

FALLING IN LOVE IS A RISK HE WON'T TAKE

# Bloodstream



EMILEE J CARTER

# **BLOODSTREAM**

EMILEE J CARTER

VELLUM PUBLISHING

Copyright © 2022 by Emilee J Carter

All rights reserved.

Cover Design: Sam Palencia at Ink and Laurel

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

✿ Created with Vellum

*For anyone who has never really felt like they belong. You'll  
find your place.*

# CONTENTS

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[Chapter 28](#)

[Chapter 29](#)

[Chapter 30](#)

[Chapter 31](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[About the Author](#)



# CHAPTER 1

ANOTHER MONTH, ANOTHER TACKY POSTCARD. THIS ONE, LIKE the majority of ones that came before it, featured a picturesque shot of a golden, sunny paradise. Faith scoffed. If she remembered correctly, it was time for the annual Thailand trip. The words *Daytona Beach* sprawled across the top in a retro font didn't make sense. She gazed at the photo, imagining the sand beneath her feet and the wind through her hair; the roar of the engines coming from the speedway. London was a far cry from Florida.

Faith placed the postcard on the fridge, under a magnet that proudly represented the coastal village she once called home, and noticed that she was rapidly running out of space to display her collection. Not that there was any point in keeping them. Her Mum had never visited any of these places. The bin would be a much more fitting home for them.

The postcards were not a new trick. Old Al who owned the gift shop back home had a whole section by the door dedicated to them, and her Mum had always had a habit of taking one a month and writing long paragraphs of bullshit on the back, sending them off to her old school friends and allowing them to believe she was out there exploring the world. In reality, Andrea Jensen had never left the county of Cornwall.

Regardless of her bitterness, seeing *my dearest Faith* in her handwriting made Faith feel nostalgic rather than nauseous, these days. Perhaps it was the loneliness getting to her now that she lived alone. She had a feeling her Mum had started

drinking again, since there was less logic behind the order of postcards.

Since January, there had been two from Barcelona. The second made no mention of the fact she had already visited two months before. She was getting careless, forgetting where she said she'd been, forgetting her usual patterns. Maybe Old Al was running out of postcards, but that was the easy answer and the one Faith was counting on. '*You abandoned me*'. That was her Mum's favourite accusation. Faith got out when she could. She built a new life, and didn't invite her to be part of it. She inhaled deeply, wishing she had the energy to go home and face her demons.

"Faith!" The gentle tap on her door and the sing-song voice behind it was a welcome distraction. She wandered over and opened the door without checking to see who it was. It was Amina from across the hall, same time every night. She moved like clockwork.

"Hello." She grinned at the older woman's slightly frazzled expression and her mood lifted when she saw what she was holding in her *Mickey Mouse* oven mitts.

"Still your favourite? Shakshouka." Amina beamed.

"Yes, thank you!" Faith stepped aside so her neighbour could come in and place the dish on the kitchen counter. "I got another postcard." She bit her lip, never sure if she'd get sympathy or a string of disapproving comments.

"You really shouldn't keep those out." She opted for a sad smile this time. "Put them in a box, shove them under your bed. You don't need to be reminded of your past every time you walk through the door."

"It just feels like if I put them away she's gone from my life for good." Faith realised how ridiculous that sounded considering she hadn't spoken to her Mum for years anyway.

"You still have time to make amends, Faith. Just take them down for now and see how you feel."

"You're right. You're so right. Thank you again for dinner, I think I might toast some ciabatta to go with it."

“No problem. What time will you be home tomorrow?” Amina started heading back out, taking her oven mitts with her. The door to her flat was open and cartoons could be heard blaring from the television, her sons holding a screaming match.

“My last appointment is at three so I’ll be back around four-thirty.” Faith edged the door shut, laughing when Amina offered a salute and disappeared.

As the door clicked shut behind her, she felt a pang of guilt. She didn’t hide much from Amina, but two days ago she had received an email. How could she tell the woman who had stepped in as her replacement Mother that she was leaving London? She shook it off, safe in the knowledge that she hadn’t officially accepted the new job and she still had time to say no. Although, based on the enthusiasm of Gabriel Lopez’s email, this wasn’t something she should let slip through her fingers. *No* wasn’t really an option.

Flying around the world with a racing organisation and sharing it with people just like her was a dream. She had grown up wishing she could be trackside, stayed up into the early hours watching races live with a dodgy internet connection. She owed her younger self, and she couldn’t let this go based on Amina and the boys. Amina wouldn’t want her to.

She grabbed herself a glass of water and paused. Faith liked eating alone. When she reached secondary school age and was old enough to make dinner for herself, she would cook whatever they had in the cupboard; usually noodles or microwave rice, and she would sit up to the table, do her homework and wait for her Mum to get home. It was her time to get away from the real world. If she accepted the job, she wouldn’t get to enjoy quiet dinners anymore. Unless she ordered room service. She mentally added that to both her pros and her cons list.

When she first arrived in London and moved her single suitcase into Uni halls, she was greeted by a tall brunette with curtain bangs and icy blue eyes, who claimed she was not only her flatmate, but also her new best friend. It was clear that

Faith didn't have any say in the matter, but she wasn't going to complain. Beatrix Miller took Faith under her wing and swore to never leave her side.

The next four years were bliss. She had never been close with anyone before, always afraid that they would find out the environment she'd been raised in and want to stay away from someone so damaged. Like her school peers. Bea wasn't like that. She made her feel safe, and when they left their University bubble to go out into the real world, Bea stayed true to her word and they moved into a flat together.

Faith had spent her Uni years living on the same diet she'd always maintained but they eventually found themselves with a fully-equipped kitchen and no reason to eat crap. Well aware that she couldn't cook a decent meal to save her life, Bea insisted on acting as Faith's personal chef and nutritionist. They would dance to Elvis songs while discussing their work and the latest social media trends, and Faith wouldn't step foot in the kitchen until Bea had perfected the recipe she was working on.

She left a year ago to travel for her dream job, one which Faith was now likely going to be part of, and Faith had reverted to sitting at the counter with ready meals. Amina was her saviour. She took pity on her when she set the smoke alarms off for the whole building a month after Bea moved out, and she'd been stocking up her freezer ever since in return for the occasional night of babysitting.

Faith wished the postcards were from Bea. As she delved into her food, she pulled her phone out of her back pocket and navigated to the *Instagram* app. She headed to the notifications tab and saw that everyone was commenting on how amazing last night's *Lovaas Lashes* event looked. She couldn't help but laugh. She was never intending to take the brand deal, but she needed money to cover the extra rent she was paying now that Bea wasn't here to split it. Her job was to attend the launch party of their new product and post photos with enthusiastic captions which reassured her followers that the brand was a hit.

In reality, it was founded and run by some rich kid who couldn't care less if the fake lashes were a) worth the money and b) actually looked good once applied. The event itself was tedious, too. The catering was mediocre, the music was a mess and the poor brand ambassadors just stood in a corner and edited the photos so the event would at least look aesthetically appealing amongst their feeds.

It was fine when she was just posting her own content, but at some point Faith had to start branching out. She had to make enough money to start her business and stay somewhat relevant in an age of teen social media stars.

The clients were the best part of her job. She taught them how algorithms worked, how to use hashtags to their advantage and how to target the audience they wanted. Faith knew what she was doing, and she knew how to do it without manipulating her followers into thinking she was someone she wasn't. She could only assume that was what her potential new employer liked.

She went to Bea's profile. Sadness washed over her when she saw that she'd posted a photo of the two of them from three years ago. She hit the like button anyway. The melancholy feeling wasn't a result of missing her; it was because she knew that their friendship was damaged long before Bea left London.

Six months ago, Bea was begging her to fly out and visit her at a race. She even offered to pay for her flights. Faith couldn't figure out if it was Faith that Bea missed, or the social media attention they attracted when they were together, so she refused.

She was all Faith ever really had, and Faith naively thought that Bea was all she ever needed. Despite her now preparing to follow in her footsteps, the last year had been hell. Thinking back to the email and the likelihood that Bea had recommended her, she realised maybe her best friend was still her guardian angel even now. She was always swooping in to save her, although Faith did most of the work. Bea was just the final piece of the puzzle. Every damn time.

Trying not to dwell on it, she went to Lorenzo Garcia's feed. He was with his teammates, enjoying lunch in Marseilles. That could be her in a matter of months. Not just the lunch in Marseilles part, but lunch with the drivers. Fifteen year old her would collapse from the shock. For the second time in her life, her dreams were right in front of her. She wanted to be part of that world. She had since she was a kid.

Perhaps she could even go as far as saying that her desire to travel stemmed from her love of motorsport. She wanted to walk into work every day and hear the Ferrari's out on the track, to travel with likeminded people and attend events that were a perk of the job rather than the job itself.

Placing her plate in the dishwasher, the postcards caught her eye again. Amina was right, she should put them in a box and hide them from view. Her Mum knew where to find her, and if she wanted to she would have found a way to get here even if she still didn't have a car. Faith hitchhiked from Cornwall to London to get away from her, so Andrea could sure as hell take some inspiration from that if she was as desperate to see her daughter as she claimed.

One by one, she released the postcards from their magnets. It felt almost therapeutic. Faith knew it could never be that simple but if she took the job, the postcards would just be sitting in a storage container with her other belongings. They wouldn't be haunting her every waking minute.

With the reminders of her past now in a box and a sense of liberation taking over her, her phone buzzed. It was a post notification from Bea. She opened it. The photo showed Bea posing in front of a private jet with a couple of the drivers. She was wearing the pilot's hat and was the centre of attention. The whole situation was very Bea 2.0. Despite the drastic change, their friendship had a beautiful start. No hidden intentions, no second guessing. Faith wasn't so sure she was ready to let all of it go to waste, especially not if they were going to have a whole season of living and working together ahead of them.

The only way she could take the offer was if expenses were covered, and not taken out of her salary. That was

something she'd have to ask Gabriel about. There was no doubt that she'd have to kiss goodbye to her business too, at least for the foreseeable future.

Before she jumped in the shower, she texted Bea, wondering how she'd react to the news. Or if she'd even respond. Faith knew she hurt her when she said no to Paris, plus now that she'd found her own fame she didn't have a reason to keep up appearances and pretend she cared about her.

She shuffled through her friend's old bedroom to get to her en-suite, feeling like an intruder. It was almost as if she was never there; no evidence of her existence except for a few sweatshirts hanging in the closet. In the bathroom, Faith had replaced Bea's products with hers, and she'd started using her room as storage, but she was yet to replace Bea herself.

She groaned when the ice cold water hit her body. It felt like pine needles were shooting into her skin at a million miles per hour and she squeezed her eyes shut, attempting to adjust to the sensation. She'd been waiting three weeks for the landlord to fix it and to completely replace the shower in the main bathroom. Another advantage of taking Gabriel up on his offer; better showers. For the most part, anyway. There were bound to be some dodgy hotels thrown into the mix.

Hurrying to get out from under the water before she went completely numb, Faith almost ripped the shower curtain from the rail. The amount of things she'd broken in this flat, whether it was her fault or not, was astonishing. It could explain why it always took so long for the landlord to show up. As she sprinted back to her own room in the cold air, something caught her eye. Bea's old film camera. Her pride and joy when they were in Uni. Faith scooped it up with an absentminded smile and made a note to take it with her if she ended up flying out to join her.

Collapsing onto her white fluffy cloud of comfort, Faith breathed a sigh of contentment. Her mattress was a solid investment. She'd saved up the money from the second she'd started her paid internship at the studio and two months later, she was throwing the cheap old thing the previous tenants had

left into a skip. For the first few weeks after moving in, the girls had shared everything. A bed, a laptop, a speaker, chargers.

It took a while but once they found their feet, they were unstoppable. Every weekend they'd be trekking round London and finding all the hidden beauty spots, organising entire photoshoots just to get some original content out into the world. Bea taught her everything she knew about composition and lighting and Faith showed her how to get noticed. They were a team until they each found themselves with an edge that the other didn't have. Bea had the connections in the industry and Faith had the social media attention, but they both wanted the opposite too.

That was how Bea landed herself a job as head photographer for the International Endurance Championship. Without even a week's notice, she was gone. All Faith got was a quick goodbye as she came home from a meeting and her best friend was already halfway out the door.

After every race or qualifying session, every new car reveal, Bea was still the person she wanted to call. She couldn't even count the number of times she'd forgotten about the physical and emotional distance between them and picked up her phone, then felt her heart ache when she'd realised that Bea was already living it. Faith had lived vicariously through her for so many years.

Four more days. If she could get through that, there would be nothing between Faith and the second biggest goal of her life except a one way flight to Europe. Faith knew deep down as soon as she read the email that she was always going to accept the job. All she had to do was arrange a meeting with Mr Lopez and she was well on her way to getting out of the UK.

She was about to put her phone on the bedside table when she got a text. *'Please tell me you're taking the job. When Gabriel mentioned it, I knew you were the perfect person for it. See you on the tarmac, angel!'*



## CHAPTER 2

A SPRING MORNING IN ENGLAND MEANT STEPPING OUT INTO the most irritating kind of rain: drizzle. London didn't offer the beautiful scent of the damp earth or the sea air that Cornwall could provide, and when Faith was running through the streets to the nearest tube station, she cursed her choice of footwear. Stiletto heels and puddles were not a good combination. Who would've thought that her beloved wellington boots would ever be considered an option in the big city? Faith flagged down a taxi on Oxford Street to prevent her blonde wavy locks going wild with frizz, which would be a terrible look for her meeting. She also hadn't worn a rain coat today, praying the drizzle would pass quickly. She had become very fashion-conscious and it meant that her clothing choices were not always practical.

She was relieved that wouldn't be a problem at the racetrack. Everyone wore team merchandise, or general IEC branded clothing, depending on their role or what they were doing on a particular day. All Faith needed to pack was a decent pair of trainers and a couple of pairs of jeans, and her work wardrobe was sorted. No more blazers, heels that made her feet ache, or blouses that creased as soon as she dared to move.

Once she had scrambled into her taxi, Faith relaxed. Not even the traffic could make her tense right now. Traffic in London was normal, and she'd been working with these clients for a few weeks already. They didn't care if she ran a few minutes late, after all the chances of them all being on time themselves was slim. Having made it to Canary Wharf

only seven minutes behind schedule, Faith was unfortunately unsurprised by the lack of a representative in the lobby. It was supposed to be standard protocol to send someone down to get her, but here she was storming past security alone. Again.

“Good morning, Miss Jensen. You can go straight up.”

“Thanks, Mark. Have a good day!”

The building’s security guard was the only positive thing about coming here. Sometimes she thought about actually befriending him out of sympathy for the arrogance he had to encounter on a day to day basis. At least Faith was usually in her mostly-friendly bubble of influencers.

She braced herself upon entering the board room. Only two men acknowledged her; her favourites. The only two who ever paid attention to what she was saying and took notes. As she set her laptop up, she noted how as expected, nobody offered her a coffee. They of course all helped themselves, however. Faith didn’t often find herself wishing for a client meeting to be over, but a board room full of middle aged men making jabs at her work was enough to leave her staring at the clock in agony.

Then there were the sexist remarks about how such a “*silly little job is definitely a women’s job*”, the comments on her age and lack of life experience. Swiftly followed by stares as she leaned over the table to pass around brand packages, plus winks and nods they thought she wouldn’t notice. Or, maybe they knew she’d notice and just didn’t care. Either way, she was grateful when they were distracted long enough by Jay’s detailed description of his latest sexual conquest for her to step outside the room to take a call.

“Is this Faith Jensen? It’s Gabriel Lopez speaking, is now a good time?” A thick European accent came through the phone and she almost melted. She could get used to hearing voices like that. She thanked her lucky stars that she herself had somehow escaped the curse of the Cornish accent.

“Hi, yes this is Faith. Now is good!”

“Ah! Miss Jensen. Now listen, I am in London on a last minute business trip, and before I leave I would like to discuss your role in person. I know I previously suggested a video meeting but I don’t like these zoomies things. Can never get the camera on. Coffee and cake is more my style.”

“Of course!“ She was ready to grab her bag right now and make a run for it. “When and where were you thinking?”

“I’m stood in front of a wonderful little café in Covent Garden as we speak. Are you available? No pressure, I’m in the city until tomorrow morning.”

Faith turned around and observed her clients through the glass. One of them flipped off a stack of paperwork that she’d left in front of him, which was met with roars of laughter. Screw sticking around for that.

“I can be there in thirty.”



It wasn’t until Faith opened the door to the coffee shop that she realised she didn’t have the faintest idea what Gabriel Lopez looked like. She’d seen his photo before, but he’d always been stood amongst other people and she had to admit, she typically only had eyes for the drivers. This place was definitely marketed towards the younger generation; the neon sign and the plants and plush booths were a dead giveaway. She scanned the tables for anyone who stood out, and was relieved to see one man in his late forties, in a navy suit. He provided a stark contrast to the chattering sea of young adults in their *Levi’s* and *Doc Martens*.

He looked exceedingly well put together, and she was glad she wore a trouser suit today. She’d usually stick to casual-wear when visiting clients at home, but office based meetings were a whole different ball game. He had salt and pepper hair, and the only other way she could describe it was ‘tousled’. He was handsome, but not her type. Thank God. She didn’t think

she'd cope if she was as attracted to her boss as she was to the drivers she'd be working with. *Professionalism, Faith.*

His brow was furrowed as he typed furiously on his laptop, but when he looked up, his face lit up and he waved her over. She began heading towards his little corner table and he stood up, almost knocking his chair over.

"You must be Faith!" He kissed her on both cheeks and gestured for her to sit down. She could smell his cologne. A definite rich older guy smell, but not at all offensive.

"I am. It's great to meet you, Mr Lopez."

"Oh please, enough of the formalities. It's far too exhausting to keep up. What can I get you to drink?"

"I'll just have a black coffee, please." She smiled at him as she made herself comfortable.

"Ha! I like it, no fuss. I'll be right back!"

Faith felt at ease in his presence. He was warm, enthusiastic, and something told her they'd be in stitches in no time regardless of how professional she tried to be. He wanted human though, right? That was the whole point of the job he was employing her to do. Gabriel came back with two coffees and sat across from her, grinning like the cheshire cat.

"I got us a slice of chocolate cake each, too. I couldn't resist. If you don't want yours I will happily eat it, my wife doesn't usually let me have it. She says I must be as fit and healthy as possible with all this travel taking a toll on me."

"Well I hate to be the bearer of bad news but I think you'll only be having the one slice today. It's my guilty pleasure too."

"You are exactly how I thought you'd be." He laughed.

"What do you mean?"

"You're just very...*you.*"

"I try to be." Faith took a sip of her coffee, hoping he wouldn't notice her pride in the compliment.

“So now you’re here, let’s get down to business. I need a social media manager for one of our racing teams. You’d be responsible for one team specifically, and would cover everything the drivers do in a typical race week through all social media platforms. I want you to allow the world to see our drivers on a more personal level.” He leaned forward slightly and lowered his voice, as if they were exchanging government secrets. In his defence, the motorsport industry was very high profile.

“Personal? Like their lives away from the track?”

“Yes! See, you’re already getting it. The social media teams we have don’t delve deep. I want the fans to see them as real people, not just these guys who sit behind the wheel, sign autographs, do interviews and stand around chatting to their engineers.”

“So you want less formal, less structured content?”

“Exactly. So while we need the actual racing content, the garage interviews and the general stuff, we also need evidence of them having fun.” Gabriel shovelled a piece of chocolate cake into his mouth with a childlike enthusiasm.

“Almost in the style of a vlog?” Faith was already imagining behind the scenes highlight reels, personal video diaries and *a day in the life* videos.

“Just like that. They go out to eat, they explore the cities they race in. The camaraderie between these guys is truly magnificent, but the media coverage just doesn’t show it to its full extent.”

Faith mulled it all over in her head. This was her absolute dream job, but Gabriel made it sound so easy. Capturing the more personal stuff meant the drivers needed to trust her and open up to her when she had a camera pointed at them. She couldn’t do that if they weren’t willing, and a lot of them had zero social media presence.

“Why me? I’ve never worked in the racing industry, never covered any kind of sporting event.”

“Most of our social media crew haven’t when they come to us.”

“I’ve never even been to a race.”

“You live and breathe motorsport, Faith. I’ve been observing your social media interactions for a long time, I’ve seen it. You know a lot more than you think you do, and the rest will come naturally. I’ve already got someone volunteering to take you under their wing.”

“How many people would I be working with, exactly?”

“So...that’s something I wanted to talk to you about.” Gabriel looked nervous now, afraid that she might walk away from it all. “We’re shaking things up. Right now, we have a general team who cover the entire pit lane. What we want is to have two social media staff assigned to each racing team. The problem is, we have a lot of interns and not many experienced staff, and we don’t want to lose the interns.”

“Okay so who’s going to oversee what the interns are doing?”

“You.”

“I’m sorry, what?” Faith choked on her coffee.

“Well, not just you. There’s Lucie Carolan, too. I want you both on the same team, one of our top teams, and also responsible for the overall management of content across the whole organisation. We want your ideas, your feedback and your planning to kick things up a notch.”

Despite the butterflies that were making themselves known in the pit of her stomach, Faith was still confident in her abilities. If she couldn’t do the job, he wouldn’t be wasting his time taking her out for coffee in a foreign city and telling her the ins and outs of this side of the business. She just wanted to hear from him exactly what he felt she could bring to the table.

“Okay, so what’s my edge? What made you contact me rather than promote an intern?”

“I need someone who knows what they’re doing, but also someone young. You’re twenty six, right? Perfect age to keep

things fresh while maintaining a solid level of professionalism.”

“I assume your interns are mostly fresh out of education?” Faith asked. If she’d had this opportunity years ago, the excitement may have ruined things for her. She knew that the standard for the internship must be high, so she didn’t need to worry about feeling like she was running a daycare.

“Correct. Plus, bonus for everyone, you can use your existing audience to bring us some extra attention.” Gabriel winked.

“One hundred percent. I think I could film paint drying and my followers would watch.” Faith laughed. “I’m going to need Lucie’s guidance, though. A quick start guide to the International Endurance Championship kinda thing. I’ve seen TV coverage, but I know it’s different once you’re there and you’re in it.”

“Absolutely! Lucie will happily adopt you into the family. She’s been with us for years, so she is a fountain of knowledge and all the drivers love her. Also, I have a plan!” Gabriel practically bounced in his seat.

“A plan?” This was all getting dangerously close to being overwhelming. Faith had absorbed so much information in such a short space of time.

“Come to Belgium for the first race next month, a trial run. I’ll introduce you to the team and to the interns, then you can cover the practice sessions before you’re thrown in at the deep end.”

A week in Spa? In the heart of the Ardenne Forest? She was in heaven already and she hadn’t even booked a plane ticket.

“Okay, I have one last issue. What if I don’t gel with the team I’m assigned to? Obviously I will do everything I can, but have you told the drivers about all these changes?”

“You will gel with them, I promise. I already told them I was coming to track you down, they were over the moon!”

“Well I’m glad to hear that, it makes me feel a lot better about coming in as an outsider.”

With all the important stuff out of the way, the pair of them ordered another cup of coffee each and Gabriel tried out the carrot cake. Faith couldn’t help but start to view him as a Father figure. Maybe it was his authority, but he had that kind of vibe about him. She liked it.

“You’ll get your own hotel room, by the way. That wasn’t a thing until Lucie begged me to expand the budget for this season, by the way. She said that with the workload you two will have, you need space to relax, especially when the drivers are being divas.” Gabriel slurped his drink, and Faith chuckled softly.

“I like her already.”

“Oh you two will be thick as thieves, especially on your days off. You and Lucie will always be on the same floor as your team, it just makes things easier. It’s the same for the interns. We keep everyone together. You’ll also have our head photographer, Beatrix, on your floor at all times.”

“How much will we be working with her?”

“Her and her team will be providing a lot of the stills content. Your team can capture stills yourselves since they mostly do the press side of things, but there might be occasions where you’ll want to use their work. I’m leaving it up to you and Lucie to decide what works best.”

Faith wasn’t so sure she liked that idea, particularly the part where Bea would be in a room near theirs in every hotel. Fixing their friendship was one thing, but doing so whilst simultaneously adjusting to a new job and a whole new lifestyle was going to make it ten times harder.

“Are there any big personalities I should be aware of? Anyone who might make my job more difficult?”

“Well, in terms of being open, we may have one driver who’s a tough one to crack. It takes him a while to warm up to people, so it’s not personal.” Gabriel bit his lip, looking uncomfortable.



“Is there going to be a problem there? I just want to know what I’m getting myself into.”

“He knows what you need from him and he’s promised to step up. It might just take a little extra effort, some more quality time before he feels he can trust you. Lucie was scared out of her mind when she first met him, then the team went out for drinks and next thing I know, they’re best friends. Simple.”

“I can do beer.” Faith shrugged and took another bite of cake. She couldn’t wait to find some cute little bakeries on her travels. Bea seemed to avoid such places and opt for fine dining these days, but you couldn’t beat a good old danish pastry and a park bench with a view.

“He is an onion.”

“I’m sorry? An onion?”

“He has layers.” Gabriel grinned proudly.

“I’ll keep that in mind. Which team is it?” She knew the teams like the back of her hand. If Gabriel told her she could only have this job if she listed every driver of every team for the last five years, including reserve drivers and which number car they were in, she’d nail it.

“You’ll be head of social media for Revolution Racing.”

Faith did all she could to not choke on her cake crumbs. No pressure at all, giving her the most successful team in the history of the whole championship. Gabriel was out of his mind.

“Okay.” She managed to squeak out a response.

“Okay?”

“Yep. That’s great.”

“I’m guessing you know who our potential problem driver is?”

“Julien Moretz. Thirty-two years old, from Belgium. He’s won the championship five times with Revolution Racing, and has never finished an IEC race lower than third position.”

“That’s the one.”

“I think it’s safe to say I have my work cut out for me.”

## CHAPTER 3

HAVING NEVER STEPPED FOOT IN AN AIRPORT BEFORE, FAITH'S stress levels were high. Almost as high as the Boeing 747 she had de-boarded not even ten minutes ago. It was the first time since moving to London that she wished she could drive. A ferry crossing alone? Easy. No security officials staring her down as she fumbled to place her belongings in the awkwardly-sized plastic tray. No kids kicking the back of her seat and screaming at the top of their lungs. All that stress for an hour in the air was ridiculous.

If she'd thought boarding the plane and getting off again was stressful, baggage claim was hell on Earth. The luggage carousel was a blur of black suitcases and Faith cursed herself for not getting a brightly coloured one when the thought had previously crossed her mind. She might even have to try to get one before going to her next destination. Wherever that ended up being.

"Oh! Is this yours?" The woman stood next to her yanked two cases off and set them on the ground, as if they weighed next to nothing. "You said you had a red luggage tag attached to the handle, so I just assumed."

"You're an angel." Faith felt her whole body relax. That was one less thing to worry about.

"You look a little lost. Do you have someone waiting for you or do you need to flag down a taxi?"

"I have someone waiting for me, they should have a sign with my name on..." She squinted as she looked through the

doors to where there were dozens of people. All holding signs and banners. Another scene of chaos, brilliant.

“Ah yes, they’ll be out there somewhere. If you don’t see them it’s worth standing still with a confused look on your face until someone approaches you. Good luck!” The woman patted her gently on the shoulder and walked away, leaving her to fend for herself again.

Faith pushed through a swarm of equally-stressed passengers and out through the automatic doors. Almost immediately, she spotted a petite brunette waving manically at her. The sign with Faith’s name on it was flailing around above her head.

“Faith Jensen? Hi! I’m Lucie Carolan, great to meet you.” She smiled warmly at her.

“Hi, Lucie. Thanks for coming to my rescue. Gabriel said that you volunteered?”

“I did. Us girls have gotta stick together. I didn’t have a me when I was you. Does that make sense? Oh! Let me take your case for you! Follow me, I’m illegally parked.” She talked at a million miles per hour, but all the excitement was hyping Faith up too.

“Just as well I was quick getting through baggage claim then, isn’t it? Sorry if my case is heavy! I didn’t really know what to pack, or how much.”

“Don’t be silly, it’s not heavy at all. You’ll never have to wheel your own case again with our team around. The guys practically fight to help me when we’re on the road. I’m all for equality, but you won’t catch me complaining.”

They walked to the car and Faith’s jaw dropped. Her new work colleague had only gone and shown up in a bloody Porsché.

“Yours?” Faith practically sputtered.

“I wish. I borrowed it. I could hardly welcome you to the world of motorsport in a Citroën, could I?” Lucie delicately wedged the suitcase in the backseat, standing up victoriously

when she was done. “There we go, it’s sandwiched in but it fits!”

Faith lowered herself into the car in a way that suggested if she moved too fast, it would vanish beneath her. Was this her life now? What was next, caviar? She laughed aloud. That probably wasn’t far off, all things considered.

“Where are you from then, Lucie?” Faith asked. She could hear the American accent, but she was no expert on the United States.

“Good old California. Los Angeles to be exact. I honestly can’t remember the last time I was in the US for anything other than Sebring, mind you. Oh, and my Mom is Italian and moved back there a few years ago so you might hear an accent when I’m drunk.” Lucie started the engine and Faith felt the goosebumps on her skin as she took it all in.

“You travel a lot then, I’m guessing?”

“All the time. Once you start, you can’t really stop. I didn’t even have the travel bug until I got this job.”

“That makes one of us. I’ve had it from the day I learned the concept of a map, but not gone anywhere yet.”

“So this is quite literally your dream job, huh? I hear you’re quite the motorsport fan.” Lucie hit the horn as someone cut in front of her. “You absolute fucking idiot!”

Faith couldn’t help but blink at her, like a deer caught in headlights. Sweet and innocent little Lucie was a feisty one. They’d get along just fine if she kept that up.

“I was approached by Gabriel. I’ll admit, it took me by complete surprise. Apparently he’s known of me for a while.”

“A few of us on socials have, but Gabriel has been keeping tabs on you.”

“I’m pretty nervous, though. Is it a bad move to confess that to a co-worker?” Faith blushed. She was letting her professionalism slide momentarily, but there was something about Lucie that felt safe and secure. She was reminding her of her neighbour.

“Of course not! I was in your position once, and I had literally zero social media experience. Barely even used my own accounts. I was hired for this role via the catering team, purely because of my passion for the sport. We need you, Faith. Something and someone new.”

Faith finally allowed herself to settle into the cool leather seats and tucked her hair behind her ear, revealing her face a little more.

“I think I’m worried about the team not being super receptive. They have no reason to trust me straight off the bat, and yet that’s exactly what we’re asking them to do.”

Lucie shook her head, “You don’t need to worry about that at all, I swear. We’re a family. A very big, very boisterous family.”

“A family, huh?”

“Yup! We eat together. Live together. Travel together. That’s what families do, right?”

Murmuring in agreement, Faith turned to look out of the window. How would she know? She had no first hand experience of what families did.



The race circuit was in the most traditional Belgian town Faith could’ve imagined. Francorchamps definitely didn’t belong on one of those tacky postcards her Mum was a fan of.

Lucie drove them into a car park packed with black SUVs and bright red Ferraris. Like the cars, the hotel was sleek and modern. Parts of the town had clearly been commercialised for the sake of its clientele, but it was magical nonetheless. They were a stones throw away from the circuit, so Faith figured that tourists weren’t fortunate enough to get a room here during race week.

“Welcome to your home for the next week.” Lucie turned to look at her. “You have your own room this time but that was

just incase you didn't like me. If you decide I'm your new best friend, we'll be sharing for the rest of the season. We usually pair up."

"Question. Is the breakfast decent?" Faith raised an eyebrow as if there was even the slight chance that a place like this would be slacking on quality.

"Oh bless your heart. You have *no* idea how lucky we are. Come on, let's go find Gabriel." She flung the car door open and leapt out like an excited puppy. Who was more keen for Faith to meet everyone, Faith herself or Lucie?

The suitcase rattled along the cobblestone path. As they got closer to the entrance, a group of middle-aged men in suits emerged. Faith stepped aside, letting them pass. That wasn't intimidating like she thought it would be.

"Is the rest of the team here yet?" She asked.

"Yep! Well, as far as I know we're all here. I've seen Mars this morning, and I'm pretty sure he and Brett traveled together."

"Mars?"

"Sorry, I mean Marco. I call him Mars sometimes. He hates it. I just like winding him up, really. It might as well be part of my job description at this point." Lucie grinned mischievously as they entered the hotel lobby, which to Faith's surprise was eerily quiet.

There was an almighty clatter down the corridor and the two of them whipped their heads round. Faith laughed to herself. Of course it was Gabriel knocking into a vase.

"My darlings! Faith, I'm so glad to have you with us. How was your journey? Everything go smoothly?" He came towards them with open arms, kissing them both on the cheek.

"It wasn't bad for my first flight, thank you. Lucie's been treating me like royalty so far."

"I expected nothing less. You two will be besties, I can sense it."

“I can’t wait to sit down and plan content. Which reminds me, I should get down to the track and grab some quick-fire interviews while it’s quiet. Most of our social media crew don’t arrive until tomorrow so it’ll save them from having to rush around last minute.” Lucie began texting manically.

“We’ll leave you to settle in, Faith. Maybe head down later if you feel like it. I suggest hunting someone down in the restaurant and asking if you can tag along with them so you don’t get lost. If I’m done with my meeting by the time you’re ready I may be able to take you myself.” Gabriel placed a hand on her shoulder as he moved past her, and next thing they knew he was halfway across the lobby. He moved like a whippet.

“I’ll get the boys to come and find you and bring you down. You do not want to get in a golf kart with Gabriel, believe me. The man is reckless. Tipped one over a couple of years ago, still insists he never saw the plant pot but he was weaving around them at high speed for a laugh.”

“Amazing. Thanks, Lucie.”

“Here’s your room key. Top floor, room one hundred and eighteen. See you later!”



Faith had freshened up and swapped out her leggings and sweatshirt for black jeans, and a basic white t-shirt. Her Nike AF1s were the only pair of appropriate shoes she’d packed, unless she wanted to march around the paddock area in black stilettos.

If there was one good thing her Mum had taught her, it was that you should pack a pair of heels and a dress for every trip. How she had discovered that little trick was a mystery. Her Mum never left Cornwall, which was hardly the place for such attire.

“Good arvo! You our new stalker then?” A strong Australian accent boomed across the restaurant. Faith looked



up from her phone and searched for the source.

“That would be me.” She waved.

A tall, tanned brunette guy walked over. He shoved his sunglasses up onto his head and sat down at her table, helping himself to a fry.

“Brett Anderson.”

“Hi, Brett. I’m Faith.”

“I told you her name wasn’t Faye, you doughnut!” He rolled his eyes dramatically, turning to the messy head of curls hovering behind him.

“My apologies, Faith. I’m Marco De Luca.” Marco reached out and shook her hand politely, taking a seat next to his teammate.

“So, *are* you a stalker?” Brett studied her, a cheeky glint in his eye.

“Brett, leave the woman alone.”

“Not a stalker, but an admirer.” Faith prayed her cheeks weren’t red. She sensed that he wasn’t the type to let her live it down.

“Lucie said we have to look after you every moment she’s not able to be by your side, so here we are.” Marco smiled at her.

“Your knights in shining armour. Although if you’re anything like our Luce, you don’t need one of those. Right, come on mate let’s get ourselves some food. We can’t be stealing all Faith’s fries.”

“*We* weren’t.” Marco frowned. Brett was a real character. She was going to get some damn good content out of him.

She watched in amusement as they placed their order with a waitress, and attempted to conceal her laughter as Brett struggled to speak Dutch. He then proceeded to try French. Little did the poor guy know, the waitress spoke perfect English. Marco swatted Brett’s hand away as he ruffled his curls mid-conversation. The younger driver was significantly

shorter, and was actually only a couple of inches taller than Faith.

“So is it just you two here?” She asked when they returned.

“Yeah, Julien is driving himself here this afternoon. He only lives twenty minutes away, but he’s got to stay at the hotel with the team. It’s in our contracts.” Marco replied.

“Lucie gave you the whole spiel about how we’re a family unit, yeah?” Brett asked.

“She did.”

“Well she meant it. Anyone messes with you, any problems, we’ve got your back.” Brett took on a more serious tone.

“I appreciate that.” Faith responded.

“Some guys might try their luck. We don’t have many ladies around, so they get a bit ahead of themselves sometimes. I personally won’t fight anyone for you, but Brett will.” Marco threw his arm around Brett’s broad shoulders playfully.

“Alright mate, bloody hell. I’m not the violent type but yeah, I’ll keep people in line if they overstep. Same as I would for Luce. It’s Jules you’ve gotta watch out for.”

“Why have I got to watch out for him?”

“The bloke doesn’t have much tolerance for assholes.”

The waitress placed their food on the table in front of them and Faith took the opportunity to break it to the guys that they hadn’t needed to struggle through a language barrier.

“Could I have another glass of water, please?” She asked.

“Of course. Would you like ice with that?”

“Yes, please.” Faith smiled and looked straight at Brett. His mouth was hanging wide open. Judging by first impressions, it likely wasn’t very often that he was lost for words.

“Well damn. Could’ve told us before we humiliated ourselves.”

“Where’s the fun in that, Anderson?”

“I like you. Can we keep you?” Marco laughed.

“Gabriel said this race is a trial kinda thing for you. You didn’t want to commit to the full season?” Brett asked, taking a bite out of his burger and promptly losing half the contents.

“As of right now, I fully intend on signing a contract and staying on with the team. I just need to know that I’m the right fit, with Revolution and with the rest of the social media staff. I have a lot of plans though, if I do stay.”

“Well, we’re all confident that you’ll stick with us. What are your plans for content? We know we’ve all got to be open to your ideas, we have been warned.” Marco said.

“Yeah, like, can I play pranks on people and film it on a GoPro or something? I do it without the cameras anyway. Just thought that might be along the lines of what Gabriel is getting at with the whole personality thing.” Brett shrugged.

“That would be absolutely perfect.” Faith said. “Each team is getting their own *YouTube* channel, which will be great for sponsors. Some things are down to team bosses too, but I hear that your boss is a bit hopeless with social media.”

“Jasper is clueless. He was so relieved when he heard you were coming on board, told us to be nice and welcoming because you’re our saviour and must be cherished.” Brett took an almighty slurp of his diet coke.

“You guys are the best team, but there’s always more to be done. A strong social media presence is the next step.”

“Yeah, we’ve got to keep up with the times. We seem to have an increasing number of younger fans.” Marco agreed.

“They’re the ones with disposable income, too. They travel round the world for races, buy merchandise. They tend to have less commitments. You need to cater to them.”

“So you’re saying if I’m completely and utterly myself, the fans will flock to us?” Brett raised an eyebrow.

“You two are exactly the kind of drivers the fans love. You have a good bond, take your jobs seriously but still have a laugh.”

“Hear that, Marco? We’re perfect.”

“One of us is.”

Faith was optimistic. Her biggest fear had been having to spend so much time earning the drivers’ trust that she couldn’t produce game-changing content for this first race. She needed to go all out from day one. Prove to the organisation, Revolution Racing and her socials team that they could depend on her. With Brett and Marco already on her side and keen to get stuck in, she was off to a great start. Two down, one to go. She had seen interviews with Julien over the years and followed his accounts, and if she was being realistic she needed to prepare for the worst. Gabriel had already warned her he was a tough one to crack. She could only fight her way in if he allowed her to.

“You ready to come down to the track? Jasper wants to meet you and introduce you to the mechanics and engineers.” Marco screwed up his napkin and they stood up abruptly. They certainly didn’t take much time out of their busy schedules to relax, that much was clear.

“Of course.” She nodded and grabbed her phone and her sunglasses. Her lack of a camera had her feeling a little lost, but today was purely about meeting everyone. She couldn’t shove a camera in their faces immediately. Save that for the first full day of press and prep.

“Let’s go, bestie.” Brett linked his arm through hers and tugged her until she was walking by his side.

Marco trailed behind them in exasperation, but Faith couldn’t wipe the smile off her face. Aside from her early years of friendship with Bea, she had never felt more like she belonged somewhere than she did in this foreign country, surrounded by strangers.

## CHAPTER 4

CIRCUIT DE SPA FRANCORCHAMPS WAS BY FAR HER FAVOURITE racetrack, and the one Faith had been most excited to visit since she was a little girl.

“Is that my Lucie?” Brett’s voice echoed through the Revolution Racing garage, startling Faith who had been chatting idly with Marco and his engineer.

Lucie rushed towards the Australian driver and jumped into his arms. Her tiny frame made it look like Brett’s six-foot-three self was cuddling a teddy bear.

“I hope you’ve been behaving yourself, Anderson.” She tapped him on the nose.

“I always do, Luce.” Brett set her down and put his hand on his heart, feigning innocence.

“He hasn’t been too bad, to give him credit. Although he did make me skip for part of the walk down the paddock.”

“Brett! You’ve got to stop making people do that.” Lucie rolled her eyes. Faith couldn’t help but agree with her.

“Hey, Faith told me stuff like that is great for content!” He defended, but a smirk was working its way onto Lucie’s face.

“When the cameras are actually on you, Anderson. You dare make me skip, I’ll get revenge.” Marco added.

“No skipping. Got it. Maybe we should get scooters, instead?”

“That’s—” Lucie started.

“Maybe not such a bad idea.” Faith interjected. “I’m serious, we could work some content around that. We can discuss it later.”

“Have you met everyone on the team yet?” Lucie asked, turning to her and cutting the boys out of their conversation. They took the hint and wandered over to the car, peering into the cockpit as an engineer explained something.

“I’ve been introduced to everyone we’ve crossed paths with, although I’m not sure I’ll remember them all.”

“Ha! If you could remember the names and job roles of everyone then I’d be amazed. I still can’t remember that guy’s name and he’s been here two seasons already.” Lucie pointed at a lanky blonde guy with glasses who was checking the tires.

“I want to say his name is Alan...but I could be very wrong.”

“Oh. I thought it was Alec. Who knows! So what do you think about the boys? Reckon we can get some good footage?”

“One hundred percent. I think Brett might be the key but Marco sounds like he’s really keen, too. With Brett by his side I think he’ll be a lot more open than if he we had him doing lots on his own.” Faith suggested.

“I agree. Are you thinking we could do a series with just the two of them? Something lighthearted, unscripted. Just let them be the complete idiots they are.” Lucie laughed.

“We could have them giving tours of different areas. A track tour, garage tour. Hospitality area, maybe? We could even get them in the merchandise stalls and the fan zones.”

“Where have you been all my life?” Lucie asked, clutching Faith’s arm in excitement.

“Sitting in conference rooms with stuck-up, rich, old white men and bratty teenaged-girls?” She offered in response.

“Hate to break it to you but there’s plenty of that going on in this industry too. We’re just usually lucky enough to avoid them and hang out with the cool kids.” She gestured to where Brett and Marco were analysing statistics with Jasper.

“Lets never tell Brett that he is considered a ‘*cool kid*’” She grimaced. He didn’t need anyone else to encourage him. The guy was pure chaos but in all the best ways. A breath of fresh air in comparison to the people Faith was used to working with.

The girls watched as Marco departed from the group and came back to join them. He stretched his arms out and carried out the stretching routine that Faith had noticed both drivers do a couple of times since walking into the garage.

“Hey, Mars. Is Julien *still* not here? He’s taking forever.” Lucie was visibly impatient. “I want to be the one to introduce him to our newest recruit.”

“He called half an hour ago, his car broke down on the driveway but he’ll be with us soon.”

“Couldn’t he just, like, hop into one of his other many cars?”

“You know how he gets. Doesn’t want to bring his precious vintage classics or his beloved Porsches to the circuit. Security isn’t very tight in the car parks.”

“Julien’s Lamborghini got keyed a few years ago.” Lucie turned to Faith. “Since that incident, he has only driven here or to Le Mans in his Range Rover.”

“You should see his car collection.” Marco added. “It’s the stuff of dreams. But I guess living out in the countryside, he has the space for it.”

“You’ll probably see it at the end of the week.” Lucie said.

“Will I?”

“I mean, it depends if he goes ahead with his annual post-race celebrations. He’s notorious around here for going all out, but last year things got a little too out of hand and he vowed to keep it low key this year.”

“You talking about when we played poker and Gabriel lost fifty thousand?” Brett threw his head back in laughter as he joined the trio. “The dude really tried to blame *us*, we can’t help it if beer blinded his judgement.”

“Lucie wasn’t in charge of helping to organise that one, that’s why there was poker. And a mechanical bull, and a bouncy castle in the field.” Marco grinned.

“The what in the what?”

“Like I said, things got out of hand. Drivers are like a bunch of overgrown kids after a race, and when we’re in a private space like Julien’s house, nothing is off limits. But anyway, I offered to plan this one. I’m just waiting for him to confirm, which he should today.” Lucie said.

“She only offered to help him because she fancies him.” Brett remarked, dodging Lucie as she smacked his arm.

“I do not fancy Jules!”

“Yes you bloody do!”

“I am not interested in him.” She glared Brett down, her cheeks flaming red. Faith knew without a doubt that Julien Moretz was *not* the driver this girl had a gigantic crush on. “I just get flustered by his distractingly good looks, as anyone in their right mind would.”

“Are you jealous by any chance, Anderson?” Marco challenged his teammate, and Lucie’s cheeks got redder.

“What? No, no I just...No...” Brett couldn’t get his words out, clearly a rare thing for this chatterbox. “I’m just messing with ya, Luce. You know I don’t mean it.”

Lucie was equally as embarrassed, but Faith was plotting in her head. There was definitely more to this friendship. It was obvious from the way her colleague had leapt into his arms, but if they wanted to pretend otherwise then that was fine. Faith would get it out of at least one of them eventually.

“Anyway, shall we go back to the hotel? I don’t want to show up to my first team dinner in jeans and trainers.” Faith broke the awkwardness surrounding them.

“Yeah, I want to hear all about your life back in England.” Lucie linked arms with her and insisted on the two of them walking ahead of Marco and Brett, leaving them ten steps behind.





As the team walked back to the hotel, the girls still arm in arm, Faith felt as though she had known Lucie forever. In a matter of hours, they had become what Brett referred to as ‘*Revolution’s Power Couple*’.

“I know this might seem weird but do you want to get ready for the team dinner together? I need outfit advice, and it’s not often I get to do things like this.” Lucie asked.

“I’d love to.” Faith smiled at her.

“Don’t feel obligated, though. Like I said, we don’t have to be the best of friends just because we’re women. I mean that. I won’t take offence.” She was speaking fast, which seemed to just be Lucie’s thing, but this time she was a bundle of nerves.

“Lucie, I would be honoured.”

“Ladies!” They were interrupted by Gabriel zooming towards them in a golf kart, grinning wildly. Faith prayed he wouldn’t ask them to hop in, having been warned of his reckless driving. “Jump in!”

“Gabriel, I swear...” Lucie threatened.

“I promise I’ll drive slowly!” He raised his hands up in defence, momentarily losing control of it. “And I will keep two hands on the wheel.” He grimaced.

“Fine.” They got in and Faith sat in the front seat. Perhaps not the wisest idea if she wanted to come out alive.

“I just wanted to say I’ve seen a couple of your posts, Miss Jensen. Of your journey, your arrival, your walk down to the circuit. Even the little hotel room tour. That’s exactly what we want! It’s so personal, so genuine.”

“Let’s not forget, at the end of the day I am still a huge fan of motorsport. This is so much more than just a job. I want that to be conveyed in the content.”

“Exactly! So let’s get that kind of excitement across on the team accounts. Tell the others to do the same for their teams, yes? Oh, and tell everyone to throw in all of the heart eye emojis! We love heart eye emojis!” Gabriel was bouncing in his seat, and getting louder and more enthusiastic the more he went on. The kart was rocking slightly with every movement. “They’re so cute, are they not? I send them to my wife in every single message.”

“*Every* message?” Lucie asked.

“Every one, Miss Carolan!”

Their conversation was cut off by the roar of an engine coming down the street behind them. A cherry red Ford Mustang passed them and Gabriel brought the golf kart to a screeching halt on the pavement as Marco and Brett stopped walking. *Oh. Julien.*

“Oh my *god*. He’s actually gone and ditched the Range Rover.” Lucie whispered.

Faith barely heard her. Her attention wasn’t on the car that was now parked on the opposite side of the street, but on the six foot something golden-blond racing driver emerging from it. She could’ve sworn he was doing the whole locking the car over his shoulder in slow motion thing, but that was just her imagination playing tricks on her. Probably.

The closer he got, the more nervous Faith became. She’d seen him on-screen, but the cameras didn’t do him justice. She totally understood her friend’s reaction. In fact if she wasn’t entering a trance of her own, she might’ve matched it.

“He’s finally cut his hair.” Lucie mumbled behind her.

“Yeah...” Faith snapped out of it and took a deep breath. “Um, should we get out and say hello?”

“Girls!” Brett called to them, and suddenly the attention of all four men was on them.

Lucie pulled herself together immediately, clambering out of the kart and rushing to give Julien a hug. He squeezed her tightly, swaying with her in his arms. They were definitely

close. Faith hoped he didn't try to hug her. She wasn't sure she could handle that.

"Jules, this is Faith Jensen. Our new social media manager." Lucie introduced her as she reached the circle. All eyes were on her, and she'd never felt less confident.

"Hi, Julien. It's nice to meet you." Sorting herself out in record time, Faith smiled at him brightly and extended her hand. He didn't take it. If she hadn't been so painfully aware of every movement he made and every reaction she was having, Faith wouldn't have let it bother her. But it had bothered her, and her heart was racing.

Julien shoved his hands in his pockets and nodded, avoiding any physical contact with her. But the eye contact was there. It felt like he was staring into her soul. *Could he stop?* Preferably before she hijacked Gabriel's beloved golf kart and drove it all the way to Brussels Airport.

"You coming to the team dinner tonight, mate?" Brett broke the tension.

"I have to unpack." He said. "I also need to speak to Gabriel. I'll be at the bar later."

"Okay." Brett replied, looking between Faith and Julien. "Well, shoot us a text when you're ready, then."

Julien nodded, walking away with Gabriel struggling to keep up with him. Faith noticed people from the hotel rushing to grab his suitcases from his car boot. *Really?* He couldn't have done that himself?

"Tell me I'm not the only one who thought that was weird?" Marco spoke in a hushed voice.

"That was insanely bloody weird." Brett agreed. "Dude's personality was wiped the second Faith came over."

"Did I do something wrong?"

"No way." Lucie placed a hand on her arm. "I have no idea what's gotten into him. He's never so...shy? Is shy even the right word?"

“I think he’s just having an off day, you know? His car breaking down probably annoyed him more than it would annoy most of us. He really hates bringing the Mustang.” Marco shrugged.

Faith had a sinking feeling that he was about to make her job hell. He was already rushing to get away from her moments after meeting her, so how was she supposed to convince him to hang around her long enough to get video footage? She was royally screwed.

“I reckon he was blinded by your beauty, FJ.” Brett winked but it did nothing to make her feel more at ease.

“Brett, who the hell is *FJ*?” Lucie frowned at him, but her features softened in an instant when he held her gaze.

“Maybe the nickname doesn’t work. It was worth a shot.”

The four of them were still gathered on the road outside the hotel where Gabriel and Julien had left them. None of them were quite sure what to say, but it was pretty obvious that their teammate’s behaviour was out of character.

“Does he know about my background? Maybe he’s seen my name pop up in his comments and he got freaked out, thinking I’m just a fan and that’s why I was hired.” Faith said.

“No, we were all told about your experience. He isn’t active on social media, either. Just posts and shuts the app. So I doubt he recognised you from there.” Lucie replied.

“He’ll come around, don’t stress about it too much.” Brett shuffled his feet awkwardly.

Faith needed this to work. It wasn’t just a job, it was everything she’d ever wanted. She didn’t want Julien to be the one who ripped it all away from her before she’d even got started. Faith would be damned if she let him have an attitude about having a camera in his face a few times a day. Besides, it was part of his job too. *Tough luck, Moretz.*

“Us girls are going to go and get all dressed up for dinner, I want Faith’s first team event to feel special. Boys, put on your best suits. We’re going all out.” Lucie grabbed Faith’s

hand and pulled her towards the hotel, determined not to let Julien's behaviour ruin her new friend's first day on the job.

"Meet us at six thirty, Luce!" Brett yelled behind them but they were already stepping through the door to the lobby.

