drive home. I refused to feel disappointed when they weren't waiting in my driveway.

I had plans to put into motion. It was time to move on from Fort Veyelsa and see what else the world had to offer.

## Chapter 29

### Lincoln

**M**y heart felt like it was being torn from my chest as I watched her drive away. She left us. She ended things and just drove out of our lives. I rounded on Grant and shoved him back. “What the fuck do you mean let her go?” I roared. “I thought we agreed to keep her!”

Grant turned red and shoved me back. “We did, but there isn’t a damn thing we can do or say right now to make her believe us!” he yelled back. He was breathing heavily, and I could see the pain he was feeling mirrored my own. He grabbed me behind the neck, bringing our foreheads together. “We know where she will be in three days. Once she comes to the party, we won’t ever let her go again,” he promised me.

He turned his head toward Ben, who had yet to speak. I also looked at him, and what I saw was a shell of a man. What stood there was what was left of a man who watched the love of his life walk out of it. Grant reached for him and dragged him into our embrace. “We’re going to fix this, brother,” Grant assured him. “I promise. Now let’s go.”

“Where to?” Ben asked hollowly.

“Back to the office,” Grant instructed.

“That’s the last fucking place I want to be,” Ben spat.

“Hey!” Grant replied, stopping Ben from getting into the Jeep to make him look at him. “I’m not happy about it either, but we have to go back to finalize our plans. We need something to prove to Nova that something like this will never happen again, yeah?”

“Yeah,” Ben nodded. The drive back to the office was silent, as was the elevator ride to our offices.

Once we exited the elevator, I snapped my fingers at Joel as we passed his desk. “Send roses to Nova. As many as they have. Now!” I ordered as I pulled out my phone. Grant may have told me to let her go, but I couldn’t bear the thought of Nova thinking that we didn’t care at all.

**Lincoln: Sugar, I know you’re upset, and I know you need more than words from us, but please don’t give up on us just yet. We love you so fucking much, and we’re going to prove it to you.**

I sent the text, but I didn’t expect a reply from her. I didn’t deserve one.

“Ok. Let’s get this shit figured out because I’m not going to be able to function until we fix this,” I said as I closed Grant’s

office door behind me and locked it. We spent the rest of the night reviewing employee files to find the people we would promote to take on our day-to-day responsibilities.

“We should have done this years ago,” I said as we worked.

“We didn’t have anyone worth leaving the office for then,” Ben reminded me.

“The important thing is that we do now,” Grant said.

We worked through the night, barely noticing the time as it went by, our sole focus on getting this task done so that we could make it right with Nova. At some point, we must have fallen asleep because the next thing I know, Joel is waking us up.

“Did you guys go home at all?” he asked as he set coffee and a paper bag of breakfast sandwiches on Grant’s desk. He looked around at the files scattered all about. “What the hell is going on?”

“Did you get the roses sent to Nova?” I asked as I took the lid off my steaming cup of coffee and took a large burning gulp.

“Yes. You said all of them, so I had them send all of them. That’s going to be a pricey bill,” Joel replied.

“It’s worth it,” Grant replied as he dug into the bag and tossed sandwiches to Ben and me before taking one himself.

“Thanks for breakfast,” Ben said to Joel.

“Anytime. Now, are you going to tell me what’s going on?”  
Joel demanded.

“We fucked up,” Ben replied, taking a bite.

“Because of those fuckwad sponsors, we were late to the gingerbread contest, and we let Nova down,” I explained. “So she broke it off with us because she doesn’t want to be a second priority.”

“So this is?” he asked, gesturing around the office.

“This is how we’re going to make sure that it never happens again,” Grant said. “We’re restructuring the day-to-day operations and promoting people.”

Joel looked at us in stunned silence before a slow grin spread across his face. “You’re serious! Holy shit. I never thought I would see the day when you three would take a step back and focus on your personal lives. I have to say, it’s about damn time!”

“You realize it means that we’re going to rely on you more to be our go-between,” I told him. “Which will, of course, come with a salary increase.”

“I’ll do whatever it is you need me to do if it means you’ll get a life,” Joel laughed.

“Good,” Grant said, handing him a sheet of paper. “You can start by arranging meetings with everyone on that list.”

