



ALL IN

WITH

DR. CHIPKIN

Kristin MacQueen

All In With Dr. Chipkin

Rosewood University Hospital Book One

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All In With Dr. Chipkin – Rosewood University Hospital Book One

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Stay – David J

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Tell You Everything – Robyn Ottolini

Never Til Now – Ashley Cooke

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Ready Set Roll – Chase Rice

Truth About You – Michell Tenpenny

We Wouldn't Be Us – Alexandra Kay

Who Hurt You – David Morris

How Do We Go – Alexandra Kay

Some Other Bar – ERNEST

Playlist

Playlist

Slipping behind the bar of Kennedy's Pub, I smirk at my sister and pull her into my arms. I haven't seen her in weeks and I miss her.

"Thank you for coming in. I kinda panicked when none of my bartenders showed up. Blake's coming too, but sometimes I think it's worse having him here." She rolls her eyes. "He'll try creating at least three new drinks and the cougars will be all over him."

"Aw, poor you. How do you live with such a hot husband?"

"Shut up!" She laughs, shoving me away from her.

I give her a wet kiss on the cheek before I grab a glass and fill it with the beer on tap for a customer. Kennedy swipes at her skin with a grimace.

"Is there anything I need to know? I haven't worked here in forever."

"There are a few new signature drinks. Blake or I can handle those orders if you want. Or he printed out a handy

cheat sheet so no one gets his drinks wrong. He laminated it and everything.”

“You can roll your eyes as much as you want. All I hear is *‘I love my husband so much. He’s the best thing to ever happen to me and if it weren’t for you, we probably never would’ve met, so thank you.’* And you’re welcome.”

“Now I’m rolling my eyes for an entirely different reason. When did you get so full of yourself?”

“It’s called being a surgeon. It’s part of the requirements. You should meet some of my colleagues.”

“Whatever, I don’t even care. Aim some of the cockiness at the customers. The women will eat it up, the guys probably not so much. Maybe they’ll get annoyed and try to beat you up.” She shrugs. “Or, you could use that cockiness to convince them they’re a pussy and can’t drink like you can. They’ll spend a ton of money.” She laughs.

The door opens and closes, drawing both of our attention. Kennedy bought this place off of our uncle. We both worked here throughout college and loved it. He always taught us to keep our eye on the door. If you know who’s coming into the bar, you know if you’re going to have a problem.

He always claimed you can tell who might cause problems instantly. I’m not good at picking out the troublemakers, but Kennedy can sense them from a mile away.

“Shit. Here comes trouble,” she mumbles under her breath.

I glance up to find a group of women chatting up Blake. He's smiling at them, being the polite person he is. Kennedy folds her arms over her chest and glares at her husband.

That man is so in love with my sister, I don't know what she's worried about. He placed her at the center of his world the night they met and has kept her there since.

She tracks Blake as he moves through the room with the women following him. I'm sure they're unaware of who he is or that he's taken, but Kennedy will probably be mixing them shitty drinks all night.

"Hey, baby." Blake moves behind the bar and sweeps Kennedy into his arms.

The group of women that walked in with him watch them intently. He cradles her head and presses a soft kiss to her lips. They let out a collective groan and it makes me chuckle. Women always fall for Blake and he doesn't hide his love for my sister from anyone.

"Well, now that he's disappointed you, what can I get you ladies to drink?" I rest my forearms against the bar and smirk at the women.

"I have a question before we get to our order." One woman cocks a brow.

"Hit me with it. I'm an open book."

"Are you single? I don't need another let down tonight." Her long blonde hair is tied back into a high ponytail. She's pretty, but she wouldn't attract my attention.

“I am single. Though I don’t know how that affects my ability to make you delicious concoctions that will get you tipsy.”

“Maybe I’m more interested in your abilities after I’m tipsy and I’m trying to find someone to *help* me home.” A slow smile spreads over her lips. I know what she’s hinting at, but that doesn’t mean I’m interested. She doesn’t really seem like my type.

“Ah, well, why didn’t you say so? We have an amazing Uber driver who we’ll call for you. He’ll happily help you get home safely.” I flash her a dazzling smile.

“And what should I do if I want you to take me home instead?” She slips her bottom lip between her teeth and bites down.

“Oh my gosh, Lindsey! He’s obviously not interested! You’re just embarrassing yourself.” A woman with dark brown hair rolls her eyes and tries to tug her friend off the stool.

“I haven’t even had a drop of alcohol yet, Faith. I’m not embarrassing myself.” Lindsey waves her off and returns her attention to me.

I’m sorry. Faith mouths the words to me. I smirk, loving how embarrassed she is for her friend. I nod my head, letting her know it’s fine. I don’t mind women flirting with me, especially when this bar is separating us.

“Well, I can help you with that. What would you like to drink?” I wink and watch Lindsey swoon in her seat.

“What would you suggest?” Lindsey leans in closer.

“That depends on what you want. I could give you a Screaming Orgasm, Pop My Cherry, Lick Her Right, or a Leg Spreader.” I lower my voice and glance around like I’m trying to make sure no one can hear me. “What do you want me to make for you?”

“Oh, crap. I think I might die.” Lindsey fans herself. “I’m so hot right now.”

“Just make her one of each. She’s not going to stop flirting with you until she tastes what you can give her,” Faith murmurs under her breath.

“And what can I get for you, Faith?” Her gaze snaps to me, surprise coloring her features.

That’s right, sweetheart. I pay attention to everything.

“A whiskey sour would be great.”

“What about a Royal fuck?” I arch a brow, standing to my full height.

“I’d rather the whiskey. At least I know how I’ll be fucked with that one.”

I finish taking orders from the rest of their friends. Faith’s the only one not fawning over me and that’s why she has my attention. I want to know more about her.

She's beautiful. She's wearing dark jeans that hug her like a second skin. A navy blouse that does nothing to hide her hour-glass figure. She's curvy and exactly what I like.

"Why don't you ladies go get a table and I'll bring your drinks out to you?" I smile at them.

They all stand and move towards an empty booth in the back of the bar. Everyone except for Faith. She watches them go and seems to be waring with herself.

"Faith, what can I do for you?" I rest my arms on the bar again, using it as a way to close the distance between us and put me more at her height.

"Just... sorry about Lindsey. She's getting out of a bad relationship and she has no shame."

"I don't mind a pretty woman flirting with me." I shrug.

"Yeah, but I can tell you're not interested in her. I hate seeing her embarrass herself." She glances at her friend with concern.

"You're right," I say softly and smile when I gain her attention again. "She's not my type."

"Oh yeah? Blonde and beautiful isn't your type?" She rolls her eyes.

"Nah, I'm more of a brunette, curvy and gorgeous type." I rake my eyes up and down her body. A slow smile spreads across my face when she fidgets under my attention.

“I’m sure.” She’s trying to blow me off, but I’m not going to allow it.

“You don’t have to believe me. It doesn’t change anything though.” I grab a bottle of whiskey and begin mixing the drinks for Faith and her friends.

“You’re probably married and just like to flirt with customers to get better tips. It boosts your ego and gets you more money in your pocket.”

“Hey, Kenny!” I wave my sister over and rest my hip against the bar as I pour the next drink.

“What’s up?”

“What’s my relationship status?”

“You’re more single than an old crazy cat lady.” She chuckles.

“Wow, a little harsh, but true. See, Faith, not married.” I give her a pointed look.

“Ok, so you’re just a man whore.” Faith nods her head like she completely understands.

“Jesse? Hell no! Jesse’s the least man whorish person I’ve ever known! I don’t think he’s even had a one-night stand.” Kennedy tries to defend me. “He’s more of a hopeless romantic who gets his heart crushed time and time again.”

“Thanks for that, Sis. How about you go make out with your husband and stop attempting to make me look good by making me sound like a total loser.”

I take her by the shoulders and spin her around. I shove her a little more forcefully than I normally would because what the hell, Kenny?

“Feel free to forget everything she just told you. In fact, down this drink so you’ll forget it a little faster.” I push the tumbler in front of her and silently pray for her to take a sip.

“Why do you want me to forget?” She laughs, keeping the glass in place on the bar top.

“Because that’s embarrassing. Multiple times more embarrassing than anything Lindsey did.” I motion to her friend.

“Oh, stop it.” She laughs even harder. “I think it’s sweet.”

“No one wants the sweet guy, Faith. I learned that long ago.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that,” she says softly.

Her light brown eyes connect with mine and I swear I’m a goner. She’s gorgeous. I could get lost in her eyes for hours.

A high-pitched squeal draws both of our attention to the table of women Faith came in with. She smiles at them and shakes her head.

“I better get over there and deal with them before they do something they’ll regret.” She watches me for a moment before she pushes her way through the growing crowd and disappears.

Playlist

Playlist

I slide into the seat next to Lindsey and try to pay attention to the conversation going on. This night is all about my sister. She needs this time to just let loose and relax.

“He’s so hot. Do you think he’d let me take a body shot off of him?” Lindsey drops her chin in her hand and stares at Jesse.

I follow her gaze, unable to look away. She’s right. He’s hot. His chocolate brown hair is just long enough that he can run his fingers through the strands, making it perfectly messy.

His lips are plumper than most and begging to be kissed. And his deep brown eyes crave your attention. Tattoos snake up his forearms and disappear beneath the sleeve of his black t-shirt. He’s wearing a pair of jeans that hug his ass without looking like he’s wearing girl’s jeans.

He smiles at someone as he loads up a tray full of drinks. Dimples pop on his scruff covered cheeks. He’s too handsome for my own good. I need to avoid talking to him. I could easily fall for a man like Jesse.

Moving effortlessly through the bar, he stops at the end of our table and smiles at us.

“Ladies, I have your drinks. Lindsey, here are your Screaming Orgasm, Pop My Cherry, Lick Her Right, and Leg Spreader. Let me know if I can help you with anything else.” He winks at her.

“I hear there’s a Dick Sucker.” She bats her long lashes at him. “Any interest in having one of those with me?”

He throws his head back and his deep laugh floats through the air. It’s a nice laugh. A *really* nice one. Something I can imagine hearing every day and smiling each time I hear it.

“Sorry, Linds, I’m working. Can’t drink on the job. I’m fairly certain Kennedy would stab me.”

“Is she a jealous woman?” She leans in like they’re sharing a secret.

“Hell, I hope not! That would be messed up if my sister was jealous of me sharing a Dick Sucker with a customer.” He grimaces.

“She’s your sister?” A smile tugs on the corner of Lindsey’s lips. “That’s good to know.”

I want to scream at Lindsey and tell her she’s not allowed to flirt with Jesse, but I have no claim on him. If anything, she saw him first and talked to him before I did.

“Faith, can I get you another whiskey sour?” Jesse turns his attention to me as he tucks his tray under his arm.

“Sure. That would be great.”

“Awesome. I’ll be right back.” He flashes me an easy smile before turning on his heels.

“Oh my gosh! He likes you!” Lindsey squeals.

When she does that, her voice rises to a decibel only dogs can hear. It’s a common occurrence and the exact reason Rocky hates her. My poor pit bull’s ears get assaulted every time Lindsey comes over. He tries to bury himself in my blankets on the bed, but Lindsey’s voice carries through my small apartment.

“He does not.” I roll my eyes and try to change the topic. “What’s everyone’s planning for Thanksgiving?”

“Nice try.” Sharon laughs, shaking her head.

“Do you like him?” Lindsey stares at me with wide eyes. “I mean, I’ve been flirting a lot, but I’m not interested. I just got divorced. I don’t need to fall into bed with someone new. My heart is already broken. He’s fair game, Faith.”

“I’m not going after anyone. I start my new job on Monday. The last thing I need to do is get involved with someone when my life is changing this much.”

I just moved here from New York a few weeks ago. I’m excited to be close to my sister and all of my friends again, but in some ways, I miss my old life.

Living in the middle of the city, there was always something going on. I had a job I loved and lived with my boyfriend. We were waiting for an adorable puppy we fell in love with to be

available to adopt. Things seemed perfect... until I found him balls deep in Susan. My best friend. Our co-worker.

I met Henry when I started my clinical rotation in the operating room. We seemed to hit it off right away and started dating before I got hired there. There were no rules against us dating, but if we got married, one of us would have to transfer to a different unit or hospital within the system.

I was looking into transferring when I walked in on him with Susan pinned against the wall as he fucked her. They were in our apartment. In our living room. Right where anyone walking through the front door could see them.

I packed my things and went to a hotel for a few days. After I took my name off the lease of our apartment, one he couldn't afford without me, I found a job in Philadelphia and put in my two weeks' notice.

As soon as I finished my last shift, I picked up the pit bull Henry and I were supposed to adopt. I know he wouldn't take care of the adorable puppy and my ex-friend hates dogs. So, I loaded Rocky into the car and we drove to Lindsey's house.

I refuse to dwell on Henry or what an asshole he is. I'm chalking all of it up to it being my time to find something new.

I've been in Philadelphia for almost a month. I decided to take the time to find the perfect apartment and to let myself heal from the break up. Now, I'm ready to get back to work and begin my life again.

“You know what would piss off Henry more than you getting set up in a new city with a new place, and a new job? A new hot boyfriend. Jesse’s at least a twelve. Henry was a seven at best. You could plaster social media with pictures of the two of you. It would be the perfect revenge plan.” Lindsey rubs her hands together. She loves making exes jealous.

“No. I just want to forget he ever existed. It’s not worth trying to upset him. That would mean I care about his opinion and I don’t.”

“You keep telling yourself that, maybe one day we’ll all believe it,” Sharon mumbles under her breath, making everyone laugh.

I’ve had more than one video chat meltdown session with the girls, but that doesn’t mean I want to remember those. It’s time to move on and leave the past in the past.

“Here ya go, beautiful.” Jesse places a fresh drink in front of me and takes the empty one away.

He doesn’t stay to talk like I wish he would. Instead, he’s taking his place behind the counter a few seconds later. At least I can ogle him from afar.

Lindsey’s more than past tipsy by the time she finishes the four drinks Jesse made for her. She’s slurring her words and her eyes are unfocused. This was the goal tonight. She wanted to get plastered and forget all about her ex-husband.

This is the first night she hasn’t had her son in a long time and she just wanted to let go. I can’t blame her. I’d do the

same thing. Sometimes you just need to let yourself push everything to the back burner and pretend you don't have any responsibilities.

"If you look at him one more time, I'll go hit on him for you," Lindsey mumbles, swaying to the side.

"I need another drink. Do you think you could go get me one?" Sharon wiggles her eyebrows at me.

I glare at her, but get up anyway. She can deal with Lindsey until I get back. I could use one more drink before we call it a night and it's almost one in the morning.

As I'm walking up to the bar, someone slips off a stool with drinks in hand and moves towards the tables. I take the opportunity to grab the seat and wait for a bartender to help me.

This place is really busy. I wonder if it's always like this or if it's only because it's a Friday night. From what I've seen since I moved here, they're almost always busy.

"Hey, beautiful." Jesse steps in front of me with a flirty smirk. He rests his forearms on the bar, bringing his face closer to mine.

"Hi." I smile despite myself. I don't want him to flirt with me. I'm not ready to fall for someone new.

"What can I get you? Another whiskey sour?"

"Yes, please. And a margarita."

"Tequila and whiskey? That's my kind of girl."

I track his movements as he makes the beverage that might help me forget just a little bit. Every once in a while, the pain of losing Henry hits me hard. It's not that I miss him, it's the pain of knowing I wasn't good enough for him to stay faithful.

If I wasn't enough for Henry, how could I ever be enough for someone like Jesse?

I wish I could take the leap and just hope for the best, but that's not who I am. I overthink everything.

"Wanna tell me what's going on?" Jesse stops in front of me and places two glasses on the wooden bar.

"What?" I blink up at him.

"You just went somewhere dark. I'm a good listener, Faith." He reaches out and tucks a lock of hair behind my ear.

The movement is so intimate and gentle, I have to fight back the moisture building in my eyes. I hate drinking. I'm an emotional drunk, yet I'm not even tipsy right now.

"It's part of the job, right?" I force a smile at him.

"Maybe if I were actually a bartender, but I'm not. I'm just helping out my sister. Talk to me."

Someone calls his name and a few other customers try to get his attention, but he never even glances their way. He holds up a finger, telling them he'll be there in a minute and I think I fall a little harder for him.

"Don't worry about it. It's not important... I should probably get these drinks back to my friends." I stand and

reach for the drinks.

Jesse grabs my hand and waits for me to look up and meet his gaze.

“Would you want to go get something to eat after we close?”

I stare at him for a moment, briefly wondering if I heard him correctly. There’s no way he’s asking me out, right?

But I’m not ready for another man in my life. I need to get settled here before I can even entertain the idea of dating.

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea.” I pull away from him and head back to my table before I can change my mind.

“What was going on over there? He couldn’t take his eyes off of you.” Sharon wiggles her eyebrows.

“He asked me to get something to eat with him after the bar closes.”

“And what did you say?” Meghan leans forward, finally putting her phone down for the first time tonight.

“I said I didn’t think that was a good idea.” I keep my chin held high, knowing they’re going to attack me with questions.

“Wow... you’re an idiot!” Meghan laughs. “That man is trying to get you to go out with him and you told him no! Why?”

“I mean, I typically make it my mission in life to never agree with Meghan, but I’m with her on this. Why would you turn him down?” Sharon watches me.

I open and close my mouth several times, but nothing comes out. How do I explain this to them without sounding pitiful?

“Henry destroyed her confidence,” Lindsey slurs. Her eyes slowly close and her chin dips before she jerks her head back up and her lids fly open. She’s falling asleep like she always does when she gets drunk.

Over the years, I’ve found a drunk Lindsey sound asleep in a public bathroom, on a park bench, sitting on the ground next to the car, with her face in her food, and countless other hilarious places. She never surprises me anymore.

“I think it’s time to go. Let me just run to the bathroom, then we can leave.” I down the rest of my drink before I slide out of the booth.

I glance at Jesse on my way to the bathroom and find him tracking me through the bar. Gone is the flirty smirk and in its place is a curiosity I don’t want to entertain.

There are five women waiting to use the bathroom when I get in line. It moves quickly, but it still takes me almost ten minutes before I’m walking back out to the main part of the bar.

I squeeze my way through people and dodge guys who try to talk to me. When I get to the table I left Lindsey, Meghan, and Sharon at, it’s now full of a bunch of men I’ve never met before.

“Oh, sorry,” I mumble, scanning the area for my friends.

“Hey, baby. What’s your name?” One of the men reaches for me, and I quickly move away from the booth before he can say or do something he’s going to regret.

I don’t need attention from some random drunk man. That’s not going to help me right now.

After a few minutes of searching for them and coming up empty handed, I take a spot at the bar and wave Jesse down.

“What’s up, Faith?” His tone is soft and it almost sounds like he cares about me.

“Do you know where Lindsey and the rest of my friends went?”

“They left. Meghan, I think that was her name, told me to give this to you.” He tugs a piece of paper out of his back pocket and holds it out to me.

I take it from his fingers, and stare at it in disbelief. They left? What the hell?

“I’ll be right back,” Jesse whispers before moving away from me.

Faith,

You need to get over Henry by getting under someone else. I know you’re going to be mad at us, but you’ll thank us later.

Go home with the sexy bartender. Have a wonderful night and let him erase any memory of Henry. You deserve better. You need to have faith in love and let go of the assholes of the world.

Start your new life off right and do something the old Faith wouldn't dare to do.

Meghan, Sharon, and Lindsey

P.S. I logged into your Uber account. If you order a ride, I'll cancel each and every one. If you don't believe me, try me.

P.S.S. We'll handle Rocky tonight and in the morning!

I squeeze my eyes shut and drop my face into my hands. I have the worst friends in the world.

Playlist

Playlist

Right after Faith disappears in the direct of the bathrooms, Meghan runs up to the bar. She holds out a piece of paper to me and smirks.

“What’s this?” I take it from her and go to open it, but she stops me.

“Don’t read it. I need you to give this to Faith when she comes out of the bathroom and can’t find us.”

“But what is it?”

“It’s the push she needs. Don’t write her off just yet... and don’t read it. She’d kill me if you read it.”

I’m about to ask another question, but when I look up, Meghan’s gone.

What the hell could this possibly say? I contemplate opening the letter, but I feel like that would be some sort of violation on Faith’s privacy and I’m not going to do that.

A few minutes later I watch Faith walk out of the back hallway and look for her friends. She heads to the table they were at and comes up empty. I don’t miss the way she’s

dodging men and quickly excusing herself from every situation.

She takes a spot at the bar and waves for me to come over. After I give her the letter, I move away to take someone else's order. She needs time to read the note and I'm not going to get involved in that.

"No! No, no, no." Faith has her face buried in her hands and she's rubbing her temples.

"What's wrong?" I grip her wrists gently and peel them away from her head.

"Meghan! I hate her so much right now."

"Yeah, I'm going to need more than that to understand." I smirk.

"Every time I try to order an Uber, she cancels the request. She's such a bitch."

"Why would she do that?" My brows furrow. They seemed like good friends. Why wouldn't they want her to get home safely?

Faith tosses the letter in front of me. I pick it up and read through it quickly. I can't believe they left her here with hopes that I'd take her home.

"Wow. I don't even know what to say." I blink at the paper. Maybe if I look at it again, the words will change and it will make more sense. "How far away do you live?"

"About twenty minutes. I live by Rosewood Hospital."

“Well, then you’re in luck. I live by the hospital too. Let me see if Kennedy and Blake need more help. The place is winding down and Blake’s probably going to screw my sister on this bar, so I’d really like to leave before that happens.” I grimace at the thought.

Blake’s a little too open about his physical relationship with my sister. I’d be happy just knowing he loves her. I don’t need to know *how* he loves her.

“Hey, do you mind if I get out of here a little early?” I ask Kennedy and Blake.

“Nah, go ahead. Most people will be leaving in the next thirty minutes. We can handle this.” Kennedy waves me off.

“And we all know how I like to end my nights here.” Blake growls, nipping at Kennedy’s neck. She giggles and kisses him.

Whistles erupt around the bar, just like they always do. People love seeing the two of them together. The regulars have been rooting for them since the beginning.

“Ew, I don’t need to hear about that again.” I cover my ears with my hands. “I’ll see you on Sunday, Kenny.” I kiss her cheek and pat Blake on the back as I move around to the other side of the bar.

Coming up behind Faith, I grab her hand, earning myself a gasp. Her eyes fly to mine and she relaxes when she realizes it’s me and not some stranger. Except I am a stranger to her.

“You really don’t need to take me home. If you could just order me a ride, I can pay you for it.” Faith curses under her breath when Meghan cancels another ride for her.

“Stop it. At this rate they’re going to suspend your account.” I chuckle, leading her over to my car.

I open the passenger’s door of my 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle. It’s my pride and joy. One of the only things I’ve spent money on since I became a surgeon. This has been my dream car for as long as I can remember.

Once Faith is comfortable, I round the car to my side and climb in. I turn the ignition and listen to the familiar purr of the engine.

I reverse out of the parking lot and turn onto the highway that will take us home. I glance at Faith every few seconds, but she’s quiet.

“So, do you want to tell me about Henry?” I break the silence five minutes into our drive.

“Isn’t there a rule about not talking about your ex with someone new?”

“Only if this were a first date... is this a first date, Faith?” I smirk at her, making her roll her eyes.

“No. It can’t be a date when you didn’t ask me out.”

“Sure, I did. I asked you to get some dinner with me. I came straight from work to help Kenny out and we were too busy for me to grab some food. You just turned me down.”

“You don’t want to go out with me, Jesse.” She leans her head against the chair and rolls it to look at me.

“How about you come with me to my favorite diner? I’ll buy you a nice greasy burger and we can talk all about this Henry guy and how shitty your friends are for leaving you at the bar with no way home. Then I’ll take you home and you never need to see me again.”

“Why would you want to do that?”

“Because I’m a good listener and an even better friend. And I think you need one of those right now. So, what do you say?”

“Fine,” she groans. “But I want a milkshake too.”

“Only if you let me dip my fries in it.” I pull up to a red light and arch a brow at her. I stare at Faith as her lips pull into a lopsided smile.

“Who doesn’t love dipping fries in milkshakes?”

“Monsters. And I don’t associate with monsters.”



“Ok, the milkshake and burgers are ordered, spill the beans. Who is this Henry guy and why do we hate him?”

“He’s my ex. He cheated on me with our co-worker and my best friend.”

“What an asshole.” I shake my head, keeping my attention on her. I want to stop any tears that might come right away. “I hope you rubbed ghost peppers on the inside of his boxers or something like that. Make it burn like crazy.”

“Oh my gosh! You’re insane!” She laughs softly.

“What? If someone’s going to treat you like that, their dick should burn for a few hours.” I shrug unapologetically. “You seem like a sweet person, I’m sure you didn’t deserve that happening to you.”

“Ugh, no one wants the sweet girl,” she groans with a smirk on her face. She’s throwing my words from the bar back in my face.

“I see what you did there.” I smirk, pointing a finger in her direction. “You, Miss Faith, are a smartass. And I love it.”

The waitress sets down our food and as soon as she walks away, I snatch a fry off my plate and dip it into Faith’s milkshake. I bite down and let out a low groan.

“Oh, this is so good!” I squeeze my eyes shut and savor the flavors washing over my tongue.

When I open my eyes, Faith is watching me with amusement. Her eyes twinkle and a soft smile is tugging on the corner of her lips.

“Don’t you dare judge me, Faith. That is amazing.” Scooping some of the ice cream up with her spoon, I shove it

in my mouth. Faith gasps and swats at my hand.

“Hey! That’s my milkshake! I agreed to you dipping your fry, not spooning it!”

“C’mon, sweetheart! It’s so good.”

“What do I get if I share?”

“You mean other than a free meal?” I chuckle.

She folds her arms over her chest and nods her head seriously. She’s absolutely adorable.

“Fine! If you let me spoon your milkshake, I’ll spoon you afterwards.” I wiggle my eyebrows.

“I already told you, I’m not coming home with you!” She laughs.

“But I’m the one driving. I could just kidnap you.” I shrug, dipping another fry into her milkshake.

“You don’t strike me as the kidnapping type.”

“Is there a specific kidnapping type? It’s kinda like a serial killer, is there a specific attire they’re supposed to wear? Should they all wear masks like Jason Voorhees so you’re well aware of their intentions? I guess kidnappers would have to have nondescript white vans and have the good candy. Or maybe a cute puppy.”

“Definitely the white van. And you didn’t offer me a single piece of candy or the chance to play with a puppy. If you’re a kidnapper, you’d be a very disappointing one.” She points a fry in my direction.

“Damn, that hurts. I’d hate to be a disappointment to my fellow kidnappers... but what if I lure beautiful women with creamy goodness?”

I’m talking about the milkshake, but as soon as the words are out of my mouth, I realize my mistake.

Faith snorts with laughter. Her body shakes uncontrollably with the action and I’m briefly worried something might be medically wrong with her.

“Oh my gosh! You did *not* just say that!” She swipes under her eyes, smearing her eyeliner in the process.

“I believe I delivered on the creamy goodness. Did I not?” I motion to the milkshake with a straight face.

“Oh, you definitely did. It’s the best I’ve ever had too.”

I burst out laughing, loving how easily she can joke around with me. I love women like this, which means she’s not going to be into me. Not in the way I want her.

“The question is, did I woo you enough to convince you to come home with me, or do I need to up my kidnapping game?”

“I’m fairly certain I’m not supposed to go willingly if you’re kidnapping me.” She arches a brow, dipping another fry.

“Yeah, but it seems like it’s easier if you just come with me of your own freewill. If not, I’ll have to drug you or knock you out or something. That sounds difficult and time consuming.”

My mind briefly drifts to Kelsey and what she went through. I shouldn't be joking around about this, but I love seeing Faith so carefree.

“So, if I come willingly, I get to spoon and get creamy goodness?” She arches a brow, watching my every move.