"Six thirty, my ass." Lucie snorted. "Takes those boys three hours to choose a watch."



"Red or black?" Faith held up two dresses to Lucie, who was in the bathroom perfecting her winged eyeliner.

"Hold the red one up against you again?" Faith did as requested. "Black."

"That's what I was leaning towards." She smiled appreciatively and slipped it on. Although it was the middle of May and the weather was warming up, the summer evenings were still a little chilly. Plus, she had been warned that the hotel kept the air-conditioning on in the restaurant. They planned on walking into Francorchamps for a couple of beers, much to Lucie's displeasure. She didn't want to walk in heels so Brett had promised to carry her at the first sign of discomfort.

The dress Faith had opted for was long sleeved with a high neckline, and ended mid-thigh. It hugged her figure perfectly, and made her appreciate her curves. She paired it with black knee-high heeled boots, which were practically begging to be worn. She'd brought them especially for her race week wardrobe, which she had decided she would just recycle for each race. If she made it to the next one.

"Do I look too much like I'm trying to be a princess?" Lucie emerged from the bathroom in a pale pink ruched satin minidress with puff sleeves. She wore white strappy heels which told Faith that Brett's offer was definitely going to be taken advantage of.

"You look great, Luce."

“Thank you, not looking so bad yourself. Ugh, I never know what to do with my hair.”

“There’s not a lot I can do with mine, really.” Faith looked in the mirror and tucked her blonde strands behind her ear on one side. Her hair didn’t even reach shoulder length, so she tended to just add a few waves and leave it at that. Lucie had been blessed with natural loose curls.

“I think I’m going to leave mine natural for once. We can be twins.” Lucie smiled.

“Are we posting about tonight?”

“Nope! Gabriel and I agreed it’s important that you just settle in tonight. By all means post on your own socials, but don’t worry about the team accounts.” Lucie secured her earrings and grabbed her phone, opening the door to let Faith out into the corridor.

“Wait! I need my debit card.” Faith started heading for her own room next door, black matte room key in her hand.

“No you don’t. Our treat. Tonight is all about you.”

Walking towards the elevator arm in arm again, Faith couldn’t help but feel uneasy. She was going to a Revolution team dinner in her honour, and yet one member of the team couldn’t wait to get away from her. It was hardly the kind of welcome she wanted.

## CHAPTER 5

FAITH FELT LIKE ROYALTY. SHE KNEW THE HOTEL WAS USED TO catering to businessmen, athletes and celebrities, but she hadn't been expecting this. Every table was taken, every seat occupied by men of all ages in suits and freshly-pressed shirts and women with diamond earrings that were probably more expensive than the block of flats Faith lived in. Revolution Racing's table for the evening consisted of Lucie, Faith, Brett, Marco, and their engineers who had departed to get an early night a few minutes ago. Gabriel had been there to help himself to their basket of bread at the start of the evening, then disappeared for a business meeting on the other side of the restaurant.

There was an endless stream of rosé wine being poured into Faith's and Lucie's glasses, with the promise that tomorrow still wasn't technically their first day on the job. That was press day in two day's time. Until then, they just had to rally the rest of the social media crew, introduce Faith, and give them a rundown of what was expected, plus figure out between them what their game plan was for their own team's content. It was looking likely that the meeting regarding the latter would be held in bed, hungover, with room service and painkillers.

They were halfway through their second course, and the Salmon dish Faith had been recommended was heavenly. Julien, as he'd said, was a no-show. Whether he joined them at the bar in Francorchamps was yet to be seen. She was on edge from the possibility that he could waltz in at any given moment and disturb the peace.

“So,” Brett put his fork down and took a sip of his drink. “Have you had the pleasure of meeting the IEC’s head photographer?”

“Actually, I’ve known her since we were eighteen.”

“You know Beatrix Miller?” Marco’s eyes widened.

“We were flatmates at University in London. Then we had our own place and worked together until she flew out to Europe to join you guys.” Faith felt a wave of shyness come over her. For some reason, she wasn’t entirely comfortable with everyone finding out she was friends with Bea before she’d come face to face with her again.

“My heart goes out to you, truly.” Lucie muttered, trying to hide her disgust.

“Okay, what is *that* about?” Faith gestured to her grimace.

“Luce and Bea are pretty much always at odds. They haven’t ended up in a screaming match yet, but you could cut the tension with a knife when they’re in the same vicinity.” Brett placed a hand on Lucie’s knee to get her to relax.

“Yeah, well, I’m not sure if we’re on good terms or not anymore. Our friendship was becoming pretty strained in the lead-up to her departure, and I refused to fly out to visit her recently. We’ll see, I guess.”

As the conversation moved on and Marco filled everyone in on his recent trip to Cuba, Faith allowed her mind to wander back to Bea. She wanted so badly to believe that she’d painted an inaccurate picture of the new Beatrix Miller, but if someone as sweet as Lucie was so bitter about her then there wasn’t much chance of Faith being too far off.

She did a quick scan of the restaurant. No sign of long, dark hair anywhere. Besides, if she had been in there she’d surely have come running for a grand reunion with her best friend in the whole wide world. Or at least that was what she insisted on calling Faith in her social media captions.

“I don’t know about you guys, but I’m skipping dessert in favour of the beers I am going to devour.” Lucie declared.



“I’m with you on that one.” Faith nodded. The amount of bread they’d consumed followed by appetisers and the main course had been more than enough.

Brett waved at Gabriel, who flagged down a waitress and pointed at their table. Just like that, their bill was covered. Faith didn’t even want to think about how much it cost, but to most of the people in here it would be considered pennies.

As they departed the restaurant and subsequently the hotel, the effect of the girls’ wine made itself known. Nothing drastic, just a slight buzz. The beer would be their downfall.

“Are we waiting for Jules?” Lucie asked.

“Nah he’ll meet us there. He’s got a few calls to make.” Brett crouched so Lucie could climb onto his back.

“Again, Luce?” Marco raised an eyebrow.

“It’s tradition, Mars. Every team dinner, I get carried to the bar. It’s the price us girls pay for wearing these god-awful shoes.” She wrapped her arms around Brett’s neck to keep from falling off.

“Luce! I’d like to be able to breathe.” He pretended to choke until she loosened her grip.

“I would like to point out that I am walking perfectly fine, completely unaided.” Faith gestured at her own heels, and was met with a scowl.

Lucie was used to running up and down the pit lane and through the paddock in trainers, and Faith attended meetings in London’s business districts in heels. She was thankful that this job didn’t require those, but she clearly had an advantage.

When they turned the corner at the end of the road, the bars and restaurants of Francorchamps were revealed. There were only a few to choose from, but they looked warm and welcoming from the outside. Despite it being gone nine o’clock in the evening, but the streets were empty.

“Is anywhere actually open?” She asked.

“Yep!” Brett set Lucie down on the pavement and held her arm while she steadied herself. “Most of the teams will either

stay at the hotel or head into Spa for classier environments.”

“We’re not classy.” Marco said, holding the door open to the first bar they got to. It was tiny but the ambience was perfect. Dim lights, a few locals and lots of mismatched chairs and tables. She didn’t care about all the fuss and the extravagance that she might get elsewhere, she felt comfortable here.

“Speak for yourselves, I am a very classy girl. We just like the homey feel that you get here. Beer, not champagne.” Lucie flung her bag onto a table and hopped onto a bar stool which wobbled as a result of its uneven wooden legs. *So* classy.

Before Faith managed to sit down herself, Marco appeared at her side with a beer for each of them. She took a sip and raised an eyebrow. She wasn’t usually keen, but she liked it.

“Traditional Belgian beer, local to Spa. This is the stuff they serve at the track, at the top of Eau Rouge.” Marco seemed excited by her reaction.

“Another reason we brought you here instead of taking you to the casino. Got to let you experience the true culture of this place, from more of a fan perspective.” Lucie said.

They settled into a conversation about the history of the circuit and Faith didn’t have the heart to tell Brett and Marco that she knew all of this already. It wasn’t even that she’d done her research, she was just such a fan of motorsport that she’d picked up on seemingly useless information over the years. Now that she was here, it wasn’t so useless.

Marco told her about the Italian restaurant on the corner which had an old Formula 1 car under the glass floor. When you passed through the restaurant, you walked right over it. It was where a lot of the teams went for dinner after qualifying, and mixed socially with the fans who had been lucky enough to get a table. Brett told her all about the hotel where the track had been designed on a napkin, right down the road from the circuit. It hadn’t had enough money poured into it in recent years, so it had been allowed to fall apart. It closed a few years ago, which devastated some of the more local drivers. Julien included.

“So, have ya left a significant other back in rainy old England then, Jensen?” Brett asked.

“I have not.” She replied, not particularly wanting to go into any more detail. Having never had a serious relationship at the age of twenty six, she was never sure if it was something she should be embarrassed about.

“God, I wish I had time for dating. It’s all work, work, work. Never gone further than a third date.” Lucie chimed in, and just like that, the shame was gone.

“Me either. When Bea was in the UK, I went on a lot of dates but then when she left I was just trying to sort my business out and stay afloat. I didn’t have time for anything else.”

“Come on girls! Loosen up a bit!” Brett’s comment had Lucie glaring at him again.

“Number one,” Lucie’s tone was mildly threatening, “you haven’t had a serious relationship since what’s-her-name fucked off four years ago.”

“Sienna.” He corrected.

“Irrelevant. Number two, I don’t want to settle down. Ever. Especially in this industry.” She frowned so intensely, Faith was certain she’d be left with permanent lines.

“Bullshit. If I got down on one knee right now, we’d sail off into the sunset. Don’t even deny it, Carolan.” He was joking, but he was looking right into Lucie’s eyes. Maybe he *wasn’t* joking.

“Pipe down, Anderson. Not even you could hold me down.

“Yeah, we’ll see. Lucie Anderson has a nice ring to it.”

“In all seriousness, it’s hard to meet anyone normal when you’re in this line of work. Everyone seems to have an ulterior motive, so most of us drivers are in it for a good time not a long time.” Marco interrupted the lovers’ tiff.

“Does Julien still get any action?” Lucie took a swig of beer. It was definitely going to her head, anyone with working

vision could see that from the way she was falling about giggling.

“Who knows with that bloke. Maybe that’s why he’s so tense today, hasn’t got any recently.” Marco replied.

“Where the hell is he, for crying out loud. We’ve already been here an hour. It’ll be time for bed soon.” Lucie said.

“Text him, see where he is. He might’ve headed into Spa for drinks instead. Francorchamps isn’t suited to everyone’s tastes, you know how the Talos boys are.” Marco suggested.

“No, remember last night? I sent a message in the group chat and told you all you had to be here for either all or part of the evening to welcome Faith. Team orders from Jasper.” Lucie reminded him. Faith felt honoured that they’d all gone out of their way for her. Except Julien.

“Aw you guys! Let’s add Faith to the group chat!” Brett yelled enthusiastically, patting her on the shoulder with force. He was like a dog who had forgotten how big and strong he was and desperately wanted to be close to his humans.

“Who’s in this group chat, exactly?”

“Us three, Jules, and our engineers.”

“You might be shocked to see that Julien has a personality over text. I know your first impression of him was... uncomfortable, but we promise he’s not like that all the time.” Lucie assured.

“I think I’ll take your word for it for now. Give him some time to warm up to having me around.” She bit the inside of her cheek, her thoughts all over the place.

Faith’s phone came to life in the middle of the table with a notification that told her she’d been added to *Revolution Royals*. She swiped across the screen and was greeted with very unflattering selfies of all three drivers from this morning.

“Don’t feel obligated to send one of those. You won’t catch me with a camera at that angle, that’s for sure.” Lucie said, but Faith laughed. She wasn’t sure what she’d been

expecting from this conversation thread, but it hadn't been that.

“What’s with the name?” She asked.

“That was my idea!” Brett needed a volume button. “Get it? We’re a multi-championship winning team, so we’re extra special. Like royals.”

“You’re divas is what you are.”

“Excuse me, Lucie. You’re part of the same group chat.”

“Someone’s got to keep us in line.” Marco grinned.

“Well aren’t you lucky? Now you’ve got two of us.” Faith raised her drink to Lucie, who clinked her bottle against it.

Their phones buzzed again in response to Brett’s firing line of questions aimed at Julien’s whereabouts. He wasn’t coming. He claimed to be going to bed with a headache, and told them he’d see them down at the garage in the morning. From the way Lucie and Brett looked at each other and then at her, she could only assume that it was her presence that was keeping him away from their beloved tradition of drinks in the local town.

Her one glimmer of hope, albeit a shit one, was his follow up text two minutes later. ‘*Welcome to the team, Faith*’. Two minutes seemed like a long time to come up with such a mediocre welcome, almost as if he’d thought about it carefully and still somehow thought it would do the trick. No emojis, no sign of genuine enthusiasm at all. Just a full stop.



They made it back to the hotel shortly before midnight, and despite Brett and Marco’s best attempts at keeping everyone’s spirits up, the evening had taken a strange turn. Faith felt nauseous, and not just from the alcohol consumption. None of them had mentioned Julien again all night to the point where Faith was scared to ask questions about, really, *anything*, out of fear that his name would come up. They had developed this

unspoken rule that his name would not be spoken aloud for the rest of the night. The man was not *Voldemort*, for Christ's sake.

Faith felt at home with these people. She really did. She was already forming a safety net, a makeshift family, and yet the two interactions she'd had with Julien were enough to have her doubting everything and feeling like she would be better off if she went back to England and carried on the way she was. She needed him to like her. Not just for the sake of the content she needed to produce, but for the sake of her new friendships. The rest of the team shouldn't be walking on eggshells. If he didn't get over whatever his issue was, there was going to be a bigger problem and the team was going to fall apart.

Having been raised by an emotionally and mostly physically absent Mum, in a small town, with a Dad she'd never met, Faith didn't know what a family was supposed to look like. She didn't know how to navigate her way through this. It had always been Faith, and Faith only. And then Faith and Bea. And then back to just Faith, with a little bit of Amina every now and then.

This dynamic was brand new. She had a new best friend sleeping next door, two more down the hall, and one guy who was determined to treat her like an outsider in the room opposite. How could she possibly contend with him? He'd been here longer than she had. The others could abandon her at the drop of a hat if their friendship with the new girl threatened their long-standing relationship with Julien Moretz. It wasn't like she could go running to Bea, either. She was supposedly as bad as Faith suspected she had become, so befriending her again wasn't going to end well where feelings were concerned, and it was going to put everyone's backs up if Faith was swanning around the paddock with the woman everyone hated.

The temptation to bang on Julien's door and wake him up was almost overpowering her common sense. She could imagine the anger she would be at the receiving end of, though, and it was just about enough to prevent her from

marching across the corridor in the middle of the night. He didn't have a choice in this, she decided. He was going to hang out with her one on one whether he liked it or not. She was in charge of content, and between her and Lucie she was sure she could orchestrate something. An excuse, a reason for them to have a conversation. Anything.

Just when she was re-considering going over there in her bright pink flamingo pyjamas, Faith got a text. It was Lucie, who had probably heard her pacing and cursing out loud through the wall for the last half an hour.

*'Be careful with Julien. Gabriel was right, he has a lot of layers.'* Faith sighed and threw herself back onto her bed. The warning was followed by an onion emoji, but she couldn't muster up a laugh at this point.

Julien could push her away as much as he wanted, but Faith just happened to like onions. She was going to peel back his layers, one by one, until she discovered who he was at his core. This was what Bea had done with her eight years ago. She had been equally as stubborn as Julien was showing signs of being now, walls up, refusing to let anyone in. Bea hadn't budged. She had gently pushed Faith out of her comfort zone and it was Faith's turn to do the same for someone else.

## CHAPTER 6

JULIEN WAS A BUNDLE OF NERVES THE NEXT MORNING AND HE was eager to escape the hotel before he came across Faith in an empty corridor. Or Lucie, for that matter. He didn't want to be berated for missing last night. He knew he'd messed up monumentally, he should've just sucked it up and made an effort.

Exiting his room and sneaking into the hallway, he didn't have time to bolt when he heard her door open. He turned and faced her, and the dread he felt was mirrored on her face. That damn face. It truly was the source of his inner turmoil. He hadn't meant to make her feel so awkward, yesterday. He had reacted on instinct, and now he needed to fix it.

"Morning. You heading down for breakfast?" He attempted to smile at her, but he was certain it came off as more of a grimace.

"Yes I am, are you?" She replied, her tone painfully polite.

"Yeah. Look, I'm really sorry about last night, and yesterday in general. My head was all over the place and that manifested as me wanting to be alone. It wasn't about you." He cleared his throat and waited for her reply. It was only a half lie. She tucked her hair behind her ear and shrugged. He hoped all was forgiven, but he couldn't tell. Why were women so damn hard to read all the time?

"No worries. Let's just take it one day at a time." She smiled warmly. A genuine smile, not one she was putting on to



keep the peace. Her dimples were cute but he couldn't let himself get distracted by them if he was going to salvage this.

He felt better, but now he was desperate for Lucie to come out of her room and save him from his torment. However, as expected, in the few seconds before Faith began leading the way to the elevators, there was no sign of her coworker.

He was trying not to admire her figure from behind but he couldn't help it. She walked with confidence. Typically, women were nervous around him. It was never the other way around. This was the second time he'd ever felt this way in a woman's presence, and this time he hated it. Julien was attractive in more ways than one and he knew it, but he couldn't shake the nausea as he followed after her like a puppy with its tail between its legs.

Picking up the pace, it didn't take long before he was a few steps ahead of her. He made a beeline for the stairs and Faith followed him without hesitation. *The elevator is right there.* Just his luck. Six flights of conversation. Being a professional athlete, he couldn't exactly pretend to be too out of breath to talk. It was tempting, though. He was so busy mentally cursing the situation that he didn't have time to think of an excuse to double back and leg it back to his room. Sunglasses? On his head. Phone? In his hand. Room key? In his wallet. Wallet? Very much visible in his back pocket.

"Got to get my steps up!" She commented, falling into place beside him. Her hand brushed against his. He was glad he hadn't taken her hand yesterday when she held it out to him. At least right now she couldn't see him swallow the lump in his throat. He was sweating. Did the stairwells in this hotel have air-con?

"Me too. Need to keep my weight down for race week." He mumbled. He wasn't sure she'd heard him. Seasick might be the best way to describe how he was feeling.

Faith almost knocked into someone running down past them on the fourth floor and jumped. She laughed, further unsettling Julien. He should take that guy's lead and start running too.

“Didn’t see him at all. Is that a blindspot?” He turned around and she looked down at him from a few steps up. He noted that she was significantly shorter than his six foot three frame. Dainty. But she looked like she could pack a punch when necessary, much like Lucie.

“You should know, shouldn’t you? You drive.”

“I never passed my test. Didn’t even leave my home county until I moved to London.” She said.

Julien was intrigued. He had spent hours last night scrolling through her social media, and he had just assumed with that and her love of cars and racing that she drove. Maybe his other first impressions of her were slightly off, too.



They were near the entrance to the circuit now, having met up with the others after breakfast and deciding to walk down. Her and Julien had helped themselves to more than their fair share of pancakes, fresh fruit and croissants at the hotel’s breakfast buffet. Bad idea. She was so full, she felt like she might explode if she wasn’t careful. Julien was slightly further ahead now with Marco and Lucie, and Brett was talking Faith’s ear off.

“So are you and Moretz the best of pals yet?” He asked.

“We didn’t talk much at breakfast, not about anything personal anyway. I don’t know what to say to him, if I’m being totally honest. He seems very closed off.”

“Yeah that’s pretty standard for Jules, unfortunately. It’s the drinks thing that’s getting to me. He never skips drinks on the first night. Ever. Especially at his home race.”

“Am I that bad?” His apology had initially put her mind at ease, but then the lack of a proper conversation as they demolished the buffet had stressed her out all over again.

“Nah.” Brett flung his arm over her shoulder. “He’ll warm up soon. Promise.”

He gave her a little hug and tugged her through the gates. She'd been so busy thinking about Julien's salty attitude that she hadn't even registered the fact she had just stepped foot into one of the most famous race circuits in the world, for the second day in a row. In a *Revolution Racing* t-shirt with an IEC lanyard hanging around her neck, with her own ID badge.

"You look like a kid on Christmas morning." Lucie commented when they got to the garage.

The drivers headed straight for their engineers, who had already been there for hours with the mechanics. Jasper waved and went back to his conversation. The environment was lively and everywhere Faith looked, she saw something that caught her attention. Whether it was the boys practicing a driver change or the screen of stats, she was mesmerised.

"Do you ever get used to all the excitement?" She asked Lucie.

"Never. You wait til they unleash the spectators on us. It's a whole other world."

"Girls?" Gabriel burst into the garage in a sing-song voice, clapping his hands together when he saw the two of them sitting off to one side, observing the mechanics hard at work.

"Morning, Gabriel. What can we do for you?" Lucie asked.

"I just came to see how you're doing. Checking in on our new little friend." He said, smiling at Faith. He sat down in the empty chair next to them and promptly kicked over the full cup of steaming hot coffee at his feet.

Faith couldn't possibly be offended by this man, or his use of the term '*little friend*'. He was too sweet. A bumbling idiot, some might say, but clearly he was the best man for the job. Not many people would ever be capable of running a racing organisation.

The rest of the social media crew were beginning to show up at the hotel today and Lucie had already had texts asking when they were going to meet Faith. It felt strange being in charge of a group of people she'd never met in a job she was

new at, but with Lucie by her side she felt confident that it would all run smoothly.

“We’re having a meeting this afternoon, already booked out one of the press rooms for ourselves. Lucie and I are mapping everything out over lunch.” Faith informed him.

“We’re not having photographers at this one, we want our crew to have a more hands-on approach with the content. We’ll still use the professional images for promotional purposes but the day to day content will be captured by us. Faith has got all sorts up her sleeve for video content, especially for Revolution.”

“I’m putting all my trust in you two. I don’t have much idea about all this Tweeter and Instant Gram thing. Or Tickytock and all that other nonsense. You’re far younger and more culturally up-to-date than me!” Gabriel looked confused as he tried to recall the correct names for platforms.

Between them, they had already determined that Lucie would hold the more formal interviews as she had more experience of being at the races, while Faith would take the casual, friendly approach that a fan would want to experience for themselves. After all, she had been hired partially due to her fan status.

“We’ll email you our ideas by twelve-thirty, incase there’s anything you don’t like.” Faith smiled at him. He climbed out of the folding chair, which was a bit of a struggle since it was so low down, and saluted them before scurrying out of the garage again. As Gabriel passed the Revolution car, it started up and he jumped out of his skin, causing a few smirks from the mechanics.

While Lucie disappeared to replace the coffee that Gabriel had knocked over, Faith observed Julien in silence. He was getting into his racing suit and leaning in to talk to his engineer. Faith didn’t particularly care for a man in uniform until now. His white long sleeved top clung to his biceps, so even when the suit wasn’t done up to his neck she was still enjoying the view. The suit itself was black with white and red detailing, and there was something about the way he zipped it

up and ran his hand through his thick mane of hair that sent her heart rate soaring. *It's not the suit, Faith. It's just the man.*

Lucie wandered back into the main part of the garage, coffee in hand. She stopped by the car and said something to Julien, standing on her tiptoes to talk directly into his ear. He responded by placing his hand on the small of her back and leaning down to hear her better. Then he smiled. The second time Faith had seen him smile at anyone or anything. She felt a twinge of something, although she wasn't sure if it was jealousy.

There was nothing between Julien and Lucie, right? The rumours were nothing more than rumours. Lucie and Brett had more chemistry than Faith had ever seen in two people. No way. She would know if they were involved. Lucie would've warned her off him for that reason, not because he had layers. Screw the layers. She was getting more frustrated by the second and she hadn't even tried to approach him yet.

When Lucie caught her staring, she said a swift goodbye to the driver and headed over. She had one eyebrow raised. "I know what you're thinking, and you are wrong. I've known him since I was nineteen, he's just a friend. He's fair game."

"Fair game? No, no, no. I'm not going there." Faith was flustered and felt her cheeks flaming.

"But you're curious." Lucie winked, seeing right through her.

"I just think he's attractive. I can't help but stare, I'm human."

"Whatever you say, Jensen. Right, I'm going to take a walk down the pit lane and scout out any new season drama. You coming with me?"

It was at that moment that Julien tore away in the car, the roar of the engine startling her. Her eyes lit up as she watched him disappear down the pit lane and out onto the track. It sounded so different when you were actually there, rather than watching a livestream on a laptop with speakers that crackled with loud noises.

“Sorry. Yes, I’m coming!” She yelled above the noise. The other garages were coming to life now, each team wanting to squeeze in as much track time as possible before the first qualifying session.

“We made the right choice bringing you on board, I reckon.” Lucie beamed.

“Lucie Carolan, was that an Aussie accent I just heard?” Faith teased her. It had happened a few times in the last two days but that was *strong*. It seemed a certain someone was rubbing off on Lucie in more ways than she would ever admit.

“Oh for fu—Yep! Let’s go.”



The pit lane adventure had been eventful. Faith had now met the majority of the social media team and been introduced by Lucie as their big scary boss. One girl had looked genuinely fearful and Faith had never been so quick to reassure someone that she wasn’t going to rip anyone’s head off. Some of the younger staff had begun listing off their own ideas, and she had attempted to take a mental note of them. Everyone seemed to be on the same page.

What she hadn’t expected was for a lot of the drivers to know her name or recognise her face. Faith was popular on social media, but not to the extent that everyone who was someone knew her. When Lorenzo Garcia and Max Edwards had waved across the garage and shouted their greetings, she’d almost fainted.

Lucie had taken her for lunch in the hospitality tent where they’d sat with a couple of the mechanics, who soon scarpered when the girls started content planning. The mechanics were lucky, they pretty much always had helmets on so their faces weren’t going to be visible in photos and videos. Personally, Faith was relieved she’d remembered to pack her makeup for the sake of the vlogs. She didn’t like filters anymore.

Back in the garage after lunch, Faith was taking photos of the team hard at work. Julien was in a better mood and was actually allowing her to get up close with her camera. He had achieved good results in the free practice this morning which was a big weight off his shoulders, and he had, by some miracle, participated in a group selfie with Marco and Brett with minimal grumpiness. It had helped that it had been Marco's idea and not Faith's, but she wasn't knocking it.

He had even returned her phone to her personally and asked her to whiten his teeth slightly before posting it, as he was in talks with a teeth whitening company regarding sponsorship and brand deals. She couldn't quite believe her ears. Was he really taking social media seriously? Perhaps it was his publicist's influence. Even so, if he kept this level of professionalism up and put some effort into their personal relationship then she wouldn't have to fight him.

"Oh my god, Angel!" The peace and quiet everyone had been enjoying for the last ten minutes was interrupted by an almighty shriek at the back of the garage. Every person in there rolled their eyes and pretended not to notice the gorgeous creature who had walked into their workspace.

Faith turned around with a horrible feeling in the pit of her stomach. There she was, eyes sparkling, skin glowing. Teeth... almost blinding. Maybe she had helped Julien get that sponsorship he'd mentioned.

"Hi, Bea!" She quickly plastered on a fake smile and was almost suffocated by Bea's perfume. *Christ, that was a bit much.* Her friend gave the kind of hugs that to someone a few inches shorter than her were, how do you say it politely... smothering. She for one did not appreciate having hair in her mouth, either.

"Oh, darling, I am so happy to see you in my stomping ground! How have you *been?*" The emphasis on her words made her seem sickly sweet. Which she was.

"I've been g—" Faith began. She soon shut up when Bea hit her arm in excitement like she was swatting a bumble bee. That was Faith's part of their conversation over. Duly noted.

“Have you met Julien properly? Did you know he and I are super close? Julien! Come over here! We have so much to talk about, I have so many stories to tell you about Jules and I’s weekend trip to Monaco the other month.”

Julien, who had been innocently sitting in his chair eating an apple, promptly stood up and shook his head.

“He’s had a busy—” Faith started again.

“Julien! Come on, come give me a hug. I haven’t seen you in forever!” Just as quickly as Bea had shut Faith up, Julien was gone with Bea chasing after him in her heels. *Heels*. Of course she was wearing those in this environment.

Marco had been observing their reunion and came to Faith’s immediate rescue. See, Marco was like a puppy in all the best ways. He was loyal, soft and sweet. He was a people pleaser. Man’s best friend. Bea on the other hand, was yappy and desperate for attention. Labrador vs Chihuahua.

“What just happened?”

“Julien isn’t very tolerant of her these days. None of us are. It’s a little exhausting trying to keep up with her and her demands. We go out for drinks and she’s constantly requesting shots and asking who’s round it is. Never hers, might I add. At dinner there’s always something wrong with her food, she always has to be glued to a driver at any given point in the day. Doesn’t matter if it’s Jules, me, Brett, Lorenzo. Anyone. As long as they’re a driver and she can post selfies.”

“I was really hoping to see a little bit of the old her.” Faith couldn’t hide the disappointment.

“We don’t know that side of her, but maybe you can bring it out of her. Might do the girl some favours. And save our sanity, especially poor Julien’s.” He shrugged.

“Maybe...”

“That’s what we mean when we say it’s hard to find someone normal to date as a racing driver, by the way. Our world is filled with people exactly like her.” Marco grimaced.

“I don’t understand...” Faith replied.



“It is what it is.” He squeezed her arm and left her alone with her thoughts. She wondered what was going on in Julien’s trailer right now. Did she even want to know?

It wasn’t her ex best friend’s drastic change in behaviour that Faith didn’t understand. That made total sense to her, she’d come to accept it over time. People grew apart, and people were easily influenced by a lot of things. Lifestyle changes being one of them. That was okay. The question playing on her mind, was what in the world was Julien Moretz doing spending the weekend in Monaco with Beatrix Miller?

## CHAPTER 7

AT DINNER THAT NIGHT, JULIEN SAT DOWN WITH AN IRRITATED sigh. Conveniently, the seat he'd settled in had been opposite Faith. It was the only one available, almost as if it had been orchestrated so he had no choice but to engage in non-work related conversation with her. His jaw was tightly clenched but he showed no other visible signs of emotion. He was scarily good at concealing things.

“What happened?” Lucie asked him and promptly plonked her glass of champagne in front of him. He necked it. Okay, maybe he wasn't so good at concealing things.

“Bea happened.” He looked at Faith and she saw a flicker of regret in his eyes. She did not like where this was going at all.

“She got her claws into you again, then?” Lucie raised an eyebrow disapprovingly.

“Well you saw her storm out of the trailer earlier this afternoon, right? After she ditched Faith to chase me down?”

“We couldn't miss it.” Faith replied. If the conversation didn't have such a serious tone, she'd have laughed at the memory.

The girls had been heading to their social media meeting with Brett and Marco in tow as their props when they'd spotted her. The doors to the trailers were kept open until the day fans were allowed into the circuit, but Revolution's had been closed. Bea had slammed it open with so much force it flew all the way back and banged against the side of the trailer,

and she stomped down the steps. Yes, stomped. The metal rattled.

“That was a result of me telling her I didn’t want anything to do with her. So obviously when I came back to the hotel to shower, I was expecting my room to be empty. Do not ask me how she got in there, but there she was. Sitting on my bed, feigning total innocence.” He frowned. Faith desperately fought the urge to make an unnecessarily bitchy comment.

“Jules, please tell me you didn’t sleep with her again...” Brett pleaded.

“I don’t know why, but yeah. I did.”

“Julien! Bloody hell.” Lucie put her head in her hands. At any other moment, Faith would’ve teased her for the Australian accent again but she didn’t have it in her right now. This shouldn’t be bothering her as much as it was.

“It was the last time!” Julien defended.

“Mate, you say that every time. I bet everyone on the grid says that every time.” Brett hit back.

“I mean it, and I’ll be telling her that.” He held Faith’s eyes again, this time like he was speaking directly to her.

“Be careful how you approach that one, she could easily turn on you. Like she did with Lorenzo.” Marco added. Oh great, so she’d got to Lorenzo Garcia too, had she? Was she just going for anyone she knew would piss Faith off? Not that she’d have known sleeping with Julien would get to her. Faith hadn’t known either until right this very second.

“I just keep going back to her because she knows I have no interest in being tied down and nor does she. At least, when we first started this she said she didn’t. She’s getting clingy now.”

“She said she doesn’t want to be tied down? Biggest lie she’s ever told. Bea *lives* for the whole traditional fairytale romance crap. She’s spent her whole life waiting for the perfect guy to pop the question.” Faith scoffed, a sense of bitterness rising in her chest. Judging by the way Lucie’s jaw

dropped, she had added something of value to this whole Jules and Bea saga.

But Julien didn't want to settle down? That should be Faith's queue to kill the butterflies that had been residing in her stomach from the moment he'd stepped out of his Mustang. Instead, it sent them wild. She couldn't focus on much else.

"I'm sorry, Faith." Julien reached across the table and squeezed her hand. That was *weird*. And nice. Comforting. "I know she's your friend, I don't mean to speak so badly of her. She's just... a lot. I'm sure you know better than anyone."

"Just because we played such a big role in each other's lives, it doesn't mean we're friends. It's okay." She smiled reassuringly at him, trying to pull herself together after their physical contact.

"Brett told me you guys aren't close anymore. I have to say, I can't imagine you being friends with someone like her." He said.

"Well, you can imagine my surprise when I found out she recommended me for this job. It came out of nowhere, truly."

"She recommended you?" Brett looked confused, his thick brows pulled together in a deep frown.

"Are you sure about that?" Lucie added.

"Why would... She said she did. When I told her Gabriel had got in touch." Faith felt her eyes prick with tears. Surely Bea hadn't lied about something as big as that.

"Faith, she's never mentioned you. Even in multiple meetings about hiring someone for your role, she didn't bring your name up once. It was Lucie who said she'd seen your profile." Julien was speaking softly. Everyone else was in shock, Lucie especially.

"So she's full of shit." Faith said.

"Yeah. Lucie saw your name a lot in the comments, mentioned you as a candidate to Gabriel, and he did his own research. You get all the credit here. Not her."

“What he’s saying, is you’re a bad bitch. And Beatrix Miller is just... a bitch.” Lucie quipped, getting a laugh out of everyone. It wasn’t champagne talking, this was just Lucie in her prime.

“Yeah you’re a...you know. What Lucie said.” Julien blushed and hastily reached for his phone. The light coming from the screen hid the redness in his cheeks before anyone else caught it.

Faith couldn’t believe her friend was keeping up with the manipulation to such an extent and thinking nobody would figure it out. Any hopes she’d had for reconciliation had been dropped now, she didn’t want anything to do with her going forward. The past was in the past. If Bea dared to post photos of them together, she would have hell to pay. Life wasn’t a game. Their seven year friendship was not supposed to be a game.

“Does anyone want to split an appetiser with me? I really want bruschetta but I can’t handle it all on my own. The portion sizes in this place are crazy.” Faith swiftly changed topics.

“Me! Julien, switch seats.” Lucie stood up and waved him across to her seat with a menu. He did as told, albeit reluctantly.

As much as she loved Lucie, and it made perfect sense for her to sit opposite so they could share the food, she missed the newfound closeness she’d been sharing with Julien. She’d been looking forward to some one on one conversations over dinner but now he was sat closer to his teammates and anything said between them would become a whole table conversation.

“Faith?” Julien called over.

She blinked at him. “Sorry, what?”

“I just asked where your family is from.”

“Oh. Right, sorry.” She stammered. “I was born and raised in a little town in Cornwall, England. Mum is from there, Dad was from Australia but settled in Cornwall after Uni.”

“Big up Australia!” Brett cheered boisterously, earning looks of bewilderment mixed with disgust from the table next to theirs.

“Are you close with them?” He asked. Faith hated discussing her family. She knew she didn’t have the kind of upbringing a lot of people did, and she could never be sure how others would respond to her supposedly tragic backstory. She didn’t think it was tragic. It was just her life.

“No. I’m not. I never knew my Dad. I don’t know where he is, if I’m honest. Mum is...I don’t have anything to do with her.” She looked down at her hands and waited for him to take the hint.

“Enough said.” He smiled.

“What about you?” She knew the answer. Things like that were public information for most drivers and a quick internet search could reveal a lot. She just wanted him to open up.

“Mum is from Liege in Belgium, Dad is from Rust, Germany. I grew up between the two after their divorce and decided to settle here in Belgium in my early twenties.”

“You’re never even in the damn country, dude. Always off gallivanting around the world even on breaks. Where *do* you go?” Marco asked.

“He goes to Monaco for a three day sexscapade with Beatrix Miller, apparently.” Brett snorted, earning him a forceful shove in the ribs from his teammate.

Faith wished they would stop bringing her up, that Bea didn’t fit into this new world she was in. This job was supposed to be her dream. She’d known Bea would be a part of it somehow, but couldn’t that just be on the work side of things? Every big step she took in her life was connected to that girl and she wanted, for once, to have one thing that was just hers.



By the time they'd finished eating, it was late. They were the only people left in the restaurant, and Faith needed sleep. She had been told about every wild post-race celebration they'd had over the years in infinite detail. Lucie was immensely proud of the time she'd dive-bombed into a pool in Dubai and surfaced to a round of applause and a champagne toast in her honour. She hadn't revealed the fact that she had later smacked her head on a rock under the pool's waterfall and had to seek medical attention, but Marco made sure to remind everyone.

Julien had become increasingly at ease talking to Faith, which was a slight surprise. Where was the blunt, arrogant man she'd met? He had swapped seats with Lucie again when she'd got up to go to the bathroom and leaned over the table so he could be heard over Brett's obnoxiously loud laughter. She guessed he must be letting his hair grow out as a section of it kept falling over his eyes, no matter how often he repositioned it. She found herself staring on more than one occasion and he'd caught her each and every time, but she didn't shy away once.

"I'm heading up to bed. Anyone else?" Lucie stretched her arms above her head.

"Get me into those fancy cotton sheets ASAP. I need to lay horizontally." Faith agreed.

The bed sheets were the best thing about her hotel room and she wanted to make the most of them before returning to her cheap ones back home. Plus, tomorrow was press day, which meant an exceedingly early start. There was almost no point in going to sleep tonight. She didn't dare take the sleeping tablets she'd been prescribed last year.

"I'll walk up with you." Julien stood up and waited for Faith to leave the table ahead of him.

Lucie was giving Brett a goodnight hug and Julien and Marco exchanged an eye roll. They might be tired of the flirting with no follow through, but Faith was not. She was loving it. She wasn't loving having to physically drag a protesting Lucie towards the lobby, however.

The elevator was packed with stray team principals going up to their various floors, which meant that Julien and Faith were shoved into the corner by the buttons. Every time someone needed to get out, Lucie would move towards Faith who would then take a step closer to Julien. If that was even possible.

When they reached their floor, he let the girls out ahead of him and placed his hand on Faith's back. She almost yelped in surprise. This casual intimacy was very out of the blue. The hand squeeze at dinner had been mixed with an apology, but this new gesture was a little too normalised for her liking.

"Ugh, Faith we forgot to update the graphics on the team's channel. We need to do it now." Lucie groaned.

"And that's my queue to leave. Night, girls." Julien swiped his key against his door. Faith followed Lucie, dragging her feet.

While they waited for the hotel's WiFi to connect to Lucie's laptop, Faith took the opportunity to fling herself onto the king sized bed. As long as she didn't fall asleep, she'd be fine, but it was proving to be a difficult task.

"I miss sex." Lucie stated. Now was not the time to be having this conversation. Faith was shattered and her mind was on Julien.

"What about someone in the organisation? This place is crawling with guys, Luce. You're hardly a hideous beast."

"No way! I have a rule." Lucie looked appalled that she would make such an insane suggestion.

"What rule is that?"

"No shagging. I love that word. Shagging. I looked up loads of British phrases to use so that you feel more at home while we're traveling the world." She beamed. She was so proud of herself that Faith couldn't tell her how alien it sounded coming from someone with an American accent.

"Oh, is *that* why you use Australian phrases and accents half the time? So Brett also feels more *at home*?" Faith raised



her eyebrow and was soon smacked over the head with a pillow.

“Screw you! I don’t even realise I’m doing that. I can’t help it.”

“It’s okay, Luce. The accent is strong, I get it. Not as strong as Brett’s biceps though, right?” She smirked.

“Right!” Lucie agreed then her eyes went wide in horror. “Oh my god. I didn’t mean it! I swear, if you tell him...” Lucie blushed furiously and brushed her hair out of her face, setting the pillow back in its place on the bed.

“Your secret is safe with me, I promise. I’m not sure how much of a secret it is, though.”

“I appreciate it. And as a thank you, I promise I won’t tease you about your gigantic crush on Jules.”

“Oh, would you look at that! The upload is done.” Faith jumped up and bolted across the room.

“Goodnight, Jensen.” Lucie called.

“Night, Carolan.”



Julien entered his room to find Bea still there. She was sitting in bed in his spare robe, with chocolates and cookies from room service. She paused the TV when she saw him.

“I told you to leave earlier. The hell are you doing in here? It’s been hours.” He tossed his wallet onto the bedside table and sighed. “Get the fuck out, Bea.”

“I didn’t think you meant it, Jules. You’ve never kicked me out after sex before. Ever.” She pouted. It wasn’t cute.

“Things change. Out.” He started unbuttoning his shirt, which was an action she would no doubt try to twist to work in her favour. He wasn’t having it.

“Not until you give me a reason.” She crossed her arms, trying to draw attention to her chest.

“Bea, for God’s sake!” He exploded. “I do not want you in here. I do not want *you*. Go ahead and sleep with some other driver to get all the benefits of this life, but that guy isn’t me anymore. No more trips to Monaco, or Ibiza, or Barbados. No sex, no borrowing my cars. No designer brands or social media facades. Nothing. You’re not my problem.” He threw her clothes at her. Clothes he’d paid for, actually. He was well within his rights to keep hold of them out of spite.

“You’ve been acting so weird since Monaco, but you’ve outdone yourself this week. Fuck you, I don’t need you. I can do ten times better than you, Julien.” She flung the duvet back and took the robe off. Standing there in her lingerie, she paused for a second.

“That isn’t having the effect you think it is.” He scoffed. Any sane person would be long gone by now, but here she was. Although any sane person in his position would cave and let her stay. She was a real piece of work but he couldn’t deny the fact that her body was incredible.

“You need your head checked.” She walked out and slammed the door behind her, the walls shaking. He was stunned. She had gone out there, into the corridor of a fully booked hotel, in black lacy underwear. *Fuck it*. Like he said, not his problem.

As he was settling into bed a few minutes later and sweeping Bea’s chocolate wrappers onto the floor, he was grunting and muttering curse words under his breath. He didn’t do drama. He wanted a simple life, which was hard to achieve in his position, but he seemed to manage in every department except women. This race season appeared to be presenting him with a brand new selection of choices to make.

His phone buzzed with a notification. It was Faith, telling him she hoped he was okay. She’d heard the yelling and the slam of the door, probably felt it too, and was concerned. It made him feel things he didn’t want to feel. He texted back

that he was just dealing with the fallout from stupidly getting mixed up with Beatrix Miller, and locked his phone.

All Julien could think about was the girl in the room opposite and why the universe had thrown him such a sensational curveball. He didn't do romance. After Bea, he wasn't going to do casual. So what was he supposed to do with Faith Jensen?

## CHAPTER 8

THE SUNRISE ILLUMINATED THE ROOM IN A GOLDEN GLOW. Faith had left the blackout blind up last night so she woke up with the sun this morning. She laid there in a state of pure bliss for a few minutes until she reached for her phone. Her eyes nearly fell out of her skull. She was late for press day. She had a missed call and three texts from Lucie who had left for breakfast without her half an hour ago, which meant not only was Faith at risk of passing out by midday, but she had to show up at the track looking like an absolute wreck on her first day of official social media duties.

She hurried around her room, jumping into a pair of blue Mom jeans and shoving her trainers on her feet. A basic white cropped tee would have to do for today. The organisation had only provided her with two team shirts, and those needed to be saved for qualifying and race day.

Eyeing the mascara on the bathroom counter, she decided it was necessary. She had been blessed with long lashes but rarely went without it. That, a hydrating lip balm and a dab of concealer, and she was good to go. She grabbed her camera, leather backpack and laptop and made her exit, trapping her bag strap in the door in the process.

“Shit, not you too?” Julien was coming out of his room, angrily battling with the sleeves of his black leather jacket.

“Nice to see I’m not the only one who’s unorganised. Makes me feel a tiny bit better.” She laughed. They took off down the corridor side by side.

They mutually opted for the stairs again but on this occasion there was no time for chit chat. Faith did her best to keep up but Julien was a professional athlete and he worked out every single day. The only time you'd see Faith break out into a run was when she was trying to catch the tube.

By the time she was out of the hotel, Julien was making a break for the golf kart that was sitting out front. He gestured for her to get in.

“Uh, are we allowed to take this?” She asked. They were hurtling down the road at max speed. If she was fearing for her life at the hands of a racing driver, she didn't want to think about how she'd feel with Gabriel left to his own devices behind the wheel.

“We're just borrowing it. It belongs to the hotel, as long as we return it later we'll be fine.” He grinned at her and Faith couldn't help but smile too. He was loving this. Who would've thought hijacking a golf kart would be such a thrilling concept?

“Okay, but are we supposed to be driving it on the road?” She panicked. They hadn't taken the private road behind the hotel because the foot traffic would've been too heavy to reach high speeds. Their chosen route would probably only cut a minute or two off their journey, but it made a much bigger difference in their minds.

“Do you know what? I have absolutely no idea.” He replied.

Faith reached into her bag and dug around. She pulled out two fruit and nut cereal bars. Victory. She tore the wrapper on one and held it out to Julien.

“Eat this. You need something.” She said. He leaned his head forward and took a bite while she was still holding it, his own hands still on the wheel. At least he took golf kart safety semi-seriously, unlike their boss.

“Thanks.” He replied, mouth half full. “I'll send someone to get us breakfast when we get to the track. We can eat while we work.”

Each driver had an interview with a French media network first thing. Julien's slot began at seven thirty, and it was currently twenty five minutes past. Faith was supposed to be at the interview with him.

As they drove through the paddock, everyone stared, and she meant *everyone*. A few fans and VIPS were starting to gain access from today, so of course they had their eyes peeled for any driver sightings. So the staring might have been because of Julien being so popular, but it was more likely to be a result of a woman being by his side. She thanked God she had her sunglasses on and they were moving at speed. Julien brought the kart to a screeching halt outside the team's garage and they were greeted by Gabriel roaring with laughter at the sight of them.

"I knew you two would cause havoc. My spidey senses were tingling. Worse than Brett and Lucie!" He grinned as they jumped out.

"We're so sorry we're late. Where are the interviews taking place?" Faith asked.

"It's alright." Gabriel held his hands out, gesturing for them both to calm down. "Jasper sent Marco down there first with Lucie. He said to send Brett in next, also with Lucie."

"Okay, so I have time to relax." Julien heaved a sigh of relief.

"Are you sure you don't want me in for Brett's?" Faith didn't want Lucie to be left with all the work.

"We're sure! Jasper and I agree that there needs to be more focus on Julien initially. So, Lucie is snapping a few photos and videos of the others and then we want you to film some vlog footage with Jules, okay?" He looked at Faith for confirmation.

"Sounds great. I'll film the whole day today, might as well milk the weekend for content."

"Amazing! Fans don't usually get to see what goes on today in detail." Gabriel agreed.

“In that case, let’s go Jensen. Breakfast.” Julien waved good morning to Jasper, who was observing stats in the garage, and lightly tugged on Faith’s arm to lead her back down the paddock.

“Have fun you two!” Gabriel clasped his hands together in glee. He looked like a parent sending their child off to their first day of school.

The concept of taking time out of such a busy day to go and get breakfast together was wild to her. He was in a weird mood this morning, way too relaxed. Had ditching Bea been enough to spark such a drastic change? She doubted it. He had gone from avoiding her like the plague, to asking about her life back home and taking her for breakfast. It was odd.

“Where’s good to eat around here?” She asked.

“I have a surprise for you. It means going out to the fan zone, so I’m hoping the place I’m thinking of is already open. Should be.” He let go of her arm but picked up the pace. That was one thing that stressed her out about these drivers, they walked too fast for her little legs to keep up.

It took them a few minutes to reach their destination, and she was glad the temperature was beginning to rise. Indoor seating was not a thing in the fan areas, unless you counted tents. The area they’d come to had a few merchandise stores, but it was mostly food trucks. As soon as she spotted the waffle and crepes truck, she knew what they were here for.

“Please tell me my guess is right.” She said. She could smell them and it was making her mouth water.

“You couldn’t come to Belgium and not have waffles, could you? We don’t really eat them for breakfast, they’re more of a dessert but I’ll make an exception. We also have different types, like the Brussels waffle and the Liege waffle. This truck does the Brussels one, it’s bigger, more rectangular and sprinkled with icing sugar.”

“While it’s lovely to learn about the history of the Belgian waffle, I’m really hungry. Which toppings do you recommend?” She turned to look at him and he’d already

started heading over to place his order with the lady behind the counter.

“Why don’t we get one strawberries and cream and one Nutella, and share?” He suggested. She agreed and recalled the gigantic tubs of Nutella she’d seen at the airport. She’d have to treat herself to one of those one day.

“You’re not paying for mine!” She tried to swipe her card on the machine but he batted her hand out of the way.

“*Dank je.*” He said to the woman serving him, a smug look on his face having beat Faith to it. The woman laughed and went about constructing their orders.

“Julien.” She scowled.

“Faith.”

“I can pay my way.”

“You could, but I brought you here as my guest. Shut up moaning, they’re ready.” He reached out for the paper trays and handed her one along with the plastic cutlery.

“Thank you.” She said, her scowl gone when she caught sight of the melted chocolate and fresh fruit piled on top of her waffle.

They sat down at a picnic table in front of the food truck and Julien immediately stretched his legs out so they were on either side of her. She pretended not to notice and recorded a few shots of the food, where they were and of Julien. He didn’t clock the fact the camera was on him, which worked to her advantage. The more candid, the better.

Halfway through a conversation about Julien’s unexpected love of golden retrievers, they were approached by some younger fans who had been patiently waiting a few tables away for him to finish eating. He happily interrupted the breakfast to take some photos. Faith didn’t film the exchange out of respect for the girls’ privacy, but she noted how enthusiastic he was towards them. The youngest girl, who was around seven, was quiet as a mouse. Julien crouched down to speak directly to her, and signed her ticket. Their Dad shook his hand, and the group departed.



“We should head back.” He said.

“Oh, sure. Okay.” Faith replied.

She couldn't deny that she was disappointed to be going back so soon. Julien was starting to open up to her, albeit in small doses. However, she would take what he was offering considering she'd only known him for three days. Less than two and a half, if she was being specific. It was still progress.



The Revolution Racing garage was buzzing with activity. Their first, second and third rounds of press duties were done and the fourth had been rescheduled, which was allowing the team time to practice. Faith had busied herself with capturing video content for the team's channel, and Julien had gone out of his way to be on camera. At one point, he'd taken hold of it and gone to film himself and Marco telling the viewers what Brett was doing in the car. Faith was impressed, and she wasn't the only one. Lucie had raised an eyebrow of approval and the team boss, Jasper, had told the girls they were doing a great job.

Three of the social media crew members for other teams had come in to share their own progress with Faith, and it was all running smoothly. There was Daisy, who worked for Eden Racing and evidently loved the colour yellow, which was her team's colour. She had a yellow bandana in her hair, yellow nail varnish and white and yellow trainers. It was a little too bright for Faith's personal taste, but Daisy stood out for her enthusiasm, too.

Then there were Lucas and Ben who were in charge of socials for Havelin Racing. They were throwing ideas at Faith at an overwhelming speed, but she encouraged them all. Gabriel wanted creative content and that's exactly what he was going to get. Except for the video which involved Havelin's drivers going bungee jumping. She didn't think the team principals or sponsors would be particularly happy with that idea.

Faith and Lucie had asked everyone to really focus on using presets on photos and videos so feeds were cohesive. It was up to each duo whether they went for bright pops of colour and crisp contrasts or warm and neutral tones. Revolution opted to bring out the red of their team's livery and uniform. Faith was relieved that they only had to make slight tweaks and not play around with tints and filters too much, since they had a bigger workload than everyone else. Of course she paid special attention to whitening Julien's teeth, as requested.

