

BENEATH *the* BLINDFOLD

A BLINDFOLD CLUB NOVELLA COLLECTION



USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
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FOREWORD

In 2014, I began writing a side project. It was a guilty pleasure, one where I would put all the scenes that were too sexy for the romantic suspense series I was working on at the time.

The side project was only supposed to be a novella, and I didn't intend for it to see the light of day.

But it grew to 90,000 words, and my brain began to fill with series ideas. They were loud, and exciting, and offered me a chance to explore my sexuality in a way that felt safe.

In January of 2015, I published THREE SIMPLE RULES, which changed the course of my life. The Blindfold Club will always be incredibly special to me, not only because it allowed me to quit my job and write full time, but it gave me the courage to push my writing in new directions.

The following is a collection of additional stories from the series. Some were previously published and a few haven't been available for a while. One is brand new, which allowed me to

*return to characters I hadn't written in five years, and it was
so great getting to see old friends.*

I hope you enjoy this collection.

Mikki
SLOANE

ONE MORE RULE

This novella is book 2.5 in the Blindfold Club series and is

best read after [THREE HARD LESSONS](#).

O N E

PAYTON

Dominic's arm wrapped around my waist, steadying me as the train rocketed around a corner. He clung with one hand to the gray strap overhead, while I used my knees to keep our bags from tumbling over. His luggage slammed painfully into my thigh. The anxiety-inducing thirteen-hour flight from Tokyo had gotten to me.

"I hate riding the El," I said, "when I own an expensive and fucking beautiful car."

Dominic gave a tight smile. "Which is downtown and doesn't have room for your luggage."

"Sure it does. There just wouldn't be room for you."

His fingers flicked me playfully just inside of my hipbone, where the tattoo rested beneath my jeans. He did it whenever I made a joke about our relationship, his wordless reminder of how much I really loved him.

"You better watch it."

"Or what?" I had my hand on his chest and drummed my fingers, challenging his seduction right back.

His embrace tightened further, and his mouth was right by my ear. "Didn't you tell me once you wanted to reenact the scene from *Risky Business*?"

My face warmed with a smile. I'd suggested that almost a year ago on a Japanese train, but it felt like a lifetime now.

Dominic had turned down my offer, worried he'd lose his riding privileges, and I'd learned during my year in Tokyo just how important those were.

Now we were on an elevated train barreling for downtown Chicago, just like the movie.

Well, not exactly. It was midafternoon, and the car was packed, standing room only. I glanced at the bored faces of the travelers around us and shrugged. "I'm game if you are."

"Fuck, Payton, you'd love that, wouldn't you?" His infectious laugh sounded so good, I'd never grow tired of listening to it.

The city we would call home again in three months loomed in the distance. Chicago. Dark, dirty, loud, and everything I wanted. I'd missed the gorgeous skyline, and from Dominic's expression, I could tell he had too.

Once we hit the loop, we got off, lugged our bags down the steps, and headed out onto the sidewalk.

"It feels like we've been gone for years," I said, glancing down the street.

It had been February when Dominic had flown across the world, determined for us to be together, no matter what. Going back to Japan with him was a choice I'd made even before he proposed. Now it was September, and our best friends were getting married.

"Which way is the lake?" I said, exhausted and disoriented. "Did they move it while we were gone?"

"I don't think so." Dominic motioned toward the left.

“Are you guessing, or do you know?” I was giving him attitude when I didn’t mean to be. “Fuck, I’m tired.”

His expression was amused. “It’s four blocks this way, devil woman. I looked it up while we were at baggage claim waiting for the suitcases.”

All of our time together, and I still wasn’t accustomed to his planning. I liked flying by the seat of my pants, making split decisions. Dominic enjoyed thinking ahead.

My suitcase wheels rattled over a grate as I followed beside him. “You love this.”

“Having a clue? Yeah.”

We hit the lobby of the Opulent Hotel right at three, so we could check in, and I sighed against him during the elevator ride up to our room. “What’s the plan again?”

“We’ll take a nap to get over some of the jet lag, then meet Evie and Logan for dinner.”

“Evelyn,” I corrected. It was an inside joke now. He had every right to call her by the nickname, but I loved to tease. The lit floor numbers ticked by as we climbed, bringing us closer and closer to sleep. I could hardly keep my eyes open. “Where are we meeting them?”

“Benihana.”

The Japanese restaurant? I’d sell my Jaguar F-Type just for some American food. “Fuck off, we are not.”

Dominic’s smirk at his joke almost melted my panties. “You’re so sexy when you’re pissed.”

The elevator doors peeled open, and we trekked along the

carpet until he had the room door open for me. No need to bother with the lights. Luggage was left by the closet as I went to the curtains and dragged them closed. I tugged off my shirt and tossed it on the chair in the corner, then stripped out of my jeans.

I locked eyes with my fiancé across the room as he began to shed his clothes. A triumphant smile quirked on his lips.

“What?” Was I acting strange? He was looking at me like I was hilarious, when all I was doing was getting ready for was a coma.

“Nothing.” His rough voice cut through the darkened room. “Just thinking about the last time we were in a hotel, trying to get some sleep during the day.”

I was pulling the cover off and froze mid-action.

“You fought me about getting into bed together,” he added. His pants fell off his hips, leaving him in only his boxers, and he came to me, brushing my hair off my shoulder.

“Yeah,” I said in a hushed voice. “Last time, I wanted to fuck you, not sleep with you.”

His lips skimmed over the curve of my neck, drawing a shudder from my body. “Not true now?”

He loved holding that over me, just one of the many battles he’d won. I couldn’t sleep *without* him now. And yes, I was tired. Two seconds ago my answer would have been I’d rather sleep than screw. But Dominic’s touch lit me up and made me burn. “I always want you, Dominic, even after we’ve been up for nineteen hours.”

His lips sealed over mine, and hands tangled in the straps

of my bra, tugging them down. The smooth skin of his chest pressed against mine as his arms encased me. Kissing him was insane. When his tongue filled my mouth, I moved mine against it, moaning into the kiss.

“Well,” he said, ending it abruptly, “calm down. I need to sleep.”

A fucking bluff. My gaze dropped to his boxers, which were tented. I shrugged and faked indifference. “You don’t need to be awake for this. I can get what I need.”

A startled cry tore from my throat as he tossed me sideways onto the bed, bent over me, and pressed the length of his cock against my center. Only our underwear held us back.

“Is this what you need?” The gravel of his voice was more pronounced when he whispered.

I clawed at him, my nails digging in. “Yes.”

Dominic slid down my body, his hot mouth coursing a line over my belly. “So, my tongue couldn’t get the job done?” He worked lower and lower, tugging the crotch of my panties to the side.

“It can get the job started,” I whispered. Cool air wafted over my exposed flesh, but only intensified the ache for him.

He hovered, teasing kisses and touches on the inside of my thighs. *Fuck*, I needed his mouth on me. This last week, he’d had to work late every night. A drawer full of vibrators didn’t compare to my man. I pushed a hand into his soft, fawn-colored hair, urging him to taste me with his wicked tongue.

“What do you want?” he whispered against my skin.

“Fuck me with your mouth.”

Bliss rolled up my legs as Dominic’s tongue licked over my clit. I had one hand in his hair and the other on the sheet beneath me, and both clenched into fists. My lungs squeezed as a finger plunged inside, taking my pleasure up another level.

He knew exactly how I liked it, but didn’t give it to me. His slowly thrusting finger was just a little too gentle, his tongue too hesitant. Teasing. Holding me exactly where he wanted me, right at the edge.

I grew lightheaded and scored my nails over his scalp, desperate for more. He could hear my whimper, begging him without words, but he ignored it. He wanted me to come at his pace, and Dominic was used to getting his way.

I endured his deliberate mouth for a lifetime.

Once my legs began to shake, he kicked into a new gear, flooring my accelerator. His urgent sucking, licking, biting ... Two fingers speared into me, filling and stretching in an ache that burned so good. I was about to come, just as he wanted.

“God, please,” I moaned, shivering as the waves of the orgasm built.

“*Zutto issho ni itai,*” he said in Japanese. “*I want to be with you forever.*”

I cried out, a strangled sound that died as I burst open. My quivering thighs locked around his head. Oh God, it was good. He was so perfect, from his stunning blue eyes to his desire to give me exactly what I needed. Liquid heat flamed through me, leaving warmth behind.

My legs went boneless as panties were yanked down. Dominic stood, and before I could catch my breath, his hands scooped beneath my knees and pulled me to the edge of the bed, sliding me across the sheets. I clutched at his hips when his thick cock sank into me.

“Yes,” I breathed. “I love you.”

My left hand walked up his chest, and my engagement ring glinted in the sunlight the hotel curtains couldn't block. I rose up on an elbow, and my grip curled around the back of his neck. I needed him closer, his lips on mine.

His first slow thrust was deep and my toes tensed into points. I arched my back as I pulled his face down, slamming our lips together. Connecting with the love of my life on all levels. His hardened chest flattened against mine, pushing my breasts into him as his thrusts increased in intensity.

“I love you,” he whispered, raining kisses along my jawline. “Real.”

It didn't take long for his tempo to erase my mind and burn away all my exhaustion. My only desire was for him to reach the same climax he'd already given me. Not like it mattered. He wouldn't settle for just one orgasm from my body. He'd go until he had me screaming, and only then would he worry about himself.

“Goddamnit,” he groaned, watching me writhe beneath him. I palmed my breast with my right hand, rolling and pinching the nipple between my fingers, and Dominic's pupils dilated with lust. “So fucking hot.”

“You're gonna make me come again.”

“Good.” Hips beat into mine, his cock growing harder as the volume of my moans increased.

“But, shit, you make it impossible to be quiet.”

The sapphire eyes gleamed. “Who said you had to be quiet? I know I sure as hell didn’t.”

“We’re ... in a hotel.” It was a challenge not to pant it out.

“And?” He ground his pelvis against my clit, and flashes of electricity danced up my spine.

“People will think you’re murdering me again.”

His perfect smile spread across his face. “I’m still hazy about that. Did they think I was killing you with my cock? Yeah, you were screaming about it, but how—”

I lifted up on my elbows again and latched my teeth on the side of his neck, drawing a sharp noise of surprise, laced with an edge of pain. It flipped a switch in him. Sweet, playful Dominic went away, replaced by the darker, aggressive version.

“That’s how it’s going to be?” he asked in his rough voice. “All right, let me help you be quiet, slut.”

He bolted upright, drawing out of me, and the sudden emptiness was shocking. I blinked up at him. Was he really going to stop just because I’d nipped at his neck? I hadn’t even left a mark. In fact, I’d never left a mark on him, other than the tattoo on his hip, which had been his idea. He’d marked me plenty of times, not that I was complaining. We both knew how much that turned me on.

When I sat up, chasing after him, a hand gripped my

shoulder and pushed me to turn around.

“On your back,” he ordered. “Head hanging off the edge of the bed.”

I shivered with excitement. I loved his dominant side, which had expanded under Akira’s masterful teaching. I scrambled in my eagerness to follow his command, pivoting on my ass and scooting down to lie flat on the mattress.

“Open your mouth so I can fuck it.”

My pussy clenched at his dirty words. I barely got my lips open and he was there, sliding his dick inside, wet with my own taste. At this angle, he could drive deep into my throat. I swirled my tongue over him, getting him to pulse, and there wasn’t anything else like that sensation. Knowing how much he enjoyed what I was doing to him. I wrapped one hand around his cock, twisting my fist around him as he thrust in and out.

My other hand trailed down between my legs where I was needy and unsatisfied. And no sooner had I started playing with myself than he leaned over me, seized my wrist, and pushed it away.

“No, no, no,” he teased. “We don’t want you getting too loud.”

I wanted to remind him that he had my mouth occupied, but he dropped my hand at my breast, squeezing down on it.

“You can play with these,” Dominic said, dragging our hands over my tits. “But this,” his fingers glided down through my wet pussy and slapped my sensitive flesh, “this is fucking *mine*.”

His other hand was a fist, and he set it beside my hip, so he had leverage as he leaned over and sawed his cock in my greedy mouth, slow enough to not gag me. When I tightened my grip, he groaned in approval, and the fingers on my clit rubbed faster. I bucked under his skilled touch.

Compatible wasn't a strong enough word for us. It wasn't like every time we had sex it was the most amazing rapture ever. But we always clicked. Always worked together. Even our mediocre sex was fun and enjoyable. I hoped I'd never take a minute of him for granted.

A rough finger shoved inside me, and I moaned while he was lodged in my throat. "Mmm ..."

"*Fuck.*" It came out strained. The vibration of my moan must have felt pretty damn good, judging by his reaction. The heel of his palm pressed against my clit while the finger fucked me in time with his hips. Pleasure built at the base of my spine, teasing the orgasm again.

I pumped my fist on him. Used suction. Spun the edge of my tongue on the head of his dick. Everything in my arsenal to bring him to the brink, as he was about to tip me over into ecstasy.

"Shit. Oh, fuck, yes," Dominic said between deep breaths. "Take it."

It was the last push I needed to release, and I exploded. My cries were muffled by his enormous, throbbing cock, and as I came, my legs trembling, it was the wordless permission he needed.

Breath left him in a loud burst, and his movements became

jerky and erratic, followed by a long noise of satisfaction, which rumbled up from deep in his chest. He came in spurts, wave after wave, filling my mouth, and when he ceased, I swallowed. It drew another low moan from him.

“Payton,” he whispered, his knuckles brushing over my cheekbone. He stepped back and helped me sit up. In a heartbeat, he was seated beside me on the bed, his arms trapping me. I tilted my head so he could trace kisses along my neck, my eyes falling shut and my fingertips gritting over his unshaven face.

His kisses slowed, and reality returned, one layer after another. I blinked sluggishly. We collapsed on the bed and Dominic tugged the sheet up over our sweat-dampened bodies.

A chuckle rang out when I curled up beside him, needing the contact against his warm body. I sighed dramatically, but since he couldn't see my face, I grinned. We'd pushed each other into new territory. Talking. Sleeping in the same bed. Love.

Soon, marriage.

“Hey.” I rolled over onto my other hip, turning to face him. “Let's get married.”

His eyes were already closed, one hand tucked under his pillow. “Thought we already agreed on that.”

“No,” I said. “Let's get married while we're home. Tomorrow.”

TWO

Dominic's eyes flew open and a scowl darkened his face. "What?"

As the idea began to take shape, I grew more excited. "We've been living together for a year. The paperwork with our work visas is a pain in the ass. We could go to the courthouse and do one of those quickie Justice of the Peace things."

His face was stoic, but the muscles beneath his jaw tensed, as if clenching his teeth. He wasn't a fan of this idea?

"Have you ever been to any of the Cook County courthouses?" He asked it in a lazy voice, but there was tension beneath. "Because if you had, I don't think you'd be chomping at the bit to go back."

"Okay, the courthouse isn't great, but it's not *that* bad. Think about it—"

His expression turned serious. "I already have."

I hesitated as the words sank in. He'd considered getting married while we were home, but decided against it. "And ...?"

"This is Evie and Logan's wedding, not ours."

"Seriously? We don't even have to tell anyone. Just you and me." My fingers brushed over his jaw, cupping his face. "I'm tired of waiting, and I don't need the big party or the dress. I want to be your wife."

He blinked slowly, and I saw the thought run through his

gorgeous eyes. He wanted this too, and badly, but he shook his head. “I really fucking want that, but there are a bunch of reasons why we should wait.”

“Yeah?” I deflated somewhat. “Convince me this isn’t the best idea ever.”

“Our families won’t like it.”

I raised an eyebrow. Of course it mattered what Dominic’s family thought, because they were warm and fuzzy, and the way a family was supposed to be. Besides his sweet parents, I was getting two hilarious sisters-in-law in the deal. I was less interested in what my family had to say about any decision I made in my life.

“I know your family might not like it,” I said, “but they’ll get over it. I have zero fucks to give about my family.”

They’d met Dominic only once, via Skype, in a super awkward ten-minute conversation. That was all the time my selfish parents could spare for the man who wanted to marry their only daughter. Dominic and I had booked our plane tickets months ago for Evie’s wedding, in the same fucking city where my parents lived, and still, plans to meet face-to-face were up in the air. I’d sort of stopped trying to make it happen, and I’d bet on my life that we’d fly back to Tokyo without seeing them. “*Sorry, Payton, I wish we could, but it’s been such a hectic week,*” I could already hear my mother saying.

“Next,” I demanded.

“Your parents said they’d pay for the wedding.”

I practically snorted. “See, we’d be saving them money.”

He ran a hand over my hip, then fingertips traced in the hollow of my back. “You could invite everyone from the club.” The way he delivered the statement was odd. There was some sort of meaning I wasn’t picking up on, and his expression turned devious. “I thought you’d love that, your ultra conservative parents footing the bill for dinner and an open bar for a bunch of high-class escorts.”

“Oh my God.” I couldn’t stop the grin. “You’re right, I do love that. Fuck, I’m such a bitch.” And I wasn’t even sorry about it.

“Don’t get me wrong, devil woman.” The fingertips skimmed up over my shoulder blades, all the way until he tucked a lock of hair behind my ear and cupped my face. “You know I want to give you whatever you want, and I’m so fucking glad that happens to include my last name. But I think *I* want the party, and the dress, and all that shit. I want everyone there to celebrate with us, and see how incredibly lucky I am.”

I felt warm and giddy inside, but I couldn’t let on how much his words affected me. Whenever things grew serious, my immediate response was sarcasm to cover my vulnerability. So I faked disdain. “You’re *such* a romantic.”

“And maybe I just want a wedding so afterward I can tear the dress off of my wife on our wedding night and fuck her like the dirty girl she is.”

I closed the space between us, kissing him sweetly. “Shit, Dominic, you should have led with that. If that’s what you want, that’s what I want, too.”



The alarm on Dominic's phone began chiming at seven, and we stumbled to the shower together, bleary-eyed. Even though it was nine in the morning tomorrow in Japan, the three-hour nap hadn't done much to recharge.

"I saw a Walgreens a block away," Dominic said as he scrubbed shampoo into his hair. "We can grab some Red Bull and slam it in the cab on our way to the restaurant."

"Can I mainline it?"

We hurried to get dressed. Dominic pulled on a French blue button-down shirt with the sleeves rolled back and black pants. The shirt matched the color of his eyes and showed off the watch I'd bought him.

I tugged the hem down of my seafoam green dress and slipped my feet into a sexy pair of nude heels. Then I donned my chandelier earrings and tousled my hair once more. "You ready?"

"I'm waiting for you to ask me something."

What ... ? *Oh*. I loved this game. How the fuck had I forgotten? I strolled over to him, hooking my fingers through his belt loops and pulling his lower body tight against mine. "Do I have your permission to wear panties tonight ... Sir?"

His expression was victory mixed with desire. "I'll allow it for now." His kiss was hungry and over too soon. "You look beautiful tonight," he whispered.

His compliment threw me off balance, but in a great way. I struggled to recover and cracked the joke, “I always look beautiful.”

“That’s what I love most about you.”

“How humble I am?”

It came out serious. “No, that you look almost as good as I do. Your personality’s not important.”

I flicked him on his hip, hitting his tattoo that matched mine.

We did exactly as Dominic had suggested and drank Red Bull on our way to the Italian restaurant, which was packed with people. I clung to his thick arm as we wove through the crowd and headed up the stairs to where Logan had texted us the table was located.

Evie looked flat out gorgeous. A pre-wedding glow, perhaps. Her excitement at marrying Logan was like a filter, making everything seem brighter and better. Would I be like this the final days before marrying Dominic? I already felt that way.

I hugged her fiercely. “Fuck, I missed you.”

She smiled as she pulled back. “Right back at you.”

We turned to watch our fiancés shake hands, which seemed too formal, but I had the feeling Logan wasn’t the hugging type. Which was exactly why I stepped up and wrapped my arms around him. He went rigid in my embrace and his gaze shifted to Dominic, worried. It made me choke back a laugh. Yeah, I’d had sex with Logan, but I knew Dominic was comfortable with this. I’d made it crystal clear to my future

husband that he was all I ever wanted. And it was so much fun to see typically composed Logan uncomfortable.

I squeezed a hand on Logan's shoulder. "You remember what I said?"

"That if I'm late to the wedding, you'll rip off my dick and shove it up my ass?" Logan's intense eyes blinked, unfazed. "No, I'd forgotten. Please tell me again."

"If anyone's going to be late," Evie said, "I think we know who that'll be." She gestured to herself.

Logan gave me a serious look. "I'm counting on you to get her there on time. She has this way of making you think she's on schedule, and then drops the bomb ten minutes before departure that she wants to take a quick shower."

Evie snorted. "One time, Logan. And why, exactly, did I need the shower?"

Logan's gaze drifted up to the left as he recalled the memory, and a half-smile bowed on his lips. He tugged her close to him and whispered something. It was hard to hear in the noisy restaurant, but sounded like, "Because you were dirty."

We sat, ordered drinks, and chitchatted about random things. Our flight, their jobs, the wedding. Dominic's arm rested comfortably on the back of my chair, his thumb brushing patterns on my shoulder.

Evie wore a sleeveless black dress that draped in the front and hung low to give a peek at her cleavage. She was a beautiful woman, and although Logan was attractive, he was lucky to have her. Evie fucking rocked. When I'd quit my job

at Rosso Media Group and began working at the club, she hadn't judged me. Nor did she abandoned me, or try to talk me out of it as some of my other friends had. Evie *got* me.

And that was probably what I liked most about Logan. He treated her as if she were everything, even with the way he looked at her. She was the center of his goddamn universe. My final night as a working girl at the club, I'd been on the table wishing I could find a connection to someone just a fraction as strong as what they had.

In walked Dominic, and boom. Done.

The conversation floated from topic to topic easily, like no time had passed with us being apart. There was a pang in my stomach. I already knew I'd spend my first week back in Tokyo being fucking homesick. *Just three more months.*

"What are the plans tonight?" Evie asked, her attention focused on me. "Or do we not get to know them?"

An evil grin warmed my face, and beneath the table, I squeezed Dominic's knee. We spoke at the same time. "It's a surprise."

I dug into my purse, pulled out the tiara I'd bought, and set it on the table. It was decorated with plastic penises, and everyone stared at it, the peach colored cocks on springs waving comically.

"Don't worry, Logan," Dominic deadpanned. "That's for Evie."

"Evelyn," I corrected, but Dominic just smirked.

Logan raised an eyebrow and his attention swung to his fiancé, his voice teasing. "Still remember what they look

like?”

Evie’s face flushed as she clenched the tiara in her hand and set it in her lap, hiding it from view. “Ha, ha, boss.”

Well, that was weird. “What do you mean?”

“Nothing, don’t worry about it.” My friend’s voice was high and rushed. Apparently she hadn’t gotten any better at lying since I’d left Chicago.

“Oh, no. Tell me, or you put the Princess Penis crown on right now.”

The men chuckled, but I was entirely serious, and it was obvious from Evie’s nervous look she knew. A deep breath was sucked in. She tucked a lock of hair behind an ear, straightened her shoulders, and gave me a plain look.

“I told Logan no more sex before the wedding.”

T H R E E

For a moment, sound fell from the room. I couldn't focus my thoughts. "What the fuck? Why?"

"Because," she snapped, "I want our wedding night to be special, okay? I liked the idea of building the anticipation, and I thought no sex or nudity would do that."

"Shit, no nudity either?" Dominic's voice was thinly veiled horror. Was he worried I'd like this concept and want to do something similar? It sounded like fucking torture.

Logan had a pained smile, as if it were humorous and awful at the same time. "Yeah. She changes in our bathroom or the closet with the door shut."

"When did the rule go into effect?" I asked Evie, who stared at her shrimp appetizer.

There was no hesitation from Logan. "Thirty seven days ago."

Oh. My. God. Dominic and I exchanged glances. How was this going to affect our plans?

Her voice was soft. "I didn't make the rule to punish us."

Logan shifted in his seat, leaning into her as he radiated concern. "Hey, I know that. I ... I don't know if *like* is the right word, but I understand the rule. You know I won't break it." His fingers curled under her chin and tilted her up into a soft kiss. "I did think you'd cave by now, though, naughty girl. You hardly ever follow the rules."

Their intimate moment forced me to turn to Dominic. "No

sex for thirty-seven days. I might die.”

He scowled. “That’s nothing. Try going a fucking *year*.”

I pressed my lips together to hold back the giggle. He’d gone that long without sex when he’d first moved to Japan, before we met. “Oh, yeah. Poor Dominic. We made up for lost time, though.”

“We’re still making up for it. There are at least a dozen inches in our apartment where I haven’t fucked you yet.”

“It’s so spacious,” I said of our microscopic place. “I don’t know how we’ll get it done in the next three months.”

Our server delivered our dinners, and once she was gone, I went needling for clarification. “The no nudity rule only applies to you two, right?”

Logan glanced to Evie, probably trying to conceal his hopefulness.

“Yeah,” she said. “If Dominic wants to take Logan to a strip club, that’s—”

I giggled. “Slut, I wasn’t asking for him.”

We finished dinner, and although Evie pried for more information, Dominic and I stayed tight-lipped. He received the text message we were waiting for just a few minutes after he’d paid the bill, and we escorted the bride and groom toward the lobby.

“You drive?” Dominic’s question was directed to Logan.

“No, is that a problem?”

I shook my head as I pushed through the front door. “Nope, it’s perfect.” I strolled toward the black stretch limo

that was pulled up out front, and enjoyed the curious looks of the people on the sidewalk.

The stout driver wore a black suit and a friendly smile. “Mrs. Ward?”

I grinned. “Yeah, someday. Are you Saul?” When he nodded, I added, “Awesome. Hope you’re ready for a wild night.”

Saul smoothed a hand over his dark hair and flashed an easy smile. “Whatever you say, ma’am.”

“You got a limo?” Evie’s eyes were wide, scanning the length of black tinted windows.

“Fuck yeah, we did,” I said. Saul hurried to open the back door, and I gestured to my best friend. “In you go.” She ducked inside, and I glanced at Logan. “Now you, Stone.”

Logan’s dark eyes narrowed the slightest bit before he followed her. Yeah, he didn’t like being bossed around, and he probably didn’t like being in the dark about the plans. I stifled my chuckle. He was about to be a whole lot more in the dark.

I climbed in, sliding across the back bench and Dominic’s impressive form was beside me a moment later, seated on the black leather. The ceiling was lit with silver LED lights, which sparkled and winked like stars. Logan and Evie were perched on the side bench, facing the bar where a bottle of champagne was holstered in the ice bucket.

“You guys didn’t have to do this,” she said, playing it cool, but I could tell how much this meant to her, and I was thrilled. She deserved it.

And even though it was Dominic’s money that was paying

for the night, I'd helped him plan. This limo had been my suggestion, as had been our first stop, so I dug into my purse and found what I was looking for.

Dominic reached for the champagne when the limo eased its way into traffic. "Of course we did," he said. "It's not every day Logan decides to get married." His gravel voice had an upswing of teasing to it, then dipped back into serious territory. "I didn't think he'd ever get hitched, but obviously he was waiting for you."

A warm expression flitted through Evie's eyes as my fiancé popped the cork on the bottle with a dull thump. Logan looked pleased, grabbed a crystal tumbler off the bar, and held it ready. Golden champagne was poured. The glass was passed to Evie, and as soon as it was done, I tore open the plastic wrap in my hands and handed her something else.

Her blue eyes scanned the black blindfold and she licked her lips. Was it in anxiety or excitement? Or was she thinking about the last time I'd handed her a blindfold, and the scorching hot threesome that had ensued? Her fingers brushed mine as she took it. It was impossible not to think about, but it had to be worse for her. She was the one who'd gone more than a month without sex.

"And for you, Logan." I tugged open the second wrapper and held it out for him.

He stared at the blindfold as if wary, and his gaze flicked to Dominic, who shrugged like he had no idea what was going to happen, even though he did.

The soon-to-be newlyweds locked gazes, communicating through a wordless conversation. Evie let out a breath, then

slipped the blindfold on, tugging it over her closed eyes. Logan hesitated, but Dominic's indifferent attitude while he continued to pour drinks seemed to do the trick.

"I feel like a fucking idiot," Logan said when he had it over his eyes.

"Well, you look great," Dominic joked. "And don't worry, Payton and I aren't going to get naked and fuck or anything now." Even under the blindfold, Logan didn't seem thrilled. "I'm handing you your champagne—"

A hand reached for it at the exact moment Dominic moved, knocking the glass and champagne sloshed over the side, splashing Logan.

"Fuck, watch it." Dominic's voice was amused. He used his other hand to guide Logan's to the glass.

"It would be easier if I could see."

"Where's the fun in that?" I said.

It was a short ride to the Baton Lounge, but probably felt longer to Evie and Logan. After the initial uncomfortable moments wore off, it seemed to relax both of them. Like it did to me, putting a restriction on them made them feel more open. No pressure to do anything. *Just sit back*, I thought, *and let me and Dominic take charge.*

Maneuvering them out of the limo while they were still wearing the blindfolds was fun. As Evie stood on the sidewalk, I set the crown of cocks on her head, working to get it to sit right.

"Yeah," she said. "Make sure it's on straight, because it would be so embarrassing if it was crooked."

I looped my arm through hers and urged her forward, keeping her from stumbling as we went in through the open door. There was a loud bang, a noise of pain, and I turned to see Logan backing away, as if he'd run into the pane of glass beside the entrance.

“Oh,” Dominic said. “Watch out, there’s a door ahead.” He grinned, clearly enjoying busting Logan’s balls.

“What the hell, Dominic?” Logan demanded.

Evie’s face contorted with worry. “Are you okay?”

“He’s fine,” I said.

It was muttered by Logan, but still loud enough for me to hear. “Asshole.” His hands searched, then grasped a shoulder, letting Dominic guide him.

The large room had tiered seating with tables, and a stage along the back wall. The woman just inside the door scanned the tickets on my phone, and didn’t seem to care about Evie’s tiara or blindfold. She did, however, stare at Dominic like he was naked. It was both annoying and kind of an ego boost. This stranger lusted after him, and could I really fault her for that? That night I’d met Dominic, I’d thought he was crazy good-looking, and time only made him hotter.

“You’re in the front row,” she said, her glittering eyes never leaving him. “Your server can help you find the table.”

Like it was really that hard.

We had our friends seated at the table and ordered drinks before we let them take off their blindfolds. “Give them back to me,” I said over the din of the crowd. “This is just our first stop.”

“Where are we?” Logan glanced around, evaluating his surroundings. “And why are Dominic and I the only guys here?”

He was right, the audience was ninety-nine percent female. I laughed. “Trust me, you’re not the only guys here.”

It was at that precise moment the plus-sized host took the stage, wearing a sparkling blue dress and a heavy coat of makeup. She strolled up to the microphone, brushed her long dark red hair over her shoulder, and gave us a sexy look.

“Good evening, ladies. I’m your host, Ginger.”

If the glitzy dress and overdone makeup hadn’t already done it, the deep voice was what clued Logan in.

“Is that a—”

“Drag queen?” Dominic answered. “Oh, yeah.”

Logan’s gaze bounced between the performer on stage, to Dominic, and back again. He had to be wondering what the hell they were doing here.

“I made a deal with Dominic,” I said. “We stick together tonight. This is what I wanted for Evie, and we’ll get to yours later. Sorry.”

The truth was I trusted Dominic, and hell, I trusted Logan too, to keep their dicks in their pants during their bachelor party. But who I didn’t trust, was other people. I’d had bachelor parties come through the blindfold club, and I’d seen things escalate beyond what anyone intended. Plus, the girl drooling over Dominic when we first walked in only affirmed my decision. It would be easier for him to brush off any unwanted attention if I was right beside him.

The show began. It was one female impersonator's set right after another. Gorgeous dresses, fake tits, and tuck jobs that were fucking magic. They danced, lip-synced to Lady Gaga and Whitney Houston, and took tips from the female audience, who treated them to catcalls and cheers. The show was a riot.

Our men sat, transfixed. Curious, but trying not to display it.

“Holy shit.” It came from Evie when a blonde stepped on stage in five-inch heels and a mini-skirt. “He has nicer legs than I do.”

By the time the final number was over, we were all buzzing from our drinks, and uptight, control freak Logan sort of looked relaxed. Perhaps it was Evie's hand resting high on his thigh, lingering close to the danger zone.

After we filed out of the Baton Lounge, we mobbed with the rest of the crowd in the warm September night, and strolled slowly down the block to where our limo waited. We ducked inside one by one.

“That was awful,” Dominic said, a smile twisting on his sexy lips. “The ones that were obviously dudes were fine, but the other ones ...”

I giggled. “Your dick get confused?”

His arm hooked around my shoulders and pulled me close. “Be quiet, devil woman.”

“Or?”

“Spankings.” His lip curled in a half-smile.

I played up my eagerness by batted my eyelashes. “Now?”

“Well, we’ll get their blindfolds back on first.”

“Oh, of course.”

Our friends stared at us like they were unsure if we were serious. I knew Dominic wasn’t, but if he wanted to ... he certainly knew I was game. Instead, I retrieved the blindfolds and passed them out.

Logan looked even less excited about it this time around. “Calm down.” I motioned for him to put it on. “The only queen for the rest of the night is the one wearing the cock crown.”

His head swung toward Evie. “It does look great on you.”

“Thanks, boss. Should I wear it to work on Monday?”

“Sure. That wouldn’t be an HR nightmare.”

They put their masks on at the same time, and like me, Evie curled up under her fiancé’s arm, snuggling close, one hand on Logan’s chest. His fingers stroked up and down her bare arm. She tucked in further, putting her lips against his neck.

The gentle, sweet kiss she’d started grew when he turned his head into hers, bringing their mouths together. It was like she’d struck a match and set Logan on fire, and although it was probably weird as hell for me to watch our friends making out, I did it anyway. I’d spent more than a year at the club and had seen every sexual act done in a wide range of ways. But the way Evie’s needy hands clutched at his shirt while he devoured her kiss was so fucking sexy.

His hands reached out, finding her hips, and then he pulled her into his lap so she was straddling him. The skirt of her dress rode up on her thighs, and Dominic's gaze automatically turned out the window.

"Such a gentleman," I whispered to him, knowing he was probably blushing. Just another thing I loved about him.

A soft sigh came from Evie, drawing my attention back to the couple. She was rocking in his lap, her hands cupping the sides of his jaw. His arms were tight around her back, holding her as their kiss grew more intense.

"This is dangerous, naughty girl."

"Why?" Her voice was low and sultry. "We've still got our clothes on and you can't see anything."

"I'm not worried about me."

Her grip fell away from his face and her back straightened. "You think I can't resist you after just some kissing?"

Below Logan's black blindfold, his lips peeled back in a smile. "You did mention it was your gateway drug."

"Give me some credit. I bet I can handle it better than you can."

His laugh said exactly how foolish he thought she was being. "Doubtful."

Oh, this was about to get interesting. Evie was focused and driven. She hated to lose, and she'd told me Logan was the same. I could sense the challenge coming.

She sat perfectly still as his lips skimmed over her neck, trailing kisses. "You seem awfully sure of yourself, Logan."

“If I wanted you to break your rule, we know I could get you to do it.”

She pulled even further back from him. “Oh, do we? By all means, boss, go ahead and try.”

Logan took a deep breath. “You sure?”

“I’m sure you’re overly confident, yeah.”

“All right, Evie.” Logan smiled. “Challenge accepted.”

F O U R

Saul parked the limo in front of a liquor store, and we left our blindfolded friends in the back while Dominic and I hurried in to pick up drinks.

“Champagne, whiskey, and rum,” Dominic said to the clerk when we entered the tiny shop. He whipped out his wallet a second later and retrieved his credit card.

“What’s the rush?” I asked.

“Gotta hurry before Evie caves and they’re fucking in the back of the limo.”

I latched a hand on Dominic’s forearm, stilling him. “Evelyn. And what the hell makes you think that’ll happen?”

The card was swiped, a receipt signed, and he hauled the paper bag of bottles into his arms. “Because I know Logan. He plays to win.”

“Yeah, well, so does Evie.”

The sapphire eyes sharpened on me. “Sorry, she doesn’t stand a chance, but you want to make it interesting?”

My gaze narrowed to match his. “I’m listening.”

“If Evie reverses her rule before, I dunno, say sunrise tomorrow ...” Dominic’s jaw ticked as he seemed to assemble the thought in his head. “You call your parents and try again to get a dinner or something between us worked out.”

I groaned. *Of course*. “I don’t know why you’re making a big deal out of that. Seriously, you’re not missing much with

my folks. I have to force them to make time, you really want to spend two hours with people who don't want to be there?"

His expression was fixed. "Do I want to meet my in-laws before the wedding? Yeah, Payton, I do."

"Fine. And if Logan breaks the rule and asks to have sex?"

He yanked open the shop door and held it for me. "Name your terms, devil woman."

What did I want that Dominic wouldn't give me freely? There was nothing. Sure, I'd like to skip the whole big wedding, but no way in hell was I going to deny him that. Then the thought formed in my mind. He'd been resistant to one request I'd made ... "You and I have lunch with Joseph this week."

We strode toward the limo, and tension tightened Dominic's broad shoulders. Normally, I liked his possessiveness over me, but not where Joseph was concerned, because Joseph was my friend. A good friend. Yes, we'd fucked a bunch of times, but it had been empty sex for both of us, and stopped the moment Dominic walked into my life.

"Okay, you got it." Dominic tugged open the limo door. "But just know, you're gonna lose."

Really? I glared at him, but didn't bother to respond, and slid into the backseat. "What the fuck are you doing? Hands to yourselves!"

Evie and Logan scattered like teenagers caught in the act by parents, and Evie let out a nervous laugh. She probably thought I was kidding and giving her a hard time, but I was serious. The way Evie talked about kissing Logan made it

sound like he could get her to do almost anything. Pre-Dominic, I thought she was crazy. Now I sort of understood.

Fuck, I did not want have to call my mom again.



Bass thumped repeatedly from beyond the black door that led into the club. We stood in the anteroom while Dominic paid our group's cover charge, and I pretended not to notice the bouncer's lewd stare.

Dominic's hand was abruptly on my ass, sliding over to rest on my opposite hip, and his scowl was directed at the bouncer. His possessiveness was showing in all its brilliant colors. I adjusted the paper bag in my arms, and the bottles clinked. "I can fuck you right here, if that will help."

Evie's mouth fell open. "Are you talking to me?" With the blindfold still on, she couldn't tell it was meant for Dominic.

"No, sorry." I laughed and helped her toward the entrance. She had one hand on my shoulder and the other laced with Logan's, but he was surprisingly quiet. *Shit*. "You know where we are, Logan?"

"The bottles gave it away."

Chicago had an ordinance banning alcohol from being served at the same establishment offering nude entertainment. All of the strip clubs in Cook County were BYOB.

"Keep your fucking mouth shut," I said. "Don't ruin the surprise for Evie."

The black door swung open and both the music and the roar of people got louder. I shuffled through, the future Mr. and Mrs. Stone trailing right behind. Dominic and I scanned the large, open room, and he pointed across the way.

“There.”

An open table waited near the stage. He hurried to claim it while I led the blind slowly through the crowded area, trying to keep Logan from tripping over chair legs. I ignored the looks of the other patrons who probably wondered what the hell we were doing.

“Can I take it off?” Logan said loudly over the music.

“I don’t think this is the right crowd for that.”

Did he just growl at me? “The blindfold, Payton.”

“Not yet.” I put my hands on his shoulders and shoved him down into a chair, then helped Evie to hers.

Dominic twisted the cap off the whiskey. “Evie, you want champagne? Or rum and Coke?”

I reached for the unopened bottle. “It’s Evelyn, and she’ll take a rum and Diet Coke.”

Dominic smirked. “You’re so bossy.”

“You love it.” We happened to arrive at the perfect moment, right as the last performer was exiting, so we had a second of quiet. “Okay, blindfolds off. Time to look at some real women.”

The deejay’s voice blared over the music, announcing a new dancer coming to the stage as Evie pulled off her mask. I’d been nice enough to let her leave her crown in the back of

the limo. Her eyes went totally white, they were that wide open. She gazed at the dim room, draped in garish red velvet curtains and mirrors, and the large stage with gold poles. Around us, the other club goers were curious.

Evie and I were the only dressed women in the packed audience.

The room felt smoky, although smoking wasn't allowed and I didn't see a fog machine running. It was a haze of sex and seediness. I hadn't felt this kind of dirty on me since my blindfold club days, and I'd missed it, just a little.

“Holy shit, I'm in a strip club,” Evie said.

Dominic flagged over one of the servers. “You haven't been before?”

She shook her head slowly, her gaze locked on the woman who sashayed over, a round tray tucked under one arm. The waitress's other hand rested on her hip, barely covered by black hot pants. The piercing in her navel winked under a strobe light. Her hot pink halter top was more like a bra than a shirt, and the padding beneath pushed her boobs together, giving her a great deal of cleavage.

Her tips were probably killer; she was hot. I wondered if I should snap a picture and send it to Joseph. He'd trolled strip clubs in the past when he was first getting started, but he'd never found a girl who was seriously interested in the job, was drug-free, and reliable. Most of his newer girls came from referrals now.

“Hi!” the waitress said with a wide smile, her hand touching Dominic's arm. “What can I get for you, hon?”

My annoyance flared, but I stayed quiet while he ordered the Diet Coke, plus some glasses and an ice bucket for the table. On stage, a lanky blonde in a black bra and fuchsia G-string was strutting in her stripper shoes. I admired the tattoos running along her rib cage. On the right girl and in the right setting, ink was hot.

“How does she dance in those?” Evie whispered to me.

The sole of the shoe was black, but the seven-inch heel and tall platform base were both a matching fuchsia, which glowed under the black light. The straps over the top of her foot were clear acrylic.

I shrugged at Evie’s question. “Practice.”

They didn’t seem to give the blonde any trouble. She swayed with the sexy song pouring from the speakers, her lower body undulating to the rhythm. Her hands caressed her curves, teasing the removal. Fingers dipped below the G-string band at her hips, pulling it away for a second, only to return it into position, saving it for the big finish later.

I adjusted in my chair, setting a hand on Dominic’s thigh, and his fingers curled over mine, holding my hand in place. Did he do this simply because he wanted to hold my hand? Or was he worried I would migrate further north to his cock? God, he knew me so well.

The stripper reached to set a hand high on the pole, wrapped her legs around it, and up she went. When she’d climbed to the top, her legs went straight out, parallel to the floor, and one knee bent, crossing over on top of the other leg. Her hands let go and she tipped back until she was upside-down, the pole clamped tight between her thighs. As she

swung, her blonde hair fluttered behind.

There were murmurs of approval from the audience watching, and it built into a roar when her hands disappeared behind her back, and the bra was flung to the back of the stage.

“Holy shit!” Evie gasped and Logan chuckled.

The acrobatic work was impressive, and obviously I wasn't the only one who thought so. Guys lined up to throw crumpled dollar bills on the stage while she worked the pole. Her graceful moves, toned body, and tight breasts were sexy as hell.

“You're going to tip the stripper?” Evie asked when Logan dug out his wallet.

“No, naughty girl. You are.”

I heard her hard swallow over the thump of the music. On stage, the stripper descended the spinning pole and planted her shoes back on the ground. She turned, bent over, and shoved her ass at the crowd, shimmying. More roars and cheers when she teased removing the tiny scrap of underwear once again.

This time she did it, exposing her bare pussy for everyone to see. Dominic's grip on my hand tightened subtly, then relaxed. “Fuck, she's hot.”

I grinned. Did he know how much I loved hearing him say that? He was confident enough to know this wouldn't bother me. He was a man, hardwired to be attracted to tits and ass, and it seemed fucking stupid for him to hide it. Let him look and enjoy. I was. And my tits and ass were nicer, not to mention Dominic owned every inch of me, which made my ass a million times better.

Evie snatched the five-dollar bill from Logan and stood swiftly. She charged toward the end of the line of men waiting to tip, her face determined.