“I could upgrade you to forking and bottled water if you'd like. I don't normally make these offers to my victims though.”

She buries her face in her hands, laughing even harder. When she peeks back up at me, more makeup is smeared.

“Come here, beautiful. You're a hot mess right now.” I lean over the table and swipe at the black line under her eye carefully.

Her gaze is intently focused on me. The attention is making my body heat up. I'd love a night with Faith. But I don't think it'd be enough for me. There's a reason I'm not a one-night stand type guy. I get attached and fast. I want a future. A wife and family. If only I could find someone to make my dreams come true.

Playlist

Playlist

You know how people always say to be wary of funny people? How they'll make you laugh and laugh and laugh. Then all of a sudden, BAM! You're naked and you don't know how it happened.

Well, I never believed that was true.

Then I met Jesse.

"Fuck, you're beautiful," Jesse murmurs in my ear as he pushes my blouse off of my shoulders and watches it float to the ground to join my pants.

I slip my hands under the hem of his shirt and nearly groan when I feel what I'm working with. Lindsey's right. He's at least a twelve.

I push his shirt higher and higher as he drops his jeans to the floor. When I toss his shirt, not caring where it lands, I'm given the most amazing view.

Jesse's fit and muscular in a way I've never seen. And I've seen a lot of naked people in my life. It's a hazard of the job, but Jesse's magnificent.

“What are you looking at?” Jesse mumbles, closing the few inches between us. He places his hands on my waist and I’m instantly turned on even more.

His touch is gentle, yet firm. Controlling and confident. He backs me up, letting my back hit the wall. I let out a gasp at the drastic temperature change.

Jesse’s mouth is on mine before I can blink. He thrusts his tongue into my mouth and kisses me like a man should. He’s all consuming and I can’t focus on anything other than him right now.

His hands wander over my body as he trails kisses down my jaw. He nips and sucks at my neck, making me moan. Everything he does to me is heightened. His touch is branding, burning. His lips are demanding and devouring.

Slipping his hands over my hips, Jesse grips my ass and lifts me into the air. I instantly wrap my legs around his waist and my arms around his neck. He pins me against the wall, holding me up with one arm.

“You’re killing me, Faith,” Jesse whispers. “We’re going more than one round,” he murmurs, tightening his hold on me.

He moves us away from the wall and into his bedroom. Carefully laying me out on his bed, he stands over me and his gaze rakes up and down my body. His attention feels like a caress and I know I’m going to miss it in the morning.

“I keep thinking I’m going to wake up and this will all be a dream.” He shakes his head slowly.

“I could leave if that would help.”

“You’re not leaving,” he growls, crawling up the bed and hovering over me.

Using his knee, he nudges my legs apart and settles between my thighs. His hands and mouth explore me as I gasp and moan beneath him. I’ve never had a man show me this much attention. I’ve never felt so cared for and cherished.

“You’re absolutely beautiful,” he murmurs against my skin.

“Jesse, please,” I’m begging, but I don’t even care. Desire and need is pulsating through me and he’s not touching me enough.

“What do you need, baby?”

“I need you.”

“You have me.” He sits back on his heels and stares at me as a slow smirk spreads over his face. “Whatever you want. Your wish is my command.”



I run my fingers through his hair, enjoying the way the silky strands feel. He has a slight curl to the ends of his hair and it somehow makes him more attractive.

“If you keep doing that, I’m going to fall asleep on your tits,” he murmurs, pressing a soft kiss to my cleavage.

“Am I supposed to be opposed to that idea?”

“I don’t know. But I’d love it if you weren’t.”

“I’m definitely not,” I say through a yawn.

Jesse lifts his head just high enough for him to meet my gaze. He rests his chin on me and stares for a few seconds.

“You’re tired.”

“Well, it is four in the morning.”

“Do you want to sleep for a little, then we can have round two?” He wiggles his brows.

“Round two, huh? You seem pretty certain I want more.”

“Oh, I rocked your world.” He smirks.

“You were pretty amazing. I won’t deny that.”

“Good.” He kisses me slowly before lying down next to me and tugging me into his arms.

It doesn’t take long for me to drift off with a smile on my face.



A low vibration stirs me from my sleep. I glance around the dark room and last night flickers through my mind. Jesse was amazing. The best man I've ever been with. Both in skill and personality. Definitely by physical appearance.

I slip from the bed to go in search of my phone. It's in a pile of clothes in the middle of the hallway. I probably wouldn't have heard it, except it's vibrating against Jesse's belt.

I pick up the phone and Lindsey's name flashes across the screen. It's weird for her to call me this early.

"Hello?" I whisper into the phone. I don't want to wake up Jesse.

"Faith! Where are you? I'm at your apartment."

I frown and try to figure out why she'd be at my place. The last time I saw Lindsey, she was plastered. How does she sound so sober right now?

"Why are you at my apartment?" I run my hand through my horribly messy hair and try to wake up enough to understand what's going on.

"Didn't you read my texts? I sent you like fifty." She sighs loudly. Like I'm a complete disappointment to her.

"Obviously not. What's going on, Linds?"

"Jackson's been sick all night. Mom called me to come get him. He has a really high fever. I need to take him to the hospital and I need you to go with me."

"Why me?"

“Well, because you’re my sister, my best friend, and you work at said hospital. And because I’m scared, Faith. I normally had a husband to do these types of things with me, but I don’t have that anymore. This is the first scary thing I’ve dealt with and I can’t do it alone.” I can hear the wobble in her voice. The sound she makes right before she’s about to ugly cry.

“Ok. I’ll meet you at the hospital. I think I can be there in about ten minutes.”

“Good. I’ll see you there... oh! And, Faith?”

“Yeah?”

“We’re going to talk about why you’re not at your apartment.”

She hangs up before I can answer her and I let out a sigh. She probably doesn’t remember practically pushing me into Jesse’s arms last night. Hell, she probably doesn’t even remember Jesse.

Playlist

Playlist

I reach out an arm to tug Faith closer to me. When my hand hits the mattress, I frown and blink my eyes open. The bed is empty. Where the hell is she?

I quickly climb out of my warm cocoon of blankets and peek in the bathroom. It's empty. Moving from one room to the next, I look for the woman who rocked my world and captured my attention last night, but I come up empty.

“Are you kidding me?” I groan, running a rough hand through my hair.

I really liked her. I thought we hit it off and maybe there could be something between us.

Returning to my room, I throw myself onto the bed and bury my face in the pillow. This is the first day I've had off in almost two weeks. I was hoping to spend it with her, but I'm not going to let Faith ruin my relaxing day. If she wants to pull a Houdini act, there's nothing I can do about it, but I'm not happy.



“What’s up with you? You were pouting yesterday and you still are today.” Kelsey nudges my shoulder with hers.

“I just... I thought I had a connection with this woman I met on Friday.”

“Ok. And?”

“And I kinda took her home and we had an amazing night... in bed.”

“I didn’t need you to add the *in bed* part. I’m a married woman. I know what you’d consider an amazing night.” She rolls her eyes.

Kelsey’s been my rock for years. She’s the best nurse I’ve ever met and we met through friends. She was a nurse in the emergency room when I was a resident. I practically begged her to transfer to the operating room when I became an attending. I knew she’d be amazing and she didn’t let me down.

“I forgot, you can only have sex if you put a ring on it,” I deadpan.

“Oh my gosh! That just hit me! You had a one-night stand!” She swats at my chest like she’s trying to ward off a swarm of bees.

“Ow! Fuck, Kels. Stop hitting me!” I wrap my arms around her torso, pinning her arms at her sides and hug her tight. “Do you think you could talk about my extra-curricular activities a little louder? I don’t think the president of the hospital heard you.”

“I’m sorry!” She laughs, dropping her head to my chest. “It’s just... that’s not like you. I was surprised.”

“You and me both. But she left before I woke up and I have no idea how to find her.”

“You’re mad. I don’t think I’ve ever seen you mad.” She blinks up at me.

“I am a little... ok, maybe a lot. I thought we might be something worth exploring, but apparently I was the only one.”

“I’m sorry, Alvin. I still love you.” I smile when she uses the nickname she made up for me.

Kelsey’s the only person who calls me Alvin. She says Dr. Chipkin sounds like a chipmunk and it’s too long to say, therefore I’m now Alvin. I don’t know why she can’t just call me Jesse, but I’m not going to complain. I like that she has a nickname for me. It makes me feel special. Like I’m important to her.

“Does that mean you’ll leave Mason and marry me instead? You can bring Kyler. I’ll raise him as my own.”

“No.” She snorts with laughter. “Do you really think I’d leave Mason for anyone?”

“No,” I grumble under my breath. “All the nurses say he has smoldering eyes.”

“Don’t be jealous. I’m sure he could teach you to smolder if you want.” She pulls out of my arms and slips her hand into mine. “C’mon, if I’m late for work, the asshole surgeon I’m working with will yell at me.” She smirks.

“Yeah, I hear the nurse in room two is a real witch. It’s going to be an awesome day.”

She throws her head back and lets out her rich laughter. I love how easy our relationship is. No matter how many times I tease Kelsey, I’ve never wanted more than friendship with her.

After grabbing my scrubs out of the vending style machine, I head into the men’s locker room and get changed. It’s full of surgeons, nurses, surgical technologists, and reps all getting ready for their day.

We change into clean scrubs at the hospital to make sure that nothing comes into the operating room. We don’t want dirt, pollen, or dog hair floating around when our patients are open to infection.

“Are you still pissed?” Derek Devine eyes me with a smirk. He’s one of my best friends and a fellow surgeon. “It was one night. How are you still hung up on this girl?”

I scowl at him as I slip my scrub top over my head. He's been after me for days about this. I can't explain why what happened with Faith makes me so angry. I've been blown off by women before and never cared. Maybe it's because we slept together. I don't sleep around like that.

"Shut it. I can be as mad as I want." I slide my feet into my clogs and grab my ID out of the top of my locker.

"What are you going to do if you ever see her again? You said she lives near here. It wouldn't be insane to see her again around town."

"I don't know. I want to say I'd approach her and ask what happened, but I probably wouldn't. I'll most likely glare at her from across the room for a few minutes, then leave before she can see me."

Derek's rich laughter fills our little corner of the locker room. He shakes his head at me like I'm crazy.

"I don't understand you one bit. Women love you, yet you have the worst luck with dating. And you're supposed to be this cocky surgeon who isn't afraid of anything, yet you hate confrontation." He shuts his locker and leans against it to wait for me. "C'mon, let's grab some coffee before we have to go see our first patients."

Derek slaps a hand on my shoulder and leads me into the lounge. The operating room has its own space. We have a nice coffee maker down here and tables to eat lunch at. Most of the time I retreat here between cases just to take a breath.

“Look at that sour face,” Scott McLaren mumbles as he lifts his coffee to his lips. He’s the best GYN at this hospital and the third member of our little trio. “Is he still mad?” He glances at Derek.

“He’s a wounded puppy. I think we need to take him out on Friday and find him someone new to be obsessed with.”

“I wasn’t obsessed with her,” I groan.

“Nah, she just rocked his world.” Scott wiggles his eyebrows.

“Don’t you have babies to go deliver?” I deadpan.

“Yeah, from all those one-night stands gone wrong.” He walks away chuckling.

“Well, shit. If she gets pregnant, maybe you will see her again.”

“I hate you. I’m going to find my best friend. At least she’s nice to me.” I push past him and climb the stairs.

“We both know I’m your best friend! You can’t replace me, Jesse! Kelsey sucks, she’ll never be as awesome as me!” Derek calls to my retreating back.

“Excuse me!” Kelsey says. I glance over my shoulder and find her hands on her hips, her glare pointed at Derek. He’s squirming under her attention.

Help me! He mouths the words to me, his eyes wide with fear.

“I’m not helping you out of this one! I hope she chews you up and spits you out.”

As I walk away, Kelsey’s yelling at Derek and I’m fairly certain she hit him at least a few times. Serves him right.

I enter the operating room and head straight to pre-op to see my first patient.

Playlist

Playlist

It's always intimidating walking into a new job. There are so many factors that can impact how it goes. I'm the new girl. I can't walk in here and say they're doing something wrong or everyone will hate me. I have to navigate through the strong personalities and try to find my little tribe of people.

People in the operating room have some of the strongest personalities you'll ever see. They're confident and don't take shit from anyone. They know their job and are able to anticipate what's going to happen next.

Being the new person is hard. It's like entering a new middle school and maneuvering your way through the most difficult time of your life with all new people.

"Faith Holloway?" The woman who runs the schedule smiles up at me.

"Yes." I step up to the front desk and wait to see where I'm supposed to go.

"It's nice to meet you. I'm Hope. I'm going to get you set up with some scrubs, then I'll give you a little tour. I hear you

have a lot of experience in orthopedics, is that right?"

Hope's tall and curvy. Her hair is tucked into a scrub hat so I can't see what it looks like, but she's gorgeous.

"Yes. I was on the ortho team at the last hospital I was at. I really enjoyed it and would love to be able to join the team here."

"Well, we're short staffed today. A bad stomach bug swept through here and we had six people call and say they're not coming in today. I don't have enough orthopedic nurses. How would you feel about me throwing you to the wolves on your first day?"

"I'm sure I can handle it." I chuckle.

"Thank you! I don't know what I was going to do if you said no. I'm going to put you with Kelsey Bennett. She's an amazing nurse and will be able to show you the ropes. I'll have you scrub since you don't know how to use the system for paperwork yet."

"That sounds perfect."

"Good. I have you and Kelsey in Dr. Chipkin's second room. He's a delight to work with which is shocking."

"Why is that shocking?" My brows furrow.

"The surgeons at the top of their field tend to be awful to work for. They think they're God's gift to humanity. Dr. Chipkin isn't like that. He's down to earth and treats everyone nicely. Except Kelsey."

“What? Why not Kelsey?” Anxiety spreads through me. What if she’s a nasty nurse? I’ve met more than my share of those and I really don’t want to deal with that right now.

“They’re best friends. They tease each other incessantly.” She shakes her head with a smile.

“Morning, Hope.” A handsome man winks at her as he walks by.

“Good morning, Dr. Devine.” She tracks him until he’s out of sight, then turns back to me. Her cheeks turn a light pink and she avoids making eye contact with me.

Once I’m changed into scrubs and have my hair tied up under a scrub hat, I follow Hope as she gives me a little tour of the operating room. We end in room two, where she introduces me to Kelsey.

“It’s so nice to meet you! We’re going to have an awesome day. Alvin has three joint replacements in here and four in the first room.”

“Oh, wow. How long does it take him to do seven joints?”

“He’ll be done around two. He’s really fast.”

“Does he only do knees and hips, or shoulders too?”

“Just knee and hip replacements. We have three knees today. They’re so much better than hips,” Kelsey mock whispers.

“Dr. Chipkin schedules all knees in one room so Kelsey doesn’t have to do any hip replacements.” Hope rolls her eyes.

“Hey, it’s the perks of dealing with him outside of this place. Do you know he’s trying to convince my husband to raise quails? Because their eggs have a higher amount of protein and he doesn’t have the time to raise his own,” she mutters the explanation in a deep manly voice, making us laugh.

“I’m not surprised at all. And I’m assuming Mason jumped at the idea?” Hope quirks a brow.

“We’re picking up the quails tomorrow.” Kelsey rolls her eyes. “They’re both lucky I love them so much. I spent my entire weekend helping Mason build a hutch. I don’t know why he couldn’t just call my brother and have him make it. The man builds houses for a living, I’m sure he could handle a quail hutch.”

“Alright, well you argue with Alvin about the quails and I’m going to go figure out where I can fit in Dr. Holly’s appendectomy.”

“I love Willow. She’s such a sweetheart. I’m so glad she took Derek up on his offer to join the practice. I would’ve hated it if she went to a different hospital after she finished her residency.” Kelsey smiles brightly. She seems like such a sweet woman.

“I know. She’s an awesome addition. Have a great day, Faith, and let me know if you need anything.” Hope leaves the rooms and I’m left with Kelsey.

“Are you excited for your first day?”

“Yes. Maybe a little anxious too. It’s always nerve wracking to learn the steps of a new surgeon.”

“Oh, Alvin’s easy. He’s very minimalistic. And I have steps if you want to tape them to the wall. You also have the rep and they’re really good. I think we have Joy today.”

“Joy and Faith?” I chuckle.

“Like I said, it’s going to be a great day.” Kelsey smirks.



I’m all set up and waiting for Dr. Chipkin to finish the procedure in the first room. Orthopedics do things a little different. The doctor performs the surgery in the first room and leaves a resident or PA to suture the incision. They jump into the second room and can complete the whole surgery, leaving someone else to close the patient. By the time he’s breaking scrub, the first room will be ready for their next case. Most of the time, closing the incision takes just as long as the joint replacement does.

Two men walk into the room right before the patient comes in. They stand off to the side and chat while the anesthesiologist puts a spinal anesthetic into the patient. That way they don’t need to have a tube down their throat and

they'll breathe by themselves the whole time, but they won't feel the surgery.

One of the men looks familiar, but it's hard to see much of him. Masks cover half of our faces and our hats cover our hair. It's hard to tell who someone is based on their eyes alone.

My favorite part about being in orthopedics is the hoods we get to wear. We look like astronauts, but I get to take off my mask during surgery. It's so much nicer.

Joy comes in and begins going over the procedure with me. I listen, turning my back on the rest of the room. She helps me get all of the cutting guides set the way Dr. Chipkin likes them and gives me a few hints and tricks.

I love working in orthopedics because there's more for me to do. I think it's a blast putting together the cutting guides and knowing that the surgeons rely on you more heavily than they do in other specialties. The extra responsibility is somehow more rewarding.

Chatter fills the air again as the surgeon, his assistant, and the hook holder enter the room. They each need a hood, gown and gloves before they slip a vest on so their back is sterile too. I spin around with a towel, so they can dry their hands and freeze.

There's no way.

Thoughts rush through my head as I hand the hook holder a towel. Did he ever say where he works? No. He just said he didn't work at the bar; he was helping out his sister. I drape a

towel over the assistant's hand and take a deep breath. He didn't mention working in the medical field at all. Neither did I.

Jesse turns his attention to me; a big smile is stretched across his face. It falls the second his gaze lands on me.

I hold my chin high, refusing to acknowledge what happened between us. It's not going to happen again.

"Good morning, Dr. Chipkin. My name's Faith. I'm a new nurse here." I try to keep my voice strong and void of emotion, but it's hard.

Jesse narrows his eyes and his brows pinch together. I pray he doesn't say a word about Friday. It's bad enough I have to see him again after walking out of there, but if he says anything in front of my new co-workers, I'm going to be pissed.

"Yeah, nice to meet you," he grinds out through a clenched jaw.

As soon as all of them have their vests on, Jesse turns his attention to Kelsey.

"Is the prep dry yet?" He snaps the slightest bit.

Fear and anxiety pool in my stomach. He was so happy and carefree before he realized who I was. Hell, he was the same way when we were together on Friday. What happened?

You walked out on him without a single word.

I've been thinking about it since I shut his door behind me. At that point, what was I supposed to do? I locked the door when I left. I couldn't very well walk right back in and leave a note for him.

I was so worried about Jackson. I didn't really think about anything else. The entire time I sat in the emergency room with Lindsey, I thought about going back to his house, but that felt desperate.

Could you imagine having a one-night stand with someone and them showing back up a few days later? Most men would be packing up and moving if that happened.

Maybe all of this happened for a reason. Perhaps Jesse isn't someone I'm meant to be with long term and that's why I left without a thought of leaving a note. I figured if we were meant for more, we'd run into each other again... I just didn't expect to see him at work.

"Whoa, Snappy McGee. Who the hell do you think you're talking to?" Kelsey folds her arms over her chest and glares at her friend.

"I'm sorry, Kels. I shouldn't be speaking to you like that." He lets out a long sigh. "You know I love you." He blows her a kiss and she rolls her eyes.

"You're only saying that because you want my eggs." She waves him off, moving closer to the patient.

"What the hell?" The assistant's eyes widen to a comical proportion.

“Don’t be gross, Carmen. He wants my quail eggs.” She rolls her eyes.

Kelsey grips the patient’s ankle and takes it out of the candy cane. It holds the patient’s leg in the air so we can prep the skin to prevent infections.

She holds it out for Jesse to slip a stockinette over the foot and roll it up the leg to a little below the knee.

“I need a down sheet,” Jesse growls at me.

“I have one ready for you. Maybe you could ask for things in advance until I learn how you do things and that way you don’t have to wait,” I retort.

I’m not this person. I’m normally a really nice and caring person, but Jesse’s pissing me off. I didn’t want to leave him on Saturday morning, but Lindsey needed me. What was I supposed to do, let her sit alone at the hospital?

Jesse’s gaze snaps to mine and he narrows his eyes. He watches me for a full ten seconds before he moves.

“Are we going to have a problem, Faith? Should I ask Hope for another scrub?”

“No, I don’t have a problem at all. You’re the one who seems to have an issue with me.”

“Oh, I wonder why.” He rolls his eyes and takes the drape from me.

The entire case is spent with him barking at me. Kelsey alternates between flashing me apologetic glances and glaring

at Jesse. I wish I could tell her what's going on, but that's an uncomfortable conversation to have with a stranger.

I don't want rumors to spread about me and Jesse. The last thing I need is people thinking I'm sleeping with him because I'm trying to get some sort of an advantage at work. I'm not. I'm a good employee and amazing at my job. I don't need to screw my way to the top.

Jesse strips off his gown, gloves and hood as soon as Carmen starts suturing. He shakes his head at me as he pulls his mask up over his mouth and nose.

My heart sinks and tears prick at the back of my eyes. Maybe moving and starting a new job was a mistake.

“What the hell did you do? I've never seen him like that with anyone,” Carmen whispers so only I can hear him as soon as Jesse and Kelsey exit the operating room.

She's yelling at him and talking with her hands. He's pissed and yelling right back. I can only imagine the rumors that will be spread about me by lunch time.

Playlist

Playlist

How is she here? How is she the new nurse that I'm going to be forced to work with?

I don't think I realized just how angry I was with Faith until I came face to face with her again. How dare she show up in my hospital and try to act like nothing happened!

"Get your ass outside!" Kelsey hisses as soon as I've removed my hood. She grips my arm and drags me out of the room.

"What?"

"Don't you dare what me! You know what!"

"What do you want me to say, Kels?" I toss my mask in the trash and scrub a hand down my face, letting out a long sigh.

"I want to know why you're treating Faith so awful. It's her first day here! You're the first surgeon she's worked with and you were a total dick to her!" Her hands move wildly in the air, just like they always do when she's mad.

"Well, she already had my dick," I growl.

Kelsey stops and stares at me. I can see her piecing it all together and her mouth falls open.

“She’s the girl from Friday night?” She whispers, swatting at my chest.

“Yes. What the hell am I supposed to do?”

My mind races with what to do. I could ask Hope to transfer her out of my room, but that might get her in trouble.

I’ve never asked for anyone to be reassigned before. I know questions will be asked if I do, and I don’t want to answer them.

Faith wasn’t bad at her job. In fact, she was really good. So much better than I expected, but I’m not telling her that.

“I don’t know, but I’ll tell you what you’re not going to do. You’re not going to treat her like that during the second case. And! At the end of the day, you’re going to pull her aside and apologize to her.”

“Kels,” I groan.

“No! If you want to act like a toddler, I’m going to treat you like a toddler.” She plants her hands on her hips.

“Kyler must hate you,” I mumble under my breath.

“I’m a fantastic mom and if you ever imply anything different ever again, I’m going to have a talk with Mason, Derek, and Scott. Let’s see how sassy you’ll be with me when you have them breathing down your neck.”

She folds her arms over her chest and gives me her best mom look. For having an infant, she already has the look down pat.

“I’m sorry, Kels. Please forgive me.” I tug her into my arms and hold her tight.

“I’ll forgive you when Faith does.”

“Are you already getting in trouble, Jesse?” Cali comes around the corner with a smirk on her face.

“Did she set off the bat signal or something? How do you always know when she wants someone to help her team up against me?”

I push Kelsey away from me with a palm to the face, she snorts with laughter and slaps my bicep.

“It’s a mother’s intuition.” Cali chuckles.

“You’re not *her* mother!” I roll my eyes.

“Fine! Woman’s intuition. Plus, I can sense your bitching from the other side of the operating room. Derek sent me to check on you.” Her grin widens.

“First off, bullshit. Second, why are you in that asshole’s room anyway? You should be with me.” I fold my arms over my chest and glare at her. If she were in my room, I wouldn’t have to deal with Faith.

“No can do, bud. I’m out of the orthopedics game.” She pats me on the chest.

“What? Why? You’re amazing. I need you in there.” My brows furrow as I try to figure out why she’d want out.

“Oh my gosh!” Kelsey squeals at an ear-piercing level. She jumps up and down on her toes and claps her hands. “How far along are you?”

“According to Scott, I’m ten weeks.” Cali rubs a hand over her stomach and grins.

“Really? Maddox knocked you up?” I blink in surprise.

I’m really happy for Cali and Maddox. They definitely deserve to be happy after everything they’ve been through. Same goes for Kelsey and Mason.

I just didn’t think Cali and Maddox were going to have more kids. Harper’s a handful to say the least. Maddox told me he wasn’t sure he could handle another one.

“Ew, don’t say knocked up. You make it sound bad.” Kelsey swats at my chest. Again.

“What’s with you and all the swatting today?” I push her further away from me, making her laugh.

“Damn, he really is touchy today,” Cali muses.

“A total baby. Pouting every chance he gets.”

“What is this? Why are you all being mean to me?” I motion around me. The guys have been just as mean today.

“First, we’re not being any meaner than normal. You’re just being sensitive.” Kelsey rolls her eyes. “Second, I don’t think

you can complain about how anyone is treating you after how you just acted with Faith. Did she deserve that sort of shit?”

“She fucking left me, Kels. I’m not going to act like I fell in love with her in one night because I don’t think that’s how love works. But I know we had a different connection. One I’ve never felt with anyone before. And then she was just gone when I woke up.”

“Sweetie, just because she hurt you, doesn’t mean she didn’t have a reason to. I think you should talk to her and see what really happened. Maybe there was a good reason she left without saying anything,” Cali runs a gentle hand up and down my back.

These two mother me to death, but I don’t complain. It’s nice to be taken care of when you don’t have a woman in your life to do it.

“I already told the asshole he needs to apologize and talk to her.” Kelsey folds her arms over her chest.

And there’s the fact that they don’t let me get away with shit. They lay their thoughts and feelings out there, not giving a damn if I want them.

“Fine! I’ll talk to her at the end of the day. Right now, I need to go see my next patient or Faith will be gone by the time I finish all of these cases.” I walk away knowing I can’t get behind. I have shit to do tonight and it doesn’t involve operating.

“It’s so hard watching them grow up,” Kelsey mumbles like a crying mother watching her baby go off to school.

Holding up my middle finger in the air, Kelsey and Cali burst out laughing as I walk through the door to pre-op.

Playlist

Playlist

A few minutes after Kelsey took Jesse out by the scrub sinks, she strolls back in like nothing happened. I'm sure she knows what happened. There's no way he didn't tell her.

Based on their interactions during this case, Jesse and Kelsey are as close as brother and sister. I'm sure no topic is off limits for the two of them.

I avoid eye contact with Kelsey and just focus on cutting the suture for Carmen. He's been respectful since I politely told him to stay out of my business and he hasn't asked any more questions about Jesse and I.

Carmen has joked around and told me all about his wife and their adorable little babies. He's so in love with them. It's really cute.

"End time is nine fifty-eight," Summer says from the head of the bed.

She's the anesthesiologist in my room today and she's been so sweet to me. When Jesse left the room with Kelsey, she smiled at me and told me he clearly hasn't been laid in a long

time. It was a nice gesture, but it made my stomach sink because I'm guessing I know the exact time he last got laid.