The positive feedback pouring in from fans so far had been uplifting. The girls kept notifications off so their phones didn't freeze from the constant pop ups, but they kept checking in and replying to people. On Faith's own account, her followers were as excited as she was about her new adventure. They were loving the change of scenery, and they loved Lucie. They started following the team account and asking her questions, and she was doing her best to keep up. The only slight disappointment was the amount of comments regarding Bea and how they were excited to see her on Faith's profile again. She didn't tell them it wasn't happening.

Julien had just come back from a five minute break in the boys' trailer and was climbing into his racing suit again. Why couldn't he have done that before he came into the garage, and saved her from drooling? If she didn't know any better she'd have said it was a cruel trick from the universe.

"Close your trap." Lucie nudged her in the ribs with her elbow.

"What?"

"You're gawking at him like he's performing in Magic Mike XXL."

"I am not!" She protested.

It was no use, Lucie could see right through her. She just hoped everyone else was oblivious. She would never live it down if Brett called her out and teased her in front of everyone.

“I can relate. Most of us can. I’m surprised Daisy even came in earlier. Julien passed her a plate at the buffet in Singapore last season and I thought she was going to cry. Ben had a similar reaction when he handed him a beer once, too.”

“Faith!” Marco called across the garage.

“What’s up?”

“Pass me the camera! I want to film my view of the cockpit, give a little tour.” He said. She walked over to the car and passed it to him. He struggled to press the record button with his gloves on, so she came to his rescue.

“You’re all set.” She said.

“Can you put an overlay on it? Have it say *De Luca Cam* at the top of the screen?” He grinned at her and Brett and Julien laughed behind them. Poor guy. In his defence, it was a good idea.

“Your wish is my command. Boys? You want the same?” She turned to the others.

“Oh, go on then.” Brett replied.

Glad that she’d got them to agree to it despite their initial judgement, she headed back to Lucie who was now sat in a folding chair with her phone plugged into a portable charger.

“They really are like overgrown kids, aren’t they?” Faith laughed. She felt more like a babysitter half the time, and that would no doubt become more true as time went on.

“It’s still early days, you’ve seen nothing yet. I truly don’t know how I’ve survived in this job for so long.” Lucie shook her head in exasperation but she couldn’t hide her smile. She adored those boys more than anyone, and Faith was already starting to see why.

Brett and Marco had taken Faith under their wing from the first moment they’d met her in the hotel on her first day, and had treated her like she was one of them. She felt as safe within this team as she had when she had first met Bea, and that was enough for her to know that taking this job was the

best decision she'd made since leaving her hometown. It might even top it.

Then there was Lucie. Where had this girl been all these years? In three days, Lucie had secured her place as a permanent fixture in Faith's life. She couldn't imagine going home and leaving everyone behind, but she knew it was inevitable at some point. She just hoped that this trial week would be enough for Gabriel and the executives to give her a long term contract. One season could easily lead to two, then three, four and beyond.

Faith scrolled through her camera roll on a mission to find a photo for her personal account. She didn't want that account to be all about the work side of things, that wouldn't be appealing to the majority of her followers. Her own content needed to focus on her new friendships and the places this new life took her to. The foods she tried, the cultures she learned about and the memories she was creating. She found a few photos of Julien proudly taking a bite of a strawberry at breakfast this morning and whacked a filter on it. *Perfect*.

"Why are you smiling like that?" Lucie gave her a weird look.

"Can't a girl just smile?" She replied.

"She can." Lucie nodded and pulled Faith close to her side, squeezing her tight. She was not used to this kind of affection in the slightest and it was making her eyes water.

"Alright Mrs Moretz?" Brett strolled over with a huge smirk on his face. The girls frowned at him.

"What are you talking about?" Lucie asked.

"The photo Faith just posted." Brett said.

"Of Julien eating the strawberry?" Faith asked.

"Yeah. You two are adorable, aren't ya? Looks like you were on a cute little breakfast date. Fans will love it." He teased.

"It wasn't— oh God, what have I done?" She put her hand over her mouth, utterly mortified. Was Brett just trying to wind

her up or were people genuinely going to think it was a date? People would use their common sense, right? She barely knew him. The rest of the world would know that.

“Don’t stress! It’s okay. Post one of you and Marco later, balance it out. Any comments that pop up will all seem irrelevant.” Lucie spoke with an air of confidence but her facial expression begged to differ.

“Why do you look like that?” Faith pushed.

“Julien might freak out...” Brett said.

“That’s the last thing I want! I can’t delete it, can I? That will look even worse. Should I edit the caption with a disclaimer?”

“Faith, leave it. It’s fine. It’s just a photo, and as you fill your feed up with content it will take the attention away from solo driver photos. I post them all the time, it’s just that this whole thing is new to your followers.” Lucie held her hand out to her and she took it, traipsing after her.

“Where are we going?” Faith asked.

“I’m taking you to get food, and you’re going to take a photo of me, post it on your personal account, and caption it *‘lunch date.’*”

Brett patted her on the back in a show of solidarity as the girls departed the garage. Faith took some deep breaths when they passed Julien and searched his face for any sign of anger towards her. Instead, she got a show-stopping smile. If his own best friend thought he was going to panic, then there was no way he had seen the post yet. The man was completely oblivious. There was no other explanation for it.

## CHAPTER 9

CROWDS WERE THE ONLY DOWNSIDE TO THE RACE WEEKEND that Faith had discovered so far. It was qualifying which was day five out of seven, and today was the first day of autograph sessions and fan pit walks. Tomorrow, on race day, there would be an autograph session combined with a pit walk at eight o'clock in the morning, but today was just a pit walk. It meant that for now, Faith wouldn't have to actively interact with thousands of fans before her coffee had kicked in, and she could just stand back and capture content for the team accounts from a distance.

It was one o'clock, and she was frantically trying to get back from her lunch trip to the hospitality tent. All she'd had time for was a sandwich but with the way she was having to fight through people, she could've done with something more substantial.

A group of middle aged men noticed the IEC lanyard around her neck and yelled at the people around them to let her through. She was over halfway down the pit lane now and she could see the sign above the garage with Julien's, Marco's and Brett's names and photos, but she wasn't tall enough to work out exactly how many fans she had to battle her way past.

When she reached the back of the crowd for Revolution's garage, someone tugged on Faith's arm. It was Bea, camera in hand.

"Hey! How are you doing?" Bea asked.

“I’m great, thanks for asking.” Faith hoped she could hear the sarcasm dripping from her tone. This was the last situation she wanted to be in.

“I’m so glad. You might want to be careful, though.” Bea said. If Faith could slap that smirk off her face, she would. However, she was not into physical violence. She would continue to take the moral high ground.

“With what?” She smiled, feigning politeness.

“What you post about Jules. He’s a closed book.” Bea whispered loud enough for Faith to hear over the noise, as if she was revealing some big secret that only she knew.

“I’m aware. Now if you don’t mind, I’ve got a job to do.” Faith marched through the gathering of fans head on, desperate to get out of that conversation. As if she didn’t already know how Julien was from what the team had told her, and what she’d witnessed herself. It was her job to know. Just as she knew Brett was the one who carried the group with his humour, and Marco was the sweet and knowledgable one.

After what seemed like a lifetime, she reached the front of the crowd and was able to shuffle down the side of the barriers. Lucie was laughing at her as she attempted to squeeze behind their security guard.

“Oops! Sorry, Faith! Come on through.” Eduardo let her past and the big, scary facade that came with the sunglasses and muscles diminished when he realised it was her.

“Why did you go that way, you wombat!” Brett yelled out as she got through, earning laughs from the group he was talking to.

“Yeah, why did you? Why not go through the paddock like any sane human being?” Lucie questioned.

“I wanted to get a feel for the atmosphere with it being my first time here! I’m regretting it now. I’m pretty sure I broke a rib.” She said, placing a hand on her side.

“The crowds will be twice as horrendous tomorrow, poor Eduardo is gonna have his work cut out for him keeping everyone back. Definitely don’t go the same way.”

“I’ve seen it on social media. I will be staying safely on this side of the autograph table, thank you very much.” She replied.

She used to sit at her kitchen counter and watch the live videos of the autograph sessions, and her heart would ache because she wanted to be a part of it so badly. She always had hope that she would attend a race, but never in a million years would she have predicted being in the position she was in now.

Faith snapped a few photos and videos of the fans admiring the cars, then scheduled some posts. Brett being there had been a stroke of luck, since the drivers weren’t usually in the garage at the time of the pit walks unless they were in the middle of something. That was their one chance to take a break, hence the decision to keep the autograph session as a separate event on qualifying days. Having got enough content, she walked through the garage and out to the drivers’ trailer. She wanted to talk to Brett about getting a VIP pass for race day for the fans he’d been speaking to just now. She knocked on the door and entered, but Julien was the only one in there. He was on the sofa, zoned out.

“You okay?” She asked, hovering in the doorway.

“I don’t know, you tell me.” He snapped.

“Excuse me?” She knew exactly what was coming but she still wasn’t prepared for his wrath.

“You want to take a photo of this moment? Me sitting here on the sofa. Nobody else around. Which emoji are you going to put in the caption? A heart, flowers?” He sat up, staring her down. She shrunk back in fear and it was only then that his expression softened a little.

“I only put a strawberry...” She whispered.

“Faith, it looked like a special intimate moment just between the two of us. I have people in my life outside of this industry who are going to see that and demand answers from me.” He placed his head in his hands and she kept a firm grip on the door handle.



“I know how it looks, but it *was* just the two of us. I’d have posted whoever I was with, it’s my job. I’m sorry, Julien. I know you’re not used to this, but you just happened to be the first solo male I uploaded a photo of. It seems like a big deal now but in less than twenty four hours you’ll blend in with Marco, Brett, your engineers and mechanics.” She was fighting to keep him calm but she knew he was going to shut down again.

“No more photos or videos of just you and I, okay?” He snapped.

“No, not okay. Julien, it is part of my job. I have to document everything, the race preparation and the races and everything in between. There will be moments where yes, it is just you and I hanging out whether it’s socially or otherwise. I am simply doing what I was hired to do, nothing less and nothing more. You don’t get to be an exception.” She could feel her own anger brewing.

How could he possibly expect to pull this off, especially when the IEC were drastically changing their approach to content? Gabriel and the execs wanted multiple vlog-style videos for each race, and for Faith, Lucie and the rest of the crew to get up close and personal with their respective teams. If Julien was going to have a seat next season, he had to step it up. The sponsors were watching them closer than ever.

“Get out.” He was refusing to look at her and her temper was getting the best of her. She couldn’t fathom how he was being so obnoxious.

Yanking the door to the trailer open with force and slamming it behind her, just as Bea had done the day before, Faith jumped when she literally ran into Brett at the bottom of the steps. Her eyes were so blurry with tears she couldn’t even see two feet in front of her.

“Hey! What’s going on?” He put his hands out to stop her and wrapped his arms round her.

“Sorry, I know this is really unprofessional. I’m just so frustrated.” Faith took a few deep breaths and tried to gather

her thoughts. She didn't want to say too much to the wrong person, but Brett felt like someone she could trust.

“Julien?” He asked.

“He's so arrogant! He needs to pull his weight, social media involvement is part of his contract. Speaking of contracts, if he doesn't buck his ideas up, I won't be getting one.” She sighed.

“Give him time, Faith. You're gonna get the contract for the season and with each day and each race week that passes he'll open up more and more.” Brett assured.

“What makes you so sure?” She questioned. His stone-cold reaction to her when she'd first arrived didn't give her much hope that he would change. Was it her? Had she personally offended him? No, she couldn't have done that before even meeting him. They'd been strangers.

“He has way more going on behind the scenes than anyone realises. Just trust me, he's not a bad guy.” He said.

That was the thing, she did trust Brett. Lucie, too. There was no way Lucie would be on such good terms with Julien if he was as awful as he was showing himself to be right now. The question was, how long would it be until she saw the same Julien Moretz everyone else did?



Julien had singlehandedly managed to ruin Faith's entire Spa race week experience, and it was killing him. He didn't know what had come over him this week. One minute he was keeping his emotions in check and going about his day perfectly fine, the next he was breaking down and taking it all out on her. The truth was, Faith had done absolutely nothing wrong. It was all on him. If he didn't want that kind of content being broadcast to the world, he shouldn't have taken her for breakfast. Now he was going to have to pull a similar move to gain her trust again. It was a vicious cycle, however he had no

choice but to repeat it for the sake of Faith and the rest of the team.

It was different with Lucie. Everyone knew the deal with them, from fans and followers to family. Lucie was just Lucie. But Faith? Nobody here or in his life outside of work knew her yet, nor did Julien himself. He wanted to know her and he wanted to let her in, but it was more complicated than she could ever understand. She had a hold on him that she was blissfully unaware of. Every time he saw her, all sense of rationality was gone. That reaction either worked in Faith's favour or it worked against her in a way that Julien was ultimately ashamed of, and unfortunately he was never sure which outcome it would be until it was happening and he could do nothing to stop it.

Unless Julien's perception of human emotion was wildly off-kilter, Faith was upset. He couldn't blame her given the way he'd exploded before. When she turned to watch him walk in, her eyes were slightly puffy. She looked away fast but it was too late.

Bea flounced into the garage in the red bottomed heels he had got her for her birthday last year, and he cursed. This was so far from what Faith needed right now. Her ex best friend was a real piece of work. She was cold and calculating, but something told Julien that Faith would look beyond it all in favour of their history. He watched as Bea headed straight for her and started babbling utter nonsense about the post race party and what she was going to wear. If only he could uninvite her and watch her crumble into a million little pieces. He wasn't a cruel person, but someone needed to put her in her place.

"Dude focus, you can fix that problem some other time." Brett clicked his fingers in front of his face, bringing him back to the task at hand. He was clutching his helmet, not realising just how tightly until he looked down and noticed his knuckles were white.

"Someone needs to say something, and there's no point saying anything to Faith. She's too good for her, Brett. You know it as well as I do." He said.

“Jules, getting in the middle of their friendship is not the way to go. If we want to support Faith, we have to let her make her own decisions. You know Bea will manipulate the situation if you try to boot her out of her best friend’s life, and it won’t end well for you or for Faith.” Brett was right, but that didn’t stop Julien clenching his jaw until it ached.

He spent the next few minutes trying his absolute hardest to listen to what Brett was saying about the best approach he’d discovered to turn one, but his head wasn’t in the game. They had good competition out there today and Julien couldn’t have Faith in his head the whole time he was in the car. He needed to get a word in with Bea.

Out of the corner of his eye, a camera flash went off and startled him. He whipped his head round and saw Bea with her hefty DSLR aimed right at him. Enough was enough.

“Can we talk?” He snapped.

“Anything for you, Jules.” Bea replied. Julien’s vision was zeroed in on Faith.

There was something about her that told him he needed to do everything he could to protect her, but he had yet to work out if that stopped at removing Bea from her life. He kept a firm grip on her freshly fake-tanned arm as they came to a stop at the back of the garage. He didn’t care who overheard them, as long as Faith wasn’t in earshot.

“Stay the hell away from her.” He said.

“Why would I do that?” She laughed.

“I know you better than you think I do, Bea. I’m not going to let you manipulate her anymore. She has people on this team who care about her million times more than you claim to, so you can come after me if you want but I am telling you now that she is not a pawn in your childish little games anymore.”

“Screw you, Julien.” Bea hissed.

He felt her yank her arm out of his grip before she stormed off into the paddock and grimaced. He hadn’t meant to keep hold of her while he spoke, and was very aware that it could come back to bite him when she played her next card.

Whatever, it was done. He'd saved the day, or so he hoped. He looked through to the garage and saw Faith laughing with Lucie and the boys. That smile was what he was trying to keep on her face all the time. Every time Bea was around, it disappeared in an instant.

Julien began walking back in to join them, but Jasper caught him. "Sorry, Jasper. Didn't see you there." He said.

"You look troubled, Moretz. Everything okay?" Jasper asked. He asked that question at every race, but this time he had a look on his face that told him he knew there was something else on his mind. Julien typically kept his personal life entirely separate from his work life, but the gorgeous blonde girl a few feet away was making it an impossible task.

"Just struggling a little more than normal with adjusting." Julien said.

"Ah, you can go home again soon. Only a few more days!" Jasper was beaming but he couldn't quite match his enthusiasm.

Julien wanted to be at home more than anything, he always did, but he wouldn't be able to settle there either until he got his head straight, and he couldn't get his head straight if he kept pushing his emotions down.



Faith felt a rush of adrenaline as Julien was preparing for the qualifying session. He was a nervous wreck but the team was so busy analysing statistics and working on the car that they weren't paying him much attention. He had barely uttered a word since his conversation with Bea, and as much as she wanted to ask him about it, she didn't know if she'd like the answer. She ideally wanted an apology from him, but Brett's reassurance of his good nature made her believe there truly were bigger things going on that were none of her business. She had to continue trying to work on their friendship and allow him the benefit of the doubt. It would either work, or it

wouldn't. Either way, Julien was no longer the only one of them with walls up.

He was sat on his own at the back of the garage, visibly sulking. She wasn't the best person to approach him in this state considering how angry he was with her, but it was worth a shot. Swallowing the lump in her throat, she sat down next to him. He glanced at her with his eyebrows raised in surprise. She had half a mind to jump right back up and scurry away to safety again but one of them needed to get over their tiff and Faith got the impression that he was even more stubborn than she was.

"Can I do anything to help? Are there any rituals you do before you get in the car, or maybe I can get you a bottle of water?" She asked. She was shaking ever so slightly, so she sat on her hands.

"No, I'm okay..." He insisted on holding her gaze again, his expression unreadable but anything but blank.

Faith broke their eye contact and stood up reluctantly, clearly not getting anything out of him. At least he hadn't been blunt. "I'll leave you to it then." She said, offering a weak smile.

"Faith," He spoke as she took a step away from him, "Thank you for asking." He still didn't smile, but it felt like he meant it.

"You're welcome."

Five minutes later, the television cameras were outside their garage and Julien was patiently waiting in the car for the team to give him the go-ahead. He was given the signal to go out on track, and Faith eagerly watched him go on the TV screens. With Revolution being such a prestigious team, the cameras tracked the car round a large portion of the circuit. All eyes were on Jules. The entire team's trust was in him to get a good time and put them at the front of the grid for tomorrow's race.

Marco and Brett were gathered around the screens with Jasper, who looked more relaxed than one might expect for a

team principal. He had been doing this job for a long time, and Faith imagined he must do a lot of the relaxation and focus rituals Marco had told her about.

Julien was currently making the fastest time, and her and Lucie were capturing footage of everyone's reactions. He was smashing it. Marco gave Faith his headphones so she could hear the team radio, which only made the whole experience more real. This was the kind of access most motorsport enthusiasts would never get and she was embracing it.

When he returned with the pole position secured, the team was in high spirits. He high-fived and hugged anyone he came into contact with, the girls filming it all. Faith wasn't expecting a similar exchange, but Julien stopped right in front of her and took his helmet off, grinning widely at her. She stopped recording and lowered her arm so her camera was no longer aimed at him. Was she about to get an apology?

“That one was for you, Jensen. Welcome to Revolution.”

## CHAPTER 10

FAITH HAD BEEN SITTING IN THE RESTAURANT WITH HER laptop, staring at the spread of fresh fruit, cereals, and pastries, for a ridiculous amount of time. She felt too nauseous to eat anything, but she knew she'd regret it in two hours' time. It was five o'clock in the morning and she was the first member of the team who was up and ready. The red on her team shirt matched the nail polish she was wearing and her hair was beach waved to perfection. She had done a full face of makeup today, highlight and all, since she'd had time to kill. There was no need to be down here yet, but she had nothing left to fuss over and sitting in the hotel room was suffocating. Faith's mind kept drifting to every little thing that could possibly go wrong.

Today was race day which meant she had to bring her A-game if she wanted to be given a contract for the rest of the season. She was pretty sure she had it in the bag based on Gabriel's feedback and the fans' interactions online, but she wouldn't believe it until she was signing it.

Julien joined her at ten past five, walking into the restaurant all bleary eyed and dopey. She laughed at him and he responded with a disapproving scowl.

"What on earth are you doing awake?"

"I couldn't sleep." She shrugged, not wanting to confess that she'd actually only slept for three hours. He didn't respond, but sat down opposite her. As he yawned and stretched his legs out under the table, they brushed against



hers. There was very minimal contact, but enough that her eyes immediately darted to his. He didn't move.

They sat in silence for another twenty minutes until members of the team slowly trickled in, helping themselves to food. Once it was all in front of her, Faith realised how hungry she was. Julien was texting furiously. He'd hardly spoken to Marco or Brett other than muttering a *'hello'*, so she placed a muffin in front of him. He swiped it as though he was afraid it might disappear and took a bite, nodding in approval.

"Thanks." He mumbled, mid-mouthful. While the team chatted amongst themselves, he didn't look up once. He was still glued to his phone, oblivious to the world around him.

Faith was uploading yesterday's vlog to the channel but because she was just sat waiting for the progress bar to move, her mind was focused on the feeling of Julien's leg on hers. She wondered if he would reposition if she moved, so she didn't dare so much as flinch. She wished her brain would normalise physical contact with him the way it did with the other drivers, but so far every slight touch sent her pulse racing.

Her saviour came in the form of Lucie, who rushed into the restaurant at five forty-five and started dishing out hugs to the whole table. She came up behind Julien and wrapped her arms around his shoulders, kissing him playfully on the cheek. Faith was thankful when he sat up straight and his leg was no longer resting against hers, but a green eyed monster was lurking. She couldn't tear her eyes away. Lucie noticed and swiftly skirted round to Faith's side of the table to sit by her. She passed her a huge bottle of water which, frankly, was big enough to knock someone out.

"You're gonna need that today." She said.

"Thanks, Luce." Faith smiled appreciatively. She had been warned that they wouldn't get much chance for a break today.

They needed to stay glued to the drivers, and they would no doubt be sending other people on errands for them. She wasn't feeling great about needing to be so close to Julien at all times, given how snappy he got when he was in the zone.

When most of their food had been cleared from the table, the team started getting up and the girls followed suit, already clutching their cameras. As she was solely responsibly for the *YouTube* channel, Faith had only brought a small vlogging camera with her which made a refreshing change from lugging a huge DSLR around like she used to in London.

“Guys, we’ll meet you down there. We’re going to walk.” Lucie told the team. They said their goodbyes in the car park and the drivers and their engineers got in golf karts. At least these ones weren’t being hijacked and illegally driven.

“I’m so tired.” Faith sighed.

“Me too.” Lucie sighed. “You might have to be strategic and find time to nap. Good luck, though. The boys are lucky, during the race they can nap any time they’re not in the car. We don’t have the same advantage.” She said.

“I’m sure I’ll survive, the adrenaline will keep me awake.”

“I’m assuming Jules is still hosting everyone tonight for post-race celebrations, he hasn’t said otherwise. So, prepare yourself.”

“Really? By the time the race finishes and everyone leaves the circuit, won’t it be really late?” Faith asked. The race wouldn’t be over until six and then everyone needed to get ready, plus Julien lived an hour away. Was his house even set up?

“Julien’s parties don’t start until eleven. We’ll have loads of time!” Lucie replied.

“Eleven?!” She would have sat this one out if it wasn’t for the fact it was her first. Then there was the fact that it was her team hosting it. She couldn’t abandon this for a nap.

“We always go out for dinner first, but I might skip it to get ready and just grab something when we get to his place.”

“God, I feel so old.” Faith groaned.

“You’ll get used to it, sunshine!” Lucie patted her on the back.



The girls walked into absolute mayhem. Their social media crew were rushing around creating content, drivers were zipping into the paddock on mopeds and narrowly avoiding the crowds, and camera crews were darting back and forth with heavy equipment. Faith dodged Jasper marching into the garage on a mission, and stood blinking like a deer caught in headlights.

“Sorry, running late!” Jasper yelled.

“On that note, I’m going to grab that man a coffee and get started on posting. I think Gabriel has a surprise for you, he should be here soon!” Lucie said.

“Faith!” Right on queue, Gabriel came running over. He looked like he’d just done a marathon with how worn out he was, and Faith was incapable of concealing her amusement as he put his hands on his knees and panted like a dog.

“Good morning, Gabriel. What can I do for you?” She asked.

“Jasper and I have arranged something. It’s waiting for you in the trailer.” He gestured at it and then he was gone.

She climbed the steps and pulled the door open slowly, peering around. It was empty. She stepped in further and closed the door behind her, the blinds rattling against the tiny little window. Hanging up directly in front of her was a racing suit with a note attached. *‘We wanted you to feel like a real part of the team, so you and Lucie both have a suit for race day - Team RR x’*

Faith tried not to let the tears fall. This was the final piece of the puzzle in making her first race the perfect experience, and she knew she was in the right place. This job was hers and she wouldn’t let it fall from her grip without a fight. Julien’s reluctance to share everything he did in a race week was a minor inconvenience, but that’s all it was. An inconvenience. Not a death sentence for Faith’s career.

She stripped down to her underwear, a black lace ensemble that although hidden, gave her a confidence boost. Matching underwear was one thing that always made her feel put together. T-shirt bras were a thing of the past in Faith's world.

"Ahem." There was a cough behind her.

Faith swung around and saw a half-naked man emerging from the bathroom. Julien. In a white towel. Rock hard abs on full display, water droplets falling from his blonde hair. There might as well have been steam coming from behind him like that iconic shot of Mark Sloan in *Grey's Anatomy*. She blushed but didn't make an effort to cover herself up. Neither did he.

"I'm so sorry, I didn't think anyone else was in here." She said.

"It's fine." He replied. He edged closer to her and she tried to control her breathing, hoping he couldn't hear her calming technique. This man's body was ridiculous, which should be expected for an athlete but so far nothing about Julien had been predictable so Faith had every right to be stunned into silence. Why on earth had he never done a magazine shoot with this physique? She knew for a fact Brett had done one a couple of years ago. Not that she would admit to having seen it.

"I'll get out of your hair." The words fell out of her mouth in a rush and she stumbled over them.

"I said it's fine." Julien placed one hand on the curve of her waist. Their eyes locked and he glanced down at her lips for a split second, his entire body against hers. There was nowhere for her to go and she felt his hand squeeze her body as if he was trying to gain some control over himself but in the next moment, his mouth was on her neck. He pushed his hips into her, only the thin material of his towel and her lace underwear separating them. She could feel all of him and the desire pooled between her legs as his tongue ran along the sensitive skin of her collarbone. Faith let out a whimper, desperate for him to touch her in other places, but then he reached past her into the closet and pulled out his own race suit.

The interruption brought her back to reality. This trailer was far too small. She was feeling claustrophobic. And *hot*. Did the windows open? Faith wrapped her arms around herself. It didn't do much considering she was wearing a *thong* and his dick had just been pressed right up against her. That was it, granny underwear was essential in the future. High waisted and all.

Looking very calm and controlled, Julien turned around while Faith jumped into the suit. It was a snug fit, but it was comfortable. Plus, she felt ten times cooler than she probably looked. She did a subtle check over her shoulder and saw that Julien was fully dressed too but had his back turned. She thanked the heavens that she hadn't witnessed him whip off his towel, or something else might have been occurring in this metal box.

"I'm decent. You can look." She mumbled.

"Sorry about that, I completely forgot they were sending you in here. It's usually just the boys. Does your suit fit okay? It looks good." Was he not going to address what he'd just done?

"I'll make sure I knock in future." She said. That got a smirk out of him and he walked past her and took a seat on the sofa.

"You can stay in here if you want, we've got about an hour until the autograph session." He patted the spot next to him and leaned back, putting his feet on the coffee table.

Faith climbed over his lower legs and sat on his right, copying his position. What she really wanted to do was sit totally upright and not move a muscle, but it was better to play off how uneasy she felt around him. She couldn't stop replaying the image of his bare chest in her mind. He had light tan lines where his t-shirt sleeves would've ended, and she tried to focus on that memory rather than his perfectly sculpted abs. She suddenly felt very conscious of her body. She was slim but she had curves, and she usually embraced them and was proud of them but over the years she had compared herself to Bea, and considering he'd been sleeping with her ex

best friend, it wasn't doing much for her confidence. Julien may have had his hands and mouth on her but he hadn't looked Faith up and down the way she had to him, or maybe he had and she was so mesmerised by her own view that she hadn't noticed. She wished she didn't care. She also wished she couldn't feel him studying her.

“Take off the suit, Faith.”

“What?”

“You heard me.”

“Julien—”

“Take it off or I'll do it for you.”

Faith stood up in front of him and unzipped the suit, well aware that Julien was probably used to a show. But that wasn't her. She didn't perform, didn't try to be sexy. From the hungry look in his eyes, though, and the way he sat back on the sofa as he observed, he didn't need her to do anything other than follow his exact instructions. The suit hit the floor and she stepped out of it, her bra strap falling down in the process.

“Are you wet for me?” Julien murmured, staring her dead in the eye. He didn't make a move towards her.

“Yes.”

“I want to feel you.”

She stepped closer to him, her need for him to touch her overruling the alarm bells going off in her mind. He used his knee to part her legs and motioned for her to straddle him, so she did precisely as told, afraid that if she didn't he would think she didn't want this. Because she did. It was a terrible idea. She barely knew him and she had to work with him, but she wanted this. She wanted whatever he was willing to offer her in the moment. Julien gripped her waist with one arm so she was locked in and repositioned himself so she could feel how hard he was underneath her.

“Put your arms behind my head.” He instructed.

With her hands gripping the back of the sofa in anticipation, she held her breath as she awaited his next

movement. Julien used his free hand to skim the waistband of her underwear, sending a shiver up her spine before he let his hands wander. He squeezed her ass, growing harder against her. She moved her hips as Julien's hand edged closer to her inner thigh and under the line of material keeping him from what he wanted. They both let out a short, sharp breath as his fingers made contact with her centre. She hadn't been lying when she'd said she was wet, she was practically dripping.

"Is that for me?" He whispered in her ear. Faith couldn't do anything except nod in response. "Good girl."

She kept moving her hips in sync with the movements of his fingers. He hadn't even put them inside her yet, and she was almost certain he wasn't going to. He didn't even need to, she was so turned on. As his thumb stroked her clit, she could've come right then and there. But she wanted to see what else he was going to do, the high he could bring her to.

Gaining some newfound confidence, Faith reached up and took her bra off. She didn't know what had got into her, this was insanity. And not part of his instructions.

"I don't recall telling you that you could do that." He muttered as his fingers entered her and she let out a loud moan directly in his ear. "But I'll let you off this time."

Keeping his fingers moving at a steady rhythm, Julien scattered kisses across the soft skin of her breasts but he was being anything but soft in his actions. He nipped and sucked at her skin, making sure she'd be left with bruises later. She was close to begging when he removed his fingers and threw her off him, gesturing for her to lay down. She leaned back, expecting him to start removing his race suit. Instead, he immediately inserted his fingers again, pumping harder and faster than before.

"I'm not going to fuck you today, but I'm going to make you cum. Do you want me to make you cum, Faith?" The sound of her name coming from his lips nearly sent her over the edge, and he must have noticed the way her muscles tightened around his fingers because he gripped her jaw and made her look at him.

“You like that, Faith? You like it when I say your name?” She whimpered and he released his grip, using his free hand to hold himself up over her. He leaned in close and spoke in a soft, low voice in her ear. “One day, I’m going to get you in this trailer and I’m going to fuck you so hard you’ll never look at another man again. You won’t want anyone else to ever touch you, to ever be inside you. You feel so fucking good, Faith. Cum for me. Don’t make me beg.”

Faith lost all control. Her hips lifted off the sofa and her hands gripped onto Julien’s arms as she climaxed, her body shaking as she rode her orgasm out on his fingers. She did everything in her power not to scream, the sensation so overwhelming it brought tears to her eyes as he clamped a hand over her mouth to keep her quiet. This man was unreal. She had never had such an intense orgasm in her life, and he’d given it to her with just his hands. She couldn’t possibly imagine what it would be like to have all of him in the way that he’d promised.

She watched him sit back and look down at her as she struggled to catch her breath and regain her composure, smirking as he put his fingers in his mouth and sucked them clean.

“You taste even better than I expected.” He said, and then he was on his feet and walking across the trailer. Was that it? He was just going to give her *that* and then leave? But then he was back with a tissue, cleaning her up. “This isn’t the last time I’ll make you orgasm, and I’m the kind of man who keeps his promises.”

“And a man who gets what he wants.” Faith added, still trying to catch her breath.

“Precisely. And I want you screaming my name one day. Come on, you need a power nap to get your energy back.”





Julien had been jabbing at her collarbone for ages, to the point where he was sure it was hurting her. And he didn't want to piss her off. She opened her eyes with an almighty scowl on her face.

“You take ages to surface, don't you?”

“I think you've left a bruise.” She mumbled sleepily, and his face softened.

“Sorry.” He grimaced and checked his watch. “We've got ten minutes, need to get back. Here, you'll need these. People always forget to turn their flash off, bunch of idiots.” He threw his gold-rimmed sunglasses to her and she caught them effortlessly.

He knew from experience that the trailer became very dark behind the tinted lens, so Julien reached out for her arm and led her through the gap between the sofa and the table, towards the door. He pretended not to notice the goosebumps that appeared all over her body.

Falling asleep next to Faith's half naked body had provided Julien with this odd feeling of inner peace, like all was right in the world, and yet it had also unsettled him tremendously. It had kicked his emotions up a notch. He felt a connection to her and he couldn't shut it off, but what he did to her in that trailer was unfair when he couldn't give her anything emotionally. Then again, maybe Faith would be okay with exploring just the physical side of things.

Julien hadn't felt this torn about anything or anyone in his thirty two years. It was no wonder he caved and allowed such an intimate moment to happen. He needed to get a grip and let her do her job, too. If fans wanted to suggest there was chemistry there, then fine. They wouldn't exactly be wrong. He didn't want to not be around her or ban her from capturing memories. They were his memories too, and maybe he could get on board with the concept of watching them back one day. There were a lot of moments in his personal life that he had very few visual reminders of. He needed to accept that the time he spent with his teammates away from the circuit; at

dinner and in the cities they worked in, were part of his personal life, not just his job.

The security guy gave the first fan the go-ahead to walk up to their table; a little girl no older than seven. She was an absolute sweetheart and the drivers took an immediate liking to her. They let her get a few selfies, and her Dad thanked them and collected a couple of signed cards and posters. The next fan was a middle aged British guy carrying a gigantic backpack with a flag sticking out of the top. He'd poke someone's eye out if he wasn't careful. He shook all of their hands proudly and wished them luck.

Marco passed autograph cards to Julien, who signed them and passed them down to Brett. They followed their usual system and answered questions from the journalists who made their way down the pit lane. The crowds seemed never-ending as the minutes ticked by.

Fans were growing more and more impatient and it didn't take long for people at the back of the so-called 'queue' to start aggressively shoving into people. Fans near the front were getting knocked into the table and trying their hardest to stay upright, and everyone was yelling at each other. It was usually the grown men who behaved like complete animals, and this time it was no different. The drivers were treated like zoo animals and the fans behaved like chimpanzees.

Faith and Lucie were stood off to one side getting photos and videos of the chaos when a man was unintentionally rammed into them. Lucie managed to dodge him which meant Faith took all of the impact in her small frame.

"Hey!" Julien stood up angrily, almost knocking his chair over, and yelled in the general direction of the shoving. "Everyone move back!"

Eduardo was already in front of the girls, trying to calm people down as he called in reinforcements. Brett and Marco were desperately trying to keep the autographs flowing but with Julien not participating, some fans were getting left out. Julien gestured for the fans at the front to wait a second.

He took a few steps towards Faith and led her back to safety, checking her over. She was shaking a little, but she seemed okay.

“Are you alright, Faith?” Lucie rushed towards her, taking over so Julien could go back to his seat. He hovered by his chair, not wanting to sit down until she confirmed she was okay.

“I’m okay. You can carry on, Jules.” She smiled softly and relief washed over him. He was definitely overreacting, but he could’ve sworn he could hear his own heart beating. The crowd was calmer following his explosion of anger.

“Hi, excuse me?” The last fan reached the table and the rest of the queue dispersed. Their time was up. The girl stood in front of them looked pretty young, and she was very softly spoken.

“Hi! What’s your name?” Marco asked her.

“Sofia.” She replied.

“Hi, Sofia. Would you like a photo?” Julien reached out for the phone she was holding. When she nodded, the drivers got up from the table, walked to the other side and gathered round her.

“Hang on!” Faith ran over. “Let me take it.”

They threw their arms around her and smiled while Faith carried out a full blown photoshoot. She must have hit that shutter button thirty times. Girls always did that and it drove him up the wall. He was a ‘*click the button once and if it looks shit just don’t post it*’ kinda guy.

“Thank you so much!” Sofia gushed. “Um, Faith? Could I get a photo with you, too? I’m a big fan.” She said. A fan of Faith? Julien was bewildered. This girl had real people looking up to her?

“Of course! Here, let’s take a cute selfie.”

“I can’t believe you work in motorsport after all this time. I’ve been following you on social media for like, four years and got into racing because of you.” Sofia said.

“I can’t believe it either, to be quite honest. That’s so lovely to hear, though. We could do with more female fans.”

“I really admire you, you know. How open you are, how you’re going after what you want. You inspired me to take a gap year.”

“That’s amazing! What are you doing with your year off? You got any plans?” Faith was just as excited as Sofia was.

“I’m actually traveling Europe at the moment, and I’ve managed to get tickets to every race of the season.” Sofia replied.

“*Every* race?” Faith’s jaw dropped.

“Yep! I’m meeting friends at some of them.”

“Well, I’d love to hang out when I have time! I might be able to get you some merchandise or VIP passes or something.” Faith was still chatting away as staff started removing tables and chairs.

Julien was being dragged back into the garage by Brett for a water break but he couldn’t stop observing the scene in front of him. Never in a million years did he expect Faith to have an influence over people. He thought she just sat around and posted photos all day, but maybe he was wrong. She cared about people. She cared about making a difference and making strangers feel like they had a friend in her. He wanted in on that. He wanted to share the parts of himself that he kept hidden, and he didn’t just want to share them with the world, he wanted to share them with Faith. But it could never be as sweet and simple as he was idealising in his head. Some things had to stay buried deep.

## CHAPTER 11

REVOLUTION WERE LEADING THE RACE WITH JULIEN OUT ON track, just about holding off Lorenzo from Talos Racing. They were significantly faster than most in their class, so the race had swiftly become Moretz vs Garcia. The whole team was gathered around the screens in the garage, fixated on the almost non-existent gap between the two cars. Faith was biting her lip, afraid that there would be a big crash. She'd seen them on television before and really didn't want to witness one today. It was inevitable in this sport, though. It was just a part of the risk the drivers took each time they got behind the wheel.

Marco had given them a perfect start, but when Talos's first driver caught up after Revolution's pit stop, it was up to Julien to step in and keep Lorenzo at bay. He had two laps left until Brett took over and got them across the finish line.

The car came into the pits and Julien hauled himself out of the cockpit, switching places with Brett. He came into the garage looking utterly euphoric, knowing that his work here was done and he couldn't possibly have done a better job. Talos's third driver was new this season, and probably wouldn't be able to overtake a seasoned driver like Brett.

Once he was out of shot of the TV cameras, he lifted his helmet off and gratefully took a bottle of water from his engineer, gulping it down. He was a hot, sweaty mess and Faith couldn't tear her eyes away from the strands of blonde hair plastered to his forehead.

"Good work." She said, smiling at him.

“Thanks, Jensen.” He nudged her arm. His good mood was contagious but she was painfully aware that this version of Julien likely wasn’t here to stay. It never lasted.

Brett tore past the chequered flag in first position, winning the six hours of Spa. The atmosphere in the garage was like nothing Faith had ever experienced before, but it was Jules who stunned her into silence. He threw his arms around her, spun her around and planted a kiss on her cheek. It took her a few seconds to register what he was doing, and then she was back on her own two feet as they swayed side to side. Lucie and Marco joined in, Marco ruffling Faith’s hair and yelling in her ear. Faith had never received so many hugs in such a short time span.

Julien put his arm around her again, but faint horror set in when Faith noticed who was stood at the entrance to the garage. Bea was taking photos of them, which meant she had definitely caught the moment Julien had kissed her. If she posted them anywhere, he would flip out again. She gently pushed him away, but he and Marco were already on their way out to Brett.

“Girls!” Gabriel congratulated the team and headed towards them, his lanyard swinging wildly as he ran.

“Hi, Gabriel!” Lucie shouted back above the buzz of excitement.

“Come to the podium! You can get great content up there.”

“You want us *on* the podium?” Faith asked. Regular staff didn’t get to do that. Only drivers and whoever was handing out trophies. It was also televised across the globe.

“We want the fans to feel like they’re actually here, remember? And you can’t do that from down here.” He hurried them along.

It was all happening so fast. Gabriel shoved them out onto the platform and Talos and Havelin’s drivers walked out followed by Julien, Marco and Brett. They were met with rounds of applause and the girls had their cameras out, filming both the crowd below and the drivers receiving their trophies.

Julien smiled at Faith, and with her camera pointed at him she pleaded with the universe to keep him on this high. She didn't want to go back to walking on eggshells around him.

Narrowly dodging being sprayed with champagne, Faith and Lucie were called over to join the boys. Brett passed them his bottle and took hold of Faith's camera to film them both taking a sip. It was absolutely vile, but all part of the experience. Media crews dispersed along with everyone else, giving them a chance to congratulate the other teams on the podium properly.

Faith had never realised how close the teams were despite the on track rivalry, and was now looking forward to tonight's afterparty. She was, however, counting on being able to stay glued to Lucie's side. There was something about relying on a bunch of men to look after her drunk self that made her nervous. Girls had to stick together, but Bea was the only other woman going as far as she was aware. There wasn't enough space to have every single person from the organisation at these parties, so it was pretty much just the drivers and the three of them. Even the engineers and mechanics still had work to do post-race. The open-invite events were held once a year at whichever luxurious resort the organisation could get exclusive access to, and Faith hoped she was still around for that.

"How do you feel?" Lucie asked, clutching Faith's wrist in excitement.

"Bewildered." She replied.

"That's the first time I've ever gone up there! Wow. The rest of our social crew are gonna be devastated, bless them. Maybe we should ask Gabriel if that can be a regular thing. If a team wins, their social media people get to go up."

"Slight problem there, Luce. Revolution always wins." Faith laughed.

"Ha! You're right. Screw 'em." She shrugged.

"I can't believe you just did that, you jammy devils!" Daisy from Eden Racing called out to them as they got near

the garage.

“Neither can we.” Lucie responded.

“Listen, I just wanted to say thank you to you both for giving the rest of us so much creative freedom this week. We’re loving it.”

“Of course! But it’s really it’s Faith here you should be thanking.”

“It’s an honour.” Faith smiled proudly.

“Anyway, congrats on your first win of the season! See you in France.” Daisy smiled and left to follow her team.

It was strange to think that if Faith got this job permanently, she actually had time to fill between now and Le Mans in six weeks time. She had no plans. It was a totally new concept, and she felt lonely again already.

“There they are. The two luckiest ladies in the world, getting to go up there. Not every gal gets the full Brett Anderson experience, you know.” Brett smirked playfully as he flung his arms around their shoulders.

“No, but most get at least half.” Lucie offered a sarcastic smile.

“You can have the other half if you want it, Carolan.” He replied. Faith shrugged herself out of his grip, not wanting to be physically attached to them while they flirted.

“I know, and that is precisely why I don’t.”

“I don’t know why you keep lying to yourself, Luce. You can admit it, nobody will judge. I come with a great feedback rating.”

“You’re disgusting.” She rolled her eyes.

Faith caught Julien’s eye and they laughed. As the group started to walk through the paddock, Julien held back so Faith wasn’t walking alone, handing her the same gold-rimmed sunglasses she’d returned to him earlier.

“The sun is getting pretty low, thought you might want them.” He said.



“Thanks.” Faith replied. Even with the rush of adrenaline gone, he was still treating her like they were friends. It was all she had wanted from him from day one.



Julien was soaked head to toe in champagne and he felt grim as they drove back to the hotel. He was driving a kart with Faith in the front and Marco, Brett and Lucie in the back. There were only four seats so Lucie was sat on Brett’s lap. Marco had offered Faith his seat up front so she didn’t have to put up with any lovey-dovey nonsense, and Julien was debating turning a corner very abruptly so the pair of them would be thrown out. That would put a stop to it.

“Are you girls coming to dinner tonight? We’re just going to shower and freshen up then head into Francorchamps to the Italian.” Julien said.

“What the hell are we doing about the party?” Lucie questioned. “I tried to catch you earlier but you were too busy.”

“I didn’t really think about it this year. I figured everyone could just stop and get beer on the way, there’s a Carrefour near mine.”

“Jules, you can’t host a party with zero preparation. You need cups, music, food, alcohol, valuables put a—” Lucie rambled.

“I’ll skip dinner and go home first then.” He sighed, irritated. He had only had a couple of days at home before race week, which wasn’t enough time to prepare. He would much rather let someone else take responsibility for this.

“No you won’t. Faith and I will go back to yours and organise everything, we can get takeout. There will be plenty of dinners to take Faith to over the rest of the season.” Lucie suggested.

Julien would be lying if he said he was totally comfortable with that idea. There were things in the house that might raise questions, and although Lucie knew the answers, he really needed her to do him a solid and brush them off. Or better yet, hide everything. Preferably while Faith waited outside on the driveway.

“Alright. You can take my credit card and my keys.” He kept one hand on the wheel of the golf kart and handed both to Faith.

“Your credit card?” She asked.

“Don’t look so surprised. You’re not planning on buying a giraffe or anything outrageous, are you?” He raised an eyebrow.

“No, but honestly now you’ve said that, I might. Perhaps a zebra.”

“See that gold key?” He laughed and pointed at it. “That’s my house key, take that off. The other ones are my car keys and I need those to get back. Do not let Lucie keep hold of that house key, she’ll lose it for the third year in a row.”

“I will not!” Lucie protested behind them.

“Noted.” Faith nodded as her friend scoffed.

“You girls can sleep in my room tonight, okay? I’m not having you getting a cab back to the hotel on your own. I’ll sleep on the sofa and the boys can share the guest bedroom. Brett, Luce, no funny business.” Julien warned, smirking when Brett flipped him off.

“With that horrendous image in my head, I might take the other sofa.” Marco shuddered and earned himself a punch in the arm from Lucie.

Arriving back at the hotel, Julien parked the kart next to his beloved Mustang. He needed to get a word in with Lucie about Faith being in the house. When she told them she was going up to her hotel room, he almost collapsed with relief.

“You are okay with this, aren’t you?” Lucie asked once Faith was out of earshot.

“I think so. If she sees anything and starts asking about it, just make something up on the spot, okay? Doesn't matter what it is, if she mentions anything to me later on I'll go along with it. I think I still have things hidden from when some of the guys came over a few months back...I hope.”

“I've got it, just focus on celebrating. Do you want me to pick Ford up from the neighbours?”

Ford was Julien's dog and any time Julien was out of town, the family at the farm down the road took care of him. He'd got him as a puppy seven years ago, a Husky. He loved people, and when Julien had parties he was the centre of attention of whichever group he attached himself to.

“If you have time, that would be great. You girls can shower at mine too, might be more relaxing than a hotel shower. You know where to find the guest towels, right?” He asked.

“Yes.”

“And how to work the shower?”

“Yes.”

“Actually, the shower in the guest bathroom doesn't get very warm so use mine. I have wine in the cellar so help yourselves but don't let other guests drink it all. It's from my personal collection and I don't want it all wasted.”

“Julien.”

“Oh, don't worry about putting the dishwasher on, I'll just do it in the morning. I've moved the cutlery to the second drawer on the left by the way, and if you could give Ford a treat so he doesn't feel left out that would be amazing.”

“Julien?”

“Yeah?” He frowned and looked at Lucie.

“Quit stressing.”

“Okay.” He exhaled and nodded.

He knew he was taking a risk by letting her into his home, but he couldn't have seen Faith coming from a mile off. She

was never meant to be anything more than a coworker, but Julien had been forced to push that idea aside the second he saw her. It was too late now. The things he'd been trying not to face would have to be dealt with at some point, whether that was tonight or in the months to come.



The team dinner had set the tone for the rest of the night, and Julien was loosening up a considerable amount. He had yet to touch a drop of alcohol since he was driving, but he felt a buzz. The restaurant was bursting with as many people as the manager could cram in, which had resulted in extra tables being brought out of storage and put in the marquee on the side of the building.

There were front bumpers of old racing cars hanging from the ceiling and memorabilia plastered all over the walls which gave it the feel of a teenager's bedroom, but this place was home. Everyone came here every year after the race, and the staff ran around like headless chickens trying to get everyone's next round of shots to them before they could even ask. They lived for it.

Julien had received a flurry of texts from Lucie who had been in the supermarket getting enough alcohol for more than a hundred drivers. She would ask if she should get one brand of beer or another, then if he took longer than ten seconds to respond she would text again to tell him she had got both. He could only imagine how heavy the shopping cart was, and he would bet all his money on Faith being the one stuck pushing it.

“So, guys.” Gabriel began, “How are we liking Faith?” He sat back and crossed his arms, studying them all.

“Love her.” One of the mechanics replied.

“Yeah, second that.” Another agreed.

“Please tell us we're keeping her?” Brett pleaded.

“Moretz?” Gabriel looked him dead in the eye and Julien nearly choked on his steak.

“Yeah, she’s great. A real asset to the team.” He said, hoping it came across much smoother than it had sounded in his head.

If he was being honest, Gabriel sending Faith back to England and not asking her to join the IEC would solve all his problems. He’d never have to see her again. On second thought, she would still be all over social media and in Julien’s head. So she might as well stick around for a while.

They were just finishing their main course when Lucie text again and informed him that they had arrived. She had started setting up while Faith was in the shower, then Faith was going to lay out snacks while Lucie got ready. They were begging for a two hour window to get it all done, which meant Julien was tasked with dragging dessert out for at least an hour. He would say it was an impossible task, but with Brett and Gabriel talking so much it wasn’t an issue. The impossible thing would be getting them to shut up long enough to guide them out of the restaurant.

“Oh my gosh, hi! Congratulations on the win, my darlings.” Bea waltzed in wearing a hot pink satin dress and heels. Mere days ago, Julien would’ve thought she was an absolute knockout, but that was before Faith. Now he was blind to it.

“Hello, Beatrix!” Gabriel stood up to give her a hug and a kiss on each cheek. He was the only one who was good at pretending she was well-liked.

The problem with Bea was that she was so good at her job, and when it counted she was professional and good with people. That was how so many got sucked in. Too many drivers hadn’t seen the ugly side of her, but the guys in the bigger teams had.

“Can I sit here, Bretty?” She asked Brett, placing a hand on his shoulder gently. He grimaced and threw Julien a look. They were sitting next to each other, which meant she was just that painfully desperate to ignore Julien’s boundaries.

“I don’t know who Bretty is, but nah I’m gonna stay here. You can sit over there, though. In the empty seat.” He pointed across the table at the chair next to Marco’s engineer.

She sulked as she sat down opposite them and crossed her arms, refusing to look at them. She couldn’t look more childish if she tried. When Gabriel brought up Faith’s latest video, Bea asked the waiter for a glass of champagne at an obnoxiously loud volume. She drowned out any talk of her friend and Gabriel stopped mid sentence and tensed his jaw. This was going to get very awkward very fast if someone didn’t start asking her questions about herself.

“So Bea, you coming to Julien’s tonight?” Marco asked, earning discreet glares from the entire table. Her presence was inevitable but they’d all been hoping she would have other last-minute plans. What a ridiculous thought, Beatrix Miller always went wherever the drivers went.

“Of course I am. It’s the party of the year, I wouldn’t miss it for the world.” She gushed.

“What, Julien’s parties are better than the ones the organisation throws?” Gabriel feigned hurt.

“You know I didn’t mean it like that! Speaking of, where are you taking us this year?” She asked.

“Ah, that’s a secret. You’ll find out right before we go.” He winked.

Julien’s phone buzzed on the table and he caught Bea trying to catch a peek of who’s name popped up. She raised an eyebrow.

It was Faith, asking him where the remote for his fancy lighting system was. He told her to check in his bedroom drawer and cringed. He was sure there were some polaroids sitting in there. Perhaps he’d moved them. They were usually carried through the house with him when he was stuck in a downward spiral, but wherever they were, if Faith found them she was probably going to freak out.