“I’ll take care of it now,” he replied as he headed for the door. Before he left, he turned back to us. “I hope you get her back. She’s good for you.”

We spent the rest of the morning in meetings, and by the time we finally left to go home and try to sleep, we had our new department heads and branch managers. Everyone on our list had accepted the promotions, which would be announced at the New Year's Eve party the next day. On our way home, we drove by Nova's house. Her car was in the driveway, and as tempted as we were to stop, we continued past. We'd give her space for now, but she'd find out soon that walking away from us would be far more difficult than she thought.

# Chapter 30

## Nova

### 1 Day Until New Year's Eve

I woke up feeling like absolute dog shit. I spent most of the day and night crying my eyes out. When I finally accepted that I wouldn't get much sleep, I went into the bakery to finish the day's baking without seeing anyone. When that was done, I left a note for Stef that I wouldn't be in today and we would be closed tomorrow. Returning home, I sighed as I stepped through my door. The guys had about twenty dozen red roses delivered to me yesterday following Linc's text. Determined to get my shit together and my life in order in preparation for my move, I called the nursing home and arranged for someone to come by and pick up the flowers. They were more than happy to do so and immediately sent a van. Before the last bouquet was carried out, I swiped a single rose from it and placed it in water.

Once my house didn't look like a flower shop, I started packing away the Christmas decorations. I gathered the



stockings we made together, planning on throwing them away, but at the last minute, I changed my mind. Instead, I carefully tucked them away in a box. A memento from this special Christmas I spent surrounded by love. As I packed up my Christmas memories, I thought about my plans for the future. Maybe I would head south. Somewhere warmer and near the water. With what I should get for the house and the shop, I should be able to settle somewhere else. As much as I loved my snowy little town, I once dreamed of living on the beach.

After struggling to drag the tree to the curb, I called the realtor and arranged to have the house and shop listed on the first, assuring her that I was motivated to sell. She agreed to keep it quiet until then. I spent the rest of the day cleaning and packing until I could barely stay on my feet. I had run myself down and was asleep before my head hit my pillow.



## **New Year's Eve**

I woke up the next afternoon with a groan. I wasn't looking forward to seeing the guys tonight, but I had no choice. I would uphold my end of the agreement. After a late breakfast, I spent the day pampering myself, determined to look my best. This was why they made the contract with me, to begin with. They needed arm candy for their party. As I stepped into my dress, it felt a little bittersweet. I had been looking forward to them seeing me in the dress, and now everything had changed. I wasn't a fool. I knew they wouldn't make the evening easy for me. I hadn't heard from them since Linc texted me, and they sent me the flowers. Either they didn't care, or they were planning something. My mind told me they didn't care. My heart wanted to believe they were up to something.

Just as I was grabbing my keys to head to the party, there was a knock on my door. I opened it to a chauffeur and limo parked on the street. They had sent a car for me. Was this a kind gesture or insurance that I held up my end of the deal? I guess either way, it didn't matter. The driver helped me into the limo, and I was relieved to see it was empty. Another bouquet of roses and an open bottle of champagne chilling in an ice bucket were waiting for me. I poured myself a glass as the limo glided away from my house.

My interest became piqued as the limo took me further up the mountain. They hadn't brought me to their cabin before, and I wasn't sure what to expect. When the limo arrived, I had to laugh. "Cabin" didn't exactly fit the elegant log monstrosity before me. White Christmas lights were scattered among the

trees surrounding the house, and I could see through the large glass windows that the inside was decorated just as elaborately. They had spared no expense for their company holiday party.

The chauffeur helped me out of the limo and escorted me to the fairy-light-lit path to the front door. Halfway down the path, a waiter was waiting with a tray of bubbling champagne flutes. I accepted one and sipped it as I made my way to the door, where another waiter was waiting to take the glass and open the door for me.

“Just give me a minute,” I pleaded as his white-gloved hand grabbed the door knob. He paused as I collected myself. I could do this. I just had to make it to midnight, and then I could leave. Mere hours, that was all. I would remain strong and stick to my guns. I deserved to be with someone who valued me and treated me as more than an afterthought in their career. I just had to be strong. I nodded to the door attendant. I was ready.