Once our patient has been taken to post-op, we clean up from this case and wipe everything down. As soon as the floors are mopped, we bring in the supplies for our next case.

I'm able to get everything set up and all of the instruments put together before the next patient comes in the room. Sometimes keeping up with a new surgeon is hard and I'm glad I've been able to do it so far.

"Hey, I'm Kelly." A co-worker walks into the room with her gown and gloves. She sets them on a table and begins opening them sterilely. "I'm your lunch relief."

"Hi, I'm Faith." I smile at her.

As much as I'd love to do this case so I could learn Dr. Chipkin's steps, I really don't want to deal with him again.

Once I've performed my handoff with Kelly and gone over where I put everything and our counts, I tear off my gown, gloves, and hood. I slip the helmet off my head and wrap the cord around it. Throughout the case, my helmet pumps air inside the hood, so I can breathe and it keeps me cool.

After thanking Kelly for relieving me, I head out to the scrub sink and rinse the waterless scrub off my arms. It always leaves your skin feeling sticky and slimy.

"Faith... Can I talk to you?" Jesse steps through the door and lets it close softly behind him. His tone is softer than it's been all day and it has me pausing.

But he doesn't deserve my kindness. Not with how he's been treating me.

"I'm on my lunch break, Dr. Chipkin." I tug my mask off of my face and toss it in the trash.

"I'll make sure Kelly stays longer for you. I'll tell her that I needed to go over things about the case. You won't get in trouble." He grips the back of his neck, his eyes pleading with me to listen.

"I'm not sure I want to talk to you right now. And I really don't want to discuss this at work. The last thing I need is rumors spreading about the new nurse."

"Fine. Will you meet me for dinner? Drinks? Coffee? I'll take anything, Faith."

"Why? You were more than happy to treat me like shit all morning. Why are you trying to be nice now?" I fold my arms over my chest and watch him.

"I might've had a couple friends point out what a dick I was being."

"You needed someone to point that out? You couldn't figure it out on your own?" I laugh in disbelief.

"Will you please let me take you out for dinner, Faith? Let me make up for my asshole behavior."

"Fine, but you better not be a jerk."

"I won't. Promise. How about Catalino's? I'll pick you up at six?" A slow smile spreads across his lips, reminding me of

just how irresistible I found him on Friday night.

“Ok.” I grab the pen out of his scrub pocket. “Do you have a piece of paper?” He shakes his head and holds his arm out. I can’t write my address on his hand or forearm, the scrubs we use before each case will wash it away.

Slowly pushing his sleeve up his bicep, I move his arm out to the side and write my address on the inside of his arm. I’m hoping no one will see it there.

He watches me the entire time. His skin is so soft, his biceps so hard. Memories of our night together flash through my mind. He’s so strong, so attractive. I shouldn’t be going out with him. It isn’t going to end well.

“Are you going to give me your number?”

“No.”

“Why not?” His brows furrow.

“You have to earn my number.” I shrug, slipping his pen back into his pocket.

“I don’t need to earn your address?”

“I’m not telling you what apartment I’m in. I’ll meet you outside at six. If I give you my number, you’d have access to me at any time. If you know what apartment building I live in, you only have access to me when I’m coming or going. You’re also assuming I wrote down the correct building.” I wink at him with a cocky grin.

“That’s so mean.” His deep chuckle wraps around me and makes me want to fall into his arms. But I can’t do that. I don’t trust that he isn’t going to break my heart time and time again.

“I also reserve the right to stand you up if you treat me like shit during the third case.”

“Deal. You drive a hard bargain. I’ll see you at six.”

“You’ll see me during the next case.” I roll my eyes and walk away to him laughing again.

Playlist

Playlist

I was able to pull myself out of my funk the rest of the day. I'm going to take Cali and Kelsey's advice and find out what happened before I hold the past against Faith.

Faith wasn't annoyed to see me again, she was shocked and maybe a little bit confused. If she didn't want to see me again, I think she would've been mad. She definitely wouldn't have agreed to dinner with me.

"Dr. Chipkin, there's a patient in the ER with leg pain. They had a knee replacement by you two weeks ago. Do you want to see them, or do you want the on-call doctor to?"

"Nah, I'll go see them. I hate when another practice gets involved with my patients. Thanks."

"No problem. Do you mind if I tag along?" The medical student practically begs. I think his name is Josh. He held retractors in my room once, but there are so many of them. It's hard to keep them straight.

"Yeah, you can come. Maybe you'll even learn something."

I lead the way out of the operating room and across the hospital to the emergency room. We weave through the department to my patient.

“Hey, Mr. Green. How are you feeling today?” I smile as I enter his room. I hate seeing my patients in pain or not knowing what’s going on with them.

“My leg really hurts. It feels like it’s cramping.” He groans, grabbing his knee.

“Ok. When did this start?” Sitting on the rolling stool, I move in front of him and slip on a pair of gloves.

“A few days ago. The pain is getting worse though.”

“And you’re two weeks post-op, correct?”

“Yes.”

His leg is swollen and discolored, but that’s not uncommon with a knee replacement. I run my hand over his skin and the warmth seeps through my glove.

“We’re going to do an ultrasound and make sure you don’t have a blood clot. I’ll write the order and get it done as quickly as I can. Do you have any questions?”

“What if it’s not a blood clot? What else could it be?” Mr. Green asks.

“It could just be pain and swelling from the knee replacement, but I want to make sure I’m not missing anything.”

“Ok. Thank you, Dr. Chipkin.”

“You’re welcome.” I pat his leg before standing and exiting the room.

The computer at the nurse’s station is free and I hop on to add the order. I’m hoping it won’t be long before an ultrasound tech can fit him in. Blood clots make me nervous. If the clot breaks off, it could cause big problems.

“What do we do until the ultrasound is done?” The medical student blinks up at me. I glance at his chest and smile when I read his name tag. He is Josh.

“Well, I have nothing to do. I’m done with my cases and I have an hour before I have to meet someone for dinner. I’m going to hang out with Mr. Green and see how he’s doing. The best thing you can do for your career is show your patients how much they mean to you.”

“Yeah, but most of the doctors I’ve worked with really don’t care that much. Do you just fake it?”

I stare at him. He has to be joking, right?

“No. I care about my patients. It’s my job to help them and I take that seriously. I don’t view them as a paycheck. They’re real people. Spouses or parents, kids or siblings of someone. I wouldn’t want my parents, sister, or the rest of my family and friends to be treated like a number so I refuse to do that to my patients.” I shake my head, a little annoyed with his outlook on being a doctor. “If you view them as a number, you probably shouldn’t be a doctor.”

Pushing past Josh, I slip through Mr. Green's door. I'm about to tell him the ultrasound tech should be down soon, but I find him asleep. I was only gone for a few minutes.

My eyes stray to his chest and I realize it isn't moving. Jumping into action, I place my fingers on the side of his neck, over his carotid artery. There's no pulse.

I slap the blue button on the wall, alerting all available staff to the code blue.

"Get a crash cart, Josh!" I scream, already positioning my hands over Mr. Green to start CPR.

To Kennedy's entertainment, I always hum *Staying Alive* when I do CPR. She used to joke around about it to keep a rhythm and showed me an episode of *The Office*. Since then, I can't do CPR without humming the song.

Within seconds nurses and doctors are flooding the room. One nurse gets defibrillator pads on Mr. Green and I continue my compressions.

"What happened?" Summer, the anesthesiologist that was in one of my rooms today, moves to the head of the bed and places a mask over my patient's mouth and nose.

"I think he went into cardiac arrest. He presented with leg pain, swelling, skin discoloration, and warmth. I wrote an order for an ultrasound to rule out a deep vein thrombosis. When I came back in here to hang out with him until they arrived, he was unconscious. No pulse."

The defibrillator alerts me that it's going to evaluate the heart rhythm. I take my hands off of his chest and pant out a breath. My heart is beating so fast, blood is whooshing in my ears.

As soon as the robotic voice tells us we need to deliver a shock, we press the button and hold our breaths. A slow beep fills the air as Mr. Green's heart begins beating on its own again.

Summer jumps into action and starts an IV. She begins administering medication to help raise his heart rate and listens to his lungs.

“What can I do, Summer?” I run a hand through my hair.

“Call the interventional cardiologist. You just saved his life, Jesse. Now, I'll keep him alive until we can fix this.” She flashes me a soft smile.

I suck in a deep breath and blow it out slowly. Dropping into a chair in the corner in the room, I let my head fall back against the wall and close my eyes. This is too much excitement for one day. I like a nice quiet day in the hospital.

After pulling up Mr. Green's file on a computer, I call his wife and ask her to come down to the hospital. She's crying before I even hang up. No matter how many times I reassure her that he's ok now, she doesn't stop.

I promise I'll stay with him until she gets here and I know it's going to be a while. Glancing at the clock on the wall, it's already past six. I let out a sigh and lean forward on my knees,

letting my head drop. I have a feeling I just ruined any chance I had of fixing things between Faith and me.

“Why do you look worse than I do?” Mr. Green’s voice is weak, but he’s talking.

“Well, I feel like I let you down.”

“None of this was your fault. You told me there was a chance of blood clots before surgery. Hell, there’s a chance of blood clots without surgery.”

“I should’ve-”

“Nope. I won’t let you blame yourself for this. You’re an amazing doctor and you actually care about your patients. I’m not going to let you beat yourself up over this... Why else do you look so beaten down?” When I hesitate to answer him, he rolls his eyes. “I technically died. Pretend I’m your fairy ghost and tell me. I have seven kids and they’re around your age. I’m good at being an ear for their problems.”

“There’s a woman-”

“Isn’t there always.” He snorts with laughter. “How’d you screw up?”

I go over the last few days with my patient. He listens intently. I normally would never do this, but something about him seems so fatherly. I should just call Dad and get his opinion, but Mr. Green is here right now.

“Damn, that’s going to be hard to come back from. Do you want me to call her and explain how I decided to die and ruin your plans?” He smirks.

“I’d love to, but she refused to give me her number.”

“Smart girl,” he chuckles.

Mrs. Green rushes into the room and over to her husband. She wraps her arms around him and a soft sob fills the air. Mr. Green closes his eyes, a gentle smile spreading over his face.

“I’m ok, darling. Dr. Chipkin saved my life. And now he needs to go get his girl.” He gives me a knowing look. “Get out of here, Jesse. You don’t need to stay here any longer. I’m sure the other doctors can play hero if I need them to.” He grins.

“Fine, but I want you to call me if anything happens. Do you understand?” I scribble my number down on a piece of paper and hand it to his wife. “That’s my personal number. I’ll answer at any time of the day. If you feel weird at all, I want you to call me.”

“Thank you,” Mrs. Green whispers.

“Of course. Feel better and I’ll visit you tomorrow morning to see how you’re doing.”

“Don’t break her heart,” Mr. Green mumbles as I leave the room.

Playlist

Playlist

As soon as I get home, I start getting ready for dinner with Jesse. Catalino's is a nice Italian restaurant. One Lindsey's spoken about more times than I can count. She claims they have the best food in the area and I've been wanting to go there.

I check my reflection in the mirror one more time before I slip on my ankle boots. Instead of wearing a dress, I decided to go with dark washed jeans, a light gray sweater that hugs my curves and shoes to match. My hair is twisted into a fancy bun with a few tendrils hanging in my face.

I look pretty and confident, without trying too hard. I twist one way and then the other to check myself out from every angle. As soon as I'm happy, I grab my purse and head out the door.

I want to say I don't care about Jesse and I'm only going out with him to get a free meal, but that'd be a lie. I could claim I just want to smooth things over so work isn't awkward and while that's true, it's not the complete truth.

I crave to get to know him better. I want to know everything about him and see if he's as great as I imagined he was when I went home with him.

I'm just reaching the little bench in front of the apartment building I gave Jesse the address to – not my actual apartment building – when my phone rings.

I tug it out of my purse and find Lindsey's name flashing on the screen.

“Hey, what's up?”

“Nothing. I'm bored. I haven't left the house since we came home from the hospital on Sunday morning. I love my child to death, but I'm the worst person to play nurse. How much do I have to pay Auntie Faith to come take care of Jackson?”

“He still isn't feeling well?”

“No. They said it will be a few days before he's feeling better, but it's torture. I hate seeing my baby sick.”

“I know. Me too. Is there anything I can do?” I can feel her about to respond and I cut in before she can get a word out. “Other than being his caregiver until he's better?”

“Well, I mean would that be so much to ask?”

“Yes!” I chuckle. “Linds, I can't miss work. You know if I wasn't at a new job, I'd be by your side in a second, but I have a feeling if I call and tell them I'm sick on my second day on the unit, I'm probably going to get fired.”

“What if I hire you as his nanny?”

“He’s eleven! Does he really need a nanny?” I roll my eyes.

I love Lindsey, but I think she just doesn’t like to be alone. Getting a divorce was a huge change for her. One she had very little say in. Her ex was cheating on her and got the other woman pregnant. He decided he wanted a family with her instead of Lindsey and moved out of their house the next day.

He doesn’t have an issue with her keeping the house and everything he left. He has more than enough money to replace all of it. As far as Jackson goes, her ex barely even cares about him. It’s been hard on both of them.

“Fine! What if I propose to you and you can be my platonic wife?”

“I’m not marrying anyone! Plus, I’m your sister!”

“Hmm, what if Mr. Hottie Bartender asked you to be his wife?” I can picture Lindsey wiggling her eyebrows at me.

“No, Linds. Ugh! He’s a surgeon.”

“What?”

“A surgeon! You know, a doctor who operates on people and the kind I work with.”

“I know what a surgeon is, you turd. I was just surprised.”

I chuckle to myself. Jackson must be in the room and that’s why she’s keeping her word choices clean.

“So... you’re upset he’s a doctor? Because I’m not really understanding how him being successful is a downfall.”

I groan in frustration. I really don't want to rehash all of this with Lindsey. After all, he should be here any second to pick me up.

"I didn't know he was a surgeon. I showed up to work today and they made me scrub in his room. He was shocked to say the least."

"Did you bang in a supply closet?"

"You do know this isn't an episode of one of your smutty shows, right? No one is banging in a supply closet."

My thoughts drift to Jesse and how I wouldn't mind being locked in a closet with him. We wouldn't need long. Maybe ten to fifteen minutes.

"Why not? Oh! What about a call room?"

"Well, I don't even know where the call room is and I'm betting he doesn't stay in there. His residents probably call him if there's an emergency and then he comes to the hospital. He lives really close to the hospital and most of the time orthopedic surgery isn't life or death situations."

"Ah, so you want a cardiologist." I can practically hear her nodding her head.

What does that say about us? Do we spend too much time together if I know exactly what she's doing even when I can't see her?

"No, I don't want a cardiologist! I don't want anyone right now."

“That’s only because you got laid in the wee hours of Saturday. If you hadn’t been, you’d be a horny mess.”

“Mom!” Jackson’s voice is muffled, but I can still hear him.

“What? It’s completely natural. Just wait until you get hair on your balls and you’re horny all the time.”

“Ew! Why do you have to be like that?” He mumbles. I feel bad for the kid. Lindsey’s a great mom, but she has no filter.

“I’m just being honest! We can talk in four years and see if you still disagree.”

“You’re going to scar that poor child. Maybe I should come be his nanny so he knows how normal people act.”

“Oh, whatever. Normal is boring. So, what happened today?”

“He was an ass to me.” I go on to explain exactly how Jesse treated me throughout the whole morning and how things changed around lunch.

She bombards me with one question after another and I wish I never answered the phone.

Does he look hotter behind a bar or in scrubs? Definitely scrubs, but I enjoyed both.

Is he a good surgeon? Yes, amazing.

Does he smell as good at work as he did at the bar? I don’t know! I’m not getting close enough to smell him when I’m supposed to be working... plus the hoods make it difficult to smell anyone.

“You should totally be his patient.” She sighs.

“For what? I don’t have any issues.”

“I don’t know! Maybe he’ll strip you down and give you an exam.”

“He’s not a gynecologist, Lindsey! He replaces knees and hips.”

“Well, you could get down on your knees for him and show him how well your knees work.” She giggles. “When is he picking you up, anyway?”

“He was supposed to be here at six.”

“It’s almost seven.”

“I know,” I whisper. “Do you think all of this was a ploy to get back at me for leaving on Saturday morning?”

“I don’t know. Maybe? Why didn’t you leave a note?”

“There wasn’t any paper or pens lying around. I felt like it was an invasion of his privacy to go snooping through his things in search of some. Plus, I was in a rush and didn’t really think about it until it was too late. I was trying to get to the hospital to meet you... Do I just go back to my apartment?”

“Yes. I just ordered dinner for you. Take a long bath and enjoy your sushi. Maybe read that book I sent you and dream about the perfect book boyfriend since the ones in real life suck.”

“Thanks, Linds.”

I hang up and slowly walk back to my apartment. I don't want to admit how rejected I feel, even to myself.

Did he seriously ask me out just to stand me up? Was this just a way to get back at me? So many thoughts are begging for my attention, but I don't want to think about any of it. I want to pour the biggest glass of wine and sink into a hot bubble bath. But first, sushi.

Playlist

Playlist

I scan the names next to each buzzer at the apartment Faith gave me. None of them are hers. Unless the landlord didn't change it since she moved in.

I mutter a curse under my breath and try to decide what to do. I need to find her and explain what happened. I'm sure she thinks I stood her up and I didn't. Well, I did, but not on purpose.

What should I do? I could give up and go home, but I don't want her thinking I planned to stand her up. I need to find her and explain what happened. She'll understand then.

I take a deep breath and blow it out slowly. I can't believe I'm about to do this. Pressing the buzzer for the first apartment, I hold my breath and wait for them to answer.

"Hello?" The intercom chirps.

"Hey, is this Faith?"

"Nope! You have the wrong apartment. There isn't a Faith in this building."

"Thanks."

I groan and scrub a hand down my face. There are at least a dozen apartment buildings. How am I going to figure out which one is hers? Each building has eight units. What are the chances of me finding one woman in the ninety-six or more apartments here?

Moving to the next building, I press a buzzer and go through the same motions all over again. This person doesn't know a Faith and insists they're friends with everyone in this complex.

Is it possible that she doesn't even live here and she gave me a fake address? Was she trying to stand me up?

I trudge back to my car in a worse mood than I was in this morning when I found Faith standing in the middle of my operating room.

I dial Kelsey's number and wait for the phone to ring. My irritation grows and grows with each ring.

"Hello?" There's laughter in Kelsey's voice. I can picture her and Mason sitting at home and watching Kyler try to maneuver around the living room.

"I think she stood me up," I groan, dropping onto a bench in front of the apartment she gave me the address for.

"Faith? Why?"

"Yes, Faith! Well, I was supposed to pick her up at six and-"

"It's almost eight, Jesse... hold on, let me put you on speaker. Your boyfriend wants to hear your sexy voice. His words, not mine." She laughs.

“Hey, sexy beast.” Mason’s deep voice floats through the line, making me chuckle.

“What’s up, stud?”

“Stop it! We have more important things to discuss than the two of you stroking each other’s egos,” Kelsey mutters.

“I have something else you can stroke if you’d like, Firefly,” Mason murmurs, right before I hear the distinct sound of them kissing.

“Seriously? I’m just going to call Derek or Scott if you two are going to be working on baby number two instead of helping me!”

“Wow, someone’s being sensitive today,” Mason whispers.

“Are you for real? Did she tell you that she and Cali kept saying that?”

“Yes.” Mason laughs. “We’re just screwing with you. I’m not even kissing her. In fact, only my hand is touching her. Though, full disclosure, it’s between her legs.”

“I hate the two of you,” I grumble under my breath.

“You do not! And he’s joking. His hands are on my boobs.”

“Oh, because that’s better.” I roll my eyes even though they can’t see me.

“Both are amazing. I don’t think I could pick a favorite,” Mason says.

“That’s it! I’m hanging up!” I pull the phone away from my ear as a video chat request comes through. I click accept even

though it's the last thing in the world I want right now. No one wants to watch their friends all happy and in love when they're as single as can be.

"There! Now you can see us and know he's not doing anything." Kelsey smiles at me.

"Exactly! I'll keep my hands where you can see them." Mason places both hands over Kelsey's breasts, making her laugh.

"The two of you are impossible."

"What happened?" Mason's tone turns serious. He shifts so he's sitting next to Kelsey and isn't touching her other than the arm around her shoulders.

I give them the rundown of Mr. Green and what happened with him. How I was delayed from meeting Faith, but it wasn't my fault. I couldn't leave my patient after he basically died.

"So, you went to two buildings?"

"Four. Everyone insists there are no tenants here named Faith. I think she gave me a bogus address and never had any intention of meeting me." I sigh, my gaze focused on my hands. I don't want to see the pity in their eyes when they look at me.

"I wish I had her number. If I did, I'd at least call her and explain to her what happened. But I didn't get it today. I think she viewed me as more of your friend and less of hers."

"Is she working tomorrow?"

“Let me check the schedule.” The screen goes black for a few seconds before Kelsey’s face reappears. “She’s in Scott’s room. Are you going to pop in there?”

“Yes. I can’t work with her if I don’t know what’s going on and if I ask Hope to take her out of my room, it’s going to create problems for both of us.”

“Yeah, I wouldn’t get Hope involved. Talk to her first. Unless someone calls out, I’m free in the morning. I can relieve her if she’s scrubbed by herself and you can talk to her in the core or one of the other supply rooms.”

“Thanks, Kels.”

“Of course. For what it’s worth, I think there’s an easy explanation for all of this. You just have to be willing to listen to what it is.”

Playlist

Playlist

When I get to work in the morning, I keep expecting to see Jesse pop out of an alcove or to waltz into the lounge. We have our morning meetings in the lounge. We get updates on various things and Hope tells us if there's anything we need to know about our cases or patients for that day.

As soon as it's over, I climb the stairs and move through the core to my room for the day. I'm working with a nurse named Cali. She's going to show me how to chart in the system the hospital uses. It's the same program my last job used, but there are a few differences they'll have here.

"Hey! I'm Cali." A bubbly woman walks into the room with a smile on her face. "We have Jen working with us today. She's an amazing surgical technologist. And Dr. McLaren is one of my favorite doctors!"

"Hi, I'm Faith. Is Dr. McLaren nice?"

"Oh my gosh! Yes! He's the nicest guy ever. And he does the most beautiful c-section closures."

"Oh, ok." I chuckle.

“There’s my favorite patient.” A tall man with an olive complexion walks into the operating room with a big smile.

“If Kelsey hears you say that, she’s going to be mad.” Cali shakes her head.

“Yeah, well, can’t I have two favorites? Do you only have one favorite surgeon?” He arches a brow, daring her to answer him.

“As a matter of fact, I have three. Derek, Jesse, and you. But not in that order of course.” She winks and pats him on the chest.

“Damn straight! I deserve to be at the top. I’m the one who’s going to deliver your baby. Jesse and Derek wouldn’t even know what to do with one.”

I have to fight the groan begging to break free from me. More people who are friends with Jesse. Just what I need. Does everyone in this hospital love him?

If yesterday never happened and my only interaction with Jesse was at the bar, then I’d probably agree. He was a really great guy that night. But I can’t forget how harsh and rude he was to me yesterday.

“Alright, Doc. I have a ligature for you.” Cali goes on to explain what supplies we have for our cases today and finds out what else we need to get. She jots down notes on a little pad of paper and asks Dr. McLaren what type of suture he wants.

I love how she tries to have everything ready before the patient is in the room. I've seen so many nurses not do this and it causes issues throughout the entire day.

Grabbing the basket of supplies, we begin opening all of them into a big basin. It sits on a stand with wheels and once we begin the case, we'll give Jen some water to clean her instruments in it. Or you know, in case there's a surgical fire and she needs to put it out.

"Do you like anything in specific places?" I ask Jen.

"Nah. I just like it all opened before I scrub if possible. I'm really impatient." She smirks behind her mask, her eyes crinkling in the corners.

"I'm the same way." I chuckle.

Jen goes to scrub, and when she comes back into the room, I'm popping the last item into her basin. I push it closer to her back table and move behind her.

As soon as she's done drying her hands, she slips her arms into her gown and begins getting her gloves on. I secure the Velcro at her neck and the tie at her waist, like how a robe ties on the inside too.

Jen grabs the card at her stomach. She holds one of the strings and hands me the card. It has the other string threaded through it, allowing the string to remain sterile while I hold the now unsterile card. Spinning in a circle, Jen closes the back of her gown and tugs the string from me. She quickly ties a knot and gets to work setting up her table.

“Jen, can you take your kit really quick, then we’ll go see the patient while you set up?” Cali asks.

“Of course.”

She takes the instrument set out of the metal container and I check to make sure there aren’t any holes in the filter. If there are, the instruments would be contaminated and we’d have to get another set.

“You’re good.”

I slip the container into a big metal cart we put our dirty instruments in at the end of the case and follow Cali out of the room.

“So how do you like it here so far?” She glances at me.

“I’m not sure. Most of the staff has been overwhelmingly nice, but some...” I trail off, not really wanting to talk badly about anyone.

“But some are Jesse and he doesn’t know what side is up when it comes to you.” She smirks.

“I was hoping you didn’t know,” I whisper.

“I can guarantee seven people know and no one else. We’re not going to tell people either, so don’t worry. Derek Devine and Scott McLaren are good friends with Jesse. So are Kelsey, Hope, Summer and I. But things stay between the seven of us. We don’t like others in our business.”

“Thank you. I’ve had this overwhelming fear that everyone was going to find out and I’d be miserable. I’ve been waiting

for the rumor mill to start and for it to get back to me.”

“Nah, we keep our mouths shut... outside of us at least. Everything is fair game within our circle though.” She shrugs. “Jesse and Derek are chatty little things. They’re like teenage girls. As soon as one of them knows something, all of us do.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

We enter the pre-op area and find our patient in bay three. She looks terrified and it breaks my heart. Some patients are so much more scared than others.

“Good morning, Ashley. I’m Cali and this is Faith. We’re going to be in the room with you today. I’m going to ask you a few questions, then I’ll go back to the room to finish setting up for your surgery. Can you confirm your name and date of birth for me?”

“Ashley Darren. Two, twenty-seven, ninety.”

“Do you have any allergies?”

“No.”

“Great! Some really suck.” She smiles. “And what surgery are we doing? And who is your surgeon?”

“Removal of an ovarian cyst by Dr. McLaren.”

“Perfect. You answered everything correctly. Do you have any questions before we go?”

“No.”

“Ok. We’ll see you in the operating room then!” Cali smiles one last time before she leads me back to the operating room.

It doesn't take long before Ashley's coming in the room with Rich, the anesthesiologist. We help her get onto the operating table and get her positioned. Rich does his thing and quickly gets her off to sleep.

Once she's prepped and ready to go, Dr. McLaren starts the procedure. We hook up his suction and cautery before doing a time out to go over the patient's name, date of birth, and what procedure she's having done. We talk about what antibiotics were given, allergies, and a few other things. It's our last chance to confirm we know the things we need before we start the procedure and make sure everyone is in agreement.

"Incision, seven forty-five," Scott calls out for us to document.

The door to the core, a place we keep all of our sterile supplies, opens and Kelsey strolls into the room.

"Good morning, Scott," she singsongs.

"Morning, Kels. Where are you today?"

"I'm the core whore." She laughs. "I get to stay in the core all day and run for supplies for everyone."

"You're such a pretty whore." Scott winks at her.

"Could you tell my husband? I'm sure Mason would love to hear you say that."

"Hell no! I'm terrified of Mason. He could break me in half and I'm not a tiny man, Kels."

"Oh, he's a big teddy bear." She rolls her eyes.

“Well, you weren’t the one he was glaring at when you were trying to push out Kyler. I thought he was going to murder me.”

“It was his fault I was in that position.” She laughs. “He wants to know when I’m having more. He loves being a daddy.”

“The second I placed Kyler in his arms, I knew he would. I figured it wouldn’t be long before you got knocked up again. What are you doing in here?”