Time ticked by at a painfully slow pace as they ate dessert. He hadn’t received any further texts, which meant either Faith

was interrogating Lucie about Julien's personal life or they were going about their evening and getting all dressed up.

Something told him that he wasn't going to be blinded by their nose highlight the way he was by Bea's every time the light caught it. He was all for makeup and thought contouring was an art form, but it was a little much at times. He wondered if Faith even wore any. She hadn't so far, and he was pretty useless at working it out from a social media photo that had been taken at a distance.

"Is the coast clear yet? I want a beer." Marco sighed. He'd cut Bea off mid-sentence and she was pouting again. Nobody wanted to hear about the date she'd been on with Garcia last month. Garcia probably didn't even want to hear about it.

"They asked for two hours, so—" Julien checked his watch. "I'd say it's safe to start driving back now." For the love of God, could someone in this restaurant stand up and claim Bea as a passenger.

"After you." Brett let him out.

"Cheers. You driving with Mars? I've got luggage on my front seat, suitcases in the back and helmets in the boot." Julien listed off all the excuses he could think of to keep her out of his car. It worked, she didn't follow them out.

"Good save, mate. We racing?" The Aussie driver grinned mischievously.

"Follow the speed limits in built up areas, other than that, we're racing." Julien replied.

This was a piece of cake, he lived in the middle of nowhere. He could count on one hand the number of times he'd passed another car on the first half of his journey here. Once they got past a certain point, the road belonged to them.

"You're on."

## CHAPTER 12

FAITH PERCHED ON THE EDGE OF JULIEN'S BED, AFRAID TO crease the perfectly ironed duvet. Had he done that before he'd left for the hotel, or had a cleaner come in while he was away? She felt like a bull in a china shop in here. The place barely looked lived in. The walls were all white, not a mark on them. No grease marks from fingerprints, no mud splatters from his gigantic dog running in from the back garden, no chips of paint missing in the skirting boards as a result of being too vigorous with the vacuum.

She thought back to her flat in London, and the lines of crayon from letting her neighbour's little boys run riot on babysitting nights, the huge dents in the carpet that had been left behind when she'd rearranged the furniture after Bea moved out.

Julien's home felt lonely and isolated, and it didn't help that his closest neighbours were a five minute drive. When Faith and Lucie had gone to pick up his dog from them, she had not been expecting a massive Husky to come bounding right into the front seat of the car. Lucie had made the mistake of leaving the drivers' side door open and hadn't had a chance to encourage him onto the back seat. He had taken an immediate liking to Faith, licking her nose enthusiastically and hauling his dinosaur-sized body half onto her lap and half in the footwell of Lucie's tiny rental car.

The alcohol was piled up and securely wedged in the back seat. Crates of beer, vodka and high-end gin clinked into one



another and between that, Ford panting, and Lucie blasting Ariana Grande on the radio, Faith had been itching to get out.

Her wishes had been granted when they'd pulled up outside Julien's. It was dark now but the outside lights were on, illuminating everything in a warm glow. It looked magical. It was an old farmhouse but it had been modernised, with large windows and a concreted driveway. There were trees surrounding the property, and the land seemed to go on forever.

The inside was open plan and absolutely flawless in design. There were large white oak beams above them, and wide archways connected the kitchen, dining and living area to the main entry hall. The staircase lead to a mezzanine which held a bedroom, bathroom and guest bedroom. He had nailed it on the textures, with wooden floors, cream rugs and tan leather sofas and leafy green plants in ceramic pots. The coffee table appeared to be a slab of oak tree placed in the middle of the living space.

The kitchen was Faith's favourite part though, and was one of the many areas that made the space great for entertaining. There was a spacious center island, which the girls had covered with red plastic cups and bottles of drink; much like the University parties Faith and Bea had both hosted and attended. It was lined with black metal industrial-style bar stools, and Faith knew she'd be sitting on one of those with a headache tomorrow.

Ford had barrelled up the stairs by her side and led her into Julien's room. The master bedroom had high ceilings and a fireplace, with french doors leading to a private balcony. She had been tempted to open them but was terrified she'd set off an alarm and the police would show up before they could work out how to switch it off. The balcony overlooked the swimming pool and the built-in hot tub. The house had been designed to provide Julien with a picturesque view of the adjacent woods beyond the fields and she could imagine him with horses, if only he stayed here long enough to care for them. As Marco had said the other night, Jules was never in the country.

“Did you bring a swimsuit?” Lucie emerged from the ensuite wrapped in her towel, hair dripping wet. Ford tugged at the end of her towel, begging for fuss.

“I didn’t.” She replied.

“Neither did I. We’ll leave that to Bea.”

“Christ, I forgot she was coming.” Faith threw herself back on the bed, forgetting about how crisp the sheets were. Now they were going to have huge paw-sized dents in them, because Ford had jumped up and was chasing his tail.

“If you stick with me, chances are she won’t come anywhere near you.” Lucie laughed.

“If I know Bea as well as I think I do, she’ll be wherever Jules is.” Faith could hear the bitterness in her own voice and she didn’t like it.

“And I think Julien will be wherever you are.”

“Yeah, right.”

“You two are idiots.”

“What do you mean?” Faith sat up and brushed against Ford’s side. He settled next to her and nudged her with his snout.

“I’m just saying, there’s something there. Tension always reaches a climax at parties, and this is a party in his own home so he’ll be feeling waaaay more comfortable.” Lucie shrugged.

Faith smoothed down her hair and patted Ford’s head, getting up to join Lucie at the mirror.

“How about this? I’ll make a move on Julien when you make a move on Brett.” She said.

“What?!” Lucie stared at her in the reflection. “Not happening.”

“Well, then.” Faith shrugged.

They connected Faith’s phone to Julien’s speaker system and selected a playlist while they got ready. It had a good mix of artists but they were counting on Brett having something

more suitable. A party full of male racing drivers probably didn't want to listen to Doja Cat.

"Hello?" A deep voice called out. The music was so loud they hadn't heard any cars pull up, and if it wasn't for the echoes in the entryway the girls likely wouldn't have heard them arrive. Ford bolted out of the room to reunite with his owner.

They left the bedroom to lean over the railings and say their hellos. Faith could've sworn Julien inhaled sharply. She shouldn't be leaning over the way she was in this dress, she was exposed. A female voice singing about various body parts was not helping her feel any less indecent. Maybe it was the glass of wine she'd already devoured, but she didn't feel an urge to stand up straight.

"Everything's all laid out in the kitchen, hot tub is on, and look out the back!" Lucie pointed excitedly and they peered through the window overlooking the terrace.

"Ah, you went in the barn!" Julien called out.

"Sorry, we didn't know if we were supposed to. Then I saw the fairy lights and we couldn't resist." Faith admitted.

"It looks great. Thanks girls."

They had gone out looking for the pool inflatables and had found a flamingo, a donut, a swan and a watermelon. The pool was big enough for all of them, so they blew them all up and threw them in. They'd got the rickety old ladder out and strung the fairy lights up, screaming when Lucie had lost her footing and almost gone into the pool fully clothed. That was *before* they'd started on the wine from the cellar.

"I'm ready when I've straightened my hair, so you can go on down if you want. I'll be fifteen minutes, tops. Pour me another one?" Lucie asked, passing her wine glass to Faith.

"Alright, see you in a minute."

Faith was carrying two glasses and an empty bottle down, which meant she didn't have a spare hand to grip onto the bannister. It would have been wise to put her heels on once she

reached the last step, but when Julien appeared at the bottom, she was glad she had done a grand entrance.

“Let me take those.” He held his hand out and took everything effortlessly, offering her his arm, too. “You look incredible, Faith. You have no idea the things I want to do to you.”

She stopped walking. “Enlighten me.”

“I want to bend you over that balcony,” He gestured up the stairs with his chin, “and bury myself in you. I want to fuck you right there, hanging over the railing. I want to hear your voice echo as you scream my name and tell me how good I feel as I thrust into you. And I won’t stop on that balcony, Faith. I want you on my leather couch, on the rug in front of the fireplace, in the pool, in the hot tub, in the shower, in the woods and on the kitchen counter. I’m going to make you cum in every place I can possibly think of in this house, and you’ll never want to leave. But you’ll have to, and in the days and weeks until I get my hands on you again you’ll be calling me from the comfort of your own bed, begging me to get on a plane and put you out of your misery. You’re mine, Faith. And I’m going to keep fucking you and exploring what your body likes and dislikes until you cannot possibly learn anything else from me. I’m going to drive you crazy, Faith. You’re going to crave me the same way I crave you. Every fucking waking minute.”

He said every word with so much conviction that she didn’t dare doubt him. Her body tingled with anticipation and she became hyper aware of his hot breath on her neck. How could he turn her on so much just with words?

They were reminded of their company when Brett cheered at the sight of his favourite beer in the fridge. “This place looks amazing.” Julien was cool, calm and collected, even as he had to readjust the bulge in his jeans. It probably didn’t help that Faith’s cleavage was on full display, right in his line of sight.

“Well, we had a lot to work with. You have a beautiful home, and an even more beautiful dog. I may have to steal

him.” She said as Ford circled them, tail wagging.

“He likes you.” Julien commented.

“Yeah, I was getting that impression. The only time he’s left me alone is to come and see you.”

“He didn’t follow you into the bathroom though, did he?” Jules cast a weary glance at her.

“He did. Sat there good as gold the whole time I was in the shower, though. Only ducked his head under the water once.” Faith reached down to stroke Ford’s fur, realising too late that she was on display again. Julien averted his eyes quickly when she stood back up, swallowing nervously.

“I’ve been trying to get him to stop that. Drives me fucking insane and it’s inappropriate when I have guests.” Julien scratched behind the husky’s ears fondly.

“Girls love dogs though, Jules. If you introduce him to someone who doesn’t love him even half as much as you do, she’s not the one.” Marco chimed in and Julien looked uncomfortable.

Faith concealed a smirk. There was one girl she could think of who hated dogs, and she had been swiftly booted out his personal life a few days ago.

“How was your first European supermarket trip?” Brett asked, helping himself to crisps from the bowl on the counter. How was he *still* eating?

“You know what, I think I’m actually getting the hang of foreign languages! We know the most French between us so we tried that, and the staff seemed to understand us.”

“Ah, the beauty of being in a country where one half speaks French and the other Dutch.” Julien laughed and smacked Brett’s hand away as he went for yet another handful of tortilla chips.

“I’m gonna go to the bathroom.” Brett said.

“You know where it is, right?”

“Yes, Julien. I have been here many times.” Brett rolled his eyes dramatically and wandered off in the direction of the stairs.

“Shall we remind him there’s a bathroom down here?” Julien smirked.

“I think we all know why he’s chosen to go upstairs.” Marco raised an eyebrow.

“Yep, and he’ll head straight for the ensuite instead of the guest bathroom.” Faith replied.

They stood in the kitchen laughing, the boys enjoying their first sips of beer. Lucie had insisted that nothing would happen with her and Brett, but their friends weren’t stupid. That meant that there was more pressure on Faith to act on her feelings for Julien. Except they were just words, right? Nothing had been set in stone, nothing strictly promised, and yet watching him she wondered what it might be like to wake up here every morning and stand in this same spot drinking coffee from the Nespresso machine in the corner.



The party was in full swing now, music was blaring and drinks were flowing. Faith and Lucie were side by side, wine in hand, gratefully accepting compliments on their semi-matching dresses. Lucie wore a pale purple satin mini dress and Faith had chosen a black one. They both had clear strappy heels on and had their hair in waves, except Lucie’s reached her waist and Faith’s was above her shoulders. The only thing they had intentionally matched was gold eye makeup.

When Lucie had finished getting ready, she’d sent a reluctant Brett downstairs with strict instructions to send Faith back up for photos. They had gone out on the balcony, and Julien and Marco had stood down below hyping them up. Faith hadn’t felt this confident in years. Next to Luce, she felt like an equal. That wasn’t to say that her friend wasn’t absolutely stunning, because she was, but she didn’t have an

ego the size of Jupiter like Bea was so often guilty of on nights out.

“I have arrived!” Gabriel strolled through the patio doors with a crate of beers and everyone cheered. He was grinning so widely that anyone would think this was a party in his honour.

“What took you so long?” Marco teased, looking like he already knew the answer.

“I drove Bea here with Jasper and a couple of others.” He said sourly. “She had to run back to the hotel to change her dress.”

With that, Bea walked out in a black dress, identical to the one Faith was wearing. The group looked back and forth at them, stunned into silence. The thing was, Bea knew that Faith only owned a few dresses and that this one was her go-to for big events. They had gone shopping together, and bought one each. Faith had a distinct memory of how she’d squeezed into hers, and her best friend managed to fit into one two sizes smaller and hadn’t shut up about it for ages. Of course she would wear it tonight, this was her territory and she wanted to make sure Faith didn’t get too comfortable.

“I think we should raise a toast.” Jasper joined them, looking more relaxed than at the track.

“I agree. Here’s to the success of Revolution Racing, Marco, Brett and Julien, and of course to Lucie and Faith. Our sport wouldn’t be the same without you all.” Gabriel said.

They raised their drinks up and clinked them, smiles all round as more drivers greeted them on arrival. Bea firmly planted herself next to Brett, who was trying to edge closer to Lucie at every given opportunity.

Six shots of tequila in, and Faith was feeling the effects of the liquor. She’d lost count of how many people were stood in the circle she was in. Everyone seemed to have gathered where the host was, and Faith was stood right next to him. Another driver shuffled into the circle and Faith moved aside, falling over her own feet and right into Julien. He put his arm out to

steady her and she instinctively leaned into him. He didn't stop her, in fact he kept his arm around her. Dynamics were shifting and she wasn't sure it was a good idea given the alcohol clouding her judgement.

“Uh, guys?” Lucie said. “Have you two checked social media?”

“Us?” Faith asked with a frown. She went to her notifications.

Silence fell over them and her ears tuned out the rap music in the background. She broke away from Julien and showed him her screen. Right there on Bea's account was a perfectly filtered photo of Faith and Julien embracing with his lips against her cheek, with thousands of likes pouring in from adoring fans, gushing over their blossoming romance. Faith knew without a doubt that there was not going to be anything blossoming after this. Julien looked furious, and Faith's anger was bubbling under the surface, too.

“For fucks sake, Bea.” She muttered.

“I've got to take this.” Julien's phone lit up with a call and he tried to turn it away from her view but he was too late, she'd seen it. The name *Jasmine* in big white letters.

Whoever she was, Faith was under the impression that a totally innocent moment shared between friends was about to cause hell for Jules.



She had no idea where Julien had disappeared to but thought it best that she left him to it. This clearly wasn't her business, and in his mind she had probably done enough. Again. Grabbing a glass of water from the refrigerator, ice cubes and all, her quiet moment of reflection was interrupted by the clatter of heels on the wooden floor. Bea helped herself to whiskey from the liquor cabinet like she owned the place, even though everyone had been told it was off limits.



“Hey, can we talk?” She poured some into a glass. Just enough to take the edge off.

They headed up the stairs and Faith led the way into Julien’s bedroom, settling on the king sized mattress. It wasn’t until Bea sat next to her that it hit her. Her best friend had probably been here before, in this room. They would have had sex in this bed, and she really didn’t want to think about that. Now, or ever.

“Faith, I really didn’t mean for that photo to get posted. I hit the wrong one by mistake, and then once it was up I kind of just figured it wouldn’t be a big deal.” Bea was practically whimpering.

“But you have to go through so many different steps before you hit upload.” Faith studied her face for any sign of a lie, but she knew when Bea was lying and this wasn’t one of those times.

There was a loud scoff from the doorway. They looked up to see Julien stood there, beer in hand. “Did you really think we were gonna fall for that, Bea?” Julien snapped. “You wrote a caption to go with it. That was no accident and you know it.”

“I was meant to save it in my drafts, I swear!” Bea stood up in protest. “I was in such a rush and you know how *Instagram* gets, Faith. It’s temperamental and it’s super easy to click the wrong button and then whoosh, it’s out there.” She looked from Faith to Julien with tears in her eyes.

“Why would you *ever* post that, though? You knew how people would respond.” Faith’s voice was barely a whisper.

“Faith, I promise you I didn’t mean to do it. I’ll take it down right now.” She was giving her friend all of her attention, turning her back on Julien.

Faith wanted to believe her and to trust her, but she’d been told so many things in the past week that she didn’t understand who Beatrix Miller was anymore.

“Stop lying to everyone, Bea. You might think it’s all a bit of fun but these are people’s lives you’re messing with. You

need to learn to fix the damage you cause.” Julien stepped into the room and subtly gestured for her to go.

“Once again, I’m sorry.” She bit her lip and looked at Faith, then brushed past Julien and left.

Swallowing the lump in her throat and taking a sip of water, Faith stared down at her hands and refused to make eye contact. He sat down next to her and rested his elbows on his knees.

“Jules?” She mumbled.

“Mmmm?” He mumbled back.

“I’m sorry I seem to be causing so many problems for you.”

“What?” From the corner of her eye, she saw his head turn.

“I’m—”

“No, no—” He interrupted. “You have nothing to apologise for, absolutely nothing. If anyone should be sorry, it’s me. I’ve treated you like crap since you got here and taken all my frustration out on you. You deserve better than that, and I’m going to do better.”

She didn’t know how to respond so she just stared down at the cream rug under their feet.

“I’m gonna go for a walk.” He said.

“Are you sure that’s wise? It’s pitch black out there.” She looked through the balcony doors to the fields beyond the backyard. There was nothing but darkness.

“I’m not leaving the property and the outdoor lights are bright enough to light my path. I just really need to get out of here and clear my head for a minute.”

They stood up and made their way out of the room together, walking down the staircase and back into the party. People were in the kitchen getting drinks and Faith squeezed Julien’s arm reassuringly as he departed, sneaking out via the side door. She spotted Lucie leaning against the breakfast bar and made a beeline for her, grateful for a friendly face.

“Everything okay?”

“I’m worried about Julien, he’s taken himself off for a walk.”

“He does that a lot, don’t stress about it. He’ll come and join us again when he’s ready.” She poured Faith another glass from their secret stash of white wine.

Although he had distanced himself again, she wasn’t so positive that he was distancing himself from *her*. If it had been about her, he wouldn’t have sat next to her and had that conversation. Would he? It was still progress, however you looked at it. As long as this didn’t go against her and he didn’t push her away for the billionth time. Faith wanted to know what he was thinking, how he was feeling, but they weren’t there yet. With each day that passed, each issue that arose, she was under the impression they never would be.

## CHAPTER 13

JULIEN WAS SAT AT THE BOTTOM OF A FIELD ON AN OLD TREE trunk. He'd cut some of these trees down last year and it had left him with the perfect space to sit and watch Ford run around in the grass. Now, it was nearly midnight on a Sunday in early May and he was watching his friends having the time of their lives, wishing he could just get his head straight and be a part of it. He had started out the night relaxed, and although Faith had been on his mind it didn't feel like a burden for once. He had reached a point where he could just accept his feelings for what they were. Then the photo thing had happened and knocked him for six.

Jasmine calling him had reminded him of how much was at stake here, it wasn't just about him. It was about the people in his life who were entirely separate from the world of motorsport, and it was also about Faith. He couldn't drag her into his mess. She was oblivious to it all, and had somehow not found the polaroids of his past hidden away in his bedside drawer.

"You okay?" Lucie was walking through the grass towards him, holding onto her heels and a bottle of wine. She held it out to him and sat on the edge of the tree trunk.

"Could be better." He admitted.

"That's why I brought this." She gestured to the bottle in his hand.

She snuggled into him, providing them both with some warmth in the light breeze. Lucie had undoubtedly become

one of Julien's closest friends and confidants over the last few years, and she always knew what to say. He could rely on her to tell him whether he was overreacting to something, and he really needed that same energy from her tonight.

"How did you find me? I'm pretty far out."

"I couldn't see you in the darkness so I just walked around the perimeter of the property until I found you." She said.

"I can't look at her without falling apart, Lucie. It's eating me alive." He sighed.

"Faith?" She asked.

"Yep." He nodded. "Everything is weighing on me, there's too much pressure on my shoulders. If it was as simple as acting on my feelings, I would. You know how complicated things are for me, why I don't do long term. I'm at a complete loss with this girl." He was gripping the bottle so hard his knuckles were white.

"I think you should just lay it all out on the table, but I'm not in your shoes and I never have been, so...I don't know, Jules. Maybe you should focus on keeping your distance where possible."

"I don't think I can." He said. He exhaled deeply and Lucie sat upright. "I need to, though."

"Do you?" Lucie looked at him and he could see her frustration clearly for the first time. She was as fed up with Julien as he was with this whole moral dilemma. "She's nothing like Bea."

"I know she's not." He frowned. It would be a lot of easier if she was so he could write her off.

"I'm just saying, Jules. You've only ever dated women like Bea and all this no-relationship rule has done for you is put your walls up even further than they were all those years ago." Lucie rose from their makeshift bench and put her hands on her hips, looking back at the party.

"I really like her." He mumbled.

“Oh, really? I thought we were having this conversation just because she has pretty eyes.” She pretended to be shocked.

“I’m a grown man with a massive crush.” He laughed pitifully. It was embarrassing to admit.

“We both know this is more than a crush.”

“Am I just going insane? Should I call my psychologist? It’s been less than a week. What if it’s just because she’s got blue eyes and curves?”

She raised an eyebrow. “This doesn’t happen to you, ever. It’s been too long since you let someone in. I think it’s time.”

“Maybe you’re right.” He threw his head back and looked at the moon. On the other side of the world, where part of his heart belonged, the moon hadn’t even risen yet.

“I’m gonna go back now, coming?” She asked.

“I’ll be there in five.” He’d like to stay out here longer but it was reaching the time when everyone was about to be off their faces and things started getting wild. He couldn’t miss out on that.

“One last pearl of wisdom for ya.” She shivered in the breeze and wrapped her arms around herself. “You can’t live two separate lives forever. At some point they’ve got to link up.”

She promptly took the wine bottle back from him and waved as she stalked off across the field. He hated it when Lucie Carolan gave him advice, because she never steered him wrong.

Faith had a way about her that made Julien feel alive again, and Lucie was right, it was about more than the way she looked. It wasn’t just her eyes that reminded him of his past, it was all of her. Her fiery temper when he was being an arrogant piece of work, the way she truly believed in the goodness of everyone she met. If he could dig deeper and find out what made her *Faith*, what made her similarities to his past less scary, maybe he could let her in.



Since Lucie had rejoined the party five minutes ago, she had already managed to encourage Faith to do two shots and help her set up a game of beer pong outside. Faith hadn't played beer pong before as it wasn't really a thing in England, however Brett had taken it upon himself to explain it to her in thorough detail at a very high volume. He was loud without the help of beer, but he was on another level tonight.

Julien returned soon after and she felt a lot more at ease. He came over to stand with them but purposefully avoided standing too close to her. Once again, she didn't know how to act. Were they okay? Were they real friends now? He caught her eye and raised his drink to her. That didn't help.

On a mission for food and a get-out clause, Faith went into the house and hunted down the leftovers from her's and Lucie's takeout. She hopped up onto a bar stool and tucked in, attempting to be graceful but failing to keep her arms steady as a result of the alcohol coursing through her veins. She felt fuzzy.

"Enjoying that?" A voice she didn't recognise came from behind her. She spun around, fork in hand, and saw Lorenzo Garcia.

"Yep." She mumbled through a mouthful of food. Not flattering in the slightest, but with any luck he would look past that.

"May I?" He gestured to her food.

Lorenzo was around five foot nine and his dark hair brushed in front of his eyes. She hadn't heard him speak much English, and got the impression he wasn't fluent. Before she'd flown out here and met him, every time he spoke his native Italian it sent shivers down her spine. Then Julien had happened and the effect wore off.

His aftershave was strong. As strong as Bea's perfume. Perhaps they had read the same advice on how much they

should use to attract members of their preferred sex, but as Lorenzo got closer, Faith resisted the urge to let him know he needed to tone it down.

“Congratulations on coming second.” She said.

“Thank you. I must admit I am a sore loser.”

“Maybe you’ll get ‘em next time. Not that I’m suggesting I’d like to see that, obviously.”

“Hmm. Do you know what I’d like to see?” Lorenzo’s eyes glistened and she didn’t like his tone in the slightest.

“No, what?” She asked.

“You, me, skinny dipping.”

“What?” She choked.

“Come on, Jensen! It’ll be fun, give everyone a show.” He ran his thumb along her jaw and she tried not to tense up. This was getting very uncomfortable very fast.

“I’m going to pass.” She said.

“Don’t be boring, Faith. Loosen up.” He tucked a strand of hair behind her ear.

There were always rumours swirling that some drivers on the grid took advantage of their power, and really Faith should have predicted that Lorenzo would be guilty of that. He was one of the few who was very active on social media, constantly flaunting his lavish lifestyle. He favoured wild parties and beautiful bikini-clad women hanging off his arm.

“I’m not interested.” She gritted her teeth.

“We can go hand in hand if you like?”

“Get out.” A deep voice boomed behind them. Faith looked over Lorenzo’s shoulder. Brett was stood there with a face like thunder, Lucie by his side and Julien coming up behind him.

“I’m going, no drama.” Lorenzo held his hands up in defence and brushed past both men roughly.

“What was that about?” Julien asked.



“Garcia being his usual charming himself.” Brett replied, tracking his movement.

“Faith?” Jules looked at her intently and his expression changed from confusion to concern.

“I’m fine. Thought he was one of the good guys, guess I was wrong.” She tried to laugh it off but she felt nauseous.

“Do you want to go upstairs for a bit? I can take you.” Lucie asked, coming over to stand near her and placing a reassuring hand on her arm. She was unsteady on her feet.

“Yeah. I think I need to lie down.”

“Luce, you’re a bit tipsy sweetheart. I’ll take Faith up, get her some water.” Julien said. “If she’s alright with that?” He asked.

Faith nodded, maybe a little too enthusiastically. Lucie gently kissed the side of her head and wandered back over to Brett, who took her hand and led her back out to the pool area.

She sighed heavily while Julien got her a drink, and watched the ice cubes drop into the liquid with a splash. There was anger brewing under the surface but he kept his cool and spoke softly.

Placing his hand on the small of her back, he let her lead the way up the stairs and kept hold of her glass. So, this was what he was like when he cared about people? She was a fan. Faith walked into his bedroom and he hesitated in the doorway.

“You can come in, Julien.” She said.

“Okay.” He took one step.

“Jules.” She scowled at him and he walked further into the room and put the glass down on the bedside table next to her.

“Should I sit down?” He gestured to the bed.

“Yeah. Will you stay with me? I just want to lie down until I feel less tipsy. I don’t really want to stare at the ceiling and get lost in my own thoughts the whole time.” She said.

They laid back on the bed and sunk into the heavenly memory foam mattress. She didn't think she could get much better than her first brand new mattress back in her London flat, but she was wrong. Is this what people with money did? Spend it all on finding their perfect mattress and bedding combination?

Julien's shirt rode up to reveal his abs and Faith's mouth watered. "Jules?" She whispered.

"Yeah?" He didn't whisper back, just spoke in that low, seductive tone of his. He wasn't even trying to be seductive, but the wine was going straight between her legs.

"Do you fuck women in this house?"

"Never."

That was all Faith had needed to know. She was well aware of Julien's reputation for casual flings, but he'd told her he wanted her naked in his home specifically. That had to mean something, right? She was losing her mind.

"Will you fuck me now?" She draped her leg across his waist and sat up, straddling him on the bed. It was difficult in this dress, and the hem ended up rising and revealing her underwear. She'd opted for blue lace this time, and no bra.

"Fuck, Faith. Don't do this to me." He groaned and put his hands on her hips.

"What am I doing to you, Julien?" She asked innocently, grinding against him slowly. He let out a low growl and flipped her over so she was underneath him.

"Making me insanely hard. But as much as I want to, I can't fuck you yet. You're way drunker than me, and you've just had a run in with Garcia. When I take you, I want us both to be stone cold sober so we can remember every single second. It will be worth the wait, believe me."

"It had bloody better be." She sighed and he laughed, moving off her.

"What's your favourite dog breed?" He asked.

“What?” She couldn’t do anything to stop the snort that came out of her nose.

“Answer the question, Jensen.” He laughed. “I think that giant monster of a dog out there tells you what mine is.”

“Mine’s probably a Husky, too. I’ve never had a dog, though. Never had a pet, actually.”

“Not even a hamster?”

“Would’ve died with Mum taking care of it.”

“Is there a reason you’re not close with her?” He turned to lay on his side and face her.

The fact that he’d remembered her telling him over dinner that time surprised her and she wasn’t sure what to do with it. People rarely paid much attention when she spoke about little things like that, although it was probably because she was always so quick to change the subject.

“Mum didn’t have her life together while I was growing up, so I sort of raised myself. Took care of my own food, got to and from school, cleaned. She took it to heart when I got out of there, and now she sends me postcards of places she’s never been to.” Faith bit her lip, unsure if she should’ve unleashed all that on him.

“Now I see why you’re so quick to forgive Bea. You’re used to being on your own, and she was the first person who made you feel like you belonged. Am I on the right track?” He asked.

Faith gazed at him absentmindedly for a moment and didn’t respond. He may despise Bea, but he understood her perspective. “Yeah.”

“Well, I think you should hash it out. Sit her down and tell her how you feel and where you stand on your friendship. She needs someone like you to sort her out.”

“You think so?”

“I do, and I never follow my own advice so it would be really great if someone else did.”

She laughed and rolled onto her side, face to face with him. His eyes were even easier to get lost in this close. They were the kind of icy blue that made people stop talking mid-sentence to admire, and made Faith feel self-conscious about her own. When the light hit hers they were beautiful, but nobody had ever got lost in them. Except Julien, right now. The soft lighting gave him an ethereal glow and his blonde hair brushed past his eyes ever so slightly. She resisted the urge to sweep a strand aside. His hand was resting on the duvet, in the empty space between their bodies. She wondered what it might be like to intertwine her fingers with his, to feel the lightest touch of his fingers on her skin.

Faith felt her eyes flutter closed. She didn't want to sleep, she just wanted to block out the light. Today had been exhausting and it was nearly two in the morning, but this was an event she couldn't miss. She'd be back out there with Lucie and the boys once this dizzy spell had passed, and she'd be good as new.

She felt Julien exhale next to her and the mattress shifted with his movement. *Please don't leave*, she thought. She didn't have the energy to call out and stop him. Except Julien didn't go anywhere, and the next thing she knew he was playing with her hair. It was soothing. The only person who had ever played with her hair was Bea, and this didn't feel even remotely like that.

"I wish you hated me." Julien murmured.

She froze, but didn't open her eyes. If she opened them it would be game over and he'd stop talking. He needed to say it.

"I'm so scared to get close to you. I'm not good at this, I've done it once and it ended in heartbreak. I'm used to being alone but I don't want to be this way forever. My instinct is telling me to let you in but I come with a lot of baggage. Some of it you could never understand. I don't want you to have to understand."

He stopped talking and the room was eerily silent. She listened to the sound of him breathing. What baggage could Julien have that made this so difficult for him? Faith could

handle baggage. She had plenty of her own. The kind that did permanent damage and changed the way she carried herself.

“I wish I could stay away from you, but I don’t think I have it in me to keep pushing you away. I know you’re not going to do it yourself, because that’s not who you are. I don’t know what the right thing is, here. I think...next time we have a moment, we should embrace it. But I don’t know. I’m scared.”

Faith was struggling not to ruin his heartfelt speech with the revelation that she wasn’t asleep. Her heart was beating so fast, he must be able to hear it. Somehow, despite his own fears, Julien had managed to make all of her own disappear.

She was feeling brave. Not brave enough to say anything right now, but brave enough to do as he had said. Embrace the moment. Faith and Julien were the kind of people who didn’t let themselves enjoy anything or anyone too much, and she for one was tired of it. She wanted to feel something, to let genuine connections into her life. Julien deserved the same.

## CHAPTER 14

FAITH FELT LIKE SHE'D BEEN TAKEN FOR A LAP AROUND THE race circuit at full speed with no helmet. Her head was excruciatingly painful, and Julien's Egyptian cotton sheets were doing nothing except making her too hot. She kicked them off and a disgruntled Lucie stirred beside her. Thank goodness it was only Luce.

Last night had taken a turn once Faith had surfaced from her fake nap, and she had found herself recreating a musical number from *Mamma Mia!* on a balcony with Lucie and Bea. Yes, Bea. They had put the drama aside with the help of more wine, which Julien had eventually hidden from them. The girls had, of course, switched to gin in protest.

Crawling out of bed, Faith hunted down some mouthwash and a hairbrush, attempting to feel human again before she faced the team downstairs. She looked at the mass of dark hair against the white sheets and debated waking Lucie up, but thought better of it. Hungover Lucie was not someone she wanted to experience before she herself had food and painkillers in her system.

The smell of bacon wafted up the stairs as she made her way down into the unknown territory of a post-party apocalypse. She could hear voices, which meant the boys were up and they were going to drag her to hell over the girls' antics.

"Morning, sunshine!" Brett yelled with sheer enthusiasm as she entered the kitchen.

Faith squinted in the direct sunlight coming from the floor to ceiling windows. Hadn't Julien considered blackout blinds?

"Smashing outfit, Jensen." Brett grinned.

She looked down and realised she had skipped the vital step of looking in the mirror. Nevertheless here she was, stood in the middle of Julien's kitchen in boxers and a t-shirt that drowned her. Who those items belonged to remained a mystery.

"Thanks." She said, wryly.

"You want something to eat?" Julien got up from his spot at the breakfast bar next to Marco, who was resting his head against the white marble surface, and took charge of the frying pan that Brett had abandoned on the stove.

"Have you got mushrooms? I fancy mushrooms on toast." She said. That was her comfort food when she was feeling under the weather. Plenty of grease equaled a perfect hangover cure.

"You're in luck." He pulled two cartons of chestnut mushrooms out of the fridge. "Anderson? De Luca?" He asked, receiving an enthusiastic nod from Brett and a grunt from Marco.

"You'll be pleased to know we have footage of you and the girls performing that *ABBA* song. I was gonna post it but Gabriel told me to play nice." Brett grinned.

"You'd better be on your best behaviour, Anderson." Lucie's voice croaked in the doorway and she scowled in the harsh sunlight. Brett passed her his sunglasses.

"You guys looked great! So glad we found the feather boas in the garage, they really completed the look." Julien laughed.

"Keep quiet and stick to frying those mushrooms." Faith smacked him lightly on the arm.

She vaguely remembered how the idea had come about. Julien and the girls had been rummaging in the garage for the air pump for one of the pool inflatables when they had discovered a box hidden under a blanket. Faith spotted a neon

pink feather sticking out of the top and lunged for it, revealing a mass of feather boas in various colours. Nobody questioned why he had such items sitting in his garage. Instead all three girls looked at each other, eyes wide with the realisation of what they absolutely must do.

They pounded up the stairs, high heels flung in the general direction of the front doormat, and straight onto Julien's balcony. It was as though everyone by the pool had worked out what was going on from their giggles and squeals, because a crowd had already gathered and Brett was waiting for his instructions on which song to play.

Faith cringed at the thought of her bosses witnessing such unprofessional behaviour, but then she remembered her friends' stories of previous parties and felt that last night had been relatively tame in comparison.

As Lucie hopped up onto the counter next to Brett and dangled her legs in the air, a horrific memory popped up. Had Faith kissed someone last night? Her brain was foggy, but she was sure it had happened out by the pool.

"You look like you've seen a ghost." Lucie said.

"Did I kiss someone?" Faith asked, looking at Julien to gauge his reaction. There was a splutter of laughter, which meant if she was right then it wasn't him.

"Oh! Yeah, that was me! We won a game of beer pong and celebrated. Sorry, I think I might've initiated it." Lucie grimaced.

"No, it's okay! I'm just glad it was only you."

"*Only* me?" She feigned hurt.

"Could've been worse." Marco came to life all of a sudden. "You could've kissed Gabriel."

Faith couldn't resist letting out a snort, a common occurrence now that she was comfortable around them, which triggered Julien to do the exact same thing. Judging by the looks on their friends' faces, that wasn't normal for Jules.



She sidled up next to him and peered over the frying pan. The oil hissed and spat at her, making her hand sting.

“You good?” Julien looked down at her and she smiled up at him, crinkling her nose when he smiled back.

He looked cute this morning. His hair was ruffled and he wore a creased white t-shirt that clung to his biceps. He must own a lot of white tops because aside from one black one and his racing suit, that was all she’d seen him in this week.

“Are they cooked yet?” She asked him.

“Try one.” Julien reached into the cutlery draw for a fork and stabbed a piece of mushroom, holding it out to her.

“Mmhmm, they’re good to go.” She replied and turned around to grab a plate for the toast. Marco, Brett and Lucie were all gawking at them like they were from another planet.

“What?” Julien scowled.

“Nothing mate, nothing at all.” Brett said.

Except Faith knew what it was because inside her head she was having the same reaction. Julien and Faith were flirting. Very mildly, but you couldn’t call it anything else. Not when they’d gone from zero to one hundred overnight.



Jasper had kindly sent them a car to pick them up from Julien’s shortly after lunch, giving them time to recover and freshen up. They needed to get back to the hotel and get their suitcases, and then it would be time to drive to the airport and go their separate ways across the globe. Lucie was going back to LA, Marco to Italy, Brett to Australia and Julien to who knows where. Faith assumed he’d have been staying put, but he had a flight booked later that night. She didn’t question him.

They had received a text from Gabriel stating that he wanted a quick meeting with Revolution Racing at the hotel’s bar, including the mechanics and engineers. They had groaned

at the thought of being in the general vicinity of alcohol so soon but it was a necessity, apparently. Gabriel told them it would be informal and last less than five minutes, which was just as well because none of them were in a state to absorb important information. They weren't even convinced poor Marco had the ability to board his flight in time.

At the hotel, Faith was saying a sad goodbye to her hotel room. She hoped she would be returning here next year, but if not then she would just have to miss it forever and get used to her flat's pine needle water pressure again. She dragged her suitcase out into the corridor with an almighty struggle, hauling it over the threshold and promptly bashing it into Julien's.

"Sorry!" She cried out.

"It's cool, these corridors are narrow, huh?" He laughed.

Neither of them addressed the fact that the only reason they had collided was because she had got her case caught on the door strip and yanked it free with so much force that she'd hauled it into the air.

"We are taking the lift, yes?" Faith raised an eyebrow. Julien had a bag not a case, which made taking the stairs easier for him than her.

"We are. Here, give me that." He took the handle from her and dragged her case behind him as he headed to the other end of their floor. "Jesus, what have you got in here?"

"I've never left the UK so I had no idea what the weather was going to be like! The internet is a confusing place." She replied.

Stood in a small metal box eight floors up, Faith realised that this was the first time they'd been alone since last night in his room. As the doors shut in front of them, she didn't dare confess to hearing every word he'd said while her eyes were closed.

"Fuck this." Julien sighed and threw his bag down, slamming his fist into the panel next to the elevator door. The

tiny metal box came to a sudden stop and he backed her into the corner. "I've been dying to taste you all night."

"In here?" She yelped as he lifted the hem of her sundress up, revealing her tanned thighs.

"Yes."

"Aren't there cameras?"

"The staff in this hotel have seen much worse. Just let me do this for you." He murmured against the delicate skin of her neck.

"For me or for you?" She smirked.

"For both of us."

Faith took his hand and placed it against her centre, allowing him to feel how wet she was. That was all the permission he needed to get on his knees and pull her lace lingerie down. She stepped out of them as he put them in his jacket pocket.

"You'd better give those back after." She warned, but she was cut off by the sensation of his tongue on her clit. Nothing in the world could have prepared her for that.

He buried his face between her legs and her hands went straight to his hair, tugging on it as he licked and sucked. There was no time for the soft, gentle kisses on her thighs that she had been anticipating, but she was by no means going to complain. He was eating her out like his life depended on it, like he might die if he didn't get to taste her orgasm on his tongue. Julien grabbed her leg and placed it on his shoulder, then inserted his fingers as he kept his mouth on her clit.

"Julien. Fuck..."

She shivered as he laughed against her, the vibration sending shockwaves through her and nearly making her lose total control of her body. Faith didn't know how much longer she could stay standing.

"You taste fucking amazing." Faith gripped his hair tighter and began thrusting her hips which encouraged Julien to pick up his pace.

“I need to cum, Jules.”

“Beg for it.”

“Please, Julien. Please...Fuck. Julien, I swear to God. Please let me cum in your mouth.” His fingers moved in and out of her at a pace she didn’t think was humanly possible and her entire body began to tremble. As she reached her climax, she had to throw her arms out and grip onto the railing on the side of the elevator. Julien used one arm to push her against the wall, holding her upright while she shook against him.

“Good girl.” He wiped his chin and smiled up at her, looking mighty proud of himself.

“You know, you could’ve fucked me in here.”

“Oh I know, but knowing that you’re as desperate to have my dick inside you as I am is a game I’ll never get tired of playing.”

“You will. When I stop letting you touch me.”

“You’ll never do that, Faith.” Julien reached into her pocket and handed her underwear back to her and hit the button to keep the elevator moving. “Like I said, I’ll have you begging.”

“Ah! There you are. Our guest of honour.” Jasper was waiting outside the elevator for them and ushered them out excitedly. He was a lot like Gabriel, Faith decided, just less chaotic.

“Who, me or Jules?” She asked.

“It’s you.” Julien whispered beside her.

“Yes, come on! Everyone’s waiting in the bar.”

Faith checked the time. Nope, she wasn’t late. She was more than ten minutes early, so why was the rest of the team already here? Julien abandoned their cases in the lobby and gestured for her to follow them with a grin on his face.

They walked into the bar and Gabriel leapt out of his seat and clapped his hands together. Julien rushed to sit down with the boys, and Faith saw Lucie sat up front looking smug.

“I’ve spoken to the team and we would like to officially welcome you to the IEC and Revolution Racing as a social media manager. You’ve gone above and beyond this week and as a result we’ve gained thirty thousand followers across all platforms, which to be honest, has blown our minds. We’ve sent the contract to your apartment in London, but we just wanted to let you know that we would be over the moon to have you as a permanent part of the team.” Gabriel gushed.

She had known it was coming but that didn’t make it any less emotional for her. Faith deserved this. She had grown up alone and clinging to the belief that there was more out there for her. For twenty six years, she had waited to know what it felt like to have a family, to have a shot at seeing the world she’d grown up learning about, and to turn it all into a job she loved. One out of the blue email had given her everything, and none of it could be taken away by an unstable Mother.

Her upbringing in Cornwall seemed like it was a million lifetimes ago and she couldn’t imagine ever sitting on a clifftop at sunset and questioning her entire existence again. This was what she had held on for.

“You’re definitely stuck with me.” She smiled at Gabriel and then looked over at her friends. Brett led a round of applause and Lucie rushed to wrap her up in a warm hug. These were her people.



The team trekked out of the hotel in a blur of suitcases and were piling into the cars provided for them. A long line of SUVs were parked on the side of the road, chauffeurs patiently waiting. It was a bit like trying to organise a school trip, right down to people shouting excitedly to their friends who were stood too far away. Brett and his engineer were guilty of that.

“Are we going in the same car?” Lucie asked.

“I’m actually heading off with Joel and Will. We’re all on the same flight.” Marco replied. He really did look like he was

on a school trip with his giant rucksack.

“Take care, Mars.” Lucie said, and the curly-haired Italian driver went around the group, giving everyone a hug goodbye.

“Bye, Marco!” Faith waved as he disappeared.

Julien took it upon himself to slot everyone’s luggage into the back of the car and excuse the chauffeur from his duties. Perhaps Faith had been wrong for judging him when he let the staff get his bags when he’d first arrived here. She had been wrong about a lot of things with him.

The girls squashed up next to each other in the back seat and tuned out the boys’ conversation about football. The car departed the hotel and while they drove through Francorchamps, Faith was already feeling nostalgic. She wished she’d had more time to explore, and vowed to travel here on her own terms soon. She wanted to visit the casino in Spa, take the lift up the hillside to the wellness spa, go to the village of Coe and see the waterfalls.

The problem was, she didn’t want to do it alone. She didn’t want to do anything alone now. She hoped the friends she made here were the kind of friends she could experience life with, and she was worried that they would lose touch over the next six weeks and she would come back and feel like a stranger.

At Brussels airport, everyone hopped out and Julien took charge of their luggage again. It was great not having to struggle, but Faith felt like she should have trained in preparation for her arrival back in London. Getting it here in the first place had been hard enough and now she had more in there, like hats and model cars for her neighbour’s kids.

“I’m really gonna miss you, Luce.” She said sadly. They were walking from the drop off zone, towards the terminal.

“Wait!” Lucie stopped abruptly and dropped her bag onto the pavement in front of them. Julien and Brett, who had been walking closely behind, bumped into her.

“Bloody hell, Luce!” Brett cried out.

“Call me crazy, but what if I came back to London with you?” Lucie asked.

“Yes! Please come, you can take Bea’s old room.” Faith didn’t even hesitate. She might as well kick things off with some spontaneity.

“Okay, I need to change my flight. Do you think they’ll have any seats left?” Lucie was getting more and more animated as the reality of their adventure set in.

“I’m glad you two girls are gonna stay attached at the hip but I’ve gotta love you and leave you. There’s a plane to Sydney calling my name.” Brett sighed.

The Aussie giant gave them all bear hugs and lingered on Lucie for a while. Not wanting to intrude on their moment, and that was exactly what it was even if they denied it, Faith stepped away and turned to face Julien.

“You alright?” She asked, noticing that he seemed deflated. It could be the adrenaline of the weekend leaving his system, but he’d been upbeat until now.

“I’ll be honest, no. I don’t like goodbyes.” He shuffled his feet awkwardly. He was adorably shy all of a sudden.

“Me either.” She looked down at their shoes. Her tiny little white trainers versus his big leather boots.

“Come here.” He mumbled and pulled her towards him. This was the first time they had shared a hug without the excuse of Revolution getting a podium, and now she had him in her arms she didn’t want to ever let go.

“I’m glad you’re talking to me now.”

“I’m glad I got over myself.” He replied.

Faith wished they had more time to get to know each other now that they were on good terms, now there was something brewing. She wanted to ask him where they stood. Would they exchange texts? Share phone calls and update each other on what they were doing with their time off? Or was this hug the last encounter they would have until they met in France?

She feared that applying even slight pressure would send him running back to the old Julien and undo all their progress. Unfortunately, that fear also meant she wouldn't have the courage to contact him first.

"Faith, we should get moving if we're going to get my ticket sorted in time." Lucie called over.

Julien cleared his throat and she stepped backwards. His hands returned to the comfort of his jean pockets and a cloud of tension drifted over them. Brett had already disappeared into the crowd of passengers entering the airport, and Lucie was stood on the the edge of the curb waiting patiently.

"That's my cue." Faith said.

"I guess it is." Julien replied, his expression unreadable behind his sunglasses. She picked up her bags and smiled, giving Lucie the signal that she was ready. "Hey, Faith?" Julien interrupted.

"Yeah?" She turned and looked at him.

"When we see each other again, I'd like to take you for a drive. Would you be up for it?" She could see Lucie practically bursting at the seams a few feet away, and she was trying not to have the same reaction.

"I'd love that."

Julien lowered his voice so that only she could hear. "I might even fuck you in my car."

"You guys are cute and all but we have places to be and exciting things to organise." Lucie hurried them along.

"Good luck with this one in London, Jensen. She's an absolute terror when she's impatient." Julien laughed.

"Bye, Jules. See you soon." Lucie yelled out behind them as they walked away and gripped onto Faith's arm excitedly. Faith swatted her friend's hand away and shushed her.

"Play it cool, Luce. I can feel his eyes on us."

"Oh, yeah, I bet his eyes are on us. They're on your *ass*." She let out a slightly manic laugh. "Also, *what?* Play it cool?"



Faith Jensen, you have a date with that man.”

“I do not!” She protested.

“I’ve known him for years and he’s never taken me for a drive anywhere other than a supermarket. There is nothing romantic about buying bread. This is a date.”

“It’s definitely not a date. I will be sitting in the passenger seat very innocently.”

“Yeah, until he puts his hand on your thigh just a little too high up to be considered friendly. Good luck with the innocence then.”

“Lucie! For heaven’s sake.” Faith tutted, remembering the elevator incident. And that moment in the trailer.

“The only girl capable of remaining innocent in a car with Moretz is me, and that is because I’m immune to his charm.”

“Oh right, so it’s got absolutely nothing to do with you fancying his Australian teammate instead?”

“I do not!” Her face faltered. “I’ll shut up.”

Faith stood to one side while Lucie changed her flight, and observed the sea of irritable passengers. People were arguing, kids were screaming, and young couples were crying as they wished each other farewell. Faith, however, was in a state of bliss. The invitation Julien had extended to her, date or not, was the cherry on top of an already mostly-perfect week.

With Lucie’s new plane ticket to London secured and adrenaline coursing through them, the countdown to Le Mans had begun before they’d even got back to the UK.

## CHAPTER 15

THE COFFEE SHOP WHERE FAITH HAD MET GABRIEL WAS A LOT quieter this time around. She silently thanked the universe that they were the only customers in there at ten o'clock on a sunny wednesday morning, because Lucie was gushing over literally everything her eyes landed on. If it wasn't the cherry blossoms lining the street outside, or the miniature dachshund passing by the window, it was the teacups they were given by the handsome, posh British waiter with great dress sense. That was Lucie's description of him, anyway. To Faith, he was just a plain old Brit.

They had been here for less than twenty four hours and already done a walking tour of Faith's neighbourhood, had dinner with Amina next door, and tried three brands of tea. It was tiring, but Faith wasn't about to kill Lucie's vibe for the sake of sleep. She was used to a busy schedule, she just needed to get used to one with traveling on top.

"Did you know most of our social media staff are fresh eighteen year olds? We scoop them up straight out of education and train them on the job." Lucie remarked. "The younger you are the more up to date with trends you're likely to be but hey, that's not always true. Besides, we have the wisdom to go with it, too."

"Luce, you're really not helping me feel less old. Wisdom is a word you use for old men called Cyril who have been through wars and lost the loves of their lives twice over. Do I look like an old man?" Faith raised an eyebrow.

“No, but you are starting to sound just as bitter. Oooh, we need a night out! Know any good clubs around here?” Lucie bounced in her seat. This was going to call for a trip to Oxford Street, she could see it now.

“You’re in luck. Bea and I were frequent visitors when she lived here. My friends were mostly her friends though, so I’m not sure they’ll really want to join. I can try?”

“Making friends is my speciality, Faith. You should know that. Shoot them a message!”

“You’re really not used to your own company, are you?” Faith asked.

“Nope.” Lucie shook her head. “I grew up one of six, big Italian family, then left home and went straight into the organisation where I was just surrounded by...well, you’ve experienced it. A *lot* of people. Alone time is just not a thing in my life anymore and I’ve fully embraced that.”

“Sounds like heaven to me. Even after this first week I can’t imagine sitting in my flat alone anymore. No amount of reality TV is a match for the company you guys provide.”

“Yeah, you’re absolutely stuck now. I go where you go, like a puppy. Oh my god, like that one outside!” Lucie pointed behind her to a tiny English Bulldog waddling along the pavement.

Faith laughed fondly, grateful that she no longer felt quite so lost and isolated in a big, bustling city. Seeing London from a tourist’s perspective again almost made her want to keep the lease on her flat, but plans were being made in the group chat after just one day apart and she couldn’t let the opportunities slide.

They had come home to another postcard from her Mum and as she filled Lucie in on the drama, Faith felt a pang of sympathy for Andrea. The resentment she had still felt not even two weeks ago had been replaced by this alien concept of wishing she could pluck her Mum out of her dingy little caravan in Cornwall and take her around the world with her.

“I’ve got to say, I’m impressed at the little empire you’ve built for yourself.” Lucie mumbled through her cake. Elegant was not a word that fit her, which was becoming increasingly obvious the more time they spent together.

“Thank you, I’m actually quite impressed myself, looking back. I didn’t think it would lead me *exactly* where I wanted to be, I just figured it would get me somewhere equally as good.”

“And yet here we are.” Lucie smiled.

“Running on minimal sleep.” Faith grimaced.

“It might kill you initially, but it’s worth it.”

“I’ll power through.” Faith took a sip of tea.

