

THE TITANS SERIES, # 2



GODS

*of  
Aegean  
Grace*

MARIAN ANDREW

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*Of Aegean Grace*



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*Dedicated to:*

*Every woman out there.*

***The strongest women are sometimes the ones who love  
beyond all faults, cry behind closed doors, and fight battles  
that nobody knows about.***

*' αστέρια κοιτάζεις, αστέρι μου. Μακάρι ουρανός  
να γινόμουν, και μ' άπειρα μάτια εσένα να βλέπω.*

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# Prologue

*(From the epilogue of Book 1, GODS of City Glory)*

## Ben

*Monday morning. The day after chaos erupted.*

Last night Ava never returned home. We phoned her several times. Oscar and I left messages, but she didn't return any of them. Understandably, she's upset with us, but why does she sometimes have to be so goddamn stubborn? At least just let us know she's still alive. Now I'm worried out of my fucking mind because it's 4am, and we're about to drive out to Newark to catch a plane to Montana, and we've had no word from Ava since yesterday.

"I'll leave her note that we've left and when we'll be back," Oscar disappeared to her bedroom.

Most likely, she's with her two girlfriends, they're her support system, and I'm glad she has them. But she needs to realize we are also part of her world, and she can't just fuck off whenever she's upset, leaving us stressed with worry about her whereabouts.

My gaze turns towards Oscar as he's coming out of Ava's bedroom, holding her cell phone.

"The fuck?" I say, drawing a ragged breath. She's upset; I get it. I need to pace myself. Ava can be pretty sensitive at times; I need to find my inner calm.

"She left it here on purpose, so I can't track her," Carter uttered, closing his tablet and shoving it into his carry-on luggage. I'm sure he logged on just now to try and locate her.

"It's too early to call the girls. Once we land in Montana, we'll phone them." I can't think of anywhere else she could be. I rub my knuckles against my stubble, hoping my words turn out correct because the inner feeling I'm having is not favorable.



Carter's driving us to the airport, and I'm riding shotgun. None of us talk as we hit the road because, most likely, we're all thinking of Ava. For her not to return last night, she must be really pissed off, and leaving her phone like that means she wants space. So that's what I'm going to give her, but I still need to know she's okay or where she is. I'm not comfortable knowing our girl is out there somewhere, and I haven't got a clue if she's safe.

“What if she doesn't come back?”

I hear Oscar break our silence, bringing me out of my thoughts.

“That's not going to happen,” I hear myself saying sternly. But we all saw the look on her face last night. I swallowed hard. There's a chance we may have to fight to get her back, and I can't rule that out. But I don't need to worry the other two about it, so I keep my inner thoughts to myself.

“Look, as soon as we're done in Montana, we'll get our girl home. But I'm sure she'll be there by the time we get home and would have forgotten about the incident.” No one says anything because it's fairly obvious that we all have some doubts about what I just said.

Ava is headstrong and a pretty determined person. She goes for it at full strength when she gets something in her head. She wanted all three of us, and now look at us three jokers pining over a woman because we upset her. We're all afraid to lose her.

How the hell did we arrive at this point?

Sure, maybe we didn't handle the Montana situation well with her, but when it comes to tough love, I choose to protect her over anything else. That's why I have to side with Carter's decision, even if she dislikes me for it. It stings a little to think that she might actually hate me.

\*\*\*

We arrived in Montana later in the afternoon. I decided to try her cellphone again as I assume she must have returned

home. Oscar tries her at work, and Carter contacts Emma and Olivia.

Her cellphone is switched off or out of reach. I can find a dozen reasons why, so I'm not going to elaborate on that because it's not solid info.

"I spoke to her assistant," Oscar says as we wait outside the airport terminal for Carter to get the keys from the car rental booth inside. "She went to work today but didn't stick around. She was in her boss's office for a while and then left and didn't go back to work."

"Well, at least someone's seen her." It was a little relief, but I still needed to hear Ava's voice for confirmation. I had a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach that this wasn't going to end well. Our girl is majorly pissed.

We see Carter walking toward us; he doesn't look too good. It's as if all the color has drained from his face.

"A problem with the car?" I ask, a little frustrated because my nerves were already shot with the Ava situation.

"No, they're bringing it here to us." Carter has a lot on his plate at the moment, starting with the dire situation here in Montana and the reason why we're here, and I know he blames himself for what happened with Ava last night. "It's Ava," he says, pursing his lips together.

"What's with Ava?" Oscar said, his eyes darkening. Now I'm on edge too. If anything happened to her, I'm going to have a major shit show.

"I spoke with Olivia. All three women are pissed with us. Ava's gone."

"What do you mean gone?" I ask, my head spinning trying to figure out what the hell is going on.