“That was ... unexpected.” Logan’s expression had an edge of concern. Maybe he’d expected her to be too shy.

Like blood in the water, the men noticed her presence as a herd, and a few jaws dropped open. They parted, all gesturing for her to go to the front of the line. “Hey, ladies first,” one of them said.

Evie was probably bright red. I couldn’t see with her back facing us, but one of the guys at the front leaned over and said something close to her ear. She turned to look up at him wide-eyed, and Logan bolted out of his chair.

“Wait,” Dominic called. “It’s cool.”

Apparently all the man had said to Evie was to put the money on her lips, which she did. *Yeah, Evie.* I laughed as the fully nude blonde took one look at my friend with a five-dollar bill on her face, and sauntered her direction. I had to believe every pair of eyes in the building were watching as the stripper palmed her breasts, and leaned into Evie so she was nuzzled between them.

“Fuck,” Logan swore in appreciation. “I think I have another five.”

The blonde’s breasts were pushed together, so when the stripper stepped back, the five-dollar bill was stuck in her cleavage. People hollered for her to do it again, and someone yelled for Evie to take her top off. That sobered Logan quickly.

“Save your money,” Dominic said. “We’ve got a private room we can head to whenever you want.”

Logan’s attention turned to Dominic, stunned and yet grateful, and it was clear he understood. A private room meant lap dances away from an unwanted audience. Right now there were dances going on in the open booths lining the left wall. Anyone could watch the girls as they slid their bodies over the customers, which was sexy, and also safer for the dancers. But the strippers always had bras and panties on. We’d get to see more in the private room.

Sure enough, Evie’s face was flamingly red when she turned on her heel and marched back toward our table, but she held her chin up. As she made her way through the tables of men, they stared up at her, lust in their eyes, and it was clear that wasn’t lost on her. Oh, there was power in being a desired woman. I knew about that. At times, the power could be downright addictive.

“Did you enjoy yourself?” Logan asked, his lips teasing a smile.

“Did you, boss?” Her voice was casual. “She smelled like strawberries.”

The server came by with our glasses, and Dominic doled them out to the table. We drank and watched a few more performers, but no one held a candle to that first blonde who’d mastered the pole.

The shower show was nice. The ebony stripper had fantastic tits, and they looked even better when they were glossed with soap and water. As we finished our drinks, a redhead wandered past, dragging her hand along my

shoulders.

“Do you or any of your friends want a dance?”

“Maybe in a little bit,” Dominic answered for me. She smiled and flitted away, and he turned quickly to me. “Unless you were into her? Did I just make a horrible mistake?”

“Please. You know I’ve got my eye on someone else.”

We hadn’t talked about me getting a lap dance, he just knew. His eyes lit with amusement. “The blonde?”

I nodded as my hand tried to travel a line up to his dick, but he squeezed my wrist. “Control yourself.” His expression went strict and hard. “Or I’ll do it for you.”

Evil, evil man. Saying that in his dark voice turned the volume up on my lust until it was deafening. Yet, he had a good reason to stop me. I’d feel awful if I got us kicked out and Evie and Logan’s night came to an abrupt end.

“What do you think?” Logan said to Dominic, nodding toward the glowing neon sign that announced the private rooms.

“Let’s do it.” Dominic gathered up our supplies and the ice bucket holding the champagne.

“We’re leaving?” Evie sucked in a breath, probably horrified at how disappointed that had come out sounding.

“No, Evie,” Dominic said. “I’m gonna buy Logan a lap dance. You get to pick out the girl.”

The future Mr. and Mrs. Stone exchanged a glance. *Choose wisely, Evie.* I needed him to beg for sex so we could both win our little competitions.

Logan's intense eyes stared down at her. "You should do the lap dance. You're the hottest girl in here."

Dominic cleared his throat, but Logan remained unfazed. Thankfully Evie didn't fall for it, and she scanned the room, evaluating the girls working the floor. Her focus settled on a leggy brunette with shoulder-length hair and a pretty face, and sexy librarian glasses that were probably just for show. Yet they made her look cute and studious, which would definitely appeal to anal-retentive Logan.

"Her," Evie said. Her smug voice matched her expression, saying she was confident in this decision.

We went to the bouncer waiting beside the doorway, and I pointed out who we wanted to come join us in our private party. He nodded, wrote it down on a clipboard, and told us we were in room three.

The narrow hallway was dimly lit and bare bones, and there were a total of three rooms judging by the numbers on the door. I opened ours and was pleasantly surprised. It had a large tufted couch in red and two black chairs opposite it, with a low table in the center for our drinks. In the corner, a lit platform surrounded a pole. The hallway had been kind of gross, but this was nice.

Dominic and I each took a chair as Logan sat on the couch. "Come here," he said to his fiancé. "Are you okay with this?"

She let out a short laugh. "Me? Yeah."

It did seem silly to ask, given what we'd done, but at the same time I appreciated how important Evie's level of comfort was to him. He always did his best not to fuck up with her

again.

“Let’s establish rules,” Logan said.

Evie gave him a dubious look. “You want more rules?”

“Guidelines,” he amended. “I’m allowed to touch you. Kiss you. Everything except for sex is fair game.”

Evie bit down on her lip and shook her head. “Part of the rule is no nudity—”

“As long as I don’t violate that.”

She didn’t get a chance to answer him, for a sharp knock came from the door, and it swung open a half-second later. The leggy brunette with glasses. She was even cuter up close. *Good.*

She gave a shy smile, undoubtedly part of her act. “I’m Tracy. Someone wanted a dance?”

Dominic pointed out Logan. “He’s getting married next weekend.”

Tracy made the appropriate small talk that was probably club required, congratulating Logan. Thankfully, I didn’t have to do that when I’d been seeing clients at the blindfold club, because I fucking sucked at talking.

The garter around Tracy’s thigh was holding a lot of twenties, and I wondered how much she made a night. Nowhere near as much as I did at the blindfold club I was sure, but she also made hers legally. She fidgeted with her lacy red bra and matching panties, as if anxious to get them off. Her curves were nice. Big breasts, and a round ass that begged to be touched.

“You sure you’re okay with this, sweetheart?” Tracy asked Evie. I’d stopped listening to the conversation for a moment, she must have figured out the bride was right beside the groom.

Evie gave a devious smile and nodded.

“Okay,” she said to Logan. “Can you open your knees? I need some room.”

When Logan leaned back against the couch and relaxed his legs, Tracy put one knee between them, sliding it up and down, right over the fly of his pants. Her hands twisted behind her back and undid the clasp of her bra, and she held the cups to her chest for a moment before dropping the fabric away.

Her tits were immediately in his face.

Evie’s breathing picked up as she watched the topless woman grind on her soon-to-be husband, but she didn’t look anxious. Nope, she was getting turned on. She crossed her legs and put her hands together in her lap, almost as if she wanted to touch Logan but didn’t want to get in the stripper’s way.

Tracy’s hands fondled her breasts, massaging them as she slid up and down his face. The music from the main stage was pumped into the VIP room and wafted from a speaker in the corner. She moved in time with the song that was all about fucking, letting her body give us a perfect visual.

When she straddled Logan’s lap and rode him, everyone else in the room froze. Were they as unprepared as I was for how hot the scene was? Logan’s hands splayed on her thighs around him, just resting there. Tracy didn’t seem to mind.

“Fuck, Evie, kiss me.”

A startled smile broke on her face. “Yeah? Are you having a *hard* time?”

“He’s getting there,” Tracy said, flashing a wink. Then she rose up on her knees, undulating while her hands ran up and down his chest, caressing him through his dress shirt.

I flinched when Dominic’s fingers skimmed my knee. I’d been so engrossed watching the show I hadn’t noticed he’d pulled his chair closer to mine. I leaned in and breathed in his ear, my words barely a whisper.

“I want to fuck you so bad right now.”

“I know.” He gave me a triumphant smile.

This was Dominic when he was most in control, and he loved his power. There’d been so many nights when we’d played with Akira and Yuriko, and I’d been writhing under his command, desperate to hold it together and begging for him to fuck me. He’d spent the first few months following Akira’s lead when to reward, but his confidence had grown to no longer need advice. Dominic knew exactly when to give me what I craved, and how long to deny it to maximize our pleasure. Or make me crazy. Sometimes they were the same.

Tracy’s hand flowed down the line of buttons on the front of Logan’s shirt, over his belt, and ...

“Shit.” Logan groaned it through clenched teeth.

I raised an eyebrow at Dominic. Was that sort of thing allowed? He shrugged.

“You’re barely looking at her,” Evie said to Logan. “Don’t you think she’s hot?”

I cut the chuckle off before it slipped out. She was taunting him, trying to win her bet, and I fucking loved it. Plus, she was right. It seemed as if Logan was struggling and avoiding the scene as much as possible.

He groaned, low and frustrated. His hand hooked around the nape of Evie's neck and dragged her across the couch so he could crush his lips to hers while the stripper raked her fingernails over his zipper. I drew a deep breath in, sipping the air that was heavy with desire.

Tracy stood while Logan continued to deliver a passionate kiss, his mouth moving over Evie's with reckless abandon. Tracy turned and sat in his lap, rubbing her ass against the bulge of Logan's cock. Her creamy tits jiggled with her movements, and I fought to keep still. I wanted to touch her, or for Dominic to touch me, or both. My skin was tight with lust and I needed relief.

Evie moaned when Logan's hand trailed down her neck, over her collarbone, and settled on her breast. It was then that Tracy leaned to put her back against Logan's chest, her head resting on his shoulder opposite Evie. The dancer continued to squirm, and her movements were obviously having an impact on him.

Her head turned toward him, and I caught a flash of Tracy's tongue as it dipped out to lick the side of Logan's neck. He jerked and his free hand wrapped around her hip.

"Look at him," I whispered to Dominic. "Living the fucking dream."

He smiled back like the devil.

Behind the gyrating body, Logan fought for breath, or maybe to maintain his control. To go more than a month without sex, to kissing Evie while a nearly naked stripper humped him ...

“Someone’s a lucky girl,” Tracy said, glancing at Evie. “His dick is huge.”

Evie’s face colored a shade of pink, and that was her only response. But the blush quickly faded when Tracy stood and swayed to the music, her fingers creeping beneath the band of lace at her hips. She rocked her thumbs down painfully slow, one side then the other, as her underwear began its taunting descent.

There was a sharp inhale from Evie when the red panties were lowered to mid-thigh, just below the money-filled garter. Tracy bent forward and set her warm hands on my knees. Her ass wiggled, shoving her bare pussy right in Logan’s face. All the while she smiled at me behind her glasses.

“You’re pretty fucking hot,” I said.

She tossed her hair over a shoulder, and for a split second I wondered if she was bashful, but she laughed softly. “Thanks, girl.”

“You never answered me,” Logan said, his voice hurried.

Evie’s gaze seemed unable to leave Tracy’s hypnotizing pussy. “About?”

“The guidelines, naughty girl. I need to know ... what’s allowed.”

The dancer’s ankles came together. She stood straight, arched her back, and the panties fell to a heap at her feet. Holy

fuck, she looked good in nothing but her money, glasses, and high heels. Dominic and I didn't get to look at the long, nude curve of her body for more than a few seconds. She turned to face the couch and knelt between Logan's knees while her hands ran along his inseam, working her way up.

"Fucking shit." Logan combed his fingers through his hair and tipped his head back on the couch. Evie was sucking on his neck. Tracy's hands unbuckled his belt. His pants were unsnapped and a zipper dropped. *Oh my God.*

It wasn't clear if Logan was trying to sit up and stop Tracy, or if he was moving to make it easier. By the time he was sitting upright, the fully naked woman dropped down into his lap, right over his erection covered by a thin layered of black cotton.

"Shit. Shit, wait a minute," he said. His hands were on her undulating hips in an attempt to stop her. His eyes were hooded with lust, but still focused on Evie. But this didn't seem to bother his fiancé.

"Does she feel good?" Evie's smile was diabolical, and pride burned warm in my veins. It was exciting to see this side of her, the one who was powerful. It had come out for a moment in Logan's darkened bedroom that night last September when she'd let me join them. She'd pushed Logan right to the edge. Her voice was as commanding now as it had been then. "Tell me how bad you want me."

"Goddamnit."

"Tell me," Evie goaded, "what you want to do to me."

Tracy slithered over his cock, her pussy grinding against

him. Were his eyes going to roll back into his head? He looked a half-second away from tossing Tracy away, slamming Evie into the couch, pushing her panties aside, and taking her in one, quick thrust.

He seemed like he might give up with his next breath.

“I want you to ride my fingers.” He was panting now. His face had an intense, raw expression. “I want you coming on my face. Now, fucking tell me ... is that allowed?”

“You’ll violate the nudity—”

“No, naughty girl.” He gave her a frantic kiss, as if he only had a fingertip’s grip on his control. “Payton has blindfolds.”

Of course. Kind of cheating, but not. *Clever, Logan.*

FIVE

Evie's blue eyes blinked at his question, and it was so clear. She wanted to say yes desperately, but also feared what giving him that power would do. I feared it as well. Men were most persuasive when they were on their knees.

“Answer me.” It was a whisper from Logan, but his demanding tone made it sound loud.

“Yes,” Evie said breathlessly. “But if you peek, I win.”

Logan's smile was a million miles wide. “That won't happen, but I get it.”

Tracy picked up the pace, sliding faster on him and the muscles along Logan's jawline flexed. He looked like he was enduring punishment.

The pads of Dominic's fingers traced circles on my knee and threatened to venture up onto my inner thigh. My legs parted slightly to make room and encourage, but he didn't take the bait. He just sat there, tracing his infuriating and teasing circles while I ached for his touch.

The song faded out and was replaced by another, and the waves of Tracy's hips slowed to a stop. “You want another dance, sexy?”

“No, thank you.” It was tight and relieved from Logan.

Oh, hell no. He'd survived the lap dance, but I sensed he was wound tighter than a spring. Maybe he just needed another push.

“She wants a dance,” I said, gesturing to Evie. “My treat.”

The noise of protest that escaped Logan sounded suspiciously nervous, as Tracy lifted onto her knees and began crawling into Evie's lap. Who went statue-still with shock.

"You can touch me," Tracy whispered, her voice warm like honey. "Forget about club rules, I don't mind." Her knees were planted on either side of Evie's lap, and her hands tousled her light brown hair. Then her palms flowed down her neck, over her bare breasts, tweaking her nipples to keep them hard. Or maybe she simply enjoyed the sensation.

Tracy finished wandering her own body, and traveled over to the front of Evie's dress. Her fingers dipped inside the neckline. Evie's mouth fell open but no sound came out.

The woman glanced at Logan. "Is she shy?"

I snorted. "Only with strangers."

"Oh, shit." Evie's shoulders shuddered when Tracy latched her lips on Evie's neck. Hands moved under the neckline of her dress.

Dominic gripped my knee and tugged, drawing my focus to him. His dark, seductive look made my breath hitch. Lust hung heavy in the air, choked my lungs, and I was snared in his gaze.

"Get the fuck over here. You're too far away," he said in his rough, deep voice.

Too far away for him to undoubtedly torture me, but I went to him anyway, eager. I scrambled to sit sideways in his lap. His hold tangled in my hair and yanked me down into his kiss while his other hand slid up my leg, diving beneath my skirt.

Fuck yes.

I could hear movement on the couch that sounded as if Logan was doing up his pants. Did he have blue balls, aching to be inside his fiancé? Because I could fucking relate. Whatever the female equivalent of that was, I had it. I *needed* Dominic. Somehow the restraint Evie had placed on Logan had an effect on me. It was like how denial instantly intensifies a craving.

Dominic feathered the lightest touch over my panties, but it was a bolt of static electricity on my sensitized skin.

“Yes,” I whispered. “More.”

His lips hovered by the shell of my ear. “Where?” His fingers brushed again. “Here?”

“Yes,” I hissed. I gripped his forearm and squeezed. I both hated and loved his teasing.

“But you didn’t say please, Payton.”

“Fuck.” I squirmed to try to get his fingers against me. I was soaking through the lace, and now I wished he hadn’t given me permission to wear the underwear. The barrier between us needed to go, but Dominic held me firm.

Logan’s voice cut through the fog, spoken with pride. “Naughty girl.”

Holy shit. Evie had a hand on Tracy’s tits, and her big, blue eyes stared up at the naked woman writhing in her lap. There was a tiny, unexpected spark of jealousy at this, which was ridiculous. I was the last woman Evie had been with. She and Logan hadn’t invited anyone else to play after me, or so she said. I loved my best friend, but not in that way, and I’d gone on to play with other women, so wasn’t I a fucking hypocrite?

“Is this okay?” she whispered to Logan.

His hand pushed down his erection, adjusting in his seat. “Are you serious? It’s so fucking hot.” He leaned in and swallowed her moan as he kissed her.

Dominic pressed a finger right to my clit, and I jolted. “Eyes on me, devil woman.”

“Yes, Sir.” I’d meant it to sound sarcastic, but this man made me fall apart. His expression was full of power and control as he stroked me. His fingers toyed with the seam, mocking that he’d move the fabric to the side and *really* touch me.

Speaking of mocking ...

“Did you need something?” Evie said. I didn’t dare take my eyes off Dominic, but I could hear the confidence in her voice. “You look like you need something.”

“I’m fine, Evie.” It would have been more believable if Logan’s voice hadn’t sounded uneven. “But watching you suck on her tits has me so fucking hard.”

“What? I haven’t done that.”

“You’re about to.”

Evie blew out a breath. It was quiet, and then Tracy’s low moan rang out. I wanted to watch what was happening. I was turned away to face Dominic, but he could see it all, and since I was in his lap, I felt the subtle jerk of his cock against my thigh.

His gaze flicked up to meet mine, and an indecent smile crept over him. “Your friend’s licking the stripper’s tits.”

Why was I surprised that she'd done it? Obviously she didn't have a problem with women, and Logan had basically told her to. The good girl loved following his commands. But I was thrilled, too. This had been strategic on Evie's part, I was sure. She'd do what she could to win.

“And what about your friend? Does he look ready to break a rule?”

Even without seeing him, I could feel Logan's gaze boring into me. “No, he doesn't,” he answered for Dominic.

But since I had obeyed my fiancé, he rewarded me. My breath evaporated in a shiver when my panties were tugged to the side and a finger plunged inside. My fingernails dug into his forearm at the welcomed intrusion.

“Slow,” the rough voice echoed in my ear, just a whisper. “Don't rush me, or I'll stop. You don't want that, do you?”

I shook my head and clamped my teeth together to choke back the plea for *more*, and *faster*, and *harder*. God, all of what he'd give me, if only I had patience. Pleasure grew in slow waves, building with Dominic's painstakingly slow pace, and the thumb that teased my clit.

A soft moan slipped from my lips. If he expected me to be quiet, he was going to have to tell me.

“Ready to start revising the rule?” Logan's tone was wicked. “If I put my hand up your skirt, am I going to find your pussy wet and ready for me?”

Evie gasped. “Oh my God.”

“That's not an answer.”

Dominic's mouth captured mine, and his tongue slid past my lips. It possessed and tasted, and I returned the kiss with the same intensity he fed me. My next moan was louder, and two fingers delved into my greedy body. The stretch was delicious, but wasn't enough. His skilled fingers were amazing, but I hungered for the real thing.

Time began to blur. It was burned up by the heat Dominic was injecting me with. Abruptly the fingers retreated and I whined, but Dominic shushed me. He *fucking shushed* me—

The wet fingers were shoved in my mouth, cutting me off. I sucked them clean, and it was then I realized why. Tracy stood in front of us, her bra and panties back on, and an expectant look.

“It's eighty,” she said softly.

Dominic pulled out his wallet and pushed the Yen aside, digging out the American money. He counted out five twenty-dollar bills and handed them over. “Thanks.”

“Thank you.” She winked, thrilled with the tip. “Can I get you guys anything?”

“Yeah. There was a blonde on the main stage when we got here—”

“The one with the amazing pole skills,” I interrupted.

Tracy slipped the twenties into her garter. “Ashley. I'll see if she's available to party with you.”

As soon as she was out the door, Dominic reached for his glass of whiskey, and he chuckled right before tipping the glass back. It was because Evie had hurled herself into Logan's lap and his hand disappeared under her skirt.

“You can tell me you don’t want to fuck,” Logan said, “but your body says otherwise.”

Evie sighed and clung to him. “You know I want to. This is all your fault.”

“How’s that?”

“You’re the one with all the rules and who loves anticipation.”

His expression was skeptical. Clearly he didn’t believe her.

“Green ...” She kissed his lips. “Yellow.” She rocked her hips on him. “Red.” Her hand gripped his cock through his pants. “You’ve taught me all about the build-up, boss.”

Logan looked smug. His dark eyes studied her as he continued to move his hand between her legs.

“You let me know ...” she said in a tight voice, “when you think you’re so persuasive that I’m going to cave.”

His short laugh was full of confidence. “I’ll let you know when I start, but here’s a clue. I’ll have a blindfold on.”

Evie’s expression shifted into one of fear. “Wait, I’ve changed my mind. You can’t go down on me.”

Logan hesitated. “What?”

“No oral. Well, I can still go down on you—”

Oh, he did *not* like hearing that. His expression hardened. “Bullshit. You already set the rules, you can’t go back on them.”

His arm flexed and moved, as if he’d thrust his finger deep inside her. Evie inhaled sharply and balled his shirt into her

fists.

“Fuck,” she cried, twisting with pleasure and pain.

“No changing the rules during the game, naughty girl. Understood?”

It was barely a word from her. “Yes.” It was immediately followed by a moan and she melted into Logan’s embrace.

The door swung open without a knock, and in strolled the blonde on her black and fuchsia shoes. She was even better looking up close, but there was a cold, ruthless look in her eyes that I was a little too familiar with. This had been me at the blindfold club. Disconnected. Doing the job while being numb.

Ashley didn’t have the people skills Tracy did—she was all business. “It’s fifty for a two song dance. Forty for one song if you want me on the pole.”

“Fifty,” Dominic said. “My fiancé wants a dance.”

She gave a plain look. “Sorry, I don’t do women.”

I ... couldn’t even. She took the money from Evie’s lips earlier without a problem. I found the girl’s rejection annoying, even though it wasn’t personal. She had every right to refuse, but ... “You don’t like money?”

Ashley’s face soured, and when she wasn’t smiling, she had a full-on case of resting bitch face. “I do, but I’m not into girls.”

Her condescending tone was sharp as a knife, slicing both Evie and I, but she didn’t appear concerned about it. Her gaze flitted from Dominic to Logan, and her whole demeanor

changed. Her face lit up and her voice warmed like honey. “Do either of you guys want a dance?”

This girl made her living dancing for men, and she was a seasoned pro. One who assumed either Logan or Dominic held the money, and she’d have more luck getting extra dances out of the guy with the wallet if he was the one receiving.

“No, they don’t want a dance.” I snatched my drink off the table and slammed it. “But thanks for stopping by.”

Her eyes widened with surprise. Surely she was used to being the most powerful woman in the room, but then, she’d never been in one with *me*.

“I can get on the pole for thirty.” Like she was sensing the sale slipping away.

I gestured to Dominic. “You know what? He’ll take a lap dance after all ... for thirty.”

Her eyes went narrow, but she didn’t walk. How confident was she in her skills in getting more dances out of him? Apparently confident enough. She nodded in reluctant acceptance and strutted toward us.

Alcohol buzzed in my system, but when I rose to stand on my sexy high heels, I tried not to show the effects. I rounded the chair so I could set my hands on Dominic’s shoulders and lean over. It wasn’t my first choice, but I liked this. It was a position of power and a front row seat to the dance.

Ashley’s gaze paused on mine, and she issued a silent threat to keep my distance. *Whatever, bitch*. I’d touch him if I wanted to. Dominic would throw her ass to the ground if I asked him to do it.

The song changed and Ashley began her dance. Her feet moved side to side on those sexy heels while her hands wandered over her body. It felt ... forced and robotic. Not alluring and seductive like Tracy's had been. Dammit, why didn't I just ask her to stay? Every second Ashley looked less and less attractive to me.

Her bra came off quickly and was cast to the floor as she remained on her feet, swaying to the music. Her hands stacked her blonde hair up on top of her head, and then it fell, cascading down as she shook her head, her tits bouncing slightly.

She spun on her heels and flopped down, putting her ass in Dominic's lap so she could grind on him. Would he even find this sexy? I felt bad for agreeing to the dance without checking with him first. I needed to make this better. *Hotter*.

I bent down and settled my lips a breath away from Dominic's, teasing my kiss. I even lowered until our lips barely touched, but didn't give him the pressure and intensity I knew he desired. His hand shot up, grabbed a handful of hair on the back of my head and forced me down so our mouths could crash together, while the other woman rocked in his lap.

But the impact of our kiss made my drunk ass stumble on my heels. *Shit!* My hand latched onto anything to stabilize and keep me from falling. I found something soft, and warm, and bare.

Ashley's shoulder.

I yanked my hand back and straightened, but she jolted up out of his lap and spun to face me, anger flaring in her eyes.

“That was my bad,” Dominic said. Ashley snatched up her discarded bra, not bothering to put it back on. “She didn’t mean to—”

But Ashley fled without a word, exited the room in a huff, and the door slammed shut.

I blinked at Evie and Logan who were frozen on the couch, staring back at me, and since I was drunk, I no longer cared about my filter. She’d run from the room just because I accidentally touched her shoulder? “God, what a lesbian.”

Dominic chuckled.

“You know what?” I said. “I think Tracy’s hotter anyway, I’m sure we can get—”

The door opened and a thick white guy with no neck stepped inside, a sneer on his face. “Party’s over. Time to go.”

SIX

My mouth dropped open. “Are you fucking serious?”

The bouncer surveyed the room and his gaze landed on Dominic. “Yeah, you can’t touch the dancers. You all need to leave.”

“He didn’t touch her,” I said. “I did, and it was completely on accident.”

The enormous man shook his head and crossed his powerful arms over his chest. “Not what the girl said, but it doesn’t matter.”

“This is bullshit.”

“Are we going to have a problem here?”

Dominic’s hands were on my waist, locking me in place, as if he knew I was a heartbeat away from getting in the bouncer’s face. I drew in a breath to even myself out and remain in control. It was done, and no amount of talking was going to salvage it. “Nope, no problem.” I put my hand on top of Dominic’s, urging him to release me. “Let’s go. I’m fucking exhausted anyway. The jet lag is catching up.”

It wasn’t possible to feel worse than I did as we were escorted through the club toward the main door. There were round tables near the entrance that had poles in the center so the dancers could entertain smaller parties, up close and personal. Ashley, back in her bra, was up on the table, dancing for a group of men.

I felt a little better when several of the guys turned my

direction and watched me. From the annoyed expression on her face, I could tell she knew. These men preferred to look at me, fully clothed, over her in a bra and skimpy underwear.

The night air was cool as we waited for Saul to pull the limo up.

“Guys,” I said. “I’m sorry.”

Evie shivered in the breeze, but laughed. “It wasn’t your fault. And think about how awesome the story is. I got kicked out of a strip club during my bachelorette party.”

Logan’s hands rubbed up and down her arms, trying to warm her. “Payton, it’s not a problem.”

“Of course not. You’re just dying to get your blindfold back on.”

Logan’s grin developed slowly, and it looked seductive and sinister in the moonlight, much like a predator’s, and Evie was his prey. “You’re not wrong.”

The limo pulled up and Saul hopped out, opening the back door. Evie and Logan climbed inside, but I motioned for Dominic to go next, and set a hand on our driver’s arm.

“Can you just drive around for the next forty-five minutes or so? Stay in the city, but keep us moving?”

If it was an odd request, Saul didn’t show it. “Sure, not a problem.”

“Thanks.” As I climbed in and shut the door, I wondered how much of our party he could hear behind the black privacy glass. Maybe he’d go home tonight and tell his wife about chauffeuring us from drag queen club to titty bar, or perhaps

this wasn't that wild of a night for him. He was a limo driver in Chicago and might have driven all sorts of crazy celebrities.

"No more liquor for you." I tugged the champagne glass from Evie's hand. I didn't want it to be any easier on Logan. In fact, I wanted him to need a crowbar to get her knees apart.

"What's going on?" The corners of her mouth turned downward. "Earlier you acted like you thought I was insane, and now you're on board?"

"Yeah," Dominic said before I could get anything out. "Now that she's got something riding on it."

Logan held an amused smile. "You made a bet?" His gaze settled on mine. "You're going to lose."

Dominic laughed. "I told her that."

Cocky pieces of shit, both of them. "Hey, fuck you. You both think you're so irresistible, why don't you try to seduce each other?" I sipped the drink I'd stolen from Evie as the limo took a turn and forced me to lean into Dominic. I set my hand on his chest and pushed off, righting myself. "Evie and I could watch."

It was like I'd insulted their mothers. Both men gave me an annoyed look, illustrating exactly how *not funny* that idea was to them.

"You're a bunch of hypocrites," I continued. "You love girl-on-girl, but you don't give us any guy-on-guy action."

Evie giggled at the thought. Shit. She sounded like I felt. Buzzing.

"Keep dreaming, devil woman."

I made a pouty face, but then I got an idea. The drink sloshed as I abandoned it in a cup holder and set my sights on Evie. She was sitting on the side bench, closest to the front of the limo, which meant I'd have to climb over Logan to get to her.

Strong arms ensnared me as I tried to move, and his low voice rumbled in my ear. "And where do you think you're going?"

"To get some girl-on-girl action," I whispered back, "since I didn't get any at the club." Instantly Dominic's hold was gone.

Logan eyed me with suspicion as I fumbled through the aisle. The car hit a bump and I tumbled into his lap.

"Don't mind me," I said, full of sarcasm. Which of course, he didn't. Logan made zero effort to help me, but perhaps he wanted to keep his distance. Dominic and I hadn't talked much about the fact I'd fucked his best friend, because it had happened months before I'd met the man who became my fiancé. But tension lurked in the quiet moments, and Logan didn't seem to know how to deal. It needed to not be so quiet.

"Get out your phone and put on some music," I ordered Logan. "Something sexy."

He didn't move. "What exactly is your plan?"

I flopped down on the seat between the bride and groom, edging Evie out of the way. "Evie's going to give me a lap dance."

Her laugh was bright and bubbly. She thought I was kidding? Because I wasn't.

The dark back seat glowed with soft light when Logan began tapping on his screen, and then a slow, seductive beat began.

“Come on,” I said to her, my voice going husky. “Let’s see if we can get Logan to come in his pants.” How would Evie beg him for sex if he were already spent?

Logan’s tone was dark. “You’re hilarious. That won’t happen, so there’s no need to try.”

“Logan,” Dominic barked. “Shut the fuck up.”

I grinned. Dominic hadn’t gotten to see Evie and me together, after all. It was only fair.

“Okay.” She flashed a smile as she shook her head. “Get ready for the least sexy lap dance ever.”

I’d cut her some slack. She was a little drunk. Even though the limo was spacious, it was still the interior of a car and didn’t leave much room. Plus, it was in motion and she had an audience.

But when she sat down on my lap and stared at me, like that was all she had, I laughed. “Yeah, don’t quit your day job.”

“Yes, please don’t,” Logan quipped.

Evie leaned over and put a hand on his leg to stabilize herself. “I wouldn’t dream of it, boss.”

I hadn’t lied at the club; I was exhausted. So I needed to get the show going if I had any hope of getting Logan turned on enough to ask her to break her rule. My palm slid up her spine, and I buried my fingers in her soft, thick hair, only to

clench a fistful and tug her head back. A startled noise erupted from her when I planted my lips on the side of her throat, right where her pulse pounded.

Both men straightened, and the mood in the back seat snapped from playful to serious in an instant. My other hand cupped the side of her face, holding her still as I sucked on her neck, and her heartbeat raced.

“Oh.” It escaped from Evie on the lightest of sighs.

She smelled like citrus. The tip of my nose traced her delicate skin, and I exhaled. It drew a shiver from her, and power rose in my belly. I’d learned how much I liked being in control the first night Akira let me have it over his submissive Yuriko. Dominic wouldn’t have an issue now, but how much control would Logan let me take?

Without releasing my hold, I softened my grip on the hair at the nape of her neck, giving her just enough leash so she could see both men gazing at us. Their lustful expressions only fed my power.

“Can I touch her?” I asked Logan, knowing his response would dictate what kind of response I got from her. If he were into it, she’d allow it. My hand not in her hair crept down to rest on her collarbone, and my fingers edged just inside the shoulder of her dress. Hinting exactly where I wanted to go.

“If it’s okay with Evie.”

It was a dangerous game I hadn’t intended to play again, but I couldn’t stop myself. The pads of my fingers glided over her smooth skin, traveling down the fabric of her dress until the round globe of her breast was in my hand.

She didn't stop me, thank God. Over the song playing on Logan's phone, I heard both men's breathing pick up.

"Shit," she mumbled. "What are we doing?" Only she arched her sexually starved body into my touch.

"Just having some fun." I squeezed and her nipple harden beneath her bra. *So responsive*. My mouth went back to her throat, and as I moved up, she turned her head down ...

Our lips met. *She* kissed me.

Her warm, soft mouth tasted like champagne and sin, and her hands cupped my face. Passionate. Delicate fingers brushed my cheek, and abruptly she shifted in my lap. Moving so she could straddle my legs, and devote all of her attention to me. Did she have the same thought as I did?

Either way, it was thrilling. Once again her skirt was almost to her hips, giving a hint of the dark panties she wore beneath. The new position made it easier to touch her tits, which I did. Her full C-cup breasts were so different from Yuriko's.

Evie rocked in my lap, stirring her hips, and grinding against me to the beat of the music.

"So you do know how to give a lap dance." Both of my hands massaged her breasts, pushing them together. "I think you should take off your dress."

Her eyes grew big.

"Nice try," Logan said. "You've had your fun, Payton." A surprised noise choked in Evie's throat when Logan grabbed her around the waist and hauled her into his lap, his eyes glinting with determination. "Dominic, do you mind if we sit

there?”

He didn't. As soon as Logan was gone, carrying Evie to the seat in the rear, Dominic took his seat beside me. The song faded out and another replaced it. This one was still sexy, but sounded dirtier. *Perfect*.

“I need the blindfolds.” It was an order from Logan.

Wait, no. Shit, I was going to lose. Evie settled into the seat and pressed back into it, her hands spread on her thighs. Then she crossed her legs and looked just as nervous as I felt.

“I left them in the club,” I lied.

He'd seen me put them away, but even if he hadn't, it wouldn't have mattered. Logan was like me and could read lies easily. “No, you didn't.”

I gave Dominic a traitorous glare as he reached into my purse, produced the blindfolds, and passed them to his friend.

“Why don't you,” Logan said to Dominic, “check the view out the window. See what's changed in the city since you've been gone.”

“The windows are tinted and it's night out.”

“Then stare at the fucking ceiling. Don't look back here.”

I laughed. Logan was just as possessive as Dominic, maybe more. My guess was Logan was about to remove Evie's panties and he didn't want Dominic to see anything.

“Okay.” Dominic exchanged a smirk with me. “I'll try.”

When Logan moved in to kiss her, she looked wary. She took the blindfold, but didn't put it on. “I don't have to wear it. Seeing myself naked doesn't violate the rule.”

Logan's expression was ruthless, and his tone was that of a dominant. "Put it on."

Fuck. It made me hot and my hand curled on Dominic's leg. Logan slid off the seat so he was kneeling on the floorboard, his back facing Dominic and me, and obscuring Evie from view just as she donned the black mask.

"No cheating," she said, her voice wavering.

Logan slipped the thin strap on the back of his head and positioned his blindfold down over his eyes. "I've got mine on now."

I hopped up into Dominic's lap, which allowed me to see over Logan's shoulder, and to put Dominic's hand on my thigh, high beneath my skirt. His warm palm smoothed up and down, but didn't move inward. No, not yet. He'd stoke the fire until I was desperate, and then he'd make me burn.

Evie flinched when Logan put his hands on her knees and urged her to uncross them. Her lips pressed together when his hands moved upward, carrying her skirt with it, all the way until her black panties were exposed. I barely got a look before Logan wrapped his fingers around the sides and began tugging them off.

"No sex," she said. Who exactly was she telling? It sounded more for herself than for him.

"No sex *with my cock*," he clarified.

I held my breath as the panties were worked past her knees, and she pulled one leg out, leaving the underwear on an ankle. A tiny landing strip of hair covered her slit, and it was sexy as hell. At her sides, Evie's hands were clenched into

fists. Her chest heaved rapidly.

“How’s that view, Dominic?” Logan asked.

“Still tinted and nighttime.”

“Great.” Logan’s palms trailed up Evie’s legs, gently pressing her knees apart. When he reached the juncture of her thighs, his hands curled, and he raked his fingernails down the insides of her legs, sensitizing her.

She jerked. “Oh my God.”

Logan bent, lowering his mouth to her knee, and his lips glided along the faint pink track marks he’d left on her pale skin. Goosebumps lifted on her legs, and she shuddered as he closed in.

“I’ve been dying to lick this pussy for the last thirty-seven days, Evie.”

Her tremble increased with anticipation as he hovered so close she could surely feel his breath. Her hands moved to clench the sides of her dress, and she went white-knuckled.

A short gasp punctuated the backseat when his mouth latched onto her clit. And since Logan was nestled between her parted legs, and they both had blindfolds on, there was no one to know Dominic was peeking except for me. I grinned and shook my head, but he just shrugged. Sort of like, “*Can you blame me?*” I couldn’t. It was so fucking hot.

“Oh, shit,” Evie said. Her back bowed from the leather seats, which forced Logan to clamp his hands on her legs, keeping her spread. Her head tilted back and she panted for breath as his tongue worked its way through her valley.

He didn't stop or slow when her hand crushed into his hair. Either trying to drive him back or hold him in place, I couldn't tell. Her moans grew louder as his face nuzzled. He attacked her like a man desperate for her orgasm, which he probably was. Maybe he'd edge her for a while and make her insane with need, just as Dominic loved to do to me. The tough skin of his palm caressed my thigh, each stroke inching closer to my pussy.

“God, don't stop.” Evie's whisper was more of a plea.

My legs opened and I shoved Dominic's hand where I needed it, pressing his fingers to my aching clit. I shifted in his lap, rubbing myself against him. But it wasn't enough.

“You're not allowed to wear panties for the rest of the night.” His dark voice was low and in my ear, too quiet for our friends to hear. *Yes.* I scrambled out of the underwear and shoved the wadded fabric in my purse, then pulled his hand right back to where it had been. It felt so fucking good when he touched me, just grazing my clit. My nerve endings sizzled and begged for more pressure.

Evie's legs were shaking. Her knees had gone lax and spread wide, her whole body under Logan's command. Only one hand was on her thigh. The other was beneath his mouth, working a finger inside her. It was slick with arousal, sliding in and out easily.

He paused. “You want another, naughty girl?”

She bit down on her bottom lip and nodded, but since he couldn't see, he continued to wait for an answer.

“Yes ...” she said. “Oh!” Logan's first two fingers eased

inside.

“Goddamnit,” Dominic whispered. “You’re so wet. Maybe I should have left your panties on.”

I shuddered when not one, but two fingers pushed inside me. Before I could moan loudly, his palm curled around my mouth.

“Quiet, Payton. Not a sound.”

His warm lips feathered kisses on my neck, sending waves of delicious shivers through me. So I sat there and watched Evie ride Logan’s fingers and tongue, while Dominic fucked me with two thick fingers, and struggled not to make a noise. I tried to contain the bliss that crashed into me and threatened to erupt. Dominic always found a way to put restraint on me, knowing how much I craved it. It made my release so much better.

My thumb rolled circles on his hard cock through his pants. How far would he allow me to go? Could I undo his belt and fuck him under my dress in front of our friends? They couldn’t see, but they could certainly hear.

There was a cry of pleasure from Evie, and a soft pop as Logan pulled off suction from her pussy.

“Tell me you want my cock,” he said as he straightened. His hands undid his pants. “Tell me how badly you need it.”

Her face was half-covered with the blindfold, but it twisted with agony. “Oh, God, Logan ...”

Dominic and I froze when Logan’s boxers were tugged out of his way and his large dick was gripped in a hand. A nervous cry tore from Evie as he ran the tip of his cock through her

wetness, testing her.

“Wait,” she blurted out. Her hands flailed, finding his shoulders.

He pumped his hips, sliding up and down through her folds. My pussy clenched at the visual. I loved how that sensation felt, the ridge of Dominic’s cock when he teased, skin on heated skin.

And holy shit. Was Logan going to break the rule?

He was right there. Only a slight push of his hips and he’d be inside her. Evie gulped down air like she was drowning. Her desire and his need were thick in the enclosed space, blanketing us all.

“Don’t you want to?” Logan’s words were coated in persuasion. Evil man. She squirmed beneath him. “Are you trying to get me to fuck you, naughty girl?”

Her expression flashed with guilt. “Please.”

“Please, what?”

“Do it,” she begged. “Just for a second.”

Dominic’s warm breath was at the shell of my ear. “I told you.” *Dammit.*

Logan continued his slow, mocking thrusts while not sliding into her. “What about the rule?”

“I don’t care anymore. You win, Logan. Fuck me, please.”

“Shit, Evie. I *really* fucking want to ...” His hands clenched on her waist, tightening to hold her still. “But I won’t.”

She gasped. “What? Why?”

“Because I love you. I’m not going to risk any regret about tonight. What if we do this and you end up wishing we’d waited a few more days?” He reached a hand out, finding her face and guided himself to plant a kiss on her lips. “I promise I’ll make it worth the wait.”

Warmth spread through my chest, spiraling outward from my heart. Yeah, Logan was lucky to have Evie, but she was plenty lucky to have him, too. He always put her first, which to me was the definition of love.

I glanced at Dominic, who wore the same smile I probably had on my face. He’d give me whatever I needed, just as I’d do for him, no matter what.

“So,” Logan said, “no sex until you make an honest man out of me. But I won’t say no if you want to blow me right now.”

She laughed and fused her lips to his. Their kiss was raw and powerful, and when she pulled back, she was grinning. But I knew her well. Beneath that blindfold, she was blinking back emotional tears. Her love for him was overwhelming.

“Where are you—” she said, but her words cut off as he bent back down. His tongue swirled where his cock had just been, and she twitched, like the pleasure had been intense. “Oh, shit.”

He sank his fingers inside her, pumping them in a furious tempo, and his mouth rotated on her clit, hinting how much work was going beneath his lips. She bucked on the seat, groaning.

Her moans swelled with each passing second. “God, I’m close,” she said. “I’m so fucking close.”

It only made Logan increase his efforts. His hand not inside her body wandered up her stomach, grabbing a handful of her breast. That seemed to be the final straw to tip her over the edge.

“Fuck!” She seized as tremors tumbled down her legs. The muscles along her calves strained with the orgasm until she collapsed back against the seat with an enormous sigh. Her mouth was slack, and she panted for air.

Watching the ecstasy rip through her flipped a switch on Dominic. His fingers pulsed inside me, and teeth sank into the flesh of my earlobe, so his breath filled my ear. My mind couldn’t focus on anything but this man. I groaned quietly into his rough palm that was covering my lips.

“Touch your pussy. Let’s make this body come.”

It was a command I was happy to follow. I buried my fingers in between my legs, rubbing the swollen nub, needing relief. God, his hands. The one fucking me was building my climax, but the one keeping me quiet was so dominating and hot.

Logan sat on the seat beside Evie, and she didn’t waste any time switching positions with him. Her knees were on the floor, the panties still wrapped around an ankle, and her hands gripped his hard cock in the moment before it disappeared into her mouth.

It came on a low voice from Logan. “*Fuck.*”

Was there something wrong with me that I liked watching

this? I enjoyed seeing her head bob on him, and loved listening to his heavy breathing. I was already unbearably turned on, but then Logan gathered her hair up into a makeshift ponytail, holding it with a strong hand while she sucked him. It was so hot, it made me sweat. He controlled her pace, and the leather seats protested when he thrust up into her mouth.