“I can’t even express how happy I am that Gabriel hired you. I was pretty much the only woman when I started, then Bea came along and we were vastly different, so we never bonded. I mean, you and I are different but Bea is, how do I say it politely, from another planet.” Lucie winced.

“I don’t know when exactly she was abducted, but I’m very sorry I didn’t do more to stop it.”

“That girl scared me off dating in the industry. It’s not just how complicated things can get, it’s also the fact that I always felt like I was competing with her. You can’t deny she’s a glowing goddess and heads turn for her, and I am by no means saying that I’m not confident within myself, but it’s the snarky attitude that comes with it. My cheeks don’t ever even flush until Bea sticks her nose in directly in front of someone I’m attempting to flirt with.”

“Why do you think I’m still single? Any time a guy even got close to me, regardless of whether she was acting as my wing woman or not, the attention was diverted to her. Nobody compares.” Faith thought back to all the men who had been mid conversation with her and then asked if the ‘*brunette with the gold hoops*’ was single.

“At least we have the personalities to go with our looks though. Plus, you’ve already pulled Julien Moretz and it’s only week one.”

“I have not pull—” Faith frowned.

“Shut up! Embrace it. Embrace *him*. Oh, wait, you already did that at the airport yesterday.”

“You’re a pain in the ass, Carolan.”

“You don’t say arse?”

“Just because I’m British doesn’t mean I’m posh. We don’t all speak like the Queen.”

“Well, no but you are quite well-spoken. Anyway, back to Bea, you should know the history with her and Jules.”

“You mean why he hates her so much? Please, enlighten me. He literally curls his lip up in disgust when he sees her.”

“And then when he sees you he goes all soft and gooey...” Lucie’s teasing was greeted with a napkin being thrown across the table.

“You’re skating on thin ice, sister.”

“I promise I’ll be quiet for the rest of this trip. However, once we get to France, my silence will be lifted. *So*, Julien and Bea never really openly flirted or made it obvious, it was all kept under wraps until she opened her mouth at a party.”

“I bet he loved that.”

“It gets better. She started telling everyone that her and Julien were dating, and he pulled her aside in front of everyone and told her she knew that wasn’t the situation, as he had made clear a number of times. She flipped her *shit*.”

“This was a couple of months ago, wasn’t it? Right after their Monaco trip.”

“Yeah, and notice how he isn’t in any of the photos? He’d sue her ass, that’s why. Besides, that trip was a work trip with like six other people.”

“You said she flipped out, what did she do?”

“She tried her damn hardest to paint Julien as this toxic, condescending bad guy and worked her usual magic to turn

everyone against him. It semi-worked on a few people but it didn't last because she kept losing track of her lies.”

“I should've known she'd turn out like this. When I first came to London, she was so good to me. Then our social media presence started to grow and before long she was constantly begging to post selfies, she'd tweet about all these fun things we were doing which we actually didn't do, and she stopped caring about the emotional aspects of our friendship.”

“From what you've said, it seems like she's got lost somewhere along the way. Maybe you could give her a little nudge.” Lucie suggested.

Faith stared into space for a few moments, trying to figure out exactly how she felt about it all. It might be an almighty strong tug to get Bea back down to Earth, but it could be worth it.



Julien had arrived to his destination in the middle of a torrential downpour. He could see the rain pelting the ground from his spot at baggage claim, and regretted his decision to show up here in a t-shirt and leather jacket. At least hungover Jules had failed to muster the energy to put product in his hair. The luggage belt was taking its sweet time and he was getting impatient.

Sometimes, everything in his life felt like a race. Getting in and out of airports was up there with one of the more stressful ones, but it was part of the job. Except this occasion wasn't.

Locating his rental car was one hell of an experience. The lady at the desk recognised him and welcomed him warmly. Not because of his profession, because he was sure she was totally oblivious, but because he came here multiple times a year and had built up a rapport with staff at various establishments across the island. He had opted for the usual; a red jeep. The aim was to blend in and feel like he belonged, which should be easy considering everything that was waiting

for him here, and yet he still felt like an alien who had landed here by mistake each time.

The steering wheel of the jeep was the only thing that felt both familiar *and* comfortable, a combination he wasn't used to these days. The car was old and it meant he had to sacrifice bluetooth, so when he got an incoming call he had to scramble to answer his phone and put it on speaker on the seat next to him. It might fly off, if he was lucky. He hated answering calls when he was here.

“Hello?” He yelled towards the passenger side.

“Julien!” Gabriel’s voice boomed and almost frightened the life out of him. In retrospect, it was just as well he hadn’t been able to connect to the car’s audio system.

“Hi, Gabriel. What can I do for you?”

“Where are you off to? You’re very muffled.”

“I’m away.” Julien sighed. Quite frankly, it was nobody’s business where he was in his free time, but Gabriel was one of few people who knew all there was to know about Julien’s life.

“Oh, of course you are! You’re not in the middle of anything are you? I just called to update you on Faith’s position in the team.”

“No, I’m alone.” Julien sighed. This traffic was infuriating. “Did she sign the contract?”

“She did. Emailed me an hour ago. Now, I know we’ve had this conversation a few times but now you’re in the States...I just want to reassure you again that what you get up to in your down time is not going to be made public.” Gabriel’s voice had thankfully lowered a few octaves.

“Thank you, Gabriel. I appreciate that.”

They said their goodbyes after Gabriel promised to leave him alone for the course of his trip unless there was an emergency, and Julien was left in a suddenly claustrophobic environment. He was stopped at a set of traffic lights and felt like everything was closing in on him.

Winding the window down and letting the rain spit onto his arm and the black plastic of the Jeep's driver side door, he looked to his left. There was a blonde woman in her mid twenties, sitting in the passenger seat of the car next to his. She looked over at him and smiled, and he returned it half-heartedly. He was trying desperately to see something familiar in her eyes, but he was met with nothing.

He had done this with every woman he passed at the airport, but he knew just as he had known the very first second he came face to face with her, that Faith Jensen had that light in her eyes that made him feel alive again. He wished she didn't. He wished nobody did, because it terrified him. He never imagined he would feel this kind of connection to someone again and until he met Faith outside the hotel in Belgium, he hadn't actually *wanted* to. He still wasn't convinced he wanted to, but it was too late.

One thing Julien was certain of was that he couldn't have his mind on Faith today. Every year on this date, he let his past consume him. This day didn't belong to her, it didn't belong to anyone or anything except a past he couldn't bring back.



## CHAPTER 16

PACKING WAS NEAR IMPOSSIBLE WHEN THE GIRLS DIDN'T KNOW where they were going after Le Mans. All they had been told was that they would be leaving Europe, and needed swimwear. That didn't cut it for Faith, Lucie *or* Bea and the three of them had banded together to ask everyone they could think of. It hadn't taken long to determine that Brett and Marco had an inkling, but they wouldn't budge purely because they loved seeing the girls get so wound up on FaceTime.

Lucie's excessive amount of Oxford Street purchases and tacky tourist finds had fallen victim to a temper tantrum as she threw herself across her suitcase in a desperate attempt to close it. It would be safe to say that they were one more angry screech away from panic buying another case each and begging someone in the organisation to contact the airline and up the team's luggage allowance. Brett was having a similar issue with his outrageous collection of trainers, although the girls weren't sure why he needed to take six different pairs of Nike's.

"Zip it! Go, go, go!" Lucie yelled and Faith went running on cue, yanking the metal zip while her friend's petite frame crushed the contents.

"Success! Mine next, please." Faith gestured to the living room where her trusty new raspberry red suitcase was waiting.

"How have you managed to keep everything so neatly folded?" Lucie scrunched her nose up at the perfectly organised clothes.

“I made a spreadsheet with everything I needed, and I keep photos of all my possible outfit combinations in an album on my phone. I used to do it for content shoots.” Faith shrugged.

“That is absolutely genius.”

“I thought so too. The heels were the only thing I struggled to get in, so they’re sort of shoved in the corners.” Her nonchalance received a bitter glare from Lucie, who had put her own heels in Faith’s carry-on as a last resort.

“You’ve got the team rain jacket?” She asked.

“It’s underneath everything.” Faith lifted up a pile of jeans to show her. She had been warned that although it was currently quite warm in France, it had been known to rain heavily in previous years. Le Mans was wildly unpredictable.

After they had wheeled their cases out into the hallway and planned their airport outfits, which matched despite Faith’s protests, they fell onto the sofa. Faith was going to miss this sofa. It was green velvet and was her’s and Bea’s pride and joy. Wherever she settled, if she ever did, a replica was essential. Her Mum had one just like it in the trailer in Cornwall and it had provided young Faith with a lot of comfort over the years, as she dived deep into fictional worlds or watched re-runs of old American sitcoms. A green velvet sofa was a subtle way of paying homage to the inner child she was still nurturing to this day.

The girls were using their time after these next two trips to explore the British coastline, which meant going back to Cornwall and trying to replace the negative attachments to her home county with memories she wasn’t battling to shove into a hidden compartment of her brain.

Whether she took the opportunity to visit her Mum or not was a decision she didn’t think she could make until she was minutes away from the patch of grassland where Andrea resided.

They had started out in an actual caravan park, but moved when Old Al the postcard entrepreneur had offered up a section of his farm for a cheaper fee. Faith still wasn’t sure

why Andrea had put all of her money on a heap of plastic rather than a slightly bigger, better insulated heap of bricks.

In fact she could've rented or purchased quite a nice house, and she had a decent job in a care home, she was just a mess in every other aspect of her life. She didn't seem to want nice things for herself despite being able to afford them.

Faith's Mum thought that she could only be classed as successful if she had a ring on her finger. That resulted in a string of failed relationships and engagements because nobody was quite right, or they didn't treat Faith as their own, or they tried to help Andrea kick her alcohol dependancy which, if you asked her, was not a problem in the slightest.

Thinking about it all now that she was removed from the situation, Faith came to the conclusion that perhaps all the self sabotage was a simple case of her Mum punishing herself for letting Faith's Dad go. From what she'd heard growing up, the man was the full package. She wished she knew where he was.

"Do you have any crumpets? I've always wanted to try them, they look really weird." Lucie piped up halfway through an episode of *The Bold Type*, looking at her with curious eyes.

"You need to calm down with your stereotypes, Luce. I don't, but I promise we'll find you some when we're next in England." Faith replied.

"Suits me just fine. Hey, did you know that being in charge of socials means that we'll get to go to the funfair at Le Mans and actually get away from the paddock?" She said.

"We can really milk that for content, film for all platforms. Maybe we should take a film camera too!" Faith jumped up and went into Bea's old room, returning a few seconds later with the one she had left on her desk when she'd moved away.

"The boys are going to die over this. We can get established on *TikTok* too, do a little montage." Lucie was buzzing.

"Great idea, I just need to check with Bea that we can go ahead and use this. I'll buy it off her if necessary." Faith took

the camera over to her suitcase, already dreading the drama involved with getting it through security.

“I hope you can handle the waltzers though, because I can’t. I always outdo myself on the snacks and regret it. You can take my place.” Lucie grimaced as if she was recalling a memory.

“As long as you do the rides that involve heights. They are really not my forte.” Faith thought back to the trip she had taken to *Alton Towers* with Bea and felt nauseous already.

“It’s a done deal.”

They settled back into their feminist binge session, pjs on and popcorn in a bowl between them. This had become their almost daily ritual over the last month and life felt strikingly normal in contrast to what they were heading into tomorrow morning.

Julien hadn’t been active on social media for the entire month they’d been apart, and the contact they’d had with him had been minimal. He had text Faith a couple of times outside of the group chat to check in with her, but other than that it was just the odd emoji in response to someone’s message in *Revolution Royals*.

Lucie insisted this was standard behaviour for him, but Faith still wished they’d had a more in depth conversation just to put her mind at ease about where they stood when they were reunited.

Did he still want to take her on a drive, were they still friends, was he ever going to touch her again, or was he going to keep her at arms length? It was hurting her head, and her heart but she wasn’t ready to admit that part.

Her phone buzzed with a text to the group from Marco, asking if they were all packed and had solved their crisis. Lucie replied with a ‘*No thanks to you*’ and got devil emojis in response. Faith had caught her on solo video calls with Brett numerous times, but vowed not to mention them because she didn’t want to be teased about Julien for the billionth time.

“I’m going to ask if anyone is staying in the hotel between test day and race weekend or if they’re all staying in their rooms in the hospitality area. The drivers share rooms behind the garages and that’s where they nap in the twenty-four hour race period, but you and I will either have to go back to the hotel in shifts or sleep in the chairs in the garage.” Lucie explained.

“I’m not trekking back to the hotel, thank you very much. The chairs will do for me.” Faith responded as she got up and went to the kitchen to make them another cup of tea.

Her phone lit up with a series of messages from the team. All three drivers were opting to make the most of the comfortable hotel beds until they were forced to give them up for the race, which meant team breakfasts would remain. She was so excited for Le Mans that right at this second she didn’t know if she would be able to handle the buffets, or even a coffee.

“Luce! Did you see Julien’s message? He’s getting an overnight flight and he’s scheduled to land in Paris at midday, wants to know if anyone wants to grab lunch in the city before we make the drive to Le Mans?” Faith called through to the bathroom where Lucie had disappeared to do an intense skincare routine.

“We land at eleven, right? We might as well wait around for him. By the time we’re through baggage claim, he shouldn’t be too much longer.”

Faith typed out Lucie’s exact words and hit send. Why was the concept of a sophisticated lunch in Paris with her coworkers so daunting? It could be worse, she could be alone with him. She just prayed nature didn’t provide Julien with a light breeze to drift through his hair, or a ray of sun across his face to highlight those baby blues. With any luck he would have his sunglasses on, hair gelled firmly into place. *Please, Jules, for the sake of my sanity.*



Faith wrestled the key into her flat door at six thirty the following morning, scowling heavily. This was supposed to be a wholesome moment where she said goodbye to the flat and to Amina, and her and Lucie sailed off into the sunset together. Many sunsets, actually. In the beautiful landscapes of Europe.

Instead, Lucie was in a foul mood after getting no sleep and the coffee machine breaking, and Faith's rusty old key just did not want to turn in the lock. Amina and her sons had emerged from across the hall to two very stressed young women who were anything but happy and upbeat.

"Oh, don't worry about that, sweetheart. I'll call the landlord. You haven't left any valuables, have you?" Amina asked.

Faith shook her head. Any tech she wasn't taking with her, such as her record player and speakers, she had given to Amina's sons. All that was left in the flat was books and furniture. She was going to donate the books and Amina had offered to sell the furniture on an online marketplace, although they were still arguing over who was keeping the money. Faith didn't need it on her new salary, and she knew that as a single Mum, her neighbour struggled to treat the boys.

"Thank you for everything you've done for me over the years, Amina. I don't think Bea and I would've survived our first few months here without you, and I definitely wouldn't have survived the last year on my own." Faith pulled her in for a hug. She had promised to stay in touch and the kids had followed all of the team social accounts so they could see everything she was up to, but it still pained them all to know that their weekly pizza nights and Sunday morning farmers market trips would cease to exist.

"If only you knew what you've done for us, the impact you've had on Caleb and Rhys. It feels like one of my own is flying the nest, but I am immensely proud of you." Amina spoke softly which only resulted in sniffles and tears.

"Will you and Lucie come and visit?" Rhys looked up at her, and it broke Faith's heart.

“Dude, come on. We’re best friends now, you can’t get rid of us.” Lucie ruffled his hair and captured him and his brother in her arms.

They squealed but Caleb fought his way out of the embrace. He hated affection unless he was feeling under the weather, and would much rather show love by wrestling people to the ground MMA style. These boys were a huge part of Faith’s suddenly ever-growing world, and she hadn’t recognised until it was time to say goodbye that she had been blessed with some form of a family all along, even after Bea was gone.

They were interrupted by a notification that their driver was here to take them to Heathrow. Faith caught Lucie’s eye mid-sob and signalled that it was time to go. She had become so attached to the twins in just four short weeks, and Faith guessed she was missing her own siblings.

“Our Uber is here.” Faith said.

“Okay, we’ll say goodbye up here.” Amina smiled warmly at them.

Even saying goodbye to the doorman was going to be emotional. He had seen her and Bea in so many states, and now Faith was going to be meeting doormen all over the world who didn’t know a single thing about her, like the fact that she pretty much always had to run back inside to get her umbrella because she had tried and failed to manifest the sunshine on a rainy day.

As the elevator doors closed on the three disheartened figures in the hallway, Faith felt a pang of guilt. She was leaving them in the lurch. Amina had become reliant on her babysitting services and the boys idolised her, but she had taken her new job without a second thought. Was she being selfish? Amina would tell her not to be so silly, and if Faith had rejected the job and it had come to light further down the line, Amina probably would’ve found Gabriel’s number online and called him herself. No, this was good. She was making herself and Amina proud even if she couldn’t make her own Mother proud.

“Why the hell am I crying?” Lucie wiped a tear from her eye as she got into the car.

“Blame it on lack of sleep and caffeine.” Faith swallowed the lump in her throat. She didn’t want to set off the waterworks again and give herself a headache when she had a flight, a long drive, and a sleepless week ahead of her.

The streets of London passed by in a blur of red buses and black cabs. It was early June and the British heat had yet to make an appearance. Usually Faith would be complaining and begging nature to work its magic, but at this present moment in time with her passport in her hand, she couldn’t care less.

“Earth to Faith? We’re here.” Lucie prodded her arm when they reached the terminal, thanking their driver who had kept quiet but blasted noughties R&B the entire way. He had been living in his own little world as he bopped his head and tapped on the steering wheel.

The girls hauled their excessive amount of luggage through the terminal doors and into the mass of tourists. It was like a zoo today, far worse than the last time Faith had flown out of here. Children were literally screaming and parents were almost matching their volume levels.

It wasn’t even the summer holidays yet, so God only knew why so many little ones were flying around the world. The childless adults of the world truly couldn’t go anywhere except clubs and bars without the little gremlins running riot amongst the general public.

“Faith Jensen?” A young woman whispered from two seats away in the boarding zone.

“Hello?” Faith turned to face her.

“I’m so sorry to disturb you, I wasn’t even sure it was you and then Lucie came and sat down with her coffee.” The girl gestured to the Starbucks cup Lucie was cradling.

“Hi!” Lucie chirped up, practically beaming. Thank goodness, because Faith had been more than ready to throttle her if she’d moaned about being tired one more time.



“I’m Valeria. I’ve been following your journey online for the last couple of months and I just wanted to say I think it’s amazing how you left everything you knew to pursue this new job. It must be quite daunting for you.” She said.

“Honestly, it wasn’t as scary as you might think. If anything, the thought of not doing it was scarier. I didn’t want to stay in London forever.”

“Must be nice to be surrounded by all those attractive racing drivers, too.” She teased.

“It’s an added bonus, yes.” Faith laughed.

“Do they ban dating in the organisation?”

“Nope.”

“So... You and Julien?”

“Are friends.” Faith replied quickly.

“Mmhmm, okay.” The girl nodded.

“She’s in total denial about how fit Julien is.” Lucie interjected eagerly.

“I’m not in denial about his level of attractiveness, I’m just not dating him or anyone else.”

“Yet.” Valeria added.

Faith’s jaw dropped as their newfound friend joined in on the teasing. She felt very attacked, but the worst part was her complete inability to tell her she had it all wrong. She was going into this trip with, according to Lucie, a date. A drive, a date, whatever you wanted to call it. Faith was categorising it as a drive until Julien made a firm move that suggested it was anything else.

Lucie had decided that a hand on the upper thigh would definitely count as a firm move, but a brushing of the hand didn’t. She was clearly rooting for a kiss between the two of them, unaware of everything that had already occurred, but Faith wasn’t convinced she was prepared for all the complications it brought with it. A kiss might send Faith and Julien into another dimension.

## CHAPTER 17

“GET THAT WINE DOWN YOU.” LUCIE PUSHED THE GLASS OF wine towards her, finding the whole ordeal rather amusing. The landing in Paris was a bumpy one and it had left Faith feeling rattled, both literally and emotionally. She barely spoke a word from the moment the plane hit the tarmac until right now, sitting in a bar in the city with Lucie. She was just grateful to be back on land with this dark red liquid in her right hand.

Julien was due to get here twenty five minutes ago, but there was still no sign of him. Faith was starting to think he might have bailed just like he did with her first team dinner in Spa, but she kept reminding herself of the traffic they fought through to get into the city. It was a miracle they’d even got a seat in this bar. Paris was so much like London, except it felt ten times more magical. Even the light drizzle didn’t matter.

“So, do you think this is a permanent thing for you? This job, traveling.” Lucie asked.

“There’s nothing keeping me in London so I guess I’ll just go wherever life takes me.” Faith shrugged, feeling very peculiar about not having a structured plan once this race season was over. She hoped Gabriel would want to keep her on board for at least a few seasons. Maybe forever. That would be good, too.

They chatted amongst themselves and sipped their wine, which was very overpriced. Faith was accustomed to a bottle of *Echo Falls* on a Friday night, but Lucie was determined to give her the best of everything. She lived well within her

means, but even Faith had to admit that a trip to the fashion district of Paris was very tempting. She checked her watch again. Julien should be here soon, and there was no way he'd want to come shopping with them. Paris round two was definitely on the cards.

Julien breezed in an hour late, looking as immaculately dressed as ever. He took his sunglasses off and blinked a few times as his eyes adjusted to the dim lighting, scanning the room. He grinned when he saw them sat in the corner with their luggage and weaved effortlessly through the crowds of rich, French businessmen. Even with the leather jacket, he could easily pass as one of them. It was all in the way he carried himself. He could go from Bad Boy to Sugar Daddy in seconds, as Lucie had pointed out when their eyes landed on him.

“Hello, stranger.” Lucie smiled and stood up to hug him, stealing him a chair from the adjacent table. Faith cringed inwardly, likening the behaviour to Brits in their local pub rather than classy, civilised young women in a sophisticated Parisian bar.

Faith hadn't risen from her seat for a hug, worried that it would send Julien into a blind panic. She almost froze up when he leaned down to place a kiss on both of her cheeks, something he hadn't done for their friend. He pulled back with a twinkle in his eye and settled down next to her, his leg brushing against hers. This was going to her head more than the wine was.

Julien signalled for a waiter and ordered himself a non-alcoholic beer, since he was in charge of driving. He asked if the girls wanted another glass each to which they shook their heads. They were only drinking it so Faith could say she had experienced a bottle of expensive red in one of the most romantic cities in the world. Although, she had to admit she hadn't actually remembered Paris's reputation as the city of lovers until her favourite Belgian driver had arrived.

“How was London?” He asked. The question was aimed at both of them but Lucie was bursting at the seams to tell him everything from a tourist's perspective.

They let her babble on for fifteen minutes as she hyped up Faith's home turf and tour guide abilities. More than anything though, Lucie applauded the way Faith had made London feel like it belonged to Lucie, like she had been there just as long. She recalled nights out with Faith's old friends, trips to museums and cafés, dinner with the neighbours. London was Lucie's second home now, apparently, but Faith wasn't sure she wanted to rush back.

"She gave up her apartment, you know?" Lucie gestured to Faith who was caught off guard. She had zoned out in the middle of Luce listing off all the types of tea she had tried. Poor Julien was doing his best to feign genuine interest.

"Oh? You're not going back to the UK?" He raised an eyebrow.

"Not for a while. We're going wherever we feel like going in the moment. Gallivanting, as Luce keeps saying." Faith replied.

"I love a good gallivant. Maybe I'll have to join you for a few trips here and there, when I don't have other commitments. We usually do a couple of team trips, don't we Luce?" He said.

"We do. I think it's important that we spend time together this season more than ever, plus we can really build up individual social media presence for you guys." Lucie replied, referencing the drivers. Julien in particular.

Not once since he sat down had Julien mentioned what he had been doing with his time off. So not only was he keeping it quiet online, but now he wasn't discussing it with the girls. Did Lucie know? That was a horrible thought.

It seemed like they were back to playing their strange little games again, never giving any details and never getting too close but acting as if they were friends. It was just like when they were barely speaking but celebrated the race win together, or when Faith had pretended not to hear his heartfelt confession in his bedroom and the next morning they had stood cooking breakfast together like it was just a normal thing they did.

Lucie excused herself right when the conversation was dying out and left Faith, who had been relying on her friend to keep any awkward silences at bay, to fend for herself. Julien shuffled in his seat and she could've sworn she heard every sip and gulp of his alcohol-free beer. She had to speak up at some point.

"Back to this, huh?" She asked, biting her lip. Was this weird vibe between them going to last the whole trip? Julien looked at her longingly, like he was desperate to say something.

"This is just how it has to be for now." He said. No sign of a mutter or a mumble, just bullshit. What was that even supposed to mean? It was the '*for now*' part that baffled her the most. How long did she have to wait? How long until he started treating her the way he treated everyone else? It didn't have to be this hard.

"What about that drive?" She asked.

"After the race. I promise, and I told you I keep my promises. I've been missing the taste of you."

"You have?" She choked on her wine.

"Of course...If we weren't in such a classy establishment I'd crawl under this table and make you cum right now."

"Oops, excuse me, Sir! Pardon!" They heard Lucie returning from the bathroom and Faith swiftly changed the topic.

"I'm taking you to the funfair and you're going to have fun. I can't post content if you're looking miserable all the time." She teased and got a cheeky grin out of him.

"You're buying me candy floss."

"Obviously."

They still, in all their moments, hadn't kissed. There had to be a reason for that. A very small, insane part of her wondered what he might do if she grabbed his face and kissed him right now, but she feared he may have a heart attack and he'd be out of the race.

She wasn't often confident in someone else's feelings towards her but her intuition told her that he wouldn't pull away from her if she tried. Still, she wasn't going to cross boundaries. His walls were up for a reason, and she needed to respect that. Who ended up kissing who first was giving her a bit of a thrill, but she really hoped it was him and that it would lead to the wild sex he'd promised. She also really hoped it was immediately after the race. The less time she had to wait to feel his lips on hers, the better.



Two hours later, they had Brett with them and were on the road to Le Mans. His Australian accent boomed so loudly from the backseat that there was no need to turn the music down, although Lucie might end up deaf by the end of the journey. Faith was sat in the front with Julien who had lightened up again now that he was behind the wheel.

The drive was due to take just over two hours, but that was without the crazy levels of traffic coming out of the city. By the time they had escaped it, Brett had drifted off to sleep with Lucie's head resting on his shoulder. All that talking had worn him out.

Julien was concentrating hard on humming the ACDC track that was playing, and Faith was concentrating equally as hard on staring at his arms as he gripped the steering wheel. She let her mind wander back to their half naked encounter in the boys' trailer. It seemed like forever ago now, and if she was going to stick to her plan of not pouncing on him then she was going to have to avoid being in confined spaces with him.

"You've never been to Paris?" Julien's voice scared the life out of her and he laughed when she jumped. It was his fault she'd been distracted. He had no right to find it funny.

"No, I've only ever been to like, half of Cornwall, and London. I hitchhiked to the city when I was eighteen." She said.

“You *hitchhiked*?” Julien’s eyes were wide.

“Well, I couldn’t afford the taxi to the train station or the train itself. I grew up in a very rural part of Cornwall, barely had an internet connection or phone service let alone transport.”

“Sounds like the part of Belgium I was raised in. We’re still catching up with modern times. So much so that my Mother doesn’t even own a smart phone. You should convince Lucie to come back out to Paris in the week, before qualifying gets underway.” He suggested.

“I think I might do that. I’d like to see the sights.” She didn’t want Paris to just be a convenient place to land, she wanted to actually experience what the city had to offer. She envied every post that Bea put up of her time there, and was keen to find all the cute cafés and bakeries and climb the steps to the Sacre Coeur.

“You should go to Italy between Le Mans and Silverstone if you have time. I know you girls said you were touring the English Coast after the IEC trip, but even a weekend getaway to Rome would be worth a visit.” He spoke of it fondly.

“Why don’t you join us? We can convince Brett and Marco too while we’re at it. Italy can be our first non-work trip.” She said.

“Ah, I have somewhere to be after the big mystery holiday. I can’t stick around.” He looked nervous. Screw the mystery holiday, the biggest mystery here was where Julien was spending his time when he wasn’t with the team. A secret girlfriend was on the cards, but Faith didn’t think he was capable of that level of deception. She was all for leading a private life, but for him to not even tell his best friends where he was going? Something wasn’t adding up, or someone was lying.

“No worries.” She gave a half-hearted smile.

“We’ll definitely plan something soon, though. We could go to Thailand maybe? I haven’t been before.” Julien kept eyeing her cautiously and it made her want to scream. She

wasn't made of china, she could handle whatever it was he was clearly dying to blurt out.



The hotel was beautiful. It wasn't modern like the one they'd stayed in for Spa, nor was it right by the circuit. It was in the heart of the town and full of motorsport history. The girls were sharing a twin room and Julien was in the room next to them again. Jules was complaining that they'd keep him up with their gossiping and giggling when they stayed up late to edit content, but he admitted it was better than hearing Marco's snoring coming through from the other side.

A lot of the smaller teams hadn't arrived yet, resulting in a reduced wait for the elevator, which Faith had been told was usually chock-a-block and had a queue of ten plus people. She and Julien had glanced at each other when Brett and Lucie were moaning about it, and agreed they would make their stairwell sprints a tradition. No golf kart speeding this time around. They didn't want to be arrested by the French Police.

The sun was out and the temperature was heating up rapidly, so Faith and Julien were taking full advantage of the hotel's air conditioning system and holding their impromptu work-related meeting in the lobby. There weren't many people around but they were very conscious of the way their voices carried and echoed throughout the building, so Julien was leaning on the wall next to Faith. He lowered his head so he could speak quietly but it meant their faces were inches apart. She was struggling to stay on task.

They were discussing the idea of Julien taking over the team's *Instagram* story tomorrow. He wouldn't have any actual work to document, it was just whatever he and the boys chose to do with their day off since they were only really here because the engineers and mechanics were already out here preparing. She was showing him how to access more filters, and helping him save his favourites. In normal circumstances, everything would be pre-filmed and pre-edited on standalone



apps before posting, but that seemed like too much pressure for a post-and-go kind of guy.

“Jules, you don’t have to do this. We can ask Marco to do it instead.” She said.

“Hell no, I’m doing it. You were right back in Belgium, I’ve got to do my part in this whole online thing. I can film my coffee art in the morning.” He *almost* sounded excited.

Every once in a while, he would post a short video of himself making a coffee with patterns in the foam, a skill he had perfected over the last few months. His morning coffees were his pride and joy, and Faith’s marketing brain was thinking about how if he kept that content up, he could collaborate with a coffee brand, whether it be purely promotional or they allowed him to create his own signature blend. He could even start up his own brand. *Baby steps*.

“You know, if you wanted to get into the whole social media thing a little more on your own, just when you’re at home doing your own thing, Ford would be a great asset. People love dogs, and he’s a Husky. Lots of personality there.”

“He’d be the star of my account, wouldn’t he?”

“Absolutely.” She nodded.

“I think you’ve hit the nail on the head there, Jensen.” He smiled down at her, his hair falling in front of his eyes again. She thought he’d have cut it after Belgium and gone back to his perfectly styled short trimmed look from last season, but thankfully for her and not so thankfully for her heart rate, he had kept it longer. She was a big fan of the rough and rugged style.

“If you ever need any help, shoot me a message.” She said.

“What, I can’t ask you in person? While my face is buried between your legs?” He smirked.

“Not if you’re on the other side of the world.”

“I didn’t think of that part.”

If they didn’t get it together soon, if one of them didn’t take the plunge, they might never do it. They owed it to

themselves, right? To at least share one kiss and see if the spark really was there or if it was just about the sex. *One kiss.*

“Hello, everyone!” A shrill voice called out and they both rolled their eyes in unison. Bea strutted in wearing those damn stiletto heels again, click-clacking her way across the lobby. Lorenzo Garcia was traipsing behind her, despite previously claiming he wanted nothing to do with her.

“He’d better stay away from you.”

“He won’t come over now, you’re stood here.” Faith grabbed Julien’s arm and led him away, down the corridor to the stairwell. It was better that they skipped the elevators and minimised the risk of Bea and Lorenzo catching up with them.

“If he makes you uncomfortable, you tell me.”

“I will, don’t worry.”

“I’ve known him a very long time, but I don’t trust him with you. After that little performance he’ll be lucky if he gets an invite next year.” Julien was literally stomping up the stairs and Faith had to stop a few steps behind just to laugh.

“Calm down, Jules. No harm was done.”

“Calm down?” Julien whipped around to face her, looking exasperated. “Men like him should be held accountable for their actions. It’s not okay. In an industry with as much toxic masculinity as ours, we should all be more mindful.”

“Noted. I appreciate it.” She replied.

“You and Luce should start your own movement for women in motorsport.” He suggested.

“Those exist, don’t they? Is there any point?”

“They exist for aspiring female drivers. Just an idea, but you have a lot of women on your media team and you would gain so much traction with your following. Get Bea on board, get her to sort her priorities out a bit. The three of you would be a force to be reckoned with. Just think about about it for next season, once you’re all settled in.”

Faith stayed stood there on the stairs for a few moments, feeling a bit dumbfounded over his idea. He had a point. This was the perfect way to bring Bea back in line with her morals and beliefs, it would give Lucie a huge career boost, plus their current crew. Then there were all the girls who had grown up just like Faith, who never thought she would get here. Motorsport shouldn't be all about men. Female drivers existed within this organisation, and yet the guys still got all the focus. They had the power to shift some of the attention onto them, and it was about time they took hold of it.

## CHAPTER 18

THE TEAM WERE AT THE TRACK TAKING A FIRST LOOK AT THIS year's set up and establishing what was on the menu in the hospitality tent. According to Brett, that was one of the most important parts of the week and he had requested some very specific changes which he had to double check had been done. Lucie said she wasn't sure exactly what he was going to do if they hadn't since it was too late and he wasn't the type to kick off, but he was adamant. Marco reckoned he just wanted an excuse to sneak into the kitchen and help himself to some food even though they were scouting out the food trucks later on that evening.

Faith walked into the garage alone and was met with a warm welcome from everyone who didn't have their head buried in an engine or chassis. She didn't feel the same nerves she'd felt the first couple of times she'd come in here, and instead felt like she was playing a significant role in the team's development off the track. Their social media presence tied in with all the work they did on the actual car and out on track. It all brought attention and of course sponsors.

Lorenzo walked past the front of Revolution's garage on his way to Talos, which was unfortunately right next door. Julien had text her earlier to forewarn her, but she was sure he was more bothered than she was. The way he had behaved towards her at Julien's party happened to women all the time and while that didn't make it okay, it did mean she was sort of desensitised to the situation. He waved at her, but she ignored it.

“Trust me, he won’t be a problem.” Julien muttered under his breath as he came to a stop behind her. That statement concerned her and made her think he’d had a threatening word.

The drivers took advantage of the gap in their schedule and practiced driver changes. Faith captured some footage and sat down in the far corner, gratefully accepting a cup of coffee from Lucie regardless of the fact she had put three sugars too many in it.

Gabriel bounded in like the greatest thing in the world was happening, with a girl no older than fifteen following behind him with significantly less energy. She looked shattered.

“Faith! I have someone I’d like you to meet. This is my daughter, Alessia. She’s a huge fan.”

“Of the team?” Faith asked.

“No, darling, of you!” He clapped his hands together enthusiastically.

“Dad, you’re embarrassing me. Hi Faith, it’s nice to meet you.” Alessia shook her hand. She had pink hair and was wearing all black, with winged liner and a nose ring. Something told Faith that Gabriel had his hands full with her, although she was sure the same applied the other way around too.

“It’s lovely to meet you too, Alessia. Are you here the whole week?”

“I am. It’s the only race I go to, my Father says the race is such a historic event that there’s no way I should miss it. I will give him credit, it’s exciting.” She smiled and Faith noticed that her green eyes crinkled the exact same way Gabriel’s did, and she had his dimples. She definitely hadn’t been switched at birth.

“Well, you’ve been here more times than me!”

“Can I hang out with you for an hour? My Father has a meeting with one of the team principles so I have to keep myself entertained. I don’t want to go for another walk.” She sighed.

Faith nodded, grateful for the company. Lucie was off overseeing the work of a few of their new interns and the boys were preoccupied with the car. Having minimal content to capture today, she was impatiently waiting for their food truck adventure to roll around. She was really hoping for dirty fries, but pizza was also tempting. Or she could just have countless doughnuts, but that wouldn't fill her up quite the same and food fuelled her through late nights and early mornings.

It was nearing sunset when Julien appeared by her side. She was drifting off in a camping chair with no sign of Lucie yet. Alessia had left a while ago to eat dinner with her Father which had left Faith bored out of her mind, if she was being honest. There was only so much excitement involved in watching the drivers hop in and out of the car as it sat stationery in a quiet garage.

“Fancy that trip to the funfair?” He asked.

“Yes, but can we do food afterwards? I'm not sure it's wise to eat before going on a waltzer. The ride operators can be brutal.”

“Of course.” He laughed. “It should be quiet because most of the teams are heading back into Le Mans for dinner now. There might be a few fans floating around though, so I can't promise we won't have to stop for a few photos and autographs.”

Julien gestured for Brett and Marco to follow them and they set off to find Lucie in the paddock. She was lounging around in another team's hospitality tent with a group of media and photography interns, enjoying an iced coffee. Brett strolled in like he owned the place and whispered in her ear.

“Let's go!” She came bounding out and linked her arm through Faith's, hurrying everyone along. If Brett wanted to do his usual skip through the paddock like he had on her first day, now would be an appropriate time. They were like a group of kids who had just been let off the coach on a school trip to Disney.

The funfair was one of the best Faith had seen. It was ten times better than the run down ones they had in various towns

in Cornwall, and equal with the one Bea had taken her to in London. The skies were a soft candy floss pink with streaks of orange and the lights from the rides, the music playing over the speakers and the red and white striped stalls and marquees, had Faith feeling like she'd walked into a movie. She might even try to win a giant stuffed shark toy on the hook-a-duck.

The team made a beeline for the waltzers, where the ride attendant looked like he could do some serious damage. Faith eyed Lucie, who already looked like she might faint.

"I'm sitting this one out." She stopped walking and crossed her arms. "Look at that guy, he's plotting to kill us all."

"Death by spinning funfair ride is a good way to go." Brett said teasingly, flinging an arm around her shoulders in hopes of swaying her decision.

"Sure we can't convince you?" Marco asked.

"Absolutely not. I'll film it from back here, we don't want Faith's expensive camera flying through the air." Lucie took the camera from her and exchanged it for a GoPro, which Faith immediately handed to Julien.

"Jules, you're in charge. I'm a small human, I need to hold on with both hands. Please try to avoid crushing me." She warned the boys as they all climbed into their seats.

The ride operator started it up with just the four of them on the ride. That was the downside to coming here so early in the week; all the attention was on *their* ride experience and meant that it was likely to be more intense than usual. The ride began moving around, gradually getting faster until it was time for the first almighty spin.

Faith gripped the metal bar and braced herself for impact but it wasn't long before Marco, being quite light himself, came sailing across the seat towards her. His weight plus Brett's weight on him resulted in Faith being squashed up against Julien's muscular frame.

Julien threw his head back unable to control his laughter and put his arm around her so that their bodies would move

together with the next spin. Marco scuttled back to his left, towards Brett who was laughing so hard he looked like he might actually cry.

As the ride slowed down, Faith tried to look for Lucie with blurred vision but could not for the life of her work out where she was stood. The ride operator looked immensely proud of himself as they stumbled off the platform in a fit of giggles, falling into each other. Brett tripped down the steps and knocked into Faith, who promptly fell into Julien and sent the two of them tumbling onto the grass. They sprawled out, legs intertwined and arms stretched out.

“Uh, guys, where’s Mars?” Brett asked.

They scanned the area and spotted him at the back of a marquee, dry heaving into a wheelie bin. Faith and Julien leapt up from the ground and ran to him, but he batted them away.

“I’m fine. It’s been a while since I went to a funfair.” He mumbled. A racing driver, who sped around a track at over two hundred miles per hour, couldn’t handle a funfair ride. Faith tried to hide her smirk until she noticed nobody else was bothering to hide theirs.

“Hey, guys!” Lucie ran to catch up with Faith and Julien on their way over to the dodgems.

“What’s up?” Faith turned her head to face her, and her hair blew in front of her eyes in the light breeze. She had her hands full with cameras and phones, so Julien reached out and brushed it away from her face. A few strands caught on her eyelashes and he tentatively removed them. Faith did her best not to look at him like he was from another planet.

“I got some amazing shots of you two laying on the grass, is it okay if I post them? It’s perfect behind the scenes footage.” She looked to Julien for confirmation, already knowing that Faith couldn’t care less.

“Go for it.” Julien smiled. He was still giddy from the waltzer but he was looking down at Faith like she was the only person there.

“Wait, really?” She asked.



“Really.” He nodded.

She snapped out of her trance when the others joined them, Marco looking much brighter than he had a couple of minutes ago. Lucie edited photos while she walked, applying filters and making a few adjustments. The colours of the funfair were rich and vibrant, and the red tied in perfectly with the colour of the team’s uniform and livery. Even Faith was wearing a red denim jacket to fit the theme, which had been unintentional but might have to become a regular thing.

Faith refused to go on the ferris wheel. Julien offered to stay with her, but Marco told him there was no way he was going up on his own. It was only the first day but this week was becoming more unpredictable than she had been prepared for. Perhaps it was just Julien’s adrenaline influencing him, or the pure magic of being at Le Mans, but Faith’s intuition told her it was far more than that. This was him letting go of his fears and embracing the little moments between them. Just as he had promised in the soft light of his bedroom five weeks ago.



Julien couldn’t take his eyes off Faith as she walked ahead of him, back to the paddock. They were going back to the hotel after stuffing their faces with burgers and fries. He’d had avocado with his burger so he didn’t feel so guilty for eating so unhealthily, but that hadn’t stopped him taking a bite of Faith’s doughnut. How was he supposed to resist something so soft and warm and doughy? It was heavenly.

He also couldn’t resist spending ninety euros on winning a stuffed shark for her after she had tried her best to do it herself. He walked away angrily insisting that hook-a-duck was rigged, but nonetheless couldn’t wipe the smile off his face when she gratefully took it from him and asked for a name suggestion. They settled on Mustang, taking inspiration from the name Julien had given his dog, Ford.

He was in a complete world of his own when Lucie interrupted with her burning questions. She wanted to know if he'd had a change of heart about Faith, following on from their conversation at his party. Little did she know, he had. He wasn't fully ready yet, but he was working on it. Going with the flow. Rather than having walls up, he had fences. Wooden ones that could be knocked down with a little less force.

"I don't want to take a giant leap until I know I have the capacity to let her in all the way."

"What are you classing as a giant leap?"

"A kiss."

"*Oh*. Yeah, if the sparks are flying before you make that sort of physical contact then one kiss and you'll both be head over heels."

He let out a little grunt in agreement, tempted to tell her what they'd already done, and watched as Brett wrestled Mustang the shark from Faith's arms and attacked Marco with it. Julien felt a pang of jealousy even though he knew Brett could sense their connection from a mile off and would never betray him. The hard truth was, Julien already *was* head over heels for her.

"Maybe this week isn't the time for it. I think I need to have an honest, open conversation with her first. I said a few things in Belgium when she was asleep, but there was so much I didn't say even when she couldn't hear me. It's like I don't want to admit certain things to myself, let alone Faith." Julien sighed.

"You're allowed to feel things, Jules. It doesn't make you a terrible person, it makes you human. There are worse people you could be drawn to." Lucie tucked herself under his arm.

"You know it's not just me I've got to worry about." He said, hugging her appreciatively. He would give her similar advice about Brett but that connection had been building for years. It would take a lot more effort to make those two budge.

"Everyone just wants you to be happy. It's about time." She said.

Julien bit the inside of his cheek, once again unsure what he should do about the battle between his head and his heart when his head was constantly going back and forth. Lucie was right, he deserved to be happy, but it might end up being at other people's expense and he didn't want to hurt anyone. All he knew was that he was getting closer to making a decision. Kiss or no kiss, there were some things Faith deserved to know.

As they got closer to the team's garage, Gabriel caught his attention. He looked nervous and Julien had a sinking feeling.

"Can I have a word, Moretz?" He asked.

"Sure." Julien led him to one side, out of earshot of the team who were already halfway down the paddock by the time Gabriel worked up the courage to start speaking.

"It's about the trip next week. I was actually fighting to move the location, but the other executives wanted it to be at this specific resort because they're offering a huge discount, exclusive access to the entire place and no fear of noise complaints or trespassers." He said, his confidence knocked down a peg or two.

"Let me guess, this resort is an island."

"Yes..."

"An island you knew I wasn't happy to go to for work events." Julien clenched his fist because he didn't want to take it out on his boss. He had already said he fought to get it moved, and the other execs had no idea what his problem was with this specific island.

"Oahu." He nodded. "I'm sorry, Jules. I tried."

"It's okay, Gabriel. Honestly." Gabriel apologised again and said his goodbyes, rushing to track down Jasper.

The thing was, nothing about going to Hawaii was okay. Julien had just come from there, and he had promised certain people there that he would visit every single time. They would be able to see that the organisation was there from social media and he couldn't sneak away without being asked where

he was going, because where would he possibly have to be on an *island* in the middle of a work event?

He drove back to the hotel solo and left the others to fend for themselves. He couldn't be in anyone's company tonight, he had too many inner demons to fight. He could just not go, but that would lead to more questions. Plus it would be breaking a work commitment which he had only done once in all his years of racing.

He had to suck it up this time. It was all on him, if he was honest with himself. While he was so busy trying to protect people, he had ended up alienating himself and leading two separate lives. Lucie was right, he couldn't do it forever.

He crashed onto his bed and kicked his shoes off. Digging his phone out of his pocket, he looked through Faith's *Instagram*. He wanted to read the posts her fans were always going on about. If they knew her so accurately through social media, her profile must be worth an in-depth scroll. A significant amount of posts were similar to those he saw on his own profile or Brett's, Lucie's or Marco's. There was even a photo of her and Luce posing with Ford at the party.

Their lives were aligning very quickly, the only difference was Julien always had somewhere to be but Faith could go wherever the wind took her. As he scrolled further, he read every post in her voice. As if she was living inside his head. She spoke to her followers like they were her best friends, and he could feel the warmth of her personality through her written words just the same as he could in person.

He could be honest with this girl, he knew he could. There didn't seem to be a bad bone in her body. There was no manipulation, no little white lies or want for anything other than genuine friends. He had been terrified that she would be just like every other woman who threw themselves at him. She hadn't done that. She was reserved, but unable to deny their chemistry.

He got up and looked out of the window, wondering if they were back yet. Their car pulled up a few moments later and he watched her get out, Mustang in tow. She clung to that shark

for dear life and it confirmed everything he needed to know about her. She was nothing but a sweetheart. He sighed and sat back down as she disappeared from view. He could do it. He could take the leap and kiss her and everything would be okay, but there was always that tiny chance that it wouldn't be. The chance that she would get hurt even if nobody else did. So he could do it, but he wouldn't.

## CHAPTER 19

THIS MORNING'S TEAM BREAKFAST WAS TAKING PLACE AT A café opposite the hotel and was a couple of hours later than usual. The lie-in had been needed. The girls had stayed up until three a.m working on the funfair content, not because there was a deadline but because the footage was beautifully shot and they were excited to share it with the fans.

Bringing Bea's film camera, which they had been given permission to keep hold of, had given them photos that looked like they were from another decade, and Lucie had made sure to capture some for their own personal keepsakes. The world wasn't ready to see the way Julien looked into Faith's eyes as they shared a cardboard tray of chilli-topped fries. Faith hadn't been quite ready for that, either.

"Please come with us. You guys aren't even supposed to be here yet, you just came early for the hell of it. There's a whole city waiting for us, and Faith hasn't been before. Don't be selfish." Lucie was begging all three drivers to join them for an action-packed day in Paris with an overnight stay.

"Fine! But when you girls go shopping, I'm going to magically disappear into the *Rolex* store." Brett scoffed at the thought of being dragged into *Gucci* or *Prada*.

"Well one of you boys has to come shopping with us. Luce and I don't speak any French, remember? Mars and Jules are both fluent." Faith chimed in to back her friend up, but in reality it was mostly because the girls planned on buying so much they were going to need not only another suitcase between them, but three extra sets of hands to get everything

back to the hotel tonight. She had no idea how they would get to the top of the Eiffel Tower with all of these bags but that was a problem for future them.

“I don’t know if I’m going to come, girls...” Julien was hesitant as he sipped his coffee and Faith’s heart dropped. She didn’t want him to miss out on things just because he wasn’t fully comfortable around her, and she knew that’s what it was. He had nothing in his schedule, and yesterday had been enthusiastically telling them about the boat trip down the River Seine.

“Come on, Jules.” Faith nudged his knee gently. “What else are you going to do? Sit alone in the hotel bar?” She smiled at him and he held her gaze for a moment, not saying a word.

“Okay.”



Lucie wandered over with a map when they got off the metro. They had driven into the city but abandoned the car at their last-minute hotel so they could have a more authentic tourist experience, much to the displeasure of Brett, who hated being squashed up against strangers in the summer heat.

“There’s a place just over there where we can rent bikes.” She pointed to a row of bicycles and gestured for everyone to follow.

Faith picked up a helmet and tucked her sunglasses over the neckline of her t-shirt, not wanting to wear them because she was truthfully terrified of cycling in such a busy city and dark lenses weren’t going to help. Brett had beaten them all to it and hopped onto his bike, already causing havoc and narrowly avoiding people on the pavement.

“Can someone help me? I can’t get it to fit quite right.” Faith frowned at her helmet. She had quite a small head which meant she needed maximum adjustments, but it was tricky. Julien took pity on her and sorted it out.

“Safety first.” He said, patting her on the head with just enough force to earn him a scowl.

Faith and Jules barely had time to get on their bikes before everyone was pedalling off the pavement and onto the road, giving Faith the fright of her life as people began hitting their horns. She swore they did it on purpose, but then again it was such a frequent occurrence in Paris that maybe they actually had something to complain about. Like the Fiat that narrowly avoided smashing into the car in front of them.

They took a break on the steps of the Musée d’Orsay after a speedy tour of the museum, narrated by Marco, and indulged in Nutella-coated crêpes from a nearby food kiosk. The sun was beating down on them and a jazz band was busking. The girls got up and danced, placing a few euros each in the saxophone player’s case.

When the girls finally sat down, they were worn out from all the activity and in dire need of a drink of water. Before they could say a word, Julien handed them a bottle each from the kiosk they’d got their desserts from. They took them gratefully and leaned back on the steps, soaking up the sunshine while letting the breeze hit them.

A huge gust of wind would be lovely right about now, but they would just have to wait patiently for the air conditioning of Louis Vuitton. Or in Lucie’s case, not so patiently. She had been pleading with the group to make their way to the Champs-Élysées since they left the museum but everyone else was desperate for food and rest. They had abandoned their bikes already, realising it was probably safer and less stressful to catch the metro or just walk.

“Did you guys know Bea lives in Paris?” Faith asked, wondering where her apartment was.

“Who doesn’t?” Julien muttered. “Sorry, I’m being bitter. I can’t help it but you know, she’s just...” He fumbled for the right word.

“A bitch?” Faith finished for him.



“Uh-” He stuttered as if he wasn’t allowed to say it now, given the fact that the girls were on civil speaking terms.

“It’s alright, we’re going to be having a long overdue conversation. I’ll be damned if I let her carry on like this.” She tried to reassure him but he didn’t look convinced. Nobody did except Lucie, who had heard the stories of their University days and was encouraging a reconciliation. Their *ABBA* performance at Julien’s party had provided a stepping stone to friendship.

“Where have you girls got on your travel bucket list, then?” Marco asked.

“Croatia, Iceland, Greece, Dubai, Nashville, Vegas, Switzerland, South Africa. The list goes on and on.” Lucie said.

The good thing about this job was that they were on such a strict schedule that wasn’t likely to change a lot year in year out, and it meant they could plan long term. The only things they needed to make time for were events for sponsors and teams, but even those were such a huge deal they usually had a few months notice.

“I was telling Faith we should all go to Thailand together, maybe at the end of the season so we have a few weeks to explore Indonesia at the same time.” Julien added.

“Yes! I’ve always wanted to go back there.” Lucie eagerly agreed.