"Like left. Gone. The girls know where she is, but she told them she doesn't want us to follow her."

"Fuck." I breathe out heavily, realizing she's more than just upset with us.

“There’s more,” I could see his hesitation. He shoves his hand through his hair and almost seems lost in thought momentarily. “She’s moving out.”

“What?!” Oscar and I blurt out simultaneously.

“Telling her to leave last night, well obviously, she took it literally,” Carter repeats his conversation with Olivia. “Ava doesn’t feel welcome anymore like we have our own thing going on, and she’s nothing but a sex toy to us.”

We all stand there looking stunned as if the wind had taken our breath away. The roaring sound of an airplane above us took over our silence.

“The girls are siding with Ava on this,” he adds after the plane passes over us.

“Did they say where she is now?” We need to find and reason with her; this is all too sudden.

“They said that we should leave her alone. They know where she is but won’t say.”

“They’re protecting her.” Oscar rubs his forehead with obvious distress.

“From us?” Carter looked pained, his eyebrows furrowing deep with concern.

I grab his shoulder firmly because I know he blames himself, and I won’t let him take the fall for this. “Let’s get this job done here. We’re back in NY in two days. Then we’ll talk with the girls.”

I look at Carter. His entire face is in a frown. I feel sorry for the dude; on top of dealing with his fucking uncle, the SOB Rick, this new problem lands on his back to carry on his shoulders.

“We’ll get her back, I promise,” I reassure Carter and Oscar, trying as best I could to avoid my voice resonating with the doubts my mind was clouded with.

# Chapter 1

## Carter

*Sunday, the day before chaos erupted*

I'm ready now. Ready to show Ava everything there is about me because I feel confident about how she feels around me. She has given me her entire heart without any reservations, and I will provide her with my world in return.

On the Sunday before I fly out to Montana, I throw Ava a couple of dates and ask if she's available for the evening on any of them. This will be our first real date, the one-on-one that she's had with the other two guys several times but never with me because I've been too scared she won't like the real me.

We're both sitting on the sofa, she's reading her ebook, and I'm running some security data via my tablet. She glances up at me when I mention a date but doesn't even bat an eyelid of surprise, and I know it's because she doesn't want to make this date out to be a big deal and thus make me nervous. That's Ava for you; she understands all of us, what makes us tick and how to deal with each of us in our own idiosyncratic ways.

She doesn't tell me which days she's available; instead, she takes her phone from the coffee table and grants me access to her iCloud calendar.

"Choose a day. I'll be available," she says without hesitation. She didn't even waver in giving me such personal access to her life.

"In fact, I think I should give Ben and Oscar access too, so you guys know what's going on and when I'm not available."

I stare at her with amazement, and she just gives me a placid smile, like what she's done is no big deal. I look down at my tablet, choose an evening, and show it to her. She sees it

and gives me an approving smile. I think she would have been happy for any day because this one date is just as important for her as it is for me. This is the peak of my relationship with her.

Tomorrow morning I have a flight to Montana; that SOB, Rick Collins, is getting out on parole, and I'm making sure he sees me when he gets out. Definitely not to greet him or be the first friendly face he sees out of prison, but my presence will heed a warning. I will eventually kill him one day, and it will be a slow, painful death. That bastard doesn't deserve to live even if this fucked up justice system thinks he does. I don't give a damn what blood and DNA I share with him; he's been a thorn in my parent's thighs since the day I was conceived.

He raped my mother while she was dating his brother, the man whom I consider my father. There was a massive fallout between the two brothers years earlier; my mother, for whatever god-given reason, refused to report the rape. A month later, she realized she was pregnant and opposed getting rid of it because she didn't want to kill a child that had the possibility of not belonging to the asshole brother. After I was born, they did a paternity test and discovered my father was not the biological father. They decided to keep it a secret, and he raised me as if I were his own. Growing up, I never doubted that he was not my true father. I never found out the truth until after my mother's death.

My parents married just before I was born, and my father moved us out to California, where he was stationed with the Navy SEALs. Even though he was often deployed overseas, he had people and an entire network within the military community that could keep an eye on us.

Except the bastard brother developed a sick infatuation with my mother, and he was biding his time to get back at her for marrying my father.

When my dad's father became terminally ill, my father left the navy, and we moved back to Montana to run the family ranch Rick was written out of because my grandparents knew he was unstable. Of course, until that point, I hadn't even met Rick, other than recognizing him as my father's estranged brother.

Once a year, my dad and his crew took the cattle to auction across the state to Idaho. This was nothing unusual; he did the trip annually and was always gone for ten days. I was pretty young at the time, so I have no recollection of the event that took place while my dad was away.