All the air in the interior of the limo seemed to have disappeared, and in this vacuum, electricity crackled with intensity as both Logan and I approached orgasm. I wasn't trying to time it with him, but I also wasn't in control. Dominic was, absolutely.

“Who’s going to come first?” His gravel whisper asked. “I think it should be you.”

Desire burned across my skin, glossing it, and I hungered for my release. Everything ached and focused in on the end goal. The tingling, lightweight sensation that happened just before orgasm fluttered in my belly.

“Mmm ...” I moaned through Dominic’s hand, and let the pleasure take me. I convulsed in his embrace, slowed my own touch, and pressed my fingers hard to my pulsing clit. My eyes pinched shut and everything felt warm and amazing as I exploded.

As it faded, I inhaled a breath slowly through my nose, and the hand fell away from my mouth.

“Yes, just like that,” Logan said through clenched teeth. “I’m gonna come.” His grip guided her to go faster, and faster, and ... “Shit, shit!”

His moans built into a crescendo and peaked, and he held her firm as he came, her jaw locked around him. It prolonged the aftershocks of my orgasm, even as Dominic's fingers retreated. But when he withdrew, it took the last of the energy from my body. Exhaustion stormed in and made itself home.

What about Dominic?

I set a hand on the bulge of his pants, stroking down, but he took my hand in his and stopped me.

"Can I be honest?" he said. "I'm fucking tired. I need a raincheck, devil woman."

He couldn't be more perfect if he'd tried. "Thank God. I am, too. You just saved yourself from a lackluster blow job."

His eyebrow lifted. "Blow job's still a blow job." But his arms tightened around my waist, holding me close. "Tomorrow. You better give me your A-game."

I shrugged and tossed my hair over a shoulder. "I don't know. I don't just give that to anybody."

The embrace was gone, only so he could flick my tattoo and deliver the tiny sting that reminded me how much I loved him. Even though he knew I didn't need it.

S E V E N

I stared at my phone, gnashed my teeth, and slowly lifted my gaze to meet Dominic's. "They're late."

"Give them a minute. You know how traffic can be."

We sat in the back of the crowded restaurant and nursed drinks while we waited for my parents to arrive. I'd made the call yesterday morning while Dominic hovered over me, ensuring that a decent effort was put in on my part. And I couldn't fault him for wanting this, but I hated it. My parents were going to disappoint us, and although I wasn't responsible, I still felt that way by association.

The waiter came by and asked if we wanted to order lunch, but Dominic shook his head and the waiter left.

"You think it'd be rude to order without them?" I asked. Dominic's expression was pointed, but I shrugged. "Well, I think it's fucking rude that they can't tell us they're running behind."

I was halfway through my second glass of wine when my phone rang. I glanced at the number and groaned. "One guess who it is." I swiped to answer the call and tried not to seethe. "Hey, where are you?"

"Payton," my mother said. "Your father's in a deposition that's taking a lot longer than he thought it would. Are you already at the restaurant?"

Was I—? *Seriously?* "Yeah. You said one o'clock."

She sighed. "I don't know when he's going to be finished,

and he's got to be in court by three. This case has been such a mess, I told him he should have given it to one of the other partners."

"So you're not coming."

From across the table, Dominic's blue eyes studied me, gauging my response. All he wanted was to meet my parents. We'd flown ten thousand miles from Japan, and they couldn't make it twenty blocks from my father's law firm.

"We were looking forward to it," my mom said, "but it's been such a busy week. I'm sorry. I feel just awful about it."

"Yeah?" I was done with this bullshit. "You should feel awful." I pressed the *End Call* button and dropped my phone on the table. Surely my mother was on the other end wondering what had happened. I'd never talked to her like that before, but I'd also never felt more let down by them.

"I'm sorry," Dominic said.

His unnecessary apology only made me angrier. "*You're* sorry? For what? Wanting my parents not to be dicks?"

I said it too loud and the couple at the table next to us glanced over.

"No more wine for you." Dominic gave me a lopsided smile. "You know, it's easier to talk like that when no one around us speaks English."

"I told you this would happen."

He blinked, but his face remained unchanged. "You did." He flipped open his menu casually. "So, we tried, Payton. We'll see if they change their attitude when they want to see

their grandkids.”

Grandkids.

We both wanted children, and we’d talked about it in the future, but it continued to throw me off balance how settled and comfortable he was with the idea. Sometimes I’d catch myself staring with disbelief at the enormous ring on my finger. I was engaged, I had to remind myself. I’d found another person who willingly wanted to be a part of my life. Shocking.

His carefree demeanor, and the lunch we eventually ordered, diffused some of my anger. It was pointless to get worked up, and I tried to emulate Dominic’s easy mood.

“So, I’ve been thinking,” I said as we finished up our plates. “We both technically won the bet about Evie and Logan.”

Dominic leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms. “How do you figure that?”

“The no-sex rule. It didn’t get broken.”

A lazy smile grew on his lips. “Fine, devil woman. I’ll have lunch with Joseph, but only because you want us to. Let’s be clear. You did not win that bet.”

“Whatever.” I climbed out of my chair, and was about to tell him I was heading for the restroom, when something caught my eye. Not something, but *someone*.

Holy shit.

He wove through the tables, moving quickly toward me, a blur in an expensive suit. “Payton.”

“What the fuck?” I stared in disbelief.

He grinned, surprised. “Wow, nice language.” His glance went from top to bottom. “And, wow. You look great.”

Dominic’s hand was warm on my waist, but his expression painted in a scowl at this man he didn’t know. I would have laughed if I could get over what I was seeing.

“You must be the fiancé. I’m Kyle McCreary.” My brother extended a hand.

Once the information settled in, the tension in Dominic’s shoulders relaxed and a smile broke on his face. He took Kyle’s hand and shook it. “Hey, yeah. Dominic Ward.”

“Okay,” I said. “What are you doing here?”

“Mom told me what happened. I thought I’d see if I could catch you before you left.”

There was a thin gloss of sweat on Kyle’s forehead as if he’d hurried, and the purple plaid tie he wore with his gray suit was askew.

“So you ran from New York all the way to this restaurant?”

Kyle’s soft smile froze. “No, I live here now.” He pushed his suitcoat back so he could rest his hands on his hips and catch his breath. “You didn’t know?”

He looked so different from the last time I’d seen him, which had been ... when? My college graduation? Kyle’s hair was more like Dad’s, the color of maple syrup. He’d let it go long on the top and it was a little wild. Soft curls turned up at the ends. I couldn’t tell if he’d skipped shaving for the last

three days, or if it was perfectly maintained scruff.

Either way, it was a good look on him.

My arms moved without thought, and suddenly I was hugging him. Kyle stood straight and immobile, confused. My family did *not* hug. But then again, I'd always been the black sheep.

“No, Mom didn't tell me,” I said. “She's *too busy*, I guess.” I stepped back from him and curled into Dominic's embrace. “When did you move?”

“About six weeks ago. Dad got me a position with his firm.”

“What happened to New York?”

Kyle's eyes clouded with an emotion I couldn't interpret. He looked ... unhappy? But in a flash, the emotion was replaced with an empty one. “That's a story for later.” His gaze held mine. “Look, I can't stay. My schedule's crazy while they're bringing me up to speed on my caseload, but ... hell. We haven't seen each other in a while.”

We certainly hadn't. My older brother and I weren't close growing up. I'd done my own thing while Kyle had been the golden boy. I didn't envy him; the crown seemed heavy. Mom and Dad laid enormous pressure on him, so I understood when he'd high-tailed it out of Chicago, not a week after graduating law school. My parents felt disrespected he hadn't come to the firm that carried the McCreary name.

But that had been years ago. Now he was back?

“So you ran twenty blocks in a suit to see me?” I asked.

“Mom said you were upset.” He took a deep breath and smoothed a hand down his tie. “Mom and Dad don’t get it. They think their stuff is more important than anyone else’s. I used to try really hard to make them understand, and honestly, my life got so much easier once I stopped.”

My mouth dropped open. It was the most honest I’d ever heard him, and he made his living spinning truths and twisting words.

“I also came to meet Dominic.” Kyle’s focus shifted to my fiancé. “As her brother, I’m supposed to threaten you with bodily harm if you don’t treat her right, but that’s not really my style. So enjoy my threat of litigation instead. I’m very good, and it wouldn’t be pleasant.”

“Aw, you’re sweet,” I said, my voice mocking. “But Dominic’s smart. He knows if he fucks up with me, I’d be his biggest threat.”

“Yes,” Dominic said instantly.

Kyle blinked again at the profanity. Not like he was offended, but more amused. Shit, how far apart had we’d been these last few years? He barely knew me anymore, and I’d never really known him.

“Okay, well, that’s good, I guess.” Kyle fiddled with his watch and checked the time. “I have to run. As in, literally.”

“Thank you for coming,” I said, hoping my voice matched how sincere I felt, because I was a little blown away.

“Should we grab drinks some night this week?” Dominic asked, but Kyle shook his head.

“I’d like that, but everything’s a mess with the move. You

two will be back for good in a few months though, right? We could do it then.”

“Sure.”

We said our goodbyes, and I watched Kyle go. It was such a simple gesture for him to come over, and yet it meant so much.

Dominic had a strange half-smile on his face.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Running here and back just to say hello. Your parents don’t get it, but your brother does.”

“Yeah,” I said. *Who would have thought?*



The premium leather of my driver’s seat was buttery soft. I’d narrowly avoided reunion tears when I’d picked my car up from Logan’s place. Well, *technically*, our place. Evie and Logan would move out in mid-December so Dominic and I could move in when we returned from Japan.

I felt bad about kicking them out, but only for thirty seconds. The view was to die for, and Logan had known this day was coming since leasing the place from his friend.

“It looks different in the daylight,” Dominic said, gesturing to the blindfold club entrance. He wasn’t wrong. The black door looked smaller, and the wear on the façade seemed greater in the harsh light.

“Yeah, this place is way less sexy during the day.” A fact

I'd discovered the first time Joseph had asked me to fill in for him. I hadn't a clue why Joseph wanted to meet here now, but since the club was a good twenty-minute drive from our hotel, and I had my hands on my Jaguar F-Type, it was fine with me.

"Any chance you'd let me drive the car back to the hotel when we leave?" Dominic's hopeful expression wasn't enough to pry my grip from the steering wheel.

He hadn't driven a car in almost two years. "No way, get your own."

"Half of this car will be mine when we're married."

I shut off the engine and let my expression go serious. "Yeah, the passenger half."

We hurried across the street and through the front door that Joseph left unlocked for us. It was dark except for the security lights as we strolled through the bar and down the hallway of doors. The silence and poor lighting further detracted from the sex appeal.

To the left were the holding lounges, and to the right were the client rooms. I'd met Dominic in Room One. A smile warmed on my lips as we passed the door decorated with the brass six, the room where Dominic asked me to be his wife.

"Joseph?" I called, leading Dominic upstairs.

"In here."

Not in his office, but across the hall in the large dressing room. He stood by the bar lining the far wall, his back turned to us. His suit jacket was cast aside on a chair, and as he poured himself a glass of whiskey, I could see his sleeves had been rolled back. This was as close to casual as Joseph got.

“Hey.”

My voice forced him to turn. He probably appeared composed and maintained to Dominic, but like the last time I’d seen Joseph, there were faint edges around his eyes. He looked ... weary. Not that I’d say that to him. Joseph was all about power, and he’d view it as weakness.

He smiled. “You got him to agree to come.”

“Of course,” I said. “My boy-toy does whatever I tell him to.”

The snap on my hip was sharp and biting. Dull pain lingered on my tattoo, so I glared up at the blue eyes watching me. “Okay, ow.”

Dominic looked smug. “Watch it.”

“You watch it,” I echoed back like a four-year-old.

Joseph carried his drink in one hand and strode toward us, pretending he hadn’t just witnessed the immature exchange. “Dominic,” he said. “I’m Joseph Monsato.”

“I remember.” My fiancé’s words were tight. “Everything about that night was pretty hard to forget. You know, except for those ten minutes after the bouncer’s right hook.”

They’d met face to face in the front lounge when Dominic first arrived at the club almost a year ago. It was protocol with walk-ins, plus Joseph liked to evaluate potential clients to match them with the right girl. That meeting had been fine, according to Dominic, but the way he’d left the club was still a sore subject. He’d spent the whole night trying to find me, his head throbbing with a black eye, all because of Joseph.

“I’m sorry about what happened,” Joseph said, his expression genuine. “I didn’t handle it well when Payton said she wanted to leave. Your fiancé was a big part of this place, and also my friend, and ... I wasn’t sure how the fuck I was going to get on without her.”

Joseph didn’t mean it sexually, of that I was sure. Yet his admission made my breath stall in my lungs. When I’d left the club, I hadn’t just quit, I’d effectively abandoned Joseph. I was at a loss for words, which had to be a fucking first.

“It was good, though,” Joseph continued. “For me, and most definitely for her.”

Dominic shifted his stance. He didn’t seem to be faring much better than I was with the seesaw emotions between resentment and surprise. “Uh, yeah.”

Joseph’s attention sought mine. “I bet you want to know why I asked you here.”

“The question had crossed my mind.”

“I need a favor, and unfortunately, I need it from both of you.”

Well, he was just full of surprises today. “What is it?”

The amber liquid sloshed in Joseph’s drink as he swirled his glass. “I hired a new girl, and I can’t get a read on her.” He paused to take a sip. “Usually I can tell whether or not they’d be good, but this one ...”

“How’d she do with her ...” I wasn’t about to remind Dominic how the girls at the club got their spots. Several months ago I’d had too much vodka, or ‘truth serum’ as he called it, and spilled all the gritty details about the club. “With

her audition?”

“Christ,” Dominic growled.

But Joseph’s face was stoic. “She didn’t audition. Regan’s only interested in being a sales assistant. She’s made it clear she won’t get on the table.”

As far as I knew, that was a first. All girls started on the table. “Why not?”

“She says she has a boyfriend, but I don’t think that’s her reason.”

“Okay, what is?”

“She’s not submissive,” Joseph said.

I could sense Dominic’s impatience with all of this, and tried to get right to it. “So, what’s the favor?”

“I’m hoping you’ll get on the table,” he said, his dark gaze trapping mine. “And let Regan negotiate the deal when Dominic tries to buy you.”

E I G H T

Regan was a redhead, her hair fire engine red with streaks of copper. She had gorgeous, big blue eyes and high cheekbones, and a slender frame. But beneath her simple black suit dress, I could see power lurked. This woman had a strict workout regimen.

Her sleek nose and bow lips made her look regal. She was beautiful, which was good. Her looks would help her during negotiations. A little older than me, but still young.

“You’ve done this before?” I asked her as I stripped off my clothes and hung them in the empty, open-faced locker in the dressing room. Dominic had been sequestered into one of the holding rooms downstairs, while Joseph went to his office.

My fiancé hadn’t been thrilled with this plan, but I felt like I owed Joseph. I’d abandoned him twice in the last year, first when I’d quit, and once again when I’d gone back to Japan. So I told Dominic I wanted this, and gave him the reminder that he’d be running the show when I was on the table. Total control over me.

So, he was on board.

Regan’s voice was pleasant. “I shadowed with Nina and Tara several times. I know I’m new, but trust me. I’ll get the most I can out of him.”

Even though it came off sounding arrogant, I liked it. Sales were all about confidence, and this woman had it in spades.

I slipped an arm into the silk robe while her gaze lingered

at the tattoo on my hip, but she said nothing. She seemed comfortable when I'd gotten naked, not staring, but not averting her eyes either. Like she was assessing me as a product, which was good. I dug through my black hole of a purse until I located a tube of lipstick and went to the mirror to apply it.

"You're sure you're up for this?" she asked. "Joseph said you haven't been back very long."

I pressed my lips together, spreading the color evenly. We'd decided for a cover story that I'd left Dominic back in Japan, returned to Chicago bitter from the breakup, and flat broke. I was ready to get back to the blindfold club and start earning money.

"Fuck yeah. I might be a little rusty, but I haven't forgotten what to do." I gave her a wink. Not that there was all that much to it. I'd be bound, blindfolded, and not supposed to speak.

"All right. Let's go make some money." She hooked in her earpiece and motioned toward the door.

If Regan was nervous about her first solo sale, she didn't show it. Her heels clicked steadily over the floor when she pushed open the door to Room Two and led me inside. She moved with practiced efficiency to prepare. First, the lights, then the thermostat, and finally she went to the cushioned table in the center.

A drawer squeaked as I slipped the robe off and hung it on the hook. Regan already had the straps tethered to the anchors on the table when I made my way toward her.

“Joseph mentioned the client is already in the holding room,” she said, subtly telling me not to dawdle. Wealthy men didn’t wait for pussy. “Did he tell you anything about the appointment? I figure he’s someone important for Joseph to schedule in the middle of the week.”

“Maybe,” I said with forced casualness. It was hilarious how excited I was about the favor. Dominic and I were both going to enjoy this role-play.

Regan rushed through the final stages of setup so I was bound and had the blindfold in place, and she signaled Joseph through her comm that we were ready. There was no sound from her other than her soft breathing. She didn’t bother to move to the chair in the corner to wait, knowing it wouldn’t be long.

In the dark and quiet, my body began to respond. Goosebumps pebbled on my skin and anticipation hardened my nipples into knots. I licked my lips, waiting impatiently for him.

“Good afternoon, sir,” Regan’s voice purred.

I hadn’t heard the door open, but it shut behind him and Dominic shuffled a few steps closer. My legs slid together, rubbing my knees against each other as desire corded around me. Would he leave the blindfold on this time? The straps, I was sure. I’d called the shots both times we’d been here before, and he wasn’t going to give me an opportunity to do it a third time.

“Do you like what you see?” Regan asked sincerely. Not pushing, not yet.

“Yeah, she’s pretty cute.”

My face scrunched under the blindfold. What the fuck was that, *cute*? I held my tongue, but I’d let him hear about it later. He was probably grinning at how hilarious he thought he was. That was, if he wasn’t blushing.

“Pretty cute?” Regan’s words were dubious. “I think she’s gorgeous.”

“Yeah, all right, she’s really fucking hot.” *Better, Dominic.*

“You two would make quite the pair. It looks like you’re in fantastic shape, if you don’t mind me saying. Do you work out, play sports?”

Good. Regan used the code to communicate that he was attractive when she dropped the sports mention.

“No sports. I’m more into lifting. So, how does this work?”

She paused. “You haven’t been to the club before?”

“No.” Dominic took a step closer. “I almost didn’t come in. This place didn’t look like I expected it to.”

It wasn’t all that much of a lie, and I appreciated the detail. He was doing a decent job of selling it.

“Well, I’m glad you did. Is that beautiful Jaguar out front yours?”

“Sure is.”

I could hear the fucking smile in his voice, and it was insanely difficult not to jolt against the restraints or call him out. Oh, he was going to *get it* when these straps were off.

“Nice,” she said. “Fifty thousand.”

He gave a sharp noise of surprise. “Are you asking if my car was fifty thousand dollars, or is that the price—”

“It’s for her.”

Holy shit, what the fuck was Regan doing?

“That’s ... too much.” He stumbled over the words, as if he wasn’t sure what was going on. Yeah, me too.

“You’re saying you don’t think she’s worth that?”

A frustrated sigh slipped out. He’d told me long ago the negotiations made him queasy. He didn’t like assigning a dollar value to me. This was supposed to be fun. *Pretend*. Her question made it a little too real.

“I’m saying ... I’d feel more comfortable paying five.”

Her heels clicked as she glided closer to him. “I understand.” Her warm hand rested lightly on my ankle. The indication that she thought he was willing to pay a lot more, which he had agreed to once.

Her hand squeezed, prompting me to respond. I shook my head.

“I’m sorry, she’s not willing to accept the offer. Would you like to try again? How about sixty thousand?”

“What? That’s more.”

I couldn’t understand what her game was, and broke the rule about staying quiet. I tried not to hiss it at her. “What are you doing?”

“Joseph told me to try to get as much out of the client as I

could.” Her direct voice was stunning. “I believe this man would pay every last cent he had for you.” *Oh my God.* “Am I wrong?”

The question seemed to be for Dominic. He sighed. “Nope.”

“You’re her boyfriend?” she asked.

“Fiancé.”

“Fuck,” I said, squirming against the straps. “What tipped you off?”

“Lots of things. He didn’t look at your tattoo, which is interesting, so that made me think he’d already seen it. There’s no security on the premises, which says Joseph trusts this man with you.” She paused. “Also, I could tell he lied about the car. Even if I couldn’t, it was too much coincidence. I saw the Jaguar logo on your keyring as you were going through your purse upstairs.”

A feminine hand was on my wrists, tugging at the Velcro.

“The biggest giveaway,” she continued, “is the way he looks at you. Can’t take his eyes off of you.”

The command from Dominic was quiet, but firm. “Stop. I’ll do that.”

Yeah, he’d undo my restraints ... when he was good and ready. I took in a deep breath. “Tell Joseph he should hire you.”

She gave a half-laugh. “He just did.” She must have meant through the comm in her ear. “Have fun, you two.”

Heels tapped out on the hard floor, growing quieter with

each step, and the door fell shut. I flinched when fingers skimmed across my belly and up between the valley of my breasts. He gripped my chin and set his soft lips against mine.

“I would, you know,” Dominic said. “Pay every last cent I have for you, Payton.”

“I told you, I don’t want your money.”

His hot mouth sucked and licked at the base of my throat as it journeyed downward. “Yeah? What do you want?”

“For starters, I want my ring back. And then I want your cock.”

He chuckled and the mouth vanished. The cold ring was slipped back onto its home on my finger, and I clenched my hand tight around it. It’d been off for twenty minutes, but it felt like eons.

“Okay, now that cock.”

His lips were back at my collarbone, inching over my skin. “You,” the stubble of his unshaven face rubbed against my breasts, “are not ... *fucking* in charge.”

“Shit!” I cried as he nipped at the underside of my breast, hard enough it might have left a crescent shaped mark. His physical mark on me to match the emotional one he’d left. Dominic stained my soul, and I loved it. Electricity spiderwebbed from the sting, and my veins flooded with heat.

My hands curled around ribbons holding me down as his fingernails scored painlessly across my stomach in a straight line toward my pussy. His light touch was worse than his firm one. The ache choked my lungs and left my head swirling with need.

Inch by inch.

His mouth followed his fingers down and he inhaled deeply, like he was trying to memorize my scent. The pads of his fingers worked over the inside of my thighs, my hips, and dragged slowly from one spot to another just above my slit. Teasing. Tormenting.

“Touch me,” I whispered.

He didn't. His palms smoothed down my legs and back up again. I urged my knees apart and the leather protested quietly. The throb in my clit was intense, fueled by his warm breath that I could feel pouring over me.

“Dominic,” I whined.

Those fucking hands continued to explore and linger, never straying to where I was desperate for them. His lips skimmed the inside of my knee. Sparks danced across my nerves as two fingers brushed upward in a line along my thigh, starting a tremble in my legs.

“Please.” I begged it on a shuddering breath.

“This is how I like you. Watching you trying to keep it together.” There was another nip on my thigh, but this one was soft and seductive. “Let's play a little game, Payton. I'm going to undo one of your straps.”

It was hard to think through the fog of lust. He was going to set me free? The use of one hand meant I could easily undo the other strap or pull off the blindfold. I'd only have the illusion of restraint.

“I'm going to make you come,” he said. He kissed the spot where my leg joined my body. The muscles low in my

stomach clenched in response, so hard it was almost painful. “If you touch me, or yourself, you don’t get to come the rest of the day.”

I swallowed a gulp of air and bit down on my bottom lip. I almost preferred that he keep me bound. I didn’t trust myself. But the Velcro tugged open with a loud scratchy noise, and his hand closed on my wrist, pinning it to the mattress-top.

“It’s simple. Your hand stays here. Can you obey?”

My chest was heaving and my heart raced. “Yes, Sir.”

He issued a noise of approval. I didn’t call him Sir often as if he were my Dom and mean it. I liked rationing the word so it carried more power and weight when used.

“*Yes,*” I cried. My back arched up off the table and my head tipped back. His soft, sinful tongue licked and swirled. It fluttered on my clit. I probably looked like a woman possessed when he fucked me with his mouth, but it was true. I was completely possessed by him. Two thick fingers crept inside. The first inch. And another. Behind closed eyelids, colors spun with my pleasure.

But the warmth of his mouth retreated, causing me to collapse back against the cushion-top.

“Oh ... my ... *fuck.*”

He wasn’t playing fair. A third finger nudged down, touching my asshole while his fingers were fucking my pussy. I swallowed hard, and commanded my hand to stay in place. I wanted to rub my clit as his finger began to intrude there, filling me full. My orgasms with anal were much more intense, but I wouldn’t get there on penetration alone.

I began to writhe when he had two fingers in each entrance. His languid pace was diabolical, and I pictured him bent over the table between my legs, propped up on one arm as he fucked me with the other. His gorgeous eyes would be watching my every move. Every gasp of breath I took.

My head turned and I moaned it into the side of my arm. “Oh, God, please.”

It was killing me not to set my fingers on my swollen clit. It would probably take me two circles of my frantic fingers and I’d come apart. He knew this. He was pushing me as he liked to do.

“You’re so fucking hot, I can’t stand it,” he said in his rough, deep voice.

I cried out in relief as his other hand cupped my pussy, his thumb rolling circles on the nub that was the center of my pleasure.

“Scream for me,” he commanded.

Holy shit, I did. It ripped from my throat and echoed in the soundproof room, so only he could hear how much ecstasy he’d drawn out of my body. I convulsed on his fingers as bliss tore me apart, and the sensation went on.

And on.

Oh my God.

I screamed again as the second wave of pleasure crashed into me, leaving my mind blank. All I could do was shudder and endure as my body took control. Flashes of white decorated my eyelids.

“Fuck,” he groaned. “Your pussy’s gonna break my fingers.”

There was no response I could give. No biting remark. I had to focus on pulling air in through clenched teeth. He’d gotten me breathing so hard I’d come close to passing out. The hand slid away. His zipper rang out. The table shook as he climbed on it.

His voice was pure sex. “Here’s the cock you asked for.”

He didn’t give me any rest. His fat dick impaled me in a single thrust. My mouth fell open, but no sound came out and my heart refused to work properly. It slammed in my chest just as fast as he slammed into me, and it burned so good.

His clothed body pressed to my naked one, and my nipples rubbed against the cotton of his t-shirt. I loved feeling his weight on me. Then he shifted, taking it away for a moment, and when his body pressed back down, it was warm skin on mine. He’d pushed his shirt up so we could have delicious contact.

The fingers of my unbound wrist flexed and curled back into a fist. I yearned to touch him, or to push my blindfold up so I could watch as he fucked me. Whimpers flowed from my mouth. Desperate, pathetic noises that only seemed to make his cock harder and his thrusts deeper.

“You feel so fucking good,” I mumbled into the side of his neck. The flutters in my belly began once more, and I was quaking beneath him.

“You ready to come again?” His voice was corrupt.

My head bobbed up and down, nodding violently.

One hand slipped beneath me, grabbing a handful of my ass and squeezing just to the edge of pain. He slammed his hips against me, driving his cock at a furious pace. “Then fucking do it.”

I moaned as he shoved me over the edge into euphoria. Another of my screams filled the room, but this one was followed by his loud groan, and it set off a series of jerks from him. His cock pulsed inside me, one wave after another of heated bliss.

The tense muscles pressed against mine began to relax as he recovered from his orgasm. “Shit, our American sex is epic.”

A short laugh fell out of me. “Our Japanese sex isn’t a joke either.”

“We should teach classes.” He faked seriousness. “People could learn a lot from us.”

“Right. Like how not to lie about your fiancé’s car being yours.” A finger tugged the blindfold off and I blinked at my vision suddenly being restored.

“It’ll be mine eventually.” His voice was heavy with meaning and his eyes glinted.

He was right in every sense. He pushed me, always getting his way in the end, and I *loved* every minute of it.

I loved it almost as much as I loved him.

NINE

EVIE

Processional music broadcasted softly from the small speaker in the cramped bridal room. It sounded tinny through the electronics, but I hoped it was beautiful for the guests sitting in the pews in the nave of the church. I was sure it was. Logan had picked the quartet himself.

Holy crap, it was really happening.

Logan's mom probably had the same thought. She'd been waiting for this day a long time. For years, everyone had assumed it'd be a lithe blonde marching down the aisle, not a brunette with thick thighs.

Why the hell was I thinking about his ex? I was a jittery mess, all nervous and excited and happy. I couldn't wait to see him, and I couldn't fucking wait to become his wife.

My gaze was glued to Payton, who held her bouquet of blue hydrangeas and white roses in one hand, and fiddled with the top of her bridesmaid dress. I'd let the girls pick their own, the only stipulation being that the dress was solid black. She'd chosen a strapless one that had a deep V notched in the center of the neckline, revealing her ample cleavage. By her standards, the dress was tame, but the priest was going to have a heart attack.

"Don't forget," I said to her. "Flowers up here." I held my bouquet up high over my chest. I need to crack a joke to distract from my nerves.

She smirked. “Are you insane? I’m not covering my best feature.”

My father cleared his throat and Payton sobered, falling into line with the rest of my bridesmaids while we moved to the narthex. Only a set of double doors stood between Logan and me now. At the front of the line, Jamie disappeared through them with her arm linked to Logan’s half-brother Garrett.

Payton had corrected Jamie at the rehearsal dinner last night when my coworker friend called me Evie. God, my best friend’s little jealous streak was so funny. It’s not like I’d demoted Payton’s best friend status, but Jamie and I had become friends over the past year. Plus she had been awesome at helping plan the wedding on a budget. Thank God the Stones offered to pay for half of it. I was so blessed, and my family was grateful.

“Oh, no,” I whispered to my father. “Don’t you dare. If you start, I start, and I won’t be able to stop.” Tears stung and threatened to spill.

He wiped at his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. “I’m fine. I’ve got it together. It’s just thirty feet.” Since his tone was unsure, I stared up at the ceiling, desperate to drain the tears back.

Nick, Logan’s brother, was the best man, but it made more sense for him to walk down the aisle with his wife Hilary, who was also a bridesmaid. Plus, this left Payton and Dominic to walk together. My heartbeat ratcheted up another level as Hilary and Nick disappeared into the church.

My knees were soft and uncooperative as Dominic stepped

into view, offering his arm to my maid of honor. “You look beautiful,” he said as she threaded her hand through the crook of his elbow. “Oh, and you, Payton, you look nice, too.”

She turned, flashed a grin back at me, and stepped off with Dominic.

“Thirty feet,” my dad mumbled to himself, like he was trying to get pumped up.

My heart launched into my throat, blocking air as the song ended and the first strings of the wedding march began. I wasn’t sure who was leaning on whom for support; both of us were shaking.

The doors swung open with the swell in the music, revealing the standing rows of friends and family who’d come to celebrate Logan’s and my union. Every pair of eyes was on me, except for my father’s. He was probably counting the steps as we moved forward.

No amount of visualization could have prepared me emotionally for this moment.

I’d seen Logan in a tuxedo before, and it had made me weak in the ovaries, but now he incinerated them. They didn’t stand a chance against his perfect three-piece black suit, a formal black bow tied at his neck.

His focus was one hundred percent on me. There could be fireworks going off all around, we wouldn’t have noticed. They couldn’t compete with the fireworks between us anyway.

Logan’s lips parted and shoulders lifted in a deep breath. Had I ever seen him this stunned before? My perfectly controlled man seemed to be struggling. The thoughts he held

were loud on his face. He wanted to storm up the aisle and whirl me into his arms. He'd like to kiss me hard, and probably fuck me harder.

Oh, God. I'd just thought about fucking while at church. I was going to hell.

The enormous skirt of my A-line dress swished as we ambled across the white aisle runner at a measured pace. My dad was rushing and I tensed my arm, trying to get him to slow down. There was so much to take in, I didn't want to miss any of it. Every step brought me closer to the man I loved, and I wanted to celebrate them each as a victory.

As the distance between us shortened, the depth in Logan's dark eyes grew. His expression filled with so much love, it was overwhelming. My bottom lip and chin trembled as I teetered right on the edge.

No, no, no ... I did not want to cry. Why did people cry when they were happy? I fought to pull the corners of my mouth back into a smile.

“Ten, nine ...”

Oh, good God, my father was literally counting under his breath. His stage fright was a welcomed distraction, and it was like a countdown to the moment I'd be with my groom.

“Five ... four ...” Logan straightened and his broad shoulders pulled back as he inched forward, as if he couldn't wait and wanted to meet me halfway.

“Three ... two ... one.”

Logan's hand was extended to my father and the men shook. I leaned in, tilting my head as my dad kissed my cheek.

“I love you, Evelyn. Your mother and I are so happy for you.” I closed my eyes, squeezing back fresh tears. “And I’m outta here.”

My eyes popped open, and I choked on my laugh as my dad scurried behind me, trying not to trip over my cathedral veil. My gaze turned back and found Logan’s. His hand clasped mine and our fingers laced together. We turned toward the altar and went forward, together.

It was a blur after that. Readings, vows, and the rings. I slipped the silver band on Logan’s left hand, and ... yup, definitely going to hell. More impure thoughts at church. The band symbolizing his commitment to me was undeniably sexy. Our gazes and hands locked together.

The priest’s baritone voice echoed in the vaulted ceilings. “You may now share your first kiss as husband and wife.”

Even though I knew it was coming, the moment still caught me off guard. I wanted to lick my lips, which felt sticky from the long-lasting lipstick the makeup artist had applied this morning, yet Logan didn’t give me time. As soon as he had the go-ahead, his fingertips glided over my cheek, gently drawing me in. His mouth lowered to mine and stole my breath. Soft, warm lips moved unhurried, taking as much time as he wanted, teasing me with a hint of tongue. I melted against his kiss as I always did. It was as shockingly good as it had been our first time that wild, out of control night outside the blindfold club.

No, wait, this was better. A million times better because he was my husband.

His kiss left me woozy, and I swayed when his hands

retreated, my body mourning their absence. It was momentary, because he wrapped his hand around mine, holding me steady. His dark, intense eyes sparkled, helping further to pin me back in place.

The ceremony drew to a close, and it was impossible to catch our breath. Pictures. The receiving line. The stretch limo that carried us with our bridal party to the Opulent Hotel where our reception would be.

We'd squeezed together to all fit in the limo, and with my enormous dress, I was practically sitting on Logan's lap.

"You look amazing, wife." He murmured it against the side of my neck, and I giggled.

"You look pretty amazing yourself, husband."

Being in the limo with him was a dangerous reminder of our evening last Saturday, and I shuddered with anticipation. Dinner, dancing, and then we'd be upstairs in the honeymoon suite, completely alone. No more closet or bathroom doors shielding his gorgeous body from my eyes, and no more self-imposed rules of keeping it in our pants.

By the time we arrived at the hotel, cocktail hour was nearly over. Payton hurried to bustle my dress in the handicapped stall of the bathroom while I slammed a bottle of water.

"There you are," Logan said when we emerged, as if we'd been in there for a century. "We need to line up for introductions." He threw a pointed look at Payton. "You're letting her fall behind schedule, McCreary."

She snatched a glass of white wine off a server's tray.

“Yeah? I dare you to figure out the ribbons of her bustle faster than I did.”

“The only thing I’m going to concern myself with Evie’s dress,” Logan said, “is how fast I can get her out of it.”

I laughed, but it froze in my throat as my grandmother’s head turned our direction. *Shit!* A light smile breezed on her lips, and she ... *oh my God*. She winked.

Logan and I scarfed down our dinners so we could spend as much time as possible mingling among the tables of our guests. I’d been to weddings where the bride and groom never once spoke to me and was determined not to have that happen at mine.

“I don’t want to whine,” I whispered to Logan as we began our first dance together. We were all alone on the dancefloor while our friends and family watched. “But my feet kind of hurt.”

“Yeah? Mine too.”

I had one hand on his chest and the other resting on the back of his neck as we swayed to the love song that filled the ballroom. Logan took my hand, held it away and led me through a turn under his arm. As I came back into his embrace, I stared up at him, wide-eyed. “What’s this? It’s not eight-grade dancing.”

“My mom informed me I had to up my game. That’s at least a tenth grade move I just gave you.”

“Nice.”

I was torn between not wanting the evening to end and my desire for it to be over so we could go upstairs. We laughed

with our family, posed for pictures with friends, and ate a piece of our wedding cake.

My feet were aching and screaming for relief as the deejay played the final song of the night. Our crowd had thinned once the bar closed at eleven, and as soon as the song was over, the lights in the ballroom brightened. It had been an amazing day, but also exhausting.

Dominic's arms were tight around Payton's waist. "Logan," he said, his tone serious, "it's been a while for you. Let me know if you need any pointers for the wedding night."

"Thanks, Dominic. By the way, go fuck yourself."

Payton laughed. "He has me for that."

As soon as the elevator doors sealed us in alone together, Logan was on me. One warm hand splayed on the bare skin of my back while his other gripped my ass tightly, pressing me into him, crushing my dress. He held me into his kiss that was an assault on all fronts. My heart, mind, and body *needed* this man. My hand dove inside his tuxedo jacket, seeking the hardened muscles beneath the crisp dress shirt and three-button black vest.

"You have too many clothes on, boss."

"I'm fucking aware."

We hit our floor, he grabbed my hand, and tugged me down the hallway.

"Slow down," I gasped. "Not all of us are runners." He was dragging me along at break-neck speed.

"Is it faster if I carry you?"

I had no idea if he was kidding or not. We'd been together more than a year, and it wasn't any easier to tell. "I dunno, maybe."

A yelp escaped when his hands gripped my waist, lifting me, and not the sexy swept-up-into-his-arms kind, but the thrown-over-the-shoulder, caveman style kind of carry.

"Shit," he groaned. "Your skirt is huge." He banded an arm around my thighs, tucking the fabric out of his way so he could see, and took off. I bounced on his shoulder and the shorter, elbow-length veil I'd switched into for the reception hung down, trailing on the carpet.

"You don't like my dress?"

"I didn't say that. You took my breath away, Evie."

My heart thumped in my chest and my face warmed with a flush, but that also could have been the blood rushing to my head because I was upside-down.

"Hey, put me down before you hurt yourself." Although, if I were honest, I kind of liked this. His 'I have to have you now' attitude was seriously hot.

We were through the door and into the honeymoon suite. I couldn't see much, but the room was softly glowing with flickering light. His strong arms braced me as I slowly slid down his body until my feet were back on the ground. The veil was flipped over my head, and Logan lifted it, brushing it back.

"Are you thirsty? There's champagne."

"Oh?" I turned in his arms to face the room, "... my God."

A white, king-sized bed was against the left wall, decorated with a gold satin comforter and eggplant purple accent pillows. Mirrored, square lamps were perched on the nightstands. Everything was elegant and luxurious.

The back wall was like our apartment. Floor to ceiling glass with a view to die for, only this wasn't North Beach, it was the heart of the city, and the yellow-orange windows glowed in the night.

Also glowing were glass votive candles that lined just about every flat surface in the room. No lights were on, and it was breathtaking. I stood motionless as Logan went to the ice bucket and pulled out the bottle of champagne.

My desire for him was so strong I could taste it, but instead I remained still, watching him open the bottle and pour me a glass. I gestured to the room. "Did you arrange this?"

The only answer he gave me was a half-smile, but it confirmed he had. He held out the glass of champagne and I took it, letting my gaze fall to the other focal point in the room ... the large Jacuzzi tub. It sat opposite the bed in a corner, the walls wrapped in mirror and the tile ledge around it was covered with more flickering candles.

It was romantic and seductive.

My gaze went back to him, starting at his feet and drifting upward over that sexy tuxedo, all the way until I could meet his eyes. Those chocolate brown eyes had been my undoing our first night together, and they were just as devastating now. Especially since they seemed to be filled with the same sordid thoughts he'd had then.

He poured another glass for himself but didn't take a sip.
His intense focus was on me. "Lose the dress."

T E N

I swallowed thickly and smiled. I was eager, but ... “I’m going to need your help.”

Logan took a sip of his champagne and set it down, then shrugged out of his jacket. He tossed it on the chair nearby, and I’d learned he only disregarded his neat-freak status when he was impatient.

I loved how I did that to him.

“I’m happy to help, naughty girl.”

I turned around and swept my veil over my shoulder so it wouldn’t be in his way. “There’s a hook at the top.”

His tone was displeased. “And a shitload of buttons.”

I smiled to myself. “Calm down, there’s a hidden zipper.”

Fingers drew a line where the fabric on my strapless dress stopped, tracing over my skin, and paused at the center to undo the tiny metal hook. Then, the zipper must have been discovered beneath the panel of buttons, because it began to drop, one tooth at a time.

I shivered as his lips floated over my shoulder, ghosting kisses. His hands were inside the back of my dress, pushing the bodice down, and sliding up over my belly. Making me tremble and insane with lust. My fingers fumbled in the small of my back to undo the knot holding my crinoline in place.

The cups were sewn in, so I wasn’t wearing a bra, and my sigh of relief was loud when he palmed my breasts. I leaned into him, putting my back against his hardened chest. My eyes

fell shut as I waited for his next move. I never knew what kind of sex I'd get with Logan. Did he want to make love tonight? Have a quick, hard fuck? Maybe both?

He enjoyed touching me, moving at an unhurried pace, but my body's response was too strong. I couldn't last much longer, so I shimmied out of the dress and my shoes. A tight noise came from behind.

"I like these." He ran a hand over the swell of my ass, admiring the blue panties I wore that had 'Mrs.' written in tiny rhinestones across the back.

"They were my 'something blue.'"

"Holy shit. It stands up on its own."

He was talking about my dress. "Yeah. No hanger required." The layers of stiff netting and boning supported the dress and kept it upright, defying gravity.

His fingers slipped under my arm and turned me to face him. His gaze traced each centimeter of my naked flesh like it was the first time he was seeing it, and he looked appreciative of the view. The only things I wore were the panties and the veil still attached at the base of my up-do. His expression shifted and grew more intense, mimicking one of a predator. This was the darkest version of Logan I only saw when he was overwhelmed with lust and losing his grip on control.

"I've missed these." Once again, his hands fondled my breasts, only this time he wasn't gentle. He moved on me urgently, forcing me backward until I slammed into the wall, but he didn't let up. Hands pinched at my already-tight nipples, making me ache while his mouth locked on mine. His

tongue thrust deep, and I moaned.

But he stepped back abruptly and the heat of his body vanished, making my eyes fly open in surprise.

“Fuck.” He ran a hand through his hair.

“Yes,” I said, already breathless. “That’s what we should do.”

“We’ll get to that, don’t you worry, but I want to get in the tub.”

I glanced at the large, deep Jacuzzi and gave him a dubious look. “You want to take a bath?”

“You mentioned your feet hurt.”

They did, and now that I had it off, I was realizing just how heavy the dress had been. A bath with massaging jets and my gorgeous new husband wrapped around me suddenly sounded like the best idea ever.

While he ran the tap, I went to the mirror and began the process of removing my veil. I said it loudly over the rushing water. “There are a thousand pins inside my hair, just so you know.”

“Awesome.”

Movement from beside the tub stopped me mid-process. Logan was getting undressed and I wasn’t about to miss the show. The vest was already open, and the tie hung loose around his neck. Sexy. Then, the shirt was unbuttoned and cufflinks undone. I gasped when he peeled one shoulder out, followed by the other, and dropped all of it to the floor in a heap.

I couldn't stop the grin at how he was breaking his own rules.

“What?” he said. “It's a rental.”

“Okay, boss. I can pretend you're not going to pick all that up later because it's bothering you.”

He smirked. His hands busied themselves undoing his pants, and it showed off his impressive upper body. All sinewy muscles flexing under his smooth, tan skin. The pants fell off his hips, slid down, and he kicked them away. The black socks were tugged off and added to his pile.