“Oh, I need to steal Faith for a few minutes.” She smiles at me and waves for me to follow her.

My brows pinch. Why would Kelsey need me? I have no choice except to follow her, but I really wanted to get to know the system. The faster I can be on my own, the better it will be.

“What do you need me for?” I ask as soon as we’re in the core.

“Oh, I need you to put your name on an ortho helmet. After yesterday, they want you on the ortho team permanently. Apparently, Jesse sang your praises to the other surgeons and now they all want you in their room.”

“I have a hard time believing Jesse said anything kind about me,” I mutter under my breath.

“He’s a good guy, Faith. I understand that some things happened, but I think you need to hear him out.” She leads me out of the core and down the hall to the ortho storeroom. She swipes her badge and pushes open the door.

We're barely two feet in the door when her phone rings. "Hello?... yeah, I'll be right there." She slips the phone back into her pocket. "I need to get something for Maria. Here's a marker. Write your name on any helmet that doesn't have one on it. Then wait until I come back. I have to get you the steps for all of the surgeons."

Kelsey disappears out the door and as it closes, I spin around to face the wall of helmets. I quickly write my name on a blank one and hang it back up. I'm slowly walking around the room to see what we keep in here versus the core.

The door opens and closes. I spin around expecting to find Kelsey, instead Jesse's standing there.

"What are you doing here?" I glare at him.

"I need to talk to you."

"Well, you had the chance last night. Then you stood me up." I fold my arms over my chest. "Was that payback?"

"I didn't stand you up... not on purpose anyway. One of my patients came into the emergency room. He ended up going into cardiac arrest and I had to do CPR for a while."

"Oh my gosh! Is he ok?"

"Yeah, I kept him alive. Summer took over once we got a pulse back. I stayed with him for a while though. He had a blood clot and while I was writing an order for an ultrasound to confirm, it must've broken off and caused the cardiac arrest. It's my fault. He had his knee replaced two weeks ago." He scrubs a hand down his face. He's really upset about this.

“You know it’s not your fault. Not really. Blood clots are a side effect of any surgery. And you saved his life. That’s amazing.”

“But it made me late. I didn’t get to your apartment... well the apartment address you gave me until almost eight. I rang so many doorbells and no one knew a Faith. I can’t believe you actually gave me the wrong address. Do you even live in that complex?”

I nod my head slowly. “Building C.”

“I tried there! The woman who answered said she knew everyone in that building and there wasn’t a Faith there.”

“I don’t know what you want me to say. I don’t know who you spoke to, but she lied. I’m in building C apartment six.” I shrug.

“Why’d you leave Saturday morning without saying anything to me?” He closes the distance between us, making my heart beat a little fast.

He’s acting more like the Jesse from the bar and it feels like the asshole surgeon I met yesterday was all a dream. I can see how hurt he is that I left on Saturday without an explanation and how much last night hurt him.

“Lindsey called me. She’s my sister and my nephew had a really high fever and needed to come to the emergency room. He has some health problems and she just got divorced. She was scared to do this by herself.” I shrug.

“So, it had nothing to do with me? With us?”

“No. But there isn’t an us,” I whisper softly.

“There could be. We had a great time together.” He steps closer.

“We did. Except now we work together.”

“What does that matter?” He blinks at me.

“Well, you’re a doctor! I can’t be with a doctor.”

“Why not?” He frowns. “That’s most women’s dreams come true.”

“Because I don’t need rumors going around the hospital about me sleeping with the cute doctor. I don’t want people thinking I tried to sleep my way to this position or that I’m trying to find a sugar daddy so I don’t need to work anymore. I had enough rumors spread about me at my last job.” I glance away.

“Why? What happened?” Jesse takes the final step separating us. He takes my hand in his and squeezes gently.

Butterflies erupt in my stomach at his touch. It reminds me of all the touching we did in the early hours of Saturday morning.

“I told you about Henry. He was a surgical technologist. We worked together for years before we started dating. We were serious and I was looking into transferring to a different department so we could get married... then I found out he was cheating on me with another nurse. That’s why I moved from New York to Philadelphia. I had to get away from him and that

hospital. I couldn't handle living near him or hearing the whispers at work."

"I'd never cheat on you, baby." Jesse cups my cheek.

Squeezing my eyes shut, I relax into his touch and wish things could be easy. If he were just a random guy I met at a bar, I'd be all over the idea of dating him. But we work together. I'm not going to let history repeat itself again.

"I don't know. I'm not sure I can handle dating someone I work with again."

Jesse tugs me into a hug, his arms wrapped tightly around me. I drop my head to his chest and hug him back. I'm not sure why I feel so comfortable in his arms, but I do.

"Don't punish me because he was an ass, Faith. That's not fair."

"It's not, but it's my reality." I pull back right as the door to the storeroom opens and Kelsey walks in.

"Sorry about that. Maria's a hot mess. Let's get a copy of those steps for you." She ignores Jesse and walks right over to a big binder and flips through, grabbing a few different papers. "These are the steps for each of the orthopedic surgeons."

"Which you don't need to know. You only need to know my steps." Jesse takes any paper without his name on it and tosses it back onto the table.

"Oh shush." Kelsey rolls her eyes. "Don't listen to him! She needs to be able to scrub for more than one surgeon."

“Not if she’s my personal scrub.” Jesse folds his arms over his chest and glares at her.

“Hope will kill you if you ask for a personal scrub. Plus, you need two since you have two rooms. Who else are you going to choose?”

“Cali and you... maybe Kelly. Then I’d have the perfect team.”

“And when Derek and Scott also request us, what are you going to do then?”

“Sprinkle some laxative in their coffee.” Jesse shrugs, heading towards the door.

“I wouldn’t even be surprised!” Kelsey laughs.

Playlist

Playlist

“I can’t believe I’m doing this,” I whisper to myself as I climb out of my car and take the small path to the door.

Finding apartment six quickly, I press the buzzer and stuff my hand in my pocket as I wait.

“C’mon up!” Her sweet voice chirps into the intercom.

My brows pull together and I freeze for a moment. I didn’t think Faith would let me in so easily. I figured it would take me at least a little bit of smooth talking.

I tug the door open before it automatically locks again. Climbing the stairs to the second floor, I pause outside of her door.

I don’t know what I’m even doing here. What am I supposed to say when she answers the door? Do I lay it all on the line and tell her I’m not ready for us to give up on whatever could be between us?

I take a deep breath and blow it out slowly. I brought sushi with me. Faith told me how much she loved it when we were lying in bed together. I know her favorite kind of rolls and

which restaurant she prefers to order from. I got everything she likes and more.

Lifting my hand to knock, the door opens and Faith gasps. She stares at me with wide eyes, clearly not expecting me to be on the other side of the door.

“Jesse? What are you doing here?”

“I brought dinner?” I raise the takeout bag and beg she doesn’t turn me away. I’m not sure my ego can take one more hit from Faith.

“But... how’d you find me?”

“Today you said you lived in building C, apartment six. I know all of my letters and numbers so it wasn’t too hard to find you.” I shrug.

I’m beginning to question my decision to come even more when she finally motions for me to come in.

“Come in... Lindsey’s going to be here with Jackson any moment though.”

“Is that why you let me up?” I grip the back of my neck and glance around the living room.

Fluffy gray couches form an L around a beautiful wooden coffee table. There’s a smaller TV tucked into the corner with big bookshelves on either side.

A table sits behind one of the couches and has a bright colored table cloth on it. Three plates are placed in front of

chairs. A bottle of wine sits unopened in the center with a can of soda and two stemless wine glasses next to it.

“Yeah, I thought you were Lindsey.” She scrunches up her nose. Barking comes from down the hall, but she ignores it.

“I can go... I just...” I scrub a hand down my face, trying my hardest to figure out what I was trying to do.

“You were just, what?” She takes a step closer. I don’t even think she realizes she’s doing it.

“I wanted to see you,” I whisper my confession.

I’ve never been a manly man. I’m softer, gentler. I believe in love and want a storybook romance. Somehow, I haven’t been able to find it yet. I always go after the women who are already taken. Like my friend Sammie who was pining after her best friend. Instead of trying to convince her to date me, I helped her get Cole. Now, they’re happily married with two kids and I couldn’t be happier for her.

“Jesse, that’s really sweet,” she trails off and I know what’s coming next.

“But?”

She lets out a long sigh. Before she can answer me, there’s a knock on the door. It opens on its own and Lindsey waltzes in with a boy following behind her.

“I just don’t understand how that happens. Like you’ve had a penis your entire life. How do you forget to tuck it back into your pants completely before you zip up your fly?” Lindsey’s talking wildly with her hands.

“I don’t know, Mom. I’m not the idiot that did it. I’m just saying, Jimmy left school crying and Jake was in the bathroom with him. He said Jimmy screamed like a baby.” He shrugs his shoulders as I grimace.

“Can you believe these-” Lindsey finally looks at us and she pauses mid-sentence. Her mouth falls open and her gaze bounces from me to Faith and back.

“Hey, Linds. It’s nice to see you again.” I smile, trying my hardest to remain calm.

“What in the- what?” She sputters. “I thought you were imaginary! I figured there was no way he was actually *this* hot!”

“Mom,” Jackson groans. “You’re embarrassing yourself.”

Lindsey whirls around to face her son and plants her hands on her hips.

“Excuse me, small fry, but to embarrass yourself, you have to be ashamed or self-conscious of your behavior. I am none of those things. It sounds like *you* are getting embarrassed by me. And guess what! You might as well get used to it because I’m not going to change.”

“It’s ok, Jackson. You can come live with your Auntie Faith when you can’t stand her anymore.” Faith laughs.

“Oh shush! We’re not talking about me. We’re talking about what this fine specimen of a man is doing in your apartment.”

“I was just bringing Faith some of her favorite sushi as a thank you.”

“A thank you for what?” Lindsey arches an eyebrow. “For not murdering your ass after you stood her up last night?”

“While I am super appreciative of that, no. I was thanking her for putting up with my moody ass yesterday at work. Also, I guess apologizing for my behavior.” I grip the nape of my neck and glance away.

“Are you looking for a booty call too?” Lindsey smirks.

“No... as a matter of fact, I think it’s time for me to go. Enjoy the sushi, Faith. I’ll see you at work next week.” I flash her a tight smile.

Quickly leaving, I shut the door behind me and race down the stairs. I feel like an absolute idiot. What was I thinking? Coming to her apartment without any warning was stupid on my part.

I thought maybe we could have a nice romantic evening. We could get to know each other a little bit better and maybe grow closer.

I was hoping if we could have a few nights like that, I could possibly convince her to give me a shot. We wouldn’t have to tell anyone at work if we started dating. I’m not her supervisor. Hell, I’m not even employed by the hospital.

We don’t have to answer to anyone. We can do whatever we want and not get in trouble. But first, she’d have to give me a chance.

Playlist

Playlist

I stare at the front door like it's going to magically reopen and Jesse will be standing there again.

I never would've invited him to my apartment, but having him here actually felt... good. It felt natural to have him in my place.

"You're not seriously just going to stand there, are you?" Lindsey waves a hand in front of my face. "Did he break you or something?"

"What am I supposed to do?" I keep my eyes trained on the door.

"You're supposed to go after him. You'd be an idiot to let that man get away from you. He's hot, Faith. And he's a freaking doctor. You guys hit it off instantly, I don't know why you aren't chasing after him already."

She doesn't guide or encourage me towards the door, she full out shoves me as hard as she can. I stumble into the hard wood and my shoulder slams into the molding.

"Ow! What the hell, Linds!"

I rub my sore shoulder and race out of the apartment, down the stairs and into the parking lot. Jesse's about to get into his car when I spot him.

"Jesse! Wait!"

He pauses and glances up at me. When he realizes who's calling him, he shuts the car door and leans against the side, waiting for me to get to him.

I jog over, not knowing what I'm going to say. I shouldn't be doing this. I shouldn't even entertain the idea of getting involved with someone else I work with. It's completely stupid.

"Hey," I whisper when I stop in front of him.

"Hey." His lips turn up the slightest amount at the corners.

We both stare at each other for a few moments before we laugh.

"What did you chase after me for?"

"I don't know. I just didn't feel like I should be letting you go." I shrug.

"So... what do we do now?" Jesse smirks.

I lean my back against his car so our shoulders brush. I cross my feet at my ankles, mirroring Jesse's position.

"I don't know. What do you want to do now?" I nudge him.

"We could go out for dinner."

"Lindsey and Jackson are still in my apartment." I chuckle.

“I guess I can’t invite myself back in then either.”

My phone pings in my pocket. I tug it out to find a text from Lindsey.

Lindsey: Jackson and I are going home. Take the hunky doctor back to the apartment and enjoy him. Just don’t do anything I wouldn’t do. Which isn’t a whole hell of a lot. I’d definitely rock his world and make him forget other women exist.

“Well, I don’t think we have to worry about Lindsey and Jackson anymore. She just left.”

“Why? They didn’t have to do that.” Jesse glances at me and he actually looks sorry.

“Don’t worry about her. She wasn’t going to eat what I made for dinner anyway. She hates anything in a casserole dish, but it’s Jackson’s favorite.” I laugh.

“You really are a great aunt, huh?”

“I mean when he’s stuck with a mom like Lindsey, I feel like he deserves an awesome aunt. He needs at least one normal person in his life.” I chuckle. “Lindsey’s actually an amazing mom. She’d do anything to make Jackson’s life better... she just doesn’t know boundaries.”

“Yeah, I figured that out within the first five minutes of meeting her.”

“Touché.” I tuck a strand of hair behind my ear and nibble on my bottom lip. I shouldn’t do this, but... “Do you want to

come back up? I'm sure you didn't buy the sushi for me to eat alone." I peek up at him.

"I mean, I like sushi too." He lifts a shoulder in a boyish shrug.

"C'mon," I chuckle, reaching for his hand.

I take it in mine and tug him towards my apartment building. Thankfully I was smart enough to remember my keys before I ran out of there. Otherwise, we'd be locked out and I'm not even sure how I'd get back in.

Jesse's hand makes mine feel tiny. His palm is so warm and soft against mine. Memories of his whole body pressed against me fills my head and my cheeks pinken.

"What are you thinking about? It has to be something dirty with how bad you're blushing," he whispers in my ear as I attempt to shove my key into the lock. My hand is shaking slightly and I can't do it. "Let me."

Jesse carefully takes them out of my hand and quickly unlocks the door. He places a hand on my lower back and guides me inside, shutting the door softly behind us.

"Do you want some wine?" I grab the bottle off the table and hold it out like he might not know what wine is.

"Sure. I'm thinking maybe I should open it though. I'm afraid you might stab yourself if you do it." He chuckles.

He carefully screws the bottle opener into the cork and pulls it out. I watch him the entire time, mesmerized by the way his muscles flex with the movements.

“How was work today?” He peeks up at me as he pours us each a glass.

“It was good. Dr. McLaren’s really nice.” Opening the bag of takeout Jesse brought, I lift out five containers.

“You should stay away from Scott. He’s a total asshole,” he almost growls.

“Says the man who was mean to me on my first day,” I singsong.

Jesse grips my hips and spins me around to face him. He pushes me against the counter and pins me in, his body blocking my escape.

“What are you doing?” I ask in a breathless whisper.

His fingers tighten on my hips and I swear his chocolatey eyes darken. His gaze ping pongs between my lips and my eyes. I want him to kiss me so badly, but I know we shouldn’t.

Things were so much easier when he was just a guy who worked at a local bar. Now everything is getting complicated.

“I was a total asshole on your first day and I’m sorry for that. I was furious when I woke up on Saturday and you were just gone. The thought of never seeing you again was unbearable. I never imagined I’d see you again, let alone work with you.”

I drop my attention to his chest. I know if I keep looking into his eyes and see the vulnerability there, see just how much I hurt him by leaving, I’m going to give in and end up in bed with him all over again.

“Faith,” he whispers. Gripping my chin between his thumb and forefinger, he gently raises my chin until I’m forced to meet his gaze. “We had a connection and you know it. I don’t know why you’re fighting this so much. Even right now, you want me to kiss you. You can deny it all you want, but I know I’m right.”

“It doesn’t matter. I can’t date someone I work with.”

“Give me a chance to prove I’m better than your ex. Hell, ask Cali and Kelsey how often I date people I work with. Ask Derek and Scott how often I date in general. The four of them know everything there is to know about me.”

“Because I’m sure they’re not willing to lie for their friend.”
I roll my eyes.

“Have you met them? If I asked them to lie, they’d laugh at me. Especially Kelsey and Cali. Those two are brutal. They love to watch me squirm. They’re like having sisters that I work with. I imagine working with Kennedy would be identical to working with Kelsey.”

“But at the end of the day, all of them love you enough to want you to be happy.”

“And what about you? Do you care enough about me to want me to be happy?” He brushes his knuckles over my cheek softly and I hate the way I so easily lean into his touch.

“I barely know you, Jesse.”

“Then let’s fix that. Let me take you out as a friend until we get to know each other. Then, we can revisit the idea of us

dating.”

I glance away from him, needing to create a little bit of mental distance since he won't give me physical distance.

“Please, baby?” Jesse cups my cheek and rubs his thumb over my skin. “I'm not going to be able to stay away from you.”

“Friends. That's all I can give you.”

“For now.” His voice is stern, he's not going to walk away without at least a chance at more with me.

“For now.” I sigh, knowing this is a big mistake, but I don't really know what else to do. And I'm not sure I can resist him enough to turn him down completely.

Playlist

Playlist

She picks up a piece of sushi and pops it into her mouth, chewing slowly. Her gaze stays trained on me the entire time. A smile tugs on the corner of her lips, but she's fighting it.

“What were you like in high school? I picture this jock who had the girls fawning all over him. You were probably a smooth talker and knew how to get them to melt in the palms of your hands.” She points her chopsticks at me.

“Well, you'd be horribly wrong.” I chuckle, shaking my head. “I was the dorkiest guy in my grade. No one wanted a thing to do with me. I was more interested in reading a medical textbook than I was going to a party on Friday night. I'm fairly certain if Kennedy wasn't my older sister, I wouldn't have left the house. But that girl is a social butterfly and refused to let me stay home all the time and study. She never gave up on me and I owe her everything for that.”

“I think I'm going to need photographic proof to believe this.” Faith smirks.

I tug my phone out of my pocket and bring up my text messages. I don't have any photos from high school, but I

guarantee Kennedy does.

Jesse: Hey, can you send me some pictures of what I looked like in high school?

Kennedy: Yes! Gosh, you were so not cute. I hope you say your prayers every night and thank God for the magnificent glow up he gave you. *winking emoji*

Jesse: I can feel the love from here.

Kennedy: Just keeping it real, bro. You know I love you and I'd still let you in family photos even if you were ugly.

Kennedy: Blake says if you were ugly, he wouldn't let you in his family photos. *laughing emoji*

Five images appear on my screen one after another. I flip through them and chuckle. I forgot how different I looked in high school.

“Come sit next to me so we can enjoy these awful photos together. In my defense, I skipped a few grades so I'm a little dorkier than the average kid.” I pat the chair next to me and smile when she doesn't hesitate to take it.

I hold out my phone with the first image and Faith bursts out laughing. Frowning at her, I glance at the younger version of me. I wasn't that bad.

“Wow. You're really trying to damage my ego, huh?”

“You just look nothing like you do now. I'm not even sure how you went from that to this.” She motions from the picture to me.

“I’m not sure if I should be hurt by your words or proud of my transformation.” I fold my arms over my chest and pout.

“Oh, stop it! You know you’re insanely attractive now. If you don’t believe me, I could have Lindsey come back and she could drool all over you again.”

“Lindsey does a good job at boosting my ego.” I tap my chin like I’m debating on inviting her to come.

“Yeah, I’m sure the nurses who drool all over you at work help too.” She rolls her eyes.

“You know I don’t interact with them, right? Not as anything more than co-workers at least. The only women I speak to at work in a friendly manner is Summer and Hope. Also Kelsey and Cali, but I knew both of them outside of work first. They’re both married to friends of mine. The group is massive. I think there are fourteen couples and a bunch of single men now. I’ve lost count on how many kids run around when we get together.”

“Hmm, maybe I should go meet some of these single men. See if I can find myself a new boyfriend.”

I move fast, surprising the hell out of her. One second, she’s in her seat staring at the old images of me on my phone, the next she’s straddling my lap and staring down at me.

“You don’t need to meet anyone with a dick. There’s no point in looking for a boyfriend because I’m right here and I’ve already applied for the job and had my damn interview. I’m just waiting for the offer letter to arrive.”

“And what if I decide you aren’t right for the position?” She slips her bottom lip between her perfectly white teeth.

“Do you really want to break my heart, beautiful?” I reach up and tug her lip free with my thumb.

“No, but I’m scared you’re going to break mine,” she whispers.



Once we’ve finished dinner and cleaned up, Faith and I take a seat on the couch and she pulls up a movie to watch.

I don’t know what’s playing on the TV and I really don’t care. I’m too focused on her body lying next to mine on the chaise lounge. Her head is on my chest with her arm thrown over my waist.

She fits perfectly against me, making me wonder why she wants to keep fighting this. Clearly, she’s comfortable around me or she wouldn’t be so relaxed in my arms.

I close my eyes and enjoy the feel of her pressed against me. It’s not often I get to experience this and I’m going to commit it to memory.

“Are you asleep?” Faith shifts in my arms and I know she’s staring up at me.

“No, but I’m tired.”

“Do you want to go?” She places her hand on my chest, right over my heart.

“Nope. I like having you in my arms.” I tug her closer, burying my face in her hair

“Do you...” she trails off, drawing some sort of design on my chest with her finger.

“Do I, what?” I open my eyes and watch her struggle with her words and emotions.

“Do you want to stay here tonight? It’s already after eleven.”

“Am I sleeping on the couch?”

“No.” She laughs, shaking her head. “It’s not like we haven’t slept in bed together already. But this time maybe we can keep some clothes on?”

“You’re taking all the fun out of it.” I pout.

“Hey! I have to be up in like six hours. I’m already not going to get a lot of sleep. If I say clothing optional, I’ll probably get two hours of sleep and I need more than that to function.” She swats at my chest.

“Does that mean if I sleepover on a weekend, clothing might be forbidden?” I arch a brow.

“I thought we were taking this slow. Becoming friends first.”

“We are... but we also slept with each other a few hours after meeting, so I think the lines are a little blurred for me.”

She lets out a real laugh, one that hits me square in the chest and has me smiling like an idiot.

“I need to let Rocky out, then we can go to bed.”

“Rocky?”

“My adorable pit bull puppy. He’s been locked up all night because Jackson’s allergic to dogs.” She smiles, climbing off of me. “Do you want to go for a walk with us?”

“Sure, I’d love to.”

Faith holds out a hand and tugs me off of the couch. She grabs a leash off the table by the door and disappears down the hall. She comes back a few seconds later with a cute black puppy. He’s jumping around, trying his hardest to get to me.

I kneel down on the ground and smile when he jumps on top of me and starts licking my face.

“I think he likes you.” Faith smiles at me.

“I’ve been wanting to get a dog for so long.” I run my hand up and down his back, his soft fur slipping through my fingers.

“Why don’t you get one then?”

“Well, as we learned yesterday, my hours are difficult sometimes. Who would I have to walk the dog when I’m at the hospital for sixteen or more hours in one day?”

“I don’t know. Lindsey lets Rocky out around lunch time, but I know I’m only going to be gone around nine hours.”

“Maybe on my days off I could steal Rocky for a little bit and pretend he’s mine. I’m sure I could pick up some women with his leash attached to me.” I smirk at Faith.

“You know, I was going to say yes, but not anymore. I’m not going to help you pick up girls with my dog.”

“Then I guess you better decide who gets the position of your boyfriend.” I stand to my full height and take Rocky’s leash from Faith. “C’mon, baby. Let’s walk the dog like the couple you refuse to believe we are.”

Playlist

Playlist

My alarm fills the air, stirring me from the most amazing dream. I roll over and grab my phone off the nightstand to silence the offending sound. As soon as it stops, I let out a sigh.

An arm snakes around my waist and pulls me flush against a warm chest. I want to snuggle into him and never get out of this bed, but I'm fairly certain Hope wouldn't be too happy if I didn't show up to work today.

"You get up much too early," Jesse groans into my neck. His breath fans over my sensitive skin, sending tingles through my body.

"It's five-thirty. I have to be at work in an hour." I chuckle.

"I don't want to let you go," he whispers.

Soft kisses are pressed across the back of my neck and under my ear. Desire floods my body, making me want to straddle this man and let him do whatever he wants to me. I know he's skilled and I want to experience it all over again. I'm not sure one night will ever be enough with him.

“I don’t want you to either,” I moan into my pillow.

The bed dips and a wiggly body moves up the mattress. A cold, wet nose presses into my ear and I let out a shriek.

“Rocky! No!” I roll to get away from him, falling onto the floor with a loud thud. “Ow,” I groan.

“Are you ok?” Jesse hangs over the edge of the bed to stare at me.

“No. I fell on my hip. He must’ve gotten out of his cage again.”

“Aw, I didn’t know you were an old lady. Do you think you broke it? If we were dating, I’d fix your hip for free.” He wiggles his eyebrows. “It’s a perk of dating an orthopedic surgeon.”

“It’s not broken.” I roll my eyes. “But it does hurt.”

“Climb back up here and let me look at it.” He holds out a hand to me.

I take it, knowing he’s not going to be able to pull me off the ground with how he’s hanging off the bed, but it will be entertaining to watch. Except, he can do it. And without any sort of effort on his part.

He tugs me down on the mattress next to him and lifts the t-shirt I’m wearing until he can see my hip. My ass is half showing in my tiny boy shorts and I want to hide even though I know Jesse saw all of this and more on our first night together.

He rubs a hand over my butt cheek and across my hip. He trails his fingers with soft kisses. Poking my skin every once in a while, he asks if any of it hurts.

“No. It’s just a little bit sore. I’ll be fine. I need to start getting ready. At this rate I’m going to be late and I still need to take Rocky for a walk.”

And if he keeps running his hands over my body like he is right now, I’m never going to get out of this bed. We’ll end up naked and I’ll get fired for not showing up at the hospital.

“How about you go through your morning routine and I’ll take Rocky out.”

“You’d do that for me?”

“Of course. I just kissed your ass, literally. You don’t think I’d walk your dog?”

I can’t help but laugh at him. I love how carefree and funny he is when he’s not at work. I want to believe everything that happened the day I scrubbed for him was just a bad day and maybe he’s like this all the time, but I’m not sure.

“Thank you, Jesse.”

“You’re welcome.” He kisses the tip of my nose.



“Ugh,” I groan, closing the door to the refrigerator.

I thought I had one yogurt left in here, but apparently not. What am I going to eat for breakfast now?

Searching one cabinet after another, I push aside a box of crackers and hope I’ll find something I can shove down my throat.

“What are you doing?” Jesse laughs, shutting the front door behind him.

Rocky trots through the kitchen and over to where his water is waiting for him. I climb down off the stool I was using to check the shelves above the fridge and frown.

“I was looking for something to eat. But there’s nothing. I need to go grocery shopping.” I fold my arms over my chest and pout.

“So, you don’t want the scones I picked up from the bakery down the street?” Jesse holds a bag out in front of him and shakes it.

“You bought me scones?” I perk up instantly.

“And coffee. I saw the sad state of your kitchen last night when I was putting things away. I knew there wasn’t anything to eat and I needed something before I head to my office. I figured you would too.”

“You’re the best!” I throw myself into his arms and press a quick kiss to his cheek.

Except he turns his head at the exact same time and the innocent kiss meant for his stubbled cheek gets planted on his lips.

Jesse snakes his arms around my waist and tugs my body flush against his before I even realize what’s happening. I groan into his mouth, my body craving more with him after our PG night in bed.

“If you keep making noises like that, we’re both going to be late for work,” he whispers between kisses.