Faith wanted to suggest a trip to Melbourne too. She wondered if her Dad had gone back when he’d left Cornwall. Although she didn’t know a lot about him, she knew he had the travel bug. That was how he had met Andrea when they were eighteen and more than likely where Faith had got it from. It was just that the environment she grew up in made her crave genuine connections and a close-knit family, which he evidently had not.

“How are you two going to get by speaking minimal foreign languages?” Marco laughed.

“We will very politely request that you three come on as many trips as you possibly can. Mars and Brett, there are zero excuses for you. You boys travel together all the time so it will make no difference if you have an extra couple of people tagging along.” Lucie was insistent that they make some team traditions and give Faith a tour of all the places she hadn’t yet visited, *Revolution Racing* style. Which she was certain equalled chaos, judging by the trouble they caused even in a standard working week.

There was a buzz among the group as they talked about where they would go first and when, but it didn’t take a psychologist to work out that Julien was significantly more reserved each time specific dates were brought up. Faith watched him for a moment and sighed inwardly when she saw his smile falter yet again at the mention of Christmas in Norway.

“What’s wrong?” She asked.

“Hmm?” He tore his attention from the others.

“You’ve gone very quiet all of a sudden. Just checking everything’s alright.”

“Uh, I’m just not sure how much I’ll be able to travel with you all this season. I have other commitments, I need to work out a balance.” He was trying so hard to play it off like it wasn’t a big issue, but his face suggested otherwise.

“I’m sure we can figure something out.” She smiled warmly at him and he seemed to relax a little. Not much, but enough so that he didn’t look so downtrodden and miserable.

“I’ll make Thailand happen, for sure. Consider that one a promise because there’s no way you’re going without me and showing me photos of everything I missed out on.” He laughed softly when her eyes lit up. Thailand was the one she was most excited for, and had been since he’d put the feelers out there.

“Sounds like a deal.”

As they started preparing to leave the steps of the museum, Julien got a phone call. He grinned at the name on the screen

and leapt up, taking the call out of earshot of the rest of them. Faith decided to leave the topic of traveling alone for the rest of this trip, because she knew he wasn't going to give even the slightest hint as to what his other commitments were.

She feared that he was still viewing her as someone who was only trying to get close to take advantage of him and the kind of life he could offer, and it probably didn't help that she was still so accepting of Bea. She didn't know how to prove to him that she wasn't anything like the other women he had dated, to prove that she wanted him and not his money.



It wasn't until they were sitting around feeling like they'd just eaten enough for the entire race organisation that they wished they still had access to those rental bikes. The trouble with Europe was the endless availability of pasta dishes. They had almost opted for seafood tonight, but Marco was trialing a vegan diet and they didn't think it was fair to expect him to eat an entire meal of side dishes and nothing else. He had been happy to fill up on desserts but the girls had insisted that the Italian across the street was a good alternative.

They hadn't steered the boys wrong, clearly. Brett was currently collapsed in his chair, head thrown back as he exclaimed that he was more stuffed than a turkey. Lucie tutted and scolded him, telling him that the place they were in was very classy and he was making the place look shabby. Faith didn't dare admit that she still felt out of place in environments like this.

Lucie thrived on getting all dolled up so she looked like she belonged, but Faith was still a joggers and trainers, sunglasses shoved on top of her head kind of girl. Julien always gave off the vibe that he was important and people should be queuing up outside to meet him, which apparently happened to the boys quite often.

It was the price they paid for their careers, but the only complaint any of them had was that more often than not, when

fans wanted photos with them out and about, they caught them mid-mouthful and posted rather unflattering photos.

“Shall we go, boys?” Lucie prodded Brett’s arm out of fear that he was going to drift off to sleep and his mouth would drop open in the middle of the restaurant.

According to Lucie’s digital map, which she had now favoured above the huge paper one they had started out with, they were only a ten minute walk from the Eiffel Tower where they were heading next. They were following on from there to the River Seine for a boat tour to end their Parisian adventure.

“I’m exhausted, guys. I don’t know if I can survive all those steps.” Faith complained before they’d even taken a left turn at the end of the street. This was the problem with cities; everything seemed so close until it was time to walk.

“Come on.” Julien stopped walking and gestured for her to walk towards him. She had no idea what he was hinting at, and she stood there dumbfounded. The others had kept walking and left them a few feet away from the front of the restaurant, amongst streams of tourists.

“What?” She blinked at him.

“Get on my back, muppet.” He rolled his eyes but she giggled at the fact he had picked up on her British vocabulary. How could he make such a ridiculous word sound so sexy?

“Are you sure? It’s a long walk.” She admired his muscles and decided he could definitely handle her weight, even if only for half the journey. The soles of her feet needed this.

“I’ve trained for this moment.” Julien bent his knees, bracing for impact as she jumped onto his back. If Faith still went to music festivals, he would be the perfect companion with those shoulders and all that height he had going for him.

“Onward.” She teased.

Julien carried her all the way to the ticket booth at the base of the Eiffel Tower, not stopping once. When everyone noticed they were flagging behind, they turned and Lucie’s camera was immediately zooming in on them. They willingly obliged with Julien posing dramatically, like they were on a catwalk.

Faith was doing her very best not only to not fall, but also to shake the expression that she'd had the entire time, because while Julien was facing away from her and wouldn't catch it, their friends and that camera lens most definitely would. She was very aware that she looked like she was fighting some serious hormones.

Her arms were wrapped around his neck but it was his hands on her thighs that were the biggest distraction. It didn't help that he was absentmindedly humming, which she could feel as she clung onto him. It was driving her crazy to the point that she almost begged him to put her on the ground.

The glass floor at the top of the tower was far scarier than Faith had imagined it would be. She had thought the excitement of being in Paris would detract from the fact that she felt like it was going to smash and they were all going to fall to their deaths, but unfortunately she was stood to one side, hands shaking and nausea rising through her body.

Everyone went and laid down, taking selfies and commenting on how small the rest of the world looked from up here. Faith refused to get close enough to agree with them, and insisted that she was fine where she was.

"Jensen! Get your arse over here." Brett yelled from the floor, surrounded by shopping bags.

"Do you trust me?" Julien took her hand.

"Jules..." She tried to resist but he was already leading her over to Brett like he was leading a lamb to slaughter.

"On the count of three, we're going to sit." He said, stopping when they were stood next to Brett.

Admittedly, Julien started lowering his body to the floor before she did and ended up yanking her down with him, but regardless, she let her body relax and followed his actions until she was laying between him and Brett. It took a few reassuring squeezes of the hand from the pair of them before she was ready to look down, but when she did she was blown away. The people below looked like teeny tiny ants. A mere twenty minutes ago, that had been them.

Julien turned to face her, looking equally as mesmerised. Suddenly the view underneath them wasn't quite as interesting as the view in front of her and he had a glint in his eye that was making her body tingle all over. Faith felt her cheeks turning pink and turned to look at Brett, Marco and Lucie instead, only to find that all three of them had disappeared. She couldn't handle another moment of staring into Julien's eyes.

"Can we go to the gift shop?" She pleaded.

"Yeah, I want to buy a magnet." He said.

She couldn't recall seeing magnets on either the indoor or outdoor fridge at his house. He was a minimalist when it came to decor and she would've assumed that he found magnets as tacky as she found postcards, which left her with the question of who the magnet was for. She was being dramatic, she knew she was. It was a magnet. A lot of people liked magnets. If there was a woman in his life she was sure he would step up his game and at least buy her a t-shirt.

They found their friends gathered around a shelf of teddy bears with *I Heart Paris* shirts on, gushing over how cute they were and insisting that the team needed a cute new mascot. The bears were too generic but it had sent them running wild with ideas and they were throwing different animals into the mix.

Lucie and Marco were favouring a zebra but Brett was insisting it wasn't cool enough and they needed a shark. Faith's shark from the funfair, to be specific, despite Mustang being gigantic. She still wasn't sure how she was going to transport him and was succumbing to the idea of holding him on her lap for every flight in the future. If she didn't have a home now then neither did he.

Leaving the shop in time for the sunset, the crowds had grown by almost double since they arrived. There wasn't a lot of space at the edge so they got separated and Faith and Julien found themselves alone and gripping onto each other as impatient tourists shoved past on a hunt for the perfect photo opportunities.

They managed to find a gap, but Julien was left with no choice but to stand directly behind Faith, body flush against hers. He put his arms on either side of her and held onto the barrier in front of them so nobody could knock into her, and his muscular frame meant that he was solid as a rock. They were not about to risk a repeat of the autograph session at Spa when she had been sent flying. Her ribs were very much safe under Julien's protection.

"Does this mean you're done hating me?" She mumbled so nobody around them could hear.

"I never hated you, Faith. God, my life would be so much easier if I did hate you. Sometimes I wish I did, I wish that I could, but it's quite the opposite." He mumbled into her hair and she leaned her head back so it was resting on his chest. If not for the picturesque view of the city, she would close her eyes and soak in the feeling.

"It feels like you do half the time. Like you would rather be anywhere else in the world than around me." She said.

"I have to distance myself from you sometimes, Jensen. You send my head in a spin. It gets to be too much."

"I'm too much?" She asked shyly.

"No, sweetheart, the way you make me feel is. You could never be too much. I haven't felt like this for a very long time, and it's scaring me half to death. If we're going to do this, I need to approach with caution and make sure it's real."

"Okay." Faith agreed but she didn't know if she completely understood.

It sounded like he was telling her that she was his endgame, and yet she was confused about where they stood following on from this. Was he going to push her away again, was he going to allow these moments between them to carry on, or was he going to make a strong move towards her?

He was making their whole connection feel very heavy on her shoulders but the kiss he placed on the top of her head filled her with comfort. She came to her usual conclusion of *time will tell*.

## CHAPTER 20

IT WAS THE MORNING OF RACE DAY AND JULIEN HAD successfully been avoiding Faith unless they were filming for the team's channel or they were in the garage at the same time. He didn't go for lunch with her and Lucie, skipped dinner at the hotel in favour of a quick visit to team hospitality, and spent breaks in the trailer or in his room at the back of the garage.

Marco knew something was up and would happily tell Julien he was being a massive idiot. It was what Brett and Lucie had been telling him, what he'd been telling himself, and even what Gabriel had suggested when he'd witnessed an exchange between Faith and Julien two days ago. Unfortunately, none of it took away the risks.

"I thought you two had a great time in Paris? You looked like you were hitting it off." Marco pondered, t-shirt stuck halfway over his head.

"It was perfect." Julien stated bluntly. Grabbing his own top from the trailer's tiny closet, he pulled it on angrily.

"So...what's the issue?" Marco frowned.

"We're going to Hawaii next week." Julien sighed.

"I don't understand why you don't just lay it all out there with her, let her make a decision for herself. You keep doing what you think is best for everyone, but have you actually asked anyone other than yourself?" Mars looked so sweet and innocent stood in the doorway.



“This is more than just wanting to go on a couple of dates and see where things go, Mars. One kiss is going to seal the deal.”

“Oh dude, you’re so screwed.” Marco exhaled.

He was right, Julien was in deep trouble. He couldn’t plant one kiss on that girl without it shifting their whole world, because the sparks would develop into full blown fireworks.



The autograph session at Le Mans put the one at Spa to shame in every aspect. There were more people, there was more shoving and shouting, and the pressure was on Faith and Lucie to keep up with content while avoiding injury. They tried to remain safe on the right side of the table but there were moments that they had to sneak around to the other side. Security had been increased too, but the boys still took it upon themselves to step in and calm down the aggressive middle aged men who insisted on battling everyone else out of the way instead of just waiting.

They were in the safety of the garage again with an iced coffee each, which they were grateful for as the temperature rose and the first wave of tiredness started to hit. Faith had dragged Bea out of the paddock to find the iced coffee truck half an hour ago so they could have a friendly chat away from everyone.

She was saving the serious friendship development stuff for after race week was over and they were jetting off to wherever the organisation had planned, hoping that the environment they were in then would help soften the impact of the harsh words she had for her. They were words that needed to be said, but the goal was to help Bea realise it wasn’t too late to undo some damage.

Julien had been acting strange for the last couple of days but so had the other boys. Lucie told her to put it down to the stress of the race, after all it was the biggest race of the year

and the pressure was on a level that nobody else could possibly fathom, but Faith knew that some of his behaviour was because of her. *Again.*

She was counting on the trip to change things between them for the better, with all the stress of Le Mans over and done with and the next six weeks of relaxing to look forward to. For five of those weeks he could stay away from her in terms of physical distance and sort his head out. She didn't need to sort hers out, she knew what she wanted. A chance. No more of this hot and cold nonsense.

Faith stepped out of the garage to stand in the sun for a second, hoping the short burst of vitamin D would calm her nerves and give her a boost to push her through the next couple of hours until their next scheduled coffee run. Catching her off guard, Lorenzo Garcia ran down the side of the Revolution trailer and approached her, hands up in defence.

"Faith? Can we talk?" He asked. To give him credit, he looked terrified of her. As he should.

"Sure."

"I'm sorry for my behaviour at Moretz's party last month. I honestly didn't mean to make you uncomfortable, I just got a little over-confident. I should've backed off as soon as you hinted that you weren't into it." Lorenzo held eye contact with her. Most people who apologised stared at the ground out of shame.

"Thank you for your apology, I appreciate it. For what it's worth, my opinion of you hasn't changed drastically." She smiled.

"Thanks for not setting the boys on me."

"Oh, they tried. Jules especially." Faith warned.

"Speaking of Jules...He's pretty great, you know. We've all seen the way you two interact, and I just thought I should say he deserves a good woman like you. We're all sick of getting walked all over, but he's...what's the saying?" Lorenzo paused and his brow creased, the language barrier hitting him. "A teddy bear."

“Hmm.” Faith nodded in agreement. She wished Lorenzo good luck in the race and went back into the garage.

If Julien Moretz was anything less than a genuine, kind man who cared deeply about his friends, this would be an easy fix. If he had remained as arrogant as she first thought, she could put him out of her head and insist that she was better off without him and more importantly she could find better, but Faith had tried to date before.

She'd had summer romances in Cornwall with guys who had travelled there from various parts of the world, been wined and dined by businessmen and gone to museums and gigs with artist-types in London, but nothing could match the way she felt the first time she met Jules. Letting go wasn't an option. It would be easier to give things a shot and deal with any heartbreak later. The *what if* was eating her alive.

Busying themselves with posting and responding to comments, Faith and Lucie stayed out of everyone's way once the race had begun. The first few laps were stressful and all eyes were on the TV screens, but once Julien had set the pace and put a decent gap between Revolution and Talos, the garage settled down a little. Faith had no idea how the mechanics and engineers stayed so focused for such a long period of time, because for them, the race extended far beyond the twenty four hours. She was struggling to keep her eyes open an hour in.

Once again they were having to focus the social media content on Brett and Marco because every time the camera came out, Julien magically disappeared in a puff of smoke. Thankfully he had been cooperating prior to two days ago so he had been a huge feature of the funfair posts and the Paris footage which were a hit with the fans, and Gabriel and Jasper.

Even Jasper was getting involved today, asking the girls if they wanted any quotes from him or any action shots of him scowling at the stats or talking into the radio. He was loving the less formal approach.

Faith really didn't want the Brett/Marco to Julien ratio to be obvious to the point where people were commenting on it and Gabriel started asking questions, so Lucie was taking it

upon herself to go on a secret photo mission this evening and hope that after Julien's nap he would be a lot more willing to shoot some video content with Faith. That included her tagging along to hospitality with him and getting a personal room tour, which currently seemed so far out of reach that she could sense an intense screaming match right around the corner. It was lucky for him that Brett had already committed to the trailer tour.

Faith perched herself in a chair to the side of the garage and took everything in, waiting for her own followers to flood the comments on her personal feed. Her heart still leapt every time the cars passed the pit lane, or when someone got close to overtaking in another class. It was a feeling she didn't think she would ever get tired of, and even from outside the car she could understand why drivers risked their lives out on the track. Everything about it was addictive. The adrenaline racing through her bloodstream was a feeling like no other.

When Julien re-entered the garage and swapped with Marco so the Italian driver could carry out his first stint, Faith felt anger wash over her. He sat down next to her without a word, and she didn't dare open her mouth out of fear she would wind up lecturing him about professionalism again. The last time she'd done that, during their heated discussion in the trailer back in Belgium, she had less ground to stand on. She was new to the team, nobody had seen what she could do. Things were different now, but arguing with him wouldn't solve anything. Julien was a grown man, he knew he needed to play an equal role.

The two of them were called over by Jasper to look at the stats, freeing them from their awkward silence filled only by the squeak of the camping chairs they'd been sitting in and the occasional roar of an engine. Marco had just set a record for the fastest lap but Talos's rookie driver, Lucas Fitzpatrick, was catching up rapidly. The tension should have been building, but these drivers were abnormally zen.

That was what made them the best of the best. You could throw anything at them and they took it in their stride, pushing themselves to the absolute limit and refusing to crack under

pressure. Faith had no idea why the emotional battle Julien was having about their situation was throwing him off his game so much, but as long as he didn't take it out on track, the team wouldn't be affected.

“Bloody hell, I've got a lot to live up to out there, haven't I?” Brett said.

“Not at all, Anderson. Just a lap record *and* my record from two years ago.” Julien teased. She liked it when the boys let themselves get cocky and Jasper encouraged it based on the sentiment that some healthy competition never hurt anyone.

Faith sighed and pressed her hand against her temple, willing her headache to go away. Perhaps she had overdone it on the coffee too early on. It was barely seven o'clock in the evening and they had a long way to go, but she didn't know how she could stay awake without the aid of caffeine in her system. A walk in the fresh air with a light evening breeze may have to suffice, but first she needed to hunt down a jacket.

“You're cold.” Julien commented, pointing out the goosebumps that had appeared on her arm. They weren't just a result of the way he brushed up against her in the middle of his conversation with Brett, however. She was actually getting cold, but it was too warm for her team jacket which was hanging over her chair.

“Only a little, I'm fine.”

“Go get my hoodie, it's on my bed.”

“Jules—” She tried to argue.

“Go.” He instructed, giving her a gentle shove when she didn't move.

She started heading towards the back of the garage where there was a corridor consisting of the drivers' rooms and Jasper's office. Faith wasn't sure why the boys didn't just share one room since they were never all in it at the same time, or why they didn't use the sofa bed in the trailer right outside for such a short sleep, but she guessed that was what happened when you were a valued, world-class athlete. You were given

special treatment. She cast a sorrowful look at the camping chairs she and Lucie would be sleeping in.

The hoodie was waiting for her exactly where he said it would be, looking very warm and inviting. Significantly more so than its owner. The bed was practically crying out for her to crawl into it and steal a quick twenty minutes of peace and quiet, but with things between her and Julien as sensitive as they were, she didn't dare. He'd be in here any moment for his nap and she highly doubted he was up for a spooning session.

She yanked the hoodie over her head and inhaled the smell of his cologne, wrapping her arms around herself. It was too big for her but it would do for a walk to the food trucks at the opposite end of the paddock. She had promised Lucie she would get them a pizza to share and she was desperate for some chips and mayo. The girls were starving and the constant adrenaline running through them was making them burn off food a lot faster. On her way out, Faith turned and knocked into Julien.

"Sorry!" She squeaked out.

"My bad, I thought you'd have heard me coming. Forgot how loud it is around here." He replied. "That drowns you really, doesn't it?"

"Fits fine. I like oversized."

"Looks like you're not wearing anything." He glanced down at her bare legs, his gaze lingering a few seconds too long. "You know, if you're cold..." He raised an eyebrow.

"Where is this going, Jules?"

"I can keep you warm in ways that don't involve wearing my hoodie." He nodded at the bed behind her. The camp bed.

"The walls aren't even real walls, Julien."

"You'll have to keep quiet then, won't you?" He smirked and pushed her backwards. "I'll keep my hand over your mouth, don't worry."

Well aware of what was awaiting her, Faith couldn't stop herself from smiling back at him as she lifted the hoodie over

her head. She was wearing a team shirt under it and Julien took a second to admire her in his team colours.

“Red looks good on me, don’t you think?”

“Mmm. I can’t disagree with you, Jensen. But you look far better naked. Take it all off for me.”

Faith kept walking backwards towards the bed, stripping down to her underwear. One look at Julien’s expression and she knew what he wanted her to do. Her red lace thong found itself on the floor of the garage, amongst their team shirts. “Where do you want me?” She spoke softly, afraid she’d be heard.

“I’m going to fuck you. Right now.”

“*Here?*”

“Yes, here. You’re in my territory, Faith. I’m going to fuck you on that camp bed, and it’s going to help me win.”

He didn’t need to say anything else. His racing suit was off before she could even get herself situated on the bed, and Julien was stood in front of her with his dick in his hand, stroking his already-hard length as he held her gaze.

“I want your pretty little mouth on my cock.”

Faith moved towards him and did as he asked, licking his tip and tasting his pre-cum. She usually hated giving head. She found it boring and tiresome, but it was different with Julien. She wanted to please him. She wanted to do for him what he had done for her multiple times already. She ran her tongue up and down his length a few times, then closed her mouth around him fully.

“Fuck me, that feels so good.” He moaned and placed his hands on her head, gently forcing himself down her throat. Instead of letting Faith do all the work, Julien took control as she took every inch of him in her mouth, her moans vibrating against him. She looked up right as his eyes rolled to the back of his head. He might think he was in control but Faith knew she had him right where she wanted him. In this moment, in a tiny room at the back of the garage, he was hers.

Before he could get too carried away, Julien stepped backwards with a dark look in his eye. Faith stood up to meet him, holding his gaze and removing her bra. She had worn red for him today, knowing he would be wanting a release before the big race. They hadn't been intimate since Spa, but of course he could've been intimate with literally any other woman on the planet during their break. She didn't want to think about them. Not now, not ever.

Julien turned them around and sat on the edge of the bed, grabbing her hips and lowering Faith onto his lap. Seconds after his lips were on her neck, she was grinding against him. His hands traveled up her back but she stopped him before he got to his destination, aware they didn't have much time until someone found them.

She guided his hand between her legs, her attention on the pulsating feeling below. She shivered as he made contact, pressing his palm against her while he kissed her neck. She began to move her hips, matching his pace and moaning. As she threw her head back in pleasure, he moved faster, knowing just from the two times he'd touched her before exactly what would send her over the edge. But Julien didn't let her get that far.

"Not yet." He breathed out. Removing his hand, he moved them until he was laying down with her still on top of him. Foreplay was his speciality, but there wasn't time right now. He was on a mission, and he couldn't get behind the wheel until he had completed it. "You have no idea what you do to me."

"I really should've taken you more seriously when you said you were going to do this."

"What, you thought I was all talk? This might not be one of the locations I promised, but I am insanely sexually frustrated and it's your fault."

"Allow me to fix that." Faith lowered herself onto him, catching him off guard. With her being on top, Julien had little to no control over her movements and she was going to take full advantage of that. She craved control in the bedroom



sometimes too, and the ball had been in Julien's court from day one. It was her turn.

Faith ran her hands across his bare chest as she rode him, playing with her breasts and moving faster the more he moaned. So much for keeping quiet, but what did it matter? There were NDA's for a reason. The noises coming from the back of Julien's throat were driving her crazy and she knew she wouldn't last much longer. He pulled her closer and his teeth grazed the sensitive skin of her neck. She whimpered, his hands roaming every inch of her body.

“Good girl, Faith.”

She slowed to an agonising pace, lifting herself off him almost completely before sinking back down again. Repeating this a few times, she watched his jaw clench and she knew he was close. Faith gasped when she felt Julien's hand on her clit, moving his fingers in circular motions. He was too good at this.

“Fuck, Jules...”

Julien closed his eyes as she sped up again, bouncing up and down on his cock. Unable to hold it in any longer, Faith's body began to twitch. She felt the release as he buried himself deep inside her and they came simultaneously. She swore she could see stars as he held her close to him, panting in her ear while she shook against him. Sitting up to enjoy the view and allow him to admire his own, she couldn't help but laugh as he lay there with a a sleepy smile on his face.

“So worth the risk of being caught.” He breathed out. “And do you know what's really sexy?” He asked as he sat up, placing a gentle kiss on her collarbone.

“What?”

“I get to spend the whole race knowing you're full of my cum.”

## CHAPTER 21

FAITH AWOKE IN HER CAMPING CHAIR AT SIX O'CLOCK THE next morning with Julien's jacket draped over her. She scrunched her nose up and squinted, the bright lights of the garage a little too intense so early in the day. She had only slept for three hours while Lucie took over filming, but she felt strangely well rested thanks to her's and Julien's antics.

Her legs were hanging over the side of the empty chair next to her and she was still in Julien's jumper with the hood up, probably looking very much like she was nursing a hangover. She hoped and prayed Lucie hadn't caught evidence of the state of her, or worse that the television cameras hadn't panned over to the side of the garage while she'd been passed out.

It took a few minutes for her to be able to open her eyes fully and sit upright, just in time for Lucie to deliver a cup of black coffee and a croissant. Her friend shared her love of pastries and they had become a staple part of their diet. It was just as well they were so active, running up and down the pit lane every day.

The croissant was presented on a paper napkin and Faith struggled to contain the crumbs, grimacing as they floated to the ground with last night's pizza crumbs and granules of sugar from the doughnuts they'd demolished past midnight.

"How did you sleep?" Lucie collapsed into her chair in a heap.

“As well as I could given my sleeping arrangements. Wish I’d taken Jules up on his offer to use his room.” Faith said. He had tried very hard to encourage her to shut herself away in there when her headache hadn’t subsided prior to her nap, but she had refused. The nighttime portion of the race was known to be full of action and she wanted to be right there incase anything happened. Earplugs had done the trick.

“I drifted off for an hour or so. Brett woke me up ten minutes ago to tell me that Talos’s rear bumper flew off after a collision, Fitzpatrick was behind the wheel. He’s fine, he’s already back out there but the good news for us is that it gives Mars an advantage.” Lucie looked smug which might be considered a little dark and morbid, but Talos falling behind took a huge amount of pressure off the team for the time being.

“When are we doing the next driver change?”

“Ten laps. Brett is in the car next, then Jules is taking us over the finish.”

Julien heard his name mentioned and turned his head to see what was going on. Upon seeing that Faith was awake, he wandered over while he peeled an orange. The hospitality team had showed up early with the fruit platters, then. She should probably help herself to some of that and stop shovelling down the pastries. Her body would thank her for it.

“Morning, ladies. Glad you’re up early, the sun is rising and the sky is all pink and orange and pretty. Would look great on the feed.” Julien acknowledged. He held the orange segments out and let them take one. Faith wanted to know where on earth they came from because they were absolutely gigantic. And sweet. There was nothing worse than sour fruit.

“How’s the race going? We haven’t had a lot of chance to talk overnight.” Faith asked. He had given her the silent treatment after he returned from his evening nap, choosing to ignore the fact they’d had sex, and she had spent most of the night filming with the mechanics in between pit stops, or with Brett and Marco who had stolen the spotlight. Lucie had snuck

some photos in, but now it was time for the one on one Julien content that Faith had promised to deliver.

“Yeah it’s going great so far, but you know Le Mans, things can change in the blink of an eye. The team are communicating well though, so there’s that.” He smiled.

“I spoke to Paolo earlier and he said that we’re expecting some rain. Surely they’ll want you out in that instead of Brett?” Lucie questioned. Julien had a reputation for getting great results on a wet track, but he couldn’t cover the rain and the finish. It would be breaking the rules.

“That’s not expected until the final hour of the race now so we should be alright. We’ll keep Brett out if the weather gets bad and then I’ll give us one final push when we change over. It isn’t looking like Talos will catch up but you know Lorenzo, he’ll give it everything he’s got.”

“Hmm. I hope it definitely does rain then, because Garcia is shit in the wet. So is Fitzy actually, so they’ve got no hope at catching us if that’s the case.” Lucie stated. “Right, I’m going to go and grab some of that fruit before the mechanics get to it. I don’t like oil and dirt on my watermelon.” She scurried off and left Julien and Faith alone, neither of them looking at each other.

“We need to film together.” Faith said.

“Give me a moment, I have a video call to make. I’ll come and find you when I’m done. Also, don’t come in the trailer.” He said.

Faith stared at him as he walked away. What kind of video call needed to be made at this time of the morning in a locked trailer? The work she needed to get done was time sensitive. She had to shoot content with Brett when he was out of the car, and she needed time to edit some of last night’s content and get it posted before Julien went back out.

He was on the verge of messing up her’s and Lucie’s entire schedule which had been cleared and agreed by Jasper. It wouldn’t matter so much if it was a practice day or even qualifying, but Julien couldn’t just film on his own terms in

the middle of an actual race. They were depending on him. As usual, Faith's position in the team was depending on him.



The day passed by in a blur of excitement and it was mid afternoon. The race was coming to an end. When it had started raining four minutes after Julien had got in the car, the energy in the garage had been electric.

Every pair of eyes was glued to a screen and although Brett and Marco were trying to maintain professionalism, every time the camera crew disappeared again they were back to behaving like overgrown kids. Even Jasper was letting his hair down and jumping up and down whenever another car in their class made an error.

Nobody had been involved in a serious accident yet, but a few cars were out of the race. Unfortunately for them, Talos were still in with a shot of winning. Lorenzo Garcia was holding his own out there which frankly was surprising everyone at Revolution Racing.

Talos were known to crumble under pressure in the wet, plus Julien usually had the upper hand in his rivalry with Lorenzo. The boys suspected that his personal issues with the Italian following the Spa after-party were giving Julien an edge. He was angry and Lorenzo was a little scared of him, and off track drama often came to a head on track even for the most experienced drivers.

Lucie was in the pit lane with one of Talos's mechanics, much to Brett's annoyance. He still insisted he had no romantic interest in his best friend, but his arms remained crossed and the scowl on his face was threatening to be a permanent feature. He kept his eyes off them and on the car on the screen in front of him. Faith was certain he'd perk up soon because if the race kept going the way it was, there would be a monumental cause for celebration.

With less than three minutes to go, Lucie darted back into the garage to join the rest of the team. There was too much of a gap for Lorenzo to close it, plus his steering had locked up for a fraction of a second and it was suspected that it might develop into a real problem. This was it, they were going to win.

“Ready?” Lucie grinned at Faith like she knew something her new co-worker did not. This wasn’t going to be as tame as the race celebration in Belgium and in all honesty, she was feeling almost scared. Brett was very tall and very strong and could crush her like a bug if she wasn’t careful.

She had forgotten that the winning teams tended to run out to the pit wall and climb up, leaning over the barriers to cheer as the cars crossed the finish, so before she had time to process what was happening Lucie was grabbing her hand and yanking her out of the garage with everyone else. The pit lane was full of other teams doing the same thing. It was nothing short of a miracle that the girls were managing to keep hold of their heavy cameras.

Julien crossed the line and the team took it to another level. Between the cheering, whistling, applauding and the roar of engines, the volume levels were deafening. Faith loved it. She must have hugged every single person who was associated with Revolution plus at least half of Talos and every other team who had earned a place on the podium, whether she knew them or not. The energy was euphoric, it was the kind of energy that she had frankly never experienced in all her twenty six years.

They rushed to find Julien and the car when he came back around to join civilisation again. The wait for him to detach himself and get out was painfully slow but when he did, he removed his helmet to reveal the most radiant smile Faith had ever seen written across his face. He embraced his teammates with tears in his eyes as if he couldn’t believe that they had done it yet again.

Faith wondered if the feelings they were experiencing now were ever diminished by the repetitive wins. These boys had been racing together for three years now and that was just as a

part of Revolution. They had known each other a very long time, worked together across different teams and championships and been childhood rivals. It was a bond that was totally unique to their sport, and one that nobody except the other drivers could ever comprehend.

Faith was still recording when Julien spotted her stood off to one side and having already received a hug from Lucie, he flung his arms around her and squeezed her tight. Faith held on for dear life because she knew full well that while they were laughing now and going with the flow of the moment, once they were back to their bubble of normality she was going to lose this version of Julien again.

“Congrats, Moretz.” Her voice was muffled by his shoulder, their height difference coming into play. It didn’t help that he had his arms around the upper part of her back and not the middle or lower, so she had a mouthful of racing suit.

“Thanks, Jensen.” He kissed the side of her head and lingered just two seconds too long, not noticing the TV camera immediately to their left. They had approximately nought point two seconds until that was all over social media.

It didn’t matter that he did that to Lucie all the time, because Faith was new here. Fans knew he hadn’t had the time to build up that level of connection with Faith, and it must mean there was more to their relationship. They would be right, but that wasn’t going to make Julien feel any better when he started getting interrogated.

After a champagne-filled podium celebration and even more shouting and cheering, mostly from Brett who was apparently the loudest man Jasper and Gabriel had ever met, the team were heading back into the garage at a much more peaceful volume.

They had been warned that the media team would want to catch up with them for post-race interview which was standard for every race, and it was live. The live part terrified Faith. She could see the crew coming towards them now and Julien had his arm resting on her shoulders as they walked. The garage

was close enough that she could dart in ahead of everyone, but it would look more suspicious if she tried to hide away.

“Julien! Can we get a word?” The interviewer jumped in front of them to block their path and a camera was shoved in their face.

“Of course.” Julien smiled widely, his arm still in the same position. This was getting dangerous. He should have taken the opportunity to move it and let Faith run away.

“Oh good, we’re the first to interview the grid’s newest couple!” The interviewer exclaimed. The poor woman looked so innocent, Faith prayed Julien kept his cool. He tensed, but that was all. No correction, no topic change. Faith was frozen.

“Faith, what’s it like to be working in an industry you’ve loved for so long?” She asked. For a second, Faith forgot that she was kind of like a celebrity in her own right but when she realised, she wished she’d had media training at some point in her life.

“It’s an absolute dream. I really couldn’t ask for a better job or a more welcoming group of people. The fan feedback has been incredible too, I just love being able to give them what I always wanted as a fan myself.” She replied, feeling Julien squeeze her shoulder reassuringly. Yes, she was doing great but she didn’t belong in this situation. Neither of them did.

“So, Julien. It must be pretty incredible to be celebrating another win here at Le Mans.”

“It’s always an honour to take home a trophy. The team works really hard and you know, I couldn’t do it without Anderson and DeLuca and the rest of the team.” He replied.

The camera crew left to find Jasper and the other drivers after a few more questions about Julien’s thoughts on the car, but the frustration had been bubbling away at Faith the whole time she’d been standing next to him. She calmly removed herself from his grip and located Lucie. Steam must have been coming from her ears because her friend immediately took her



arm, abandoned her conversation with a mechanic, and led her to the boys' trailer.

"I witnessed the whole thing." Lucie grimaced.

"I mean, honestly, what the *hell* was that all about?" Faith was exasperated.

"Sweetheart, I hate to say it but it really does look like you're dating to the outside world. After that photo that Bea put up of you two hugging, rumours have been swirling. And there was the one of your little breakfast date. I deleted comments on some of the posts so you wouldn't notice but the rumours are there, and people can see the chemistry. It's our own fault, really. We should've controlled the content better." Lucie sat down next to her on the sofa and looked like she might throw up.

"Okay we could have cut some clips, but people still would have seen the chemistry. It's there and it's natural, if we took all of it out Julien would barely exist in half the videos. It would be a race week vlog with only two of the drivers. He's the one who just stood there on camera and pretended we were a couple instead of saying '*Hey, we're not actually dating we're just great friends!*'. How hard was that?" Faith said.

"You have a point. God, this is so messed up. He's going to lose it." Lucie sighed.

Right on cue, Julien flung the door open, his face dropping when he saw the two of them sat there. Lucie stood up and gathered the cameras, offering a weary smile and shuffling out of the door. Faith waited for it to close before she let rip.

"You—" She started.

"Don't say a word." He cut off.

"Excuse me?" Faith gawked at him in disbelief. She was going to say exactly what she needed to say, because she wasn't about to have the blame put on her.

"Your stupid little social media posts have led everyone to think that we're together and now I'm in a huge mess." He said.

“My ‘*stupid little social media posts*’ which are part of my job, you mean? You know I get paid for those, right? I was hired by *your* bosses to boost *your* career and *your* sponsorships. Don’t stand there acting so entitled when you know you wouldn’t have half the things you have if it weren’t for people like me and Lucie. You’re part of a team, Julien.”

“All you’ve done is complicate my life, Faith. You live in a bubble. You snap a few photos and make them all pretty and colourful and fail to see that there is so much more to life than fucking filters and flying around the world, sipping cocktails. You’re just another stuck-up influencer. Try spending one day as an actual adult with real responsibilities.” Julien seethed.

“You have no idea how hard I worked and what pushed me to get there. I’m here because I earned my position, just as you did. Lucie and I sit up for hours editing photos and videos and strategising how we can make you guys look more approachable and less big and famous and scary, but it’s kinda hard to do that when you’re so arrogant that you think the world revolves around you and shielding your private life. A life you won’t breathe a word about because you think I can’t keep my mouth shut or I won’t understand. Maybe I won’t understand because we haven’t walked the same path, but mine left me with baggage too.” Faith’s vision was blurred with tears but she wasn’t done.

“I forgot about—” He mumbled.

“My past? My feelings? You seem to have pushed all that aside and done what was right for you without stopping to think for a second how this hot and cold behaviour might affect me.”

“I thought I was protecting you.” Julien stared at her with sad eyes and her anger subsided enough for her to feel some sympathy towards him, some forgiveness.

“All you did was hurt me. I want you to feel like you can trust me, because you can. It doesn’t matter if nothing comes of this connection we have, but I’d at least like to know your reasons for not pursuing it further than sex, so I’m not left feeling like it’s something I did.”

“I do trust you, Faith.” His tone was soft.

“Then stop wrapping me up in cotton wool and just open up to me. I care about you, Jules. A lot. Let me be part of your world instead of shutting me out and wishing I would go away, because I’m not going anywhere. You’re stuck with me, the same way Lucie is and the same way you’re stuck with Brett and Marco. We’re a team, and as the boys told me when I first arrived in Spa, we’re a family. I’m not going to betray you, Julien.”

Faith didn’t give him a chance to say anything else. If he was going to tell her whatever it was he’d been hiding, whatever had his walls so far up, then a trailer at the back of his racing team’s garage wasn’t the time and place. Perhaps the mystery trip would give him the opportunity, but for now she left him sitting alone while she tried to rationalise what in the world could be such a big deal to him that he hid it from almost everyone he knew.

## CHAPTER 22

EACH TEAM HAD BEEN SENT TO THEIR GARAGES WITH A GLASS of champagne each, and strictly instructed not to leave until Gabriel had been to speak to them. He was going to be announcing the destination of the annual trip but although they were all excited, they were also itching to get back to the hotel so they could pack their bags. All they knew so far was that they were leaving at seven o'clock the next morning for their flights, which meant there was no time for drinks and bar crawls tonight.

Faith and Lucie had already decided to ditch dinner at the hotel and order room service while they got some work done. They didn't want to be working on their first day of the trip, and it didn't matter to them if they had to catch a flight with three hours of sleep.

"Congratulations, team!" Gabriel came to visit them first with his daughter in tow. Alessia did not look amused in the slightest, and given her age, it would be safe to assume that she was not invited to wherever they were going.

"Gabriel, come on! We have suitcases to pack and it's a mission and a half." Lucie complained.

"Lucie, I am about to make your year. Tomorrow, we're heading to Hawaii!"

There was an excited chatter amongst the mechanics and engineers but Faith noticed that Julien had ducked out while his boss was speaking. He hadn't said a word to her since their argument, even though by the end of it they had stopped

screaming at each other and there had been a sliver of hope for their relationship.

Glancing at her friends, she realised that none of them looked excited. Lucie actually looked scared. Faith had a sinking feeling that Julien wasn't going to be joining them on this trip, and she couldn't help but think that it was her fault.

Did she even deserve to go? She had worked a mere two races, and Julien had just won arguably the biggest race of any motorsport championship in existence. There was a possibility that she was taking this away from him just because he didn't like people thinking they were dating. She shouldn't be going with them, if that was the case.

"You excited then, Jensen?" Brett asked, forcing enthusiasm.

"Yeah...seems like I'm one of few." She said.

"Nah, Hawaii is just not really where Jules wants to be." Brett shrugged nonchalantly.

She sighed and gathered up her things, ready to go back to the hotel for a long night of packing and editing. She couldn't hype herself up for this trip, with all the work they still had to get done and the Julien drama weighing on her mind. If he could just get out one sentence, one hint at what was happening in his world, she was sure it would lead to him revealing everything.

That was the issue here; he had a secret that he needed to tell her so they could move forward, but he couldn't tell her because he thought it was going to move them ten steps back. So they just stuck to sexual encounters. Faith had been through a lot more than anyone knew in her own personal life, things even Bea didn't know, and she was the last person to judge.

"Girlies!" Bea stopped them before they could get even a quarter of the way down the paddock.

"Hey, Bea!" Lucie called back, having got over her hatred for now. Until Bea put another foot wrong with any of the drivers.

“Oh my goodness, I’ve heard all about your big interview with Julien! I can’t believe you two are actually a thing! I’m so happy for you, really. I can think of nobody better for him.” Bea gushed.

“Thank you, Bea. That means the world.” Faith pulled out her best acting skills and smiled with a glint in her eye that she was sure Lucie would call her out on. If Julien could play this game, so could she. The lie no longer belonged solely to him, it belonged to *them*.

“Well, I am over the moon for you. I shall see you ladies in Hawaii!” She floated away oblivious to the chaos she had just been involved in creating.

“Faith!” Lucie whipped around to face her.

“Well aware of what I’ve just done.” She said.

“You’re doing exactly what you’re mad at Julien for.” Lucie flung her arms out in despair.

“I just wanted to go along with it and see how genuine she was being.” Faith defended.

“That backfired, didn’t it? You’d better hope and pray she doesn’t go and run her mouth to Jules, otherwise you two are going to have yet another fight and God knows your relationship can’t survive that.” Lucie tutted and shooed her down the paddock like she was scolding a child.

“I think the champagne is getting to me.” Faith stuck her bottom lip out in hopes that she would look all sweet and innocent and Lucie would stop shouting, however much she deserved it.

“I think the sexual tension is getting to you.” Lucie stated, trying to make light of the situation. Little did she know, Jules had already seen to that.

“Yeah, well nothing will be done about that for a long time.” Faith lied through her teeth. “Julien and I will be old and crippled by the time he pulls it together and makes a move, and he won’t be able to lean far enough forward out of his armchair to kiss me. He might even die of a heart attack from all the excitement.”

“I reckon he’s already got a few grey hairs hiding in that blonde mane. He doesn’t have enough fun in life.”

“You mean to tell me that he shagged Bea Miller and gallivanted around Monaco with her, but he doesn’t have enough fun?” Faith raised an eyebrow.

“I knew you used those words! So British. I love it.” Lucie grinned and walked down the paddock repeating the word ‘*shagging*’ to herself. She was in such a world of her own that she didn’t notice Julien exiting the hospitality area and joining up with Marco and Brett, who were pretty far behind them but not far enough for Faith’s rising anger levels.

“Luce.” Faith snapped. “Walk faster.”

“Why?” She turned around, confused.

“Keep me far away from my fake boyfriend, please. I’m very tempted to rip his head clean off and that won’t be good for the team. We need him.” Faith scowled. If she wasn’t careful she’d be needing to ask Bea for botox recommendations.

“Oh honey, let’s get you back to the hotel and hide away in our room. Room service sushi will fix you.”



It was too early to be awake for Faith’s liking, and the decision to work through most of the night was met with heavy regret from her and Lucie. They had managed to get an hour of sleep in with all the giggling and tossing and turning, and when they joined the rest of the team downstairs all of the drivers were way too boisterous to deal with.

The girls stood to one side, itching to get their suitcases bundled into the car and get on the road to the airport so they could squeeze in a nap.

The team had been split into two cars with Elliot from Havelin Racing joining Lucie, Julien and Faith. He didn’t know it but his sole purpose on this two and a half hour

journey was to dissolve the tension between the grid's newest non-couple, and keep Julien distracted enough to be able to engage in a normal, civilised conversation with Faith. He had been a gentleman and carried her case out of the hotel, but hadn't spoken more than one sentence to her in the ten minutes they'd been stood outside together. It was uncomfortable, to say the least.

A fleet of Range Rovers picked everyone up just past seven o'clock, tinted windows and the ridiculous amount of cars making the whole debacle feel very over the top. All the team lorries were leaving the circuit this morning, too. Eyes were already on them given that they were in a relatively small town full of racing fans who had yet to head home, and taking all of these vehicles to the motorway at once was bound to draw attention.

The tinted windows were appreciated, especially by Faith and Lucie who had their sunglasses tangled up in messy buns and were wearing oversized t-shirts over cycling shorts. There would be nothing glamorous about their arrival on Oahu.

Elliot was Faith's saving grace. They had barely plugged their seatbelts in before he started chatting about growing up on his parents' Vineyard in France. He was British, but had moved to Bordeaux when he was six and married his childhood sweetheart when he was eighteen.

She was called Valentina and he was really keen to make sure everyone in the car knew how perfect she was. That part of the conversation wasn't Faith's favourite, but it was sweet to listen to him describe the moment he knew he was going to marry her. Julien still looked like he'd rather be anywhere else but at least he was actually using his vocal cords now.

"I've been to Cornwall a few times for family holidays over the years. It was one of the first places in the UK I took Valentina to, St Ives. She wasn't a fan of the pasties." He laughed.

"I mean, you can't come to Cornwall and not try one. It's what we're famous for." She said. Pasties were not her favourite, and she hadn't eaten once since she moved to



London but when she took Lucie to the coast in a couple of weeks she might have to indulge just for old time's sake. Devon and Dorset called for a traditional cream tea, which she knew would have her friend rambling on about British stereotypes again.

“Are your parents from Cornwall?” He asked.

“Mum is. Dad is from somewhere in Australia, went traveling when he finished school, met Mum in Newquay. He left when I was a few months old, and honestly I'm not too sure where he went. Mum debated tracking him down but she just never did.” Faith almost wished she hadn't revealed so much to a stranger. In hindsight, she had only revealed the basics.

“Bet your Mum is super proud of everything you've achieved. Probably made her feel like she did the right thing staying here instead of chasing after your Dad.” Elliot smiled.

Faith had never thought of it like that and it shook her up a little, allowing her to see Andrea in a different light for a moment. He was right, it probably made everything her Mum had been through seem worth it to her, even if Faith didn't let her be a part of it.

Andrea had made some poor decisions in her life, and hadn't always given Faith everything she needed, but she had never discouraged her from following her dreams despite being bitter about being left behind.

Faith had felt the same when Bea had left for Europe. She wondered how her best friend could just go and live a life without her while Faith yearned for more for herself too, and that's exactly what Faith's Mum had expressed from the moment Faith had told her she was moving.

In Andrea's eyes, her daughter was everything she couldn't be because she'd never had the courage and she'd let a series of bad relationships send her so far off course there was no way back. She was consumed by her drinking problem and let all the wrong people into their home.

She lost her job shortly after moving into the trailer and for a few years until she was healthy enough to land another care job, had to rely on help from people in the community who were trying to keep Faith fed and happy. No matter how hard she tried to be a good Mum, she always fell short.

When her rough or creepy boyfriends had laid their hands on her daughter, that was when she had fought for her. That, Faith suspected, was why her Mum had never come after her. It was a chapter that needed to be closed in order for Faith to move on.

London and her introduction to Bea had given her everything she had imagined and more. She found it difficult to enjoy the opportunities she was given for the first couple of years because she felt that it could be taken away at any given moment, and it took Bea dragging her to events and parties to open her up to the world and actually experience life.

She had to keep reminding herself that Bea would never let her get wrapped up with the wrong guy, she didn't have a problem with alcohol and never touched drugs even though the city was full of them. She wasn't going to be a carbon copy of her Mum.

"I never realised how you grew up..." Julien's voice brought Faith back to the present moment. She stared at the back of his head from the seat behind him and her eyes went wide in pure shock. She had said all of that out loud, and now everyone knew the horrors she had experienced as a child.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to offload all of that. Haven't had my morning coffee yet, I guess it's getting to me." Faith let out an awkward laugh and shrunk back in her seat.

"Don't apologise. And what's said in this car stays in this car, right?" Julien reached back to place his hand on Faith's knee.

"Absolutely. We're always here if you need us. I know I'm not part of Revolution Racing, technically I'm a rival, but you can consider me part of the racing family." Elliot said.

Lucie rested a head on her shoulder, knowing her friend enough by now to know that more sweet sentiments wouldn't do anything except keep them all stuck in a weird limbo where nobody knew what else to say.

Elliot swiftly moved the conversation on to cars. The motion of Julien's thumb brushing against her skin was enough to take Faith's mind off the bombshell she'd just dropped, and send her thoughts running wild about what she'd like to do to the blonde God of a man sitting in front of her.

He had flipped his visor down and opened the little window to reveal the mirror, which meant she could stare right at him and engage in the kind of eye contact that usually led to non PG activities. Except this wasn't a movie, it was real life. Julien and Faith were real people who couldn't get out of their own heads. She was counting on Hawaii changing everything.

## CHAPTER 23

THE ENTIRETY OF FIRST CLASS HAD BEEN BOOKED OUT BY THE organisation. Julien and Faith had been seated next to each other, causing Julien to ask Gabriel when the flights had been booked, wondering if they were together because of their now-viral couple's interview.

Much to their horror, their boss had politely informed him that his assistant had arranged it a month ago because she had seen the sparks flying between them and thought it would be appreciated. Faith and Julien agreed that everyone should have been in alphabetical order according to surnames.

Faith had surfaced from her nap mid-flight with one headphone in but before she could search for the missing one, she'd overheard Julien whispering to Brett across the aisle. She couldn't make it out word for word, but the general gist was that he was going to have to be careful to keep everything under wraps and that if he was absent for a while, Brett knew where he would be.

He said he didn't want anyone else to know until he had spoken to Faith, but he didn't know how he should tell her. Brett suggested just telling her at dinner, but Julien felt that a beach walk would suit the situation better. There was not one hint at what the big secret was, but when Faith finally put her other headphone in she did it with a smile on her face, safe in the knowledge that Jules was finally letting his walls down.

Over twenty four hours after leaving Paris, having briefly stopped at LAX Airport, they were pulling up outside the hotel in Hawaii. Needless to say, the organisation had pulled out all

the stops with this trip. They had the *entire* resort to themselves and nobody dared to think about how much it had cost, but money was a mere object to most of the execs and CEO's. The drivers were usually a little more reserved with their money, but for Faith and Lucie and the rest of the media personnel, this was once in a lifetime.

There were palm trees everywhere they looked, brightly coloured flowers blooming all around them, and the weather was blissful. They were offered sunset-coloured cocktails as soon as they walked in and their suitcases were taken from them and quickly whisked away by staff.

Someone from the organisation gathered them in a circle to hand out room keys. With people already wandering around and admiring the views and paying zero attention, this method of treating them like school kids was necessary.

Lucie and Faith learned that they were sharing a room, much to their delight, and had the entire Revolution team on their floor. They doubted they would be getting much sleep since the week would consist mostly of pool parties and late nights, and there was no need to keep the noise down for the sake of other guests at the resort.

“Moretz, we have a room for you.” Gabriel side stepped towards them and whispered loud enough for only the team to hear him. “You’re not obligated to stick around but it’s there if you want it. Steph will give you the key in a moment.”

“I’ll be present for the whole trip.” Julien smiled gratefully and glanced over at Faith, accidentally catching her eye. Why wouldn’t he stick around? Brett had said that Jules didn’t want to be in Hawaii, but where else would he be going if he wasn’t with them at the hotel? This whole secret thing was becoming less frustrating, and more weird than anything else.

The girls’ room was beautiful. It was light and airy, lots of white linen and light wood furnishings. There were fresh flowers on the dresser with a welcome note tucked into them and the doors to the balcony had been left open with the curtain blowing gently in the breeze.

There was a view of the pool area and the sea beyond it, and yet again there were palm trees as far as the eye could see. Their suitcases were waiting for them at the end of the bed, a king size which they had no problem with, and Lucie nearly tripped over them as she ran out to peer her head round to the neighbouring balcony.

“Oh Christ, it’s you two.” Brett teased from their left, and they were soon joined by Julien on their right. Marco was to the right of Julien, so they could all talk in one long line.

It really was feeling more and more like a school trip, albeit a very expensive and alcohol-fuelled one. Faith was used to caving and abseiling on Cornish beaches, not surfing in the deep blue waters of the islands of Hawaii. It was quite the contrast.