Witnessing Logan in only a pair of black boxer briefs set my body on fire. I freed the comb that the veil was attached to from my hair and, following his lead, I dropped it to the floor.

“Come here.” It was a soft request from Logan, not a demand, and I went to him instantly. His hands swept over my skin, greedy to touch what he'd been denied. They plunged beneath the back of my panties, and he gripped a handful of flesh, driving me against his hard body.

“I love you,” he whispered between kisses, which grew reckless and frantic, and it was impossible not to match his intensity.

“I love you so much,” I answered back, clawing at his underwear.

It was a race to see who could get the other one naked first, but he won, of course. He lifted me up into his arms and stepped into the tub. A moment later he had the faucet shut off and the jets running, both of us sitting in the warm water. My back rested against his chest, while his strong arms held me,

and his legs were wrapped around my waist.

There were tiny tugs at my hair. Was he ...? I glanced over my shoulder and saw him set the bobby pin on the tile. Then, another. Shit, this man made everything sexy, even something as simple as helping me let my hair down. I grabbed his foot and pulled it into my lap, massaging the sole, and he issued a groan of approval.

We chatted about our morning apart, recapping our favorite moments from the day as he pulled the pins from my hair and I rubbed his tired feet. It wasn't the type of intimacy I thought we'd share the moments after we came into the honeymoon suite, but it was wonderful. I loved the quiet moments with him just as much as the steamy, intense ones.

"I think I got them all," he said. His fingertips drifted down my neck and he rubbed my shoulders as I combed my fingers through my hair, searching for any stragglers.

"Good ... job," I moaned. His hands were magic.

"What would you say if I told you we should get out so I could fuck my wife senseless?"

"I'd say I like the sound of that."

"Hmm. I thought so."

The jets were shut off and the water gurgled as he lifted the drain stop. I'd barely finished toweling off when he yanked the plush fabric from my hands and threw it to the ground. His expression was pure sexual hunger, only intensified in the candlelight. A gentle shove, and I was sprawled out beneath him on the bed.

"Look at you. All fucking gorgeous and so fucking mine."

My lungs refused to work as he gripped his thick cock and stroked himself, his wedding band the only thing he wore. I couldn't control myself. My fingers flew to my clit, touching myself.

“Oh, shit, Logan. I need you.”

He sank down to kneel and placed my knees on his shoulders. My body didn't know how to react. I loved when he went down on me, but I was greedy and impatient. “No, please — God.” Then his tongue was inside me, and thought was too difficult. “Yes, *yes*.”

Velvety heat flicked on me, sending sparks radiating out and down my trembling legs. My moans were a mixture of satisfaction and whining, and they grew louder with each of Logan's careful manipulations. Fire seared deep inside, and I bucked off the bed, seizing his head in my hands.

“Make love to me,” I cried. Every cell in me was quaking, and I worried I was going to vibrate apart. The only thing that could stop my uncontrollable trembling was if he brought us together.

The bed shifted as he launched to his feet, wiping his mouth with one hand and giving a final stroke to his rock-hard cock. He held himself steady and positioned himself right at the apex of my legs, rubbing the tip in my arousal.

“Green?” he teased.

“So fucking green. Please. *Please*.”

He pushed inside and I wanted to cry at how good it felt. The stretch the first time he moved in me was like nothing else. My legs tightened around his waist.

“Fuck, Evie. You feel amazing. So wet and so perfect.”

My eyes squeezed shut so I could better enjoy the sensations as he slid deep, all the way until I couldn't take him any further. My hands clutched at his chest and he gripped them, linking our fingers together so he could hold my hands flat against the sheets.

His thrusts were slow and calculating. Each one seemed to hit a new spot that was better than the last. His mouth roved over my lips, my neck, and my breasts. I swallowed back a moan as he increased his pace. Spots danced in front of my vision as the orgasm closed in.

“Yellow,” I gasped.

I was sure I didn't need to tell him; he knew my body better than I did sometimes. He knew exactly how much I could take, how much I needed.

“Did you ... hear me?” I said between pants. He hadn't eased up.

His voice and expression were authoritative. “I heard you.”

I fought against his hold. He needed to slow his roll or I'd come, which usually made him come. “Fuck. I'm gonna ... oh, red. Red!”

“No, Evie. You're not allowed.” And then his mouth was on mine, sealing me off from asking permission to come. It wasn't a game we played while I'd imposed the rule, and with what he was doing to me, I'd forgotten all about it.

I turned my head away from him and my voice shook as I demanded it. “I need permission.”

“For what?” He whispered it in my ear, his tone coy.

“Permission to come.”

He sucked on the tender spot of my neck, just below my ear. He drove into me. This wasn't lovemaking. He was owning my body now, and I lifted my hips up off the mattress, eager to meet him.

“Okay, Mrs. Stone. You have my permission to come.”

I let out a cry, or maybe a scream as it began. Sparks of pleasure burst, lifting me higher and higher, until I fell over the crest of bliss. My muscles tightened and strained against the sensations rolling through me. As the intensity of the orgasm began to fade, warmth washed from the tips of my toes upward.

“Fuck. Oh, fuck.” Logan's curse words signaled the trigger had been pulled on his release. His right hand abandoned mine, and scooped beneath my neck, cradling my head. “Open your eyes.”

His damp forehead rested against mine and I followed his command. *Oh my God.* His fascinating eyes stared down into my soul as he shuddered. He came hard, and loudly. Every desperate gasp for breath was for me. The throbbing of his body inside mine ... I'd never get enough of this. My connection to him was so strong, nothing could break it.

His skin, still damp from the bath, or perhaps slick with sweat, stuck to mine, but I didn't care. For a long while we lay on the bed kissing and touching, enjoying each other.

“Want to make a deal?” I whispered.

“I'm listening.”

“You blow out all these candles and let me lie here, and I’ll blow you when you’re done.”

He twisted his mouth into a knowing smile. “Right. I’m sure you won’t be fast asleep when I get back here.”

I put my hand on his jaw, brushing my thumb over his lips. “I didn’t say when *specifically* I’d blow you.”

“New rule, then. Promised oral sex must be delivered in a timely fashion.”

I giggled. “No more rules, Logan.”

He rose up on an elbow and brushed a lock of my hair out of my eyes, his face going serious. “One more rule. We say ‘I love you’ every night before we fall asleep.”

It was something we already did, so I had no problem defining it this way. “Absolutely.”

“Don’t go breaking it, rule breaker.” He faked a strict, harsh look.

“Never, boss. I love you.”

“I love you too, Evie.” He pressed his lips to mine in a kiss full of passion. “More than you can even imagine.”

And since I knew how much I loved him, I could imagine a lot.

* * *

TABLE FOR TWO

*This story originally appeared in the ROYALLY MINE
anthology and is best read after [THREE SWEET NOTHINGS](#),
book 5 in the series.*

ONE

JULIUS

I was buying suits like a heartbroken person bought a gallon of ice cream to cheer themselves up. It was getting really fucking expensive, but at least I could afford it.

Courtney Crawford was going on a date. Tonight. Her first official date since her divorce six months ago, and it was killing me. I'd bought my first suit after I got her text about it last week. The gray fabric was so dark, it was almost black, and it matched my shitty mood. I also got a maroon silk tie and pocket square that had small white polka dots. It looked good, like I had money and style.

I ordered the second suit when she called me on Tuesday, wanting advice on where she should go if the guy asked for ideas. *Nowhere*, I wanted to say. *Go out with me instead*. Fuck. If I'd known she was ready, maybe I would have done something about it.

Who was I kidding? We were friends, and I didn't want to fuck that up.

I'd watched her with another guy for the last seven years. I'd stood up at her and Tariq's wedding because he was my boy and he'd asked me to. I didn't know how the hell to say no. Didn't want him figuring out I was in love with his girl and have him take her away from me.

I told myself it was cool. Courtney and I could just be friends. I'd rather have that, than nothing at all.

But then he'd started cheating on her.

Wait, fuck that. He'd *always* been cheating on her. She knew about it when we'd been at Ohio State. He said it was a one-time fuck-up. It'd never happen when she was his wife. Tariq was a beast on the football field and an asshole off it, but he was smart enough to know he needed to lock Courtney down.

The front door of the shop chimed when I pushed it open, and I marched toward the counter in the back. The place was dead, but it was three o'clock on a Friday. The only man I saw working didn't look familiar, and it added to my disappointment. Two years ago, I owned one suit, which I never wore and barely fit into. Now, I had a closet full of them, all tailored to the last goddamn detail, and a specific guy I liked when I shopped here.

"Where's Maurice?" I asked.

The guy behind the register was pale, almost like he'd never been outside. His nametag said 'Brandon' and as he stared up at me, his Adam's apple bobbed in a hard swallow.

I got that a lot. I was a big motherfucker.

"He's out today," Brandon said. "Can I help you with something?"

"I got a call telling me my suit's ready."

"Your name?"

"Julius King."

He nodded, disappeared into the back, and reappeared holding the top of the hanger sticking out of the black garment

bag.

I took it from him. “I gotta check the fit.”

“Of course. Please let me know if you need anything.” He motioned toward the fitting rooms.

Don't think about Courtney. I stripped out of my jeans and t-shirt, and pulled on the suit pants. *Don't think about the lucky fucker who'd been set up on the blind date with her.* I shoved my arms through the crisp black dress shirt that was also custom-made. *Don't think about how Kyle betrayed you, arranging the whole GD thing.* He was supposed to be my friend. The only one who knew how I felt about Courtney, and then he went and fucking set her up with someone else.

Asshole. I hadn't texted him back since I found out. I was almost thirty, but not too old to give his ass the silent treatment.

I buttoned the shirt, pulled the jacket off the hanger, and put it on. The fit was good. The suit was a deep purple, and looked sharp, not stuffy. I stepped out of the room and went to the full-length mirror, where Brandon lurked.

His eyes widened. “Wow. Looks great.”

“Thanks, man.”

I stared at my reflection. I should have felt good. My linebacker build was physically impressive, and the expensive clothes made me seem professional. I looked powerful, and when I scowled, people nearly shit themselves. But I'd learned a while back how a smile got me a hell of a lot further. I liked smiling better, anyway.

Not today. My frown made Brandon go five shades whiter.

“How does it feel?” he asked, nervous. “Is there something wrong with the fit?”

“Nah.” I forced the scowl away. “Bad day, is all.”

Brandon nodded. “Hey, at least it’s Friday.”

Except Friday was the beginning of my ‘work week,’ not the end of it. And it was Friday, the day she was going out with *him*. For once, I wasn’t looking forward to going to my club. Being around all the sex was going to make me think about Court and if she was going to fuck her date tonight if things went well.

“I’m gonna wear it out,” I said. “Is that cool?”

The tags were already gone, removed before the tailoring, and I’d worn the right pair of shoes into the store. I figured I’d go straight from the shop to the club, and get some shit sorted out before opening tonight. Anything to keep my mind off her.

“Of course, sir,” Brandon said. “You’re all set. Have a nice night.”

Yeah, that was real fucking doubtful.

T W O

JULIUS

I sat at my desk and eyeballed the bottle of bourbon. Kyle had given it to me as a birthday present. It was some classy shit, or so he said, but I didn't like it. I stuck it in my office to make me look good. Even though this place was a blindfold club, looks mattered.

My club was my kingdom. My leather desk chair was so big, some of the girls called it my throne, and when I was in it, I could see every inch of the place through the monitors. Nothing went down in the rooms without me knowing about it.

Was it too early to start drinking?

Some of my staff were already in the building, but the girls wouldn't show up for another few hours.

I checked my phone. Court hadn't texted me. She hadn't sent out an SOS asking for help bailing on her date, which had started thirty minutes ago. Plenty of time for her to sneak away to the bathroom and tell me how awful the guy was ... but she hadn't. Fuck, it meant the date was going well.

Panic was too big a word, but it was like ants were crawling on me. I'd waited too long. I was gonna miss my window, and wasn't going to be lucky enough to get another chance with her. I had to fucking do something.

When I called her, it went right to voicemail. I thumbed out a text instead of leaving a message.

Me: Need to talk. It's important.

Minutes dragged by. The text said it'd been delivered, but not read. I set the phone down, covered my fist with my other hand, and cracked my knuckles all at the same time. I pictured her at a fancy-ass restaurant, sitting across the table from some asshole attorney, which the guy had to be since all of Kyle's friends were lawyers. She'd be smiling her smile that made me forget how to speak words.

I should be that guy. That smile was for me.

Fuck. If I couldn't get in touch with her, maybe I could get the guy on the phone. Kyle owed me.

Me: The bourbon you gave me tastes like shit.

A meme jumped on the screen. "New phone, who dis?"

The three dots blinked by as Kyle continued typing.

Kyle: Fuck you. I don't hear from you all week, and that's what you open with?

Me: I need dude's name and number.

Kyle: Sorry, can't give it to you.

Me: U R an asshole.

Kyle: True.

It was still early. Unless she was out in the suburbs, I could ambush her date and make it back to the club before it opened. Traffic would have to cooperate. Didn't happen much in Chicago, but a brother could hope.

Whatever. Focus.

Me: Name and number. Or you call him.

Kyle: And tell him what?

Me: Setting them up was a mistake.

Kyle: Was it? Sounds like you finally want to make your move.

I stabbed my finger at the phone so hard, I was lucky it didn't break.

Me: ASSHOLE.

Kyle: Yeah, we established that. If it helps, this thing wasn't my idea. Going into a movie. Text me later.

Was he shitting me?

Me: WTF?

There was no response.

Me: Hope your dick falls off.

The bastard didn't answer me. I stared at the bottle of nasty-ass liquor and got angry as fuck. What the hell was I going to do?

I was a powerful guy. Connected to everyone, and treated like goddamn royalty. The superintendent of the Chicago PD was a client, and I cooperated with the FBI when some big-time john came through my doors. I could pull favors in an emergency. One phone call and I'd have most of the city out looking for Courtney Crawford.

Goddammit. That would be some crazy-ass shit, right there.

Instead, as much as it'd suck, I'd sit here and wait for her to answer my message. I'd been through worse nights at the club. I'd tussled with another bouncer here once, and broken a client's jaw when he strangled one of my girls half-to-death. I didn't like fighting. Didn't like the feeling of my fists pounding against something soft and warm, and knowing I

was causing pain. No judgment of the guys who came to the club to get off like that, but I liked using my hands to give pleasure.

“Julius,” a male voice echoed through my earpiece. It was Deiondre, my newest security guy. “Some girl’s at the front. You got an audition tonight?”

Not that I knew about, but sometimes a girl I was recruiting showed up without scheduling. I focused on the screen at the main entrance, enlarging it so I—

It felt like I’d been smacked in the center of my chest with a football helmet.

What the fuck?

No idea what Courtney was doing here. Only thing I knew was Kyle McCreary was a fucking dead man. Courtney looked nervous as hell, and I wasn’t too proud to admit I was scared shitless. She didn’t know what I did. I fed her the same line of bullshit everyone else got, that the blindfold club was an exclusive, members only, wine club.

I’d been grandfathered in with the lie, thanks to her husband Tariq. I wasn’t embarrassed about the business I ran. Why the fuck should I be? Everyone who walked through the door wanted to be here, especially my girls. I kept them safe, gave them a classy place to do their business, and we all made truckloads of cash.

But I couldn’t go back on the lie once it’d been told. Court would have questions, and one of them would be if her husband had ever visited. I’d been trapped. Tariq and I had played football together at Ohio State, and he was real fucking

quick to remind me “*Bros before hoes.*” The longer it went on, the deeper my hole got.

Every time Tariq showed up at my club, cheated on his wife, and I didn’t say a thing to her, it was like I was the bigger bastard. My betrayal stung more.

“She’s asking about you,” Deiondre said. “You want me to send her up?”

Fuck, no! I launched to my feet. “I’ll come down. Don’t say nothing to her.”

I took the stairs down, two steps at a time. All the doors in the main hallway were open and the cleaning people were busy inside the client rooms, prepping for the night. A war drum pounded in my chest, harder than the moments in the tunnel before a big football game. How much had Kyle told her?

Shit, what if this was the end of me and her, before we even got going?

No. I wouldn’t let that happen. I yanked the door open to the entry checkpoint and put my hands on the doorframe, blocking the inside of the club from view.

Seven years ago, Court had been a cheerleader at Ohio State. She was five-foot-nothing and maybe a buck-ten, as my Grampa would say. Tiny. Blonde, white, and so fucking pretty she’d been used in a bunch of the marketing material for OSU’s football program.

And she just got better looking as the years went by. First time I’d seen her when Tariq brought them to Chicago, she’d cut her long hair short and gone darker. Still blonde, but more

natural looking. It made her eyes bluer and brighter. Made her look sexier, which I didn't think was possible.

I couldn't stop my gaze as it slid down her tight body. Was she wearing leather pants? Fuck me, the girl was a dime whatever she had on, but the loose, draping shirt she wore was mean. It covered her perfect ass from view, and I needed to see it in those pants she'd poured herself into.

When Court's gaze landed on me, a smile broke out, and wires crossed in my brain. She didn't look pissed ... she looked relieved. What the fuck? Maybe Kyle hadn't told her anything. Maybe she'd gotten the address somehow and still thought this place was legit.

I dug my fingers into the wood frame of the door where she couldn't see my grip, and tried to sound normal. "Courtney? What're you doing here?"

She stared at my suit and blinked. Was the color throwing her off? Her big blue eyes shifted to look up at my face. "You wanted to talk." She took a step forward. Even in heels, she was a foot shorter than I was. "You said it was important."

I worked my fingers deeper between the wood. If I went after it, I'd separate the jam from the wall. "Yeah, but how'd ___"

Her voice was casual and steady. "I know what you do. I've known about this place for months, Julius." She glanced at Deiondre, then back to me. "Can we go inside?"

The door frame splintered and cracked in my hand, making her jolt. She'd known ... *for months?* I brought my hands down, jamming them in my pockets as I turned to let her

through the doorway. My brain chugged along, trying to keep up.

Courtney was dressed to go out, but she was alone.

“Did I fuck up your date?” I asked.

Her faint smile made my confusion worse. “No.”

As she walked past, I got a hit of her perfume. Just a hint of her scent had me swallowing hard. Did this girl have any idea what she did to me? I pulled the handle closed, putting a door between us and Deiondre.

Courtney took in her surroundings. The narrow room had fancy couches on one side and a bar on the other, which was currently dark. When we were open, I staffed one guy behind it. He made sure the clients had whatever they wanted before their appointments, or if it was a walk-in, they had to hang out in this room while I evaluated their membership application and went over the rules.

“I got questions,” I said. A fuck-ton of questions.

She nodded, but stared at the floor instead of looking at me. “I do, too. Like, if you had ruined my date ... would you be glad?”

Trap, my brain warned. There were way bigger things to talk about right now. Worry squeezed my voice. “What do you know about my club?”

“You don’t sell wine.”

I sucked down a breath and my shoulders lifted. My chest was tight. “Yeah? What do I sell?”

Finally, she looked at me and licked her lips. She did that

shit when she was nervous, and had no fucking clue how much it turned me on. Her mouth was sexy as hell. She was so quiet, it was almost a whisper and I couldn't tell if she was judging me. "You sell women."

My pulse kicked up another notch. "Nah, not exactly."

Her eyes went big and she looked confused. "Then, you tell me, because I heard you—"

"I sell an experience."

Her lush lips rounded into an 'oh.' The sudden urge to grab her and slam my mouth over hers was fierce, but I kept my goddamn hands in my pockets. She hesitated, but the look in her eyes ... what was that? Interest?

"An experience," she repeated, "with beautiful women, who are naked, blindfolded and bound."

Shit, she really did know. "Who told you?" I asked.

It wouldn't be Tariq. Their divorce was messy, and ... fuck me. It couldn't have been Kyle either. Besides him saying he wouldn't tell her, he'd been my attorney, too. That was privileged info.

She peered up at me like I was fascinating, not disgusting. How was that fucking possible? My heart roared along, like a stupid girl skipping through flowers. Courtney was my best friend. Having her know this and not judge me was fucking *huge*.

"There's a guy who plays offense for the Bears. He came here last year with his wife, and ..." She shrugged. "Players' wives talk."

I staggered back a step, taking in the info I hadn't seen coming. As a businessman, I was glad she hadn't said the client's name. We didn't use them in the club, since the whole point of the blindfolds was to keep identities a secret.

Courtney tucked a lock of her hair behind her ear. "She was, uh ... complimentary of your place."

"I gotta sit down." I plodded over to the nearest couch, dropped into it, and set my forehead in my hand. Holy shit. No point dancing around it. "Whatcha think when you found out?"

Her heels tapped across the floor, and she sank slowly down onto the other side of the couch. "I was worried. I mean, what you're doing isn't legal."

"I'm fine," I said, rubbing my forehead with my fingertips. "I ain't going anywhere." Not to prison, because I had an airtight arrangement with the Feds.

"Right after I found out, you met Kyle and you said he helped you with stuff. So, I suspect he advised you how to operate without ..." she searched for the right thing to say, "getting into trouble."

I let out a breath. I was glad to come clean on one secret, but couldn't tell her the whole truth. If my deal with the FBI collapsed, it wasn't just my neck, it was every one of my employees' too, and that was a big deal for me.

"Something like that." I straightened and turned to her. "You mad at me for not telling you?"

"No. I figured you would when you were ready." She smiled softly. "But ... I got impatient. You know I fucking

suck at keeping secrets.”

It was true. How had she gone months without telling me she knew about my club?

“And as long as we’re talking about secrets ...” Her breathing picked up and her face flushed.

Fuck. This had to be about Tariq. Did she know he’d been a regular until their divorce? Until I’d finally stopped being a stupid fucking idiot, picked her over him, and threw Tariq’s ass out of my club?

“I didn’t have a date tonight.” She licked her lips nervously. “I thought maybe you’d tell me *everything* when you were ready.”

My heart stopped skipping and slammed into a brick wall. “What?”

She lifted up and scooted closer to me. The nearness of her tripped proximity alarms in my head, and I tensed to keep myself from leaning into her. She swallowed a breath. “I know our situation’s complicated. We’re friends, and I was with Tariq. I get why you’re nervous.”

I played at being casual. “Who’s nervous?”

Courtney moved again, inching her way toward me, and I stayed glued to the couch cushions. I liked this a lot. The building could be on fire, but I wasn’t fucking moving.

What was she getting at, though?

“If you didn’t have a date tonight, why’d you tell me you did?” And all that shit with Kyle—what was that about?

She slid until she was right beside me. Her knee, wrapped

in that sleek leather, was up against my thigh. Courtney pressed her lips together, and her gaze dropped to my chest. I didn't like seeing her anxious, but couldn't think of a damn thing to say to make her more comfortable.

“I was hoping you'd tell me not to go.”

“Fuck, Courtney.” Sitting beside her was like being on a roller coaster. It flipped my stomach, but in the best kind of way. “I should of. I wanted to, but I thought it'd fuck things up between us.” I couldn't fight the urge any longer and leaned close, right up to the edge of the friend zone, and then pushed passed it. “You want ... more?”

I'll give you everything I've got, just say the word, girl.

She stared at me like she was torn, but between what? Nerves? Worry about things changing? Her eyebrows came together. “Yeah, I do, but—” she glanced around the room, “—I need to know what *you* do here.”

My brain was still stuck on her answer and I couldn't follow. “I run the club.”

“What I mean is, I'm not going to get into anything with you if I have to ... share.” Her expression went hard. “I already shared my man once, and it's definitely not my thing.”

Now I got it. “I don't fuck my girls. I don't even touch 'em.” She gave me some side-eye, but I laughed. “For real. I'm their boss.”

I stopped before I said the girls were like my sisters, because that always sounded creepy as hell, but it was the only way to explain how I felt. I cared about every one of my employees like we were a twisted, messed up family. And you

see someone naked enough times, it stops being weird and becomes your version of normal.

Same for watching them fuck on the security footage.

Still didn't look like she believed me. "What happens at an audition?" she asked.

I'd changed some things when I took over. Originally at an audition, the girl got naked and went down on the owner. For Joseph, that wasn't just about her proving herself, it was to give him power. I wasn't into any of that.

"The girl gets naked," I said quickly.

Court frowned. "That's it?"

It wasn't. I took them into a room and ... "I watch her get herself off."

Her face went blank. "Oh."

"I didn't tell you about this place, I know. But you gotta believe I ain't lying about this, Court."

"Okay," she said with a tight voice. "How about you give me a tour then?"

T H R E E

COURTNEY

Julius King was unexpected. He was huge with an intimidating build, yet he was the nicest, sweetest guy I knew. Back in college, he'd been surprisingly fast on the football field. After we graduated, he'd gone into security for the club ... only to end up owning the place.

Even his deep purple suit and black dress shirt was unexpected. I hadn't seen him dressed in a suit since the tux he'd worn at my wedding. This one fit much better, and the eggplant color looked beautiful on him. He looked commanding and confident as he stood from the couch and gestured toward the other door in the room, the one which led further inside his club.

My best friend owned a brothel. I'd known for months, but seeing really was believing, and it was hard to wrap my head around it.

He hadn't changed much physically from the guy I'd met at a house party Tariq had taken me to after a football game our junior year. Julius had shaved his head after graduation and kept the look. He was thick with bulky muscle. His bicep was probably bigger than my thigh, and the weekend after my divorce had been finalized, I'd had two glasses of wine and wondered what it'd be like to have his powerful arms around me.

The thought made me shiver. It felt wrong to like the idea

so much because he'd been my friend for years, but it also felt ... completely right. On paper, we shouldn't click. We were opposites in every way, literally black and white, but instead we fit together perfectly.

And once the idea of us moving from friends into something more was in my mind, I couldn't stop thinking about him.

I wasn't sure how long he'd had feelings for me. If it was before I'd come to Chicago, he'd done a damn good job of hiding it, but the more time we spent together, the more obvious it became. He got braver over the last few months, and I did everything I could to encourage him.

But I wasn't laying it down hard enough, I guess. My eagerness reached a critical turning point when my sister asked if she could set me up with a guy from her gym. I knew what I wanted, and I was fairly confident it was the same thing Julius did, but I also didn't want to be ninety years old when he finally made his move.

And it'd been months since I'd had sex with anything that wasn't battery operated. Julius was attractive and worked at a club surrounded by beautiful women who sold their bodies for money, which he had plenty of. Times were desperate. I wasn't going to lose him before I'd even gotten him.

My legs were jelly as I stood from the couch. I believed in what I was doing, but that didn't mean it was easy, and I could not get a handle on my nerves. They rattled in my chest, vibrating me from the inside out.

His eyes were jet black and filled with concern, but I couldn't tell if it was for me or for himself. Was he worried I'd

judge him? The concept of him running a brothel took some getting used to, but I'd done it. There were legal jobs he could have had that were worse than this. Above all, I trusted he knew what he was doing.

"I've never given a tour before," Julius said. "How much do you want to see?"

My body temperature rose and made my weak knees worse. I'd had fantasies about this place. All of them included the man before me. He said he didn't touch the women, but did he live this lifestyle? Would he tie me up or blindfold me if I asked him to?

I could barely choke the words out over my excitement. "All of it. Walk me through what you do."

He drew in an unsure breath. "This room is where a client hangs out before his appointment."

"His?" I repeated. Cordell and his wife had played together, living out their mutual fantasy of a threesome, but ... "You only take men?"

"Nah, we take women and couples too, but ninety-five percent of the members are guys." He strode to the door, but hesitated before opening it for me. "You sure you're cool with this? Shit's gonna get real."

It was like he'd lit a firecracker and tossed it inside me. I bit down on my bottom lip and nodded quickly. I was dying to see more. Would the blindfold club match the sexy images I'd painted in my mind?

He tugged the door open.

The hallway, like the holding room we'd just come from,

was dim. Black walls, broken up by open doorways on both sides. Security lighting in the corners was bright enough to see, but it made the long hallway feel ominous.

“I don’t have the lights on since we’re not open yet,” Julius said.

“Oh.” It was all I could think to say.

I shuffled forward a few feet and glanced into the room to my left. It looked like the living area of an elegant hotel suite. There was a big screen television mounted on the wall, a couch, and what seemed to be a wet bar area. That wasn’t what I expected at all. No bed?

“We got a few client rooms,” he said. “Overflow if we book two at the same time. We hold the guy here until his girl’s ready.”

Oh. A tingle crept along my skin as I glanced to my right. There was a brass number two on the door, and my gaze swept further inside. This room was lit by a glowing crystal chandelier, and the prisms cast subtle rainbows on the wall. It was the only color. Everything, including the table in the center of the space, was black except for the white wingback chair in a back corner.

He didn’t tell me it was okay to go inside the room, but I did it anyway. The table was like a large cabinet with a black leather cushion top.

“This is where it happens?” My voice was breathless.

“Yeah.”

I pictured getting on the table, and shuddered with unexpected pleasure at the mental image. “How does it work?”

Julius shuffled a few feet into the room. “The sales assistant helps the girl get blindfolded and strapped down, and waits for the client to come in.”

I paused. “Sales assistant?”

“Another girl. She’ll negotiate the price.”

I stared at the empty wingback chair. “Does she stay during?”

“Nah, she leaves when a deal’s done.”

“Is that ... safe? Leaving the girl alone with the guy?”

Something flickered through his expression. Was he shy all of a sudden? “It’s safe. We got cameras and I’m watching in my office.”

I felt stupid for not thinking of that, but then my eyes widened. “Holy shit, Julius. You *watch*? What’s that like?” I couldn’t stop the surprised smile from rushing across my face. “Is it sexy?”

He shook his head. “It’s work.” He rubbed a hand on the back of his neck, showing off his hulking form. “And it’s probably gonna give me an ulcer. A lot of the guys, they’re nothing to worry about. All they want is to fuck a hot girl. But I always gotta watch for that one asshole who wants to push things. The motherfucker who goes too far.”

His uncharacteristically dark look made me think it had happened before.

My gaze went back to the table as I struggled to find a change in topic. He’d said the girl was tied down, but—
“Where are the straps?”

“Top drawer.”

It felt like he was cool with me peeking. I grabbed the silver knob and slid the drawer open. Swaths of black ribbon were coiled neatly inside, and beside them, stacks of black blindfolds wrapped in clear plastic.

There were three other drawers beneath this one. It didn't make a sound as I closed it, and neither did the next one I opened. My breath stalled in my lungs. The drawer was partitioned, and each section held a different item. Vibrators. Dildos. Plugs.

“That one's for pleasure.” Julius's deep voice broke the quiet in the room.

As I stared down at the toys, I could feel his gaze on me, and I grew hot. The air in the room thickened and became hard to breathe.

The next drawer down was also partitioned. Paddles. Riding crops. Nipple clamps. A looped item I suspected was a whip.

“That drawer's for pain.”

There was something buried in his tone, and I knew him well enough to recognize it. He didn't care for this drawer, which was interesting. I peered at it with fascination, but also trepidation. I'd been a vanilla girl most of my life, but had always been curious, and Tariq's betrayal was a catalyst to broadening my sex life.

It shouldn't have been surprising the 'pain' drawer made Julius uneasy. The guy was the sweetest thing ever. He looked intimidating, but he had a gentle heart. Yet, he ran a BDSM

sex club. Wasn't this drawer a huge part of that?

I closed it and opened the final drawer, moving slowly because my body was sluggish with lust. There were strap-on harnesses. A wand with feathers at the end, and other things I didn't recognize.

"That drawer is for both."

My tone was skeptical. "Feathers can cause pain?"

"You got ticklish feet, Court. Think about if you couldn't move or get away."

Oh, God. He was right. That'd be torture. My gaze landed on the black woven handle. I gestured toward it. "Can I—?"

He looked exactly how I felt. Tense with desire, but trying not to show it. His head bobbed in a single nod.

I slipped my hand around the handle of the flogger and pulled it slowly from the drawer. The long leather tails dangled until I circled my fist around them and dragged the bunch through my closed hand. I could only see this tool slapping against skin and causing pain. "How is this one both?"

He sucked in a deep breath. Maybe he was struggling to breathe the thick air as much as I was. "When used right, it can feel good."

He said it with enough confidence, it sounded like he was talking from experience. Shit, I was going to burn up from the inside. The fire was so intense, it seared away my vocal cords and kept me from asking him to show me right now.

Instead, I tucked the flogger back neatly where I'd found it, shut the drawer and straightened. My pulse roared in my

body, thumping the hardest between my legs. It pounded out an ache I wanted Julius to satisfy, but I struggled with how to get what I needed.

The first year here in Chicago had been brutal. The other football wives were nice enough, but Tariq had a not-great reputation, which followed him off the field and became mine by association. Julius was the only real friend I had, and I'd leaned on him hard when I discovered Tariq's cheating. He'd helped me get through the divorce, which had driven a wedge between the men who'd played ball together in college. I felt bad their friendship ended, but secretly I was thrilled Julius had chosen to stick by my side.

I laid my nervous hands on the cushioned top of the table and stared at my splayed fingers, searching for courage. I didn't want to screw up what we had, but couldn't fight my feelings any longer. I longed for him with every shallow breath I took.

I hoisted myself up, turning around to sit with my legs dangling over the side.

Alarm coasted through Julius's handsome face. "What're you doing?"

"I want to see what it's like," I said in a rush.

His concern shifted to confusion, and in a few steps, he was right in front of me. "C'mon, don't play like that."

Only his statement was filled with cautious hope. When he set one of his large hands on my shoulder to help me down, it was the connection we needed. It turned the key in the lock on my desire, and set it tumbling free. I reached for him, grasping

his face in my hands, and pulled him down into my kiss.

F O U R

COURTNEY

I hadn't kissed another man in seven years, and bringing my lips to Julius's was fireworks. It was everything I'd hoped it'd be, and then some. My fingers bristled against the rough ends of the whiskers darkening his defined jaw when I pulled him closer. He had on cologne or some type of woody scent that smelled amazing.

His soft lips pressed to mine, stunned at first, and then the intensity of the moment hit us with its full force. I was kissing Julius King ... and he was kissing me.

Oh my God, how he was kissing me.

His mouth was passionate and commanding. His hot tongue moved past my lips, seeking mine, and its sexy, slow movement was the same as if he'd stroked his hands between my thighs. I felt it along every nerve ending in my body.

His hands seized my waist and hauled me to the edge of the table, causing me to wrap my legs around his hips. We were wild. Out of control with lust. I'd worried about making the wrong move, but this felt so goddamn right, I was mad I waited so long.

The softest of moans slipped from me as his kiss intensified another layer. The ache for him grew like an unpredictable tornado and left me spinning. I clung to him, holding on for dear life. Would I ever be able to let go?

It was easily the most passionate kiss of my life, and I let

out a hushed cry of displeasure when he ended it. His hands still circled my waist and he didn't go far. His warm forehead rested against mine, his eyes closed, and for a long moment we stayed like that, working to get our breathing back under control.

“Jesus,” he whispered.

His single stunned word announced how much this kiss meant to him, and it was powerful. It had meant *so* much to me. I slid my hands down his neck until I had my palms flat against his broad, hard chest.

“Maybe you should,” I said between two gulps of air, “shut the door.”

His eyes popped open, but he seemed foggy. “What?”

If I said it fast, I could get through it before I lost the courage. “I want to see what it's like for the girl on the table, and you said she's naked.”

My statement literally knocked him back, and I'd never seen my friend look more surprised. Part of him liked this idea a lot, but the other part was conflicted. He wiped a hand over the smooth dome of his head, considering how to respond. As words failed him, a stone of embarrassment grew to the size of a boulder in my stomach.

“You don't want to?” I whispered.

“No, I do,” he said instantly. “Fuck, you have no idea how much I want to.” He threw a hand toward the table. “But like this? The first time we ...” His posture stiffened. “The table you're sitting on, it ain't right for that. It isn't *special* enough for you.”

I softened, understanding what he meant, but this was important. I needed him to see I was okay with what this club was. Yet, I felt like I was losing him. “You said this place was an experience.” I slicked my sweaty palms down over my leather-clad thighs. “We don’t have to have sex, we could do other ... stuff.”

He blinked slowly. “What’re you offering?”

His question sparked an idea. “Isn’t that how it starts here? With negotiations?” I dragged a seductive smile across my lips. “I want this. What do you want? What can I give you to make this happen?”

He let out a half of a laugh, making a sound like I was crazy, and grinned. It froze on his face as he grew serious. “A date.”

“A date?” I repeated, not expecting such a simple demand.

“Yeah, a real fucking date at some fancy restaurant, where you let me pay for everything.”

A laugh welled up inside me. “Now I’m concerned for your business, because you don’t seem to get how negotiating works. You’re supposed to ask for stuff I *don’t* want.”

One long stride and he was back at the edge of the table, his face only inches from mine. His voice was commanding. “You’re gonna wear that red dress you wore to your sister’s thing when she got engaged.”

My mouth went dry. I’d met Julius, Kyle and his girlfriend Ruby for drinks after my sister’s engagement party two weeks ago. The red dress was short and had a plunging neckline. I’d bought it to make myself feel better. Tariq’s adultery wasn’t

my fault. It wasn't on me. I was older now, but I still looked damn good, and the dress was a reminder I could be sexy.

I could be ... wanted.

“After dinner,” Julius continued, his tone confident, “you’re gonna come back to my place and stay the night. I’m not talking about fucking. I want you in my bed. I want to wake up next to you. You asked what I want, and that’s it.”

I nearly melted down the side of the table, not just from his words, but the way he set his powerful, dark hands gently on my knees and slid them up my thighs. His touch was electricity, sparking across my skin.

“Deal?” he asked.

I choked out the terms in an eager voice. “You show me what it’s like on this table, and I’ll give you a date and wear the red dress.” I set my hands on top of his and curled my fingers around them, inching his hold up onto my waist. “I’ll spend the night in your bed.”

I was sure we’d do a heck of a lot more than just sleep, but it was sexy to leave the promise unspoken. He tipped his head down and sealed his lips over mine. This kiss was slow, but just as intense as the last one, and I tightened my grip on his.

He didn’t confirm the deal with words. Instead, when the kiss was over, he went to the door and pushed it closed. He lingered, facing the wall with his broad back to me, and he put his hand on a hip.

“Deiondre,” he said. “I’m in room two and taking out my earpiece. Nobody knocks on the door unless it’s really fucking important, got it?”

Whatever answer he received, it seemed to satisfy him. Julius turned to face me, and as he peeled off his suit coat, he strode toward the white chair. The coat was folded neatly and set on the cushion. He unhooked the earpiece with spiraled cord, tugged the small battery pack attached to his waist, and set the communication system down on top of the coat.

A tremble of excitement began at my ankles and worked its way up to my knees as he locked his gaze on me. Then, he began to unbutton the cuffs of his black dress shirt. He rolled his sleeves back to the elbow, showing off his strong forearms. His skin was darker than Tariq's, and much more beautiful. I couldn't wait to see more of Julius.

"You gonna get naked?" he teased, but again, there was a hidden edge, like he was worried I was going to change my mind. "Want my help?" he asked lightly.

I wasn't normally shy, but I was nervous having him out of reach. "Do you want to take my clothes off?"

"It's not about me right now. It's whatever you want."

I slid down off the table to stand beside it. "Okay. I want you to do it."

The room was charged with energy and my body was a live wire. His eyes hooded at my request, and he complied, dipping his fingers under the hem of my top and slowly working it up. Our gazes were fixed on each other, broken only for a second as he tugged the shirt over my head, and dropped it silently to the floor.

His Adam's apple bobbed with a thick swallow.

I stood absolutely still as his fingers landed at the button of

my pants and undid it. He inched my zipper down, but his eyes never strayed from mine. It was like he found my eyes more interesting than the skin he was revealing.

I gasped when he put his hands under my arms and lifted, seating me on the table. Then, he slipped off my heels and tugged my pants off, one leg at a time. My chest rose and fell with my hurried breath, and then quit moving altogether as his hands crept along my body, his fingertips searching for the hooks at the back of my bra.

His mouth was damp and warm against the side of my neck, planting kisses there as tension released from the band and my bra came undone. Oh, shit. This was the moment of no return. I was about to be topless.

He must have sensed my hesitation. “Okay?”

I grabbed him by the back of the neck and moved his head toward mine until our mouths could meet. I was more than okay, I’d just needed a moment to acknowledge the threshold we were going to cross. As we kissed, I pulled my bra free from my body and added it to the pile of clothes on the floor.

His hands roamed over my bare back and goosebumps burst on my skin. My nipples tightened into points under the cool air and the anticipation of his hands touching me.

But he didn’t.

At least, not on my breasts. He turned me on the tabletop and eased me down onto my back, his dark brown eyes intently watching me. The leather was smooth and cold, and every muscle in me tensed. I’d negotiated for this, but anxiety crept in. It grew larger as his gaze finally broke from mine and

he pulled open the top drawer.

My hands were balled into fists at my sides, and I bit down on my bottom lip. Should I take off my panties while he was busy getting the straps ready? I couldn't make myself move. Watching him was too distracting.

Plastic crinkled as he pulled out the black blindfold. He held onto it, hesitating, and my body took over. I tugged the blindfold from his hold, slipped the straps behind my head, and pulled the shade down over my eyes.

In the darkness, I calmed almost instantly. The blindfold covered my nerves, so all I was left with was so much excitement, I worried I'd burst. His fingers gently wrapped around one of my wrists and urged it up over my head.

"If you wanna stop, just tell me," he said.

I didn't want him to stop ... in fact, I couldn't wait to get started. Anticipation thundered through my bloodstream, heating me to a million degrees.

The scratchy sound of Velcro coming together filled my ears as he closed the first restraint, and then he took my other wrist and did the same. I startled as his unexpected fingers curled around the sides of my thong and drew the scrap of fabric down my legs.

Blindfolded, bound, and now naked, I was more physically vulnerable than I'd ever been, but Julius had already seen me at my most emotionally. He'd been there for me, and so showing him this version was ... easy. It only strengthened my connection to him.

And speaking of connection—was he going to touch me?

After he'd removed my panties, his hands were gone. It didn't sound like he was moving. He was standing beside the table, just breathing.

"What are you doing?" I asked softly.

"Looking at you." God, his voice was like velvet. "Jesus, Courtney. You're so fucking beautiful."

It punched a sigh from my lungs. The ache for him pulsed incessantly in every cell of my body. "Are you going to touch me?"

"You better fucking believe it." His fingertips trailed over my cheekbone, just below the edge of the blindfold. It was his warning so I didn't startle when his lips settled on mine. This kiss was seductive, even though seduction was unnecessary. Even if I wasn't tied down, I'd do whatever he wanted.

He used one fingertip to draw a line over my lips, tracing down my chin and along my neck. Its slow path forced more goosebumps to pebble on my flesh. It was the only place we were connected, but I felt his power *everywhere*.

"You like it?" he asked.

His touch, or being under his control? The answer was a strong *yes* to either. I pressed my lips into a thin line and nodded quickly. I had to squeeze my knees together against the sensation as he steadily dragged his finger over my collarbone and down between my breasts.

It continued farther. Past my belly button. Swiping over my skin until he was at the delta of my legs, about to—

Gone. His touch disappeared and the table beneath me jostled faintly. He'd just opened a drawer. Which one was it?

The *pain* one seemed unlikely, but Julius always kept me off-balance.

Strings landed gently on my chest and my brain flooded with confusion. What the ... Oh. The flogger.

My breath caught. How was he going to use it on me? The sensation of the unknown was exciting. Was this how the women felt while on the table, at least a little bit? The curiosity was foreplay all on its own.

The flogger tails moved, sweeping downward over the curves of my bare skin. The leather caressed over my sensitive nipples, and my mouth dropped open. The sensation was nice. It made the muscles low in my belly contract with satisfaction as the tails continued their journey. It moved all the way down over my thighs and to my knees before floating away.

It sort of tickled, but was more like a wave of pleasure.