“It’s your fault. I was going for your cheek,” I pant out as his lips trail over my jaw and down my neck.

“Hmm, I’ll take the blame. But only if you’ll let me take you out for dinner tonight.”

“Can’t. Rocky will be locked up for too long.” I gasp when he sucks lightly on the skin right below my ear.

“Fine. Come to my place, I’ll make us dinner. You can bring him with you.” Jesse slips his hands under the hem of my shirt, his warm fingers setting my already hot skin on fire.

“Are you sure?”

“Faith, you either promise me dinner tonight or I’m going to strip you down right this second and neither of us will make it to work today.”

“Six o’clock?” I peek up at him, my hands resting on his chest.

“Six o’clock sounds perfect. Let’s get out of this apartment. It’s too tempting to say screw all of our responsibilities and let’s spend the day in bed.”

Playlist

Playlist

“Someone looks happy! Did you finally find the cure to having a micro dick?” Derek sets his lunch down on the table with a smirk.

People sitting around us and other employees walking through the cafeteria stare at us.

“You know, when I decided to be friends with you, it was for your maturity. I knew I didn’t want anyone who was going to act like a prepubescent boy, or maybe girl. How could I make such a colossal mistake? I thought ‘Huh, he’s a surgeon. He must be at least a little bit mature. He has to have his life figured out to a certain extent.’ I couldn’t have been more wrong.”

“No would’ve been a completely acceptable response to my question. Clearly you didn’t solve your problems because now you’re being sensitive.” Derek tosses a fry into his mouth and chews.

“Does he still have blue balls?” Scott drops into the chair next to Derek and smirks at me.

“Did you two decide you’re going to team up on me today? I’m not sure I have the strength to deal with it.” I wave them off and take a big bite of my wrap.

“Yes. His answer is yes, he still has blue balls.” Derek chuckles loudly.

“Ew. I feel like I’m making a mistake by eating with the three of you. Should I go find a few nurses to eat with?” Willow stands next to the table and scrunches up her nose.

“No! Please sit down. Maybe having a little estrogen at the table will pull their minds out of the gutters and remind them how they’re adults and not middle schoolers.” I roll my eyes.

“See, totally sensitive!” Derek motions to me.

“He’s not being sensitive. I don’t know why you all keep ganging up and trying to convince Jesse he’s sensitive.” Willow shakes her head.

“Wait. What?” I glance around the table at them. “What are you talking about, Willow?”

“They have a bet with the girls. Whoever gets you to admit you’re being sensitive first gets five hundred dollars and bragging rights.” She glares at Derek and Scott when they groan and start complaining at her for spilling the beans.

“Thank you, Willow. I’m glad I have one real friend in this place. Would you be interested in being promoted to my best friend? It seems I have four vacancies.”

“Yeah... I’m not sure I could handle you that often.” She scrunches up her nose like the adorably innocent woman she

is.

The guys cackle with delight over her busting my balls. I seriously hate them right now.

“I don’t know why you’re laughing.” Willow motions to Derek. “You’re the reason I couldn’t handle Jesse. I already use all of my energy dealing with you on a daily basis.”

“Excuse me?” Derek’s jaw falls open and he stares at her in astonishment.

“What? You’re a handful.” Willow shrugs and shoves a bite of food into her mouth.

“I gave you a job!” Derek blinks in surprise.

“Yeah, and that was awesome. I didn’t take into consideration that I’d have to share an office with you, though. And work with you even more. And deal with you complaining about the residents.” She waves him off.

“How’s Knox doing?” I ask with a smirk. I’ve always liked Willow, but now I really like her.

“He’s great.” She smiles to herself. “I’m not sure who I like snuggling up to more at the end of a long day, him or Achilles.”

“I mean I’d go with the one who can give you an orgasm, but that’s just me.” Scott shrugs a shoulder.

“Anyway, I’m really loving our life together. It’s so nice to be away from my parents and finally have control over my life.” Willow ignores Scott and keeps talking.

“I’m really happy for you. Cole says Knox is happier than ever before. And Sammie won’t shut up about how cute you two are together.” I grin thinking about how they’re polar opposites from each other.

“I hope so, because I’m not sure he could get rid of me if he tried.”



“Do you know how much effort it took for me to stay out of the OR and let you work? Because the struggle was real, Faith.” I smile as soon as she walks into my house with Rocky in tow.

“You weren’t even working at the hospital today.” She giggles, patting me on the chest as she struts past me.

“So? My office building is connected to the hospital. It would take me a whole two minutes to get from my desk to the lounge.” I stare at her.

Her chocolatey brown hair is pulled into a high ponytail. It swishes back and forth with each step she takes. Black yoga pants fit her like a second skin and a hot pink crop sweatshirt hangs over her torso.

She bends over to take off Rocky's leash and her shirt rides up her back, revealing a strip of smooth skin and putting her gorgeous ass on full display. She stands to her full height and glances at me over her shoulder.

"What? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"I think you dressed like this to tease me." I motion to her body.

"Like what? It's pants and a sweatshirt."

"Oh, bullshit. Your ass is looking amazing. I keep thinking about how much I want to kiss it all over again. And that crop top makes me want to slip my hands beneath the loose fabric and see what's underneath it."

"Do you know what '*taking things slowly*' means?" She shakes her head at me.

"Yeah, I know exactly what it means." I step into her and snake an arm around her waist. "It means I'm going to strip you naked and slowly kiss my way up and down your body until you're begging for me."

"Jesse," she groans, dropping her head to my chest.

"What? Can you honestly say you don't want more?"

"Well... no, but I want to do things right this time."

"Then that's what we'll do." I release my hold on her and reach for her hand instead.

Threading my fingers through hers, I lead her into the living room. We find Rocky sprawled out on my couch like he's been

here a thousand times.

“Oh my gosh! I’m sorry! He shouldn’t be on your couch.” She moves to get him off the furniture, but I stop her.

“I don’t care if he lays there. He looks comfortable, so leave him alone. I want to give you a tour of my place. I think we skipped over that last time you were here.”

Her cheeks pinken the slightest amount and it makes me smile. I love how she doesn’t hide her embarrassment.

“Are you ever going to let me live that down?” She sighs.

“Nope! I think it’s interesting that neither one of us have one-night stands, but we did it so effortlessly with each other. It’s almost like we’re meant to be together.”

“Will you shush!” She laughs.

Leading Faith through the first floor, I show her my office, which is kind of pointless since I have a real office where I see my patients. She loves my back porch and the hammock swing for two. She basically drools when she sees my kitchen and I wonder how often I can convince her to come here and use it.

I’d love to have her eat dinner with me every night and we could alternate who cooks. It would be like a dream come true.

“Do you like to read?” I ask, guiding her up the stairs to the second floor.

“Love it! I always wanted one of those window seats that overlook beautiful scenery.”

“What’s your favorite genre to read?”

“Romance, of course. I want the perfect book boyfriends.”
She smirks.

“Ah, so that’s the competition I’m up against? Fictional men crafted by women for women. That seems a little unfair.”

“I’m sure they exist somewhere in the world.” She shrugs.

“Well, let me show you something.” Placing a hand on her lower back, I rub my thumb over her bare skin and wish I could push her up against the wall and kiss her the way I’m dying to.

We pause outside of the first door at the top of the stairs and Faith glances up at me. A slow smirk spreads over my face because I know she’s going to love this.

Twisting the knob, I push the door open and my smile widens when she gasps. She steps into the room and right over to the window.

I live close to the hospital, but just far enough from the city to have a decent size property. I wanted something similar to what Kelsey and Mason have. I searched for a backyard I could picture my family running around and playing in while my wife and I watched from the porch. This place ticked off all the boxes on my dream house list.

The reading nook in the bay window was specially designed for me. There’s a large mattress custom made for the space. It’s more comfortable than my bed and I’ve spent countless hours on it.

The windows wrap around the space, creating the perfect little reading oasis. You can see the entire backyard from this spot. The pool with the little man-made waterfall and hot tub. The firepit is surrounded by comfortable chairs and the outdoor kitchen.

Faith climbs onto the mattress and crawls to the window. I watch her for a few seconds before I join her. I've always wanted to snuggle here with the woman I love and enjoy a summer storm while we read.

I just need to find a woman who loves me enough to stick around.

"This might be my favorite place ever," she whispers, glancing around the room.

Bookshelves cover every wall. Most of them are full of books, but some have framed awards I've received over the years. Some of these books aren't even mine.

When I moved in here a few years ago, Kennedy decided she didn't have enough room for her books at her house, so she started stocking my shelves with her favorites after she was done with them. She said if she wanted to read them again, she'd come back and check them out like at a library.

I asked her why she wouldn't just go to the library, but she claims she likes indie authors and it's hard to find them in the library. Plus, she can't stand dog-eared pages or wrinkles. And if someone breaks the spine, she'll lose it.

"I can't believe how many books you have."

“I think more than half are my sister’s romance novels.” I shrug. “You’re welcome to borrow anything you want.”

“Hmm, do I have to borrow them, or can I come here to read?”

“You’re always welcome in my home, baby.” I press a soft kiss to her forehead.

She shifts until she’s laying on her back, staring up at me. She runs a finger down my jaw and over my bottom lip. I nip at her skin and a smile tugs on the corner of her lips.

“I might need to steal the key to your house so I can sneak in here whenever I want.”

I lean over her, planting my hands on either side of her head. Straddling her hips, I stare down at her and watch her eyes darken. Her chest rises and falls a little faster. I know she’s expecting me to do something, but I’m not going to. If she wants to take things slow, I’ll take them slow.

“There’s no need to be a criminal. I have a spare. I’ll give it to you so we don’t need to worry about you getting charged with breaking and entering.”

“That’s so kind of you.”

“I keep telling you, I’m a nice guy.”

She loops her hands around my neck, playing with strands of my hair. She’s watching my every move. Her attention flickering from my eyes to my mouth and over the rest of my body. She’s waiting for me to make a move.

“Are you hungry?”

“A little.”

“How about you explore the rest of this floor while I start making dinner?”

“You’re not afraid of me snooping?” She arches her brow.

“Nah, I did a really good job of hiding my diary and I only left my cute undies in my drawers.” I wiggle my brows.

“You’re a smartass.” She giggles, pulling my neck down towards her.

“And you love it.” I peck her on the cheek before climbing off of her and out of the window seat.

I glance over my shoulder at her right before I leave the room. She’s staring at me with a deep crease between her brows. She thought I was going to kiss her. She was expecting so much more.

If she wants a friend; I’ll give her the best friend she could ask for.

Playlist

Playlist

What the hell was that?

I thought he was going to kiss me. I expected him to slip his hands under the hem of my shirt and push the fabric higher and higher until he could see my sports bra.

I'm frozen in my spot in the reading nook for a few minutes, trying to process what just happened. He's been pushing for more out of our relationship since we met and now, he's respecting what I want?

I'm not even sure I want to take it slow anymore. Not when I see how he's looking at me. Not when I'm constantly reminded of how amazing it is to have his hands and lips on me. When his attention is solely focused on me and nothing else.

"Shit," I whisper into the empty room. "I'm in trouble."

When I left New York, I swore I wasn't going to get involved with anyone for at least a year. I didn't want to complicate my life again after just getting out of such a crappy situation.

I don't need another man screwing up my life. I can't move again. I can't pack up everything and retreat to lick my wounds.

I told everyone that I left because I wanted a fresh start. The reality is I didn't want a constant reminder of all the things I lost. I thought Henry and I were going to get married. We'd been dating for a few years and things seemed serious.

We lived together. We planned on getting a dog together. We shared a car because it's pointless to have two cars in New York. I think the only thing we didn't share was a bank account. Thankfully, I insisted I wasn't doing that until we got married.

After I found out he was cheating on me, everywhere I went reminded me of a date we went on or a store my ex-friend and I used to shop at.

At work, people stared at me with pity. Of course, all three of us still worked on the same unit and word spread quickly about Henry's extra-curricular activities.

I knew I couldn't stand living in the same city and working at the same hospital as them. Moving was the best option for me.

Since Lindsey's life was slowly collapsing around her, moving here seemed like the best option. We can be here for each other and I get to see Jackson a lot more. It's hard to be an awesome aunt from a different state.

I slowly climb off of the reading nook and mosey around the library. I always envied Belle for getting to live with the beast and enjoy that amazing library, but now, I think I'm getting the better deal. Jesse isn't a beast, he's actually a sweet guy when he doesn't think you're ghosting him.

I'm not being held here against my will, though I'm not sure I'd even be upset if Jesse tried to keep me here. I might enjoy being his little captive.

After I've perused the shelves and made a stack of books I want to read first, I exit the room to explore the rest of the second floor. The next door on the right has a home gym with every piece of equipment imaginable. I'm sure with his odd hours, it's easier to work out at home then to try to make it to the gym during normal hours.

The next door is a guest room. There are a bunch of toys pushed off to the side and a baseball bat, glove, and ball. I wonder who those are for? I know he has at least one sister. Does she have kids?

The door at the end of the hallway is the master suite. The walls are painted a light gray. The furniture is stained dark, almost black. Everything is simplistic, but manly.

The top of his dresser has three different bottles of cologne. I lift each one to my nose and sniff. They all smell wonderful and I briefly wonder why he needs so many different ones. Most people pick a favorite and wear it forever.

Sitting on his nightstand is a stack of computer papers stapled together to make a little book. *Jesse's Diary – DON'T*

Touch! is written across the top in messy handwriting.

I chuckle and shake my head. This is totally something he would do and I love it.

I flip the first page open and find a lopsided heart drawn on the first page with JC + FH written inside. My smile stretches impossibly wider and I think I fall a little more for the man cooking me dinner downstairs.

Turning to the second page, a laugh bursts free from me before I can stop myself.

Dear Diary,

First off, should Diary be capitalized? I've never done this before and I'm not quite sure what the rules are. Do I write to you like you're a real person and not just my personal notebook to write down my hopes and dreams? Eh, I'm still going with making you a proper noun.

Anyway, I met this girl. Woman? Is it offensive to refer to a female over the age of eighteen as a girl? I feel like it's acceptable, but I wouldn't want someone to call me a boy. That would make me feel like my balls were still tucked up in my abdomen and I was virtually hair free. This chest has hair on it, baby! But not the balls, because manscaping is a real thing and everyone should do it.

*Think of it this way... no one wants to eat at a smorgasbord where they find a hair in their food. I'm thinking of her when I shave my balls. I'm making sure she has a hairless snack.
*wiggles eyebrows**

But I digress. This woman captured my attention the second she walked into Kennedy's Pub. She's effortlessly beautiful and I don't think she even realizes it. I swear I didn't pay attention to a single female after she appeared like an angel in front of me.

I just about choked on my own saliva when her friends left her with no way home except me. Just the thought of being able to spend a little more time with her had me giddy like a prepubescent boy.

I don't even know how I convinced her to come home with me, but damn, it was a dream come true. All I can say is women aren't wrong when they say to watch out for funny guys. We get you to laugh and laugh and laugh. Then, BAM! You're naked and not quite sure how it happened. That's the only way I can explain her falling into bed with me.

But then when I woke up and she wasn't there. Fuck, that gutted me. I felt this insane connection to her and it broke my heart when I realized she left without a single word. I had no way of contacting her at all.

I guess I could beg Kennedy to let me work at the pub for free and hope she popped back in there sometime, but what are the chances that would happen when I was there? If she really didn't want to see me again, she'd be stupid to strut back into the bar we met in.

And she's not a stupid woman at all. She proved that the first time she scrubbed for me. I swear I've never been so impressed by a nurse before. I wanted to compliment her skill

level and her knowledge of orthopedics, but I let my ego get in the way and I blew it.

I promised myself I'm going to fix everything between us. I'm going to become the world's greatest friend and maybe one day I'll get lucky enough to convince her to give me a shot as her boyfriend. Until then, I'll savor every second I have of her in my arms. Every ounce of attention she sends my way.

They say the best things in life are worth waiting for and I'm willing to bet she's one of those things.

Until next time Diary! You keep those pages closed and be a classy bitch. Only spread those pages for me.

Your sexy author,

Jesse

I swipe under my eyes, trying to rid my cheeks of the moisture. I'm not sure if they're tears of laughter or over how sweet he is. I know this was a joke and he wrote this specifically for me to read, but I love it. I love the effort he went through to write this.

I flip the page, wondering if he wrote anything else. I doubt it, but I check anyway.

Dearest Diary,

You dirty slut! You spread your pages for her and I guarantee she didn't even wine and dine you first. You should be ashamed at how easy you were. I bet all she had to do was bat those long lashes at you and you fell open like you were being paid for it.

*At least my undies have more pride in themselves. I know they're not going to drop their drawers open for her. After all, they have standards, unlike you. See what I did there *wiggles eyebrows**

Your Ashamed Owner

Laughter bubbles out of me all over again. He's right, this is exactly how I ended up naked in his bed that first night. His personality is so addicting and I want to spend more and more time with him.

Without another thought, I place his fake diary on the nightstand and move over to his dresser. I open one drawer after another until I find his underwear drawer.

There's a note sitting on top and a massive smile spreads across my face before I even read what it says.

Is nothing sacred around you? Can't a man keep his thongs safely tucked away without prying eyes sneaking a peek?

*Go ahead, you might as well look through and see what my balls like. They're sensitive guys and like to be handled with care. These boxer briefs know how to cradle them without suffocating them with love. They provide easy access to my cock too. *wink wink nudge nudge**

The thongs aren't actually mine. Derek bought me them for Christmas. He thinks he's funny. Jokes on him, I'm stuffing his locker with extra small condoms for his birthday.

Though I didn't buy them, I'll wear the damn thongs if you give me a chance. A little bit of motivation might help.

Now, get your ass downstairs and give me a hug.

Love,

Jesse

I grab the first pair of underwear and laugh. It's a leopard thong and not something I can imagine Jesse wearing at all. I stuff them back into the drawer and shut it.

Snatching a pen off his dresser, I grab his diary and flip to an empty page. I quickly scribble out my own entry before returning it to its position on the nightstand.

I can't wait to see what he says when he finds it.

Playlist

Playlist

Tossing the baby bliss potatoes, I turn down the heat a little bit so they can brown without burning. The last thing I want to do is serve Faith burnt food the first time I try to cook for her.

“Mmm, that smells good,” Faith murmurs, walking into the kitchen.

I glance over my shoulder at her with a smirk. She looks so comfortable in my space. So at home here. I love it. I wish I could see her here more often.

“I hope you’re hungry. I made garlic roasted chicken and potatoes with green beans. It’s one of my favorites.”

“Such a little housewife.” Faith smirks.

She takes the spatula out of my hand and rests it on the counter. Wrapping her arms around my neck, she hugs me tightly against her. I don’t hesitate at all. My hands are looping her waist in seconds and I’m burying my face in the crook of her neck.

“Thank you for making me dinner and letting me snoop in all the places. I absolutely love your house. I’m fairly certain

it's the house I've dreamed of owning my entire life."

"You're welcome. I was serious when I said you can come over whenever you want to. Bring Rocky with you and curl up in the library with a good book."

"We'll have to see when both of our schedules allow it." She pats my chest and takes a step back.

I instantly miss the feel of her pressed up against me. Sometimes it's really hard to remember she isn't mine because she feels like she is.

"You can come even when I'm not home."

"I'm practically a stranger to you! Why would you let me into your home when you're out? That's crazy. I could steal from you."

"Are you admitting something? Did you steal a pair of my cute undies?" I plant my hands on my hips and arch a brow at her.

"Jesse, I'm serious!"

"So am I! Do you know how hard it is to find the perfect undies?"

She rolls her eyes and peeks in the living room to make sure Rocky's still lying on the couch. The dog hasn't made a single peep the entire time he's been here.

I actually checked on him when I came back down here. He was so quiet and still I was afraid something was wrong with him.

“I know where you live and where you work, Faith. Plus, Kelsey and Cali’s husbands used to be undercover detectives and now run their own private investigation company. I’m fairly certain if you stole something from me, I’d find you and get it back.” I shrug, snatching up the spatula and flipping the chicken and potatoes.

She’s quiet for a few minutes and I wonder what she’s thinking about. I want to get to know her better and find out things I wouldn’t normally be able to figure out.

“Let’s play a game. I get to ask you five questions, then you get to ask me five. They can be about anything and everything.”

“Do we get to pass if we don’t want to answer?” She quirks a brow.

“I guess if you want to be a sucky opponent.” I roll my eyes, making her smile softly.

“Ok, who goes first?”

“Me. I thought of the game, so I should go first.” I take my time thinking of something that might take a long time to figure out naturally. “When you were a kid, where did you see yourself at this point in life?”

“Well, I didn’t expect to be working in the operating room. I wanted to work in the neonatal intensive care unit. I thought it would be so rewarding to take care of the little babies who were so helpless. Some of them are there for so long and their

parents can't always be with them. I wanted to hold them and snuggle with them as much as I could."

"Why didn't you do that?"

"When I did my clinical rotation through there, I saw the sad and depressing side of things. I knew I couldn't handle working there forever. I was really drawn to the operating room and the fast-paced environment."

"Husband or kids?"

"I didn't think I'd get married super young, but I thought I would've been married by now. Maybe one or two kids already." She shrugs. "Two more questions."

"What? No way! Those others were follow-up questions."

"Nope. You asked three separate questions." Faith shakes her head and hops up on top of the island. She swings her feet back and forth with a smile on her face.

"Fine. How old were you when you had your first kiss?"

"Four."

"Four! Are you kidding me?" I gape at her.

"Nope! Jimmy crawled over to my mat during nap time and kissed me right on the lips. I spit in his face and told him I was going to break his nose if he ever came near me again." She chuckles lightly. "Alright, that was five. My turn."

I glare at her, but she doesn't seem to care one bit. She's totally cheating at this game. She taps her chin and seems to really be putting some thought into her questions.

“Why orthopedics?”

“I like playing with the big bones.” I smirk. “I wanted to help people and make a real difference in their lives, but to be completely honest, I didn’t want to deal with terminal illnesses or super sick patients. Most of my patients are completely healthy people. They come to me to improve their lives and reduce their pain. I like that.”

“Did you always want to be a doctor?”

“I never even contemplated being anything else. Running into a fire never appealed to me and tackling suspects to the ground seemed too difficult. Who wants to run that much anyway? Not me.” I shake my head, stirring the food around again. “My dad’s a doctor too. I think it just runs in my blood.”

She thinks for a few minutes before she asks her next question. And this one surprises me.

“Which is the real Jesse? The one I met at the bar or the one I scrubbed that first case for?”

Turning off the burners, I place the spatula on the counter and spin around to face Faith. I spread her knees and step between them, planting a hand on either side of her hips.

“The guy you’re with right now, that’s the real Jesse. I’m sorry if I ever made you question that.” I stroke the back of my hand down her cheek, unable to resist touching her. “Two more questions, baby.”

“Why are you still single?”

“Because you won’t agree to dating me.”

“Why do you want to date me so badly?” She whispers, staring up at me with so much vulnerability.

“Why wouldn’t I want to? You’re sweet and sexy. You care about your friends and family. You take pride in your job and understand the hours I work. You’re simple and laid-back, everything I’m looking for in a partner. And I don’t give up when there’s something I want, Faith. I keep trying until I finally get it.”

She watches me for a few seconds and right before I’m about to step away to get dinner on the table, Faith grabs my shirt with both hands and tugs me close. Her mouth is on mine before I can even register what’s happening.

I grip her hips and slide her to the edge of the counter so her core is against mine. She moans into my mouth, making my mind head south along with all of the blood in my body.

I’m sure she can feel me hardening against her. She knows just how badly I want her. Slipping her tongue between my lips, she tastes like mint and strawberries. Her tongue works against mine, begging for more.

It’s taking everything in me to stay in the kitchen and not slip my hands under her ass and carry her up to my room. Maybe I could stay right here and we could go for another round on my counter. I wonder if the neighbors can see into the kitchen at night?

I'm just about to suggest we move this party elsewhere or at least take off some clothing when the sound of liquid hitting the hardwood floor fills the air.

Faith and I separate immediately and glance around the room with wide eyes. Our gaze lands on Rocky at the same time. He's peeing on my floor by the backdoor.

"Rocky! No!" Faith leaps off the counter and ushers him out the door.

I immediately grab a roll of paper towels and begin cleaning up the little spot of piddle. He's barely four months old. He's not completely housebroken and I'm not upset about it. Not even a little bit. Piss happens.

I just wish it didn't interrupt what was about to happen between us.

Playlist

Playlist

“I better get going. I don’t like walking this late at night,” I mumble, scooching even closer to Jesse.

He’s so warm and inviting. He makes me never want to remove my body from where it’s plastered against his. The only thing that could make this better is if we could remove some of the clothes keeping us apart.

“You walked here?” Jesse pulls back and stares down at me.

“Yeah. I’m trying to leash train Rocky and I figured it would tire him out.” I shrug. “It sounded like a good idea at the time. Now, I’m thinking it wasn’t though.” Scrunching up my nose, I peek up at Jesse.

A slow smile spreads across those amazing lips and it makes me think of how addicting his kisses are.

“I think you just wanted me to invite you to stay over tonight. You figured I would never make you walk home and if you waited long enough, I wouldn’t feel like driving you home. You’re a sly woman.”

“Damn, I wish I *had* thought of that. It’s a great idea.” I chuckle.

“Stay with me. In the morning, I’ll make you breakfast and drive you to work.”

“What am I going to do with Rocky?”

“Well, I’m only working for a few hours tomorrow. I cleared my afternoon for a conference, but it got canceled. I can come back and hang out with him. Maybe we could even go for a jog and really tire out that puppy.” He scratches Rocky’s head.

I’m lying on Jesse’s right with my head on his chest, while Rocky is curled up on his left. Soft puppy snores puff out his cheeks every few seconds and it’s adorable.

“Are you just trying to find a girlfriend?” I deadpan.

“Nope. I found her. She just needs to get with the program and agree to date me.”

I roll my eyes at him, but I can’t help the smile spreading across my face. He’s so adorable. I don’t understand how he’s still single.

“I want to stay, but you don’t have a crate for Rocky. He can’t be free when we’re sleeping or when we’re at work. He’ll chew on everything and probably pee even more.”

“Huh. If only I was intelligent enough to stop at the pet store on the way home and pick up a crate.” Jesse taps his chin. “Something similar to the one in the trunk of my car.”

“You did not.” I narrow my gaze on him, trying to figure out if he’s joking.

“I did, babe. I wanted you to be able to come over whenever you want to and not have to worry about him. I figured this way if you came over on the weekends and we decided to go out for dinner, we wouldn’t have to drive back to your place just to put him in his crate.”

“You’re crazy.” I laugh and shake my head.

“Nah, I just know what I want and I’m going to do whatever I have to do to get it.”

“And what is it that you want?” I shift on the couch until I’m facing him.

“I want you. In my arms, in my bed, in my life.”

“What if I don’t want to tell people about us? At least not yet.”

“Then we don’t tell them. Our relationship is no one’s business except ours.”

“Even Kelsey and Derek?” I arch a brow.

“Damn, you’re including them too?” He lets his head fall back onto the couch and groans. “Those are my besties!”

“I’m going to tell Scott and Cali you said that.” I smirk.

“First off, Cali knows and she wouldn’t care. She knows I have history with Kels and she’s practically family. Scott... he won’t be nearly as understanding. Do you really want to break Dr. McLaren’s heart? Because I wouldn’t want to have that

sort of damage on my conscience. The nurses would be devastated if his swoon worthy smile disappeared.”

“Are you always this dramatic?”

“I don’t know. Sometimes. Are you ready for bed yet?” He yawns and stretches both arms above his head.

“I need to get Rocky to go out one more time, then I’ll be ready.” I kiss his cheek softly.

“Good. I’ll put his crate together while you take him. Do you want it in our room or the guest room?”

“The guest room. He whines if he can see me and can’t get to me.”