“I’m surprised they didn’t put Faith and Jules in the same room with all the rumours flying around.” Lucie commented.

“You mean the rumours that Jules basically confirmed on live TV?”

“Anderson, shut up.” Marco scolded Brett who smirked but shut his mouth. It was more likely Lucie’s glare that did it.

“I’m gonna take a quick drive but I’ll see you all at dinner tonight. Enjoy the pool.” Julien gave them a friendly smile, coming across as scarily calm given the joke that was just made. Faith wondered what could possibly be better than an afternoon by the pool in a private resort, but nonetheless she was relieved. There was too much tension lingering in the air which only good food, fancy cocktails and the company of a couple of a hundred other people would dissolve.



The sky was getting darker and the twinkling lights created a perfect atmosphere for their evening meal. There was a live band playing Elvis songs, which was very cliché but still enjoyable, and an experience that would feel horrifically

cheesy if they were at a pub in England. Everything just felt magical and Faith was in heaven.

Food and drinks were flowing and the servers were doing an outstanding job at staying on top of it all no matter how many drivers had gone full diva mode and were demanding adjustments and extras. Lucie and Brett were in their own little bubble, ignoring the rest of the team at the table which left Faith, Marco and Julien to chat amongst themselves.

Julien had returned from his adventure an hour before dinner and popped into the girls' room to ask for fashion advice and help Faith get her necklace on, a gold choker lined with diamonds that Bea had given her a few years ago. Two hours later and she could still feel the warmth of his fingertips on her bare skin.

On the next table, Bea was up to no good. Faith knew when her best friend was interested in someone and right now she might as well be literally fluttering her false eyelashes in the face of Ricardo De La Rosa.

The thing with Bea was that guys were drawn to her natural sex appeal and she didn't have to try, so when she did put in some effort she really meant it. Ricardo was handsome. Tattoos covered his body and he had a mane of jet black hair that constantly fell over his grey eyes. He hadn't shaved for a number of days and wore a patterned shirt with the top few buttons undone. His whole demeanour suggested that he was the most laid back man on planet earth. He was the polar opposite of the dark haired, fake tanned woman beside him in her black lace bodysuit, white tailored trousers and matching blazer. Her heels made her almost the same height as him. Ricardo was so far from her type it made Faith laugh, and Bea was blushing so hard she needn't have bothered to fake it with makeup.

“Bea.” Faith called over.

“Yes?” She turned and abruptly cut off her conversation with the Odesza driver, who simply smiled and went back to eating his bruschetta.

“Can we have a chat?”

“Of course!” Bea excused herself and waited for Faith to join her so they could head over to the sun loungers. With the entire organisation demolishing the spread of food provided and knocking back the cocktails, they had the pool area to themselves.

“I thought it was time we sorted out the weird animosity between us because I don’t know about you but I’m exhausted trying to keep it up. We have too much love between us to let this friendship die.” Faith stared out at the still water.

“I’ll start off by saying it’s my fault. I lost all sense of who I was.” Bea admitted.

They had once had what Faith and Lucie now shared, and it didn’t seem right to pretend it didn’t exist and allow someone with such a soft heart deep down to turn into a monster purely because she had the wrong people around her. Nothing about Bea’s friendships with the models and influencers who crawled all over the motorsport world was genuine.

“You drifted a little, but you’re still in there.” Faith said.

“Only because you came to my rescue.”

“Well, I owed you one.” She shrugged.

“I was jealous.” Bea admitted, her face flushed.

“What?! Why?”

“I always felt like you had everything handed to you on a plate, which I know is the furthest thing from the truth. We both worked just as hard. You’re just this perfect human being, everyone loves you and fitting in is so effortless for you because of it. The whole world sees in you what I saw the first day we met at Uni, and for once I just want someone else to see all of that in *me*.”

“I saw it in you, Bea. I still do. Why do you think I’m having this conversation with you? You’re the first person in my life who I could consider family, and that’s not just something you find every day.” Faith knew she was lucky to have found it twice.



“When I found out you were coming to work with us, I thought I’d get shoved aside. I try so hard to be part of everything but I guess I try too hard and instead I get clingy with all the wrong guys, ones who aren’t interested in getting to know the real me, and I get on everyone’s nerves. All I want is to be included, but when that doesn’t happen I just have some stupid dramatic reaction, and now I have a reputation I can’t free myself from.”

“You absolutely can free yourself from it. You’re halfway there already. You know the guys at Revolution have been begging me to have this talk with you?” Faith tried to reassure her, squeezing her hand. “I do have one question, though. Why did you post that photo of Julien and I at Spa, knowing how he would react?”

“Oh, God.” She covered her face in embarrassment, so Faith gently pulled her hands away and forced her friend to look her in the eye, to show her she wasn’t angry anymore. “I didn’t think he’d freak out the way he did, but of course I should’ve known he would accuse me of having an ulterior motive. I genuinely thought it was a cute behind the scenes moment between friends, and I didn’t think the fans would see it as anything more. Lucie behaves the same way with him, but I suppose you two just have this chemistry that everyone can see except you and Julien.”

“Trust me, we know it’s there.” Faith pressed her lips into a thin line, debating confessing everything.

“I’m sorry, Faith. I want to be the old Bea again, the one who was a lot less worried about what strangers think. People don’t deserve the way I treated them, you especially.”

“Let people see her. I miss her, too. And our friends and coworkers will love her just like I do.” Faith was realising just how insecure her best friend was.

The new version of Beatrix Miller was simply her putting her walls up, and nobody could blame her for that. The social media bubble was toxic and even Faith struggled to stay on the right side of it sometimes. Combine that with the world of

motorsport where money talked, and it was a battle that you could very easily lose yourself in.

“I saw the way Julien looked at you the first time I came into the garage to find you, by the way. I knew he wasn’t into me, and to begin with we were totally using each other but I developed a little crush. Who wouldn’t? And then you came along and I saw how perfect the two of you were for each other. It isn’t just the chemistry you have, it’s who you are as people. That’s when I realised it wasn’t him that I craved, it was the attention he gave me. I got angry when he ended things with me but that was the jealousy talking again. I went about things the wrong way, I should’ve given him a hard shove in your direction.”

“I don’t know him, really. I just know there’s something there. And that he’s a stubborn son of a bitch.” Faith sighed.

“You know his heart. Better than most of us, I think. You have such a good read on people, Faith. Julien is a great guy, he’s just closed off. His private life is very private and it’s hard to accept when you want to know all of him. But that didn’t stop you getting close, right? Because your gut feeling is telling you to hold on.” Bea raised an eyebrow, knowing that Faith had the same sweet nature she was describing and gave her whole heart to people even when she was scared.

“Correct.” Faith nodded. “I wanted to keep it professional and move on but even when we fight and argue and he makes me want to tear my hair out, I still want him. I just don’t know how much more time I can give him. I think if he doesn’t open up by the end of this trip I’m going to have to let the situation go. He doesn’t owe me an explanation of his life, but I owe myself the option to walk away.”

“I vote you confront him and tell him exactly that. If he cares as much as we all think, then he’ll recognise what he risks throwing away. Nobody has really forced him to open up before, but something about you clearly gets under his skin. I mean God, some of the drivers have known him since he was a *kid* and even they can’t believe how much emotion he’s displayed publicly in the short time he’s known you. Good or bad.” Bea said.

Faith nodded and stood up, pulling Bea with her. Somehow in one conversation she had got her best friend back and managed to work out what the hell she was going to do about Julien. If he didn't come to her and speak to her tonight, with the buzz of alcohol giving him the courage, she was going to pull him aside tomorrow and tell him he was going to have to tackle his demons. She had already made it clear that she was someone he could trust with his emotions. It would just be better if he came to her first, beat her to it, so she knew that he wouldn't run.

## CHAPTER 24

AFTER A DESSERT SPREAD OF PROFITEROLES, CHEESECAKE, fruits and gateaux, everyone was in a food coma. There was hardly anyone sitting down who wasn't collapsed back against their wooden chair, wishing they hadn't indulged quite so much. There had been so much rich, creamy food consumed in the last couple of hours that they were all fearing how their bodies were going to react when they were done drinking for the night.

Lucie, Bea and Daisy were even debating going up to their rooms to change into looser fitting clothes. Faith didn't want to get up from the table, but she knew they couldn't sit here forever. The staff had a lot of cleaning up to do, and there was a pool and a beach to be enjoyed.

They had been told there was a campfire down on the sand, plus a fire pit and a hot tub by the pool where a live DJ was setting up for the evening. Apparently, he would be here every night for the next week. That was how committed the organisation was to partying and celebrating. With so many people here, every area of the resort was always going to be busy.

Marco had scooted his chair over to the girls so he could tell them he had gone ahead and organised flights to Italy next week, with plans to drive to the mountains after a few days for a skiing trip with Brett's family. They had three days in London to recover first and Bea was coming with them for old times sake.

Marco and Brett wanted to come too because they had attachment issues according to Brett, who couldn't bare to be away from his girls. He did also mention that the flight to Australia and then out to Europe again was such a palaver that it was pointless going home before Italy, but he insisted that wasn't the only reason he was tagging along to the UK.

Bea had sat down and given a very lengthy and detailed apology to the entire table on what she was calling '*Beatrix Miller's Apology Tour*', and after a subtle nod from Faith they claimed that all was forgiven. Julien even apologised to *her*, although it was clear he wasn't entirely convinced he needed to, and Marco gave her a hug and flagged the waiter down for another round of *Sex on the Beach* cocktails.

The effect of the cocktails overpowered their over-indulgence of food and the dancing began. The Revolution team, with Bea as an extra addition, were causing a stir and it wasn't long before everyone was joining in. Clothes and shoes were being tossed to one side and people were taking full advantage of the pool, including Brett who started a diving competition. You wouldn't believe he was a grown man as he star-fished into the water.

"Lucie!" Bea yelled over the music. "I'm sorry for being such a massive bitch, I think you're a lovely human being!"

"Oh, Bea!" Lucie cried out with tears in her eyes. "Screw the past, life's too short."

As her best friends hugged it out and sobbed in the middle of their makeshift dance floor, Faith glanced around until she turned and found herself face to face with Julien, who was putting in some serious moves of his own.

He took the opportunity to shuffle closer to her and for a second she felt like Sophie in *Mamma Mia!*, when everyone was dancing around her during *Voulez-Vous* and she gradually felt dizzier and dizzier. If she didn't get out of here quickly, Faith was going to pass out.

The beach was practically calling out to her and she had no problem following the overgrown path that led to a remote part of it. She settled on a broken tree trunk on the sand. She

loved it when beaches had things like that. Other parts of nature that didn't belong there, and yet somehow *did* belong. She refused to accept that the resort had probably placed it there for people like her who ventured out for a sunset stroll.

She sat down and stared out at the horizon, appreciating the pink and purple hues of the sky above. The sea was calm. That was how she felt now that she was away from the pressure of Julien's eyes on her. And his body against hers.

Someone fake coughed behind her. "Mind if I sit down for a moment?" The Dutch accent gave it away and Faith motioned for him to join her without turning around.

"Sorry, just needed some fresh air." Faith said, immediately blushing when she realised how obvious her lie was. Fresh air. They had been out in the fresh air the whole evening.

"It was getting a little heated, huh?"

"As always."

The pair of them sat in silence for a few minutes, just soaking it all in. "You look just like her." His voice was barely a whisper. He shuffled awkwardly, too shy to look at her.

"Who?" Faith swallowed the nervous lump in her throat. She felt sick. Unsure if she was ready for this conversation.

"My wife." Julien chose that moment to pause and gather himself before continuing, leaving Faith's head in a scramble as she waited for more words to come out of his mouth. "I got married when I was eighteen. I was traveling, met her in Greece and followed her back here to Hawaii. For two years we lived in a tiny little hut on her parents' land. I lost her out there." He gestured to the water and Faith's heart dropped. "She drowned. I witnessed the entire thing, I tried to swim out but—" He was getting choked up.

"It's okay, Jules..." Faith swallowed nervously. "What was her name?" She placed her hand over his and he took it.

"Kailani." He said. He was regaining his composure and he looked relieved that she wasn't freaking out. Faith wasn't really having much of a reaction at all, at least not visibly.

“She was my best friend. I’ve never been able to match what we had. Never really tried, because I always felt like she was it for me.”

“I’m glad you got to experience a love like that, even if it was only for a short time. But I guess that love continues for you, right? She’s gone, but you’re still here with the memories.”

“Mmhhh. There’s more.” A strange noise came from the back of his throat, like he really didn’t want to say whatever was coming next. “I have a daughter, Jasmine. She was barely a year old when Kailani died but I was already racing. I had been for a few years. Kailani’s parents took over, raised her full time and let me visit every moment I possibly could. That’s where I go when we get a break. I step into the role of Dad and I spend time with Jasmine, mostly here but sometimes at home in Malmedy. She’s almost twelve. I continued with racing because it meant I could financially provide for them all, giving her the opportunities that Kailani would’ve wanted for her. It just sucks that I’m not with her twenty four seven, raising her myself.” He explained, as if he was afraid Faith might judge his choices.

“So your daughter is the reason you’re so cautious when it comes to us?” Faith nodded slowly, finally understanding his behaviour over the last few months, his reluctance to get too close. He was protecting his kid. Faith realised why Lucie always told her to be careful with him, while also encouraging her not to give up on him. There was a lot at stake.

“Yes. I also didn’t want her in the media. I’ve only ever told Brett, Lucie and my bosses. Even Marco only knows about Kailani. He has no idea about Jasmine. She lives in a very peaceful world out here. Her and her grandparents grow a lot of their own food, she goes to a good school, goes hiking on weekends and she can play freely with other kids in the area. I don’t want to drag her into my world until she’s old enough to understand it. I think that maybe, being almost a teenager, now might be the time to slowly introduce her to it.”

“That makes sense. And hey, if you need any advice on how to protect her from the media, I’m happy to help.” Faith

smiled.

“Faith, I’m telling you all of this because I want to move forward with you. To begin with, I couldn’t look at you without thinking about my wife. You could be twins. Christ, I couldn’t even kiss you despite being all over you in every other way. But over time, I’ve started to recognise all the things that make you different, and you unknowingly forced me to confront a lot of things that I had pushed down for years. I didn’t want to commit to anyone because I knew they wouldn’t understand or respect my decisions. Can you imagine many supermodels giving up Monaco and private yachts for an eco-friendly lifestyle, an almost-teenager, and muddy winter walks with a malting Husky?”

“Sounds like a dream to me.” She said softly.

“Exactly. That’s why I knew I had to sort my head out. Because of you. An incredible woman who *already* exists in my world.” Julien held her gaze for the first time since he had told her everything. She saw a light in his eyes that hadn’t been there before and it made all the confusion and the pain worth it. Jules was a passionate man. His life wasn’t all work, work, work like she had first assumed and wrongly judged him for. He craved the same kind of love and family that she did, the only difference was he already had a family that needed to be nurtured.

“Do you have a photo of either of them?” She asked, tears forming in her eyes.

Julien reached into his pocket and retrieved his leather wallet, opening it up and finding two polaroids. There was something about him having physical photos rather than digital ones that made Faith’s heart melt. It seemed more sentimental, more special. He handed them to her and she took them carefully, not wanting to damage them.

Jasmine was beautiful and looked far older than twelve. She had a pink hibiscus flower in her dark hair and wore a white dress as she sipped a smoothie. She had her Dad’s eyes, a sparkling blue. Julien’s wife truly did look just like Faith, the only difference being that Faith was blonde, her nose was



slimmer and her cheekbones slightly more defined. Even their smiles were nearly identical, and she could see why Julien had behaved so strangely when they were first introduced. But he was right, Faith was Faith. She would never be Kailani, nor did she want to be, and Julien didn't want her to be either.

"It feels like everything that's happened since we met makes sense now." Faith said. "Every argument, every time you pushed me away, every time you just ignored what we'd got up to behind closed doors. I get it. This is a lot to process for you, and would be for your daughter and the rest of your family too. It's scary how much I resemble your wife. Jasmine is obviously your pride and joy and I know I'm not a parent but I understand how important it is for you to do right by her."

"I tried to stay away from you. I mean, you know that. I told you at the top of the Eiffel tower. Losing Kailani was the hardest thing I have ever experienced and the thought of that happening again terrifies me. But I don't want to deprive myself of a second chance at love, and I don't want Jasmine to grow up with a Dad who is so afraid of something so human. And I don't want you to sit in hotel rooms every night wondering why I won't let you in. I owe it to everyone involved to at least give us a shot."

Faith didn't respond as she studied his features, taking in every detail. His jawline was prominent and she was acutely aware that he hadn't shaved for a couple of days. The sun had lightened his hair and brought out his freckles. He was perfect. She wanted to say something, anything, but she didn't want to ruin the moment. Faith didn't care about the hues of the sunset. It was like Julien was all she could see, all she wanted to see. Reaching across, she put her hand on his face. Her body edged closer and he took note, turning and closing the gap.

His lips were on hers in an instant. Hundreds of seemingly insignificant moments, stolen glances, a light touch here and there, the almost-kisses and the intimate moments they had shared. They had led Faith and Jules to this one kiss that would ultimately shift their entire world. The sun was setting over the horizon, the waves were crashing gently onto the sand

near their feet, the lights and noise of the party were behind them. Nothing could top this. Faith was grateful he had waited until now to place his lips on hers.

His hands were roaming her body, following every curve and caressing every inch. His touch was more addictive than ever. She allowed him to deepen the kiss and sunk into his arms as if they were melting into one another. All of their secrets were out there in the open, nothing was left unsaid. Except for one thing. Faith was scared. Before she could cut off her thoughts, her hands were on his chest, pushing him away. He rested his forehead against hers and tucked her hair behind her ears, oblivious to the panic rising through her body. She leaned back and ran her hand through his blonde hair, both of them in a complete daze but Faith biting her tongue.

“I’m sorry, was that too much?” Julien asked.

“Not at all. I just—I don’t know. There’s a lot going through my mind right now.”

It wouldn’t be fair to make him believe that everything was fine and dandy when she wasn’t sure if it was. Now that she had all the information, she needed to be sure that she was ready to give him what he needed from her. This was supposed to be her year to travel the world, to have the time of her life, and Julien had just offered her a whole other path to follow. It was a beautiful, magical path in itself but for Jasmine’s sake and theirs, she needed to be one hundred percent certain. Eighty five percent wasn’t enough in this situation.

As she explained this to Julien, she heaved a sigh of relief when he nodded and squeezed her hand in reassurance. It was her choice. It was a life changing decision to commit even to the very early stages of dating, since the feelings were absolutely there and there was no turning back without someone getting hurt. Faith had a past of her own that she needed to deal with, plus she wanted to get to know the real Julien.

“Will you come and meet Jasmine tomorrow? No pressure. We can take Lucie, Marco and Brett, too. I just want you to see what she’s like, to get to know her personality a little and see

what I'm like in Dad-mode. I think you'll know instantly if our little bubble isn't right for you, but I'm hoping it might make you feel more at ease about all of this. We can either rule us out completely or give it a little while longer. What do you think?"

"I think that sounds lovely." Faith agreed and leaned her head on Julien's shoulder. She had to start healing fully so she could give all of her energy and focus to this. As had been the case this entire time, there was no denying that Faith and Julien would end up together, it was just a matter of when.

## CHAPTER 25

A RED JEEP WAS DRIVEN UP TO THE FRONT OF THE HOTEL BY the valet, who tossed the keys to Julien. He caught them effortlessly and gestured for everyone to pile in, and although there was only space for four, all five managed to squeeze into what Julien fondly called *The Rust Bucket*. They learned that he hired this exact same car every time he was out here and he was tempted to just buy it.

He clearly loved this jeep. He even left his own CD's in it when he gave it back to the rental company since he used it so often. A *Bon Jovi* album, *Journey* and one by a band from LA called *Saint Motel* who Lucie had introduced him to. Faith wondered if he'd ever arrived on the island to discover that the jeep had been given to another customer, or if he'd ever had a CD stolen.

The roads gradually got bumpier and a lot less comfortable for the back seat passengers as they neared their destination. Brett was in the front seat, given that he was far taller than Marco and the girls. He had taken it upon himself to wind his window all the way down and as a result, strands of Faith and Lucie's hair were getting tangled together and they couldn't see anything except a mass of brunette and blonde. Naturally, the guys thought it was hysterical. The girls, not so much. By the time Julien slowed down to drive along the dirt road to the farm, Lucie had a scowl on her face that threatened to leave permanent lines on her forehead.

The road was long, straight and narrow but it wasn't muddy, just very dusty. Driving at a slow speed was necessary

otherwise they'd have red clouds of dirt surrounding the car. It was lined with plants all the way to the end, and when they turned off they were greeted by a handmade wooden sign that read *The Kalakaua's*. It was slightly wonky but it had character. The whole place did.

The exterior of the house was white with a pinky-red coloured roof, and it had a wraparound porch. It was one story but it was pretty big, definitely big enough to be holed up with a teenager. Although one quick glance of the land surrounding it suggested it was unlikely that Jasmine spent much time inside. There were more plants everywhere you looked and a more than generous fruit and vegetable patch. Each planter had a wooden stick with the name of its' contents written on it.

The girl from the photos came hurtling out of a red front door and towards her Dad as he hopped out of the jeep. Julien scooped her up in an almighty bear hug and spun her around. Jasmine spoke to him in Dutch which totally threw Faith off, but made her heart all warm and fuzzy. She'd learned her Dad's native language even though Faith had only heard Julien speak it a handful of times. Maybe she could speak Hawaiian, too. An older couple, in their fifties, followed her outside as everyone else got out of the car to say their hellos. Judging by their features, Faith guessed that they were probably native Hawaiians.

Their faces were full of life and their eyes sparkled as they watched their granddaughter reunite with her dad. The love for both of them was very evident and Faith felt a pang of sadness that she didn't know her own grandparents. She imagined them to be just like Koa and Malia, who had just made their introductions and immediately asked Faith and Lucie if they had ever tried lilikoi which was otherwise known as passionfruit.

"Lucie!" Jasmine added lots of extra letters onto the end of her name and greeted Lucie like an old friend. She expressed that she was excited to finally meet her after seeing so many photos and videos and chatting to her during video calls with Julien. Faith hadn't confronted Lucie about keeping everything hidden from her because she didn't feel like she

should. This was Julien's story, nobody else's. He had to be the one to tell it.

After she had hugged Brett and nervously said hello to Marco, who high-fived her and told her he liked her braids, it was Faith's turn. Jasmine wasn't the only shy one. She hid behind Julien, who took notice and gently pushed her forward so she could see that Faith was smiling warmly at her. That gave her the confidence to step forward and wrap her arms around her Dad's mystery friend, and stunned Faith and Jules into silence.

"Hi." Faith laughed softly and returned the hug.

"Hey, are you the girl who isn't but definitely should be dating my Dad?" She asked with a mischievous grin. Brett lost it. His laughter broke any tension and Julien gawked at his daughter.

"Where did that come from?" He was stunned.

"Well, you said on the phone that the interview you guys did was a misunderstanding but Grandma and Grandpa let me see everything that gets posted and I'm not blind, Dad. You like each other." Jasmine said it so innocently and matter-of-fact that they couldn't help but laugh. Kids really chose their moments.

"Why don't you locate the football?" Julien sent her running around to the back of the house and they all followed. Koa engaged them in an animated conversation about racing and Malia hit them with a million different flavour combinations for the smoothies she was about to make.

"How are you feeling?" Lucie lowered her voice once Malia had disappeared inside and left them to it. The girls sat on the porch while Jasmine instructed her Dad, Grandpa and honorary Uncles on the game she had created.

"It's a lot." Faith admitted. She was feeling a little out of her depth, here. She knew that if her and Jules pursued things, it was the real deal. She felt a lot of responsibility to Kailani, a woman she had never met. There was a lot to live up to.

Besides, Jasmine herself had to let Faith into her world. Despite her teasing, she had never met any of Julien's romantic interests before. She had also never had someone playing the role of Mum, unless you counted Malia. She might not be ready.

"First of all, do you *want* this?" Lucie gestured at the scene in front of them. A bright pink football went flying at Brett's head and bounced off the side of the house when he ducked. Julien yelled at his daughter, but maintained his composure.

She did want this. It was complicated and it wasn't going to be easy by any stretch of the imagination, but Faith was falling in love with this man and she wanted everything he had to offer, including his daughter and his dog, his life in Belgium and his regular visits to Hawaii. There was nothing to keep them apart now except for her fears. Julien had battled his. It was her turn.

"I do." Faith nodded eagerly.

"In that case, take the two month break for yourself. You two need to adjust and get to know each other without secrets, so maybe do regular video calls. Then you can travel with me, visit your Mum, and Jasmine has time to get used to the idea of you being around."

"When did you get so smart, Carolan?"

"I'm the queen of good advice."

"Here you are, girls! Passionfruit smoothies, my secret recipe! Not even Koa knows what's in them." Malia came out carrying yellow frothy liquid in mason jars with metal straws, and then popped back in and returned with an array of freshly sliced fruits ranging from mangoes and strawberries to bananas and kiwis. It looked beautiful, and she set it down on a wooden table next to them. Something told Faith that she liked to host and didn't get to do it often. She called everyone over to help themselves and swatted Brett's hand away when he reached for the chocolate brownies she had also laid out, telling him to wait until he'd eaten the healthy stuff.

This was Malia's family. None of them related by blood, but any family of her Son-in-Law's was her's and Koa's too. Faith was already fond of the couple and as Jasmine sat on the top step next to Faith and dragged her Dad down with her, she felt like she was catching a glimpse at her future.

She hoped that she could give Julien the kind of love he never thought he would find again. It was something she had never experienced for herself and thought didn't exist, but Julien made her feel alive in a way she couldn't possibly explain to anyone. You had to feel it to understand. And she did. She understood exactly. Julien was it for her and she was going to fight like hell over the next two months to be the best possible version of herself for him.



Faith helped Julien load his luggage into the jeep. It had been a very long week. Every day consisted of swimming, surfing, sunbathing and drinking cocktails, and each morning began with a trip to Malia and Koa's farm to hang out with Jasmine. She was a ray of sunshine and could not be more excited to see them each time. They had enjoyed seeing parts of the island with her that they never would have known existed if they had stayed at the resort, although some other drivers seemed a bit miffed that Revolution continually abandoned them all.

Julien had confessed to Faith that he felt like he had deeply betrayed the whole community by keeping his daughter hidden and he was worried they might think it was odd. He didn't know if he should make a big deal out of it and sit everyone down in a conference room, or if it was better to just post a photo of them both on social media and let the rumour mill go wild.

Jasmine had put her two cents in and insisted that she wanted a red curtain reveal at the first race she was allowed to fly out to, but Faith, who was now given the sole responsibility of managing Julien's personal *Instagram* account, had told her to play it cool. Jasmine had agreed, but only because she was



already considering herself extremely lucky that she was actually going to watch her Dad out on the track.

Bea had spent her week with Ricardo, enjoying strolls along the beach and cocktails in the sun. He had given her all of his time and attention and didn't seem to care that he was neglecting his team. A lot of people had yet to warm up the new and improved Bea, not trusting that she had changed in such a short space of time. It was just as well Faith and Lucie saw it, because most people were following their lead based on the fact that they wouldn't be caught hanging out with someone toxic.

Bea had gone on a social media strike, claiming that she just wanted to be around the people she loved. Marco had grimaced slightly at the thought of being included in that category, but nonetheless had gone wakeboarding with her and Ricardo and returned to the rest of the group insisting that they had in fact all been wrong about her. She was hovering near Julien's car with Lucie and Faith now as he said his goodbyes to the boys.

It was abnormally emotional watching them pat each other on the back and exchange hugs. Julien was staying in Hawaii for the whole two months with Jasmine, and would meet them all in England for Silverstone. It was going to feel like the longest break in his career history, or at least that's what he whispered into Faith's hair when it was her turn to say goodbye.

Their friends had gone back into the hotel and left them to it but Faith could already feel the tears coming. They still had one day left and she didn't know how she was supposed to enjoy it without Julien, and with their future weighing on her mind. They were standing by the fountain in the sunshine, and Julien's arms were wrapped around her. Julien had been respectful of Faith's request for time to process, and had held back on excessive amounts of kissing and touching. A hand on the small of her back when they walked in and out of the hotel restaurant, tucking her hair behind her ear, kissing her on the cheek to greet her.

He was a gentleman. It was just how they had always been, but this time there was no dark cloud above them threatening to ruin their moments of bliss. No pulling back once they realised there was a risk of getting too close.

“Faith, I don’t want you to give anything up to be with me. I know you said you love the idea of muddy dog walks and saltwater in your hair but part of the reason you took this job was so you could travel. So, we’ll travel together.” Julien looked down at her, gently caressing the side of her face in a daze.

“All three of us?”

“Yeah. I mean, not straight away. It’ll just be me for a while, but one day Jasmine will be with us. When she was born, I always envisioned bringing her along for the ride but when we lost Kail, I left her here so she had a family.”

“But family comes in different forms.” Faith read his mind.

“Exactly. As long as she’s surrounded by people who love her, that’s her family. Kind of feel like I missed out on a lot because I didn’t realise that sooner, but Malia and Koa have given her a stability that I never could.”

“You’re an amazing man, Julien Moretz. You should be proud of yourself. I’m sure Kailani would be, too.” She glanced up at him, worried that her mention of his late wife would offend him somehow but his lips curved upwards into a soft smile and he did the classic hair tuck, a couple of strands catching in her gold hoop earrings. He laughed as he fixed it.

“I should get going, I promised Jasmine I’d take her out for ice cream with her friends.” He checked his watch and sighed.

“Okay.” Faith nodded and let go reluctantly.

“Come back.” Julien pulled her close again. She lifted her head up and he leaned down to meet her halfway, his lips crashing down on hers. They savoured every second, making it last because they knew it would be a long time before they could do this again. Faith could feel his hands in her hair,

tangling it beyond help but she didn't care. She wanted to stay in this moment forever. When they broke apart she frowned, her bottom lip jutting out slightly in protest.

"I'll see you in August." She whispered.

"Try not to get into too much trouble while you're off traveling the world without me. I don't want to come back to see you in a cast or with a limb missing or something. And don't let Brett convince you to try the big scary mountains when you go skiing, stick to the small ones. Or sit it out and sip champagne while you watch everyone else make a fool of themselves." He said.

"And you try not to strangle your beautiful daughter when her typical teen attitude kicks in."

"I make no promises."

"Hey Jules, I've been meaning to ask. What happens to Ford when you're gone?" She thought of his dog, who was often left at his neighbour's farm in Belgium.

"He'll be with my Mother in Brussels. I'll take Jasmine back to Belgium for a couple of weeks to see them both but don't worry, Ford is fine. He loves staying with my Mother, she makes a huge fuss of him and he gets two walks a day and plenty of visitors. He's in good hands." Julien promised, knowing that Ford had taken a shine to Faith and vice versa. She looked forward to the day he tried to follow her into the shower again and got his mass of white and grey fur wet.

"Think I'll miss him more than I'll miss you. He's much better company." She teased.

"Get back into the hotel." Jules tutted. "I'll see you soon. Silverstone will be here before you know it."

He opened the door to the jeep and climbed in, yanking the sheet of red metal and slamming it shut behind him. It made an almighty creaking sound and they both winced. It was a stark contrast to the sports cars and top of the range SUV's that other drivers and engineers had rented for the week, and the valet guys had loved it and told Julien that he fit right in as a local.

As he sat behind the wheel now, Faith felt as though she was watching someone else. A man who was so far removed from the moody, arrogant and closed-off racing driver she'd met in April that she barely recognised him. But it wasn't a bad thing. It just made him human. She jumped when he started his radio and *Kokomo* by *The Beach Boys* was blasted on full volume.

Julien threw his head back, laughing wildly in a state of pure bliss. He waved out of the window as he started pulling away from her and she grinned, hearing him sing along at the top of his voice as he drove out of the resort. If Jules opened up this part of himself to the rest of the world, they would see all of the things that Faith did. Everything that made it impossible to let him go.

## CHAPTER 26

THERE WERE TWO WEEKS TO GO UNTIL THE RACE AT Silverstone. Faith and Lucie were crammed into a tiny green VW Beetle convertible with suitcases in the back, and the winding roads of Cornwall were throwing them around violently. Lucie wasn't used to driving the British country roads but that didn't stop her approaching each corner at a far higher speed than Faith would've liked.

She hit the horn on the steering wheel each time, a tip that Faith had given her when they had first picked the car up from the rental company in Devon weeks ago. So far they had only had a few narrow misses which unfortunately had not slowed her American friend down in the slightest. Lucie claimed she had no fear as she was used to constant, angry Los Angeles traffic, but Faith wasn't convinced.

They had been lucky with the weather and hardly had to put the roof up, although they had been caught out during a trip to Lulworth in Dorset. They were heading back from their trek down to Durdle Door in the most inappropriate footwear they could've chosen when the rain hit. It pelted them at full force and Lucie had screamed that she was sure it was going to physically dent her skin.

She had been such a diva the whole time they'd been on the road that Faith couldn't help but find it hilarious each time she had a minor meltdown. Faith was used to the poorly designed roads, the lack of phone signal, the unexpected torrential downpours and the empty meal deal shelves in the supermarkets but Lucie had grown accustomed to the luxury

that their job offered. They had eaten more egg sandwiches than any human ever should, and didn't want to see another packet of ready salted crisps for as long as they lived. Their daily pub trips were their safe haven and every evening they indulged in a hot meal that rivalled the pasta dishes Amina used to make back in London.

They were a few miles out of Faith's hometown now and she felt nauseous. For once it wasn't just as a result of Lucie's erratic driving although she wished it was. She hadn't told her Mum she was coming. How would she? Her Mum hadn't had credit on her phone for as long as she could remember, and Faith's number had changed so many times that she wasn't sure she had it saved anymore anyway. She always text her Mum with her new one but never got a reply.

The one-sided postcards were their only form of contact and Faith had only responded a handful of times over the years, never having an awful lot to say. They were showing up with zero warning and frankly it was terrifying not knowing what to expect.

It had been eight years. No real conversation and a lot of resentment from both parties. Faith knew her Mum was happy for her despite the way she had lashed out in the Dubrovnik postcard, where she claimed that her daughter had abandoned her. They both knew that wasn't the truth, but Faith also had no doubt that Andrea was drinking again. Alcohol made her say everything she had buried deep, and it was never pretty.

Turning up like this meant she had no time to put on a facade. She couldn't clean up the vodka bottles or make herself look all fresh and youthful to convince Faith she was doing well. Faith didn't want to be here, but she knew she needed to confront her past. Not just for her own peace of mind, but also so she could heal the wounds her Mum had left her with and mentally and emotionally prepare to play a maternal role herself.

"Is this it?" Lucie slowed down, a rarity, and pointed at the rickety wooden sign that introduced Old Al's farm. He had added a cute little painting of a sheep which made Faith smile. He was a sweet man and had always got excited when Faith

asked to hang out with his animals, letting her milk the cows with him before school or take the sheepdogs out into the field.

She had watched one too many baby sheep and calves being born when she was younger which really hadn't proved useful in the years that followed, but nonetheless she bet Lucie had never experienced anything like that. Faith was definitely a country girl at heart no matter how many big cities won her affection.

"I hope she's not drunk." Faith swallowed the lump in her throat and gestured for Lucie to park up next to the farmhouse rather than the trailer.

Al was unlikely to be home at two o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon. He still had a shop to run which they had passed on their way into town, Lucie squealing that it was absolutely adorable. Faith couldn't deny that. It was built like a log cabin and there were flowers in planters and hanging baskets, a sign for fresh strawberries placed up on the side of the road. They were already debating stopping in to say hello and pick some up on their way back.

"If I can handle drunk racing drivers, I'm pretty sure I can handle your Mum. Don't stress about it." Lucie squeezed her hand tightly and opened her door, not allowing her friend any time to panic and back out. She was already halfway to Andrea's front door by the time Faith had hopped out in her Doc Marten boots. Lucie had opted for white trainers which she was trying not to complain about when she stepped in a puddle, but Faith could hear the pain in her voice.

The trailer was in good nick, better than when Faith had left it at least. She had only lived here from the ages of thirteen to eighteen, having stayed at the caravan park until then. This caravan was bigger than their original one and had pink, yellow and blue flower stickers on it which were peeling away at the edges.

They had actually been Al's choice when he'd offered it to them, thinking that they would make the girls feel at home. He had decorated Faith's room with pastel curtains and bed sheets

and a big fluffy rug that covered the thin, fading carpet. The local community knew she loved reading, and people would often pop into Al's store with books to pass on to her that their own children had read and didn't want anymore. Al came home with a bag full every couple of weeks and she would proudly show her Mum, who helped her alphabetise them by author. There would be times when the living room had stacks of them.

"Faith?" Andrea opened the door in her dressing gown, half a face of makeup on and her blonde hair in rollers. She looked good. Not tired and dishevelled like she usually did, and she hadn't aged all that much. She was still relatively wrinkle-free.

"Hi, Mum." Faith swallowed nervously.

"Hi! I'm Lucie Carolan. I'm your daughter's friend and co-worker." Luce put on her best smile and shook Andrea's hand. Her accent had clearly thrown Faith's Mum off, judging by the little goldfish-style mouth movements.

"Come in! Gosh, I had no idea you were coming. You didn't send me a postcard to warn me, did you?" She rushed to straighten the cushions on the sofa. "The postman has been off sick for a few days so everything's delayed."

"No, I didn't send anything. We're on a road trip around the coast and I just thought it was about time I came back for a visit." Faith perched on the sofa. The living room was tidy, although there was still a mountain of books on the coffee table. One of Faith's old teddies sat proudly in the armchair she used to read in, holding one of her favourite romance novels. The kitchen was sparkling clean and the few postcards Faith had responded with were attached with magnets of London landmarks.

"I'm so happy you're here. And it's so lovely that you've brought a friend with you. Would either of you like a cup of tea?" She was hovering near the kettle and was clearly itching to give her daughter a hug, but thought better of it.

"A tea would be lovely, please."



“Could I have a coffee instead?” Faith asked.

“Wow, you really are all grown up. Drinking coffee.” Andrea smiled and boiled the water. She leaned on the counter, crossing her arms like she was protecting herself. “How have you been?”

“Really good. I’m working in the motorsport industry now, doing social media. So there’s a lot of travel involved.” Faith took a better look at the collection of things on the fridge and spotted some photos of her Mum and a man she didn’t recognise stood in front of various landscapes. “Mum, where were these taken?”

“Oh, these?” She took them down and handed them to the girls. “Barcelona, New York, Tokyo. That’s Mike. We’ve been dating for a year now. He works in finance.”

“In finance?” Faith’s eyebrows shot up.

“Ooooh, he’s cute!” Lucie commented.

“Thank you, Lucie.” Andrea laughed. “He’s been very good to me. Nothing like previous boyfriends. I think you’d really like him, Faith. He’d like to meet you one day but I told him I need to see you first. Don’t want to spring him on you. I was going to visit you before the end of the year actually, I was just putting it off because I didn’t know if it was a good idea. He’s been asking me to move to London with him.”

“So why haven’t you gone?”

“I was hoping you’d get the courage to visit me before I got the courage to visit you. And I thought that if I left here, you might not know where to find me. That if I sent you my new address, the postcard would get lost and you’d never receive it.”

“You’ve been waiting for me?” Faith’s heart softened, even after she’d noticed the beer bottles on the counter.

“Of course I have. I messed up a lot of things, Faith. I know I damaged our relationship with my drinking and my poor decisions. I didn’t want to try to force a reconciliation on you.”

“Have you stopped drinking?”

“I have. Those are Mike’s beers. I’ve been sober for two years and I started an online business. Mike got me one of those iPad things so I’ve been creating digital prints and it’s been going really well so far. It’s given me a good focus, and I can do it from anywhere. Mike and I have done a bit of traveling, so no more fake postcards. The ones I’ve been sending recently have been real.” Her Mum was bursting with pride. She was no longer living a lie.

“How did you meet Mike?” Faith took a closer look at the photos and noted his dark hair and olive complexion. He looked familiar but she couldn’t put her finger on it.

“About that...” Andrea handed them a mug each and sat down next to them hesitantly. “I don’t really know how to say this so I’m just going to get straight to the point. Mike is your Father.”

Lucie and Faith nearly spat their drinks out. Her Dad was not only back but was dating her Mum and living in a big fancy flat in the city she had been living in for eight years? It didn’t make sense. How did she not know this? And how had it been a year since he’d been back in contact with her Mum, and yet she still hadn’t met the man?

“He came back for you?”

“For us. Technically. Two years ago actually, but it took me a long time to trust him again. To trust his intentions.”

“How did he know you were still here?”

“He didn’t. He took a chance. He’d been living in Hong Kong ever since he left us, with a lady called Mei Ling and their kids”

“They have children? I have siblings?” Faith was struggling to digest this new information. It was like she was being handed a biological family on a silver platter, the one thing she had always wanted, and yet she couldn’t have actually have it.

“Tao and Jae. Tao is sixteen and your brother is six. Mei Ling was very controlling. She insisted that he should forget

about you and focus on her and their own children. She intercepted some letters he'd tried to send us, and he didn't find out until a couple of years ago. He wrapped up his job in Hong Kong and came straight here to find us when he discovered them. He'd already filed for a divorce. Mei wants to send the kids to live here because your Dad has more money than her and can provide better, but he isn't ready for any of that until he can meet you. He'd like to be on good terms with you before they arrive, so that you can get to know your brother and sister."

"He wants to meet me?" Faith looked at Lucie who looked like she might collapse from the shock. The feeling was mutual.

"Yes. When you're ready. I know this a lot to process, Faith. And I know I should've told you, but I didn't think you were ready for a visit from me, and I wanted to tell you in person."

"I wasn't ready for a visit or you weren't?"

"You've got me there." Andrea cast her eyes down at the floor.

"Christ." She exhaled shakily. "Why did my Dad leave us?"

"Mike liked to convince himself he was ready for the fairytale romance and for a baby but he was lying to himself. He was selfish, which he'll willingly admit. He needed to live his life for him. It took him ten years to settle down again and he was nearly thirty by then with a stable job and a dreamy lifestyle. He says that Mei Ling could never compare to me and he was never truly happy. When he discovered that the letters hadn't been sent he realised he might still have a shot at reconciling the first family he had created, joining it with his new one. He tracks what you're up to on social media, by the way. He's been so close to messaging you so many times but he was terrified it would make you uncomfortable. He thought it would be better for me to explain everything and to give you a chance to reach out on your own terms. I'm praying he was right."

Faith didn't answer for a while. She was sure she should be feeling some kind of anger and resentment but in all honesty she was more numb than anything. This was her flesh and blood they were talking about, and it seemed that everyone was sorting their own lives out again before they came along and risked screwing hers up.

She was successful and they knew that. It would do no good to try to build a relationship with her if they were still trying to fix their own messes. It seemed that Andrea had clocked that and started taking the necessary steps a while ago, but Faith had beat her to it with this visit.

"Are you okay?" Lucie whispered under her breath while Andrea disappeared into her bedroom.

"Yeah, I think."

"I have these. Tao sent them." Andrea returned with an envelope and a photograph. "She's written you a letter which you don't have to respond to, she just wanted you to have it to read when you're ready." The photo was of Tao and Jae. They had the same dark hair that Mike had, but their features were different. Both Andrea and Mei had very strong genes that were reflected in their children. One thing they all shared was their Dad's smile, and it made her feel good about this whole situation.

"I don't know if I'm ready to meet him yet. My Dad, I mean. I have a lot going on with my job and everything. Do you think he'd be open to exchanging a few letters? And maybe you would like that, too. I could send postcards, actually. Keep up the tradition." Faith suggested and thought of all the traveling she'd be doing.

"I think he'd be open to whatever you're willing to give him, sweetheart."

"Okay. Thanks, for this." Faith held up the photo. She clutched it tightly and admired Tao's handwriting on the back. It was dated two weeks ago, as if she had somehow been anticipating Faith's return to Cornwall. She wondered how alike they were.

“You can keep the one of me and your Dad, if you would like to.”

“I might keep that one for myself, actually. Mike’s fit.” Lucie grinned.

Lucie had successfully lightened the mood and got a hearty laugh out of them both, and by some miracle there was no tension in the air. No hard feelings from Faith towards either one of her parents. No lingering resentment. Just acceptance.

“Don’t let Brett hear you say that.” Faith teased, knowing that he and Lucie had been exchanging flirty texts since their skiing trip weeks ago. Something had gone down in the Italian alps, and Faith had a feeling it was one of them.

“Oh? Who’s Brett?” Andrea asked with a twinkle in her eye. It had been a long time since she had gossiped with Faith and her friends, and it was needed after such a heavy conversation.

“Lucie’s man.”

“He’s just a friend. My man friend. A male, who happens to be my friend. And co-worker.” Lucie interjected.

“You’re dating a racing driver? Or is he an engineer?” Andrea was on the edge of her seat and Lucie looked like she was ready to give up arguing with the pair of them.

“For heaven’s sake, you two are a nightmare. He’s a racing driver. But actually, Faith is the one who has updates on the romance front. Isn’t that right, Jensen?” She shot a look at her friend, looking very pleased with herself.

“Yes, Lucie. That is right.” Faith smiled with gritted teeth, mentally cursing her.

“Really?” Her Mum nearly flew off her seat.

“It’s early days.”

“Ha! Hardly.” Lucie scoffed.

“We have some things to figure out.”

“They’re perfect for each other. The whole world knows it. Literally.”

“Oh! Mike said there was a very handsome man on your social media profile and it looked like you two were close. Blonde, blue eyes? I think he had a European accent?” Andrea quizzed.

“That’s him!” Lucie yelled.

Sitting back amongst the plush cushions of her Mum’s old green velvet sofa, Faith started to tell Andrea everything about Julien. It felt odd to be confiding in her about this, or to be confiding in anyone other than Bea or Lucie about him, but the way her Mum’s eyes lit up filled her with a strange sense of nostalgia for her childhood. For the times she would come home from primary school and tell her all about her latest crush and how they’d both stood at the bin to sharpen their pencils together during an English lesson.

This felt right. The whole visit did, and she was glad she had decided to come. Glad that Julien had encouraged her over the phone last week and that Lucie had accompanied her, despite how rural and rundown this part of Cornwall was. She was grateful that she had seen the changes to her Mum’s life for herself, and even more grateful that everybody involved was at a point where they could welcome each other with open arms. It was just a shame it had taken this long.



The girls left Andrea’s and found a dodgy roadside diner that looked like it probably served roadkill. To be on the safe side, they had opted for a vegetarian all-day breakfast for their dinner, with a much needed glass of cheap wine to accompany it. There was a motel next door where they were staying before they drove all the way to Bristol and caught a flight to Cyprus for two weeks in Ayia Napa with Bea.

Andrea had cried when they’d left and even Faith had welled up with tears, but it was Lucie who had sobbed her heart out as if she was going off to fight a war. She had still been emotional half an hour into the journey, told Faith that she was proud of her for handling everything so well and

would be there every step of the way if she wanted to meet her Dad.

Faith decided she would start with written contact, and when the race season was over she would return to London to visit him, and then initiate contact with Tao and Jae before they moved over here. She had no hesitation about meeting them, she just wanted to take it slow.

“I need to talk to you about Jules.” Faith poked around at her food and stared at the plate.

“You’re scaring me. What’s he done?” Lucie frowned.

“Nothing. It’s me. I have to call things off.”

“What?” Lucie’s face dropped.

“He’s amazing, but I don’t know how to be someone’s partner, let alone how to be a parental figure for his kid.”

“That makes sense.”

“You’re not going to try to change my mind?” Faith was stunned. Luce had been the one encouraging her to take her time with Julien and really pushing for her not to give up on him.

“No, I’m not. Your life is a flipping whirlwind, Faith. You just keep getting all this crap thrown at you, and you can’t be expected to adjust to it all immediately. I personally think that you could do it if you gave it a shot, but if you’re not ready then you’re not ready. I also believe, and I think you do too, that Jules is the perfect man for you. Your soulmate, even. If that’s the case then you two will figure it out when the timing is right. You’ve come this far, what’s to say you won’t meet your Dad and your siblings and in a year be ready to share his world with him?”

“I don’t want to hurt him.” Faith chewed her lip, the anxiety rising at the mere thought of having to let him down. She didn’t want to have that conversation because she knew she was only doing this out of fear, but it was better to leave it all in the dust now than to drag Jasmine into it and shatter her world too.

“He cares about you deeply, Faith. And you both want what’s best for everyone. If one of you isn’t ready, you shouldn’t dive in head first. Look before you fall, and all that. I think you’re doing the right thing.”

They sat in silence for the rest of their meal, and Faith didn’t have much of an appetite anymore. It was nothing to do with the cookies Andrea had practically shoved down their throats.

She hated that after all the progress they had made, all the excitement at the prospect of a future together and the plans they’d made, she was going to ruin it and take her and Julien right back to square one. Because she knew their feelings weren’t going anywhere, and their chemistry was going to be stronger than it was before. The moments they shared would keep happening. But she couldn’t let them become what they had both thought they would be.



## CHAPTER 27

AFTER TWO WEEKS OF TRYING AND FAILING TO DECIPHER various phrases in Greek and Turkish in Ayia Napa, it was nice to be able to speak and read English again. Bea had booked them an Airbnb rather than an all inclusive resort, claiming that it would provide them with a more authentic experience, but they had missed the luxury of room service and fresh towels and bedding.

They vowed that next time they had a holiday like that, they would skip the authenticity factor and opt for ease. They were seasoned travellers already, and they had a lot of upcoming trips where they would constantly be hiking and exploring so they needed a healthy balance of relaxing beach holidays in between.

Aside from navigating through the resort town and the bars and clubs with a language barrier, the trip had been successful in bringing the girls together. Each day had brought fresh local seafood and a busy nightlife scene which had been thoroughly enjoyed by all three of them.

Bea hadn't had to fight to get them out past nine o'clock every night. In fact, sometimes it had been the other way around. They had run out of dresses, so they were washing them in the sink, drying them on the balcony and swapping with each other so nobody was re-wearing anything.

Bea had insisted on impromptu photoshoots at various points and in different locations every day, which had resulted in literally hundreds of photos of each of them to edit. Then there were the scenic shots. They spent their days by the pool

going through them and deciding what to post and when, and were sure that their followers would soon grow tired of Aya Napa content.

They wanted this to be an annual thing for them, having fallen in love with the place on day one. It was the perfect girls trip and they had no intention of letting the boys tag along, ever. As Lucie had informed them in the group chat, if they wanted to come they could go to a hotel on the opposite side of town and stay out of their way.

Driving from Gatwick to Silverstone was a reality check for them. They had gone from views of boats on the ocean to views of cows in green fields, and instead of smelling seafood all they could smell was fresh manure. Pure bliss. The organisation had sent a rental car for them and given them a Range Rover with all the extras, so they were taking full advantage of the cooled seating option. Faith was in the front, gazing at a bright blue, cloudless sky. This weather was due to stay for the whole week, but with the English weather who knew if that would be the case. Right now, though, the air conditioning was a godsend.

The trip had been the final step in Faith and Bea healing their relationship and really proved to Lucie that Faith had been right about her friend being a very different person to the one she had been presenting herself as for the last year and a half. She was still in touch with Ricardo De La Rosa, who had sent a bouquet of flowers to the Airbnb on their second day. They had well and truly hit it off, and were even talking about Bea meeting his parents at their vineyard in Tuscany and her moving to Monaco.

“I want pretzels.” Bea complained from the back seat. She hadn’t been able to find any at the airport, or at the Tesco Express Lucie had stopped at forty minutes into the journey.

“There’s a Sainsbury’s an hour out of Silverstone. I will get you your pretzels, if you promise to drive the rest of the way.” Lucie rolled her eyes. Having Bea in the car was a bit like travelling with a whiny kid who was constantly asking how long they had left to go.

“How am I supposed to eat if I’m driving?”

“I’ll feed them to you.”

“Aw, thanks Luce! That’s so sweet.”

In the time it took them to locate the pretzels and get a member of staff to unlock the toilets, the boys had beaten them to it and arrived at the hotel near the circuit. Faith was still hoping that the girls would have time to get settled before her big reunion with Julien and was counting on him going down to the track to see the team. At least if they came face to face for the first time in the garage, there wouldn’t be a chance for things to be awkward with all the activity around them.