Again, the strands dropped onto my chest and began to dance over my flesh, working lower. I shuddered from their wicked stroke. It felt so freaking good. Like a skilled masseuse's hands priming my skin.

“Open your legs,” Julius commanded, and I gasped. It was both strange and amazing to hear him like this. His tone was warm, yet in control, and I was more than ready to obey. I peeled my knees apart, no longer feeling shy, and when the flogger coursed over the most aroused part of me, I jerked against the restraints, stunned by the feeling.

My gasp made him chuckle. “You get it now?”

“Yes,” I whispered. Or perhaps I pleaded. It was insane how something so simple was also so incredibly erotic.

He did it at least three more times, and each pass felt better than the last. I curled my hands around the ribbon holding my wrists to the table and arched my back, letting the leather play over every inch that was clamoring for attention.

“Fuck,” he groaned appreciatively. “You’ve got no idea what this is doing to me.”

It was almost impossible to think he was enjoying this. Sure, I was naked, but he was fully clothed and we weren’t even touching. How could he be getting any pleasure from it? “This is,” I said, sounding doubtful, “doing something for you?”

Sex with my ex-husband was all about the finish line for him. Was Julius merely humoring me? Pretending he was into it for my benefit?

“If you mean ‘doing something for me’ is getting my dick hard, then, yeah. Because it’s definitely doing that.”

I blinked under the blindfold. *Really?* I felt warm all over. After Tariq, I hadn’t realized how desperate I was to feel desired again, and Julius made me feel that way a million times over. My bottom lip trembled and I bit down on it, holding back the urge to cry with relief. The surge of emotions was intense, and probably amplified given my current state.

“Julius,” I said on a broken breath.

“I’m here.”

And he was. His hot mouth locked onto mine, and I arched once more off the tabletop, straining against the straps, only this time because I wanted to throw my arms around him and kiss him until our lips were sore. His tongue tangled with

mine, and the way it moved in my mouth was like he was fucking me.

I moaned, crying my need against his crushing lips, and wished I could go back in time. Back to the stupid house party where I'd run into Tariq the first weekend of my junior year and let him talk his way into my pants later that night.

I'd been so fucking stupid, lured by the glamour of dating a guy who was a football star and sure to go pro. It served me right. The bright lights on him that were so attractive at first became glaringly blinding, and I'd been trapped. I was weak. It'd been easier to stay with him and his manipulative ways, than deal with the truth. No matter what he said, Tariq was never really going to change who he was. He was never going to become a decent guy.

Julius, on the other hand, had always been one. Had what I'd wanted been right in front of me this whole time?

Something cold, metal, and kind of heavy, slipped around my wrist, just beneath the strap of ribbon. He couldn't see it beneath the blindfold, but my eyebrows pulled together. "What'd you just put on me?"

His hand skimmed over my arm, caressing. "My watch. It's gonna tell me your heartrate."

My pulse leapt. "Why do you—"

"I'm about to make you come a bunch of times. This way I know when to back off."

Holy.

Shit.

FIVE

JULIUS

I had to be fucking dreaming.

Courtney was in my club. She'd kissed me. Oh yeah, and she was naked. *Naked*. My brain kept screaming it on a loop, like my eyeballs weren't working. She was so fucking gorgeous, it hurt to look at her. Her skin was like snow, her nipples were a pretty pink and her fucking body made me want to sin a thousand kind of ways.

Her fair skin looked more fucking beautiful against the black table than any girl's I'd seen. I'd stroked myself as I'd watched her writhe under the flogger. That shit was intense. I didn't play a whole lot. I sat my ass in my office chair night after night and watched other guys get their rocks off.

But, I took some notes.

I wasn't a Dominant like most of the guys who came to my club. Wasn't into pain. Or humiliation. Didn't really understand the orgasm denial shit, either. If a girl could come, why not get her there? Who was going to complain about getting too many orgasms?

I'd worn the magnetic mesh band on my watch today instead of the links, and thank fuck I had. Her wrist was tiny, but the band fit. My smartwatch said Courtney's heartrate was hovering around ninety. One-thirty or one-forty should be the peak, but the only way to know for sure was to make it happen.

I opened the second drawer and stared at my options.

The white and purple toy in the left slot was a favorite in the club. Sometimes after the client left and the girl was let out of her straps, she'd reach into the drawer and finish herself off when the guy didn't have what it took. Tara said the toy got the job done for her in less than a minute.

I pulled it from the drawer and stared at Courtney again. Fuck me. Between playing Division I ball in college and running this place, I'd seen a lot of naked women in my life. But this girl bound to the table was something else. My dick throbbed in my pants, so I grabbed it and squeezed, pushing back the feeling. I'd meant what I said, that this experience wasn't about me. It did happen to be one of my favorite things to do, though.

Making Court come her brains out? I didn't have a bigger fantasy.

She jolted when I put the round suction head of the toy against her clit and pressed the button to turn the thing on. Its buzz was quiet against her skin. The thing had to be positioned just right, so I pulled the head back and moved it up just a little higher—

“Oh my God,” she groaned. Yeah, that spot was better. Her heartrate spiked upward.

One-oh-five.

One-ten. The color changed to yellow on the screen of my watch.

Her little whimpers of pleasure were the sexiest goddamn thing ever. I put my free hand on the table and gripped the

edge of the cushion. I didn't want to touch her this first time around, but keeping my hands to myself was one tall motherfucking order. Seven years I'd wanted this.

My grin went ear-to-ear. "Quit squirming or you're gonna knock it free and lose all that suction you like."

One-twenty.

Her chest was heaving and her head tipped back. Tendons in her legs flexed as she pointed her toes. Jesus, watching her was insane. My heart was going to pound right out of my ribcage.

"Oh my fucking God," she cried.

One-twenty-five. One-thirty. It climbed like a rocket, and her moans did the same, signaling an explosion. The screen blinked red, flashing the numbers as she took off.

Courtney had been a cheerleader at Ohio State, so I knew my girl could get loud, but her gasp was bigger than I'd thought it be. Damn near a scream. Louder than it'd been in my fantasies, and better sounding too. Her throaty moan that came after was a lick of heat through my spine, burning all the way to my cock.

She bucked up off the leather, straining against the straps. I tensed my grip on the table until my hand ached. *Not yet.* I wanted to touch her, but when I did, it needed to be the only feeling she had.

She shook and trembled. I could see the goddamn waves rolling down her legs and it pumped more blood straight to my dick. I was gonna bust my zipper if I got any harder.

I pulled the toy away from her skin, turned it off, and

dropped it beside her on the table while she continued to come down from her O. The watch screen was yellow now as her heartrate slowed, matching her breathing. She closed her lush lips to swallow a ragged breath.

There was a drawer on the end of the table she hadn't explored. It had rubbers, lube, and other shit and I grabbed the bottle of massage oil I wanted. Jesus help me at the sight of Courtney all glistening. I could barely keep my shit together now, but was going to try it anyway.

She was still breathing hard and didn't seem to hear me uncap the bottle. I poured a bunch of the slippery liquid into my hand and rubbed my palms together to warm it up. It smelled like strawberries a little, but nothing obnoxious like a cheap stripper. It better not, either. The bottles were tiny, but fucking expensive, like they had liquid gold in them.

I leaned over the table and set my slick hands on her thighs, my thumbs on the insides of her knees. My dark hands looked so good on her creamy skin. I didn't use a lot of pressure as I glided my palms upward, working the oil over her. I ran my hands up and down, back and forth until it was distributed on her smooth thighs. Her tense muscles softened under my hands, and her head lolled to one side like she liked what I was doing.

I poured more oil into my cupped palm and smoothed it over her flat stomach. God, her body was fucking hot. As I slid the oil over her, she moved like a cat, rubbing against my touch, as if she was as fucking eager for it as I was to do it. I teased with my fingers, hinting I'd slide them down between her legs, but didn't go all the way. She needed another minute

to finish recovering before I took her to the edge again.

Instead of dumping it in my hands, this time I drizzled the oil on her. I drew a thin line with it from one nipple to the other and watched the syrup-like stuff roll down the curves of her perfect tits.

She sighed when my large hands were on her, and it was the sweetest sound. I massaged and kneaded, letting her slick skin slip through my fingers. I brushed my knuckles over her hard nipples and swirled my fingertips on them. Shit, I was turned on. Sweating in my dress shirt and aching all over for her.

Her voice was breathless. “That feels so good.”

“You’re telling me.” I squeezed her tits and loved watching the skin slide through my grip.

She moaned against the side of her arm, and the watch flashed green, telling me like a stoplight that it was time to go again. I raked my curled fingers down her body, scraping against the oiled flesh and giving her a new sensation.

“Oh,” she gasped.

Her mouth dropped open and her breath cut off as I kept going, sliding two thick fingers against her pussy. She was hot and wet. I stirred her clit, and clenched my teeth to hold in a groan as she responded to my hand on her. Her glistening body contrasted against the black straps and blindfold, and was a thing of beauty. I wanted to climb on the table with her. It was built for at least two people, so it could handle me—

No, fuck it! I wasn’t going to take her here like this. She had gorgeous blue eyes, and I wanted to see them when we

were together.

I wanted to do it right.

I had one hand on her tit and the other teasing her clit, and what the fuck had I done to make this shit happen? Had I just wanted it so bad and long enough to make the universe hand it to me?

The muscles of her arms strained and she moaned when I sank my middle finger inside her. She was hot as fire, and squeezed down. Her pussy clenched at my finger, so tight it got hard to see straight. Listening to her enjoy it was going to get me off if I wasn't real fucking careful.

All the rubbing I'd done on her had set the stage, and her heartrate jumped up as I thrust my finger in and out of her pretty pink pussy. "Fuck, you're sexy, Court. So fucking sexy."

Her moan walked a line between pleasure and a sob. I moved faster with both hands. The one not fucking her, glided over her shiny skin, pinching and pulling at her nipples and fumbling from one tit to the other.

Her pulse roared to one-twenty, and I recognized all the signals from last time. She was so responsive. It made me feel powerful getting her to come again so soon.

"Oh, shit!" Her moans shifted in pitch, climbing until she gave me another gasp that could've been a scream, and her body locked up.

"Yeah, that's it," I said. "Fuck, yeah."

She bowed up from the table, and her pussy pulsed on my finger, flexing with the waves of her orgasm. My dick jerked like it needed to match her tempo. I sucked in air through my

clenched teeth. It was unreal, this threat of coming in my pants when I was a grown ass man. Proof of how amazing she was.

Whatever control I had disappeared faster than a client after he'd paid.

I sank a knee on the table and hauled my big body up onto it until I was kneeling between her parted legs. Didn't give her any time to recover. I scooped my hands under her ass and lifted, lowering my head until my mouth was on her.

Maybe I startled the scream out of her, or she was still really sensitive, because my tongue on her clit made her shout my name. I closed my eyes and savored her.

Fuck my job. Fuck this club right now. I was going to make her come again, and my mouth was the best way to do it since I'd taken my cock out of the playbook. The faint strawberry taste from the oil on her skin was good. The bottle was worth every motherfucking penny.

"Holy shit," she groaned. Her legs trembled, and it got worse every time I licked her. Or maybe better. She definitely seemed to like it. And me? I fucking loved it. She was lush and soft. Her squirming made me feel like a king. I had absolute rule over her body.

When I made her come this time, her heartrate got all the way to one-forty. It probably wasn't comfortable for her in this position since her chin was stabbing her in the chest and most of her weight was on her shoulder blades.

I lowered her to the tabletop and ran my hands over her oiled skin while she flinched with aftershocks from her orgasm. I grinned at her involuntary contractions and listened

to the straps go taut as she fought them.

It burst out of her in a panic. “Fuck me.”

Jesus. I leaned over, put my hands on the leather on either side of her head, and slowly lowered in until I could kiss her. I stayed up on my arms though, not wanting to crush her. I mumbled it against her damp lips. “Wasn’t what we agreed on.”

“Let’s renegotiate, then.”

I laughed and slid my tongue inside her mouth, tasting her. It was probably better if she didn’t say anything else. I was too close to caving. As we kissed, I tugged the blindfold up until it rested on her forehead. Her eyes fluttered open, and ... when she looked at me? It was like she was seeing me for the first time.

Court was staring at me the way I’d always hoped she would. My chest grew six inches bigger.

“No new negotiations,” I said. Could she hear the stumble in my voice? I cleared my throat, playing it off like the way she was staring in my eyes wasn’t getting to me. “Once a deal’s made, it’s done. Club rules.”

“Don’t you know the owner?” she teased, but sounded half-serious.

I had to move fast. Every second the two of us were on this table, it got way more dangerous. I unlatched her wrists and the sound of Velcro tearing open filled the room. Unleashing her from the table was both good and bad. As I sat back on my heels, she climbed onto me and threw her arms around my shoulders.

It felt good holding her. Felt even better the way she was rubbing her body against my dick through my pants. We kissed like that for a long time. When her lips moved from my mouth, they trailed along my jaw and she trembled.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered.

What the hell was she talking about? “Sorry for—?”

“Not coming here sooner.” She babbled it out, her voice breaking and her eyes getting wet with tears. “For staying with Tariq so long, for not seeing what we—”

“Shhh,” I said, trying to soothe. “Don’t do that. Shit happens for a reason. I could’ve stopped being a pussy and come at you like I wanted to, you know.” I squeezed her to me. “But if I had, we wouldn’t have had this, and ... damn. I liked how it worked out.”

She smiled and blinked back her tears, clinging to me. For such a small woman, she was mighty.

And she was finally mine.

SIX

JULIUS

Courtney tried to get a hand down my pants, but I caught her wrist and stopped her. I was gonna go off too fast, and I didn't want her getting ideas I was a two-pump chump. Usually I was great at holding off, but after all we'd done on the table, and the seven years of wanting her, it made me a stick of dynamite. I needed to get my shit back together.

I told her I'd give her the rest of the tour, but it took forever to get her dressed. My fault. She was distracting as hell in a bra and underwear just as she was naked, and it was hard for her to get clothes on when my hands were always in the way.

When it was done, I trudged over to the chair and put my earpiece back in.

She ran her fingers through her hair, trying to straighten it and maybe make it so it looked like we hadn't been fucking around in the room. Not that anyone would care. Most of my employees would probably tell me it was about damn time I hooked up.

"When are you going to collect on your end of the deal?" Her eyes were bright and sexy.

"I want to tonight, but I gotta work. Tomorrow night too." The club wasn't open during the week unless I made special arrangements. "Sunday." I unrolled my sleeves and buttoned the cuffs. "You don't have an early class on Monday, right?"

She was going back to school to earn her masters in finance. On top of all the other awesome things about her, Court was book smart.

“No class on Monday at all,” she said.

Good. We’d stay in bed all day, wearing each other out.

I radioed to Deiondre I was back online and to send the cleaning crew through room two.

His laugh sounded dumb through the electronics. “Audition went that good, huh?”

“Shut the fuck up, man,” I snapped. “Wasn’t an audition, her and me, we’re—” Courtney paused. Hearing only my side of the conversation, she knew what I was about to say, and seemed real fucking interested in the label I was going to put on us. I shot her a grin, challenging her to say otherwise. “We’re together.”

How could she say it wasn’t true? Her perfume was on my clothes and the taste of her was still in my mouth. No argument from her. Her pink, full lips turned up into that smile I loved.

We went out the door and into the hallway, and something small and soft wrapped around my hand. It was her hand, and her fingers moved until they were linked with mine. Fuck, this simple gesture was going to make me stumble. I was high off of her, like nothing could fucking stop me.

“Through that door,” I pointed to the black one at the end of the hallway, “that’s the payment room. It’s boring in there, so we’ll skip it.”

I didn’t take her there for a whole bunch of reasons, and

one of them was I didn't want her seeing that side of this place. Joseph, the guy who'd built the club, said the magic stopped in that room. Reality set in for the clients that the fantasy was over, and it was stupid, but no way in fucking hell did I want my fantasy with Courtney to end. Ever.

We went up the narrow stairs to the second floor, her leading the way. I wanted her to go as far as she liked, rather than me in front, feeling like I was dragging her deeper into my club. I'd been in charge in the room when she was on the table, but now the roles were reversed.

"Left is my office," I said.

She dropped my hand, turned left to go in, and I watched her look around. There wasn't much to this room. A small couch faced my desk in the center, and the bank of screens the cameras fed into, was on the wall behind it. My office was windowless. Joseph had made it look elegant to match the rest of the place, but it didn't feel sexy.

It felt like business.

"This is where I run things. When we get busy," I said, being a shitty tour guide, "someone else helps watch the feeds."

She turned to face me and licked her lips. She was nervous?

"What?" I asked.

"Can I, uh ... *help*?"

"Stay and watch?" Jesus, she wanted to sit beside me while this place was operating? I pictured it. It turned me on all over again, and I'd just gotten my dick to cooperate. "You wanna?"

Her shoulders lifted. “I’m ... interested in seeing it.”

“Never done that before,” I said. “But I can swing it. I know the owner.”

Her small laugh sounded so good. She walked to the desk, trailed her fingers over the wood, and turned away to look at the bank of screens. In room two, a woman rolled a cleaning cart up to the table.

Court’s shoulders tightened and her voice was hesitant. “Why didn’t you tell me about this place? Are you ... embarrassed?”

Oh, fuck. I swallowed hard. “Nah, it’s not that.”

“Because I’m not going to judge you, Julius.”

She’d given me back my watch, and if I’d still had the app running, the screen would be red. My pulse kicked hard. “I know you wouldn’t.”

She turned to face me. Even confused, she was still so fucking beautiful. Her blue eyes peered up. “Then, why’d you keep it from me?”

If we had a chance at long-term, I needed to come clean with her about everything. I sucked in a deep breath and prayed I wasn’t going to fuck this all up. I wanted to do the right thing. Better late than never, right? “I don’t want secrets between us no more.”

I put one foot in front of the other and made my way to her. She didn’t move as I lifted my hand and set it on her cheek, but her pupils got big and she tensed. She sensed whatever I was about to say was gonna be serious.

I got it out quick, like it'd be less painful that way, which was stupid. It was going to hurt her no matter what. "Tariq came here."

She jolted. "When? After the divorce?"

I opened my dumb mouth, but nothing came out, and her eyes turned hard. She stepped backward, out of my hold.

Her tone was razor-sharp. "When?"

She thought it was just one time, because that was probably all her self-preservation would let her. Spared her the worst of it. Tariq had cheated and lied to her for years, and he'd forced me to do it too, but no more. I was fucking done.

"Courtney." I wanted to soften the blow, but couldn't. "He was a regular."

She gasped like I'd tackled her, and she threw her arms over her chest. It was defensive. Trying to protect herself from the terrible shit I'd hidden.

I'd never felt so miserable in my goddamn life. It hurt like a motherfucker watching her suffer. "I'm so fucking sorry. I didn't run this place when he first came around—"

"A regular," she spat at me. Fire was in her eyes, and they burned hotter as she put it all together. "Wait a goddamn minute. He was coming here before you took over?" Her face twisted with horror. "Tariq was fucking girls at this club for years ... *and you knew about it?*"

My mouth was bone dry. My throat closed up, but I pushed the word out anyway. It was quiet and guilty as hell. "Yeah." My arms weighed a million pounds, dragging my shoulders down. "I wanted to tell you, I fucking swear, but Tariq ... He

was on the list before I found out.”

Joseph had a strict policy about clients’ identities staying secret—and me? I followed rules. So many years of football made it impossible not to. I put order and loyalty on top of everything else. I did what the boss said, right up until I got to be the boss.

It wasn’t an excuse, and she wasn’t having it, either. Courtney’s face was still stuck on horror. “How the fuck could you not tell me?”

“He made me promise and he was supposed to be my boy.” It sounded even worse saying it out loud. “It fucking killed me, knowing. I told him every goddamn time how he was fucking everything up, but he wouldn’t listen. Jesus, I’m so sorry.”

Her face crumbled, and panic gripped me. I was supposed to be her friend and I’d betrayed her. And, shit, I was gonna lose her over this.

“Keeping my mouth shut about Tariq was the biggest mistake I ever made,” I said.

She pulled her shoulders back, trying to look strong. “You’re right. And getting on the table downstairs was mine.”

It would have stung less if she’d slapped me. I stood fucking paralyzed as she pushed past me and stormed toward the door. She was almost through it when I snapped back into action. “Wait. Please, Court.”

She didn’t.

I chased after her, my big footsteps booming on the stairs as we went down. She was moving so fast, it was almost a

sprint, and then it was. She hit the door to the front lounge and barreled through it.

I pushed the button on my comm pack. “D, where you at?”

He didn’t get a chance to answer because Courtney pushed open the door to the security entrance and ran face-first into his chest. She bounced off of him and rolled right, moving toward the door to the street.

Deiondre got one look at my face and went for the door, beating her to it. He threw his black ass in front of it, stopping her, but like I’d taught him, he kept his tone friendly, no matter the situation. “Hold up a sec, girl.”

“Get the fuck outta my way.”

Deiondre was like twice her size, but even he flinched at her cold words. It sliced at me. Courtney was my best friend. I’d made her laugh, seen her cry, but I’d never heard her sound like *him* before. Five years being married to Tariq, and this was the first time she’d done it.

“C’mon, let’s talk about this,” I pleaded.

She barely moved her head, like I wasn’t worth the trouble. She turned just enough to give me a profile. “No. I can’t even look at you right now.”

She shut down and shut me out. There was no getting through to her right now. Time was what she needed. I looked at my security guard and nodded for him to step back. “It’s cool, D.”

As soon as he was out of the way, she shoved the door open and fled.

He lifted an eyebrow at me. “She’s pissed.”

Yeah, no shit. “Can you walk with her to the train station? Make sure no one bothers her.” My club wasn’t exactly in a nice part of town.

“You got it.”

He disappeared out the door, leaving me alone in the boring-looking entryway, and I put my hands on my hips. I was more fucked up now than I’d been when I got here, worried about Courtney going out with someone else.

I hated the lying. I hated how I’d hurt her.

But I was going to make it right. I just needed a motherfucking plan.

S E V E N

COURTNEY

I didn't answer Julius's texts or calls during the weekend. Whenever I thought about him, I see-sawed between anger and hurt. I got that Tariq had been Julius's friend first, but how could he not tell me something so ... *huge*?

Julius's silence was deafening.

Six months ago, Tariq got drunk after an away game and he'd thought he was texting his driver to pick him up from some random chick's place. Instead, he'd been texting me. I remember the moment with horrifying clarity as I looked at my phone and read it. My husband bragged about the nasty pussy he'd gotten in two texts that were so full of spelling errors, some words were gibberish.

Autocorrect gave up on him, and that night, I finally did too.

He'd cheated on me when we were dating, but I'd foolishly believed he'd change, and forgave him. But Tariq was always going to be who he was, and he didn't apologize for it, either. He'd come home from the trip and before I let him say a word, I announced we were getting a divorce.

His gaze left mine and dropped down to his expensive Italian shoes. "I can't be with just one girl, Nene," he said, using his nickname for me that I tolerated, but never really liked. "I tried, but I ain't built that way."

It was a bullshit excuse, and I told him so as he left.

We never had kids, thank God. He wanted them, and I did too, but things got rocky a while back after he'd torn his ACL and couldn't play the rest of the season. A baby would only make the strain on our marriage worse. If I got pregnant, I'd never leave him, and deep down I knew I needed to. We weren't meant for each other.

I was a fool, but not stupid.

I knew the night of the drunken texts wasn't the first time Tariq had been unfaithful, but hearing he'd been a club regular for years ... I felt shattered all over again. Who else knew? Were the other players and their wives laughing at clueless Courtney, who was too dumb to know her husband couldn't keep his dick in his pants? That he'd willingly pay to fuck other women, rather than sleep with his own wife?

What did Julius think of me?

He'd been so angry on my behalf when I'd broken down and showed him the texts. He'd been the one to suggest Kyle McCreary as an attorney when I told him I'd asked Tariq for a divorce. He'd said I deserved so much better than Tariq.

Julius was right about that.

I deserved a guy who I could trust, and those were apparently in short supply these days.

Sunday afternoon was spent in the gym, where I could send his calls rolling in to voicemail while I tried to climb away my feelings on the stair machine. I knew I couldn't avoid him forever. He was my friend, and I wasn't going to throw our entire friendship away over what he'd kept from me, but I wasn't happy, and I needed to get the point across.

My legs were rubber as I got home and dragged myself into the shower. Afterward, I cinched my hair up in a towel, pulled on a pair of old cheerleading sweats, and started thinking about options for dinner. I didn't have the desire to order out, but was feeling too lazy to make something—

A knock on my front door made me nearly jump out of my skin.

I treaded slowly to the door and raised up on my toes to look through the peep hole, but I already suspected who it was. I sighed loudly as I opened the door and glared up at him, only to have the air cut off in my lungs.

Julius's suit was midnight blue. He had a simple white dress shirt beneath the coat and a gold-striped tie. I still wasn't used to seeing him in suits, and this one ... he looked amazing in it. Every bit the man who'd given me the best orgasms of my life, and hadn't asked for anything in return.

Well, that probably wasn't true. He was likely here to ask my forgiveness.

"I'm not ready to talk about it," I said flatly.

"You don't got to. We can talk about whatever you want."

He stepped into my apartment without an invitation, and I pushed the door closed behind him with too much force. It shut with a loud bang.

He gave me a once-over. I had on old sweats and no makeup, but of course he looked at me like it didn't matter at all. His gaze settled on the towel wrapped around my hair. "Better get a move on," he said. "Our reservation's at six-thirty."

My jaw dropped to my knees. “What?”

His dark eyes sharpened, studying me. “It’s Sunday. We got a date.”

I took a step back. I didn’t like being so close to him or smelling his cologne, but I couldn’t outrun the reminder of Friday night. I could still feel the cold leather of the table against my heated skin. I still felt the lingering pleasure he’d given me, and he hadn’t even needed to take his clothes off to deliver it. What would it be like if he had?

Wait, no. I didn’t want to think about that. I scowled. “Are you shitting me?”

“We made a deal.”

“No. It’s off.” He’d lied for more than a year.

One step was all it took, and he was right in front of me, so close my breasts would brush his chest if I took a deep breath. His eyes were soft and warm. “I know you’re mad. You got every right.”

I was defenseless against him when he was wearing armor made of fine blue wool and gold silk. I stood like a statue as he hesitantly moved in, setting one hand on my waist. The warmth of it seeped beneath the cotton of my shirt.

“But,” he said on a low voice, “I held up my end of the deal, and now you’re gonna hold up yours, Court.”

My voice faltered. “What are you gonna do? Make me?”

He was prepared for that. “I can be persuasive.” A light smile tugged across his lips. “If that fails, I got other ways.”

“Other ways?” I repeated.

“We have a verbal agreement and I’m betting my attorney agrees.”

It was clear Julius was kidding, but my eyes went down to slits. “Keep Kyle out of this—” Except I was a hypocrite now, wasn’t I? I’d gotten Kyle involved with my fake date scheme, trying to force Julius into action.

His other hand rested gently on my waist, and I allowed him to hold me. I told myself it was because I was too tired from my workout to move, and not because I liked the feeling of his hands on my body.

“No,” I said. “I’m not going.” On the ridiculous date, or leaving his hold?

Julius’s expression sobered. “You don’t want to, I’ll give you an ‘out.’ You let me say my part about Tariq, and when I’m done, I’ll go.”

“I told you, I’m not ready to talk about it.”

He looked almost pleased with my answer. “Okay. So, put on that red dress and let’s go.”

My face heated with annoyance. It’d probably match the dress perfectly. “I said no—” He picked me up like I was nothing, squeezing a gasp from me as he put me over his shoulder. “What the hell?”

I bounced against him as he marched toward my bedroom, and could feel the vibrations of his deep voice through his back. “I said I’d tried to persuade you.”

“Put me down!”

We made it through the doorway and he did as I asked,

dropping me gently onto the edge of my unmade bed. I glared up at him.

“I didn’t make my move when I should have, but no more. You’re gonna let me talk about this, or put on the dress.” His eyes were desperate. “Pick one.”

“Fine,” I said in a huff. “I agreed to dinner, so I’ll go, but don’t expect me to say anything.”

“You’re gonna go the whole night without a word?” He couldn’t have looked more skeptical if he’d tried.

So, I could be a bit of a talker, but if needed I could be—oh, shit. *The whole night*. I’d forgotten the final term of our deal. Date. Red dress. Night in his bed. There was no way I’d stay mute through all that, but his dubious expression made me desperate to try.

He’d stayed quiet for more than a year. Couldn’t I be silent for one night?

I gave him a hard, determined look before launching to my feet. I pulled the towel off my head, shoved it in his chest, and pushed him toward the door. “I’m changing, so get out.”

EIGHT

COURTNEY

Candles flickered on the tabletop and added to the subdued lighting of the Italian restaurant Julius brought me to. It was a white tablecloth kind of place, with a fancy wine list as long as a novel, and tables tucked into quiet alcoves to make it feel intimate.

Our little table for two was romantic as fuck, and if he'd brought me here last week, I'd have climbed over it to get on him. But everything was different now. His withheld secret was a wall too tall for me to get over without his help.

So far, so good. I didn't talk during the ride here. I'd sat in the passenger seat of his Range Rover wearing the red dress, and tried not to think about what we'd done on Friday night.

He'd told me the truth, when he could have continued to keep me in the dark. It was doubtful I'd have figured it out on my own. Why had he told me? It would have been so much easier for him if he hadn't.

The only time I spoke was to order my drink and then dinner. Julius bypassed the wine list. The front for his illegal business was a wine club. It had been the first thing to make me question his story because Julius didn't even like the stuff.

When I didn't talk, he didn't either, but he acted as if it was no big deal. He was comfortable with the lack of conversation, but it drove me insane. I made it until the salads were delivered, and then ... I pathetically broke.

“You knew my husband was cheating on me,” I blurted out.

Julius stopped mid-sip of his cocktail. He lowered the glass slowly and looked at the ice cubes floating inside, resigned. “It’s worse than that.”

Oh my God. My hands curled on the armrests and I dug my fingernails in. “How the hell is it worse?”

If I wasn’t already so hurt, I would have been overwhelmed with sadness at his expression. He looked crushed. “I took his money.”

I closed my eyes, which were burning with tears. Maybe I’d been wrong. Maybe this was too much to overcome. Too much damage for our friendship to survive.

“I’m a proud man, but I’m not too proud to tell you it made me sick. Fucking sick to my stomach about what he was doing, and that I let the asshole get away with it.” He plunked his drink down on the table and the ice sloshed in the glass. “It’s a shitty excuse, but my club went through some scary shit last year. Legal stuff. I was worried if I cut Tariq off, he’d fuck everything up.”

Julius leaned forward across the table and his gaze was focused. “Now, me? I don’t care about me. I can handle my problems. But the folks who work for me ... they’re good people. I didn’t want none of them dragged down if the club fell.”

That sounded like typical Julius. He’d fall on his sword before he let anyone else die by it. I stared at the empty appetizer plate before me on the table, unable to look my

friend in the eye.

“You should have told me,” I choked out. “You’re my best friend, right? I thought you were in my corner. I mean, you helped me through this whole thing ... but you didn’t say a goddamn word.” My throat grew scratchy as the emotions welled up. “I can’t handle any more lies, Julius. I won’t deal with another guy who breaks my trust.”

“I know. You deserve a hell of a lot better. I made a huge mistake, but you can trust me, I swear.”

I didn’t know what else to say. “You should have fucking told me.”

“Yeah. I’m so sorry.” His sincere tone drew my gaze up like it was magnetic. “I’ll make it right if you’ll let me. Please tell me you can get past this. Maybe not tonight, but eventually. I gotta know. If this is the end, I wanna get it over with.”

I swallowed a breath. *The end?* I was angry and hurt, but he knew he’d fucked up. He was trying to apologize, and I believed in second chances. Didn’t I?

You gave Tariq one, and look how well it turned out. It wasn’t fair to compare them, thought. Julius was nothing like my ex-husband. I knew in my heart Julius was a good man, and I couldn’t stand the idea of losing him.

“It’s ... not the end.”

Relief poured through his handsome face, and I fought back the next swell of emotions. I wanted to forgive him. It was in my nature to be forgiving, as long as there was regret. It was something Tariq had never shown me. Guilt? Sure. But he

didn't apologize. His only regret was at getting caught. Losing me felt like failure, and my ultra-competitive ex-husband didn't like that.

"Is that it?" I asked. "You didn't tell me the truth because you thought Tariq was going to fuck everything—"

"No." Julius cut me off, but his eyes shifted away. He was nervous about something.

"Tell me the truth," I demanded. "No more secrets."

His gaze settled back on mine, and he looked like a man who was heading for his doom. "I didn't say nothing because I thought you'd forgive him again and I'd lose you." He made a face. "Not like you were mine, but I couldn't stand you being with him while you knew he was running around with girls on the side."

"I wouldn't," I said, but it came out weak. I had taken Tariq back before. Julius was right to be concerned I'd do it again.

"I was scared, okay? I didn't want to hurt you. I should have thrown his ass out a long time ago. I'm fucking sorry I didn't sooner."

I straightened my posture in surprise. "You threw him out?" Julius's friendship with Tariq had fallen apart, but I assumed it was the divorce and how Julius had sided with me. "Is this the reason you don't talk to him anymore?"

He blinked slowly. "I don't talk to him because of the way he treated you. He's a selfish piece of shit, and he ain't worth my time. If I wasn't in love with you, I'd have stopped being friends with him a long time ago."

My heart lurched to a halt. The sound in the restaurant dropped out altogether. “What?”

It rolled out of his mouth casually, but dropped on the table like a bomb. “I think you heard me.”

Love ...? Words were a jumbled mess in my head. I couldn’t sort them out into sentences that made any sense, so I uttered the only thing I could remember how to say. “What?”

“No more secrets.” He wasn’t fazed by my repeated response. His expression was intense and too powerful to be anything other than pure truth. “I love you. I have for a while now.”

Finally, my mouth and brain could get it together. “How long?”

“About seven years.”

“Oh my God.” *Oh my God!*

“You know when I knew? We were at some party. You were standing in a crowded kitchen by the keg. T had gone to the bathroom or something, and left you with me. You remember it?” He didn’t give me time to process his question fully. Was he talking about the night we met? Julius’s eyes drifted upward for a moment as he recalled the memory. “This guy comes in, wearing a dinosaur costume. Wasn’t Halloween. No clue why he was wearing it.”

“Him and his friends always dressed up for the games,” I babbled, reeling from the revelation. “That way they’d get on the Jumbotron.”

“Oh, yeah.” Julius smiled. “People are giving him shit about it. Someone asks what he’s supposed to be, and he says

he's a lesbian. It was weird between you and me, cause we'd just met and T was MIA, so I was trying to make conversation, and asked if you thought the dinosaur guy looked like a lesbian. You said, yeah. That he looked like a—”

“Oh my God.” I blurted it out now, just as I'd done then. “Lick-a-lotta-puss. I was so drunk.”

His grin widened. “You went as red as the bow in your hair. It was so fucking cute, Court. I didn't stand a chance.” The playful look faded back into his serious one. “But you were already with him, and I wasn't gonna get in the way. I wanted you to be happy.”

It was a gut-punch right in my feels. What he wanted didn't matter. He always put others first. The irony of it all was a hard lump to swallow. Being with Tariq hadn't made me happy, but I suspected the opposite could be true of the man sitting across from me.

Julius was in love with me. Could I feel the same about him some day?

“Why did you tell me?” I asked. “I mean, about Tariq being a regular? I never would have found out if you hadn't.”

“I want everything in the clear. Don't want him to have anything to do with us.” His gaze clouded. “I know my club's got a taste that isn't for everyone, and what I do ain't respectable. Still, the only time I ever felt dirty, was when he was there.”

His pained expression made me believe it, and what he was saying ... he'd broken the trust between us to try to build it stronger.

“I’m sorry,” he started.

I shook my head. “No, I am. I’m sorry for what I said at the club, that getting on the table was a mistake. I was lashing out—”

His shoulders relaxed with a sigh of relief. “You don’t got to apologize.”

“I do, because it was a lie and I don’t want to lie to you. Nothing we did felt like a mistake.”

Emotions swirled inside me, twisting me up and making it hard to find the courage to put myself out there. My heart was fragile now. Not quite done with rehab, although the beautiful man across the table was doing all he could to help. He’d do anything for me, including telling me a difficult truth. And he’d been brave enough to say he loved me, not knowing if I’d ever return that love.

I remembered how it felt when we’d connected for the first time in a kiss. Not a mistake at all. I stared at him and filled my expression with longing. “Being with you felt ... right.”

He’d been fast on the football field, but he moved so quickly, it hadn’t registered he’d left his seat until his mouth was on mine. His hands tangled in my hair as he bent over my chair, kissing me and not giving a fuck who was watching.

It put our previous passion to shame. I gripped the lapels of his jacket, tugging him closer as his lips slayed me.

“Jesus,” I whispered, echoing his word after our first kiss.

He chuckled and dropped another kiss on my lips, although this one was tame. Restrained. He lingered for a long moment, giving me a silent promise of more ... but later.

“Seven years catching up with me,” he joked.

“With us,” I corrected, giving him the brightest smile I had.

N I N E

COURTNEY

We ate dinner like a pair of starving wolves, although I don't think either of us was actually hungry for food. The faster we finished, the faster we could be alone and on to the final term of our deal. Would we go straight to his bedroom when we got to his place?

Nope. Neither of us could wait that long after the car ride to his apartment. It'd been so heavy with sexual tension, I felt like an overly wound spring. One touch and I'd explode.

I'd been to his place a few times before, but we mostly hung out at mine. He was a guy's guy, and didn't do much with the apartment. Only, things were way different than the last time I'd been here. I barely got a look before he descended on me.

"You have curtains," I said with surprise as he pressed me against a wall and buried his face in the side of my neck.

His mouth latched onto the sensitive skin below my ear and sucked, and it sent pleasure coursing through me. I closed my eyes and sank an inch down the wall. Holy shit, that felt good.

I was too low for him. He slid his hands down the backs of my legs, and in one quick jerk, he had me lifted and pinned to the wall, supporting me with his hands on my ass. The short skirt of the dress corded around my waist. This change in position was so much better. It made it easier to kiss him.

Easier to squeeze my thighs around his hips and rock against him, grinding our lower bodies together.

There were paintings hung on the wall, replacing the old OSU poster he'd taped up. A golden pattern filled the oversize canvases and gave the room a sunny feeling. They were big, and warm. Just like him.

Julius's bulk, even from the moment I'd met him, never intimidated me. He didn't act aggressive unless provoked, and in his dominating presence, all I felt was safe. The feeling intensified as I was held against the wall, cradled in his arms so he could shower kisses along the slope of my neck.

I shivered as his breath rolled down the low-cut neckline of my dress, and I arched my back, thrusting my breasts in his face. He murmured a quiet approval, and just the sound of it was delicious.

I'd spent years mastering balance and core strength for cheerleading. I was no stranger to being lifted by a strong guy. I was comfortable being launched high in the air and tumbling without disorientation. Yet, all that practice didn't prepare me for this. Three feet off the ground and held steady in Julius's thick arms made me off-balance and dizzy.

I was going to fall, but only metaphorically.

I cupped my hands on his cheeks and kissed him with total abandon. Like it was the most natural thing. But the world was spinning and I gripped him tighter—

It wasn't the earth that was suddenly moving, it was him. He pulled us away from the wall and carried me toward his couch. He turned at the last moment, dropping down to sit so I

was in his lap, straddling him.

“Is this couch new?” I asked.

He was distracted as his hands slid up my back, searching for the zipper. “Yeah. I got a decorator. She finished last week.”

A decorator? I smiled. He wasn't a boy anymore, and he had a grown-up apartment to prove it. I craned my neck and took a good look at the place. It was sophisticated and manly, but still ... friendly. Easy and inviting.

Everything reminded me exactly of him.

“She's good,” I murmured as he inched my zipper down. “Do you have her card?”

“Nah, Noemi's a friend. Does the decorating shit as a hobby.” His hands slowed as he tugged at the strap of my dress, easing it over my shoulder. His voice went low. “You really wanna talk about my couch and curtains right now?”

He leaned forward, pressing his damp lips to my newly-exposed skin.

“No,” I said breathlessly. Goosebumps burst from his soft kiss, radiating outward, and my heart skipped faster as his mouth worked lower. He peeled the dress and my bra down, inch by painfully slow inch, kissing my skin until I was shaking with anticipation.

Hell no, I didn't want to talk about decorating. My mind emptied of any thought except the way his soft lips felt traveling over my breasts, moving determinedly toward my nipples. They'd tightened into aching knots and I was eager for satisfaction.

“Oh,” I sighed as I got my wish.

He sucked and nipped at me. The pull on my sensitive skin sent a rush of heat to my center. I yanked my arms out of the dress and bra straps, letting the fabric fall to my waist. His mouth was erotic, and worked in perfect combination with his hands, gripping me just as firm as I wanted him to.

I squirmed in his lap, both getting relief and yet needing more. The months without a partner had amped up my sex drive until I barely recognized myself. I reached behind and set a hand on his knee for support so I could lean back and arch even more, presenting my body to him like he was a king and I was his to claim.

Large, slightly calloused hands splayed over my topless form, and Julius made a sound of deep satisfaction. His gaze on me was heavy, full of lust. It was searing.

His tie was smooth and soft as I curled a fist around it and yanked him to me, demanding his mouth’s attention on me once again, and he was happy to obey. It sent me into a frenzy. I wanted to go down on him, but I wanted his fingers inside me. And I needed his tongue between my legs, working me over until I was a shaking mess. And, God, I *needed* to fuck him, and him to fuck me, and ... and ...

This thing between us started as a tiny spark but had exploded into a fire so magnificent, it threatened to consume me. I backed off the couch, climbing out of his lap, and he moved with the same urgency I did.

Only, he was trying to pull my dress down, and even unzipped, the waist of it would never fit over my hips. Our hands tangled, trying to pull it in opposite directions when we

had the same goal. We both wanted it gone.

His handsome face was etched with concentration and a laugh broke from me. “Up,” I said. “That’s how it has to come off.”

He grinned. As he pulled up, I slid down, getting on my knees between his parted legs and leaving him holding the dress. As he tossed it to the side, he looked at me with surprise, but I flashed him the sultriest smile I possessed.

“You’re not going to help me?” I teased as I undid his belt buckle. He slumped down to make it easier for me to get his pants undone, but his hands threaded lightly through my hair.

His voice was uneven. “I can’t. I’ve been wanting it so long—*Fuck.*”

When I dropped his zipper, my fingers brushed over the hard bulge packed inside his pants, and he shuddered with pleasure. He lifted his hips when I tugged on the waistband of his underwear, and it was just enough to get the elastic down, unleashing him.

“Oh, Jesus.” I came to a screeching halt.

He was ... *big*. I lifted my concerned gaze to meet his, and his eyes had a hint of pride.

One of his hands slipped down to cup my cheek and he brushed his thumb over my lips. “Don’t worry.” He sounded sweet and perhaps amused. “I bet we figure it out.”

Despite my surprise, I smiled.

His fingers moved as he worked to undo the knot at the top of his tie. His dark-eyed gaze pinned me to the floor while he

slowly slid the tie free from his neck and dropped the gold silk on top of my discarded red dress.

His eyes hooded when I wrapped my fingers around him, squeezing at the base. Gentle at first as I stroked upward, and then harder as I pushed my fist down. He groaned so deep, it sounded like it verged on pain. But his face said it was one hundred percent pleasure.

His skin was soft as velvet, but he was hard as could be in my hands. I pumped on him, watching the motion with excited curiosity. The picture of my grip twisting down his length was so sexy, I was going to burn up inside. I loved seeing him coil and flex in reaction to my touch, and listening to his short breath, punctuated by groans.

I shifted on my knees, settling into a more comfortable position, and leaned forward, bringing my lips to the dark tip of his cock. He jerked and swore in response, but his hand went rigid in my hair, urging me to stay.