While my father was on one of these annual trips, Rick entered the ranch one evening unannounced. My father was smart enough to install hidden cameras around the farm, mainly due to thieves, and keep an eye out for coyotes in the area that liked to dine on cattle. The cameras alerted my mom, and she saw him trespassing and roaming the property, so she took a loaded shotgun, waited for him in the shadows on the porch of our home, and warned him to leave. He decided to call her bluff, and as he walked up the steps to the front porch, she didn't hesitate and shot his foot; he lost a couple of toes.

Not only did she wait a while to call the authorities, but she also took a seat and watched him suffer and bleed out. She told him it didn't even come to the assault he made on her years ago, but she called it even and warned him to leave them alone because she won't be aiming at his feet the next time.

When dad told me that story after mom died, I couldn't have felt prouder about her. My mom had more guts than either of us; she never took shit from anyone, least of all from Rick.

My parents attempted to have kids, and for months they tried without success. It turned out that my mother had a tumor in her cervix, and it was malignant. It was early stages, and she started immediate treatment. She survived cancer because that was the kind of woman my mother was, a warrior and a survivor. But the treatments killed every chance of her having children again.

It wasn't until I was a teenager that the MOFO resurfaced around town and caused problems for my parents and the ranching business. He started legal proceedings against them, trying to lay claim that they cheated him out of his inheritance. My parents were arguing a lot, not with each other but with everyone else, the ranch workers, their lawyers, and anyone else with a different opinion about Rick other than theirs.

That was right about the time I started playing around with computers, particularly in the black market, hacking, and all kinds of illegal online activities, including the security system of the FBI, Interpol, and other organizations. The deeper I dived into the dark web, the braver I became. I would literally bribe organizations for money but never go to collect because I had no real reason for doing what I did. I did it for fun, maybe also for the feeling of control because my family life was completely out of control. This went on for a couple of years, and honestly, I'm surprised now that I managed that charade for so long without getting caught.

Then I let my guard down, and the fun stopped. One late afternoon, a horde of SWAT teams invaded the ranch. My parents and the ranch staff were beyond themselves as to what was happening. The authorities literally thought the farm was some coverup for an overseas terrorist organization. When it was discovered that the entire crime was run and conducted single-handedly by a sixteen-year-old high school kid, the FBI was made to look like fools by the press.

As I was still underage, my name was kept out of the media, but the judge who tried the case bore no mercy, even if I was a first-time offender. I was sentenced to one and half years in juvie and a further fifteen years in prison. I was fucked; as fucked as a teenage hacker could get. Except a classified government organization approached me a few weeks into serving my sentencing and offered me a way out.

To work for them.

I negotiated a deal, a full-paid scholarship to Columbia, and a four-year work placement with them. After that, I'd work independently.

They were impressed that I dared to try and negotiate a deal considering my current position. They agreed to a four-year contract and wiped my record clean, thus reducing my juvie term to three months.

I finished school via remote learning and applied for a partial scholarship program with Columbia when I got out. I chose New York because it was furthest away from Montana,

and I wanted to get away from that life as far as possible. While studying, I simultaneously worked for them so that my contract was up with the department by the time I graduated. So now I am my own man, and I choose my own assignments.

Except I really wasn't as lucky as one might think. There's no such thing as luck; everything comes with a price. The altercation that had been going on between my parents and Rick for years had a deadly end. While I was still incarcerated during those three months in juvie, Rick took my mother hostage, demanding my father sign the ranch over to him. He kept her for four days, tortured and eventually killed her, dumping her body in a bullpen.

I never forgave myself because had I not gotten myself into trouble, perhaps there was a chance I could have been there for my mother. The last time I saw her was just before they carted me off to juvie, and all I saw was disappointment and sadness in her eyes. I had failed her, and that was the last thought she had of me.

I cut myself off from the world and dove straight into my studies and work because it was the only way I knew how to move on. Today, I am the world's number one security hacker and programmer. It's also why I keep a separate residence, to keep potential security risks away from my immediate family. I met Ben, Oscar, and Parker at fresher's week, and we've been inseparable ever since. They saved me from the dark world I seemed resigned to living in. They're my family, who accept me as I am, damaged and internally scarred.

When I first saw Ava, there was no doubt in my mind she was a beautiful creature, but I slowly discovered over time that she was not just a simple rose but one with many thorns. I was reluctant to let anyone else in my small world of people. Still, somehow Ava managed to find an opening, and her determination was undeterred to get through my solid barrier. She scratched and scraped the small window of opportunity she discovered. She challenged me, shook up my life, and stood up to me in ways no one else has. She got me to the point where I could no longer resist her, and I grasped onto her thorns with vigor because I craved to smell the fragrance of



this wild rose. It was lethal, toxic, and addictive, and I no longer feared the pain of opening up my soul and letting something so beautiful see me.