I stand to my full height and pick up Rocky. He’s not happy about me interrupting his sleep. I know if I don’t carry him outside and set him on the grass, he’s never going to make it out the door.

I cross my arms over my chest and rub my hands up and down my sleeves. The wind blows through the trees, making the leaves shake against the branches. Rocky looks up at them and barks like something is going to jump out of it and attack him.

“C’mon, bud. Just pee so we can both go to bed.”

Walking a little further into the yard, I think about how sweet it was of Jesse to get a crate for my dog. Henry never would’ve done something like that for me.

I take a few more steps and freeze. He asked if I wanted the crate in *our* room. Ours! As in mine and his!

Holy crap. I thought it was normally the girls who pushed the relationship too quickly. That's not the case here. It's always him pushing for more and I don't hate it. I should, but I don't.

As soon as Rocky's finished, I lead him back into the house and lock the door behind us. I climb three steps before I realize he isn't following me.

Instead, he's sprawled out on the floor, staring up at me like I should be helping him.

"What are you doing?" I giggle. He's the cutest dog ever. "C'mon, we have to go to bed." I pat my leg a few times, but he doesn't move a single muscle.

I let out a long sigh and return to his side. Picking him up, I cradle him against my chest and kiss his snout. I get a wet tongue sliding across my cheek.

"You're lucky you're cute. No one likes sloppy kisses."

"I think that depends on where these kisses are being planted. I could get behind the idea of a sloppy kiss in certain situations." Jesse wiggles his eyebrows from his spot on the floor in the guest room.

He's smoothing out a little blanket along the bottom of the cage. It's adorable how much effort he put into this little guy.

"I got him a few toys, but the lady at the pet store said it's not a great idea to leave toys in the cage unless you know if

he's a chewer. I'm thinking we save them to entertain him when we're home. I don't want him trying to eat stuffing or something like that."

"You got him toys too?" I stare at the man who's quickly capturing my heart. I can't believe him.

"Yes. Also, she said he should go into the crate naked. Like we should take off his collar. We don't want him potentially getting it caught and him getting hurt." He flattens the blanket one more time before holding out his hands for Rocky.

As soon as he's settled inside his new home away from home and the door is locked, Jesse stands and sweeps me into his arms.

"I think we should go into our room naked too. We wouldn't want to chance getting hurt," he murmurs against my neck.

"How would I get hurt?" My voice comes out a lot more breathless than I anticipate, but that's what happens whenever he's kissing my neck.

"Well, I don't know. But do you really want to take that chance?"

"Let's go to bed, Dr. Chipkin." I reach for his hand, but he sweeps me into his arms and carries me to his room instead. "What are you doing?"

"Putting you to bed."

He gently lays me in the center of the bed and grabs the waistband of my pants. Slowly dragging them down my hips, he presses soft kisses from my thigh to my ankle.

“How’s your hip feeling?” He peeks up at me.

“My hip?” My brows pull together as I stare at him.

“You fell off the bed this morning and hurt your hip. Remember?” He trails his fingers over my hip lightly.

“I forgot about that. It doesn’t hurt at all.”

“You have a little bruise,” he murmurs, absentmindedly. He’s so focused on my body, I don’t think he’s aware of anything else in the room.

I’m so tired and his fingers gliding over my skin is making me want to go to sleep. It’s so comforting and relaxing.

“If you keep rubbing your hands over me, I’m going to fall asleep,” I whisper as my eyes slide closed.

He freezes and the room goes completely silent. I open my eyes to find a frowning Jesse staring at me.

“What? Why are you looking at me like that?”

“You’re not supposed to fall asleep when I’m touching you. You’re supposed to get turned on and beg me to keep going.”

“Oh, hush. Get ready for bed and take off your shirt so I can feel you up while I sleep.” I wave him off.

“Fine! But only because I always sleep without a shirt on. This has nothing to do with what you want.” He climbs off the bed, almost falling when his foot gets stuck in the blanket.

I stifle a laugh, not wanting to upset him. Jesse glares at me, then lifts his chin and marches into the bathroom.

Tugging off my crop sweatshirt, I take off my sports bra and slide the sweatshirt back on. I'll sleep in this and underwear. Jesse won't know, nor would he care.

A few minutes later, he exits the bathroom in nothing except a pair of boxers. I swear no matter how many times I see him like this, it's still hard to believe he'd want someone like me.

He could seriously have any woman he wants. So why does he want me?

He climbs into bed and lays on his back. Holding out an arm for me, I quickly melt into his side and place my hand over his stomach. My thigh is thrown over his and I scoot closer until my core is pressed against him.

“Well, now, that's just teasing me.”

He slips his hand under my shirt and glides his fingers up my back. He pauses for a moment before he keeps going.

“Miss Holloway, where is your bra?”

“I think it's hanging out with your leopard thong.”

“Faith! You snooped?” He stares at me with mock horror. “How dare you! I trusted you!”

“Shh, it's bedtime.” I place a finger over his lips.

His tongue peeks out and swipes at my skin. I smirk and lick his chest. His eyes widen and a devilish grin flashes across his face. He flips me onto my back and is hovering over me a second later.

“Do you really want to play this game, Faith? You’re not going to win.” He lowers his head, licking from the waistband of my underwear up my stomach. He stops right before he exposes my tits and I let out a groan of frustration.

My feelings towards Jesse are so frustrating. I want to jump over every relationship hurdle and sleep with him again, but I also really want to take things slow and get to know him.

Logically, I know it’s stupid to keep the physical relationship PG given the fact we slept together the night we met, but I don’t know! It’s not something I’d normally do.

I typically date a guy for at least a few months before we have sex. I don’t know what it was about Jesse that made me go against the norm, but I did.

And now I’m left confused and wishing I knew what I wanted to do. Why does everything always have to be so difficult?

I wiggle beneath him, wanting more, begging him to give it to me. He’s killing me and I’m ready to throw out my plan and just let him do whatever he wants to me.

“Jesse,” I whimper.

“What’s wrong, baby?” I can feel his smirk against my skin.

“You can’t do that to me. You’re killing me.”

“All you have to do is say the word and you’re mine.”

Playlist

Playlist

I slip behind the wheel and my hand instantly finds her thigh. Peeking over at Faith, her gaze is already on me, a soft smile playing on her lips.

“You look beautiful in the mornings.”

“Do I look horrible the rest of the day?” Her quirks a brow, a teasing smirk tugging on her lips.

“No, not at all. There’s just this special glow about you in the mornings. The day has just begun and you look so carefree. I like it.”

She leans over the center console and runs her fingers through my hair. Her eyes lock with mine and she doesn’t look away.

“I love how your hair looks in the morning. It’s messy and adorable. I want to run my fingers through the strands over and over again,” she murmurs softly.

“I guess that means you need to have more frequent sleepovers.” I wink.

Turning the key in the ignition, I squeeze her thigh and shift my car into drive. It only takes a few minutes before we're pulling into the parking garage of the hospital.

Every time I'm in the parking garage, I think about Kelsey and everything she went through last year. I was terrified when I didn't know where she was. A million unlikely scenarios ran through my head, but I never dreamed of what actually happened.

Thank God Mason and Maddox were there for her and Cali. I can only wonder what would've happened to them otherwise.

I pull into my spot and shift my car into park. I turn towards Faith, but before I can utter a single word, she opens her mouth.

"Let's do it."

"Do what?" My brows furrow. I have no clue what she's talking about. Was she speaking while I was lost in thought and I missed something? I hope not. That would make me feel really shitty.

"I'm offering you the position, Jesse. I want you to be my boyfriend," she whispers. "Unless you don't want that anymore." Her gaze drops to her hands and I hate that she could ever think that.

"Baby," I gently lift her chin and wait for her to make eye contact with me before I continue. "I definitely still want you. I'm not sure I'll ever stop."

She reaches out a hand and strokes her fingers down my cheek, over my jaw and stops with her palm on my chest.

“Please don’t break my heart,” she murmurs.

“I’m not Henry. I’d never be stupid enough to think I could be happier with someone else. The connection I have with you is different than I’ve ever had before. I’m not going to throw that away.”

I climb out of the car and walk around to her side. Opening her door, I hold out a hand to help her. I interlace our fingers and lead her into the hospital.

“I thought we were keeping this a secret.”

“Are you really going to make me sneak off to storage rooms with you?” I raise a brow.

She slips her bottom lip between her teeth and glances around. I can see the worry and fear swimming in the depths of those beautiful light brown eyes. They almost look like a jar of honey.

“Baby, we can keep it to ourselves if you really want to, but I think it’s pointless. No one’s going to judge you.”

“Just a few weeks?” Faith peeks up at me with pinched brows.

“I’ll give you a month.” I press a soft kiss to her forehead.

“Deal.”

Adjusting my backpack a little higher on my shoulder, I walk with Faith to the scrub bank. I don’t touch her or act like

an obsessed boyfriend, but I would give anything to make sure everyone knows she's mine.

“Are you going to walk me to work every day?”

“I'd love to help you get changed too,” I mumble in her ear so no one else can hear us.

“Jesse!” She swats at my chest with wide eyes, begging me to stop.

“Text me on your lunch break. If I'm not with a patient, I'll meet you in the cafeteria. We can have a little lunch date over hospital food.” I wiggle my eyebrows.

“What time is your last patient scheduled for?”

“Eleven. As long as I don't get behind, I should be free by eleven-thirty.”

“Ok, deal.”

I peek outside the alcove the scrub banks are kept to see if anyone is coming. When I find the entire hallway empty, I press Faith up against the wall and slip my fingers into her hair. Tilting her head to the side, I kiss her deeply, getting lost in her.

She fists my polo shirt and I know if it weren't tucked in, she'd be slipping her fingers under the hem and exploring my chest and torso.

A door opens and slams shut. Voices move down the hall, coming closer and closer to us.

I take a step away from Faith and pretend I'm grabbing a set of scrubs. I don't need scrubs on to see patients in the office, but I could if I wanted to. I prefer to look more professional.

I scan my badge and wait for the machine to work its magic and open the little door with my scrubs in it. I smirk at Faith who still looks a little dizzy on lust and my kiss.

"I hope you have a great day, Ms. Holloway." I wink and move past her. "Morning, Michelle and Jason." I smile at two other nurses from the operating room.

I glance over my shoulder right before I'm out of sight and find Faith's gaze still trained on me. She's moved from the spot I left her in, but she still looks slightly dazed.



"It's whatever you want to do, Mrs. Granger. We can hold off on your knee replacement for as long as you want, but you're going to be in pain for longer if you wait."

"I'm just not sure I want to deal with the pain." She glances away and breaks my heart a little.

"Hey," I say softly, rolling my stool a little closer to her. "I get it. No one wants to be in pain, but I can promise it will be worth it. You're only sixty. You're still young and I think the

sooner you get your knee replaced the easier the recovery will be for you.”

“What’s the oldest patient you’ve ever done a joint replacement on?” She blinks at me.

A lot of patients are scared of getting their knees or hips replaced. It’s an odd concept. I’m replacing their normal joint and bone with metal and plastic. They’re always scared of the first few steps they take too. No one seems to want to trust their new knee or hip.

“I believe the oldest patient was one hundred two. She was a little spitfire and was up and moving before any of the other patients were. She told them she wasn’t going to sit around all day, and she refused to let her new knee stop her from being on the go constantly.” I smile and shake my head.

“What would you do?”

“I’d get it done soon. The summer’s coming up and if you like to go to the pool or the beach, it’s better to be all healed so you don’t need to worry about the water. But this isn’t my knee, Mrs. Granger, it’s yours. You need to make whatever decision is best for you.”

“You’re such a nice doctor.” She smiles and glances down at my left hand. Her brows raise and I know exactly what’s going to happen next. “Are you married, Dr. Chipkin?”

“I’m not, but I don’t date my patients.” I wink, making her giggle.

“Not for me! You’re horrible.” She rolls her eyes. “My daughter’s about your age. She’s been looking for a nice man. I could set the two of you up.”

“While I appreciate the thought, I actually just started dating someone. She’s kind of amazing too.”

“Well, if you break up and would like to find something new, you give me a call.” She pats my knee and smiles. “And I think I’ll schedule my knee replacement now. I’d like to have it all healed before I go on vacation this year. We were talking about going to Florida for a few weeks. I think it might be nice to recover there, lying next to a pool.”

“As long as you don’t go in the pool, I’m supportive of the idea.” I smile, jotting down some notes on her chart. “Ok, Alexia’s going to come in here and schedule your surgery. She’ll go over some instructions with you and get everything ready to go. Do you have any other questions?”

“No.”

“Great. I’ll see you for your surgery then. If you think of anything, don’t hesitate to call and ask.”

As soon as I’m closing the exam door behind me, I tug my phone out of my pocket and pull up my messages.

Jesse: I just finished with my last patient. Did you eat already?

Faith: Nope. I should be getting out in about twenty minutes.

I'm smiling like an idiot as an idea takes root. We don't have time to leave the hospital, but that doesn't mean I can't do something special.

Jesse: I'll meet you in the cafeteria, beautiful.



I'm just setting out my lunch on the table when Faith walks through the door. I smile when her eyes find mine and wave her over.

“I have to go buy my lunch. Is there anything good today?”
She glances over her shoulder at the options.

“You don't need to get anything. I brought you lunch. Sit and eat.”

Tugging out a chair, I gesture for her to take the seat. Faith's brows form a crease and she slowly lowers herself onto the hard plastic.

“You didn't need to buy my lunch.”

“Well, I figured it would've been a little mean to eat Catalino's and let you get cafeteria food, so I got you some chicken parm.”

She stares down at the meal I bought her and slowly raises her eyes to meet mine.

“You didn’t have to do this,” she says softly.

“I know I didn’t, but I wanted to. I figured just because I can’t take you out to a nice restaurant for our lunch date doesn’t mean we can’t eat good food.”

“You might be the sweetest man I’ve ever met.” She smiles at me and shakes her head. “Thank you, Jesse.”

“I think you meant to say the sweetest boyfriend you’ve ever had.” I smirk. “You’re welcome, baby.”

I lift her hand to my mouth and place a soft kiss on the inside of her wrist. I love these little stolen moments we get with each other.

“Damn, that looks good. Did you get me anything?” Derek slides across the bench next to me.

I slowly turn to look at him with a scowl. What the hell is he doing here?

“No. Why would I buy you lunch?”

“Well, I figured after I helped you with the embarrassing problem, you’d want to do something to thank me.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You know...” He trails off and glances down at my crotch. “The problem you had.”

“Shut the fuck up.” I chuckle. “He’s lying, Faith.”

She's watching us intently with a soft smile playing on her lips. It's taking everything in me to stay on this side of the table.

"Ah, so you're the Faith I've heard so much about. I have to say, I don't know what you see in him. He's not that great. He's not even attractive." Derek motions to me with disgust.

"Is that so?" Faith laughs, her face lights up with amusement. "And let me guess, I should be paying attention to you instead?" She arches her brow.

"I mean I wasn't going to bring it up, trying to be sensitive to my man and all, but since you did... yeah, I think I deserve your attention more than he does." He shrugs.

I settle back into my seat, more than interested in how this is going to play out for him. I want to see how Faith handles the wonderful Dr. Devine. Most women melt into a puddle at his feet, I need to know if she's one of them.

"I'm sorry, I don't even know who you are." Faith shakes her head. "Are you one of the guys who clean the operating room?"

Derek opens and closes his mouth. He glances down at his scrubs and doctor's jacket before turning towards me.

"Well, fuck. I didn't expect that." He returns his attention to Faith and laughs. "Do you really not know who I am?"

"Should I?" Faith cuts off a piece of her chicken and slowly lifts the fork to her mouth.

I swear I'm so focused on her lips wrapping around the fork, the world could come crashing down around us and I wouldn't even notice.

"I'm Derek Devine." He puffs out his chest.

"Ok... Are you a resident?"

"Fuck, sweetheart. You're killing me!" Derek clutches his chest in mock horror.

Actually, it might be a real horror for him. He's used to everyone knowing who he is and women practically drooling every time he walks by. This is probably a little traumatizing to him.

"He's a fancy general surgeon. He's also the chief of surgery. He thinks he's special and no matter how many times I tell him no one cares, he doesn't listen."

"Chief of general surgery or all of it?"

"Both." Derek smirks, stealing a piece of my chicken. He moans as he chews and I scrunch up my nose in disgust.

"What about you, babe? Are you some fancy surgeon?" Faith drops her chin into the palm of her hand, resting her elbow on the table and stares at me.

"Nah, I'm just me."

"Bullshit! He's totally lying to you. Tell her!" Derek nudges me.

"I'm chief of orthopedic surgery and one of the top doctors in the whole country," I say softly. I don't like to brag about

stuff like this. I'm not trying to impress anyone with these achievements.

I'm a good doctor because I care about my patients. It's not my fault most of my colleagues only care about themselves.

"Are you serious?" Faith's jaw drops and she stares at me in shock.

"Bet you wish you accepted the date from him now, huh?" Derek smirks.

"Shut up. We're dating." She waves him off and turns back to me. "Jesse, that's amazing. You should be so proud of yourself."

"I just do my job. It's not a big deal."

"It's a huge deal! Holy crap, I'm dating the chief of orthopedic surgery." She buries her face in her hands and lets out a groan.

"Yup, so if any of the residents hit on you, I'll ruin their entire career." I fold my arms over my chest and scowl at a guy walking by.

"Oh, stop! No one can compete with you." She reaches across the table and brushes her fingers over the back of my hand. I flip it over and smile when she traces the lines on my palm.

"Wow, way to bruise my ego, Faith." Derek pouts next to me.

“Go flirt with a nurse. I know a few who practically melt into a puddle of goo every time your name is mentioned. I’m sure they can boost your ego for a little bit.”

Faith tugs her scrub hat off her head and drops it in her lap. She pulls the tie out of her hair and lets the long strands fall down her back. She’s so beautiful and I don’t think she even realizes it.

“Holy shit,” Derek murmurs under his breath.

“I know,” I whisper.

“You’re a lucky bastard.”

“Yes, yes I am.”

Faith glances up at the two of us and her brows draw together.

“What? Why are you staring at me like that?”

“I’m just trying to figure out how I got so lucky to have a woman like you in my life.”

“What can I say? You knew how to handle my sister.” She shrugs with a soft smile.

“Sister? When do I get to meet her?” Derek perks back up.

“Oh, Dr. Devine, you wouldn’t be able to handle Lindsey.” We both chuckle at the thought of Lindsey getting her hands on Derek. It’d be entertaining to watch.

Playlist

Playlist

Lifting my hand, I knock on Kelsey's door and fidget. I've become friends with Kelsey and Cali over the last few weeks, but that doesn't mean I'm all that comfortable seeing them outside of work.

"What are you doing? You look like you need to pee," Jesse whispers in my ear.

"Maybe I do! Stop being mean. I'm nervous."

"What are you nervous for? You know Kelsey and Cali. I think Hope is coming too."

"I don't know! Maybe because the last coworker I got close to slept with my boyfriend." I frown down at my feet, hating how I'm still letting Henry and Susan's actions dictate my life.

"Kelsey and Cali are married, babe. Plus, they had ample time to make a move on me if they really wanted to. As far as Hope goes..." he trails off and glances around to make sure we're alone. "I'm fairly certain Derek has a thing for her and I'm not getting involved. Also, I've never been attracted to her."

“Are you kidding me? She’s beautiful.”

“Yeah, but I have better. You’re gorgeous and stunning, my perfect girlfriend.” He presses a kiss to the tip of my nose right as the front door opens.

“Hey! You guys made it!” Kelsey smiles and waves for us to come in.

We follow her into the living room. Every surface is covered in photos and I want to go around and look at all of them.

“It’s not like you gave us much choice, Kels. I’m fairly certain you said I better be here and then you threatened bodily harm if I didn’t show.” Jesse rolls his eyes.

“That sounds like my Firefly. I’m assuming you’re Faith. I’m Mason.” A handsome man appears behind Kelsey with a little boy on his hip. He wraps an arm around Kelsey’s waist and kisses the top of her head.

Before I can even process how adorable this couple is, Cali and another man enter the room.

“Hey, Faith! This is my husband, Maddox.” Cali motions to the large man next to her. “And our daughter, Harper.” She pats a little girl on the head.

“Hey, it’s nice to meet you.” The man holds out a hand and smiles brightly. I shake it, still a little stunned.

“I know Kelsey and Cali were models, but were you guys too?” I motion between Mason and Maddox.

“Hell no.” Maddox chuckles.

“Can you really see me working the camera? Or pouting on command? C’mon, Faith.” Mason rolls his eyes, teasing me.

“Dude, you have the smoldering eyes down to a science!” Derek struts in and rolls his eyes. “Being around all you beautiful men is giving me a complex.”

“Oh, please! You don’t need us to stroke your ego.” Cali waves him off.

There’s a knock on the door and Kelsey tells Derek to go answer it. As he exits the room, Scott enters from the kitchen.

“Hey, Faith. Jesse.” He nods to us. “I hear you’re the newest addition to the ortho team. I wish Jesse would stop stealing all the good nurses. I’d appreciate having a few in my room every once in a while.”

“Whoa there, buddy! I was in your room twice this week!” Cali plants her hands on her hips and glares at him.

“You’re temporary. As soon as you pop out that baby, you’re going to be right back in that room with him.” Scott rolls his eyes.

“Well, yeah, but you don’t need to be mean about it.” Cali laughs.

“Yay! Hope’s here!” Kelsey claps when Hope walks into the living room with Derek following closely behind.

“Were you all waiting for me?” She glances around nervously.

“Nah, we just got here. How are you doing, Hope?” Jesse smiles and snakes an arm around my waist.

“I’m good... I think you’re doing better though.” She giggles and shakes her head as she stares at us.

“Oh, uh... is this an issue?” I motion to Jesse, nerves flooding me.

“Of course not. We’re not at work and even if we were, there are no rules against a surgeon dating a staff nurse that I know of. Also, I’m not going to snitch.”

I don’t miss when Hope glances at Derek before looking back at me. I smile and she knows she’s been caught. Her cheeks heat and turn a light shade of pink.

“Let’s go out on the deck and chat until the food is ready.” Kelsey motions for all of us to follow her.

Her house is adorable. I’m sure each decoration was painstakingly chosen. Everything flows together so well. It looks like they were made for the room.

The kitchen is bright and open. Large windows cover one whole side, lighting up the room more. The soft gray cabinets are beautiful and the blue accents really set off the colors. I wish I had a kitchen like this.

“You look like I do when I see a pretty pair of heels. Do you like to cook?” Kelsey steps next to me.

“I love it. My apartment is really small, though. It’s difficult to cook in.”

“That’s awful! Jesse has an amazing kitchen. I’m sure he wouldn’t mind if you came over to cook. I don’t think he cooks often.”

My mind drifts to the first night Rocky and I came over. Jesse made me a delicious dinner and then held me in his arms the rest of the night.

“I want to know whatever you’re thinking about right now! You look so in love!” Cali smirks at me.

“I’m not in love,” I murmur. There’s no way. We barely know each other. “We haven’t been together long enough for any of that.” I wave them off.

“Hmm, have you told him that? Because the way he looks at you when you walk into a room, I’d disagree.”

Kelsey, Cali, and I move onto the back deck and join everyone else. Jesse instantly glances at me and a big smile spreads across his face.

He’s having a conversation with Scott and Derek, but he moves away from them, still talking. He stands behind me and slips an arm around my waist, tugging me against his firm chest.

Kelsey, Cali, and Hope smile when they glance over at us and I swear they’re already planning our wedding in their heads.

We sit down to eat dinner a few minutes later and Kyler’s scooting around on the deck, chasing Harper. They both have huge smiles on their faces and they’re giggling like crazy.

“C’mon, sweetie. Let’s sit down and eat dinner.” Maddox takes Harper by the hand and leads her over to a little plastic picnic table.

“Ok, Daddy! I love you.” She grins up at him.

“I love you too. Do you think you could sit here until you finish your food so Kyler does the same?”

“Of course! I love Kyler. He’s so cute.”

Conversations erupt around the table and dishes are being passed to the right.

“Everything looks delicious. Thank you so much for inviting me.” I smile at Kelsey and Mason.

“Well, you’re kinda stuck with us now. As long as you’re with him, at least.” Cali scoops some potato salad onto her plate.

“Are you trying to tempt her to break up with Jesse?” Scott laughs in a deep rumble.

“What? No! We’re amazing! By far the greatest people who work at the hospital!” Cali scowls at him.

“I mean, I’m the greatest surgeon there, but I don’t know about these two.” Derek motions to Jesse and Scott.

“Oh, please! You’re the most difficult surgeon.” Hope rolls her eyes.

“What? Why? When?” He sputters, his jaw dropping open.

“You forgot how, who, and where.” Mason points his fork in Derek’s direction, making all of us laugh.

“You just are.” She shrugs. “So high maintenance.”

Derek’s quiet for a few minutes. He keeps glancing at Hope, but doesn’t say anything.

I wish I could just lock the two of them in a room and force them to admit they have feelings for each other, but they’re adults and I need to leave them alone. I’m the new person here, I don’t know much about them and the last thing I need to do is stick my nose where it doesn’t belong.

“So, how did you guys meet, Kels?” I’ve been watching her and Mason all night and they’re adorable together.

“I don’t remember a time when I didn’t know him.” She glances at her husband and grins.

“I was friends with Kelsey’s brother when we were kids. I came over to their house every chance I got. I really just wanted to see her.” Mason watches Kelsey with so much love in his gaze.

“Seriously?” Scott laughs. “I’ve never heard this story.”

“Oh, yeah! And when she started wearing bikinis, I practically lived on a lounge around their pool. I wanted to make sure I was close by when she needed help putting on more sunscreen.” He wiggles his eyebrows.

“Please tell me you told him off.” Derek shakes his head.

“Nah, he was cute and I craved his attention.” Kelsey shrugs. “I would’ve dated him if he had asked me out. Instead, he joined the military and disappeared from my life for years.

It took me feeling him up while drunk and confessing my love for him before he finally made a move.”

“Wow, I wasn’t expecting that!” Scott laughs even harder.

“Hey, when you were a freshman, if you saw a senior who looks like this,” Mason motions to Kelsey, “would you be putting yourself out there? Because you wouldn’t. She was gorgeous and she knew it. She already had modeling agencies calling and I was one in a long line of guys begging for her attention. But once I made a move, I locked it down, and wouldn’t let go.”

“Until you went undercover,” Kelsey whispers softly. I’m sure there’s a story there, but based on the looks they’re giving each other, I’m not sure I want to ask about this story.

Mason wraps his arm around Kelsey’s shoulders and tugs her into his side. He presses a gentle kiss to her temple and whispers in her ear.

“What about you two?” I glance at Cali and Maddox.

“We met when Maddox and Mason were undercover... They saved my life and Kelsey’s. I don’t think I could ever thank them enough.” Cali stares at her husband.

Questions are filling my brain, begging to be asked, but I pinch my lips shut. If they wanted me to know the details, I’m sure they’d be giving them more willingly.

“So, Faith, you lived in New York before this?” Scott changes the subject and I happily accept the attention.

“I did. I worked in a big hospital in Manhattan and I lived in NYC.”

“Wow, that must’ve been exciting!”

“There was always something to do, that’s for sure. I wouldn’t trade my time there for anything, but I don’t necessarily miss it. Especially the traffic and parking.” I roll my eyes.

“I’m sure it’s much better here.” Derek laughs.

“I know a little about Kelsey and Cali, but I know nothing about the three of you.” I motion to Hope, Derek and Scott. “Are any of you married?”

“We’re all single as can be.” Scott lifts his beer to his mouth and takes a sip.

“Yeah, all the single ladies keep getting snatched up!” Derek pouts into his cup.

Hope glances at him and sadness sweeps over her face, but it’s gone almost as quickly as it appeared. I wish I could do something to help her. Nothing’s worse than being head over heels about a man who doesn’t notice you.