Urging me to do it.

I swiped my tongue over the sensitive underside, and followed the ridge around the head. One circuit, and then I opened my mouth, and made my best attempt to take him inside.

“Mother. Fucking. Shit.” His head flopped down onto the back of the couch with a loud thud. “I wanna watch but ... damn, girl. Feels so good.”

It was the shortest blowjob in the history of blowjobs, and for the first time in my life, I was disappointed it was over. Julius jammed his hands under my arms and hauled me up,

only to push me down onto my back on the seat of the couch. My short blonde hair splashed in my face, and as I swiped it out of my eyes, I stared up at the enormous man kneeling over me on the couch.

He undid the line of buttons on his shirt so fast, it was stunning, and when he pulled the dress shirt off, I held my breath. He was ... exquisite. All curves and muscles stretched over a quiet warrior's frame. I reached up. I set my small hand against his wide, hardened chest and felt the strong heartbeat thump beneath it.

His hand covered mine, holding it pressed to his heart for a long moment, and I had to break his gaze and look away before the emotions got to me. We teetered between lust and passion, trying to find a balance between.

He held onto my hand as he lowered down and set his lips on mine, and when his tongue dipped into my mouth, we tottered back toward lust. His kiss was greedy and ... *sexy*. Oh, God, it was amazing how sexy he could make me feel when his tongue caressed mine, sliding in my mouth and coaxing a moan out of me.

It was why he caught me off guard. He eased a hand between my back and the cushion, and lifted, sliding me across the couch until my shoulder blades were on the armrest. He was making more room for himself at the other end. I swallowed a deep breath and closed my eyes so I could enjoy the sensation better, mimicking the blindfold. He licked a line down my body, leaving a damp trail that was cool in the air swirling around us.

My belly quivered as the tip of his tongue coasted over it,

heading further south. His shoulders eased between my thighs, and he put his hands beneath my legs, cradling them.

The room was quiet, other than my ragged breathing and the soft, sexy kisses he placed on me. He didn't focus on one spot, either. He kissed the insides of my thighs, low on my stomach, the hollow where my leg met my body. I flinched at the contact of his lips right at the edge of my panties.

Julius lifted his head and stared up at me from between my legs, and even his breath's featherlight touch was feeding into my desire. He didn't have to use words. I knew what he wanted. I lifted my hips and let him peel the black lace from my body, and he kissed my legs as he did it.

I felt worshiped.

It was like going down on me was a bigger treat for him than it was for me, and the idea almost made me giggle. Did this man have any idea how good he was with his mouth? Because he was insane. Women would kill each other to get to him if they knew.

"Shit, yes," I moaned as his tongue glanced over my clit.

One long lick and my knees shook. He made a noise of contentment, and I nearly lost it right then. Hearing how much he liked it was erotic. He cradled my hips, tilting me to a better angle, and I ran my hands over his arms.

He teased me. His indecent kiss wouldn't stay on my clit for long. He planted more kisses on me, just to the side of where I wanted them, all while his hands slid over my body. I bowed my back as he squeezed my breast and pinched a nipple.

“Mmm,” I moaned when his mouth returned to the spot I needed it to be.

And again, my response was echoed by him. It was a chain reaction. When I grew louder, so did he, and it escalated until we were both sighing and moaning together. I hung over the armrest with my head tipped back, gasping for air as heat drilled into me. His tongue was urgent, fluttering and slashing, causing me to writhe on the cushions.

My knees were up and my feet hanging in the air, and whenever I moved too much, Julius would steady me with a hand on the underside of my thigh. He held me open so he could keep giving me pleasure like I’d never had before. I clawed at the cording on the edge of the couch cushions, and stroked my hands along his shoulders. I was wild and desperate.

The need swelled and swelled until I couldn’t hold back anymore. It burst from me in a torrent of pleasure, ripping through my system and firing along every nerve ending.

“Yes, yes ... *yes*,” I cried.

He gasped loudly, like the amazing sensation washing through me was roaring right through him. I bucked, jerking away from his tongue, too sensitive to take another touch, and he pulled back, watching me as I came apart.

Half undressed, pants undone and sagging around his thighs, he looked powerful and gorgeous. The way he looked at me with his expressive eyes made his words from earlier echo in my head.

How could I not fall for this man? I didn’t stand a chance.

T E N

JULIUS

Courtney's chest was heaving. She had her eyes closed and a hand on her forehead, looking like I'd put her through the wringer. But then she gave me a blissed-out smile, and I felt twenty goddamn feet tall.

The noises she'd made when I was going down on her ... *Jesus*. If I were a weaker man, they'd have killed me. Those soft moans. The gasps. Her whimpers. My cock jerked again even as the sound faded from my ears.

Her eyes fluttered open in time to see me slide my first two fingers in my mouth. She was already wet, and I'd gotten her to come, but a little more prep wasn't gonna hurt anything.

Her lips rounded into a silent 'oh' as I worked my first finger inside her. She was draped over the edge of the couch, her tits pointing to the ceiling, and looking at them made my mouth water. Wait a minute. Every fucking inch of her did that.

I was up on my knees and gripped the back of the couch to keep my shit stable. She was tight, and I didn't want to hurt her, but I'd barely gotten the second finger in when she—

“Please,” she said. “I want you.”

Aw, fuck. I scooped my hands under her back and lifted, moving us so I was sitting again and she was on me like she was when I first moved us to the couch. Except, she was naked and my dick was out, and I needed my wallet more than air.

I sucked on her tits as I fumbled in my pockets and finally jerked the fold of leather free. I flipped it open, pulled out the condom, and dropped the rest of it to the ground. I had what I needed now.

Her hands were on my head, holding me while I tried to do two things at once. Her tits were distracting as hell. It took longer than it should have to tear the packet open, but when she heard it, she sat back and watched me put it on.

I'd wanted our first time to be in a bed, but the couch was good. Better. She'd be on top and set the pace. Which she'd need to do, since the size of my dick seemed to be a surprise.

Her tiny waist felt so good in my hands, I let them hang out there. She said she wanted me, and I gave her a look that said, "*C'mon and get it.*"

She laced her fingers together behind my neck, and her eyes got big as hell as she rose on her knees, shifting over me. I waited to see her lick her lips and show me she was nervous, but it didn't happen. Her blue eyes stared back at me, and my chest tightened. Seven long years I'd hoped something like this would happen.

I reached between us and grabbed myself at the base, holding still so she could lower down. But she lingered, hovering.

"Oh, Jesus, Court. You gotta—"

Her hands gripped the back of my neck and her pupils grew so big, her eyes were black. Our mouths fell open at the same time, and we exhaled loudly as I pushed inside. Her throat bobbed as she swallowed, and her arms shook with

tension.

“Fuck, am I hurting you?” I asked, trying to stay calm.

She blinked and gave a weird smile, like I’d just asked a dumb fucking question. “God, no.” Her warm forehead pressed against mine. “I’m just trying to remember this.”

I kissed her. Deep and slow, showing her I could fuck the same way if that was what she wanted. We had all night. We had tomorrow too. Maybe a lifetime, if I was lucky.

But she moved on me, using her body to say *slow* wasn’t gonna do it for her. She worked her hips and I nudged further inside, all the way until I fit. Her pussy was tight as a fist. Hot, and wet, and I nearly died and went to heaven when she began to fuck me.

“Oh,” she whispered. “Oh, I like this.”

She was gonna kill me. Cause of death: Courtney Crawford. It was a great way to go.

“Yeah?” I said softly against her ear. “How about this?”

I squeezed her hips, getting her to stay in place, and then I moved beneath her. I thrust into her hot body, which felt so good I was gonna go out of my damn mind. I should’ve gone slower. Maybe not as deep. But she moaned and dropped her head onto my shoulder, and rode me like she loved it.

I put my hands on her ass, pushing and pulling her to ride me faster. That got her whimpers started. She bit down on my shoulder and it made me drive harder. Finally, my mouth slammed against hers, and she kept up with me, not breaking the kiss.

We got sweaty. Out of breath. She was trembling and twitching, and it was un-fucking-likely I was gonna last much longer. Not with the way her tits were bouncing from my hard thrusts, or her moans that were so sexy, they should have come with an explicit content label.

I pushed her hair out of our way as we kissed, and skimmed my fingers down her body. Lots of girls didn't come from regular sex, and Court was one of them. I knew because she'd gotten plastered after we went out and celebrated her signing the divorce papers, and her drunk lips told me all sorts of intimate shit I prayed wouldn't get me friend-zoned for life.

I'd had to jerk off when I got home, thinking about how I'd try to make it happen for her.

I pressed the pads of my fingers to her clit and stirred as she hammered down on my cock. This shit was getting intense, and dire. I wanted to come. It boiled in my veins. But I really wanted her to get there first.

“Oh, shit,” she gasped. She rocked against my hand, finding a rhythm she liked.

“That's it,” I said. Everything was picking up. Her tempo. My heartrate. Her moans. My urge to go off.

“Julius, right there. Oh, fuck, right there. *Right there ...*” she trailed off. As her words got softer, her tremors got bigger. I stirred my fingers, rubbing furiously, and the cry she let out was the sweetest fucking reward. Her muscles locked up and her pussy clamped down, strangling my dick.

Sent me right over the edge with her.

I came in a rush of fire. It burned hot, and then freezing

cold with each burst, and the pleasure was fucking unbelievable. My heartbeat got all fucked up, speeding along. I groaned my satisfaction, letting it roll from deep in my chest.

She was still shaking when it was over. Her body pulsed an aftershock and I jerked inside her. The feeling was overwhelming. There was nothing else I could do but sit there and kiss the shit out of her. It was all I wanted to do anyway.

Eventually, she slowly pulled off and collapsed beside me on the couch. I was burning up, but also disappointed she wasn't on me anymore.

“You okay?” I asked. I tried not to hold my breath.

“I'm great.” She gave me playful side-eye. “And also, I'm not made of glass.”

“Didn't say you were.” I pretended I wasn't relieved and acted casual. “You thirsty?”

She nodded.

I got up and went into the kitchen. First order of business was to ditch the condom. I washed my hands, then grabbed two cans of Bud Light from the fridge. “Don't be putting any clothes back on,” I said loudly. Her body was too amazing. I might spend the rest of the night just looking at her.

Who the fuck was I kidding? I had lots of plans for her—

The couch was empty and my stomach felt funny. Her dress was still on the floor though.

Bathroom? Nah. The door was open and the light off.

“Courtney?”

“In here.”

I switched the cans so I had them both in one hand and used the other to brace myself on the doorframe to my bedroom. Her hair was messy from sex and her cheeks pink. She had the covers over her, but it didn't matter. The sight knocked me hard. It was only the woman I loved, naked in my bed.

No big deal.

"I like your bed," she said.

I stalked toward her. "Then, maybe stay a while."

Her voice was heavy with meaning, and she gave me the smile that made words fall out of my brain. "I think I will."

* * *

Want to see how it all started for Courtney and Julius? Check out [THE RIVALRY!](#)

THREE OF A KIND

*This story is original to this collection. It's best read any time
after books 3, 4, or 5 in the series.*

ONE

The stock room of Dune was fucking chaos. White Claw boxes were stacked on top of IPAs, and cases of vodka were sandwiched between some shitty tequila and jars of maraschino cherries. If Joseph saw the mess, everyone was going to be in deep shit.

Our boss was a decent guy. Fair. Even cool at times.

For instance, last month I'd shown up an hour late for my shift because my girlfriend had dumped me, and rather than write me up, he'd given me the rest of the night off.

But he was ... particular. Joseph liked his nightclub neat and organized, and although I thought it was an exercise in futility, he *was* the boss. What he said went, and I needed this job. I made twice as much money bartending at Dune than I had anywhere else.

I couldn't give complete credit to Joseph and his club for that, though. I'd gotten more consistent about going to the gym over the last year and I'd bulked up. Everyone here was good looking, but recently I'd graduated to the top tier of the staff.

People wanted me to be their server.

Plus, I'd begun to study the way the other male bartenders interacted with customers. Watched what worked and what didn't, and then used it.

I'd turned it into a game. Each shift, I needed to make more than anyone else. I hustled harder, gave every customer

as much personal attention as I thought they wanted, and always acted like I was having a great time—even if I wasn't.

More often than not, it wasn't an act. My coworkers were fun. And they always had my back when we were slammed and shit got stressful.

My phone in the back pocket of my jeans buzzed with a text message. I stopped sorting the anarchy of the liquor boxes and glanced at my screen.

Were his ears burning?

Joseph: Come up to my office.

“Fuck,” I uttered into the silence of the cramped, dimly lit stockroom and unease threaded itself through my body.

He could be wanting to discuss anything. Maybe he needed me to cover someone's shift, or ask how I thought Angel, the new hire, was working out. But, no. I knew *exactly* what this was going to be about. I sensed it in the pit of my stomach.

Why the hell couldn't I keep my mouth shut?

Beer bottles clanked together inside a box as I abandoned the mess and trudged my way toward the stairs. They'd lead me up to his office, and the uncomfortable conversation I'd earned.

Goddamnit. I'd known Noemi wasn't single, that she was off-limits. Flirting with my boss's girlfriend was about the stupidest fucking thing I could do.

And yet ... I'd *still* done it.

Why did I always self-sabotage?

It's habit. You're friendly and always flirt with pretty people. It didn't mean anything.

Yeah, well, thinking all I'd done was flirt was going easy on myself. Hitting on her had been dumb, but doing it when someone else was around to witness it? That was so much worse. In my defense, it was after closing and I'd thought we were alone.

Noemi had looked more surprised than uncomfortable when I'd told her she was fucking hot. Maybe she'd been flattered, but I hadn't stopped there. I'd half-joked that if she ever got lonely while Joseph was up in his office, I'd be happy to keep her company.

At that moment, Lily popped up wide-eyed from behind the bar's counter. I hadn't realized she'd been sweeping beneath the ice bin and overheard the whole thing.

Had she gone straight to Joseph, or had Noemi been the one to tell him?

I'd tried to play it off like it was no big deal, pretending I didn't notice the awkward smile frozen on her face. I muttered an excuse and shuffled off, realizing what a creep I'd been.

The damage was done, and now I was going to pay for it, likely with my job.

When I reached the top of the stairs, I looked left through the open doorway into Joseph's office. When I'd first started working at Dune, the room hadn't been as nice as it was now. Back then, he'd owned multiple clubs and split his focus between them, but he'd sold the others and made this one his priority.

There was a fancy leather couch on one wall, facing the bookshelves that lined the opposite wall, and an oversized desk in the center. The office had a small balcony that allowed him to survey the dancefloor, but it was empty now and the French doors that led to it were closed.

He sat at his desk, staring so intently at the screen of his laptop that for a moment I considered turning around and heading back down the stairs. I could give the excuse that I didn't want to disturb him.

But it'd only be delaying the inevitable. He'd summoned me up here.

There wasn't any sign of Noemi or Lily, so ... that was good, right? I raised my hand and rapped my knuckles on the side of the door frame.

Joseph's gaze didn't waver from the laptop screen. "Dylan," he said and gestured to the couch. "Come in and shut the door."

Fuck.

My heart rate climbed as I closed the door and plopped my guilty ass on the couch.

He shut the laptop and fixed his disapproving gaze on me, making me want to shrink back into the cushions and disappear. Over his shoulder, a picture of him and Noemi sat on the shelf, taunting me with their happy smiles.

They were an interesting couple.

He was—what? Twenty years older than she was? Both were good looking, but Noemi was conventionally beautiful. She was in her twenties, had blonde hair, a perfect figure, and

a stunning face.

Joseph was over forty and attractive in an unusual way. The type of guy who pictures didn't do justice because they couldn't capture his energy. He was tall and slender, built like a swimmer with broad shoulders and very little body fat.

Even without a bulky frame, he radiated power. It didn't come from his muscles, but from his dark eyes and the exacting looks they could deliver. I always felt a weird, intense desire to please him whenever he walked into a room.

The atmosphere of him was kind of dangerous. And exciting. I understood what Noemi saw in him, plus, she struck me very much as a people pleaser.

Joseph's gaze slid down me as if he were conducting a full evaluation. He took in my t-shirt and jeans, maybe noting the toned shape of my arms before moving on to my waist and legs. It was like he wanted to take stock of the younger man who'd hit on his girlfriend and see how I measured up to him.

"I need to ask you something," he said finally, leaning back in his desk chair and attempting to look conversational, although there was nothing casual about it. He was one-hundred-percent in command.

"Yeah?" I fought to keep my tone natural. "Go for it."

"When you flirt with the male-presenting customers," he said, "is that just an act? A way to increase your tips?"

His question caught me off guard. "What?"

"You only flirt with the customers. Not the male bartenders."

“Because we work together.”

His eyebrow arched, but I couldn't tell if my answer caused displeasure or satisfaction. “Is that the reason? I've noticed you're extra friendly with some of the girls you work with.”

Okay, he had a point.

I lifted one shoulder in surrender. “Yeah.” I swallowed a breath. “Look, I was out of line earlier with Noemi, and I'm ___”

His hand came up, cutting me off. “This isn't about that.” His face skewed. “Well, it's a little bit about that, but we'll get there in a minute. I need you to answer me first, Dylan. When you flirt with other guys, is it an act, or is it,” he searched for the right word, “genuine?”

My knee-jerk response was to say my sexuality was none of his business—but the desire dissipated as fast as it had arrived. The way he'd asked his question ... had I imagined the hopeful tone buried inside the word?

Like, he didn't want it to be an act. He *wanted* me to be interested in men.

“Sometimes it's genuine,” I answered quickly, trying not to get too confrontational. “Why? Is that a problem?”

Because a lot of straight dudes had a hard time with a guy being bisexual. At least, in my experience they did.

You don't have to pretend to like girls. Just be gay, they'd said.

But I wasn't pretending. I loved women.

My last two partners had been men, but all my long-term relationships had happened to be with women. I'd always been attracted to guys, but acting on it was newer, and I was still getting comfortable with telling people about it.

Joseph did not appear to have a problem with me being bisexual. The corner of his mouth lifted. It wasn't enough to call a smile, but it was a hint of one, and that single action sent a wave of curiosity sweeping through me.

Was he like me?

"No," his tone was gentle. "No problem here." He drew in a breath, like he was glad to have that sorted. "You don't flirt with the other guys because you think they're all straight, but you'd be wrong about that. I'm omnisexual."

"Oh," I said, unsure of how to respond.

He stared at me like I was missing something, and I couldn't figure out what. His expression changed, and was he irritated with me for not knowing?

"Are you, like, disappointed I haven't flirted with you?" The words just tumbled out of my mouth. "But you're not single."

His lips curled into a true smile. "Neither is my girlfriend, but that didn't stop you, did it?"

I wiped a hand over my mouth, trying to disguise my guilt. "It didn't." There wasn't anything else to say. "I'm sorry."

He acted like my apology was unnecessary. It rolled right off him, and he leaned forward over the desk, peering at me with curiosity. "If she'd been into it, it wouldn't have bothered you that she'd be cheating on her partner?"

Warning alarms sounded in my head. I knew what the right answer was supposed to be, but for some reason, I went with the truth. “Honestly? Not really. I’m not forcing her to cheat. If she decides to do it, that’s on her.” I straightened in my seat. “But she didn’t. I just want to make that clear. Nothing happened.”

“But you wanted it to.” His expression turned sinful. “And perhaps it still can.”

Breath cut off in my lungs. “What?”

“Even before tonight, I knew you wanted her. You’re not exactly subtle about the way you look at Noemi.” I opened my mouth to apologize again, but he continued. “You think I mind? I don’t. She’s fucking gorgeous and I don’t blame you. If anything, I like it. It makes me feel good because she chose me when she could have anyone she wants. For example, a more attractive man, or one who’s her age,” his gaze sharpened on me, “or both.”

The air between us was thick, holding me down in my seat.

“When I met Noemi,” he said, “she’d been living a sheltered life. There were things she wanted that she was too scared to ask for. Helping her conquer that fear is one of the things I’m most proud of, and I love how her sexual appetite has grown to rival my own.” He smirked. “Which, is considerable.”

His seductive tone charged the room with sex, and goosebumps lifted on my arms.

The conversation should have freaked me out, but it didn’t.

Joseph was my boss. He wasn’t available and I’d always

assumed he was straight, so I'd never considered anything happening between us. Yet, even though it was a bad idea, the thought of him making a move on me sent interest zipping through my body.

And I got the impression he could tell. His eyes lit with a pleased look.

“She doesn't have a hard time telling me what she wants these days,” he said. “I've seen her with other partners, but she hasn't gotten to see me do that yet, plus we haven't played with another man.”

Holy shit. I swallowed thickly. “What are you saying?”

His tone was easy. Casual. “I'm going to fuck Noemi tonight and I'd like you to join us. Does that interest you?”

T W O

My mouth dropped open, but no sound came out. All thoughts emptied from my head.

Joseph mistook my silence for hesitation. “I understand there’s a power dynamic here. I’m your employer, but I promise you, you can say no without it impacting your job. No matter what happens, this stays between us, here in this room. And if you’re uncomfortable with sharing her, take me out of the equation.” His mouth quirked into a half-smile. “I’m happy to watch.”

The image flashed through my head. I had Noemi naked and bent over the desk, fucking her from behind while Joseph was perched in his office chair, supervising the whole thing. Would he critique me the same way he did when I was tending his bar?

Fuck, the idea was hot. But ...

His head tilted as he studied me now. “Did I get this wrong? Usually, I’m really fucking good at reading people. I was confident you’d be into this.”

Finally, I found my voice. “Yeah, well ... you caught me by surprise.”

He nodded and waited patiently, giving me time to wrap my head around his wild offer.

I’d be an idiot not to consider the downsides. I’d never had more than one partner at a time, and Joseph and Noemi were in a committed relationship. What if one of them got jealous?

He said everything stayed in this room, but how could it not change things?

But maybe that was already done. From this moment forward, things would be different regardless of what happened.

He'd always be the dude who offered to let me screw his girlfriend, and possibly him too.

Joseph ran a hand down the line of buttons on his shirt, giving me a flash of the expensive watch on his wrist. He drove a nice car, ran several successful businesses, and had a lot of money. People who didn't recognize the couple and saw the large age gap would likely assume Noemi was a golddigger. But all his money was pocket change to his heiress girlfriend. Noemi's family was one of the wealthiest in Chicago.

He loaded his tone with persuasion. "You want to say yes, Dylan. I see it all over your face. What's stopping you?"

I smoothed my palms over the jeans covering my thighs. "What if one of you gets jealous?"

He let out a soft, amused laugh. "That didn't happen the last time we played with someone." His smile widened. "Or the time before that." He straightened in his seat and turned serious. "I get the concern, but Noemi and I are rock solid. We both see this as sex and nothing more. Also, just so we're upfront, this would be a one-time only deal. We aren't looking to add a third into our relationship."

His matter-of-fact delivery was like he was scheduling a shift and not a freaking threesome. It made me wonder just

how many times he'd done this before.

“What else is giving you pause?” he asked.

My heart beat chaotically in my chest, distracting me and making me honest. “So, I’ve only been with a few guys before, and don’t take this the wrong way, but you seem like you might be a lot for me.”

That surprised him, but he nodded. “For some people, that’s true.” He looked thoughtful. “It depends on how much you need to be in control.”

I stiffened. “Meaning?”

“I’m not just a top, I’m a dominant. I’ll need to be in charge of the scene, and that’s ... not negotiable. I don’t take commands, Dylan. I give them.”

There was a dark, sinful authority to his voice, and I had to steel myself not to let its effect show. Because the sound of it made my dick twitch.

“You won’t have a problem taking orders from me though, will you?” His powerful gaze locked onto mine, not allowing me to look anywhere else. “In fact, I bet you’d like it.”

Yes, a voice in my head whispered.

I’d never thought much about it before. With girls, I usually was the one to take the lead, and with guys ... well, my past few partners had been as evenly matched as I was when it came to initiating.

I hadn’t let someone else be in charge or surrendered my control, but—fuck me.

The idea was *appealing*.

It'd take the guessing out of it, so all I'd have to do was say yes or no. And that? It was the final push I needed to get on board. I loved sex, they were both attractive, and when would I ever get an opportunity like this again?

"I would like it," I said.

"Does that mean you're accepting the offer?"

My voice was surprisingly sure. "Yeah."

The pleased look that overtook his expression made me swallow hard. He was at least fifteen years older than I was, and obviously had more experience, so I should have been nervous that I was getting in over my head.

But all I felt was excitement.

"Great," he said. "Finish what you need to do, clock out, and when you're ready, come back upstairs."

With that settled, he opened his laptop and his focus returned to his screen.

For a long beat, I sat rooted to the chair, stunned at his response. I'd just agreed to a threesome, but you'd never be able to tell it by his reaction. How was his body not buzzing with electricity like mine was?

This was typical Joseph. He controlled everything, including his emotions.

I'd been dismissed and couldn't stay. The longer I took downstairs finishing my closing duties, the longer it'd be before I could return, and so I climbed to my feet with eagerness.

"See you soon," he tossed at me when I was halfway out

the door. The words were relaxed, but his tone promised sexiness, and my chest tightened with anticipation.

Lily was the only other employee left in the place when I made my way back to the bar.

“Everything okay?” Her gaze rolled toward the stairs I’d just come down. She’d tried to act natural—but failed. She knew I’d come from Joseph’s office and was obviously curious how the conversation had gone.

I’d bet my life she’d been the one to tell on me, not Noemi.

“Yeah,” I said in an overly friendly tone. “Everything’s fine.”

“Oh.” She couldn’t have sounded more surprised if she’d tried. “That’s good.”

I went back to my closing duties, and tried not to be distracted by thinking about what was going to happen when I was done. But I was so fixated on it, I barely acknowledged Lily when she said goodnight, and it took me longer than ever to finish up.

At least, it seemed like it.

Maybe it was my excitement making it feel that way.

For the last few years, I’d wanted to participate in a threesome, but I’d never gotten the chance. When it came to sex, as far as I was concerned, the more, the merrier. Plus, it felt like it would be challenging in a fun way.

A few minutes after I finished polishing the glassware, I passed Noemi when I was on my way to the stock room. She wasn’t an employee, but sometimes she’d help out when she

came by to visit her boyfriend.

She didn't say anything to me with words, but there was zero doubt in my mind that she knew what I'd agreed to. Her gaze snagged on me, and she blinked rapidly, eking out a knowing smile before hurrying up the stairs to his office.

It made my pulse kick.

When I finished for the night, I swiped my card in the system and clocked out, and then turned to face the stairs. The electric buzz was back, pumping through my body even stronger than before, making me feel unsteady as I climbed each step.

The door to the office was open like last time, and Joseph was still seated behind his desk. The only thing that had changed from last time was Noemi sat on the couch, but this ... it felt wildly different now. The air in the room was taut with the promise of sex, pleasure, and power.

There was no doubt who held it all, either.

Her gaze was locked on his, pulling my focus in that direction too.

“Did Lily head out?” Joseph asked.

“Yeah.” I hovered awkwardly in the doorway, unsure of what I was waiting for. Permission? An invitation?

His attention swung my way, his gaze drilling right down into the center of me.

“Noemi looks lonely,” he said. “Why don't you lock the door and join her on the couch?”

T H R E E

It was posed as a question, but Joseph's command was clear, and if anything—it helped me take a breath. We were getting started right away, with him being in control, and I was grateful for it. Normally, I wasn't anxious when it came to sex, but this was so ... new. I felt like the kid who showed up late to the first day at a new school.

I did as instructed. I strode across the room and took a seat on the end of the couch opposite Noemi, because it seemed too soon to sit right beside her.

Amusement lit his expression as he eyed the space between me and his girlfriend. "So far away," he teased. "I thought you wanted her."

I cleared the gravel from my throat. "I do."

How could I not? She was so goddamn pretty, with long blonde hair and flawless skin and a body I couldn't keep my eyes off of.

"Slide over to him," Joseph said to her. "You told me you think Dylan's hot. Why don't you take a closer look?"

His comment made my heart hurry along, and it beat even faster when the leather of the cushions creaked, and she drew nearer. Her eyes were wide, and I noted the rapid rise and fall of her chest. She looked anxious, but it could just as easily have been excitement.

Earlier tonight, I'd had no problem talking with her. She was friendly and the conversation had flowed easily back and

forth between us. But now? My confidence hid from me.

She rearranged herself right at my side, only an inch of space separating us, crossing her legs beneath her skirt and angling toward me. Her hands rested casually in her lap, but I was sure the tension in her was as readable to Joseph as it was to me. She glanced at my body like I was a present she couldn't wait to unwrap but was trying to be good.

“Tell him,” he almost sounded amused, “whose idea this was.”

She drew in a preparing breath, and her gaze pierced so deep into me, he disappeared for a split-second, leaving us so we were alone. “A while back, Joseph asked me if I'd like to go down on you while he fucked me.”

The word came from me strained with lust. “Yeah?”

“I couldn't stop thinking about it.” She pressed her lips together for a moment, and her voice fell to a hush. “Couldn't stop wanting it. But not *just* that. My fantasy grew, and grew, and when I told him about all of it ...”

His eyes glittered with desire. “I do my best to give her whatever she wants.”

Shit, it was so much hotter that tonight had been her idea.

His tone was soft, yet commanding. “Touch him.”

Her gaze swept down me from head to toe. “Where?”

“Wherever you want.” I sensed his sudden hesitation and glanced at him. “Yes?” he asked, wanted to make sure this was all right with me.

“Yes.”

My arm wasn't high on the list of places I'd expected her to start, but she reached across her body and her palm landed gently on my forearm. It was tame, almost innocent, but the contact of her warm skin against mine started thoughts in my head that were anything but innocent.

"Can I," her voice was hopeful, "kiss him?"

A thrill shot straight to my stomach.

"Yes," Joseph and I said at the same time, and—thank fuck for that. He'd told me he wouldn't get jealous, but he'd also said they hadn't played with another man before. So, it'd be good to test out his feelings with something easy, like a kiss.

Not to mention, I *wanted* to kiss her. I'd had a fantasy or two about catching her alone in the stock room and using my mouth to convince her to forget all about her boyfriend. Would I be able to turn that fantasy into a temporary reality?

Her shoulders turned toward me, and her hand slid along my forearm, gliding up my chest, until it cupped my jaw. She'd planned to initiate the kiss, but I was too eager to wait for her to come to me.

I leaned in and pressed our mouths together.

At first, I couldn't fully commit my attention to her. I kept my ears open, acutely aware of the man seated behind his desk across the room, watching us. But he didn't say anything. There was no sharp intake of breath, or swear words, or groan of his chair as if he'd bolted up out of it.

Joseph remained absolutely still, simply studying us.

Did he like what he saw?

Her mouth was soft and yielding, practically welcoming my tongue as I slid it inside, and caressed her. I subtly tilted my head, urging her to do so too, so I could kiss her exactly as I wanted. She tasted good and when I deepened the kiss, she shifted closer.

It was ironic that I was the one who got lost enough in our lush kiss I momentarily forgot about Joseph. When he spoke, it brought me back to reality.

“Touch her.”

This was an order that I was happy to follow. I sank my hands into her hair, adjusting the angle of her head, before dragging a palm down the column of her neck.

I hadn't asked where to touch her because it seemed unnecessary. I expected him to step in with direction if I happened to move faster than he wanted, but the truth was I was dying to explore.

To do *more*.

Because having him watch? It was taboo. And exhilarating. I wasn't prepared to like it so much, and it cranked up the intensity, causing my dick to swell and push against my zipper.

I coasted my hand down the center of her chest, creeping closer to my target and giving them both plenty of time to stop me. But neither did. In fact, Noemi arched subtly, encouraging me to fulfill her boyfriend's demand.

She sighed with enjoyment against my lips as my fingers trailed over her breast, easily finding her erect nipple beneath the thin top she wore. The sides of it crossed over each other,

creating a deep V that showed off an awesome amount of cleavage and skin. The shirt had been fucking taunting me all night, and so I palmed her breast, massaging and teasing her nipple to get a little payback.

When I ended the kiss and drew back, she bit down on her bottom lip, and risked a glance at her boyfriend. I followed her gaze, but left my hand exactly where it was, cupped around her breast. What did Joseph think about this?

He wore a wicked expression.

Like earlier, it wasn't quite enough to call a smile, but it lurked on his lips. He didn't just approve of what we were doing, I got the sense he was impatient for me to go further.

Maybe I was as much of a people pleaser as she was because I felt the need to make him happy.

He'd told me to touch her. So, I was going to really *touch* her.

My hand dropped from her breast, skating down her waist, over her hip, and onto her thigh that was closest to me. It didn't linger there, though. I slid my hand between her knees, urging her to uncross her legs, and as soon as she did, I gripped her knee. I pulled it toward me, lifting it so I could hook her leg over mine and open her up.

Her skirt rode up on her legs, making it easier for me to touch ... and easier for Joseph to see what I was about to do.

Noemi's throat bobbed in a thick swallow when my fingers crept up the inside of her thigh. Her eyes hooded and her lips parted to take in hurried breath, but she shifted, opening herself even more to my approaching fingers.

Her little whimper when I rubbed her through her panties was so fucking sexy. I liked how her gaze bounced between us, like she wasn't sure who she should focus on. The man who was massaging her clit through her barely-there panties? Or the man who watched over us, allowing it?

I rubbed the pads of my fingers in slow circles, enjoying how she squirmed with satisfaction and the way her hands clutched at my t-shirt.

“Take off your top, Noemi. Let him see those pretty tits you've got.”

Yes.

She blinked her desire-filled eyes once, and then grabbed the sides of her shirt, stretching the fabric up over her head and cast it aside.

Her bra was sheer, letting me see every inch of her, and dear God. She was so much hotter than she'd been in my fantasies. Her tight pink nipples jutted out, straining against the iridescent white fabric, begging for attention.

My brain shut down and my desire took over. She tilted her head back against the couch when I lowered my lips to her chest and sucked at her through the bra. I didn't care that I was leaving the fabric damp. There was something so sexy about doing that, like I was leaving a temporary mark on her.

I swiped my tongue over her nipple and closed my lips around it, sucking hard enough to hollow my cheeks. It caused her to gasp and her hips to move, urging me to keep moving the hand between her legs.

Once again, I lost awareness of the other man in the room.

It wasn't until the couch jostled that I realized Joseph had joined us. Maybe we'd looked like we were having too much fun for him to keep sitting out.

He didn't waste any time getting up to speed. Noemi was sandwiched between us, and he did the same thing I'd done—he scooped up her other leg and draped it over his. She was spread out for us, her skirt all the way to her hips now and her sheer panties exposed.

We both had our mouths on her then, alternating between her tits and her lips, and when his hand slid up her thigh, I gave way. If someone were to walk in right now, it probably would have looked like Joseph and I were a team working together to give her pleasure—but it didn't feel that way. There was a hierarchy to our group, and while I'd been aware of who was in charge when he was seated across the room, that awareness had increased tenfold when he'd moved closer.

Joseph's proximity turned up the volume on his power.

Abruptly, Noemi bowed her back and let out a moan loud enough that I had to know what he'd done. I glanced down to see her underwear pushed to the side and his first two fingers disappearing inside her.

“Fuck,” I whispered. “That's hot.”

As he pumped his fingers in and out of her body, she writhed on the couch, unable to sit still as we both feasted on her. He jerked one of her bra straps down and licked at her unhindered, so I did the same.

She struggled to catch her breath, like it was overwhelming having two people focused on her at the same

time. The temperature in the room climbed, making me damp with sweat and my t-shirt cling to my back.

His voice was sinful. “I know this feels good, baby girl, but don’t come yet. You understand me?”

Disappointment crashed through her expression, but she nodded slowly. It was such a confusing command. Why didn’t he want that? Making my partner come was, like, one of my favorite things.

He didn’t explain it to either of us. Instead, he pushed a hand behind her back, and a second later her bra band went slack. She pinned her arms to her sides, letting the straps tumble down, and then flung her bra aside.

It was an invitation, and when both Joseph and I were latched onto her, one on each tit, it brought our faces only a few inches away. Ever since learning he wasn’t straight, I was just as interested in him as I was in her, and I ventured a hand out, gliding it across Noemi’s leg and onto his—

Well, there was that direction telling me I was moving too fast.

His firm hand wrapped around mine and quickly deposited my hand back on her leg. It was a clear signal I wasn’t allowed to touch him. Was it because I hadn’t asked for permission? Or was this time still supposed to be about her and her alone?

His fingers thrust faster into her, and the soft moans she made turned into needy whines. It sounded like she was getting close and was fighting to hold her orgasm back.

He leaned in, putting his mouth against the side of her neck, and whispered it, but I heard him like he’d spoken

directly into my ear. “You’re being so good. I’ll let you put his cock in your mouth.”

My dick hardened into granite when she eagerly melted down off the couch and turned on her knees, moving between my spread legs. I kept my gaze fixed on her, watching as she dragged her palms up my thighs, but in my peripheral vision, I saw him slide closer, filling the gap between us.

I helped her undo my jeans, lifting my hips so she could pull them and my underwear down to my knees. My dick bounced free, landing on my stomach, and I jerked my t-shirt up out of the way. I wasn’t shy about my body, and while I was curious what both of them thought, nerves got the better of me. They kept me from looking over at him.

Noemi wasn’t hesitant about taking her ‘reward.’ Her soft fingers curled around me and as she pumped her fist slowly over my dick, she flashed a smile. Like she was enjoying this.

Air left my lungs in a long exhale when she parted her lips and slid her mouth down around me. The heat was instantaneous, as was the pleasure. I slumped back against the couch, closing my eyes for a moment so I could enjoy just the sensation and nothing else. I worried if I looked at her or at him it’d be too much.

The slow, slick glide of her mouth over me sent my heart out of rhythm and I couldn’t believe my goddamn luck. How was this my life right now?

“She’s good at sucking cock, isn’t she?”

I blinked my eyes open and turned to stare at him. His girlfriend had my dick so deep inside her mouth, her lips were

practically touching my balls. He didn't look the least bit jealous.

He looked ...

Proud.

I sucked in an uneven breath, using it to power my answer. "Fuck, yeah."

His dark eyes evaluated me, then moved on to the girl kneeling on the floor. Her head bobbed, sending shimmering waves through her blonde hair. Did he think she wasn't moving fast enough? Or did he simply want to exert more control?

Because he put a hand on the back of her head and guided her to a quicker tempo.

Her tongue swirled over me as she moved up and down. She was the one delivering the pleasure, but somehow it was as if I were sliding deeper under Joseph's power. And I wanted to—I didn't know—feel connected to him too. But last time I'd tried, he'd moved my hand away.

So, rather than touch him, I balled my hands into fists at my sides, dutifully enduring the blow job that made me foggy with lust.

He must have noticed the hunger in me. His focus settled on my hands that longed to touch, and a knowing smirk tilted across his lips. His left hand stayed on Noemi's head, but his right hand? It suddenly moved, shooting up to grab a handful of the hair at the nape of my neck.

It wasn't too rough, or painful, but he jerked my head back and the action was ... *aggressive*. Dominating. I had no choice

but to lift my chin to the ceiling and arch my vulnerable neck to him. And once it was exposed, he went for the jugular—literally.

His mouth crashed against my neck, sucking and licking and nipping. Holy fuck. It turned me on almost as much as Noemi's tongue cartwheeling around my dick. My heart banged inside my chest while the scruff of his face bristled against the pulse point just below my ear.

I tried to control my breathing, but it was pointless once his mouth began to carve a path upward, moving dangerously close to my lips. I wanted to know what kissing him would be like, but I didn't dare try to meet him halfway like I'd done with Noemi.

With his firm hand still gripping my hair, I couldn't move even if I wanted to.

It meant I had to hold perfectly still and wait, which I did for a painstakingly long time. He teased, drawing it out. The threat of his lips lingered over mine, just out of reach for several achingly long moments while he stared down at me.

And finally, he must have decided I was worthy.

He leaned in and sealed his mouth over mine.

F O U R

This kiss was not like Noemi's soft, lush one. Hers was seductive and slow as she yielded to me. But Joseph was harsh and oppressive, demanding my full submission.

I had absolutely no idea which style of kiss I liked better.

The fast glide of her mouth on me slowed, probably because she'd been distracted by the two men kissing. He'd said she'd never seen it before, and I pictured her staring up at us while my dick was still clasped between her lips.

I had to imagine it, because I was trapped under this kiss that was more tactical than passionate. He was more experienced than I was and was determined to make sure I understood that. Every lash of his tongue against mine and the pull of my strands of hair reaffirmed it.

He only allowed his girlfriend to watch for so long, though. Abruptly, he broke the kiss and turned his head to deliver a disapproving look. It jolted her back into action, and she resumed the blow job—but it was too late.

Joseph launched up from the couch, yanking her up with him, and herded her toward the desk. She stumbled to the edge, and was pushed forward onto her stomach, her hands slapping against the desktop as she went down.

It was stunning how fast he moved, and yet, he was still careful. Sure, he was stern, but he wasn't too rough. She let out a soft noise as she was bent over the desk, but it was a mixture of surprise and excitement. She *liked* how forceful he was.

I did too, enough that I was a tiny bit jealous of her. I'd never had anyone treat me that way, never knew I'd be interested in it, but God, how I wanted it now.

I sat motionless on the couch, my damp dick cooling in the air, and watched with fascination as he flipped up her skirt and jerked down the back of her panties, just until her ass was exposed. Since the fabric was sheer, pulling them down didn't reveal much more, but that wasn't the reason he'd done it.

He reared back, and then brought the flat of his palm down on her ass with a sharp smack.

This time, the noise she made wasn't surprise. It was pleasure.

"I didn't say you could stop," his tone was dark, "did I?"

"No, sir," she whispered.

He grabbed her wrists and pinned them together, holding them behind her back in one hand while he spanked her ass with the other. *Fuck me*. It was teasing and sexy, and while he doled out the blows, I was riveted.

She looked so good like that, her heart-shaped ass pinking up while he held her down. But him? He was the perfect picture of dominance and power. His posture was stiff and commanding ... and almost as hard as the erection jutting out at the fly of his slacks.

"Tell me what you want," he said to her. "Do you want Dylan to go down on you while I watch?"

My cock twitched at the idea.

Her voice was breathless. "Yes, sir."

“Beg.”

There was no hesitation from her. “Please, Joseph.” She whined it like she was desperate. “Please let him—”

The rest of it died in her throat when he spanked her again, only this time, he didn’t pull his hand away after. His fingers turned in and slid down, rubbing provocatively over her clit. She groaned with satisfaction.

“I’m not the one who’s about to go down on you.” His tone was mocking. “Why are you begging me?”

Noemi swallowed a preparing breath and readjusted. She squirmed on the desktop, shifting under his hand so she could see me.

“Will you go down on me, Dylan? Please?” She begged it between gulps of air. “Don’t you want to fuck me with your mouth?”

The image of her, begging me while he loomed over her and teased her with his fingers, was fucking incendiary. I didn’t have to think about my answer for a single second. I pushed up off the couch, pulling up the sides of my undone jeans so I could walk toward her.

As I approached, he tugged her panties the rest of the way down her legs. “On your back, baby girl.”

Earlier, she’d been eager to go down on me, and now the roles were switched. She’d barely been seated on the desk when I reached her, and I hooked my hands under her thighs, jerking her to the edge as I took a knee. She gasped as she flopped down on her back, and my mouth landed on her pussy.

God, she was so warm and soft and wet.

I stroked the tip of my tongue over her clit in slow licks and smiled at the way her body contracted with pleasure.

“Fuck,” she whispered under her breath.

As I swirled and fluttered my tongue, I lifted my gaze to the man who stood beside the desk. He had his hands wandering over her. They’d brush over her nipples, trail over her lips, caress her arms. She shivered, but I had no idea if it was him, or me, or the two of us together that were causing it.

“Is he taking good care of you?” Joseph murmured.

She moaned her answer, a sound of deep satisfaction.