Now that Ava is my girlfriend, I will protect her with every bone in my body. She's not someone I'm just dating; she's everything to me, and my feelings for her run deep. She gives me this natural high when she's around me and when she's not, all I have to do is think of her, and there's like this sense of euphoria inside me.

She can see beyond my scars and love me despite my inability to naturally and expressively communicate my feelings to her.

*“In fact, I think I should give Ben and Oscar access too, so you guys know what's going on and when I'm not available.”*

My mind backtracks to what she said a minute ago. She's gone back to reading her ebook, and I observe her concentrating on what she's reading. I've never asked her what books she usually reads, but Oscar mentioned that she likes erotica stories, and I wonder if she's reading an explicit scene right now. The edges of her mouth have a slight curl to them, so either she's just happy to sit here with me, or she's reading something excitedly dirty. Either way, I could stare at her all day and remain fascinated.

I know she loves us to watch her, especially during our intimate moments together. She enjoys having us as her own personal voyeurs; she's a secret exhibitionist. But thankfully, it's only with us she's so carefree with as she is pretty much a prude outside our foursome because I won't accept another person within our unit, nor anyone else looking at our woman in the same carnal sexual manner as we do.

Perhaps her intuition alerts her to my intense gazing, and she briefly looks up at me. She doesn't say anything except smiles tenderly at me.

My instinct kicks in, and I close the distance between us on the sofa, wrapping my arms around her, stroking my fingers through her hair as I lean back a little to view her face.

Adoration fills her eyes, and I bask in it. I tilt her chin up, kissing each corner of her lips as I try to convey how much her small gesture means to me, how much she means to me, when she leans in more, capturing my lips with hers in a slow, languid kiss.

## Chapter 2

### Carter

“Carter, can I ask you something?” I look up and smile at my woman. The glimmer in her eyes makes me feel like I am in the presence of a goddess who possesses every part of me, right down to my soul.

“That man being released from prison, the one you told me about a few months ago back in Philly. Did it already happen?”

My heart sinks. Fuck, I can’t lie. Here is a woman who hides nothing from me, and I have to convince myself that lying to her is for her own good.

“No,” I say flatly. I pick up my tablet, hoping she will let the subject go.

“When then?” I know she’s digging out of concern, but I need to shut it down.

“Angel, it’s nothing I want to worry you about.”

I answer her honestly, but she notices my attempt to avoid the topic with her and frowns. The woman is a force to be reckoned with.

“In other words, it’s nothing you want to discuss with me.” She gets up from the sofa where she sat with me and leaves the room.

I get her frustration; she sees it as if I’m still hiding stuff from her.

This was what I tried to avoid. I wait a few minutes and realize she’s not coming back. I get up, walk over and knock on her bedroom door.

“Come in,” I hear her say.

When I enter, I see she’s sitting at her desk working on some designs. She’s been picking up a lot of freelancing lately,

and I'm worried she's overworking herself with her day job and all the extra work she's been taking on. I think I should discuss the topic with the other two and see if they have any suggestions. Oscar mentioned to Ben and me a couple of weeks ago that he gets the impression she's not happy at her current job. Except she's too proud to bring up the topic with me because I had to put my foot in it when we first met and accuse her of being a desperate fool to work for this fashion brand. That was at a time in my life when I wanted to thwart Ava from living with us because I was terrified of exactly what I have now with her.

I sit on her bed and watch her work away on her laptop.

“About what I said earlier. It's the truth, Ava. I don't want to worry you. After what he did to my mother, the less you know, or anyone close to me knows, the better.”

Ava sighs and stops what she's working on. She turns to me and thinks momentarily, digesting what I've just told her.

Sometimes Ava reminds me of Oscar, especially when she blurts out whatever strong feeling she is having at the moment. Other times, she reminds me of Ben when she sits there thinking and figuring out the best way to say what's on her mind. And then there are times when I see a little of myself in her, especially when she refrains from opening up at all.

“You know, I come from a fairly traditional family. They would never understand what I have with the three of you. Of what the four of us share. I haven't yet told them because I'm scared to. But you know what? Regardless of what anyone thinks, I wouldn't give you three up for anything. Ever. I've shared everything with you, my heart, soul, and insecurities. Everything. Because you're my world.”

Well, that's done it for me. Now I feel like a total asshole for keeping her in the dark about my family issues.

But I can't. I won't tell her anything further about Rick or bring her into what's happening on my side of the world in Montana. Because I love her too much to jeopardize her safety.

I swipe a hand over my face, my eyes fixed on her, silently pleading with her to let this topic go.

“I’m sorry, Ava, I don’t want this bastard to know anything about you.”

“You can’t hide me forever. Let me come with you to Montana.”

How does she know about my upcoming trip?