Playlist

Playlist

I want to slam Derek's head against a wall and tell him to open his damn eyes. He's going to ruin his shot with Hope before he even gets it.

I shake my head again when he opens his mouth and says something else that offends her and he's completely oblivious to it.

"Hope, I have a friend you'd like. I could set you up with him if you'd like." I flash her a smile.

"That would be really nice. Thank you, Jesse." Her voice is soft, almost hesitant.

I'm sure she's self-conscious with how Derek keeps acting like she isn't here or isn't an option when it comes to a girlfriend. In reality, Derek's trying to hide his feelings for her and I don't think he realizes what he's doing.

Derek's gaze snaps to mine and he shakes his head slightly. I arch a brow and smirk. I don't have anyone for Hope to go out with, but I'm hoping maybe it will kick his ass into gear and give him the push he needs.

Faith rubs a hand up and down her bare arms. She's stunning in her jean shorts and tank top. So effortless and relaxed.

"Are you cold?" I lean closer and whisper in her ear.

"Freezing."

"Come over here." I pat my lap. She stares at me like I'm crazy and makes no move to come closer. "Faith Holloway, get your perky ass over here so I can keep you warm."

"Oh, do you want a blanket?" Kelsey hops up and grabs a few blankets from right inside the door. She hands one to each of the women before settling on Mason's lap. Kyler crawls over to her a few minutes later and holds his arms up, wanting to be held.

She scoops him up and he quickly snuggles against her chest. She's a great mom, better than I ever thought she'd be.

"Daddy, will you hold me too? I'm tired." Harper rubs her eyes and peeks up at Maddox.

"Of course. I'll always hold my girl."

Cali scoots her chair closer and drapes the blanket over all three of them. Harper nuzzles her face into Maddox's neck and I swear she's asleep in seconds.

Standing to her full height, Faith moves to wrap the blanket around her. I wrap my arms around her waist and tug her onto my lap.

"Jesse!" She squeals.

“I’m cold and Kelsey doesn’t care about my warmth. I need you to keep me warm.”

Tugging the blanket from between us, I spread it over both of our laps. Faith relaxes into my chest when she realizes no one cares about her sitting on me.

I know she’s really worried about what everyone is going to think about the new nurse dating the doctor, but I wish she could ignore everyone else and just focus on us.

Stroking my hand up and down Faith’s back, I slowly move my hand under the hem of her tank top and brush my fingers over her bare skin.

Her body tenses in my arms and I chuckle softly. “Baby, no one can see where my hand is. I just needed to touch your body. I’ve barely had my hands on you all night,” I murmur in her ear.

She gradually relaxes into me and lays her head on my shoulder. I know we’re not going to be here too much longer. Maddox and Cali will be leaving soon to put Harper to bed and I’m sure Kelsey’s going to want to put Kyler to bed.

We typically don’t stay late, but normally Hope and Faith aren’t here. It’s nice to have some more women here, especially when one of them is in my arms.

“Well, I think we better get this one home,” Maddox mumbles, standing with Harper clutched to his chest.

“Good, give me your blanket.” Scott snatches the blanket off of Cali and tucks it around him. Everyone chuckles at him.

We say our goodbyes and soon they're disappearing into the house.

"Where's my blanket? Am I the only one who gets to freeze?" Derek folds his arms over his chest and pouts.

"Share Hope's blanket with her." Scott waves him off.

Derek turns to Hope with a raised brow. She rolls her eyes and holds out one side of the blanket to him.

Scooting his chair as close as he can, Derek drapes the fabric over him and leans in closer to Hope. They'd be cute together if they could get past whatever's standing in the way of them dating.

We talk for another thirty minutes before Faith yawns for the third time in a row. I glance down at her and find her barely able to keep her eyes open.

"I think it's time for us to go too. I need to get this girl to bed." I lift Faith in my arms and stand to my full height.

"Jesse! Put me down!"

"Nah, you're too tired to walk." I smirk. "Ladies, it was nice to see you. I need to go warm up my girl. Man, always good to see you," I say to Mason.

"We'll have to get together soon. The quails should start laying eggs in about three weeks. I'm thinking we could have a big breakfast soon." He smiles proudly.

"I like the sound of that!" I turn my attention to Derek and Scott. "Boys, I'll see you at work."

“What the hell! Why do you refer to Mason as a man and us as boys?” Derek folds his arms over his chest and glares at me.

“Look at him.” I motion to Mason who has a huge smirk plastered across his face. “I think it’s kinda self-explanatory. He’s like a machine. He looks like a man... and then there’s you.”

“Fuck you.” Derek laughs.

“Later peeps!” I call over my shoulder as we walk away.



By the time we make the short drive home, Faith is sound asleep in the passenger’s seat. Her long lashes lay over her tan skin and flutter every few seconds. Her lips are puckered the smallest amount, making me want to kiss her even more.

I contemplate waking her up, but I hate to do it. I decide to carry her into the house and hope Rocky doesn’t bark when we come in.

Quickly making my way down the hall, I breathe a sigh of relief when Rocky doesn’t make a peep. I tug the covers back and lay Faith in the center of the bed. Carefully untying her shoes, I place them on the floor next to the bedroom door.

I know she's not going to want to sleep in her clothes, but I'm going to deal with Rocky before I attempt to get her changed.

As soon as I step into the guest room, Rocky's tail bangs against the metal bars of the crate. He's so excited to see me. I feel slightly bad that he's not going to be out for long before I put him back in for the night.

I grab him out of the crate and carry him down the steps. We learned fairly quickly how easily he gets distracted and doesn't always follow us downstairs. We've had to clean up more than a few piddle spots because of it.

Placing him in the grass, I wait for him to do his business, then I start jogging around the backyard. Rocky follows me right away. He's finally able to keep up and runs at my side like a well-trained dog. He glances up at me every few seconds to make sure he's doing the right thing. I figure if we run for twenty minutes, it will tire him out for bed.

He hasn't been chewing anything lately and I'm thinking about trying to leave him outside of the crate the next time I go out for a short period of time. There's nothing he could destroy that I couldn't replace. And if I lock him in the guest room, there's even less he could get into, but then he could move around more.

Once he starts slowing down a little, I head back inside and fill up his bowl with fresh water. He laps at it for a few minutes before looking up at me.

“It’s time for bed, buddy.” I pat my leg and move towards the stairs.

Rocky gets the hint and trots up ahead of me and into the guest room. By the time I reach the room, he’s already lying in his crate, curled into a ball with his eyes shut. He’s such a good dog.

I shut the cage door and lock it before returning to my room. Faith is still in the same position I left her in. Her hands are tucked under her cheek, making her look like a sleeping angel.

Quickly unbuttoning her jeans, I tug them down her legs. It’s not easy when she’s dead to the world, but she hates sleeping in them.

“Damn, is that all I had to do to get you to undress me?” There’s a smirk in her sleepy voice. I glance up to find her half-opened eyes on me.

“I’ll undress you any time you want,” I murmur, tossing her pants into the hamper.

That’s right, Faith is here enough that we mix our laundry and wash all of our clothes together. I’ve been toying with the idea of asking her to move in with me, but I’m afraid she’ll think it’s too soon.

“Go back to sleep, baby. I’m going to take a quick shower, then come to bed. I got a little sweaty running around the yard with Rocky for so long.”

“You did that?” She blinks up at me.

“Of course. Now, get some sleep.” I kiss the top of her head and gently guide her back to the mattress. I don’t want her to wake up too much. I know how much it sucks to try to go back to sleep then.

Wrapping a towel around my waist when I’m done in the shower, I finish getting ready for bed. I’m exhausted. This was a long work week and I’m on-call tomorrow.

I’m hoping it’s a quiet day, but it almost never is. Everyone loves to break their hips on the weekends.

The staff is never happy when they have to come in, even though they know they’re on-call for these types of emergencies. I can’t blame them; I’m not thrilled with the idea either. I’d much rather spend my weekend with Faith and Rocky.

Climbing into bed, I toss my towel into the hamper. I don’t bother with putting on any clothes. Faith doesn’t care and I don’t feel like it. I tug back the covers and slip under the cool fabric. My girl instantly scoots into my side and curls her body around mine.

Running my hand up and down her back, I smile into the darkness. She stripped out of the rest of her clothes while I was showering and is naked next to me.

I want to explore every inch of her body, but I know we’re both exhausted. Instead, I scoot a little closer and kiss her temple.

Damn, this is perfect.

Playlist

Playlist

I'm so tired. It's supposed to be my day off, yet I'm stuck in the hospital with Willow and Derek.

A patient came into the emergency room with internal bleeding. Derek was having a hard time, so he asked Cali to call Willow to come help him.

I shouldn't complain because working with Cali has been nice, but I just want to go home.

This is our fourth case today and I swear each one gets harder and harder. My patience is wearing thin and I still have twelve more hours of being on-call.

The phone rings and my gaze snaps to Cali. This better not be the nursing supervisor telling us about another case. I'm not sure how much longer I can handle being here.

"Lap sponge," Derek holds out his hand and I quickly give him a fresh sponge. "What's Jesse doing this weekend?" He doesn't look at me, instead keeping his attention on figuring out where this blood is coming from.

“He’s on-call too, but obviously he’s having better luck than we are.” I roll my eyes even though Derek isn’t watching me. “He said he was going to take Rocky for a run so if he gets called in, the dog will be a little tired.”

“He loves that dog.” Derek laughs. “All I hear about is how good he is and how he’s the perfect dog. It’s like watching a new parent become obsessed with their baby.”

“I think someone needs a dog,” Willow singsongs.

“Nope! I don’t have time for anything I have to keep alive or show attention to.” Derek waves her off.

“And you wonder why the women aren’t flocking to you and begging for your attention,” she snorts with laughter.

“Derek, Jesse says to hurry up because he has a case and he’s tired of waiting for you to finish.” Cali’s eyes crinkle and I know she’s smiling beneath her mask.

“Tell Jesse I said to go fuck off.”

“Why are you flipping me off? I’m just relaying a message.” Cali scowls.

“I’m sorry, sweetheart. I’m just-”

“Found it!” Willow squeals. She clamps the vessel with a hemostat and quickly cauterizes it.

“Tell Jesse we’ll be out of here in thirty minutes,” Derek sighs with relief.



This day is dragging on longer and longer. I lay my head down on the table in the lounge and let out a long groan. I can't believe how busy we've been.

Strong hands land on my shoulders and begin massaging my sore muscles. I don't need to look to see who it is, I can tell by his cologne. Even though he has three, I've realized he wears them at different times. It all depends on what type of mood he's in.

"Do you just let any man come up and put their hands on you?"

"Mmm, if they have hands this skilled, probably."

"Wow, I don't even know what to say right now. I kinda feel used, but also underappreciated." Jesse lifts his hands off of me.

"No, baby, keep going. I'm so tired," I moan, tapping my shoulders to encourage him to keep going.

"Do you let other men touch you?" His voice is almost a low growl.

"Never. I like you and respect you too much for that."

His fingers skim up my arms and over my shoulders before he starts kneading my flesh again. If he keeps doing this, I'm going to melt into the table and all over the floor.

"Your muscles are so tight. What did you do today?"

"Dealt with whiny surgeons."

"Excuse me! I was not whiny!" Derek growls from behind me.

I don't look at him, I make no move at all because I don't want Jesse to stop.

"You were whining when you couldn't find the bleeder." I point a blind finger in his direction, hoping it's at least in the general area of where he's standing.

"No, I wasn't!"

"Yes, you were," Willow sighs. "It was an awful case and I'm sure this isn't the last we're going to see of Ms. Rochester."

"Well, if you were a better assistant, I would've found the bleeder sooner."

This time I do sit up and stare at Derek. His arms are crossed over his chest and he's glaring at Willow. She stares right back and I begin to wonder how she's going to react.

She bursts out laughing and shakes her head. She doesn't seem fazed at all by his little temper tantrum and I briefly wonder if he does this often. I really hope not because I like Derek.

“Yeah, ok. Next time, call a resident or medical student. I’m sure they’ll do a better job at assisting you.” Willow laughs even harder and disappears into the women’s locker room.

Derek’s gaze is locked on the door, a frown etched deep into his features. He glances at us then back at the door like he’s waiting for something.

“Wow. You know, when Willow was my resident, she was so sweet and quiet. She came in here and did her job well and she was so pleasant. What happened?”

“Knox Sheppard happened.” Jesse chuckles. “He taught her to stand up for herself and always has her back. I guarantee Knox is going to be at your office with a scowl on his face tomorrow.”

“Shit. He probably will be.” Derek sighs and drops his head back to look at the ceiling. “I’m going home to drown my sorrows in a bag of Doritos.”

“What flavor?” I peek up at him.

“Is she for real? Her only concern in all of this is what flavor of Doritos I’m going to eat?”

“I mean it’s a valid question.” Jesse shrugs, pulling me to a standing position. He wraps his arms around my waist and tugs me against him. “There are quite a few flavors.”

“Nacho cheese.”

“Oh.” I wrinkle my nose, sounding more than disappointed.

“Oh? What do you mean, oh? What’s wrong with nacho cheese? It’s a normal flavor.”

“Yeah, and it’s boring. That’s the kind you give to little kids because they can’t handle anything else. Jesse, what’s your favorite?” I glance up at my boyfriend.

“Cool ranch.” He wiggles his eyebrows.

“Oh, those are good! See, I picked a good boyfriend.”

“Alright, let’s go get my room ready so we can fix this lady’s hip. I want to go home and I’m taking you with me.” Jesse tugs on my hand, leading me towards the operating room and away from a scowling Derek.

I head into the core to grab my gown and gloves, Jesse following behind me. When I spin around to go to the room we’re going to do the hip fracture in, he pushes me up against the wall.

His hands are planted on either side of my head and he leans in close. Lips hover right above my ear, making my body hum with anticipation.

“I’ve been thinking about you all day. Every time I look at your lips, I think about kissing you and stripping your scrubs off of you.”

I drop my supplies on the table next to me and place both hands on his chest. His muscles flex beneath my fingers.

I’ve seen Jesse in scrubs, jeans and a t-shirt, and walking around shirtless. The only thing I haven’t seen yet is a suit or dress pants. I have no doubt he’ll be drool worthy in that too.

“Jesse, we can’t do this here,” I whisper, trying to pull myself out of my Jesse induced haze.

“Why?” He presses a soft kiss right below my ear. “Only Cali and Summer are here. Cali already knows and Summer won’t give a shit.”

“What if someone else comes in? Another doctor could show up or a resident. Aren’t you going to have a resident with you?”

“Nah, I told them I didn’t need help. I can do the case faster by myself anyway.”

He moves his hand from the wall and places it on my hip. His fingers toy with the hem of my scrub top and I know it won’t be long before they’ll be skimming over my stomach.

“Who’s going to close the incision for you?” I smirk, but it quickly disappears when Jesse’s mouth covers mine.

“Me. I’ll get to spend more time with my girl then,” he murmurs between kisses.

“Alright, alright, break it up.” Cali claps her hands. “If I weren’t already pregnant, I would’ve gotten pregnant just watching the two of you.” She shakes her head with a chuckle.

I duck my head, burying it in Jesse’s chest so no one can see my flaming red cheeks. I can’t believe she caught us. This is exactly why I want to keep our relationship a secret at work.

Pushing Jesse away from me, I gather my gown and gloves. I shoulder past him and into the operating room. I need to

focus on work while I'm at work. Jesse and our relationship are priorities outside of these walls.

"Faith," Jesse whispers, following after me.

"What?" I tug my gown out of the package and begin opening it sterilely.

"We've been together for a while. I don't plan on that changing for... well, I never plan on that changing." He grips the back of his neck. "I'm an adult. I don't want to hide the woman I love from everyone."

I freeze with my half-opened gloves hovering over the gown. My brows draw together and I suck in a deep breath. Did he just...

"What did you just say?"

Jesse closes the space between us. He helps me finish opening the gloves and tosses the wrapper in the trash. Taking both of my hands in his, he makes me face him.

"Faith Holloway, I love you and I don't want to hide that fact anymore."

"I love you too," I whisper.

"Can we stop hiding then?" He arches a brow, ducking his head enough so he's eye level with me.

"Yes."

"Good." He tugs me into his embrace and rests his chin on the top of my head. "Does that mean I can finally ask you to move in with me too?"

I expect myself to stiffen in his arms, but I don't. The idea of moving in with him doesn't sound nearly as terrifying as I would've thought, especially after everything Henry did to me.

“I signed a six-month lease. I have two more months in my apartment.”

“Perfect. We can move you over and you can see if I'm tolerable for the next two months.” Jesse flashes me a devilish smile and I know I can't turn this down.

Playlist

Playlist

Blake always told me when you meet the right woman you don't care about timelines or what other people think, you focus on how you feel and what's right for the two of you. I never really understood that, but right now I do.

Faith moved in over the weekend, but it hasn't felt new. She already spent so much time here and slept here most nights, that it's hard to notice a difference. But as I stand in my walk-in closet, I see it plain as day.

Her clothes hang on one side. Jeans, yoga pants, shirts, and sweatshirts fill the shelves and shoes line the floor. I smile at the sight; this is all I've ever wanted. I have the woman I love in my life and I couldn't be happier.

Carefully taking my dress shirt off the hanger, I slip my arms through the sleeves and slowly button it up. I leave the cuffs undone and step into a pair of dress pants. Once I've picked out my shoes, I grab a belt and watch to match. I carry all of them into the bedroom so I can finish getting ready.

Faith's looking around the room, searching for something, but I'm not sure what. Her brows pull together and she spins in

a circle.

“What are you looking for, babe?”

“My brush. I just had-” her words die on her tongue as her gaze sweeps over me. “Holy shit,” she whispers.

“What’s wrong?” I slide my belt through the loops and carefully fold my cuffs up to my elbows.

“Nothing’s wrong... but... damn, you’re all mine.”

“Yes, is this just hitting you?” I chuckle, securing my watch around my wrist.

“A little. I’ve never seen you dressed like that.” She motions to me.

“Like what? This is what I wear to the office when I’m not rushing around in the mornings. If I don’t have time, I grab scrubs.”

“Yeah, but you look like one of those sexy doctors you see on social media, but don’t believe actually exist in the wild. Because who really looks like that? Apparently, you.”

“You find me sexy?” I smirk, closing the distance between us.

“Incredibly... I think I need a picture of you for the background of my phone.” She smiles up at me.

“Only if you’ll be in it with me.”

I take her hand in mine and lead her into the library. The bookshelves will be a nice background. Positioning my phone

on the table, I set a timer and rush back to Faith's side. We take a few different photos.

One with her staring up at me with her hand on my chest and my arm around her waist. Another of us both facing the camera and smiling. Me standing behind Faith and my arms looped around her waist, her holding my forearms. And the last is us kissing and me dipping her backwards.

"I have to go before I'm late for my first patient. I'll message you the pictures."

Giving Faith a quick kiss or five, I head down the stairs and out the front door. I skipped breakfast, but I can eat one of the protein bars I keep in my office for mornings like this.

Turning my key in the ignition, I give the car a few seconds to warm up while I send Faith the pictures we just took. We look perfect together. A beautiful couple who are madly in love.

Smiling down at the screen, I make the picture of us kissing as my background and lock screen photo. I want to see us each time I glance at my phone and I'm going to start framing pictures and placing them around the house.

As soon as I get to work, I begin seeing patients. It's a busy day and almost all of my appointments are booked, except for two in the middle of the morning. They're back-to-back so I get almost an hour to relax in the office.

Opening the app to a new company I found, I begin uploading pictures to have printed in eight-by-eight tiles. You

can stick them to your wall and rearrange them as often as you'd like. It's a local place and I'm really excited about supporting a new company, but also being able to fill my home with pictures of us.

"Jesse, your next patient is here," my nurse raps her knuckles against my door.

"Thanks. I'll be there in two seconds," I mutter, confirming my order.

I push back from my desk and make my way down the hall to see my next patient. The sooner I can get through the rest of my appointments, the faster I can see my girl.



I glance in the kitchen and the living room, looking for Faith, but I don't see her. Her car is in my driveway so she should be here, unless she went on a run with Rocky.

Climbing the stairs two at a time, I head to my bedroom to change out of my work clothes. I quickly slip into a pair of gray sweats and a black tee. Laying back on my bed, I check the notifications on my social media accounts.

A slow smile spreads across my lips when I find dozens of notifications on each one. Faith posted the pictures we took

this morning and changed her status to 'In a relationship'. She's tagged me in all of them and I love it. This is her public declaration and I'm loving every second of it.

My phone flashes with a low battery and I lean to the side to grab my charger. Something on my nightstand catches my attention. I grab the fake little diary I made the first night Faith came over and smile.

She was so hesitant to make any sort of move with me, but now it feels like we've always been together.

I flip past the heart with both of our initials inside of it. I debate on writing her something new as I flip past my entries. But then I find something I didn't write, in a handwriting that isn't mine.

*Dear Diary (I went with the capital too *winking face*) and Sexy Author,*

It's ok to refer to a woman as a girl as long as it's your girl. I love when a man says 'My girl', it makes me feel more important to him.

When I walked into that bar, I planned on getting my sister drunk and helping her forget all about the asshole who broke her heart and turned her life upside down. I already had a guy do the same to me and I knew how awful it was.

I didn't want a boyfriend or even attention from a guy. I just wanted to help my sister heal the way she helped me.

I wanted to scream when I realized they left without me... actually, I think I did. But you know, loud bar, no one heard

me. It wasn't that I didn't want to be around you, my hesitation was because I knew you could easily break my heart and I didn't want to risk that. My heart was already fragile. I was barely able to piece it back together last time.

I regretted leaving without a goodbye the second I shut your door. But what was I supposed to do? It would've been embarrassing to knock on your door after I just walked out. You would've thought I was crazy.

Every option I came up with was embarrassing. I couldn't show up at your home again, I couldn't go back to the bar. I planned on you being the biggest regret of my life.

When I glanced up to hand the surgeon a towel, I thought... Well, I really don't know what I thought. I'm fairly certain thoughts and words ran from me. I was stunned and didn't know what to do.

Your anger helped in a weird way. I was able to convince myself the night in the bar was all a façade. You weren't that man and it was probably the alcohol making me think you were this amazing man, but it wasn't.

Your girl,

Faith

*Ps - I love the hair on your chest and the meticulous manscaping you do. *winking face**

I run my fingers over the page and wonder if she wrote this the first night she came over. Or did she write it sometime since then?

Flipping the page, I find another entry. My smile widens and I fall a little harder for my girl.

Dearest Diary,

*You should always spread your legs for me. I like to wine and dine, sometimes even sixty-nine. You know, if you were a man. Are you a male or female? Can diaries have a gender since they're objects? I mean, men give their cars female names... *tapping chin in thought**

I know the sexy author tried to make you feel bad by saying the undies had more class, but they didn't. All I had to do was stroke that knob and his drawer opened right up. It only took a few seconds for me to finish with the undies. It was one of those 'wow, that was fast' times. I was left rather unimpressed and dissatisfied.

Here's hoping that isn't the trend in this room. I liked to be impressed and satisfied.

You shouldn't be ashamed,

Faith

I chuckle and shake my head. This is why I love this woman. She's able to keep up with me and surprises me at every turn.

I flip the page, assuming I'm not going to find anything else, but I do. In fact, there's a few more entries. My brows pull together as I begin reading the next one.

Dear Diary,

He's the sweetest man I've ever met. I can't believe he bought Rocky a crate and puts so much thought and effort into everything he does. I wish I found Jesse years ago. He's the type of man you take home to your parents. The type you dream about a future with.

Don't get ahead of yourself, Diary. I'm not planning a wedding or anything like that, but whatever woman ends up with Jesse will be the luckiest woman in the world.

Faith

I smile down at the papers. I wonder when she wrote this. Hell, I wish I had known she was writing these all along. I would've been responding to them with my own notes.

Dear Diary,

*I wonder how long it will take him to realize I'm writing in you. That sounds a little dirty. But! You live next to the bed so I guess you know exactly how dirty we can get. *wink wink**

We haven't said those three little words yet, but I can see them lurking in his eyes when he watches me with a lopsided smile. I can feel them every time he goes out of his way to make my life easier. With every text message saying he misses me or he's thinking of me. He doesn't need to say the words because I feel them. And I feel the same way.

Life with Jesse is effortless and I love every second of it.

Faith

I scrub a hand down my face and stare at the pages. I wish I had known. I would've loved to read her entries as she wrote

them. To get a little glimpse at how she feels.

Dear Diary,

He told me he loves me today. It might've been the best day of my life. I don't think I've ever been so happy.

When he asked me to move in, I almost cried. Is it possible to get everything you ever hoped and dreamed of? Because I think it's happening to me.

I love him so much.

Faith

I bite into my bottom lip to keep from smiling. My cheeks are going to start hurting if I keep reading these. This is the best present she could ever give to me.

Dear Diary,

Sometimes you wonder if it's all a dream when life is going really good. You kinda wait for the other shoe to drop and something bad to happen, but things just keep getting better.

The pictures Jesse took of us... damn, they show a couple who's madly in love. The type of couple I used to be really jealous of. The one I dreamed of being a part of.

I don't even know how this happened, but we look like we're going to a wedding and love is swimming in the air. Instead, we were going to work. Thankfully, I was wearing a cute maxi dress and my hair was still wavy from when I curled it for our date last night.

When I saw those pictures, I knew I couldn't keep us a secret a moment longer. The entire world needs to be aware of us. After all, it would only take a single look and everyone will know we're in love.

I'm not scared of committing to Jesse. I know he's nothing like my ex and he'll never break my heart. He cherishes me too much to do that. I feel the same way. I love him too much to ever let him go.

I love you,

Faith

“Hey, I didn't know you were home already. I was in the library.”

I peek up to find Faith standing in the doorway. She glances from me to the papers in my hand and back again.

Lifting off the bed, I close the distance between us and plant my hands on her waist. I duck my head and cover her mouth with my own. I can't go another second without feeling her against me.

I tilt her head to the side and thrust my tongue into her mouth. She moans into me, her hands gliding over my chest and down my abdomen.

I don't bother wasting my time, I know how this is going to end, and I think we're both ready.

Gathering the bottom of her dress in my hands, I slowly lift the fabric over her head. I can't wait to have her naked on my

bed. I toss the clothing on the floor and take in the beautiful woman in front of me.

“You better have worn a bra and underwear to work today,” I growl, focused on the lack of anything under her dress.

“I did, I lost them when I got home. But now, I think you’re overdressed, Dr. Chipkin,” she murmurs, tugging my shirt off of me. She slips her thumbs in the waistband of my sweats and pushes them down, taking my boxers with it.

I move closer, gripping her hips and slowly running my palms around to her ass. I lift her into the air and smirk when she wraps her legs around my waist. I love how comfortable she is with me.

I don’t bother placing her on the bed, I want to pin her up against the wall. The cool plaster against her back makes her gasp, giving me the perfect opportunity to deepen our kiss.

“I love you,” I murmur, kissing over her jaw and down her neck. Her fingers thrust into my hair, her nails running over my scalp and driving me crazy.

“I love you too,” she moans.



“You’re pretty good at that.”

“Pretty good?” My eyebrows shoot to my hairline and I pull back to meet her gaze.

“Well, there’s always room for improvements.” Her lips turn up in the corners and I know she’s screwing with me.

“Really?”

“Practice makes perfect, you know. Maybe we should practice again after dinner.” This time a full-blown smile spreads across her lips.

“Ya know, you don’t need to insult me. You could just say you want my cock.” I laugh.

“Fine. Dr. Chipkin, I want your cock.” She lowers her voice to a seductive tone.

“You’re going to make me associate you saying Dr. Chipkin with sex and that’s going to make work really awkward.” I lay her out on the bed and kiss her softly.

“Maybe for you. No one can tell when I’m turned on.” She winks, patting me on the chest.