I closed my lips around her clit and sucked gently, getting her to writhe and her skin to squeal across the lacquered top of the desk. An image flashed through my mind of what we looked like. Her sprawled across the desk with my head buried between her thighs and Joseph’s fingers in her mouth.

She tasted like sex and sin, and I jammed a hand in my undone pants to massage the ache this night was causing. The need for release was building inside me, but it sounded like it was much worse for her. Noemi’s breathing was rapid and punctuated with quiet moans when I increased the speed and pressure of my tongue.

“Don’t come yet,” he warned her. “We’re three of a kind tonight. Equal. That means one orgasm for each of us.” He leaned down and planted a kiss on her lips. “You don’t want to use yours so soon, do you?”

Her expression was torn. Part of her wanted to come right fucking now, and she needed more convincing to wait.

“Wouldn’t you rather come while Dylan’s fucking you,

and I've got my cock in your mouth?" A wicked smile spread across her boyfriend's face. "Or maybe when *I'm* fucking Dylan?"

"Yes," she gasped and abruptly she put a hand on my head to push me away, like the idea of seeing us together had nearly sent her over the edge.

Joseph's expression darkened with displeasure. His hand lashed out to pinch her nipple, and he did it hard enough it made her yelp in surprise. Was this because she had pushed me away?

"Yes, *sir*," she amended, giving him the respect he wanted.

Appeased, his focus swung to me. "Stand up. Take off your shirt."

I'd been kneeling on the floor at the end of the desk, and as I climbed to my feet, my undone jeans hanging low across my hips. I gripped the sides of my shirt and was too busy pulling it off to notice how he'd moved closer.

My shirt fell from my grasp as Joseph's intense gaze drifted down my frame.

Did he like what he saw? I was in great shape and my last few partners had made sure I knew just how hot they thought I was. But his expression was an enigma. The slide of his gaze over each notch of my abs wasn't with appreciation. It was more like a potential buyer examining a product for flaws.

His attention settled on my sagging jeans and the underwear I'd pulled back in place, and finally he gave me a look I understood. His eyebrow raised into an arch, full of interest.

I hooked a finger into the waistband of my underwear, and I surprised myself with how slutty my voice became. “You want me to take these off too?”

Oh, he *liked* that. Heat flared in his eyes. “I do.”

I pushed the clothes down my legs, stepping out of the heap of them and my shoes so I was completely naked. But all the air vanished from the room when he gripped my erection.

We were roughly the same height, so we stared into each other’s eyes as he stroked slowly down the length of me. He seemed to enjoy exploring and touching, but me? The sensation was incredible. His confident hand, paired with his unwavering focus, sent sparks skittering down my spine.

“So fucking hard,” he commented. “I don’t even need to get you ready to fuck her, do I?”

The question was rhetorical, and it made me pulse in his tight fist.

He moved to stand beside me, giving me a view of Noemi on the desk, naked except for the skirt pushed up around her waist and her heels. Or maybe he’d moved to give her a look as he stroked me with his hand. She watched, transfixed, like she was witnessing something incredible and not just one guy making another feel good.

But ... was that all we were doing?

I got the distinct impression Joseph intended to treat me like an instrument. A tool for him to use as he created the scene. I wasn’t complaining, though. My gaze leapt from the gorgeous blonde in front of me, to the man who slid his fist back and forth over my throbbing dick, and then back to her

again.

Fuck, it felt so good, especially when he discovered the drops of precum that had leaked out of me, and he used it as lubricant over my sensitive tip. My chest tightened and I shuddered with pleasure.

She was enjoying watching the show, but it didn't last long, and I was grateful. Hand jobs were nice and all, but I was dying for more, and it was like he knew. The snug grip of his fist fell away, and Joseph walked around the desk, pulling open a drawer. It only took him a second to find what he wanted, and then two condom packets and a bottle of lube were set on the desktop beside her.

He flung a sharp finger at one of the condoms, and his commanding voice echoed in every inch of my body.

“Put that on.”

FIVE

My hands were steady as I picked up the foil packet and tore it open. Noemi had been up on her bent elbows watching us, but as I rolled the condom down the length of myself, Joseph pulled her to sit upright. His kiss was thorough and deep, and I was sure it wasn't remotely the same as the one he'd given me.

This one wasn't surgical.

It dripped with love.

When they parted, he whispered something to her, something *only* for her, and she nodded. When they both turned their attention to me, I guessed what he'd done. He'd asked her if she wanted me. If she consented to letting someone else besides him inside her body.

His gaze drifted down to double-check I'd done as asked and we were both protected. Warmth spread across my skin at his satisfied smile, and the way excitement ringed his eyes. She hadn't seen him with a male partner, and he hadn't seen her either. It was obvious he wanted it, and this turned him on.

What they had was unusual and unique.

And I felt special that I'd been the one they'd chosen to share the experience with.

"Go slow," he said to me. "Don't give it all to her at once."

Fuck.

The shit he said and the way he said it—I couldn't get enough. I put one hand on her hip and used my other hand to steady myself and tease the sheathed tip of my cock across her

pussy. It caused her to collapse back against the desktop and exhale loudly. One of her shoes dropped off, and she kicked off the other, both landing with quiet thumps.

He stood beside us, like a chaperon who was there to supervise, and I didn't mind it at all. Maybe I liked the idea of fucking his girlfriend in front of him as much as he did.

Pleasure twisted on her pretty face as I ever-so-slowly began to claim her body. Her hands went over her head, gripping the edge of the desk behind her, and her eyes slammed shut. Did it feel so good it was overwhelming?

Because that was how it was for me. My vision threatened to blur from how hot this was.

“Open your eyes,” he said to her. “Watch how he fucks you.”

She complied, lifting her head, and her hazy eyes fluttered open to find my dick sinking deeper inside her.

“Oh, my God,” she groaned.

Like her, I obeyed his instructions. I pressed my dick into her at a measured pace, even as my body screamed to plunge and take. When I went as far as I could go, I drew my hips back and repeated the action. She was so snug, and the delicious heat of her surrounded me.

“Do you like it?” His tone was both teasing and serious. “Shit, baby girl. You look so good with his cock inside you.”

I'd done my best not to go too fast, but my restraint eroded, and I began to thrust. I hadn't watched much cuckold porn before because it hadn't been my kink before, but after tonight?

Yeah.

It was safe to say I was into it.

I built to a rhythm that had her perfect breasts bouncing with each of my thrusts, and he seemed to approve. He rubbed a hand over his pants, massaging his dick, but then his gaze zeroed in on her skirt. I'd begun fucking her hard enough that it fell, blocking his view.

So, he leaned in, unzipped it, and pulled it up over her head.

It meant we were both naked, whereas he was still completely dressed. Was he hot in his shirt and pants? I was sticky with sweat and out of breath, but I wouldn't slow down unless he made me. The way her chest heaved and the moans that poured from her were too sexy.

And they swelled when he trailed his fingertips down her stomach and pressed them to the spot right above where I was driving into her. Noemi's eyes lidded with pleasure as he rubbed tight circles on her clit.

Perhaps he didn't want me to feel left out. He was playing with her and wanted to play with me too. He put his hand under my chin, his fingers gripping the sides of my face, and held me steady as he kissed me.

Like last time, it wasn't sensual.

It was calculated.

His tongue pushed past my lips and invaded. It claimed, owning more of me with each brutal stroke. It made my head spin, splitting my focus between him and the woman whose body clenched me with pure fire.

The kiss was over as quickly as it had started, and since his fingers were already so close, they moved in to replace his lips. Joseph pressed his index finger into my mouth, pulsing it in and out. At first, I thought he'd done it just to flex his power over me, to show me what he wanted to do later with his dick, but ... no. He had another reason for doing it.

The wet finger retreated, and then his hand went down behind me. He cupped my ass, and the finger began to probe deep between my cheeks. The thrust of my hips slowed, my breath went more ragged, and my pulse climbed.

He stood right beside me, close enough I could smell his cologne and feel his unhurried breath rolling down my skin. He studied me intently as his finger found the spot and began to sink in.

The sensation made my toes curl. It both did and didn't feel good at the same time. The burning stretch was pleasurable in an uncomfortable way. I buried myself deep in Noemi and stopped moving, sucking in air through my clenched teeth as I let my body adjust to the intrusion.

He stepped behind me, and a hand was suddenly flat on my back, shoving me down so I was bent over her. It was like he'd heard my thought earlier about wanting to be manhandled the way he'd done it to Noemi. Now I'd gotten my wish.

His action had startled her as much as it had me, but she was happy with the outcome. The bare skin of our chests flattened together, and she wrapped her arms around my shoulders.

I descended so deeply into our kiss, I didn't notice him pick up the bottle of lube. It wasn't until the cold liquid

dripped onto my skin, sliding down my crack that I realized what he'd done.

This time when he slipped his finger in, it went in easily and was far more enjoyable. I wasn't moving, but it made me throb deep inside Noemi.

The second finger stretched me even wider and pulled a satisfied moan from my lips. Fuck, it felt so amazing, especially when the woman beneath me began to move. And this didn't go unnoticed by him.

His voice was strict. "She wants you to keep fucking her, Dylan, and I want to match your rhythm."

It was wild how much I wanted to please them both. I drew my hips back and urged them forward, and he mirrored the action, easing his thick fingers in and out of my ass.

A groan of pleasure seeped from me.

I was fucking his girlfriend as he finger-fucked me, bent over his desk, and I was loving every second of it. The faster I went, the faster he moved, and bliss poured through my body. Was it the same for her?

Noemi gasped and squirmed, bucking beneath me.

"You're so greedy for cock, aren't you?" Joseph cooed to her. "Can't get enough. It looks like you need even more."

Abruptly, his fingers were gone.

Joseph stepped back and released me, so I straightened up on my arms. He strolled to the side of the desk nearest her, and my gaze fixated on his hands. They undid his belt, then his zipper, followed by his pants and underwear.

Holy shit.

The guy was big. Probably the biggest I'd ever been with.

I didn't get much of a look though, because as soon as he had his pants off, Noemi reached for him and clamped both her hands around his dick. She pumped her fists and stared up at him with longing.

"Your mouth," he demanded.

She nodded and shifted to the edge of the desk, making it as easy as possible for him to feed his cock to her. His hard dick was instantly glossy with her saliva when he began to saw himself between her lips.

And as she sucked him, he unbuttoned his shirt. First the sleeves, then the line down the center, finally pulling it off to reveal a stunning tattoo scrawled across his arm.

How had I not noticed how hot he was before? Some of his other employees had, but I hadn't paid much attention. I'd thought he was too old for me, too straight, totally unavailable.

And I'd been blinded by Noemi.

Looking at her now, his dick in her mouth and mine buried inside her ... sweat dotted my upper lip. The room was a sauna, and I was breathing in steam.

"That's it, baby girl," Joseph said. "Get me ready to take him."

He forced his dick down her throat, way past the point I would be able to take it if I'd been the one blowing him. But she didn't struggle at all.

Before, I'd thought they were an odd couple, but now?

They looked so freaking good. Noemi's eyes were heavy with sex and pleasure. She bowed up off the desktop when I matched my thrusts to the quick tempo he used to fuck her mouth. The pitch of her whiney moans changed and became urgent.

Like she was right on the edge of losing control.

But she wasn't in control, and he was quick to show her who was. He slapped his fingertips across her breast in a swipe that skirted the line between playful and punishing. "You only get one," he reminded.

Did she enjoy the restraint he put on her? How his dominance wasn't just physical? She seemed to. Her eyes shut tightly, as if she were willing the threat of her orgasm to go away.

He liked telling her what to do, but he wasn't cruel, and didn't seem to want to make her wait much longer. He retreated from her mouth and picked up the other condom packet from the desk before setting his intense gaze on me.

He said it the same way he'd tell me he wanted me to cover someone's shift. "I'm going to fuck you, while you're fucking her."

Every muscle in me tensed with anticipation, making me jerk to a stop.

But he didn't move. Didn't tear open the foil.

He simply stared at me, waiting for ... something. My brain was slow, fogged by desire, so I hadn't a clue what it could be.

The muscle along his jaw flexed as he realized I wasn't

getting it. “Yes?” he asked quietly.

Oh.

He wanted my consent.

“Yes,” I breathed.

SIX

As soon as the word left my mouth, Joseph smiled and strolled to the end of the desk where he'd left the bottle of lube. The condom was torn open and rolled on. Lube was doled out into the palm of his hand, then slathered over his dick.

Noemi rose onto her bent elbows again, curious to watch.

My heart thundered in my chest when his hand clasped on my shoulder. "Spread your feet and bend your knees." His voice was relaxed and confident. "I want you lower."

My body moved without thought, complying instantly. Once again, it was wild how fast I was willing to surrender, and wilder still how much I liked doing it.

There was more prep—extra lube and two fingers again, making me groan with pleasure. Her mouth went to the side of my neck, mouthing hot kisses against my skin, and then on to her boyfriend over my shoulder, who stood with his chest to my back.

"Grab his ass," he urged, "and pull him open for me."

Her hands caressed down my sides and onto my backside, each gripping a handful and peeling me apart to him. My dick jerked inside her. I was so fucking hard, it was unreal. And once she'd finished following his command, the head of his cock was there, nudging against my asshole.

"Fuck," I swore when he pushed in the first crucial inch.

He was so goddamn big. Her hips were in my hands, and I clamped down, probably squeezing her to the point of

discomfort, but she didn't make a sound. Maybe she liked it.

My entire body was taut as he began to inch along, pressing deeper and *invading*. Like his fingers, it felt good yet uncomfortable—except each sensation was magnified ten times over. And with Noemi snug around me? Shit, it was nearly overwhelming. My knees shook from the intensity.

“That’s it,” he whispered. “You’re doing so good.”

I couldn't tell if he was joking or being honest, but hearing I was pleasing him sent a wave of enjoyment crashing over me. It made my discomfort fade, leaving only satisfaction.

Signals crossed in my brain as the man at my back and the woman at my front began to move. They worked as a team to both give pleasure and wring it from me. Joseph's measured pace eased me into taking more of him, and when the tempo picked up, a moan bubbled up from deep inside me.

His hips began to drive, forcing me to move in time with him and his hands closed around mine, which were still tight on her waist. His grip was steel as he held her in place for both of us.

So he could use me to fuck her.

Once again, I felt like an instrument. I was an extension of Joseph's body. Yes, I was fucking Noemi, but I was doing it truly under his direction now. It was as if he was fucking both of us at the same time.

“I’ve got my cock in his ass, Noemi.” His voice dripped with seduction. “Just like you wanted.”

“Thank you, sir,” she gasped.

When we began, I felt like I was just along for the ride, but now I was just as active as they were. The three of us were connected everywhere; our hands crawled over each other's bodies. Hips, legs, chests. We really were three of a kind, melding into one.

He was warm against my back, and the rhythmic slide of his cock sent bliss rocketing through me. We were all sweaty and out of breath, and he built to a punishing tempo. His relentless thrusts sent my legs banging into the side of the desk, causing loud thumps and the desk to creep steadily along the floor.

My moans mingled with Noemi's.

Shit, I was more vocal than I'd ever been. The tremble in my legs got more pronounced, making all of me shake with how good it felt.

"Oh my God." I let my mouth run away without thought. "Harder. Fuck my ass."

I realized my mistake too late.

Abruptly, he pulled out and then there was a sharp crack across my ass. One, then another. The stinging slaps were ... seriously *hot*. He latched a hand in my hair, arching me back and forcing me to pull out of her. I blinked wildly, not sure if I should apologize or—

Joseph reached around my body to ring my dick with his fingers, right by the base, and squeezed just past the point of pleasure. I sucked in a long breath while he fitted his lips right beside my ear.

"You don't get to dictate," his voice was steel, "how I fuck

you. You'll take it *exactly* how I want to give it."

And with that, he shuffled us forward an inch so he could rub the tip of my cock over her clit. She fell onto her back, squirming at the sensation, and whining with desperation. She wanted me back inside her as much as I did.

Back and forth, he rubbed the head of my dick, tormenting us both, before lining us back up. So when he plunged himself back into my ass, it forced me back inside her tight pussy.

Everything was hazy and blissed-out for me. And for her too, judging by the way her head lolled side to side and she clawed at my arms.

But he was in absolute control.

"I'm going to make you both come." His voice was steady, despite the effort he used to fuck us. "That's what you want, isn't it?"

It wasn't clear who his question was for, but we both cried out over the slap of our bodies colliding. "Yes."

I hadn't realized she was so close, but maybe his approval was all she'd needed. It pulled the trigger on her orgasm. Her eyes slammed shut and her face contorted. "I'm coming!"

His hands tightened on mine, like he was thrilled. "Yeah? Come for us, baby girl."

Fucking shit. I'd been close too, and the internal waves of her orgasm, plus hearing it roll through her, set off mine.

Ecstasy detonated in my center, making me mindless. All the power went out of my muscles, and I collapsed forward, pinning a writhing Noemi to the desk beneath me. While we

both came, he didn't slow down. He drilled into me, going at breakneck speed, making my orgasm that much more intense.

Blood roared in my ears, and I couldn't catch my breath. All I could do was survive, bent over and still lodged inside her while the merciless man fucked me senseless.

I wished the moment could last forever.

But it didn't.

He pulled out in a jerk. I heard latex stretching and pictured him yanking the condom off and tossing it aside. It was followed by the sounds of a fist being heaved over his dick. Fast, and wet, and full of urgency.

A loud, long groan burst from behind me as he came, shooting it onto my ass and down the backs of my legs. His warm cum painted my heated skin, wave after wave, and fuck, it was sexy.

I stayed absolutely still, waiting for his next direction, but it didn't come. Was he admiring his work? I'd expected him to order me to move, but instead he padded over to a desk drawer, retrieved a package of wipes, and began to clean us both up.

When his command came, it was soft. "Stand up."

I retreated from her, took the offered wipe, and disposed of my condom while he focused on his girlfriend. They smiled and whispered and kissed, and for a moment, it seemed as if I'd ceased to exist. But then he straightened and helped her sit up, flashing an easy smile to me as she draped her arms around his neck.

My legs were still shaking, so I leaned a hand on the edge

of the desk, and eyed my clothes on the floor. I'd had an amazing time, but it was awkward now that our bodies were cooling, and the sex was over. Plus, the couple, who were very much in love, were snuggling.

I felt like I was intruding.

"Did you enjoy it?" he said.

"Yeah." It felt weird not to ask. "How about you guys?"

"Yes," he answered. "Very much."

My heartbeat was beginning to slow, but I was still struggling to get a handle on my breathing, and as I peered at her, all glowing and flushed, the question just popped out of my mouth. "Did I live up to your fantasy, Noemi?"

I wasn't fishing for validation, but she laughed softly and shook her head. As if what I'd just asked was ridiculous. "No," she said. "You exceeded it."

Warmth flooded my chest. "Good." I wasn't sure what else to say. "That's good."

"Would you like to do it again some time?" he asked.

What? Confusion washed through me. He'd said it was a one-time thing.

Joseph's expression was cryptic. "Not with us, but with someone else."

"Who?"

He delivered that faint smile. "I have a friend who owns a club. It's private and exclusive, offering a special kind of experience. It's where beautiful people sell their submission for the night."

I stared at him, not quite processing it.

“Currently,” he pressed on, “the club only sells experiences with women, but I’d be happy to put you in touch with the owner. He might want to expand his business.”

“You’re saying—what? I’d get paid to do what we just did?”

Noemi snuggled into the crook of his neck. “I’d be happy to give you a recommendation.”

“We both would,” he added. “You don’t have to answer right now. Take some time to think about it. Although, I’m doubting you’ll need it.”

I swallowed a breath. “Because you’re so good at reading people?”

He grinned. “You’re going to say yes.”

I couldn’t stop the smile that spread across my face.

He was so right.

* * *

SAY IT FIRST

This story originally appeared in MIXTAPE: A Love Story

Anthology and is best read after [THREE GUILTY](#)

[PLEASURES](#), book 6 in the series.

ONE

ANNA

I left my agent's office with an assignment—choose my next role so he could give both studios an answer tomorrow.

Anxiety poured into my stomach as I rode the elevator down to the lobby. My last movie had opened big, but I was still at a precarious stage in my career. If I didn't line up a good project, I'd risk fading into obscurity, and taking a wrong step wasn't an option.

A distracting Facebook notification leaped onto the lock screen of my phone. Someone had mentioned me, Annalise Shrader, in a comment. Which was strange. I'd been going by Anna Douglas ever since I moved to LA, and it was weird seeing my OG name.

My profile was set to private, and I didn't post—it was only to keep up with my relatives and stay connected. So who was this Samantha Hidenrite who'd tagged me?

I pulled the app open as I strolled off the elevator and headed for the exit, only to slow to a stop. Her profile picture, even as the small icon, was familiar, and the group where she'd posted her comment made it click into place.

Philpot High School - 10 Years Later, the banner across the top read.

Samantha Hidenrite—Sam Richards as I'd known her a decade ago—had added me to the Facebook group last week. She was organizing our high school reunion, which wasn't

surprising. In school, she'd been homecoming queen, a cheerleader, and a classic overachiever. We weren't friends back then. Like the rest of my classmates, she'd looked down on me as a drama club freak.

Why the hell were we Facebook friends now? She must have requested me at some point, and I'd accepted. My mother would say it was because I was too nice, but it was entirely possible I'd done it out of pettiness. The industry was hardening me up.

I scrolled to the post and then her comment.

Samantha Hidenrite Still haven't heard from a few of you. It'd be so awesome if we could get most of the class together! I'm sure **@Annalise** won't come.

Tim Washburn Did Anna say she couldn't?

Samantha Hidenrite I assume. Seems like once she got famous, she forgot we existed. Not like **@Jamie Campbell**.

My grip tightened on the phone. How ironic. She pretended I didn't exist in high school but didn't like it when the roles were reversed. I turned the screen off and pushed my way through the revolving door out into the Los Angeles sun.

I hustled across the sidewalk in a huff, down the street, and into the parking garage. I'd been home to Kentucky plenty of times since I'd started my acting career, but my visits had been less frequent recently. My schedule was a nightmare because I was always working, but that was a good problem to have, wasn't it? Plus, the press tour for my last movie had eaten away any desire to travel.

Right now, I needed to focus on my decision about *The*

Blindfold Club project, not be thinking about my ten-year reunion. I hadn't enjoyed my four years at Philpot High School and had no plans to go back.

I climbed into my car, set my phone on the dash holder, and as I stuck my keys in the ignition, a new notification caught my attention.

Jamie Campbell mentioned you in a comment.

There was a strange flutter in my chest. Jamie had always been friendly, but we hadn't been friends. I'd probably spoken to him a handful of times. But everyone in Philpot knew him. Probably all of western Kentucky did. Until last year, he was easily the biggest thing to come out of our sleepy town.

Had I surpassed him in the fame department? It was tough to say. I didn't follow NASCAR, but a lot of people back home did. He was a professional race car driver, and that made him Philpot's favorite son.

Samantha Hidenrite mentioned you in a comment.

I tried to ignore the notifications as I turned my car key. The air conditioner blasted to life, blowing my brunette hair back over my shoulders. Was Jamie's hair still sandy colored? Or had it darkened as he'd gotten older?

Jamie Campbell mentioned you in a comment.

"Okay, what the hell?" I muttered. I snatched the phone up and went to the notifications.

Jamie Campbell Not sure why I got dragged into this, but **@Annalise Vandevere** was in town over Christmas.

Samantha Hidenrite I just meant you come back a lot and do stuff for the community. **@Annalise** doesn't.

She acts like she's embarrassed by us. So I'm not going to hold my breath on her showing.

Jamie Campbell I'm sure **@Annalise** really wants to come now. Good job, **@Sam**.

He knew I was home over the holidays? I typed out a snarky response to Sam but deleted it. Then I drew in a deep breath and thumbed out a new response.

Annalise Schrader I'm not going to be able to make it work with my schedule, but thanks for thinking of me!

I wondered if she'd understand the passive-aggressive dig. What was her deal? I was by no means ashamed of my hometown. My parents and extended family still lived there.

Jamie Campbell wants to be friends on Facebook.

There it was again. That weird fluttering in my chest, which was ridiculous. He'd been pretty cute ten years ago, but I didn't get star-struck. I'd learned no matter how big a star seemed to shine, they were still just regular humans like the rest of us. If anything, meeting them caused the luster to fade.

I pushed the 'confirm' button without thinking about it.

We'd run in different circles, but I'd never heard anything bad about him. Just a rumor he'd gotten a speeding ticket for taking the Salem Drive challenge—where you drove on the rural road that ran alongside the bypass. The goal was to match the speed of the cars on the freeway.

They said he'd been going eighty and sweet-talked the female cop out of taking his license.

The chat icon lit up.

Jamie: Is it cool I said you were home during Christmas? I realized after I posted you might not want

people to know. I can delete.

Jamie: Also, hello.

Me: Hi! No worries, it's fine.

My trip had been low-key, so I was curious.

Me: How did you know?

Jamie: My mom. She does your mom's hair.

Me: Oh, that's right!

Jamie: Also, what's up with Sam? Was she always like this?

Me: No idea. I wasn't cool enough to be friends with her.

Jamie: Hey, me neither.

He was being humble. He'd been the epitome of cool.

Jamie: She's messaged me a dozen times about coming. It doesn't rate real high on my priority list. I hated high school.

I tugged my eyebrows together in surprise. I didn't enjoy my time there, but hate was a strong word.

Me: Really?

Jamie: Yeah. Busywork to get ready for college. I wasn't going. I already had a car and sponsor lined up my senior year.

Jamie: I was counting down the days till graduation.

Me: Same.

Jamie: Did you always want to be an actor?

Me: Yup. You always wanted to be a driver?

Jamie: Yeah. I think we're the only ones out of our class who knew what they wanted to do. And neither of us will be at the reunion.

Me: You're not going?

Jamie: No. It's in the middle of race season. Even if I wanted to, the closest airport to home is two hours away.

Me: Yeah. It's not the easiest place to get to.

Jamie: Sam will be pissed when she finds out, but she has no clue what our lives are like. My schedule's bad. I bet yours is worse.

Me: I stay busy. Although right now I'm just sitting in my car.

Jamie: Hey, same for me. Which race track are you on?

Me: You're on the track right now?

Jamie: No, I'm kidding. I just finished training. Why are you just sitting in your car?

Me: I had a meeting with my agent.

Jamie: Was it . . . bad? Your car's not running in a closed garage, right?

Me: No, it was a good meeting, but I have to make a decision between two films for my next role.

Jamie: You picked the right place to work it out. I do my best thinking behind the wheel.

Jamie: Although my crew chief might disagree.

My short laugh punctuated the silence inside my car. This conversation was surreal, and I couldn't stop the smile that spread across my face.

Jamie: Can I help? Want to pro/con it with me?

Lord help me, I considered his offer. He was basically a stranger, but at the same time, not. He'd been a nice guy ten years ago. There wasn't risk in doing it. I wouldn't put

anything in the chat I didn't feel comfortable getting out, and I had 'mom' insurance anyway. His mother was my mother's hairdresser, and in the South, that was the ultimate level of trust between women.

Jamie: I did a commercial for spark plugs last year, so I'm an expert at acting.

Jamie: Full disclosure, it was one line and I fucked it up, but still consider myself an expert.

Me: One role is a rom-com. The script is funny, but the director's last movie didn't do well. They haven't cast the male lead yet.

Jamie: OK. What about the other one?

Me: The script is amazing. Director has won two Oscars.

His message popped through while I was still typing.

Jamie: So maybe do that one.

Me: The problem is it's sexy.

Jamie: How sexy?

Me: The role calls for full-frontal nudity.

Jamie: Are you serious?

Me: Yup.

The Blindfold Club was based off an anonymous memoir written by a high-end escort, and the book was currently sitting on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Speech bubbles danced across the screen, showing he was typing, but then they disappeared. Finally—

Jamie: OK.

I chewed on my lip at his plain response. In fairness, when he'd started this chat, he hadn't been expecting to help me

decide if flashing my vajay was a good career move.

Me: I don't have a problem with nudity, but should I cross that line? This movie could be huge, but it's a gamble.

Jamie: So, rom-com = safe.

Me: Yes.

Jamie: Sexy movie is high-risk, but maybe high reward.

Me: Yeah.

Jamie: I'm probably the wrong guy to ask. I like risk.

Of course, he did. Every Sunday he drove in circles at two hundred miles an hour, knowing any second a crash could send him into the wall.

Jamie: If you turn down the sexy one, how will you feel about it a year from now?

If I passed on *The Blindfold Club*, I was certain I'd spend the rest of my life wondering, "What if?" The role was an original. Not like the rom-com, where the chances of me being offered a part in some similar movie down the road were likely.

I was lost in my thoughts as I stared out the windshield, not seeing anything beyond the glass. Jamie had asked me a simple question, and it had given me my answer. Excitement skittered down my body, confirming I was making the right choice.

Me: I'd have regret. OMG, thank you! I'm going to do it.

He sent me a thumbs-up emoji.

Jamie: Cool. Don't forget to mention me in your

acceptance speech.

T W O

JAMIE

-FOURTEEN MONTHS LATER-

At the start of the season, no one else noticed the mutual friction between me and my crew chief. Rob was conservative. Like, Old Testament conservative. The giant stick-up-his-ass only got worse as the races went by. He stayed quiet when I did well, but the last two had been a shitshow, and he was all out of patience with me at today's practice.

As soon as I cut the engine, I yanked the earpiece out, happy to have Rob's voice out of my head. While I undid my gloves, movement caught my attention.

For fuck's sake.

Rob stormed toward the car, his face red. If I didn't know him, I'd say he looked irate, but it turned out he always looked that way.

"What's going on with you?" His tone was accusatory.

I did not want to talk to him right now. "Sorry. I slept like shit last night."

He frowned at my language. He legit *scowled* at the cussword like I'd uttered it while kneeling at church. Everyone else in the pit swore like they'd hit a hammer on their thumb, and Rob never batted an eye. Only when I cussed, did he get angry. I wasn't in the mood to deal with his puritanical ass.

Yeah, I'd had a slow, messy run, but it hadn't been entirely my fault. "The front's loose," I said.

"Well, it was too tight yesterday." He put his hands on his hips and stood too close to the window, blocking my exit.

It was hot inside the car, and even with the cooling system in my suit, I was melting. I grabbed the A-pillar and hoisted myself up out of the seat, not caring when I put a shoulder into Rob's chest. He needed to back off.

"Figure it out and get your head on right," he said, "or we're not gonna win a single race this year."

"Yeah, I got it." I gritted my teeth. "Thanks for the motivational speech."

Rob's statement was loaded with meaning. It was my second year driving for Randall Whitman, and the way things were shaping up, it might be my last. Rob had been with the crew for six years, and no one else seemed to have issues with him.

Maybe he just had it out for me.

Team chemistry was everything in this sport. If I couldn't make it work, no way was Whitman, the team owner, going to choose me over Rob.

I needed a top-five finish like I needed air to breathe.

I ignored my irritation with my crew chief and tried to focus on work. "Let's dial it halfway between yesterday and today."

Rob nodded and looked off into the distance. The conversation was over.

Yet he stayed rooted to the track. *Shit*. I braced for the incoming comment when he sighed loudly. “I can’t wait till they put a new one up.”

I knew exactly what he was talking about but glanced up at the billboard anyway.

The track we practiced on wasn’t far from the freeway, and we could see one of the signs looming over it. Two months ago, it’d been advertising some new Frankenstein creation from Taco Bell.

Now the billboard was *her*.

Anna Douglas, photographed from her bare shoulders up, a blindfold clutched in her hand as she seductively bit down on the knuckle of her index finger. When the sign first went up, it took a moment to adjust to her blonde hair. She was really a brunette, but the lighter color looked natural on her. It looked good.

But I never got used to the billboard. Lap after lap, she stared at me with eyes full of hunger and sex. I couldn’t stop staring at it.

“It shouldn’t be there much longer,” I said, my voice tight. “The movie came out today.”

“It’s porn.” Rob shook his head in disgust. “Worse. That spanking crap? No woman should want to be treated like that. Little girls see that billboard and think, what? That a whore is a role model?”

I ripped at the neck closure on my suit, opening it, and unzipped the front. I’d do anything to keep my hands busy so I didn’t tense them into fists. Rob would notice. And then he’d

ask, and I wouldn't be able to keep my goddamn mouth shut. We were too close to race day for me to unload on the judgmental asshole.

Anna played an escort in the movie, but it wasn't porn—I knew because I went to a midnight showing last night.

By myself.

I'd put on a baseball cap and kept it slung low over my eyes, so no one would recognize me, and I probably looked like the biggest creep in the universe. I'd sat in the corner of the theater, wanting the movie to start before someone saw me, but also dreading the moment the lights went down. It was the point of no return—I wasn't going to be able to unsee a completely naked Anna.

I hadn't lied to Rob—I hadn't slept well last night. Hadn't really slept at all.

I wiped the line of sweat off my forehead with the back of my hand as I stalked to my RV, anxious for a shower. I climbed the steps inside, and as I stripped out of my suit, my phone in my bag chimed with a message.

Anna: How did your run go?

I sent back a GIF of a sloth trying to cross a road, its clawed arm reaching slowly across the asphalt.

Anna: Oh no! Was it the front again?

No, it's because I've seen you naked, and it's all I can think about.

Last year, I'd struck up a conversation with her and . . . it never ended. We chatted every day. Some nights we'd talk for hours. If she was filming or I was at the track, it would be a

quick back-and-forth exchange. But I hadn't gone more than twenty-four hours without chatting with her in months.

One year and more than a thousand messages, and Anna Douglas had become my best friend.

Me: This time it was the opposite. I was fighting the wheel the whole time.

Anna: I'm sorry. Was Rob any help or did he just bitch about the billboard again?

I'd had too many beers two weeks ago and accidentally mentioned Rob's annoyance with the wall-to-wall promo for *The Blindfold Club*. She acted like it was funny, but it was hard to tell through text, and I wondered if it bothered her. I wasn't about to tell her what he'd said today.

Me: He was the same. We'll figure it out.

Anna: Are you going to be ready to watch in a few hours?

I grinned. When I found out she hadn't seen *Game of Thrones*, I talked her into watching. It only taken three episodes of her shooting me random commentary before I'd begun re-watching the show with her. We'd finished the Red Wedding episode on Wednesday while she was flying overseas, and naturally she was dying to see what happened next.

Me: I think so. What time is it where you are?

Her movie came out today, but the Hollywood premiere had been last week. She was in the European phase of her press tour now, jetting all over the place, and I couldn't keep track. Was she still in Paris?

Anna: It's 10pm. I'm in a cab on my way to a post-

screening party. Side note: traffic in London is awful.

Side note: I've seen you naked, and you're even more gorgeous than I imagined.

Me: Never been. How is it otherwise? Good sights?

Anna: I only know what the hotels look like. :-(It's been one press junket to the next. Not to sound ungrateful, but I'm ready for this to be over.

Anna: I kind of want to go somewhere and just be a tourist, you know?

My ass hit the couch. The beginnings of an idea assembled in my head. I wasn't a patient guy. When I figured out what I wanted, I went after it, and the first step of my plan was being in the same room as her.

Me: You need a vacation. Me too. Let's do it.

The bubble appeared like she was typing, but it vanished. My chest tightened as I waited. What if she thought I was joking?

Anna: Go on vacation together?

Me: I've got two more races and I'm done. When's your tour over?

This could work. Hadn't she told me she wasn't slated to start her next shoot for a few weeks?

Anna: I think I'm back in LA by the end of the month.

Me: Awesome. Where do you want to go?

I set the phone down beside me and took off my shoes, dropping them to the floor with two soft thumps. Any second now, the phone would chime with a new message. She could pick any place; it didn't matter to me. Wherever she wanted to go, I was on board—as long as she was there.

I pulled my racing suit down around my waist and fought the chill of the air conditioning. My white undershirt was damp with sweat, and as the seconds of silence ticked by, I began to sweat all over again.

Had I put her on the spot? Maybe I needed to give a suggestion. The best bet was someplace sexy. I'd take every advantage I could get. Ideally, someplace tropical and romantic. What was close to LA?

Me: Hawaii?

The flight time wasn't too bad—easier than going to Europe. I was proud of myself for the quick thinking, and for a moment, my brain went fuzzy as I pictured us on the beach, her in a bikini.

But there was no response. Not even an attempt to type from her. I glanced up at the icon on my screen. I had a full signal, and she'd read the message.

Oh, shit.

I was so stupid. Anna had told me about a co-star a few months back. They'd become friends while filming, but he'd mistaken her friendliness for more. She hadn't said much about it, but I could read between the lines. The guy hadn't handled her rejection well and had made things really awkward.

I was fucking this up and making things weird between us. Suggesting a trip together was kind of strange, and it probably crossed a line. Nervous wasn't a feeling I got too often, and it freaked me out. I grabbed my phone and typed as fast as my thumbs could keep up.

Me: Or wherever. I think it would be fun to hang out as friends.

I grimaced as I sent the message to cover my ass. I didn't want to friend-zone myself, but better to be zoned than nothing at all.

I sighed with relief as a bubble popped up on the screen, filled with blinking dots. The anticipation of her reply was worse than waiting for a photo finish result.

Anna: Sorry, the driver wanted an autograph. This is crazy, but YES! And Hawaii! How do we make that happen?

THREE

ANNA

Planes rolled by in the distance, taxiing toward the runway. I stood in the center of the luxury private suite with my arms crossed over my chest and my nervous gaze out the oversized window. As each plane lofted into the air, I had a similar feeling in my stomach.

Jamie should be here any minute.

He'd sent a text a little while ago that he'd landed. By now he'd gotten off the plane, been picked up by the suite escort, and was being driven across LAX. I shifted my weight from foot to foot, wanting to get the nervous excitement out before he arrived.

I knew him growing up. I'd watched his interviews and promo spots. We talked every day, meaning Jaime knew me better than my agent, my assistant Sato—really everyone. He was closer to me than any other friend.

And yet we hadn't *seen* each other in eleven years.

In that time, he'd become a devastatingly handsome man. A very attractive, very *single* man. Jamie hadn't always been. When we'd first started talking, he'd been with someone. He didn't talk about her much, and I didn't pry, but they'd called it quits not long after our daily conversations began. I suspected his long chats with me had something to do with it.

I uncrossed my arms and ran my palms down my skirt, smoothing out the non-existent wrinkles. I hadn't sat down

since I'd entered the suite fifteen minutes ago. I hadn't turned on the TV or touched the snack bar, because balancing on pins and needles was taking all of my energy.

Friends.

I mouthed the word silently, reminding myself. That was how Jamie had pitched this trip to me. Would I be able to keep my desire for him stowed away so I didn't jeopardize our friendship? He'd never hinted he was interested in me. Hadn't flirted, or even mentioned if he'd seen *The Blindfold Club*. The movie had been out for a month.

God, this week was going to be the hardest acting role I'd ever taken on. Pretending my feelings for him were platonic would demand an Oscar-caliber performance. I'd do my best.

There was a sharp knock on the suite door. I took in a deep breath to prepare myself, but the words came out in a rush anyway. "Come in."

The door swung open, and I dry swallowed.

His light brown hair was mostly hidden beneath a worn Carolina Panthers hat. The gorgeous blue eyes I knew he had were concealed behind a pair of aviator sunglasses. He had on a simple white t-shirt and blue jeans, and a bag slung back over one shoulder. My gaze landed first on his toned, muscular arm and its subtle flex, and then my focus drifted back to his enormous smile—all white and perfect teeth and incredibly infectious.

"Hey," he said. His grin was nonstop, and my knees softened.

"Hi," I breathed.

He twisted his arm, dropping the bag just inside the entry, and then pulled the door closed behind him. Off came the sunglasses, and with the full power of his gaze on me, the air in the suite went thin. It was no surprise why he'd landed so many endorsements even though his racing career hadn't taken off yet. He was "easy-on-the-eyes," as my mom would say, with his long nose, strong jawline, and lips that promised trouble.

I did what felt natural—I strode forward and held my arms open. A handshake wasn't going to cut it. It didn't occur to me until it was too late that this could potentially backfire. What if a hug made things weird? What if I put my arms around him and didn't let go?

I strangled back my eager groan as he squeezed me tight. He smelled incredible, like he'd just stepped out of the shower and not off a four-hour flight. Did he always smell like this, or had he ducked into a restroom and put on cologne? The idea he might have done it for me made my heart skip along.

"How was your flight?" My words were muffled against his shoulder.

"It was good, thanks." Rather than end the hug, he seemed to settle into it. "I can't believe we got this to work out. It's great to see you."

My already weak knees became less stable. *Damnit, Anna! Pull yourself together.* "Yeah, you too. I'm excited." It was the truth. I'd been looking forward to this trip from the moment he suggested it.

When we lapsed into silence, I slowly pulled back to end the hug but wondered if I should have lingered. I had the

strange sensation he'd been as reluctant as I had been to step away.

Jamie's gaze slid from mine to scan the room. As he took in the couch and flatscreen TV, he hung his sunglasses in the neck of his shirt, probably knowing he'd need them again when it came time to leave. It was easier for guys to hide from their celebrity status. All they had to do was dress down, throw on a baseball hat and sunglasses, and they could blend in.

"Rough gig you've got here," he teased. He nodded to the sidebar, where a bottle sat in an ice bucket beside two glass flutes. "Is that champagne?"

"It is." I scurried to the bar, snatched up the bottle, and began to pour him a glass. "We're celebrating in person."

He looked confused. "Celebrating?"

Maybe driving in circles had given him temporary memory loss. "Your race? Your first NASCAR win." I passed him the glass and then poured my own. "That's huge. Congrats."

He gave me an "aw, shucks" look that was so cute, it was nearly fatal. He wasn't the type of guy to blush, but his voice softened. "Right. Thanks."

I clinked the rims of our glasses together. "Bet that shut Rob up."

As I took a sip, Jamie paused. He acted like his win hadn't made a difference.

"Really?" I asked. "You said a win meant he'd give you some breathing room."

He pressed his sexy lips together into a line for a moment

before speaking. “Breathing room, yeah. But I’m not safe. Rob’s got a ton of pull with the owner, and—” Jamie straightened abruptly, and his expression brightened. “You know what? I’m on vacation, so none of that matters right now. All I want to do this week is finish watching *Game of Thrones* and hang out with you.”

Inside, I was dying, but I gave him a controlled smile. “Sounds good to me.”

FOUR

JAMIE

I sat in my first-class chair, which was a private pod, and scanned the week's itinerary on my phone.

Even though I'd never been to Hawaii, I'd been the one to suggest the trip, so I offered to plan the weeklong vacation. I'd done it with Anna's assistant's help. Sato was fucking amazing at her job—I could message the woman any time of day, and she would respond instantly with whatever I needed. She was a human Google.

But because Sato was a professional and so on top of things, it meant she didn't have time for my bullshit. She either didn't get my sense of humor or didn't have the patience for it. I'd figured that out right quick after the first few email exchanges we'd had fell flat. I stuck to business after that.

The plans for the week were awesome, but it wasn't what I was most looking forward to. I sat up straighter in my seat and glanced over the divider that separated my pod from Anna's. We'd finished the final episode of *Game of Thrones* right as they served dinner, and she'd decided to grab a nap before we landed. She'd fallen asleep in two seconds after laying her seat flat. Maybe the engines had lulled her to sleep, but she'd probably become an expert at catching shuteye on planes.

She was a brunette again, like how I remembered her. Her maple-colored hair draped over the airline pillow, and since she was turned inward, the view of her peaceful, sleeping face

was only for me.

Anna had been pretty in high school, but now? Fuck me, the girl was gorgeous. Her pale blue eyes were my favorite. I'd watched her, rather than my laptop screen, while we were finishing the final episode, and the way the range of emotions played through her eyes was fascinating. How they'd sparkle when she found something funny, or when they widened with surprise.