“How did you know I’m flying out to Montana?” I look at her suspiciously because it’s impossible for her to get around my online security system or check my phone or emails.

She narrows her eyes at me. “I didn’t. Until now.” Her voice is undeniably bitter, and her mouth is set in a straight line.

Abruptly, she turns back to her screen, and I know she’s upset about me keeping this from her. She already knew Montana is where I’m from and made an estimated guess.

“He’s being let out on Tuesday,” I admit. There’s no point in hiding this; she’ll just keep digging.

“What do you plan to do about it?” The frustration from her voice is gone, and it’s replaced with a sudden hopefulness. Her heart is always in the right place; it’s one of the many things I adore about her.

“I’ve been fighting his appeals for the last few years. He knows it’s been me behind those court judgments. I’m going to be there when they let him out. I’m not some teenage kid anymore, and I plan to let him know I won’t stop until he’s back inside, caged up like the goddamn animal he deserves to be.”

I see Ava’s face turn back to her screen, but she’s focused on everything I’ve just told her, and she’s thinking. When she gets something in her head, it’s difficult to persuade her otherwise, and I know she’s wondering how she could help me. But not with this.

I’m going to keep her far away from my family issues.

She stops working and turns to me again.

“So, when do you go?” Her head tilts slightly to the side, and her eyebrows raise in a question. Her innocent green eyes piercing straight into my heart.

“Tomorrow,” I don’t want to lie to her, but at the same time, it’s not even a matter of discussion; I have to protect and be super strict with her, knowing she won’t like it.

Her eyes twinkle. “Let me come with you.”

I sigh heavily, “Not a fucking chance,” and stand up abruptly.

“I’ve told you my plans now. I’m not hiding anything from you. So, please respect my decision.”

She flinches slightly at my words, but I leave the room, hoping to end this discussion.

I feel her trailing behind me.

Fuck.

“You can’t do this on your own. At least speak to the guys about it.” Her voice trails off as we walk into the living room and see Oscar and Ben in the kitchen. I didn’t even hear them come home.

They both turn to look at us.

“Speak to the guys about what?” Ben asks as he prepares himself a protein shake.

Ava raises an eyebrow at me, “Either you tell them, or I will.”

At this point, as much as I love her, I’m also frustrated with her. When Ava gets something stuck in her head and believes it to be true, she’ll keep gnawing at it until she gets her way. I raise my arm at her and bow sarcastically to her.

“Please do me the honors...obviously, you seem to have developed an itch,” I say sardonically, and now I’m irritated with her persistence.

She smirks at me and turns to them, “The SOB uncle is being released on Tuesday, and Carter is flying out to see him at the prison gates.”

I’m glaring daggers at her by this point.

Oscar sits on the stool by the kitchen island and casually bites into an apple, “And why don’t we know about this sooner?”

“Because it doesn’t concern you,” I mutter.

“The hell it doesn’t!” Ben snaps at me. “You seem to forget a lot, don’t you?”

I met the guys when I was 18; they are three years older than me because of their stint in the army. Even after a year of working with the agency and getting my GED, I was still messed up. Having been in juvie, my mother’s death, finding out about my true paternity really screwed my head up. I was reserved and withdrawn, focusing on my studies and mission with the agency. These guys suddenly became my kind of guide and brought me out of a very dark place I was in. They introduced me to their martial arts, meditation, and discipline and helped me build inner strength.

If it weren’t for them, I’d probably still be in that very dark and reserved place. But over time, our relationship evolved; we’re not just brothers, roommates, and best friends; we now share a woman between us.

“So, what’s your plan?” Oscar continues eating his apple, carefully observing me, trying to act casual, but I already know he is making plans in his head to follow me out west. Because that’s what these two do, what we all do. Support each other to the bone.

I look at Ava. She doesn’t need to hear this. I want to protect her from all this.

“What?” She looks at me with her arms crossed against her chest. “You seriously want me to leave so you can talk to them?”

I don’t say anything because I can’t. I don’t want to.

She frowns with confusion.

“Say it then. Tell me to leave.” She is daring me.

“I want to protect you.” I keep my voice calm as her eyes narrow and glare at me because we’ve done this dance before, and I know she’s ready to erupt and go all nuclear on me.

“Say it, or I stay.” She locks her sight directly onto mine, her eyes almost trying to pierce their way into my thoughts.

I don’t want to challenge her, it’s the last thing I ever wanted to do with her, but she is trying it out on me, hacking at my patience.

I breathe out heavily. Sometimes this woman frustrated me to hell and back.

“Leave.” I convince myself it’s for her own protection.

She isn’t expecting that, and her bottom lip drops in slight surprise. I see her flinch slightly, but there is more hurt than anger written all over her face. Seeing her like that really tugs at my gut. I would have preferred if she was angry so she would say something insulting, storm off, and then I have the opportunity to apologize.