## Chapter 31

### Benjamin

I paced the loft that overlooked the main area of the cabin nervously. I couldn't see the drive from where we were, so I didn't know when Nova would arrive. The floor-to-ceiling windows showed a picturesque view of the snow-covered mountain and Fort Veyelsa in the valley below. It was one of my favorite views, and the reason for the large windows, but I couldn't enjoy it now. Not when I still didn't know if Nova would show or, even worse, if she would hear us out. People arrived and mingled below as waiters with hors d'oeuvres and champagne trays moved through the small crowd.

"How are you so calm?" I snapped at Lincoln, who was lounging on the couch as if he didn't have a care in the world. As if his entire future with the woman he loved didn't hang in the balance.

"Simple," he replied, "I refuse to accept any possible outcome other than Nova agreeing to be ours."

"You think she will come?" I asked. I wasn't. Sure, the contract was still in effect, but she had to know that we

wouldn't pursue legal action if she didn't come.

“She fucking better,” Grant growled. At least he was feeling as anxious as I was.

“She said she would be here, so she'll be here,” Lincoln replied confidently. I wish I had an ounce of his confidence right now.

“Did the driver pick her up?” I asked.

Linc rolled his eyes but pulled out his phone to make the call. He murmurs into the phone and then hangs up. “They're pulling up now.”

The three of us move to the railing to watch the door. It felt like an eternity had passed when the door finally swung open. Nova stepped through, and an attendant took her coat.

“Fuck,” we said in unison.

She looked like she had been dipped in liquid gold. Two delicate straps held up the dress with a deep plunge, showing off plenty of cleavage. Hugging her curves, the glittering fabric flowed down her body, splitting mid-thigh to showcase one sexy leg and the stiletto she wore. Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever anticipated her wearing this dress of her own volition. It was bold, daring, and sexy as fuck.

Nova turned to accept her coat check ticket, and I groaned when I saw the swooping fabric that left her back bare to the top of her ass. “This better fucking work,” I growled, gripping the railing until my knuckles turned white. Not touching her was going to be difficult.

“It will,” Grant assured me, sounding far calmer than he had earlier. We watched as she accepted a glass of champagne and looked around the room. She was looking for us. I see her stiffen slightly, and then her eyes lift as if she had felt our hungry eyes on her.

Grant crooks a finger at her, and she rolls her eyes at him but heads toward the stairs. We move, too, and are waiting for her at the top.

“You look fucking ravishing, Sugar,” Lincoln said, his voice strained from the effort it was taking to hold himself back.

“Thank you,” she replied softly as a blush spread across her cheeks.

“We need to talk,” I said. The sooner we got this out of the way, the sooner I would have her in my arms again.

Nova opens her mouth to say something, but Grant cuts her off before she can. “No,” he said sharply. “We let you talk the other day. Now it’s our turn.”

“We aren’t letting you go, Nova,” Lincoln began as we rehearsed. “We started making plans for the company the morning of the competition. Because not having you in our life wasn’t an option.”

“Unfortunately,” I continued, “we had a crisis with the launch. We didn’t have a choice but to handle it. And honestly, we can’t promise that emergencies like that won’t crop up occasionally. Fires that we have to put out ourselves.”

“What we can promise,” Grant said, “is that due to the restructuring of the company, we will have people to take on a large part of the burden and handle the smaller issues that don’t need us to solve.”

Nova’s face was guarded, but if I had to guess, she looked skeptical. “She doesn’t believe us,” I sighed.

“She will,” Lincoln replied, smirking at her. “We love you and can’t imagine our lives without you.”

Joel came up the stairs behind Nova. “Everyone is here,” he announced.

“Thanks, Joel,” I replied as we returned to the railing.

Grant looks back at Nova. “Make sure you pay attention, Little Star.”

# Chapter 32

## Nova

Conflicting feelings battled within me. I wanted to believe them, but I didn't see how they could make such promises. Triple Tech was their baby. I'm still unsure what to think when Linc holds up his hands and a hush falls over the crowd below.

“Good evening, everyone! Happy New Year! We're closing the books on another great year for Triple Tech, and we couldn't do that without all of you. I know the last couple of months have been hectic with the new tracker coming out later this week, so thank you for getting it done. We're looking forward to another successful launch!”