Or how the blue of her eyes deepened during a sex scene.

I was going to have to convince her to FaceTime me during the next show we decided to binge-watch. Now that I'd seen her reactions, I wasn't going to miss them again.

Her pink lips parted as she sighed in her sleep, and I had to rip my gaze away. I needed to stop thinking about how those lips would taste, or how she'd felt in my arms when we'd hugged earlier. It'd been hours ago, but my body didn't get the message. I was still buzzing like I did in the aftermath of a crash I was lucky enough to walk away from. Adrenaline coursed through me, amplifying everything.

I'd been existing in that heightened state since touching her. The longing I had—my desire—was it ever going to fade?

I finished the glass of water on my tray table and tried to figure out when and how to make my move. Was she interested in more? I needed to find out—but do it in a way that wouldn't make her uncomfortable or screw with our friendship.

“Jamie. Can I ask you something?”

I turned in surprise. Anna was awake? You'd never know

she'd been asleep thirty seconds ago. She sat upright in her seat, the blanket pooled around her waist, and peered up at me with hesitant eyes. Her voice had been soft, barely loud enough to hear over the engines.

“Go for it,” I said.

“Did you see my movie?”

Sure, I only saw it five times.

And the number would have been higher if there had been more theaters within reasonable driving distance. Showing up to see the movie alone was weird enough, I wasn't going to do it multiple times at the same location.

I dry-swallowed and wished I hadn't finished my water. “Yeah.” I tried to look chill. “Didn't I tell you already?”

“No, I don't think so.” She made a face as if she wasn't sure what to say next. “So . . . what did you think?”

Which time did she want me to answer for? Because the first time, I didn't pay attention to a damn thing other than her. I'd had to go back and watch it the second time to follow the story. The third time? That had been for me.

I couldn't get her out of my head, but maybe my feelings were misplaced. Perhaps I was seeing her as the character she played, and my attraction was to that—not the real Anna.

Except when the show was over, I knew what I felt had nothing to do with the blonde escort from Chicago she played on-screen, and everything to do with the brunette actress from Kentucky.

The fourth and fifth time I'd gone because she was busy

with her European tour and I was straight-up missing her. We didn't get much time to talk, thanks to her schedule and the time difference, so seeing her on the big screen was a consolation.

My long pause put fear in her eyes. "Oh, shit. You didn't like it."

No, I'd loved it. I'd seen her movie so many times . . . hell, I could probably quote the dialogue to her. But I wasn't about to. The last thing I wanted was to be weird and make her nervous. I had to play it safe.

"No, I did," I choked out. "It was good."

If I said anything more, I might start gushing like a fanboy.

Anna stared at me in disbelief, and why shouldn't she? My statement had been anything but convincing. I frowned at myself. *Try again, idiot.*

"It was really good," I continued. I leaned in, so she'd know I was serious. "You were incredible in it."

She blinked rapidly, and her eyes darted away, running from her blush. My compliment had surprised her? I wasn't the only one who'd said this; she'd gotten great reviews. But maybe the praise meant more coming from me? I liked that idea a whole lot.

"Thank you," she uttered. Slowly, her gaze drifted back, and her expression was warm. "How come you didn't tell me you saw it?"

I put a hand on the back of my neck and massaged the tension there. "I didn't know if it'd make you uncomfortable."

She flashed a small, knowing smile. “Because now you’ve seen me naked?”

Jesus, I had. Five viewings—and it’d nearly killed me each time. I cast my hand out as I shrugged. “We’re friends. I didn’t want to make things weird.”

“That’s sweet, but just so you know, if you’d told me you hadn’t seen the movie? *That’s* what would have made things weird.” She grinned. “You played a big part in me taking the role. I mean, I can’t tell you how glad I am you messaged me that day.”

“Me too.” It came from me instantly, and a spark ignited in my center. She softened in the seat, subtly leaning toward me. That was a good sign, right? Fuck, it had to be.

“Can I ask you something else?”

“Of course.”

Mischief lit her eyes. “I heard a rumor about you in school.”

“Yeah?” I chuckled. “Which one?”

“You got caught doing eighty on Salem Drive, but the female cop let you off with a warning.”

“Was that before or after I had sex with her on the hood?”

Her eyes went wide. “Oh my God, did you?”

“There were, like, five different versions of the story going around. In some of them I was going a hundred, which isn’t even possible. Salem has too many curves.”

Anna, the girl who’d braved putting everything on-screen, for some reason seemed bashful to ask. “And the sex with the

cop?”

“Also, not possible. An engine gets hot when it’s going eighty—way too hot to put somebody on the hood.”

The blue in her eyes darkened, which was another good sign.

I quirked my lips into a smile. “I don’t think Officer Greer would have taken me up on the offer, anyway. He’s married to my mom’s friend.” The Greers had basically been part of the family since before I was born. “The truth is I was only going sixty-five, and rather than give me a ticket, Officer Greer did something way worse. He called my dad.” Who’d spent forty-five minutes at the dinner table that night putting the fear of God in me. “I wasn’t allowed to drive anywhere but to school and back for the next month. Remember Jenny Hayes? She drove by while I was pulled over. I guess it started with her, but I dunno how the rumor got so big.”

Anna’s lips rounded into an ‘oh.’ “Yeah, I remember Pathological Liar Jenny. At least seventy-five percent of the stuff she said was made up.”

“You mean she isn’t cousins with Justin Timberlake? She told me that once.”

Anna snorted. “Right, I’m sure she is.”

The conversation shifted to the upcoming week. Sato had given the itinerary to Anna, but she’d barely been able to look at it between reading scripts and the wardrobe fittings for her next role. She seemed so excited about our plans, and I couldn’t wait until we touched down on Kauai. Then, all it would be was a thirty-minute car ride and we’d be at the

private villa Anna's assistant had helped me pick out.

The landing was smooth, and as soon as the seatbelt light was off, I was out of my seat, pulling down Anna's bag from the overhead.

"Hey," a male voice called to me. "Are you who I think you are?"

I slowed as I lowered the bag to the floor. Outside of racing, I didn't get recognized much, but it did occasionally happen. I turned to the passenger standing in the aisle behind me. He looked to be in his sixties, and the vacation had clearly started. He already had on the standard-issued Hawaiian shirt.

"Maybe," I said, giving him an easy smile.

"You drive the sixty-five car."

"Sure do. Jamie Campbell." After I pulled up the handle on Anna's bag, I offered my hand to the guy.

He took it and shook furiously, excited. "Mark Freeman. My wife and me, we're from Phoenix. We were there when you won the Cam-Am 500."

The wife ducked her head around her husband. "We were hoping Scott Kempen was going to win."

The guy hadn't let go of me, and his grip intensified while his face filled with embarrassment. "*Karen*," he uttered under his breath.

She shrugged. NASCAR fans—God didn't make a more loyal creature.

The driver she'd been rooting for was an asshole who could suck my dick, but I plastered on a smile. "Well, he made

it a good race.”

Anna stood from her seat and glanced at the couple, a thrilled smile curving on her lips. Was she getting a kick out of seeing me with a fan? Didn't seem like he was aware he was still shaking my hand.

His wife's mouth dropped wide open. “Oh my God, that's Anna Douglas!”

Why don't you shout it a little louder? I don't think the folks back in coach heard you.

Her gaze was laser focused, darting furiously between Anna and me.

“Who's that?” the guy asked.

“She was in that movie. I'm sure you remember, Mark. She was naked, and you couldn't stop talking about it.”

“Oh.” He turned beet red.

At this point, I decided I was okay with letting him continue to shake my hand all the way off the plane. I felt a little bad for him.

The wife's attention landed on the bag I'd pulled down and zeroed in on the floral scarf knotted through a zipper pull. “Are you two together?”

“No, no,” I said quickly. “We're not together, we're just friends.”

Wait. Shit!

In my attempt to make it clear we weren't ‘together’ together, I'd overcompensated. I'd made it sound like the idea of Anna and I dating was silly. Like I didn't want that to

happen, when it was *exactly* what I wanted.

Maybe I'd gotten lucky and Anna hadn't picked up the mixed signal I'd just sent—

A vacant smile was frozen on her pretty face.

Awesome.

I'd just friend-zoned myself.

FIVE

JAMIE

Anna stood in the spacious living room, taking in the floor-to-ceiling windows at the back of the villa. If it were daylight outside, she'd be able to see beyond the deck and the amazing view of the ocean, but it was late, and the moon was hidden behind clouds. The beach was just down the grassy slope, and with the windows cracked, we could hear the waves crashing against the shore.

The villa was traditional Hawaii plantation style. The pitched ceiling in the open living room and kitchen had warm wood and exposed beams, reminding me of a sophisticated thatched roof. Some of the decor was beachy and tropical, but the couch was modern with oversized and squared off armrests.

The pictures online of this place were good but hadn't done it justice. The house was seductive and romantic. It was *perfect*.

The manager of the villa spent the last ten minutes giving us a tour, showing us where the snorkel gear was stored in the garage and how to work the outdoor shower to rinse off after coming back from the beach. She didn't get starstruck around Anna—maybe celebrities stayed here a lot, and the woman was used to it. The gated, luxury community meant we'd have privacy.

There'd been an awkward moment when the manager

opened the master bedroom door and announced it was the better of the two rooms, so we should stay there. Anna didn't say anything, but I got the impression it was easier to stay quiet rather than correct the woman's assumption.

"Mahalo," the manager called out as a goodbye before she left.

As soon as she pulled the front door closed behind her, I grabbed Anna's bag and hauled it toward the master bedroom, the wheels clacking over the grout lines in the tile floor.

"Where are you going?" Anna hurried after me.

"You get the big room."

"No, that's fine. You can have it."

I ignored her and rolled the suitcase through the doorway, parking it beside the dresser. I turned and shot her a smile. "Too late. Your bag's already in here."

She frowned. "We're splitting this trip fifty-fifty. It's not fair if I get the nicer room."

The other room had a queen-sized bed instead of a king, a smaller bathroom, and no beach view, but I didn't mind. "It doesn't matter to me, but if bothers you, we can switch halfway through the week."

She gave me a look like I was driving a hard bargain. I loved how she was still polite and humble after she'd gotten a taste of fame. The Kentucky girl her parents had raised right was still there.

"Fine," she said, issuing a loud sigh. "I guess this will have to suffice." She faked disgust. "It's all just so huge and

beautiful.”

“I know, it’ll be difficult.” I glanced toward the doorway leading back to the living area. “You hungry? Want some wine?” The fridge and pantry had been stocked with everything on the list Sato sent over earlier this week.

Anna looked around the room, and I didn’t miss the way she eyed the inviting bed. “Aren’t you tired? You didn’t sleep during the flight.” She checked the screen of her phone and did the math in her head. “It’s like three in the morning for you.”

I was tired, but from the second we’d stepped off the plane, I felt a ticking clock. I only had so many days to convince her to give us a shot and wasn’t going to waste time sleeping. I shrugged. “I can rally.”

A shy smile on her? Jesus, it was hot. She tilted her head toward the bed. “Sorry, I think I need to crash. That way I’ll be ready to go tomorrow. Is that okay?”

“Yeah, of course.” Unlike her, I wasn’t any good at acting, but I did my best not to look disappointed. “Well,” I said, “see you tomorrow, then. Good night.”

“Good night.”

As I turned around and headed for the door, unease filled my gut. Was I imagining it, or had relief flashed through her expression?

She stole my focus as I took a beer from the fridge and rolled my suitcase into my room, only to discover I’d grabbed a soda instead. I was too lazy to go back to the kitchen and get what I wanted. Besides, what I *really* wanted was in the

bedroom across the hall. Was I going to be able to dig myself out of whatever hole I'd put myself in?

I yanked off my shirt, kicked off my shoes, and undid my jeans, but each movement was slower than the last. Now that I was alone, exhaustion creeped in. I snapped off the lights and climbed into bed, desperate for sleep. Would I dream about her again? I did practically every time my head hit the pillow.

Last night I'd dreamt she was sitting in my lap, wearing only a bra and underwear and her mouth attached to mine. I'd undone the clasp at her back and pulled the bra straps down off her shoulders, but she didn't give me time to look at her perfect breasts. She'd slid down to the floor, kneeling between my legs.

As I thought about the part where she'd wrapped her lips around my dick, I reached under the covers and palmed myself. I was already half-hard. And, yeah, I was tired as hell, but the ache for her wasn't going away.

I'd have to be quiet. The villa was nice, but all the windows were open, and the walls seemed to be paper thin. Across the hall, I could hear Anna moving around in her enormous room, unzipping her suitcase and getting ready for bed.

I shoved my hand under the waistband of my boxers and closed my fist tight around my cock. Thinking about the dream with her so close by made it more vivid. I pictured her pink lips sliding up and down on me and matched the tempo with my own fist. My breathing picked up as I imagined the sensation of her wet tongue swirling over my skin.

Blood rushed loudly in my ears as I went faster. I was so

fucking hard, it was unreal. Being around her all day intensified my desire, teasing me. I needed release. I pumped my hand harder, stroking down the length and twisting as I came back up.

As I got right to the edge, a faint hum drifted from her room. I stopped moving so I could focus on the sound better. Was she brushing her teeth with an electric toothbrush? I hadn't heard the water running. What was making that buzzing noise?

It became crystal clear when a faint sigh rang out.

Fuck me!

I'd know that sigh anywhere. It played on a continuous loop in my brain since the first time I'd seen her movie. Anna had given a similar breathy moan during the first sex scene where she was strapped to a table.

Only this sigh? It was real.

I froze in place, wanting to press my ear to my door so I could hear every detail better, but I was sure if I moved I'd come. So, I lay in the bed, my dick in my hand, listening to her soft moans that were pure torture. Her bed creaked, and I heard her shifting around, and I pictured her writhing on the sheets, the vibrator pressed between her gorgeous legs.

She came quickly, judging by the sharp gasp and how the buzzing ceased.

It took one pump of my hand, and I was done for. I slapped my free hand out and balled the pillow beside me in a fist, clenching my jaw. As the pleasure rocketed through me, I strangled back my groan through tight teeth.

Was there any chance she'd been thinking about me, like I'd been thinking about her?

SIX

ANNA

I clasped my snorkel and mask in one hand, and my fins in the other, and leaned back until I was floating on the surface of the Pacific Ocean. The private beach was part of a bay, so during low tide it was relatively calm. The sun overhead was warm and made all the colors more vibrant. The lush volcanic mountains looming nearby were bright, beautiful green, and the water stretched around me was turquoise blue.

This place was paradise.

I circled my hands in the water and kicked my feet to keep me from drifting too far away. Jamie and I had spent most of the morning out here, watching fish dart around the coral that was only a few feet below us. We hadn't spotted any dolphins yet, but when Jamie discovered a sea turtle, he grabbed my hand to get my attention.

Except he always had my attention.

During the drive last night to the villa, I'd figured this week with my "friend" was going to be hard. Then, this morning he'd come out onto the balcony for breakfast in board shorts and no shirt. I knew he was in good shape. Driving a race car took stamina and strength. But seeing the results of his training and how he had those ridges of muscle along his ribs made me swallow hard.

This week was going to be torture.

Each minute around him felt dangerous. I was going to slip

up and do something stupid, like flirt with him. Or find an excuse to run my fingers down his chest. Or tell him I'd had two sessions with my vibrator to take the edge off and it hadn't helped.

I came while I was thinking about you. That wasn't something friends told each other.

He was nearby, his face in the water with his yellow snorkel sticking up, and it gave me a moment to ogle him. But he must have sensed my look because his head popped up. He peeled off his mask and gave me a smile. God, he was cute even with the indentation line from his mask around his eyes.

Oh, crap. Did I have those marks? I got my feet under me, shifted my snorkel and mask into my other hand, and ran my fingers over my face.

"Taking a break?" he asked.

"I think I'm going to head in. One of my fins was pinching my foot."

He swam beside me until it was shallow enough to stand. Water coasted down his chest as we plodded up the sandy shore, dotted with black rocks. My head snapped forward, and my cheeks burned when he caught me looking at him.

I dropped my gear by our towels, but before I could bend down to grab one, Jamie scooped both up and held mine out. I hated how he was funny, and smart, and insanely hot . . . *and* he had manners. It was totally unfair.

There were other villas we shared this beach with, but we were the only guests out right now. A few yachts were moored at the end of the bay, bobbing in the gentle waves. "This place

is amazing,” I said as we began to towel off. “It’s so beautiful.”

“Yeah. It is.” His voice was weird.

I glanced over at him and swallowed a breath. He wasn’t looking at the ocean or the jungle-covered mountains. His gaze lingered on me, tracing the lines of my teal-colored halter top, over my bare stomach, and down to my matching bikini bottoms. He wasn’t looking at me the way friends looked at each other. This stare was intense and sexual.

And then he blinked, and the expression drained away, as if he hadn’t meant to do it.

A nervous, excited thrill shot through me. If seeing me in a bikini was what it took for him to have interest, I was cool with wearing it and nothing else the rest of the week. I smiled up at him as I bent over to dry my legs, and—

“Motherfucker,” I hissed. Stinging pain snapped across the back of my heel.

His expression flooded with concern. “What’s wrong?”

I tossed my towel onto the sand and sat so I could lift my leg and see the back of my ankle. The small blister was white, ringed with angry red. Jamie knelt beside me, and as I pointed to the spot, his fingers closed around my calf, holding me still so he could examine it better.

With his touch, the pain shifted and changed. It became a dull throb, centered deep between my legs.

“Damn,” he said.

Yes, damn was right. His touch was electric.

He set my foot down on the sand, and his fingers slid slowly away. His blue eyes matched the color of the ocean we'd just come from, and I watched a water droplet skate down his neck and run through the valley between his pecs. His touch and proximity had disarmed me. It made everything hazy and confusing.

Jamie was staring at me, waiting for an answer. He'd said something, but I'd been too focused on the lucky water droplet to hear him.

"Sorry, what?" I asked.

"You need me to get you something?"

I shook my head. "Thanks, but I don't think there's anything that'll help. It's just a blister."

"I dunno, a beer might help."

I grinned. "Yeah, but it's not even lunchtime."

"Maybe not for you, but I'm starving." He wiped a hand over his mouth and sat back on his haunches. "Want me to make lunch?"

Our meals had been prepped for us, but it was nice he offered. Jamie had money and fame—which could easily go to a guy's head—yet it seemed like it hadn't touched him.

"Sure, if you don't mind," I said. "I was going to lay out for a bit and dry off, but I can come help."

He stood and wrapped his towel around his waist, which of course gave me the visual of him being naked beneath it, and my brain went fuzzy again.

"Stay as long as you like." He collected his snorkel gear.

“It won’t take both of us to turn on an oven.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah, I got it.” He shot me a boyish smile, and then he was off, trekking up the stairs over the rocks and onto the grassy lawn. I spread out my towel and lay down on my stomach, watching him as he rounded the stone wall and disappeared into the outdoor shower.

Birds chirped in the palm trees nearby, and the sun was warm on my skin. I was on a tropical vacation, lying on the beach, while my next project was already lined up, so I shouldn’t have a care in the world. But all I could think about was surviving the rest of this trip without falling for a man who wasn’t interested in more. It was probably already too late for me.

Was there a chance he was interested?

I groaned quietly in my frustration and rolled over onto my back, then lifted my hand to shield my eyes from the sun.

This was silly. I wasn’t going to waste any more of our time together without finding out. I’d said yes to this trip as soon as he asked. We had great chemistry online, and I’d needed to know if the same was true in person—which it absolutely was.

I hadn’t imagined the heat in his eyes just a few minutes ago. He’d cracked the door of opportunity for me, and I was going to nudge it open. I launched upright, gathered my gear and towel, and made my way up the slope to the house. I stacked my snorkel stuff beside his in the grass, then padded on my bare feet across the stone walkway that led to the

secluded, open-air shower.

The walls were carved out of black lava rock, and since the balcony was overhead, it felt cave-like as I moved closer to the shower. I pulled up short at the sight of Jamie. He had his back turned and one arm out, his hand flat against the wall, and his head hung. Water from the rainfall showerhead drenched him, running in rivulets down his strong back, his powerful legs, and disappeared into the river rocks bordering the tile he stood on.

My heart wasn't beating in my chest, but my feet still worked. I took a silent step closer.

The mist coming off him was . . . cold? Now that I was closer, I could see the goosebumps dotting his skin.

He lifted his head, slicked back his hair with a hand, and froze when he saw me. I felt flushed under his gaze, and the longer he stared at me, the thicker the air became. Oh, I definitely hadn't imagined his heated look from before, because this one . . .

It was hotter than the sun.

My chest was tight as I inched forward, my toes in the cold water pooling on the tile. My voice nearly failed me. "Is the hot water not working?"

He broke our gaze, so he could grab the shower handle and crank it up. The water grew warm instantly. Or maybe it just felt that way because his blue eyes locked onto mine. My heart restarted, only it was in my throat now.

"Why were you taking a cold shower?" I asked.

His eyebrows tugged together, and he rested his hands on

his hips. “Because.”

“Because ...” My tone was soft and hopeful. I had a theory but needed to hear him say it.

He stepped out of the water, bringing us chest to chest. My knees threatened to buckle as he set his hands on my elbows. His palms smoothed up my arms, glided over my shoulders and neck, and came to a stop cradling my face.

“Because,” he whispered, tilting his head down and bringing his lips a breath away. “I was thinking about doing this.”

He lowered his mouth the final inch and kissed me.

S E V E N

ANNA

I gasped against Jamie's mouth and threw my arms around his neck, holding on like my life depended on it. His kiss was even more than I'd hoped it'd be. Urgent and greedy and dripping with desire.

His hands slipped down my body and settled on the small of my back, and as he stepped under the stream of water, he pulled me along with him, not letting up on our fiery kiss.

He adjusted the angle, and when my lips parted, his tongue dipped inside my mouth. *Yes*, every inch of me chanted. His tongue stroked against mine, and a bolt of heat shot down my legs. The water was warm, but I had goosebumps now too.

His kiss traveled down the length of my neck, and I heaved air into my lungs. "Do friends," I panted, "kiss in the shower like this?"

"I'm hoping to be more than a friend." He sucked gently on a spot below my ear, but whether my shiver was from his kiss or his words, I couldn't tell.

"Yeah?" I whispered as my eyes fell shut. What his mouth was doing was incredible. "Why'd you keep it a secret so long?"

His fingertips trailed up my spine, going slowly, one notch at a time. "I didn't want to fuck things up between us. Wanna hear another secret?"

“Yes.” I threaded my fingers through his hair and clung to him. As his mouth moved to the other side of my neck, my head lolled back.

He mumbled it into my pulse point, his lips brushing against my skin. “I’ve wanted this for a while.”

My heart galloped along. “Me too.”

“I can’t stop thinking about you. Anna . . . I saw your movie five times.”

Oh my God. His confession melted my brain-to-mouth filter. Since we were talking about secrets, it spilled from me. “I had to use my vibrator last night because of you.” He straightened, and I stared up into his stunning eyes. “And again this morning.”

His expression went heavy with lust. “I heard, and it drove me fucking insane.”

“You heard?”

The corner of his mouth quirked up into a smile. “I guess the walls are thin.” He stroked his palm down my back until he could cup a handful of my ass. “I came while I was listening to you.”

Well . . . that was fucking hot.

My mouth fell open, and he took advantage. He fused his lips over mine, and this time his kiss was erotic. It hinted what he’d like to do to me. His tongue slashed at mine as our lower bodies pressed together, and his dick was hard against my hip.

Rather than tell him what I wanted, I’d show him. I twisted an arm behind my back until I found the hook and undid the

band holding my top in place. Our kiss broke, and his eyes widened with surprise, then flooded with heat as he realized what I was doing. He watched me lift the damp swimsuit over my head, and then he lurched for me, clasping one of my bare breasts in his hand. My top made a sopping noise as it fell to the ground.

Our tongues explored each other's mouths as our hands learned the shape of each other's bodies. He massaged and kneaded my breast, his fingertips circling over my nipple. I sighed and arched into his touch.

Eventually, he drifted lower. He ran his hand between my legs and gauged my reaction, testing the waters before going further. I tightened my grip on his shoulder and moaned eagerly. Was this race car driver worried about moving too fast? Fast worked for me. I felt like we'd been waiting for this moment for a long, long time.

When I palmed him through his shorts, he squeezed a hand on my hip. It came out in a rush from him. "You wanna go inside?"

Where there was a bed? Along with a stash of condoms in my suitcase? I nodded enthusiastically. Shower sex was difficult and overrated, anyway.

A split second later, I was stumbling along with him to the stairs leading up the side of the house, my swimsuit top abandoned in the shower. I laughed at his determined expression and hurried pace. We came in through the side door, and I focused my gaze down the hallway. Would we go to my room, or his?

Surprise cut off a breath in my lungs as he wrapped his

arms around my waist and carried me the five steps to the couch. He guided me to sit down on the edge of one of the flat, wide armrests, and I stared up at him. What was his plan? I wasn't convinced I wanted to fool around here, especially when we were still wet, but when his mouth latched onto my breast and he eased me back, I no longer cared.

All that mattered was he kept touching and kissing me. We'd spent so much time with this space between us, I was drunk off the physical connection. It looked like it was the same for him.

Jamie curled his fingers under the sides of my bikini bottom, his hooded gaze trapping mine as he peeled the wet fabric away. I lifted my legs up to help him along, and he stood, raising the swimsuit until it was past my ankles and he could toss it aside.

If he'd seen *The Blindfold Club* five times, he'd definitely seen me naked, but my heart swelled at the way he looked at me now. Like it was new and stunning. He parted my legs and dropped a kiss on the inside of my calf while he bent to take a knee.

Anticipation sizzled in my system as his mouth marched along, kissing up the inside of my thigh. Shit, how I wanted him to do what he was about to. My toes curled into points at the first sliver of his tongue on me. It was just a hint of pleasure, but acute.

The sight of his face between my thighs made a whimper leak from my mouth, and it was all the encouragement he needed. There was a flash of his pink tongue over my bare pussy, and then the edges of my vision began to blur as he

caressed my clit.

“Oh my God,” I groaned, clutching at the couch. I struggled to catch my breath, which was hopeless. I bowed up off the upholstery, gasping and panting. I clawed at the raised seams of the armrest and tangled a hand in Jamie’s damp hair. My body didn’t know how to react to how good he made me feel.

His hands were braced under my thighs, helping to hold my legs up in the air, and as his mouth increased intensity, I began to tremble. I planted the balls of my feet against his shoulders to brace myself. My moans swelled, echoing in the large room, bouncing off the tile.

I couldn’t take much more of this. The need swirling inside me was overwhelming. I gently tugged a handful of his hair while gulping down breath, trying to slow my racing heart.

The smile on his face was wicked as he climbed to his feet. He ran his hands up my knees, down my thighs, over my hips. New goosebumps dotted my skin in the wake of his touch. Up his palms went while he leaned over me. He closed them around my breasts, pushing them together while his lips captured mine.

With our bodies pressed together, I could feel every inch of him beneath his shorts. Which—why the hell did he still have those on? I pushed a hand between us, trying to get at them.

He straightened, undid his shorts, and they slid down his legs. Now he was naked, and good lord, there wasn’t anything more beautiful than Jamie Campbell in full-frontal. His gaze moved along the length of my body as he gripped just above my ankles, and he teased the naked tip of his cock through my

seam.

His shoulders rose with his heavy breath. “You want it?”

I couldn’t contain my eager moan, but he wasn’t wearing anything. “God, yes. But—”

“Back in a second.” He moved so fast, he was halfway down the hall before it registered. He ducked into his room as I lay back on the couch and listened to the rush of blood in my ears. The sound of his bare feet slapping against the floor grew louder as he hurried back to me.

“That was fast.” I grinned as he tore open the condom wrapper in his hands.

His expression was pure seduction as he put it on and moved between my legs. He set a hand beside me on the edge of the armrest to support himself, and his lips hovered over mine. “I can go slow when it counts.”

And he proved his point by sinking into me one fraction of an inch at a time. I arched up and wrapped my legs around his waist, trying to drive him deeper, but he moved in slow-motion. The sensation of him pressing inside me only got better as he went, stretching and filling me.

I let out half a groan and curled my hands around his biceps. “Oh,” I gasped like I was cheering him on. “Oh, *oh*.”

He straightened and cast his gaze down to where we were joined. The muscle along his jaw flexed, strangling what might have been a grunt. He drew back his hips, and I placed my feet flat against his shoulders. As he eased back inside a second time, he set his hands on the insides of my thighs, his fingertips right on the edges of my pussy. So he could peel me

open and watch better.

I shoved my hands in my hair, using my arms to push my breasts together while he found his pace. I was going to burst. Each thrust gathered the intensity in my body, building toward release. He varied his tempo too, keeping me guessing. His quick, then slow movements caused my eyes to roll back in my head.

“Fuck, Anna,” he whispered. “It feels so good.”

I rose onto an elbow and reached for him. He was so far away when I needed his mouth on mine. My fingertips settled on his cheek as he came to my desperate kiss.

The padded armrest was surprisingly comfortable, but also precarious. I had to squeeze my core and hold my balance when he sped up his rhythm. The slap of bare skin meeting bare skin punctuated the air in the room, sometimes drowned out by my gasps and moans.

I was close to coming, and it felt like Jamie was too. He hauled me up so I was sitting, and I hooked an arm behind his neck to hold on, folding my legs around his hips. Our blistering rhythm made the couch inch along the floor.

The orgasm seemed near, but suddenly it was right on me. I jerked his head to mine and crushed my lips to his. The spike of ecstasy ripped through my center, sending waves of bliss along my legs and up my back. Jamie slowed as I cried out, but he didn't stop, and it made my orgasm last longer. Practically drew it out forever. I flinched and shuddered, fireworks of aftershock pleasure lighting me up.

“Fuck,” he said through clenched teeth. His thrusts went

wild and erratic, and the muscles in his chest tensed. He started his end just as I came down from mine.

Warmth rolled through my bloodstream as I felt the pulses deep inside me and listened to his long moan. He stilled, took in a recovering breath, and nestled his mouth against the side of my neck, delivering new shudders.

“That was fun,” he said between two short pants. “Let’s do that again.”

“Okay.” I was in total agreement with this plan. “Lunch first? You said you were hungry.”

“Forget it. I can always eat tomorrow.”

I pulled back so I could look at him. “Tomorrow?”

He feigned seriousness. “I’d like to fuck you all over this house, and we’re on a timetable, here. We had breakfast. Do we really need food again today?”

I laughed and played along. “All right. Where—”

“The king-sized bed is next.”

My grin had to be huge. “Well, let’s get to it, then.”

EIGHT

JAMIE

Anna and I barely left the bed the rest of the day. After a second round, she thought I was out of commission—but I found her vibrator, and we had fun with that.

Eventually, we got up and ate a late lunch. We sat at the table eating our pasta with stupid grins on our faces. How the fuck did I get this lucky? I stared at her like a lovestruck teenager, and maybe it was true.

It was entirely possible I was in love with her, and had been for several months.

We did our best to make good on my promise of fucking all over the house. After dinner, I'd been doing the dishes when her hands slipped around my waist. She undid my shorts, turned me so my back was pressed against the sink, and went down on me. Her hot mouth made me so wild, the blow job ended with her bent over the island in the kitchen, my hands on her hips and hers squealing against the quartz counter top.

Her bed became our bed.

In the morning, it was still dark out when her phone chimed with a message.

And another.

On the third ding, Anna made a sound of frustration and hunted for the phone on the nightstand. I was half-asleep in a

sex coma when she bolted upright, and it snapped me wide awake.

“What’s wrong?” I asked. “Who’s texting you?”

“My publicist.” Her tone was hesitant. “She got a request for comment from TMZ.”

It was still too early to process anything. “What?”

“They’ve already posted it and identified you.” She turned her screen so I could see.

Pictures of me off the racetrack were always weird. I’d never understand why strangers would care about my personal life—I was barely famous. Anna had to deal with this shit way more than I did.

My first impression of the picture gave me a smile, but it froze. The invasion of privacy didn’t usually bother me, but this one? It got under my skin. Most likely because it was with her.

The photographer had captured us on the beach yesterday. Anna, in her blue-green bikini, sitting on the sand, and me beside her, my hand on her leg. The perfect timing of the shot made that innocent moment between us look like a lot more. She was gazing up at me with a dazzling smile, and my body language read like I was leaning in to kiss her.

The picture was a lie, but also not. We’d made it true only minutes later.

“Whoever took it had to be on one of those boats,” I said.

“Yeah, with a long fucking lens.” She tossed the covers aside and climbed out of the bed, marching toward the

bathroom.

I followed her, wincing as she snapped on the blinding overhead light. “This is bad?” I asked. “People knowing we’re together?”

Anna skidded to a stop. She turned slowly to face me, her expression guarded. “Are we?”

I pinched the bridge of my nose. “Okay, it’s early, so I’m not keeping up. Are we, what?”

“Together.”

“Is this a thing you do? Talking crazy in the morning?” I teased. “Of course, we are.”

She looked simultaneously relieved and nervous as she took a step in my direction, closing some of the space between us. “I mean, how does it work? We live on opposite sides of the country.”

“We’ll figure it out.” I said it with all the confidence I possessed, because I wanted this and would do everything I could to make it happen. “And whatever you want to tell your publicist is fine with me.”

“That’s what I’m upset about. Couldn’t we have had one day to ourselves? Just one freaking day?” She moved into my arms and set her warm hands on my chest. “People are going to find out, rather than hear it from us first. People like our parents.”

Shit, she made a good point. I’d need to call my mom ASAP if I wanted to save myself an earful. I’d said Anna and I had become friends, but I hadn’t mentioned I was going on vacation with her.

I hugged Anna tighter, running my hands up and down her back. “There’s a silver lining though.”

“Yeah?”

“Sam Richards is going to lose it when she finds out.”

A tiny laugh shook her shoulders. “It’s Hidenrite now. And honestly, it’s hard to dislike her, because she’s the one who got us talking.”

“True.”

She tilted her head so she could peer up at me. “Are you worried about what people will say?”

“Worried?”

“Not everyone liked the movie I was in.”

I understood what she meant, how people judged her for the role. Like Rob did. “Well, those people are fucking idiots. It’s nobody’s business what we do, but whatever they say, I can handle the heat. I wear a fire suit at my day job, you know.”

She lifted an eyebrow, silently mocking my lame joke.

“Yeah, not my best effort. As I mentioned, it’s early.” I kissed her deeply then dropped my voice low. “Come back to bed.”

“Okay. I’ll be there in a minute.”

I strolled back to the bedroom, got under the sheet, and waited for her return. She was right. We needed to have a conversation about how our relationship was going to work, but I didn’t see the rush. We’d spent a year talking—we’d earned one day of acting on our feelings before sorting it out.

The bathroom light flipped off, and the bed moved as she crawled onto it, her hand snaking across my chest. I covered it with my palm and cast my other arm around her, tucking her in at my side.

My phone rang. It didn't chime with a text—it *rang*.

I snatched it up, and as soon as I read the name, my stomach bottomed out. I sat up and tapped the screen. "Hello?"

"Are you seriously in Hawaii with that porn actress?" Rob demanded. His voice was loud enough, there was no way Anna hadn't heard him, and her flinch told me she had.

"She doesn't do porn," I snapped. "And it's none of your business where I am, or who I'm with."

"Listen, kid, I've been doing this since you were in diapers, so I know a thing or two. You can think it's nobody's business, but you're dreaming. Money makes that car go around the track. Not you."

A chill settled on my skin.

"Some of your 'fans,'" he said the word with disdain, "might not care who you're involved with, but our sponsors might. And *that* is very much Randall Whitman's business."

There was an inkling of truth in what he was saying. NASCAR was a conservative sport, and as a driver and the face of the team, I sometimes had to jump through sponsors' hoops. But I wasn't going to put up with this bullshit. "This is stupid."

"Yeah, I agree. Get yourself on the next flight home if you want to be here when I tell Randall."

Anna winced, and it banded a tight, uncomfortable feeling around my chest. She slid out of the bed and scurried toward the hall. *Fuck.*

“No, Rob, I meant what you’re saying is stupid. You want to tell me what to do when I’m behind the wheel? Fine. But stay the fuck out of my personal life.”

“You don’t get a personal life, Campbell. That’s the sacrifice you made when you got in the driver’s seat of the sixty-five car. I’m ready to find a driver who can handle that.”

This was it; he was making a move against me. I gnashed my teeth together. “Is that everyone talking, or just you?”

There was a pause. “I’m sure Randall feels the same way.”

“Great. Let’s schedule a call.”

There was a long silence. He was expecting me to roll over or beg, but that wasn’t my style.

“All right.” He sounded smug. “If that’s what you want to do.”

He was sure when we went head-to-head, he’d come out on top—and he was probably right. But, fuck it. For two seasons, I’d put up with him, but this crossed a line. I was starting to realize losing my job wasn’t so bad, because at least it meant I wouldn’t have to work with him anymore.

Rob announced he’d get the meeting scheduled and hung up without another word.

I scrubbed a hand over my face, my fingers bristling on my stubble. It was the first time I’d gone more than two days without shaving since the start of the racing season.

Whitman's PR company had it in my contract that I "always maintain a clean, All-American look."

I carried my phone out into the kitchen and set it on the counter. Anna stood nearby, staring out the back windows. The sun hadn't peeked out over the water, but there was an orange-blue glow on the horizon.

"Rob's an asshole," I said.

Anna turned and lobbed a sad smile in my direction, but her eyes didn't meet mine. "Do you need to head home and smooth things over?"

"No."

She gave me her full attention then, and worry etched her face. "Are you sure that's a good idea?"

"It's fine." I did my best to sound convincing, but I must have failed, because her concern grew.

"Jamie, all you've ever wanted to be was a driver. Don't let me put your job in jeopardy. If you need to go, I understand."

"No," I said with force this time. "The only way I'm leaving is if you tell me to. I want this. I want . . . *us*. Don't you?"

She softened. "Yes, but—"

"Okay, good." I was aware it might be too soon to talk about it, but I needed her to know I was serious. "Because, with you? It's different than how I've felt about anyone else."

Her eyes went as wide as tires.

"I'm not trying to scare you," I added quickly. "I know it's

a lot, and . . . like, fast.”

I’d come as close to telling her I loved her as I could without actually saying it. I liked risk, but putting those three words out there right now? It was a challenge.

Anna licked her lips as if her mouth had gone dry. “You’re not scaring me.” Her expression warmed, and she gave me that shy smile I loved. “I feel the same way about you.”

I didn’t get time to enjoy the way hearing her say that made me feel, because my phone dinged with a text message. It was from Rob with a link to the video chat and the start time of two p.m. Eastern.

It meant I probably had two hours left living my dream job as a NASCAR driver, but as I looked at Anna’s smile, I was fine with whatever happened. I had her.

N I N E

JAMIE

Anna and I had a hike planned for the day. We were supposed to go on a waterfall tour, but my call with Randall Whitman forced us to cancel. Instead of climbing a volcano, I sat in the spare bedroom with my laptop open, watching the clock tick down until the most important meeting of my life started.

Rob's image came onscreen first. He sat in his home office, the background decorated with a shit-ton of awards and memorabilia he'd probably dug out of storage just to intimidate me. All I had was a blank wall behind me and my clean-shaven face.

"We need to make this quick," Rob said. "Randall squeezed us in, but just barely."

"This won't take long."

The asshole smirked. The window flickered, and Randall Whitman filled the screen. He was in his sixties, a stocky guy with white hair and bushy eyebrows. He could look friendly or formidable whenever he needed to. I liked that he was a cut-the-bullshit kind of guy—he'd inherited a struggling cereal company and turned it into a household name by the time he was forty.

"Campbell," he said. "Rob tells me there's a problem?"

I opened my mouth to speak, but Rob jumped in. "He's damaged the Whitman Racing image."

Whitman looked concerned. “What’s happened?”

“He’s dating a porn star.”

If I could have reached through the screen and throat-punched Rob, I would have. “I’m not, and even if I was—”

“That movie is pure filth.”

I clenched my hands into fists and took a deep breath. I had to ignore him. Nothing I said was going to change Rob’s mind. “Mr. Whitman, I’m dating Anna Douglas. If that’s a problem, I’d like to hear it from you.”

Annoyance flashed through Whitman’s eyes. “That’s the issue? He’s dating an actress?”

Rob blinked at this setback. “There are photos of them online.”

Whitman’s gaze narrowed. “What kind of photos?”

“One photo,” I corrected. “And it’s nothing.” I tapped my phone and scrolled to the image, then held it up to the camera for Whitman to see.

He made a ‘you gotta be kidding me’ sound.

Rob’s face turned an even brighter shade of red than it usually was. “Think about how this is going to look to our family-friendly sponsors.” His tone said even he wasn’t convinced.

“Rob, I don’t have time for this. As long as it’s within reason, sponsors aren’t going to care about Campbell’s personal life.”

As Whitman shuffled the papers on his desk, the tension in my shoulders relaxed a fraction of a degree. If he’d gone the

other way on this, I'd have given him a resignation speech, telling him I didn't want to work for someone who demanded that level of control over my life.

Rob's chest lifted as he took in a preparing breath. "Things aren't working between me and Campbell. They never have. He's not the right fit for this organization."

Whitman paused and lifted a thick eyebrow. "I'm not hearing that from anyone else."

"The kid doesn't listen, and I'm starting to wonder if there's even a brain in there."

I opened my mouth to defend myself, but Whitman sighed loudly. "I'm tired of hearing this. You should know, Rob, the only person I get complaints about is you." He ignored his employee's surprise. "You're right about it not working. I need guys who are on the same page. Campbell, you want to continue being part of the team?"

I straightened in my seat. "Yes, sir."

"Great." He looked satisfied. "Rob?"

Rob went cold as he laid it on the line. "No, not if Campbell's behind the wheel."

"All right, then. I guess we're doing this." Whitman stood from his chair and leaned over so he stayed in the frame. "We'll go forward with a different crew chief next season. Thanks for all your work with Whitman Racing."

"Wait—" Rob sputtered.

"Campbell," Whitman wasn't deterred, "I need to handle this, and I'll be in touch."

The screen jumped to black, and the message appeared announcing my call had ended.

Holy. Shit.

Did that just happen?

I padded out into the main room. Anna took one look at my dazed expression and launched to her feet from the couch. “What happened?”

“He fired Rob.” Hearing it out loud was weird, but also, all kinds of awesome.

“Oh my God, really?” She looked relieved. “So, you’re okay?”

It was like I’d crossed the finish line a million times over. I slipped an arm around her, putting my hand on her ass, and pulled her tight to me. “Are you kidding? I think I’m way better than okay.”

I cut off her laugh when I kissed her. It started slow and sweet but didn’t stay that way for long. Her tongue moved in my mouth and her hands were on my shoulders, sliding up into my hair.

“We can still make the hiking trip,” I mumbled between her kisses.

“Too late,” she said, undoing the button on my shorts and pushing them down over my hips. “Your pants are already off.”

Jesus, she brought out the horny teenager in me. It was like no time had passed since high school. And with that thought came another. “Are you going home for Christmas?”

She was halfway out of her shirt and slowed her movement. “That’s random, but yeah. Why?”

We’d been so busy planning this trip, I hadn’t asked about her plans. The holidays were only a few weeks away. “That’s when we can see each other again.”

She beamed a smile as she undid her own shorts. “Awesome. Also, we need to get your schedule to Sato. She’s a miracle worker.”

The sight of a half-naked Anna made my heart rate jump. “See? I told you we’d figure this long-distance thing out.”

She looked skeptical. “It kind of sounds like Sato’s going to figure it out.”

I shrugged. “Whatever. We’ve got this.” I reached around her body and undid her bra. “Patio or jacuzzi?”

She laughed as if I were joking, and sobered when she realized I was serious. Her voice was low and sultry. “Jacuzzi.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

We took off like it was a race, only it was one where it didn’t matter who got there first.

Just as long as we were together.

* * *

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