But that doesn’t happen because she is left speechless and withdraws from further conversation. I can see the sadness in her eyes. We stand there staring at each other, her with shock and me adamant that I’m making the right decision.

I dare not look away from her, but I know the guys hung their heads, not wishing to get involved because this is my problem and my decision.

She breaks our stare and then laughs. I think it was to hide her horror.

“You’re not serious.” She stands firmly, her arms fold across her chest again.

“Ava, it’s best you left,” I say quietly, keeping my face deadpan, intense emotions swirling around my mind as she blinks at me wild-eyed.



She turns to Ben and Oscar and realizes they will sit this one out. The stress on her face holds me captive as she hangs onto my words. Frown lines mark her forehead as she tries to understand.

Her brows knit together, and I desperately want to smooth them out, hating to see the pain on her face knowing that my dismissal and silence are causing it.

“I’ll be leaving then.” She says quietly, fighting back the tears. She goes to her room, collects her purse and jacket, and leaves the apartment without any further eye contact or words with us.

When we hear the door close, we remain silent for a moment, and I’m digesting everything that’s just gone down.

“That was pretty harsh.” Ben finally says.

“It was for her protection.” I assert, and I’ll keep insisting because I know what evil I’m up against back in Montana. It’s something I could never let Ava bear witness to.

“I know that, but you know how headstrong she is. From her perspective, she’s been kicked out of a major event in our lives. Like she’s only halfway in with us.”

Ben is not wrong, but I know I made the right decision.

I cock my head to the side and swipe a hand down my face. “I’d rather be in the dog house than have something happen to her because of that bastard.”

“I know, man, but she doesn’t see it that way.” Ben downs the rest of his shake and dumps the glass into the dishwasher.

“Maybe I’ll have a word with her later,” Oscar suggests. Between the three of us, he’s pretty good at speaking ‘*Ava lingo*,’ they’ve had this spiritual link between them since the beginning of time.

“I think that’s a good idea; you have that feminine connection going on,” Ben jokes, and I chuckle. Maybe that’s what it was.

“Fuck you, man, you’re just jealous,” Oscar gets up from the stool and throws the apple stub in the garbage.

“No, for real.” Ben looks at him with all serious intentions. “You’d be better at this. Let me know how it goes.”

Ben turns his attention to me, “So give us your flight details. We’re joining you. No, is not an option.”

Both he and Oscar take out their phones to block their work calendars.

I didn’t need them in Montana, but sure, why not? The more MOFOs to warn the fucker, the better.

## Chapter 3

### Ava

I'm standing outside the apartment building, stunned and in utter disbelief. I was literally asked to leave my own home because these guys wanted to talk privately about something I wasn't welcome to be part of.

The scenario I just witnessed keeps replaying in my head. Ben and Oscar just stood there with their heads down; not one of them took my side. They didn't even try to reason with Carter like they usually do.

Here I am being treated like some goddamn goddess by my men, but the reality was I was never going to be part of their inner circle or their family crew. Not as a fully-fledged member under any circumstance. How did I not see this?

Was I just some sex toy to them?

Someone they just have fun with until they've used me up and tossed me aside.

Isn't that what they did with their other women before me?

Have I been completely blindsided by my own delusion that we had something real?

My head hurts like hell because I'm trying really hard to fight what my brain keeps throwing at me on a loop. While my heart is bent on the fact that there has to be some other explanation, that faint voice in my head keeps telling me that this relationship always had a sell-by-date.

I wipe a tear aside because, for fucks sake, it hurt. My heart is completely torn; I love these men so much and feel betrayed by them.

I take to the street and just start walking. I left my cell phone at home on purpose because I know Carter could track

me with it. Wherever I am going, I don't want to be bothered, but I don't have a clue where my final destination will be.

I'm just floating around the streets; my body feels weightless, as if it moves on its own accord. My head is foggy and confused, but I keep walking, hoping it will clear my mind, but it doesn't.

Without paying much attention to where I am heading, I end up near Times Square and decide to check into a hotel nearby. There is no way I want to go home and face them. I feel embarrassed, betrayed, and heartbroken but above all, I feel used.

I just need a place to crash, alone with my thoughts, and figure this out.

As soon as I reach my room, I lock the door behind me and look around. It's nothing special, just a double room in one of those four-star chain hotels. The large floor-to-ceiling window has a view of another building, and if I look out towards the far left, I see the faintest of bright flashing circus lights reminding me where I was.

I close the curtains and sit down on the bed in the dark. The truth of my situation sinks in, and right there and then, emotional exhaustion overtakes me, and I collapse into a melancholic slumber. A lump in my throat forms as the tears start endlessly flowing. I have a heart-wrenching big cry because I fucking deserve to cry after all this shit.