Playlist

Playlist

I officially told my landlord two days ago that I won't be needing my apartment after my lease is up. He didn't care at all. He told me if I wanted out of the contract early, we could do that. He has someone waiting for an available apartment.

I happily agreed to be out within twenty-four hours and Jesse helped me pack up everything I had left at my apartment.

It's weird to think I no longer have a place of my own, but I'm happy with Jesse. We're not rushing things, but I won't be surprised when he gets down on one knee either.

We've had a whirlwind romance, but I love every second of it.

I just finished lunch, but I had to run to the bank during my break. I only have about ten minutes before I have to be back in my room, but luckily the hospital has a bank on the first floor for employees only.

I bought something for Jesse and need to pick it up on my way home. I think he's going to love it and I can't wait to see

his face. I withdraw the cash I need for his gift and rush through the hall, back to the operating room.

“Faith?” Someone calls my name as I move through the waiting room for the operating room. I glance up and my entire world slows as I freeze mid step.

“What are you doing here?” I stare at Henry with wide eyes.

“I wanted to see you.” He takes a few steps towards me.

“How’d you know where to look for me?” Taking a step back, I glance around the room, wishing Jesse was here with me.

I’m not scared of Henry, but I don’t want to waste my time on him. I’m not interested in anything he has to say.

“You were tagged in a picture on social media. Some co-worker got married, I guess. I don’t know. They just thanked their work friends for the shower and tagged the hospital in the post. I figured I could take a few days off from work to come visit you.” He takes another step, backing me against the wall. “I was thinking of applying for a job here.” He grips the back of his neck and watches me.

“Why? Why would you move here?” My brows form a deep crevice between them.

“So, we can get back together. I’ve missed you, Faith.” He grips my forearm gently.

“No! I’m not getting back together with you. I want nothing to do with you. I’m happy. I have a new boyfriend and I’m happier than ever before. I don’t want you back.”

I glance around again, trying to figure out how I can get away from him without causing a scene.

A loud beeping fills the air. It sounds an awful lot like one of the pagers the doctors carry. I follow the sound and my gaze lands on Derek and Kelsey. They're both staring at me with wide eyes.

I have no idea what they think they're witnessing, but they're wrong. So terribly wrong.

I put my hands on Henry's chest, intending to push him away from me. He holds onto my wrists and darts forward to kiss me. He moves so quickly I'm not able to get away from him in time.

His lips land on mine and my stomach rolls in disgust. I don't want him here and I don't want him touching me, definitely not kissing me.

I try to shove him again, but he's too big to move. I lift my knee, ramming it into his balls and take a deep breath as he crumbles to the ground. I look for Kelsey and Derek, but they're nowhere in sight.

"Shit!" I whisper, panic filling me.

They're Jesse's best friends. There's no way they'd keep this from him. I wouldn't be surprised if they're already in his room, waiting for him to break scrub so they can talk to him in the hallway.

"Fuck," Henry groans from the floor. He's rolling around, cupping his balls. I kneed him hard.

“What am I going to do?” I murmur to myself, glaring down at the piece of shit in front of me.

I squat down next to him and get right in his face. I’m going to make sure he understands me.

“I want to make this very clear. I want nothing to do with you. You cheated on me with my best friend. I moved to a different state just to get away from you. If you ever come near me or try to touch me again, I’m going to file a restraining order and make sure the hospital in New York knows exactly what type of nurse they’re employing. One who probably wouldn’t be able to pass a drug test now that you’ve been hanging out with Susan. We all know how much she loved to snort things on the weekends. And they should probably watch out on Mondays. You really like to come in with a hangover.”

“You wouldn’t dare,” he moans from the ground.

“Fucking try me, Henry. Don’t look for me again.” I stand to my full height, ready to go find Jesse.

“Do you really think you’re good enough for him? Because you’re not. He’s a successful surgeon. One of the top in his field. He could do so much better than you. He could have someone prettier and smarter, someone more successful. He’s going to toss you to the side and break your heart when he’s done using you,” he seethes.

“He could do better, but he seems to be more than happy with me. And one day, if he decides he’s done with me, I’ll be ok. I already survived one man tossing me to the side, I’m

strong enough to do it again.” I stare at him as his anger dissolves into shock. He expected me to give in, but I’m done with that. “Goodbye, Henry. I hope you have a miserable life.”

Playlist

Playlist

I'm just breaking scrub and rinsing my hands at the sink when Derek and Kelsey rush through the main doors to the operating room. They freeze when they spot me and glance at each other.

“What’s going on?” I narrow my eyes on them.

“Nothing!” They both say a little too quickly. They’re not good at hiding anything from me. Especially if they haven’t had time to carefully construct their story.

“Yeah, I don’t believe that. Let’s go.” I point down the hall to the call room.

There’s a bed and a table in here. It’s not used very often, but it’s available for surgeons to sleep in when they’re on-call.

They both hesitate outside of the door and peek at each other. I roll my eyes, more than done with them already.

“I don’t have time for this shit, get in the damn room and tell me what you’re hiding.” I reach past them and twist the knob, pushing the door open. I shove Derek forward and gently push Kelsey. She’ll hit me if I’m rough with her and then Mason will beat the shit out of me.

Closing the door, I rest my back against it. They're not getting out of this room until they tell me what's going on.

"Who wants to tell me what happened?" I fold my arms over my chest and stare at them.

They point to each other and pinch their lips shut. I sigh and wait. This has to be pretty bad if neither one of them wants to spill the news to me. Normally they'd be pushing each other out of the way to gossip. Shit.

"What's going on?" I whisper.

"We... uh... we saw Faith in the waiting room." Derek grips the back of his neck, refusing to meet my gaze.

"Ok? She's allowed to be out there." I furrow my brows, waiting for them to spill the bad part.

"She wasn't alone," Kelsey mumbles under her breath. It's so quiet I almost don't hear her.

"Did you just say she wasn't alone?" I tilt my head to the side, trying to figure out what she's trying to tell me without actually telling me.

"Yes. She wasn't alone." Kelsey meets my gaze and so much sadness and sorrow is staring back at me. My stomach sinks and I know whatever they say next is going to be tough to hear.

Derek scrubs a hand down his face and growls in frustration.

“She was kissing some guy, ok? I don’t know who he was, but some guy had her up against a wall and he kissed her.” Derek throws his hands in the air and lets them drop to his sides.

I stand still and let his words wash over me. I don’t want to jump to conclusions, but I don’t understand what’s going on.

“Did she kiss him back?” I ask slowly.

“She put her hands on his chest and they kissed. I don’t know who initiated the kiss or if it was mutual, but they freaking kissed, Jesse!” Anger washes over Kelsey. It’s sweet how she’s getting angry on my behalf, but I don’t need her to.

“Does she know the two of you saw her?” I raise a brow.

“I think so?” Kelsey winces and Derek nods.

“Ok. Thank you for telling me.” I fight to keep my voice calm and emotionless. I swallow hard and push my emotions deep down inside of me.

I still have two more surgeries to perform. Two more patients who are counting on me to do a good job. I can’t think about this right now. I can process everything later on.

“How the hell are you so calm?” Derek hisses. “I’m pissed off and she didn’t cheat on me!”

“Yeah... I expected a lot more... Well, any reaction really. I expected *something* out of you.” Kelsey watches me carefully.

“Getting pissed off and punching a hole in the wall isn’t going to help the two patients I have waiting to get their joints

replaced by me. They don't deserve to get shitty treatment or their cases canceled because I can't keep my personal life together." I turn towards the door, knowing the next two hours are going to be the most difficult hours of my life. "I'm performing the surgeries, then I'm going home. I'll figure things out then and let you know what I decide to do."

I leave Derek and Kelsey in the call room, more than happy to get away from them. I don't want to be here, but I need to do my job.

I quickly scrub into my next case, wanting to get into the room before Faith can find me. I'm not discussing any of this at work with her. All along she's been adamant about keeping things professional and now I'm going to do the same.

The case goes quickly. My movements are robotic at best, but I try my hardest to push my emotions down and focus on the patient lying on the table. They deserve my best.

When I break scrub, I go to the post-op area to quickly write out their medication orders and any instructions I have for the nurses. I write my surgical notes up and call the family to let them know how the surgery went. Then, I scrub for my last case of the day.

Pushing through the doors to room two, I keep my attention on anything except Faith.

"This is Mr. Harper. He's here for a right knee replacement. He has no known drug allergies. He had what antibiotics?" I glance at my nurse, Kelly.

“Ancef at one-thirty and Vanco at two-fifteen. We have your normal local on the field. The patient is an ASA...” Kelly trails off, waiting for anesthesia to respond.

“ASA two.” Summer peeks her head above the drapes.

“Is everyone in agreement?” Kelly asks and everyone nods their head.

Faith’s eyes are on me during the entire time-out. I can feel her begging me to acknowledge her, but I can’t. If I talk to her as more than my scrub, I’m going to break down and won’t be able to do this procedure.

She slips the hood over my head and holds out the gown for me. I push my arms into the sleeves and tug the cuffs up until just my fingertips are showing. Faith stretches the glove open and waits for me to thrust my hand into them. I get two pairs of gloves because of the high chances of getting a hole in one of them.

“Jesse,” she whispers so only I can hear her.

I ignore her and hold the card out for her to take so I can spin and close the back of my gown. Thirty minutes. I have thirty minutes until I can go home.

“Jesse, look at me.” She grabs my forearm and squeezes gently.

“I’m not doing this right now, Faith. We can talk later.”

“It’s not what you think.”

“Faith! I said later,” I snap, gaining everyone’s attention in the room.

I squeeze my eyes shut and let out a long breath. I need to calm down and get through this. Thirty minutes. You can do almost anything for thirty minutes.

After putting on my vest, I approach the field and am thrilled to find Carmen has everything done and I just have to make the incision. Even less time I need to be here.



Ripping my gown off my body, I push the hood over my head and drop all of it into the trash can. A weight has been pushing harder and harder on my chest as the clock ticks by.

I don’t know how I feel right now. I don’t want to believe Faith would kiss someone else, especially after her boyfriend cheated on her, but you never know.

I sign my name at the bottom of all of the documents and gather my watch and phone. I glance over my shoulder right before I exit the room, finding Faith staring at me with tears in her eyes.

I can’t do it. I refuse to have this conversation at work. She can wait an hour and talk to me at home. I think it’s better if I

work off some of the stress and anxiety first anyway.

I'm half way home when I decide I'm going to the gym I have a membership to, yet rarely use. I'll run for thirty minutes, then lift weights until the thought of moving a single muscle in my body is too much.

My feet pound against the treadmill as I increase the speed and the incline. Sweat pours down my face, but I ignore all of it. If I push my body hard enough, I'll be too physically tired tonight to focus on the emotions surging through my body.

My phone vibrates in the cup holder on the machine. Faith's name flashes across the screen, but I can't talk right now. My breathing is too labored, my pulse beats too loudly in my ears.

I finish four miles in a little under thirty minutes and slow the machine to a walk. My chest heaves and my lungs burn, but I need this.

As my pulse drops, I move over to the weight sections and go from one piece of equipment to the next. I go until my muscles fail and then I work out a different group of muscles. My body is going to pay for this tomorrow, but it's helping me push all thoughts of Faith and another man out of my mind.

I hang my head and try to catch my breath. I don't know how much longer I can do this.

My phone vibrates in my pocket. I tug it out, expecting to see Faith's name and a picture of us, but it's Kennedy. A picture of us at her wedding stares back at me.

“Hey, Kenny, what’s going on?” I ask on autopilot, my voice completely void of emotion.

“Hey, I have a massive favor to ask of you.” She sounds slightly frantic on the other side of the line.

“What’s wrong?”

“Patrick called out. Apparently, Zander backed into a pole at the grocery store and in true Zander fashion is freaking out. He tried to blame a little old lady and somehow the cops got called.” I can hear her eyeroll. “Anyway, I planned to go work tonight, but I had to pick up Wyatt from school because he threw up and Blake called me twenty minutes ago to tell me he feels sick to his stomach. He’s not going to be able to take care of all four kids by himself.”

“Are you asking me to play bartender or nurse?” I chuckle softly.

“I’ll take whichever one you’ll give me!”

“I’ll be the bartender. I’m not sure I can handle a sick Blake and you know you’ll worry about the kids the entire time. When do you need me there?” I glance at my watch, it’s already after five.

“As soon as possible,” she sighs.

“Ok. I’m at the gym, let me shower, then I’ll be there.”

“Thank you, Jesse! You’re the best brother ever. I owe you big time.”

“Nah, I’m always happy to help.”

And thrilled for the distraction.

I quickly shower, glad I always keep spare clothes in my car, and rush over to the pub. As I pull into the parking lot, guilt washes over me.

I told Faith we'd talk after work, and now I'm not going to be home until well after she's asleep. I scrub a hand down my face and let out a long sigh. I can't accept the thought of her cheating. I don't believe it.

Pulling up the text thread between us, I type out a simple text and hit send before I can change my mind. Then I climb out of my car and get into bartender mode.

Jesse: I won't be home until late. We'll talk tomorrow.

I turn off my phone and tuck it into my pocket. I don't want to hear from anyone right now.

Playlist

Playlist

I stare down at his text as a fresh wave of tears rushes over me. I can't believe this is happening. Why did Henry have to show up?

I was so happy. So, in love. Life seemed absolutely perfect. Then BAM! Henry struts back into my life and shakes everything up.

It's what he does. What he's always done. He doesn't know how to keep his nose, or in this case his lips, out of other people's business.

I'm sure he saw the pictures of Jesse and I. He saw how happy we were and decided he didn't like that. He doesn't want me being happier than him because he destroyed everything between us.

My phone rings on the bed next to me. My heart hammers against my ribs as I glance down at it. Not Jesse.

"Hey, Lindsey. What's up?" My voice is soft and broken, but I don't care enough to hide my emotions. Not from Lindsey.

“Whoa! What’s wrong with you? What happened? Do I need to break any noses?”

“Henry showed up at work today. He caged me against a wall and kissed me. Two of Jesse’s best friends saw the kiss, but nothing from before or after. And now Jesse’s avoiding me. He texted me and said he won’t be home until late. I don’t know what to do, Linds,” I whisper as the first tear slips down my cheek.

“Well, the answer to my question was yes. Yes, I do need to break some noses. Send me Henry’s address.”

“You’re not going to my ex-boyfriend’s apartment to break his nose.” I laugh through the tears. Lindsey always has this effect on me. She’s crazy, but I love it.

“Fine! Then text me when Jesse comes home and I’ll break his nose.”

“He didn’t do anything wrong, Linds. He’s hurt and I can’t expect him to be ok with what happened. I wouldn’t be if the roles were reversed.”

“Did you stop the kiss?”

“Yes, but I had to knee him in the balls to do so. He wouldn’t let me go.”

“Then he should understand once you explain what happened.”

“But I can’t explain when I don’t know where he is!” I fall back on the bed with a loud groan of frustration.

“He’s at Kennedy’s Pub.”

“What? How do you know?” I shoot up into a sitting position. The movement is so fast I get a little light headed.

“Because Jesse doesn’t go anywhere else that would be open late. Kennedy probably needed help and he jumped at the chance to help. You said he was avoiding you, it’s the perfect solution. If he’s working as a bartender, he can’t come home and he won’t have time to think about his cheating girlfriend.”

“I didn’t cheat!”

“Yeah, but he doesn’t know that! In his head, you cheated.” She’s quiet for a moment, letting her words sink into my thick skull. “What are you going to do about it?”

“I’m going to the pub,” I whisper.

“Great! I’ll be there to pick you up in ten.”

“You’re coming?”

“Yup! Mom picked up Jackson an hour ago for a sleepover. She’s bored.” I can hear the eyeroll in her voice. “And depending on how this conversation with Jesse goes, the state of Pennsylvania might thank me if you’re not behind the wheel.”



I wring my hands together as I stare at the pub. I don't want to go in there. I wanted to have this conversation without an entire bar to witness it.

If he's going to break up with me, I don't need dozens of people watching me crumble. Everyone would be horrified to witness a girl sitting at the bar ugly cry as the bartender tries to get her to leave. That type of shit ends up on Youtube or Tiktok and I don't need that right now.

“Get out of my car,” Lindsey groans, banging her head against my steering wheel. “I didn't drag you out of the house so we could sit here and stare at the building all night.”

“I thought you came here to support me.” I glare at her, but it's too dark for her to see. Not that Lindsey would really care anyway.

“I did, but I also came for those delicious drinks your boy can make. And if I'm lucky, maybe I'll find someone to entertain me for the night... I think I'm finally ready to meet someone new.”

“Seriously?” I blink at her in surprise.

“Yeah, I need to get my metaphorical dick wet.” She shrugs.

“But it hasn’t been that long since your divorce. Are you sure that’s a good idea?”

“Faith, it’s been almost six months since it was finalized. We split up long before that and we were practically strangers for even longer. I’m good, I promise.”

I suck in a deep breath and blow it out slowly. Sitting here and staring at the building isn’t going to help. Hell, he might not even be here. He could’ve gone to his sister’s house or Kelsey’s. Cali’s, Derek’s, or Scott’s. I know he has a ton of other friends, so he could be anywhere.

I really hope he’s here.

I push open the door to the pub and stare at the people behind the bar, looking for my man.

Playlist

Playlist

I hold my breath and glance up each time the door opens. I keep expecting to see her standing there, just like she was that first night.

I haven't worked here since then and it's odd to be behind the bar again.

Smiling at the woman on the other side of the bar, I grab a glass and begin mixing her drink. I hate when people ask for beers, I just pop the top and hand them over. Mixed drinks, I get to actually do something with them.

"The doctor's in the house!" Nolan cups his hands around his mouth and yells. I laugh, knowing he always makes things interesting.

Nolan's wife, Demi, worked here for years and they're pretty close to Kennedy and Blake. I know Demi well from all the times we worked together.

"Where's your better half?" I smirk at him.

"Um, you're looking at the better half. The hot mess half is in the bathroom. I swear she pees every five minutes."

“You know...” I lean in like I’m going to tell him a secret and he follows suit. “If you stopped knocking her up, she wouldn’t need to pee so much.”

“Ha! She might be a hot mess most of the time, but she’s a dream come true in bed. I’m not sure I could keep my hands off her if you paid me too.”

Demi settles onto the stool next to Nolan and slaps a hand across his stomach. He winces and lets out a long groan.

“What the hell was that for, Dems?” He wraps his arms around himself.

“You called me a mess.”

“I also called you hot. *And* I said you were a dream come true in bed.” Nolan arches a brow and points a finger in her direction.

“That’s true. He gave you mostly compliments.” I smirk, filling a glass with ginger ale and adding a splash of grenadine. Demi loves Shirley Temples when she’s pregnant.

“Thanks, Jess.”

I glance up to see if anyone else needs help and my gaze lands on Faith. She’s sitting at the end of the bar, a few stools away from Demi and Nolan, with her eyes locked on me.

Her face is splotchy and her eyes are rimmed with red. Her hair is tied into the messiest bun on the top of her head and I’m fairly certain she’s wearing one of my sweatshirts and pants.

My heart falls to my stomach as guilt sweeps over me. She's been at home crying and I'm here laughing with friends.

"Faith, what are you doing here?" I lower my elbows onto the bar and lean closer to her.

"I didn't know where you were. I texted and called a bunch, but you didn't answer. I was worried about you," she whispers.

"I told you I'd be home late. There was no reason for you to worry."

"Yeah, but you were angry at work and I couldn't stand the thought of you going to bed angry at me."

"I don't know what I am right now. Definitely hurt and confused, but I don't know if I'm angry yet."

"Well, while you figure that out, how about you make me some of those yummy drinks." Lindsey leans in and claps her hands.

"Hey, Linds." I smirk, grabbing three glasses and lining them up on the bar. She'll be easier to deal with if she's tipsy.

"What up, Lover Boy?" She drops her chin into her hands and flashes me a cheeky grin.

"You know, every time I think about a future with Faith, I realize you'd be my sister-in-law. I'm not sure if I find that entertaining or terrifying." I chuckle.

"I'm an acquired taste." She shrugs, slipping the straw of her first drink between her lips.

Faith drops her gaze to the bar and I know she's crying. There's no other reason she'd be looking away from me. Not when she came here to talk to me.

"Hey, Demi?" I slide over in front of her. "I know you don't work here anymore, but I'll give you a hundred bucks if you play bartender for fifteen minutes. I need to talk to my girl." I point a thumb in Faith's direction.

"Keep your money, Romeo. I've missed being behind this bar." She hurries around to my side with a big smile on her face. "Leave so I can have some fun." She shoves me out of her way.

I don't resist it. I quickly round the bar and spin Faith around to face me. I hold out my hand and as soon as her palm is in mine, I tug her towards Kennedy's office.

I close the door behind us and drop into a chair, tugging her onto my lap. Brushing a few tendrils of hair out of her face, I gaze into the beautiful light brown eyes I love.

They're brighter because of the tears welling in them and she's breaking my heart.

"Talk to me, baby. Tell me what happened because I find it hard to believe you'd cheat on me."

"I didn't. I'd never cheat on you." She can barely speak with how hard she's crying.

Placing a hand on the back of her head, I guide her to my chest. She needs to stop crying before we can talk. I gently run

my fingers up and down her back, trying to soothe her. I hate seeing my girl so upset.

It takes her a few minutes to calm down enough to talk again. This time I ask some questions, hoping if she's not trying to figure out what to say, maybe she won't cry as hard.

"Who was he?"

"Henry. My ex."

"Did you know he was coming?"

"What? No! I told him to leave as soon as I saw him. He didn't listen, he never does. Instead, he backed me into a wall and caged me there. I tried to push him away and put my hands on his chest. That's when Kelsey and Derek saw me. Henry took the moment I was distracted to kiss me. I tried to stop it, but he was too strong. I had to knee him in the balls to get him off of me. I'm so sorry, Jesse."

She buries her face in my neck and I hold her a little tighter. None of this is her fault. I'm not going to be mad at her because her ex is an asshole. If anything, I wish I had been there to stop it all.

"Baby, you have nothing to be sorry for," I whisper, pressing a soft kiss to her head.

"You're not mad at me?" She blinks up at me.

"No. It's not your fault he showed up and decided to manhandle you."

“I thought you weren’t going to speak to me. You were so angry at work,” she murmurs, dropping her head back down to my shoulder.

“I was angry. I didn’t know what was going on and I had just found out what Kelsey and Derek saw. I was fighting with myself to focus on my patients and nothing else. They deserve my full attention on them and their surgery. I couldn’t do that if we were arguing. Plus, I didn’t want to do that at work. We agreed to keep it professional at work.”

“But you didn’t come home.”

“No. I went to the gym to try to work off some steam. I didn’t want to lose my temper with you. I’m fairly certain I won’t be able to move for the next few days though. I went a little too hard.” I rub my sore chest. “Kennedy called me. Her family’s sick and one of her bartenders had to make sure his husband didn’t get arrested. If you knew Zander, you’d understand.” I wave my hand in the air like that explains it all.

“So, you weren’t avoiding me?” She peeks up at me.

“I was a little. I didn’t believe you’d cheat on me, but I was terrified of hearing the real story.”

“Why?” Her brows furrow, forming a deep V.

“Because if you told me it was all real... I’m not sure I’d survive it. I didn’t want to lose you and I wasn’t sure what was going to happen. Bartending seemed like an easy way out and a nice distraction. Except it wasn’t because this place reminds me of you and our first night together.”

“I’m sorry it even happened. If I had known he was going to kiss me, I never would’ve stopped when he called my name.”

“It’s ok, baby,” I murmur, kissing her temple. “I told you, I’m not mad.”

“So, we’re going to be ok?”

“More than ok. We’re perfect.”

Playlist

Playlist

I never got to pick up Jesse's gift on the way home from work because of everything that happened with Henry and Jesse. I was too worried about getting home to explain everything to him and didn't want to wait a second longer.

He didn't get home from the bar until after two o'clock in the morning. I knew he was going to sleep in and I'm more than happy to let him.

I just got home from picking up his present. I tiptoe down the hallway and pray he's still asleep. I really want to surprise him, but it will be harder if he's awake.

Pushing open the bedroom door, I want to do a little happy dance when I see he's still sound asleep. I stand next to the bed and gently place his present on the bed. It slowly moves towards him, sniffing as it goes.

"Hey, baby," Jesse murmurs sleepily. He reaches out a hand to touch what he thinks is me and pauses. He pats the body several times before his eyes fly open. "Who are you?" He chuckles, rubbing a hand down the puppy's soft fur.

“This is your puppy and Rocky’s new friend.” I smile down at him.

“You bought me a dog?” Surprise fills his tone as he scoots up in bed until his back is resting against the headboard.

“Yeah. I was supposed to pick her up yesterday on my way home from work, but things got complicated.” I wrinkle my nose at him.

“What’s her name?” He runs his hand over her golden hair and floppy ears.

“Whatever you want to name her. She’s all yours, babe.”

He’s quiet for a few minutes. Picking up the puppy, he sets her on his lap and cradles her face in his hands.

“I think we should name you Lucky. I’m the luckiest man in the world to have such a loving girlfriend and an amazing life. I don’t think any other name will do.”

“Lucky it is.” I smile down at him. “Do you want to introduce her to Rocky?”

“You haven’t done it yet?” He’s getting out of bed before he’s finished asking his question.

Cradling Lucky in his arm, he uses the other to tug a pair of sweatpants up his body.

“Nah, I figured I’d wait and let you be involved too.”

“You’re the best.” He kisses my nose before taking my hand in his and leading me to the spare bedroom.

I quickly unlock Rocky's crate and gather him in my arms. He immediately tries to wiggle free and get to Lucky.

"Someone's excited to get Lucky." Jesse winks, making me laugh at his corny joke.

As soon as we're outside, I place Rocky on the ground and tell him to sit. Of course, he doesn't. He jumps at Jesse, trying to sniff his new friend.

"Hey, buddy. Give me a second. You're going to scare your new friend if you keep acting so feisty. You gotta be cool, bro. Make her think you don't really want her, then BAM! You put on the moves and she'll be naked in your crate in no time."

"Jesse!" I laugh even harder.

"What? It'll work." He squats down to the ground, but keeps Lucky in his arms. "You can sniff her, dude. Nothing more."

Lucky curls into Jesse's chest and tries her hardest to get away from Rocky's curious nose. She scurries higher and higher on him until she jumps over his shoulder and runs around the yard sniffing one thing after another.

When Rocky comes too close, she jumps at him with both front paws in the air and playfully bites his ear. He allows it, carefully pushing her to the soft grass.

They wrestle for a while, being more than gentle with each other.

"Thank you, baby. This is the best gift ever. You didn't need to get me anything though." Jesse wraps his arm around my

waist and pulls me into his side.

“I know I didn’t, but I wanted to. I love you and I want to see you happy.”

“I’m more than happy. I don’t think anything could make me happier than I am with you.”

“Oh, that’s some smooth talking, Dr. Chipkin.” I giggle when he lets out a groan.

“I thought we had a talk about you calling me Dr. Chipkin.”

“We did, clearly I didn’t listen well.”

“No, you didn’t.” He smirks, leaning down to kiss me.

And just like that, I get lost in the man I wasn’t looking for. The one I thought would be my life long regret when I walked out of this house a few months ago. I never imagined ending up here and finding my happily ever after along the way.

Playlist

Thank you so much for reading All In With Dr. Chipkin. I'd love it if you could write me a review or share my books with your friends<3 Jesse's been begging for a book since Cole and Sammie's book (Blurred). He's constantly in the back of my head and I was so excited to finally get his story out. Of course his story brought a whole new slew of characters who also need books! This is why I can't write a standalone!

~Kristin

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Custom Piece

Virgin Ink

Cover Up

Leg Piece



University Hospital

All-in with Dr. Chipkin

Dr. Devine is Mine

I'm Not Sharing Dr. McLaren

My Fate is with Dr. Gates



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If I Cave

If I Fall



Operation Riot

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