Lincoln pauses as the employees clap and cheer before settling them down again. “Some of you may know that recently, a very important woman has come into our lives.” I felt my cheeks heating as Linc paused again to turn to me with his hand held out. I shake my head, but he just silently waits. With a sigh, I take his hand and join them, Linc positioning me between him and the railing with Grant and Ben on either side.



“We’ve always preached to you the importance of having a healthy work/life balance. As you know, we never followed our rules, mainly because work was our life.” Linc placed his hands on my shoulders as Ben and Grant covered my hands on the railing with theirs. “That is no longer the case. As such, we will restructure the company to allow us to spend more time with Nova and focus a little more on that life everyone’s been telling us to get.”

The crowd tittered quietly with laughter. Some of the faces below were familiar as they frequented the shop. Others I had never met before. All of them stared at me curiously, wondering who exactly the girl was who got the three eligible bachelors to step back from work. One face in particular stood out among the crowd. Peter.

Peter was glaring up at us with vehement hatred. Brandy stood beside him, staring at him with confusion before raising her eyes to me. I can see the acceptance of the truth in her eyes. Whatever thread of hope she had been holding on to that I had been lying to her was cut. She nods at me and leaves without Peter’s notice. I hoped that I would see her again.

My focus is brought back to the guys as they take turns announcing all the promotions they made to make stepping back possible. They really mean it, I thought with astonishment. Can I let them do this?

I turn from the railing and push past them as I run to the back of the loft, out of sight of their employees. I stare blindly into the night as I hear them finish their speeches, wish the

employees a Happy New Year, and enjoy the part. Music is turned up, and I know that it is loud enough that our conversation won't be overheard from below. I turn around to face them, still not sure what to say.

"Nobody comes up here," Grant says into his phone before tossing it on the sofa as he passes by. They surround me, crowding me against the window, but they don't touch me.

"Tell us what you're thinking," Ben says softly.

"I can't let you do this for me," I finally say. "I don't want you to resent me."

"We could never resent you, Nova," Lincoln replies. "We love you."

I shook my head, pushing past them to avoid feeling trapped. "But when we made the contract, it clearly stated that you didn't want anything long-term. Your feelings couldn't have changed that drastically in a month."

"Fuck the contract," Grant explodes.

"We didn't want anything long-term until you, Nova," Ben replied.

"You are the first woman to come into our lives and make us think about our future and not just the future of our company," Linc added. I shook my head as tears filled my eyes. Part of me was still in disbelief.

"Dammit, Nova!" Grant growled. "Don't you get it? If we had to, we would sell the fucking company tomorrow if that was the only way to keep you!"

The tears fell as I reached for them and quickly found myself back in their arms. “But I already called the realtor to sell the shop and my house.”

Lincoln trailed desperate kisses down the side of my neck. “Then we will call them and cancel it.”

“But half my house is packed,” I continued, unsure why I was still trying to argue with them when this was where I wanted to be.

“Good,” Ben said, kissing the other side of my neck. “That just means we can move you in with us that much sooner.”

Grant dropped to his knees before me, his hands trailing up my legs and beneath my dress. “Face it, Little Star. There isn’t a damn thing you can say that will make us change our minds.” His lips started to follow the path his hands were taking, making my knees weak and my pussy flood.

“We’re going to need another contract,” I rasped.

“Except this one won’t have an expiration date,” Grant replied before growling low in his chest. “You naughty little girl, you didn’t wear any panties.” He took advantage of the slit in my dress to expose me, and I was suddenly very aware that there was an entire company worth of people downstairs who could hear us. I went to push his head away but ended up fisting his hair and pulling him closer as his lips closed around my clit.

“Oh, God,” I moaned. Lincoln and Ben each slid a strap over my shoulders to bare my breasts. They didn’t hesitate to suck

my nipples into their mouths as soon as they came into view.

“Now, Nova,” Grant said as he leaned back to look at me. “There are close to seventy people downstairs right now. If you aren’t quiet, they’ll hear you.” His lips resealed over my clit, and I had to bite my lip to keep from moaning. I would never be able to show my face again if anyone overheard us.