I am miserable.

It seemed like time stood still for me as I eventually lay my head on the pillow, fisting the bedcover, and literally cried myself to sleep.

It's not until close to nine o'clock when I wake up and contemplate going home.

Was it ever my home? I rented a room, and somehow, I became this sex toy for these guys along the way.

I feel so stupid.

The girls. I should phone them, but at the same time, I don't want to call them. What exactly do I say to them?

*“Hey ladies, remember my boyfriends? It turns out it was nothing but some big sex orgy!”*

All I've ever been for my best friends was a problematic enigma on a constant loop of disappointment, forever needing their help to solve things for me. Since I arrived in New York, I'm a complete disaster, one fucking issue after another.

Nope, this time I have to deal with this on my own. Make my own decision and act on it.

Carter is flying out tomorrow, so he probably planned to return Thursday morning like his usual work schedule, and no one would have noticed that he was in Montana. That's typical Carter with all his secrets, he's like this big enigma, and I've come to accept that about him.

But I just can't wrap my head around how much Carter and I had come so far, after all the trials and tribulations we've had, and this Montana trip could backfire so much? I genuinely wanted to be there for him, be his support system, because I know first-hand how much all of this affected him, and I was concerned. These last few days, I've observed him and knew something was on his mind, and I realized exactly what that was.

In my heart, I just feel that Carter needs someone there for him, and I cannot fathom why he shut me down like he did.

I imagine now the other two will probably join him. There's no way Ben would ever leave Carter to face this alone. Those three were tight, and I was never part of that dynamic.

They probably have an early flight out tomorrow; I could stay here tonight and return to the apartment tomorrow morning and not have to face them.

*God*, I already miss them so much, but maybe what I thought I had wasn't real. I didn't want this to be the end of us, but I had a decision to make, and it was clear what the options were. Stay and be their female sex object to use until they get tired or save whatever dignity I had left and flee.

Tears form in my eyes again, but I force them to stay there. Come tomorrow I'll start looking for a new place to live. It fucking hurts, but I have to be strong. I have to do this, break away swift and clean, pick myself off the floor, and move on.

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“Oli, it's me, Ava. I'm calling you from a hotel room,” the lump in my throat was painful, and I suddenly regretted this call.

I deliberated about phoning one of the girls. I just needed to talk with someone, I even considered calling the Good Samaritan's twenty-four-hour crisis hotline, but then I was afraid that I would hog up the line for someone who really needed help.

After downing several small bottles of wine from the room bar, it was either drunk dial one of the guys or one of my girls.

“Ava? Why are you phoning from a hotel?”

After looking at my watch, I realize it's close to 11 pm.

“Shit, Oli, I didn't realize the time. I'll let you go. Sorry.”

“Wait! Ava! Don't hang up! Tell me where you are.”

“They threw me out, Oli. The boys. They told me to leave,” and I burst into tears.

After several minutes of uncontrollable crying and incomprehensible words, she managed to get the hotel name from me. Twenty minutes later, I got a call from reception that I had two guests waiting downstairs. I gave instructions to send them straight up to my room.

Both Olivia and Emma had taken a cab across town, and when they entered my room, I fell directly into their arms and just sobbed. Maybe the alcohol mixed with the heartache made me act the way I did. But I finally managed to painfully recount everything that happened and my final decision concerning my relationship.

It wasn't easy fighting back those tears, hearing my own voice telling them that the guys and I were over. Saying aloud that I was breaking up with them made it even more real. The pain in my chest that had been there since they kicked me out, pinching away at me, had tripled.

"Shit Ava," Emma leaned over and gave me a supportive hug, "I'm so sorry. I encouraged you to go for them."

"We both did," Olivia remarked. She rubbed her forehead, and her mouth set into a hard line.

I could see the obvious concern on their faces, but I wouldn't let them take responsibility. I encouraged the boys all on my own into this foursome relationship. I was to blame for putting myself in the emotional mess I was in.

"No. The fault is mine. I knew getting involved with my roommates was a bad idea from the start. The only person to blame here is me. Moving out from the apartment is the best solution for all parties."

"Are you sure, hon? Maybe you should first talk with them." Emma said, and Olivia agreed.

I just burst out crying for possibly the third time in the space of an hour. I wasn't strong for any of this. I truly fell in love with these men, and I was broken.

"I can't do it. I need your help." I managed to say in between my tears.

Olivia reached out and embraced me. "You love them. I get it. Look, we'll do whatever you ask. We're on your side."

Emma rubbed my back to soothe me, "That's right. No matter what, we've got your back, honey."

"I'm so upset at them. Why would they do this to you? It makes no fucking sense!" Olivia muttered and got up to check out the mini-fridge. She grabbed two bottles of whiskey and a bottle of still water. She gave the water to me and one of the whiskeys to Emma.