They had continued to talk non stop with almost daily video calls, and from what the girls had seen she was acting totally normal and not giving anything away, but Faith felt sick every time his face appeared on her screen. She hadn’t told him she couldn’t pursue a relationship yet, and in all honesty despite what her and Lucie had discussed and the similar advice Bea had given, she still wasn’t convinced that making him wait even longer was the best thing.

What if he didn’t want to wait and she lost out on her one shot at happiness with him? She would be cursing herself for years to come. She knew that connections like this didn’t come around often and part of her felt that she was risking throwing away something, or someone, who was once in a lifetime. She had no idea what to do.

“Jasper wants us down at the track straight away to get some footage of the new livery.” Lucie turned around to Faith. The car had a limited edition red and orange ombré livery for the British race, of course he would want that content pushed out today. Tomorrow was free practice and there would be more focus on other teams. It just meant Faith would have to suck it up and see Julien for longer and in closer proximity than she planned.

Bea drove them right into the paddock area, still having chocolate covered pretzels hand-fed to her, and abandoned the car in between two of Revolution Racing’s team trailers, right behind the garage. It was the epitome of laziness, but they’d

been lounging around on the beach for two weeks and they hadn't quite adjusted to the idea of walking everywhere again. They were still yet to swap their sandals for trainers. Stumbling out of the air conditioned space and into the muggy, humid air, all three of them groaned in protest. Silverstone's paddock was sunk into the ground slightly, with huge concrete walls at either end, and it meant that there wasn't much of a breeze.

"There you are!" Brett emerged from the garage with Marco in tow and scooped Lucie up in his arms. For once, she didn't bat him away when he got handsy.

"Nobody touch me, it's far too hot for all this hugging nonsense. Air kisses will have to do." Bea gave Brett and Marco her classic greeting and shooed them away while she fanned herself with the autograph card Marco had been holding. "Oooh, I like these!" She looked at the new design and led Mars into the garage, chatting away. He waved over his shoulder at Faith. It wasn't like she hadn't seen him lately.

"My darling Faith!" Brett yelled and picked her up like she was Simba from *The Lion King*. It still baffled her how these racing drivers were so strong, especially Brett who was near enough superhuman. She thought back to the waltzers at Le Mans where he had almost crushed her.

"Put me down, Anderson. You're such a pain in the ass." She laughed.

"I'm your favourite pain in the ass, though. It's okay, I won't tell Jules."

Speaking of Julien, she could see the back of his head from here. As she approached him, she couldn't shake the nerves.

"Hey." She mumbled. He whipped around as soon as he heard her voice and his whole face lit up.

"Hi." He smiled and went straight in for a hug, resting his chin on top of her head. She'd missed this. Far more than she realised.

The two of them stood like that until they felt eyes on them but Faith could have stayed in that position forever. She could

feel that he had been working out. His shoulders were broader and his arms were bigger. Even his chest felt different against hers.

When he pulled away she took the opportunity to fully check him out. He was wearing a navy t-shirt which clung tightly to his biceps and abs, and fitted beige trousers. She took a second to admire that view too. Yep, he looked just as good from behind. Not too long ago, she'd have been embarrassed if he caught her staring but now she didn't care.

She almost wanted him to notice. It wasn't like she hadn't witnessed him doing the same thing on multiple occasions, especially in Hawaii. It was nice to finally be able to act on their attraction to one another without the potential of Julien storming into his trailer in a dark rage and refusing to speak to her for hours.

With the boys out on the track for tests, Faith got to work on a short video of the car to accompany the photos that Lucie and Bea were preparing, all three of them agreeing on contrast and saturation settings so the car looked the same in all of the content. They didn't want the colours to look more muted in the video than the photos.

They had been doing this for their personal content while they had been traveling too, although that was trickier because their own feeds had very specific aesthetics. Bea was quite strict on how orange her fake-tanned complexion looked on her friends' profiles.

The attention to detail was something the boys lacked and were begging for help with. They wanted to take their social media presence up a notch, including Julien now that he was going to slowly introduce his daughter to it, and that meant they wanted to stand out from the sea of other racing drivers.

Brett wanted bright and bold colours, Marco wanted minimalism with a lot of black and white and empty space, and Julien was copying Faith and opting for neutral and earthy tones. She had created a mood board for him, like she used to do for her old clients, and selected photos of coffee shops and latte art, huskies with the same colouring as Ford, forests and

green leafy plants, and sandy beaches and waterfalls. That pretty much summed his life up, whether he was in Europe or Hawaii.

Julien had been posting on his social media a lot more over the last few days, making up for the lack of content being shared while he'd been with Jasmine. He had captured himself picking Ford up from his Mum's, his morning coffees, the work he was doing with his digger on his property, countryside walks with his Mum and the dog. He had actually listened to everything Faith had told him he needed to be doing when she first got here. All the things he had insisted he didn't want to do, the things he thought were stupid.

Over the last few days, he had seemed very keen to get back to the team and get behind the wheel again. It was clear both on his profile, and in the texts he was sending. Faith knew it wasn't just about his job. It was about her. She was fooling herself thinking even for a second that she could give up Julien Moretz.

She grabbed hold of Bea's arm and pulled her to one side, catching Lucie on the way. "Girls, I've made a decision." She spoke loudly enough that she could be heard over the noise of the cars in the pit lane, but not so loud that the mechanics and engineers in the garage could hear.

"About Julien?"

"Yeah."

"Spit it out!" Lucie and Bea squealed.

"I'm all in. Stropmy teenager and all. I'm going to tell him tonight at dinner." Faith smiled.

"Oh my god, Faith!" Lucie enveloped her in a hug while Bea stood aside and dabbed at the tears that were forming in her eyes. Must protect the makeup. "So you don't want to wait until you've met your Dad and siblings and everything?"

"What's the point when I already know the outcome is going to be the same? I want to be with him. If he'll still have me." Faith patted an emotional Bea on the shoulder soothingly.

Their heart to heart was interrupted by the sound of something smashing into the barriers just before the entrance to the pit lane. There were no screens on in the garage. Only five cars were out on track right now, and Faith didn't know who else was driving except for Julien. The look on Jasper's face said it all. Every single person in the garage rushed out to the pit lane and she shoved past them in a rush to get there first.

She wished she hadn't. Brett was already there, begging her not to come any closer, but she'd seen it. Julien's car ripped apart by the safety barrier.

## CHAPTER 28

HE WAS STILL IN THE CAR, NO MEDICS IN SIGHT. IT FELT LIKE everything and everyone was moving in slow motion and Faith couldn't understand why nobody was helping him. Lucie was screaming. The noise was ringing in her ears and she couldn't hear anything else. Brett was facing her, blocking her path. He was too strong for her.

Faith snapped out of it the world came back into focus. She gripped hold of Lucie, shushing her and trying to calm her down even though she was anything but calm herself. Bea looked like she was about to throw up. Marco was talking to Jasper who had a headset on and she guessed he was trying to communicate with Jules, but his expression didn't give anything away.

“Come to the medical centre with me.” Jasper beckoned them over and walked back through the garage. The girls followed after him like little lost sheep but all three of them were itching to break out into a run. Brett and Marco stayed behind.

None of this felt real. It shouldn't be real. Julien usually had perfect control. He didn't make mistakes. He definitely didn't spin out and crash the car, near-enough ripping it in half. He was a good driver, the best. That was why he was in this sport and in this team. Faith knew it could happen to any one of the drivers at any moment, but never imagined it would be him or that she would be here to witness it.

She thanked God that it wasn't being broadcast to millions of people. His daughter didn't need to see this. She wished



Brett had let her get a proper look at the car, but he was too tall for her to see past him once he'd clocked her attempt. She didn't know if Julien had got out, or if he'd been talking. Jasper hadn't said a word, and didn't until they were crammed into the golf kart that Gabriel had tracked them down in. They were calm, sensible. Lucie was still struggling to breathe as Bea did everything she could to soothe her, glancing at Faith who had remained silent from the moment she'd heard the crunching of metal.

At the medical centre, they heaved a sigh of relief that no media crews had got down there yet. Although nothing was on television, the journalists crawled over this place from the first day teams started arriving to set up. Faith debated asking someone if they knew how to get hold of Jasmine's grandparents, so they could warn her if it went public, but she didn't know who to ask. Plus there was a chance it wouldn't be reported, and she didn't want to scare them unnecessarily.

"He's responsive." Jasper reassured them and squeezed Faith's shoulder. It didn't help much. Responsive didn't mean he was physically okay. It just meant he was alive.

The medics had actually reached him in less than thirty seconds, it had just felt like a lifetime to everyone watching. Faith remembered catching sight of the marshals in orange hi-vis tabards, but he must have felt so alone in there. She couldn't stand the thought of knowing what would have been going through his head. If anything. Jasper hadn't mentioned if Julien had lost consciousness or not.

The car was a mess and there was no way it would be ready for free practice tomorrow, probably not even for qualifying or the race. It was over for Revolution. That would devastate Julien more than anything, knowing that he had taken that from everyone. Faith wished Brett and Marco were here right now. Jasper and Gabriel were too serious, too matter of fact. This was work for them. For the boys, it was personal. It was family.

"We need to get him to the hospital, he's drifting in and out!" The medical director yelled out of the ambulance. Faith burst into tears, her lip trembling at the sight of Jules. The

doors slammed shut again, lights flashing and sirens wailing. The noise was unbearable. It felt like her world was crumbling down around her and the only person she wanted to lean on was the one laying on a stretcher.



The hospital waiting room felt like alien territory. Faith had never experienced the misfortune of sitting in a creaking plastic chair, the smell of antiseptic clouding her rationality with every second that passed. It had been four hours since they arrived and Jasper had disappeared to make phone calls, leaving the girls with their untouched cups of coffee.

Brett and Marco were with them, frantically checking the media reports and responding to fellow drivers. Their roles had reversed. Typically, Faith and Lucie's eyes would be glued to their phones, but they were zeroed in on every set of blue scrubs that walked up or down the corridor. Nobody had approached them. They might as well be sitting in their hotel rooms refreshing social media until the official team statement was released. A statement they were responsible for sharing. Jasper returned looking stressed to the max, and spotting the girls sat with their legs tucked up under them, huddled together like penguins, all he could offer them was a look of sympathy and understanding.

"Guys." Bea lurched forward at the sight of a surgeon emerging through the double doors. He looked solemn and the horrible feeling in the pit of Faith's stomach grew.

"Are you family?"

"We are." Brett spoke in his Australian accent, causing the surgeon to raise an eyebrow, but the hospital staff had been briefed. He continued.

"We've placed Mr Moretz in a private room. He just needs some time to rest and stay under observation. He has a few broken ribs, too." The doctor spoke and everyone visibly relaxed.

“We will monitor him and let him leave when we feel he’s ready. Please try not to panic, we’re confident he’ll be okay. This is just a precaution. Would you like to go and see him?”

They traipsed after him through the hospital. The further in they got, the more real it became. He was fine. Julien was fine, and Faith could tell him she was ready to commit.

He was hidden away in a private suite that was so private there were no signs leading the way. This was a small hospital, but she supposed they had high profile patients quite often being less than forty five minutes from a racetrack. She thought of all the crashes she’d watched here on television and thanked the universe that Julien hadn’t become another statistic, or another idol who had to give up his career over one tiny mistake. A mistake that could easily have been fatal. Luck was on his side. Or maybe a guardian angel. Faith wasn’t certain she believed in those, but maybe she did after this.

“Moretz, my brother! Good to see you alive and kicking.” Brett grinned at his friend, who was sitting in his hospital bed in a gown looking absolutely over the moon to see them.

“Sorry about that, guys.”

“You scared the shit out of us, dude.” Marco clapped him on the shoulder, perhaps a little too aggressively, but Julien didn’t say anything. He welcomed the fuss.

“So no race for us, huh?” His brow creased.

“Don’t stress about that. You’re far more important. We’ll get the car sorted for Fuji, and I’m sure you’ll be back out on track with us.” Jasper said from across the room. He was in the doorway, clearly in business mode and not wanting to impose on them. But he counted as family too.

An awkward silence fell over them as Faith and Julien exchanged eye contact. She had wanted to run to him the second she laid eyes on him but seeing him had stunned her and she was frozen on the spot. She hadn’t even smiled. He must be thinking this had scared her off, when all it had actually done was confirm that she truly did want this. She wanted *him*.

“Can I speak to Faith alone for a minute?”

“Behave yourselves.” Brett nodded at them. “This is a hospital, people are dying. Have some respect.”

Faith took a step closer to Julien, hovering uncomfortably before she sat down on the white blanket that covered his bed. He took her hand in his, gently rubbing his thumb in circles on her skin. It sent a shiver down her spine. This was a new feeling. She was nervous around him. Usually she was sassy, confident and assertive. But now she couldn’t think of anything to say without sounding like a massive idiot. An idiot she would have to be, because he was quiet too. Someone needed to speak.

“I’m so rel—”

“I’m ending this.” Julien cut her off.

She blinked at him slowly, unable to comprehend the simplicity of those three words. He held her gaze, staring her straight in the eye as if silently signalling that he wasn’t going to back down. All the progress they’d made had come crumbling down while his walls had shot back up, leaving her out in the cold.

“Can’t we talk this through?” Her voice was shaking and she could still feel the warmth of his hands on hers. His words weren’t matching his actions.

“Please don’t make this any harder. Just go.”

“Tell me why. I’ll leave, but not until you tell me why.”

“I can’t be with you, Faith. I can’t allow you to stand in the garage at every race and wonder if I’m going to cross the finish line in one piece. It isn’t fair to you, and I can’t have that burden sitting on my shoulders. I made a decision a very long time ago, and I knew that I would have to sacrifice a lot of things that most people take for granted.”

“But you *married* Kailani...”

“That was before I got to this level of my career. I didn’t think I would ever get here when I met her, not even close. Kail still lived in fear back then and it ate me up. I risk my life

every time I get in that car, Faith. You know that, and you shouldn't have to risk losing me."

"Shouldn't that be my choice?"

"You're better off without me."

Except she wasn't without him. As long as Julien was behind the wheel of a race car and Faith worked in his world, she would never be without him. She would have to see him at every race, for days at a time. She would see him in the garage, in the hotel, on the TV screens. Hear him on the radio. Sit across from him at breakfast and dinner. Aim a camera at him while he worked. Interview him. Go to funfairs with him, sit in the back of golf karts and SUVs with him.

There was no escaping each other, so why stop this relationship from going where it had inevitably been going? The only thing that would change was that they would have to resist temptation again. Pretend that the chemistry wasn't there. That they felt nothing.

So really, nothing was changing at all. It just wasn't moving forward. All that opening up in Hawaii was a waste of time. But the kiss hadn't been. The fireworks that had gone off in her head weren't one-sided and Faith knew he'd spend quiet nights alone reminiscing. Recalling their hands in each other's hair, the softness of her lips against his. Wishing he could taste her again. Julien Morteaux was a man who cowered away from anything that was good. He was destined to become the kind of person he had told her he didn't want to be. He was a fucking *idiot*.

"Are you sure this is what you want?" She pulled her hand away, which had still been firmly in his grasp, and stood up.

"I'm sure. Please, go."

He didn't have to ask again. Faith breezed out with her head held high. Lucie and Bea were on her tail, not bothering to ask what had happened. She was sure it was obvious. Besides, Bea knew better than anyone that this was her way of coping. Act like everything is okay and break down behind

closed doors. Faith wouldn't let him embarrass her in front of the whole world.

By the time they reached the front entrance of the hospital, she was feeling a rush of adrenaline and it was just as well she wasn't in the ugly crying stage yet. The media were waiting eagerly.

"Is there any word on Julien?" The same woman who had assumed they were in a relationship at Spa popped up in her face almost immediately. *Oh, the irony.*

"He's got a few broken ribs. He'll be right as rain in no time." Faith smiled at her, maintaining a friendly approach.

What she really wanted to do was rip everyone's heads off for invading the team's privacy. Emotions were running high for all of them, and she was sure the girls could also do without all of this hassle. It was insensitive. If there had been cameras present, she may well have thrown them to the ground.

"Are you going to go back to Belgium with him and help with his recovery?" The woman asked. Very innocently, but it didn't stop Faith from gritting her teeth.

"The team will support Julien and get him back in the car as soon as we can." Lucie swooped in, saving the poor interviewer from experiencing Faith's wrath. "I'm sorry, we really need to get back to the track."

Lucie led them to a blacked out SUV in the corner and unlocked it. It was Brett's rental. She must have grabbed his keys in the rush to get out of there. Once they were in the safety of the car, both of her friends turned to her expectantly.

"He doesn't want to be with me." Faith shrugged, tears forming in the corner of her eyes. She wasn't a crier, and had never shed a single tear over a man. *Ever.* Even when Lewis had stood her up at dinner two months into their so-called relationship, or she'd found out Liam had been dating one of the girls her and Bea knew from the pub for six months, even though he'd claimed he was only dating her.

Faith didn't let men get to her like this. She didn't need them, any of them. Except Julien. She had never needed anyone more than she needed Julien. Her mind, body and soul craved him. And as she sat in the back of the car, cold leather seats sticking to her bare legs in the late summer heat, Faith wondered what on earth she had done to make him hate her so much.

## CHAPTER 29

THE HOTEL WAS A HIVE OF ACTIVITY ON RACE DAY, BUT MOST of Revolution were already on their way back to headquarters. It hurt to be missing out and team spirits were down, but nothing could compare to the emptiness Faith felt without Julien. He was getting released from the hospital today and he had just pulled into the hotel car park in Gabriel's red Ferrari 458 Spider, with their boss in the driver's seat.

Over the past few days, Gabriel had seemingly abandoned his daily responsibilities and passed the baton on to his colleagues while he went into full Dad mode, doing multiple checks on the girls who had remained holed up in their hotel room trying to salvage and recycle content for social media. Bea left them to it while she cracked on with her own job, but she'd appear at dinnertime to eat room service with them.

Gabriel knew something had gone down between his star driver and the team's social media manager, but he didn't pry. As far as he was concerned, Faith and Lucie could leave if they wanted to. Go home and get on with their lives until the next race. They could do what they needed to do from anywhere in the world. But Bea was due to travel with them when the race was over, so they waited. It was painful, but it was like some weird twisted form of therapy for Faith, who knew she had to face him eventually. She might as well get it over with.

Lucie hadn't left Faith's side even to get a bottle of water from the vending machine on their floor. She had got her out of bed at a reasonable time both mornings and into the shower,



ordered fresh fruit and orange juice for breakfast, sat next to her in bed all day while they edited, and then closely monitored her evening alcohol intake while they watched 2000s rom coms and cried or laughed or yelled, depending on Faith's mood.

It wasn't until Julien walked through the hotel lobby that Faith managed to muster up a bit of strength. Seeing him shuffle across the tiled floor and into the elevator without so much as a glance their way filled her with an air of determination.

"He'll come to his senses, Faith. He's stubborn as hell, you know that first hand." Brett threw his arm around her and squeezed her shoulder.

He had been less than impressed at Julien's argument for ending things, claiming that he was being a massive wimp. As he had bluntly said when he'd found out, which Faith wished he would tell his teammate; anyone could die at any given moment. That shouldn't stop you from taking every shot at happiness you get. Faith also thought Brett should take his own advice and go after their favourite chatterbox of a coworker but she had been too much of a blubbering mess to tell him that.

"I agree with Brett. He's battled his feelings for you from day one and he finally opened up to you with his best kept secret. This isn't permanent." Lucie patted her knee.

It didn't matter if it wasn't permanent. It was almost two months until the October race in Fuji where she would see him again. That was two whole months where she was supposed to be having the time of her life and traveling the world with her friends, and instead she would be thinking about what Julien was doing, how he was, if he missed her, if he had changed his mind yet. Faith couldn't start questioning their future again. She had to figure something out.



Fans were still losing their minds across all of Revolution's social media accounts. Julien had yet to post his own update even though race day had passed and everyone was starting to pack up and head home. He should've shared something with the fans yesterday, telling them he was back on the mend and appreciated their support. But it had been Jasper, Lucie and Faith doing all the talking. Julien was neglecting them and had been avoiding Brett and Marco like the plague.

He knew they didn't like the way he'd dumped Faith in the hospital instead of letting her have her moment with him and ending it once normality had been restored. Well, they didn't like the fact he had dumped her at all and thought his reasons were bullshit, but they argued that he could've gone about it in a more sensitive manner.

Faith hated more than anything that Julien had truly believed he was letting her off the hook. She hadn't even had the chance to tell him she was all in, and if he had just let her get those words out, he would realise that *all in* also covered the whole *you could die on the racetrack but I choose to be with you despite the risk* thing. Love was a choice just as much as it was a feeling. And she had chosen that arrogant, hot-headed, stubborn, blonde racing driver with his accent that was often hard to understand, his dutch curse words, his ridiculous luxury watch collection and his overly-tight t-shirts. She wanted *all* of him.

She had woken up this morning next to Lucie, who was snoring softly into the duvet, and reached for her phone. No missed calls or texts from Jules. Scrolling through her feed, she came across the interview they had participated in. The one where Julien hadn't denied that they were a couple. A move she had lost her shit over. But her eyes weren't drawn to the stunned look on her face or the anger you could see brewing, nor had anyone else's been. All you could take notice of was the love threatening to burst out of Julien when he looked at her, as if they hadn't been at each other's throats on and off for weeks prior.

Crawling out of bed and trying her best not to wake the tangled mess of curls beside her, Faith slipped her feet into her

trainers and left the hotel room. It was seven thirty. This floor was primarily booked out by Revolution Racing and a few of the photography team, or at least she hoped it was. The last thing she needed was the likes of Lorenzo Garcia seeing her in an oversized tee and a tiny pair of black cycling shorts, standing outside Julien's hotel room door.

She knocked and waited, transfixed on the caramel coloured swirls in the wood. As fascinating as the door was, she wanted to speak to the man behind it. A few moments passed and she knocked again, a little louder this time. Nothing. Sighing and accepting her fate, she made a beeline for the stairs. At least then she could pretend to be in a rush if anyone saw her. People didn't wait for elevators when they had places to be.

The lobby was predictably busy. Perhaps busier than it had been over the weekend. Faith frowned as she glanced down at her bare legs. You could barely tell she was wearing shorts. A quick scan of the reception desk, the seating areas and the corridor to the breakfast canteen told her that this had been a wasted trip. Julien wasn't here.

"Faith?" Gabriel called out from behind her, surprised at the state of her when she turned around to face him with dark circles under her eyes and her hair in knots. At least they were recently shampooed knots.

"Hello. I don't suppose you've seen Jules?"

"Ah." Gabriel grimaced. "I'm afraid he left last night. He's already on his way home."

"Home?"

"Yes..." He opened his mouth then closed it again, as if he was afraid to say more.

"Oh." Faith replied, deflated. It would take forever to get to Hawaii, and she didn't know the address of Koa and Malia's place anyway. Plus, she wasn't keen on the idea of trying to win him back with his daughter and his late wife's parents present.

“Faith?” Gabriel stopped her in her tracks before she could go back up to her room and sulk.

“Yeah?”

“When I say home, I mean Malmedy.”

Faith broke out into a huge grin and thanked him. The guy could’ve led with that, for heaven’s sake. Malmedy was doable.

She thundered back up the stairs, knocking into a few mechanics on the way. A suitcase smashed into her calf and it hurt like hell, but she didn’t slow down. She didn’t want to do this alone which meant getting everyone organised, and the quicker she could get to her friends and convince them to join her on her mission, the better.

Within seconds of emerging on the fifth floor, Faith spotted Bea walking down the corridor with her packed suitcase. Looking as glamorous as ever, she turned her nose up at the sight of her best friend. Faith realised then that she couldn’t drive herself. She needed time to sort her face out before they got on the ferry.

“Where are you going?” Faith was panting.

“To put my suitcase in... Oh my *God* we’re going to yell at Jules aren’t we?” She jumped up and down and whipped around, leading the way to Faith and Lucie’s room. “I should’ve known that downloading our boarding passes last night was premature.” Bea squealed.

The girls had originally planned on a trip to Athens but that was the last thing on their mind now. Who needed historical Roman landmarks when the green fields of Malmedy existed?

“You need to drive. I’ve seen you in traffic, there’s only one woman for the job.” Faith pleaded. She remembered London’s rush hours on the way to various events, and the way Bea would slam her fist on the horn with no shame, screaming at anyone who dared cut her off.

“I’ve got you. Lucie!” She yelled before the door had even opened fully and began flinging random objects in the general

direction of their suitcases as she waltzed through the room.

“What the hell is going on?” Lucie sat up in bed, bleary-eyed and confused. She’d better hurry up and change out of those Carebear pyjamas before Bea zipped her suitcase up and hauled it into the corridor.

“We’re going to Julien’s farm. Pack your wellies. Wait, do you actually own wellies?” She demanded as another shoe went flying across the room, narrowly missing a lamp.

“What the fuck are wellies?” Lucie snapped.

“Those boots that people wear in the—Oh, never mind. I forget you’re from California. You’ll have to deal with muddy shoes. It’s probably raining in Malmedy, I suggest you wear your team waterproofs.” Bea looked over at Faith like she was telling off a child. “Faith! *Move!*”

Faith sprung into action and they spent the next twenty minutes cramming their clothes and makeup anywhere they would fit, even borrowing space in Bea’s case. Some things could be thrown into the car without a bag since they’d be staying in it for at least the next eight hours. Laptops could be shoved under seats during the ferry crossing, snacks and bottles of water in any available door pockets or storage compartments.

As they hurled their luggage into the car, trying desperately to avoid filling the back seat where Lucie would no doubt be napping with Mustang the shark, they heard shouting from the hotel’s entrance. Brett and Marco ran across the car park with their bags.

“Move that one to the left. No, Luce. Left. Like this.” Brett huffed as he rearranged to make space for the boys’ luggage.

“Stop yelling at me! I literally *just* woke up, guys!” Lucie scowled.

“How did you guys know we were leaving?”

“I texted them.” Bea grinned proudly.

“Yeah, you thought we’d miss this?” Marco opened the car door and let Lucie in ahead of him. The excitement hadn’t hit

her yet but it would. On the ferry. Or maybe when they were stood on Julien's doorstep. Either way, she'd catch up.

"Wait!" Ricardo and Elliot appeared with a few other drivers, all of them in a hurry with their bags thrown over their shoulders.

"Wait!" Elliot called out. "We've booked the midday ferry crossing, is that the right one?"

"That's the one, mate." Brett nodded.

"You've booked it already?" Faith asked.

"Yep. As soon as I got the message from Bea."

Faith stepped back and looked at them all wearing a variation of their respective team merchandise; baseball caps, hoodies, t-shirts. Shutting herself away and letting herself be heartbroken may have worked, but this was where she needed to be now. Whether she ended up with Julien or not, she knew she would always have this chaotic family around her, ready to pick up the pieces.

## CHAPTER 30

FERRIES WERE MORE FRIGHTENING THAN AIRPLANES, FAITH had concluded. The crossing was rough, or at least rough enough for the captain to warn them over the loudspeaker before they set sail, and rough enough that she was seriously regretting the cookies and cream frappuccino she was three quarters of the way through. Thank goodness she hadn't had breakfast this morning.

She was sitting on a bench up on the deck with the hood of her team rain jacket up, her hair tucked into it to keep her neck warm. The weather had changed dramatically over the course of the last couple of days and they were heading into a very wet and windy Europe. Bea may have been half-joking when she had asked Lucie about the wellington boots, but maybe it wouldn't have been such a crazy idea.

"How are you doing?" With two coffees in her system already, Lucie had perked up significantly since they'd got on the road and was now very much an active part of *Mission: Get Jules Back*.

"I'm okay. Nervous that it will all come out wrong. And that he'll slam the door in my face, but I know what I'm getting myself into." Faith shrugged her shoulders, the fabric of her waterproof coat rustling.

"He's home safe, by the way. I checked up on him and made him promise to keep me updated. I'm pretending that I'm in nurse mode so he has no choice but to text me about the silly little things, like when he's napping or walking Ford." Lucie said. It was no use ringing the door bell three hundred

times if he wasn't even in the house or he was passed out in dreamland.

“Oooh, Faith! You should've turned up in a nurses costume! He definitely wouldn't be able to resist that.” Bea plonked herself down between them with her green tea.

“Beatrix Miller, will you behave yourself?” Lucie scolded her.

“Should I have dressed up a bit?” Faith looked down at her outfit. She was in a plain white hoodie, black leggings and white trainers. It was basic. Not exactly an outfit that screamed *‘I'm here to claim my man.’*

“Don't be silly! I was only teasing. You look effortlessly beautiful, as always. Besides, Julien has seen you drunk with makeup all over your face, wrapped in a towel with dripping wet hair, asleep with your mouth wide open on an airplane. Real men don't give half a shit about appearances once they know the person on the inside.” Bea patted her knee.

It was easy for her to say; she had the whole golden goddess look going on twenty four seven. The blue-eyed beauty could stay awake for six days straight and still look like she'd slept a full eight hours. But Faith knew she was beautiful, too. It was just nerves getting to her.

“My signal is low but I'm waiting for a text—Oh! Here it is. Jules is back from walking the dog and he's going to spend the rest of the day working in the garden. He's doing some intense landscaping, apparently.”

“That'll be for the fire pit he's putting in. He mentioned it a few weeks ago.” Faith sighed. If this all went according to plan, she could be sat around that fire pit with him next summer, Ford at their feet and his daughter toasting marshmallows over the flames. If not, she may not even be there to see it at next year's post-Spa celebrations.

“I can see you stressing again. Stop.” Lucie squeezed her hand.

“Girls, I have to tell you something.” Faith bit her lip. “Jules and I had sex at Le Mans. At the back of the garage.



And he pinned me against the wall of the elevator in Spa, and before that there was an incident on the sofa in the trailer...”

“What?!” Lucie choked on her coffee.

“But get this...we didn’t kiss until Hawaii.”

“Oh my God, he was *inside* you and he didn’t even kiss you?!” Bea threw her arms up in exasperation.

“I think that maybe a kiss made it real. Like it took the intimacy to a level he wasn’t ready for. Hawaii was our big moment.”

“You can’t get more real and intimate than *sex*, Faith.” Lucie scolded and shared a look of disapproval with Bea.

“Good point. But I took what was on offer.”

“You’re both absolutely ridiculous. But we still support your mission.”

“Do you think he’ll be mad at me for just showing up like this?”

“No way. He’ll take one look at you and realise how much of an idiot he’s been, and beg you to forgive him before you can get a single word in.”

“She’s right, Faith. He knows you’re special, he just doesn’t know that he’s special too. He had this once and he lost it, and he just doesn’t want you to ever feel the way he did. You doing this, quite literally crossing borders for him, is proof that he’s worth every risk that comes with being with someone in his world.” Bea assured.

As the three of them huddled together and watched the white cliffs of Dover get further and further away until they were a dot in the distance, Faith prayed that her friends knew what the hell they were talking about.



The car level of the ferry was a bizarre environment. It was dark although the lights were on, and the doors were open but

nobody was moving yet. They'd got to the ferry terminal pretty late and ended up right in the middle of the queue, which was the last place they wanted to be.

Bea, who had driven the entire way, was panicking not only about the sheer number of cars and angry French men around them, but also the thought of having to drive on the left side of the road. She didn't drive when she was home in Paris; she depended on cabs or the metro so this was totally new to her.

"Fucking hell, Bea. Pull over when it's safe and I'll drive the rest of the way."

"Pull over *where*?"

"Where it's safe!"

"And how am I meant to find somewhere safe when I'm focusing on not *crashing*?"

"Christ alive, switch seats with me." Brett flung the passenger door open and marched around to the driver's side while Bea elegantly slid across. "Happy?" He glared at her.

"Yes."

"Turn this song up!" Lucie shouted, right in Marco's ear. He winced and shushed her. The radio was playing a dance track that Faith vaguely remembered hearing in a nightclub years ago.

"This song is awful. I'm not turning it up."

"I will, then." Lucie lurched forward from the middle seat and thrust her arm between Bea and Brett, twisting the dial for the stereo. Bea swatted her hand away but it was too late.

"I'll give Luce some credit, this is a good song." Brett approved and turned it up even higher.

"Of course you'd say that, you fancy her."

Amidst all the bickering, Faith couldn't wipe the smile off her face. Life had changed so much since that email in April. She'd been to more places in that time than she'd been in her

first twenty six years of existence, and built the kind of friendships most people dreamed of. That she dreamed of.

She had finally experienced the adrenaline rushing through her bloodstream from hearing the roar of an engine coming to life, and taken her career exactly where she had always wanted it to go. She never imagined that it would all result in a late August road trip across the English Channel to declare her love to a man she had met three months ago, but here she was. And she didn't want to be anywhere else.



The group opted to detour to their hotel first to drop off their bags and freshen up. Julien lived in the middle of nowhere with only a bakery and a corner shop in close proximity, and the nearest supermarket was thirty minutes away at least. They knew he was currently sat on a digger and wasn't going anywhere, so they had time to figure out the logistics before they were stuck with nowhere to sleep at eleven o'clock at night.

They couldn't assume that Jules would invite all ten of them to stay. He might not even invite Faith to stay, and none of them fancied trying to sleep in the cars.

The boys were split across two twins and a family room and the girls were crammed in a double, but with any luck Faith wouldn't be back here tonight. She wasn't sure if she should leave her suitcase in the car or not, so she grabbed a few things and put them in her handbag, which usually served as her cabin bag on the plane. It would put Mary Poppins to shame.

The hotel was nothing special, but as they waited at the side of the road in their temporary parking spot, it sparked memories in Faith that tugged at her heartstrings. When Julien first rocked up in his cherry red Mustang in Spa she had been far from swept off her feet. And yet she had felt an odd sensation in her chest that she couldn't quite work out, and it grew every time he looked in her eyes from that day forward.

In all the fights and the disagreements, when he was so arrogant it left her exasperated; every time their eyes met she felt it. And she sat with it until she couldn't deny it. Until it became inevitable that it was time to stop running away.



Twenty minutes from Julien's farmhouse, Lucie let out an angry growling noise and pulled over.

"What the hell is that?!" Bea looked up from her phone and bolted upright, pointing at the steam coming from the front of the car. The boys pulled up behind them and Brett came hurtling towards the driver's side.

"Everyone calm down." Lucie clambered out and stood on the road with Brett, who was fussing over her more than the car.

"You can't drive that. We'll have to get a tow to the nearest garage. God knows where that is." Brett threw his hands up in the air, looking like he had just been told the world was ending.

"There's that one right at the edge of Francorchamps that sells the racing merchandise." Lucie reminded him.

"Um. You guys are literal racing drivers...can't you take a look at it? See if there's anything you can do?" Faith asked. She didn't know why she was so shy all of a sudden. Maybe it was to do with the fact that they were on a self-imposed time limit for her benefit, and this threw a massive spanner in the works.

"Come on. Let's give it a shot." Marco marched over from two cars behind and started giving orders while the girls stood on the grass patch on the side of the road, gratefully accepting snacks from the window of Ricardo's Porsche.

Ten minutes passed, then twenty, then thirty. There were now five world-class racing drivers huddled over the engine, swearing in various languages and yelling at each other.

“We don’t have time, Elliot! If this isn’t working, move on to the next solution!” Brett snapped.

“It’s no use yelling at me, Anderson. It’s not going to get Faith to Jules any quicker, is it? It’s just going to result in me decking you.” Elliot swatted his rival’s hand out of the way.

“You wouldn’t bloody dare, mate.”

“Wouldn’t I?”

“Screw this.”

“What are you—” Lucie mumbled through a bite of her cookie when Brett appeared in front of her, hand outstretched.

“Your phone please, Luce.”

“So demanding.” She rolled her eyes but handed it over, no questions asked. “Do you need the passcode?”

“No. I’ve seen you type it a million times.” Brett put the phone to his ear and placed his hand on his hip, growing more and more impatient with every ring.

“Brett, who are you calling?” Faith asked.

“I’m calling Jules and telling him to get his ass out here. You’ve waited long enough.”

## CHAPTER 31

SHE HEARD JULIEN'S CAR A GOOD FORTY SECONDS BEFORE SHE saw it. A streak of red in the distance, ripping through the tree-lined roads until it was right in front of them. He stepped out in his scuffed Doc Marten boots, which were too hot to be wearing on a late-Summer afternoon, and a black muscle tee. His hair was clinging to the sweat on his tanned forehead and his arms were streaked with oil and dirt. *Classic Jules*.

"The hell are you lot doing here?" He blinked.

Once he had processed the situation, there it was again. That look. The one reserved for Faith. He zeroed in on her and she could sense that he had blocked out the presence of the nine other people there. Faith had not, however. She was hyper aware of the shuffling as their friends got in their cars, Lucie and Brett hovering by their open doors incase either of their friends wanted out of this reunion.

"We'll be fine." Faith reassured them.

"Volume up, ladies and gents!" Brett shouted loud enough for all three cars to hear. Instead of leaving the couple stood in an uncomfortable silence, they were first met with the distant notes of a *Post Malone* track, followed by an all-time classic by the *Vengaboys*. Julien's strictly-business facade disappeared and was replaced by a smile that Faith couldn't help but match. Bea had no doubt done that on purpose.

"I take it you're here for me."

"I am...I rehearsed the hell out of this."

"Yeah?"

“Yeah. But now I don’t know where to start.”

“Are you angry with me?” He looked vulnerable. Hurt, even.

“Not angry. Just frustrated. You sat there in that hospital room and made a decision that wasn’t yours to make. And I was stupid enough to walk away without a fight. Up until two minutes before you crashed, I was going to throw all of this away because I was scared. Then you crashed, and I thought I was going to lose you anyway. I walked into that hospital prepared to lay all my cards on the table and tell you I wanted to be with you, and you took it all away from me. You chase what you want, Jules. On the track and off. It’s in your nature. So why won’t you fight for us?”

“You know what I love about you, Faith? You’ve got a fire in you. You and I aren’t all that different.” He took a step closer to her. “But I love you too much to keep you.”

“And I love you too much to let you go.”

His entire expression softened in an instant and she saw the innocence flash across his features. Julien had never had someone fight for *him*. He had only ever had women desiring him for what he could offer them. She had seen the deepest parts of him. She knew what was under the surface, what gave him purpose and the pain he had endured.

“Promise me something?” He spoke with authority, but she could feel the genuine concern. “Promise me you’ll always fight for yourself the way you just fought for me. This industry is fucking hard for women, Faith. You’ll come to realise that in time, and people’s opinions will be fed down to you and there will be days when you want out. There will be days when this relationship will be viewed harshly, and you’ll be wrongly judged. Promise me you’ll prove those fuckers wrong. This championship, the entire motorsport industry, we need you. We need you to stand up for what you believe in, to stand up for women just like you. I can’t defend you in every scenario, as much as I want to. It just isn’t my place. You’ve got to show the world what you’re capable of, keep showing them who you are. Promise?”

“Yes, I promise.”

“Good, because I want this industry to feel like your home. It’s served me well over the years, and it’s given me everything I could possibly ask for in life. Including you. Every racing driver has a moment in their career that they never saw coming, and I always thought I’d had my moment. Until you. *You* were the one thing I never saw coming.”

Another step closer, then another. Faith watched his jaw tense as he contemplated what he was doing but before he could change his mind, he was placing his lips on hers. And she could feel the fight in him reaching the surface, pulling her in and refusing to let her go. So there they were, stood on the side of a country road, souls intertwining with an Ibiza dance anthem as their soundtrack. Julien was hers as much as she was his.



Faith was in her rightful place in the passenger seat of Julien’s Mustang, and she couldn’t stop staring at him. It wasn’t just his arms this time, it was the glow radiating from him. This guy was suddenly the human embodiment of sunshine, which was freaking her out a little.

“What made you come all the way out here instead of waiting until we saw each other at the next race?” Julien glanced at her quizzically before focusing on the road again.

“This year for me has been about traveling the world for what I love. I took a big risk when I gave up my life in London, so I figured what was one more. What matters is always having faith that it will pay off in the end.”

“Having faith.” He cracked a smile. “I see what you did there.”

“Yeah? Hilarious, aren’t I?”

“One of the funniest women I’ve ever met.” Julien placed his hand on her thigh. “I spoke to Jasmine about you this



morning.”

“Oh?”

“She kept asking about you. She asked me if you and I were secretly dating. I said no. She called me an idiot. Her grandmother chimed in, told me that Kailani would approve and agreed I was a fool if I let you go. So I booked a flight to Athens...Shame you got to me first, really. Greece is beautiful.”

“You booked a what?!” She choked.

“A flight. You weren’t the only one of us planning a grand declaration of love, you know.”

“Julien! What was that whole ‘*I love you too much to keep you*’ spiel you gave me back there?!”

“That was me trying to be all tragically romantic, a bit like Allie and Noah from *The Notebook*. Gotta give ourselves a story to put in your wedding vows one day.”

“You’ve watched *The Notebook*?“

“It’s Ford’s favourite.”

“Your dog has a favourite film.”

“Ours.”

“What?”

“He’s our dog now.”

Faith bypassed the wedding vows remark and the fact she now shared custody of a gigantic grey and white Husky, and focused on her perfectly written boyfriend. He watched romantic dramas alone, drove fast cars for a living, and treated his dog like his second child. He was straight out of a romance novel.

The warmth of Julien’s touch disappeared before she could register what was happening. He wound the windows down and stepped on the accelerator, overtaking Brett and challenging the boys to a race through the long winding roads of the Ardennes. Her hair was coming loose from its messy bun and she feared the lash extensions she’d got last week

would fly away, but she didn't have the heart to complain. Not when Jules was laughing so hard he could barely breathe. It was the kind of laughter that lit up Faith's entire world and she wanted to hear it every day for the rest of her life.



Faith lay in bed that night in Julien's arms. His expensive white sheets felt a million times more luxurious and welcoming with him by her side, and instead of being drunk on liquor she was feeling lightheaded as a result of other, more scandalous actions. Actions that they would repeat a hundred times over.

"I think it's time for another round, sweetheart." Julien kissed Faith's bare shoulder and trailed his hand down her stomach, resulting in faint butterflies that she would never get tired of.

"Can you at least kick the dog out first?" Faith looked over his shoulder at the mass of fur laying next to the bed.

"Hear that Ford? Your new Mum wants you out. Go on, out you go." Julien gestured for Ford to leave and he did, sighing as he went. Faith almost felt bad, but she wanted to cherish the time she had with Julien before their friends joined them for breakfast in a few hours. They would be running on zero sleep, but it was worth the struggle.

"We haven't had sex in this bed yet...."

"And I did promise..." Julien smirked.

Faith kissed him, savouring the taste. His tongue slipped into her mouth and as he wrestled for control she knew where this was going. He had already delivered his promise of sex in the shower and on the balcony at the top of the stairs, and Faith was keeping a mental list of locations to tick off. They only had a few days to complete it before they left Belgium again.

He removed his mouth from hers and with his blue eyes locked on her own, used one hand to part her legs. Within seconds, his head of blonde hair was between them and his tongue was on her clit, the sensation making her shiver with anticipation.

“You’re so wet for me already.” He looked up at her and her eyes fluttered closed as he inserted his fingers, hooking them slightly and almost causing her to immediately beg him to take her. He did this every time, and dragged out foreplay until she was almost in tears because she needed more of him.

“Don’t make me wait, Jules.”

“Hmmm?” He pretended not to hear her.

“I know you’re already hard. You could just put it in right now, we have the rest of our lives for foreplay. Or I could let you make me orgasm from this, and then I could roll over and go to sleep and leave you laying there wide awake for the rest of the night.”

With that, Julien’s head shot up and he shifted his body so she could see his boxers struggling to contain what she craved.

“You are a cold, calculated young woman, Faith Indigo Jensen.”

“But you love me.”

“I do...” After pausing for a few seconds so they could soak in the admission, he winked at her and took his length out of his boxers, standing up briefly to kick the material onto the floor.

Disappearing into the bathroom, he returned with the cord from his robe and a smug look on his face.

“I thought you’d never ask.” Faith grinned at him as he took ahold of her wrists and wrapped it around them.

“No talking. The only sounds I want to hear are your moans and you screaming my name. Clear?” Julien waited for her to silently respond and then he was on top of her, rubbing her clit with his thumb to open her up before thrusting into her.

She gasped as he filled her and she tightened around him, and he barely hesitated before pounding into her so hard the bed rocked with his movements. This wasn't like it had been on the camp bed or even on the balcony or in the shower. The bed provided them with a stability they hadn't had before, and the thought of all the positions he was going to put her in made it feel ten times more intense.

Julien put his hand on her throat and she smiled up at him. He had no idea how much that turned her on. How much she would let him do to her. He pulled out and she whimpered, but he flipped her over so she was on her stomach and grabbed her ass, entering her again from behind.

His hand went to her head and he grabbed hold of her hair, tugging it and grabbing her breast with his other hand. He thrust into her fast, not relenting with his pace and she could already feel her orgasm building rapidly. He was letting out soft little moans behind her.

“Who do you belong to, Faith?” He whispered in her ear.

“You. I'm yours, Julien.”

“Say it again.”

“I'm yours.”

Julien slowed down and pulled out of her all the way, twisting her round so he could kiss her as he entered her again. And again, and again. She moaned into his mouth as he slammed into her. She knew he was close from the growl in the back of his throat.

“Where do you want me to cum, baby? Tell me where.” Julien struggled to get his words out.

“Cum inside me. Please. Fuck, I need you to cum inside me.”

With the loudest moan she'd ever heard from him, he let go and released his load inside her right as she reached her own climax, her whole body writhing against him. She tightened her muscles around his dick, resulting in what he would later claim was the best orgasm of his life.

“Fucking hell, Faith, if this is what sex is gonna be like for the rest of our lives, I might just retire from racing early and stay in bed for the next fifty years.” He untied her wrists and placed a gentle kiss on her forehead.

“I think the outside world would miss you.”

“The outside world doesn’t give me orgasms.”

“Well, not anymore.” She raised an eyebrow.

“Those days are far behind me. I’m all yours.”

Faith and Julien were used to a world of fame and recognition. If it wasn’t TV cameras being shoved in their faces, it was a phone camera. They were on display for the entire world the majority of the time, but in that moment, the love they’d found over the last few months was the only thing that mattered. The models from Julien’s past were irrelevant, fan opinions were merely that, opinions. They were untouchable.

“Thank you.” Faith whispered.

“What for?”

“Letting me into your world.”

“It’s a chaotic world, sweetheart. But it’s ours.”

And as she laid next to her favourite Belgian racing driver, Faith was grateful. For him, for her friends, for her job, for her Mum and her Dad and her newfound siblings she was yet to meet. For every ounce of chaos the universe had gifted her with.

## EPILOGUE

“YOU CANNOT DRIVE THIS THING AT THIS SPEED WITH A *CHILD* in the back seat, Julien! Is this what you want to teach kids?” Faith gripped onto the metal bar in front of her as they sailed past masses of young fans in the paddock.

“Yeah, but she’s my kid and she loves it! Right, Jas?” Julien turned to look at his daughter, who was ghostly white but plastering a smile on her face nonetheless.

“Right!” Jasmine yelled back.

“I’m just saying, I know you won yet another championship last season but that doesn’t mean you’re immune to golf kart accidents. This is as bad as Gabriel swerving potted plants.”

Revolution Racing were in Oyama for the fourth race of the new season, and it was the first time Jasmine had been allowed to attend. Jules had been filming an ad for a safety in motorsport campaign—ironic—and insisted that Faith go to Hawaii and personally collect Jasmine and bring her to Japan, where they spent four days in Tokyo before joining Julien at the track.

In the last year, their lives had integrated and calendars synced up so that each time they had a break from racing, they spent at least half of it in Hawaii or Malmedy with Jasmine. She had quickly adapted to Faith’s presence, and although Faith was still adopting more of a best friend approach, things had gradually been shifting into parental territory. She helped Jasmine with school work, braided her hair in the mornings,

told her off when she stomped mud through the house—whether it be at Julien’s or Malia and Koa’s—and had a quiet word when she had an attitude about something. Not once had Jasmine rebelled against her, and Faith didn’t know if it was because the kid was just super well adjusted or because she genuinely viewed her Dad’s girlfriend as a Maternal figure. Julien believed it was the latter, and was insisting they pop out six more.

Faith wasn’t so sure about *six* but one or two would be okay in a couple of years. She hoped at least one would follow in their Julien’s footsteps and show an interest in racing, because Jasmine was dead set on going to medical school. The legacy children would have to wait, however.

Faith was run off her feet with the women in motorsport program she was running with Lucie, Bea and Daisy. They had promoted Daisy at the end of the last season to work directly alongside Lucie and Bea as heads of social content, and asked her to come on board with their new movement. It was still in the planning stages, but they had their first round of workshops in the Spring at the Silverstone circuit.

On top of that, they had plans to spend the entire winter break next year in Hong Kong, with Faith’s parents and her siblings. Tao was desperate to meet Jasmine and Jae had been begging to go back to his home country, so the Jensens were dragging Jules and Jasmine along with them on their big Hong Kong adventure.

“There you are! Took your fucking time!” Brett shouted across the garage and covered his mouth with his hands when he spotted Jasmine in tow. “Sorry, Jas. My bad. Jules, please don’t hit me.”

“Dad curses in front of me all the time.” Jasmine shrugged.

“Hey! That’s not true!” Julien attempted to defend himself but it was pointless. Everyone knew she was right. As much as he tried to be on his best behaviour, Jules was a passionate man. And passionate men didn’t have a filter, or so he claimed every time he was called out.

“I got you a lil something, Jazzy. Well, Uncle Mars and I both did. We wanted your first race to be special.” Brett beckoned them into the trailer and directed Jasmine to the closet, where there was a racing suit waiting for her. It had been made especially for her, and even had her name stitched on the waist in white.

“Thank you! Can I go put it on?”

“Go find Uncle Marco after, okay? You’ve got to thank him.”

Julien ushered Jasmine into the trailer’s tiny bathroom, leaving him and Faith alone. Brett was already heading back into the garage, and Lucie was off halfway down the pit lane talking to a group of their new interns. Jasmine began singing while she got changed, which was their cue to talk. She did this a lot. Sang so she couldn’t accidentally overhear their conversations.

It had confused them both at first, until she had informed them that her friend from school did the same thing because her own parents were heavy on the PDA. Faith and Jules were much more reserved when Jasmine was around, but that didn’t stop Julien eyeing the sofa and raising a suggestive eyebrow.

“Absolutely not.”

“Oh come on, it was so fun last time.”

“Not happening.”

“Jas will be out of the trailer in a minute to go and find Marco, then it’s just us. We can lock the door...” He held her gaze as he ran his hands over her hips and pulled her closer.

“Guys!” Jasmine emerged from the bathroom. “Can we get sushi from the food trucks?”

Just like that, the moment was gone. Faith got Julien to herself almost fifty percent of the time, so an interruption every now and then did no harm when it meant she got to enjoy authentic Japanese food in the foothills of Mount Fuji and listen to Jasmine talk animatedly about how she was going to convince her Dad to be her show and tell object next semester to score points with her friends.



Besides, Faith would have plenty of alone time with the world's favourite Belgian racing driver next month, when they spent their two week Honeymoon in Switzerland. Her first trip to the Swiss Alps would be enjoyed cosied up in a log cabin by the fire, with a gold wedding band on her finger and the name *Faith Jensen-Moretz* plastered all over her social media.

Faith's family was growing, but her definition of what family meant to her had changed drastically. She had come to the wonderful conclusion that family was complicated. Sometimes you're separated by thousands of miles, sometimes by fear of rejection or bitterness. It doesn't always mean that you're related by blood. It's just a group of people who fit in your world perfectly. *Your* people. And sometimes you don't need anything more than that. But in the rare cases that you do have more, or that more finds its way back to you, nothing can diminish the role of the people who landed right in your lap when you least expected it. The people who took you under their wing. The people who love you without limits, who pick you up when you're down. The Juliens, Lucies, Bretts, Marcos and Beas of the world. *Those* are your family. And they were Faith's.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emilee J Carter grew up in a seaside town in the South West of England and has remained there into her twenties, using her media degree to pursue her journey as an indie author.

Emilee joined the Bookstagram community in the midst of writing her debut novel, and found the courage to share her fictional worlds with the real world.

When she isn't writing or reading, Emilee can be found watching 90s and early 2000s romcoms in her pjs, with a jar of Nutella and a spoon.