Needing to distract myself, I reached for Ben and Linc’s cocks, stroking the bulges through their pants. Catching on, they quickly unzipped them so I could pull them out and stroke them properly. Fuck, I loved their cocks almost as much as I loved them.

“I need someone inside me,” I begged.

“I’ve got you, Star,” Grant said as he laid back and shoved his pants to his knees. “Come get what you need.”

I straddled him, hiking my dress up around my waist. I moaned quietly as I impaled myself on his cock.

“That’s a good girl,” Grant groaned. “This pussy was made for us. Now ride me, Nova.”

I did as I was told, slowly rising and lowering myself. Ben and Linc stood on either side of me, and I wrapped my hands around them again, pulling them closer to taste them. My mouth moved between them as I rode Grant faster. We didn’t have time to make this a lengthy thing. We could take our time later. I heard someone shout over the music that it was ten minutes to midnight. We needed to hurry.

Stroking Ben and Linc faster, I brought their heads to my mouth at the same time, licking them together.

“That’s so hot, Sugar. We’re going to have to explore how many cocks you can fit in your mouth sometime.” Linc moaned.

“You should see it from down here,” Grant commented. “I could stay here all night, but unfortunately, our absence will be noticed. Come on, Little Star, milk those cocks, and come on mine.” His thumb found my clit and started rubbing it in fast circles, which spurred me on.

Ben slapped my hand away from his cock and took over as he bent down near my ear. “Open that pretty little mouth wide, Baby. We’re going to come in it, and you’ll swallow every drop so you don’t get any on your dress.”

I moaned at his words as Grant grabbed my hips, taking control of my movements. Every time he pulled me down, his hips would snap up to meet me, shoving himself just a little deeper than before and making me moan.

“I’m going to come,” I panted.

“Fuck, me too,” Linc grunted as he tangled his hand in my hair and held my head in place as he shoved his dick into my mouth. My lips sealed around the head just as I felt the first rope of cum spurt out. I swallowed, determined not to let a drop go to waste. He had barely pulled out when Ben turned my head and got his dick in my mouth just in time, and I swallowed his cum as well.

As soon as they stepped back, Grant flipped me onto my back without pulling out and loomed over me. “Our turn, Star,” he groaned as he plowed into me.

“Harder,” I begged. He complied, and it didn’t take much longer for my orgasm to burst like a bubble. My pussy pulsed around his cock, and with one final thrust, Grant emptied himself inside me. When he was finished, he collapsed on the floor beside me.

“So does that mean you’ll take us back?” he asked breathlessly.

“Yes,” I replied. “As long as you’re sure this is what you want.”

Grant turned on his side and propped his head on his hand. “Nova, you’re the only fucking thing that we are sure of.”

“Five minutes to midnight!” Someone yelled from downstairs.

“Was that Joel?” Ben asked as he grabbed some napkins, dipped them in a glass of water, and began trying to clean between my legs.

“Probably,” Linc chuckled as he fixed his pants. “He’s probably down there shouting for our benefit so we don’t lose track of time.”

They helped me to my feet, and we straightened our clothes as best we could. Looking at us, I knew there wouldn’t be any doubt about what we had been doing up here all this time. We grabbed champagne glasses and returned to the railing just as

the New Year's countdown started. At midnight, I got three New Year's kisses from three special men. As we celebrated, I couldn't help but think about Thanksgiving when I drunkenly filled out that dating app questionnaire. I never could have anticipated how much that one rash decision would change my life in such a short time.

I grin at the guys and hold up my glass for a toast. "To Love -N- Shenanigans."

"To Love -N- Shenanigans," they repeated as our glasses clinked.

# Epilogue

## Nova - 1 Year Later

“Come on, come on, time’s almost up,” I said urgently.  
“I’m going as fast as I can,” Grant growled. “Do you want me to break it?”

“Here, let me help,” Linc offered as he reached out his hands.

“Don’t touch my fucking roof!” Grant barked, making me giggle. I watched anxiously as he slowly lowered the final piece into place.

“Watch my walls!” Ben said in a panic.

“I’m fucking watching them,” Grant replied.

I moved around him to pipe a little more icing onto said walls, and he carefully dropped the roof into place as the buzzer signaling the end of the competition sounded.

“That was intense,” Ben stated as he bent over, bracing his hands on his knees.



Grant glared at him. “You thought it was intense?! How do you think I felt?”

We stepped aside to wait for the judges to go to each table. I looked around the room and couldn't help but grin. We totally won. Everyone else had houses, many of which were quite good. We had Main Street. It was totally in the bag.

“Stop gloating before they've even looked at it,” Lincoln whispered, nipping my ear.

“I can't help it,” I whispered back.

The Mayor and the other judges finally reached our table, and I watched their faces closely. They nodded to each other a lot as they pointed different things out to each other, and I could tell they were impressed with our work. I felt confident that we won when their impressed looks changed to confusion.

“Oh no,” I said under my breath as I tensed in Linc's arms. “Something must have broken.”

The mayor looks up and waves me over. As I approach, the guys follow behind me, expecting to see that half the buildings have caved in. “Miss Lane, there is an element here that is confusing us. Perhaps you could explain it to us?”

I glance at the guys, who have mixed looks on their faces. What could be confusing them? I stand next to the mayor as he points out a small blue box in front of the gingerbread version of Icings. What? I look at the mayor and the other judges in confusion as they smile at me. I pick up the box and open it, but it takes me a few seconds to comprehend what I'm looking

at. Sitting inside the box is a massive diamond ring. I gasp as it finally clicks in my head, and I spin around to see my men down on one knee.

Ben takes the box from me and removes the ring. “Nova Lane, you fell off a ladder a year ago and into our lives. While we had no way of knowing then how important you would become to us, we knew you were special.”

He handed the ring to Grant, who continued speaking. “You showed us how to live with joy in our hearts. How to slow down once in a while and appreciate the little moments.”

The ring passed to Linc next. “You taught us how to live a life worth living, and it’s a life we can’t imagine living without you. Will you do us the absolute honor of becoming our wife?”

By now, tears of joy were streaming down my face. “Yes! Not just yes, fuck yes!” I shouted. The crowd around us laughed and cheered as Lincoln slipped the ring on my finger, and they surrounded me, peppering kisses all over me.

Nobody noticed Destiny Truegood, owner of Serendripity and Love -N- Shenanigans, moving away from the crowd and leaving the cafeteria. She smiled to herself as she walked down the empty hall. Another successful match. Before she reached the front doors, she snapped her fingers and disappeared.

The End.

# Bonus Content

I hope you enjoyed *The Christmas Pact*. I had so much fun adding many of my Christmas traditions and favorite things into Nova's story. I really do have reindeer ornaments that I got with my Dad, and they go on my tree every year. I have a gift for you! Two family recipes that were mentioned in the book. All you have to do is sign up for my newsletter [here](#).

# Also By

## **Paranormal Reverse Harem**

### **The Prophecy World**

#### **Prophecy Series**

Dark Spirits

Dark Moon

Dark Heart

Dark Sun

Dark Prophecy

#### **Spin-off Standalone**

Hell Bound

#### **Standalone Books**

Crowns of Unity

## **Contemporary Reverse Harem**

**Standalone Books**

Small Town Strings

**Dystopian Reverse Harem Fiction**

**Love in the Apocalypse**

Bailey

# About Author

N.A. Jameson is a born Jersey Girl currently living in Iowa. Her favorite color is pink. She is obsessed with cows, Eeyore is her favorite Winnie the Pooh character, and she may or may not have a princess complex. That's a lie. She definitely has a princess complex. Her absolute favorite TV show is Friends. She watches it a minimum of twice a year.

Super Aunt to countless nieces and nephews. Hates snow, blue cheese, and rude people. Loves the water, ranch dressing, and thunderstorms. Her guilty pleasures are chocolate cake with chocolate frosting, peppermint tea, and wine. Naps are life. When she isn't watching corn grow, you can find her working her way through her never-ending TBR list with zero environmental awareness. Seriously throw something at her if you need her attention when she is reading. She won't hear you speak. When she isn't reading, she is writing, trying to satisfy the characters in her head demanding to be released.

# Stalk Me

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Thank You So Much!

xoxo

Nebby

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