"I'm going to hang those three upside down by their balls," Emma sneered, opening the mini bottle and taking a

sip. The picture forming in my mind was disturbing, but she was the ultimate person to have on your side of a fight.

“I’ll help you with that,” Oliva asserted with a vengeful expression. “They don’t deserve to keep their balls after what they did to you! I just can’t get my head around it all. I really am so sorry, Ava.”

I looked up at them and sat my back against the headboard of the bed. Emma gave me the box of tissue she had brought earlier from the bathroom. I took one and blew my nose.

“You can’t tell them anything, where I’ve been, nor where I’m going. I need to do this quietly and make this as clean as possible.”

It tortured me that I was taking off and would be out of their life for good. I knew when they discovered I was gone, they probably wouldn’t even care. Maybe they’ll even be angry for a while and hate me for just disappearing. They’re kind of possessive like that. But they’ll move on to the next woman who catches their eye, and soon, I’ll be a figment of their distant memory. The only broken heart here would be mine.

“Sure thing, Ava.”

They both agreed to take care of the removal of my things from the apartment. Call me a coward, but I don’t think I could ever face them again. I’m too incredibly weak, and that’s my problem. Talking with them would only drag out the inevitable.

Chatting with the girls this evening helped me realize this was the best outcome for me, even if my gut feeling said otherwise.

I did a reality check, and my brain told me to run. For once, I listened to my brain instead of my heart.



## Chapter 4

### Ben

We were up at the crack of dawn because that's what time work starts on the ranch. Regardless, I don't think we caught any sleep last night. Finding out yesterday from the girls that Ava wants to move out shocked all of us, and it didn't resonate well with me.

It's just not ok.

At first, I was angry with her. We are in a relationship together, and she just gets up and leaves without any discussion, like we're nothing to her. But then I tried to look at it from her perspective. We are three guys, and the other night we shut her out of something crucial. Like motherfucking cowards, Oscar and I bowed our heads and let her walk out, leaving her to think she wasn't part of our family. Of course, now I realize she's going to believe we only want her for fun and will close her off to the serious issues that happen because she isn't part of the bigger picture. It wouldn't surprise me if she now thinks she is just the sideliner.

So, if that's the case, then I think I understand where she's coming from.

Last night, while Carter and his father had some alone time back at the family house, Oscar and I went for a long walkabout. We ended up talking until late on the front porch. In the end, we came to the same conclusion. We were right in keeping her out of this affair for her protection, but we messed up on the delivery. This foursome relationship is unique, and as she's, technically speaking, the odd one out, she will feel the most vulnerable. We weren't sensitive to this fact and mishandled it badly.

No wonder she fucking thinks now that we only see her good for one use. But no fucking way does she think she's going to walk out on us that easily. Not after how she fought

for all of us. And certainly not after how she convinced each of us that we could do this relationship. And especially not after I opened myself up the way I have and told her I loved her. I never did that to any woman before because there wasn't anyone I felt as strong as how I felt about Ava.

When we return to New York, the four of us need to sit down and talk about what's going on and .... *Fuck*.

I stop mid-thought because that's when I realize Ava's gone. The possibility that she won't be there is pretty huge.

*For christ's sake!* What the hell are we going to do? We're on the other side of the country! I feel friggin helpless, and it's making my blood boil.

"One thing at a time," I tell myself aloud. We'll take care of what we came here for and then tackle Ava because it's impossible to solve this from two thousand miles away.

The ranch house isn't massive, and as Carter is an only child, his parents had renovated the place when they moved in years ago and converted the three bedrooms into two large ones. So the three of us ended up sleeping in Carter's old room. He took his bed, and Oscar and I shared the sofa bed.

I was the last to take a shower this morning, so I found the other two already dressed and getting themselves breakfast in the kitchen. Carter's father said he wasn't going to do the bastard the justice and be there when he gets out of prison today, so he left early, saying he needed to tend to one of the pregnant cows.

But we're going to the prison to give a warning to the SOB and hope he climbs back into his mother-fucking asshole and makes sure he stays there. If he tries to do any funny business at the ranch, we're letting him know that he'll have to deal with us. I know Carter wants blood for what happened to his mother, but he wouldn't be doing it alone if that were to ever happen. Oscar and I will always have his back. The three of us stick together, and I'm pretty sure even Parker would agree to that even if he's not so much in our lives anymore.

I'm also a little worried about how Carter will deal with seeing the man this morning. After all, the bastard abducted, tortured, and killed his mother, only to find out after her funeral that he's the end product of a rape crime. I know there's a lot of anger there, and Oscar and I need to be there for him when he decides to burst that bubble and make sure he doesn't do anything he regrets later.

According to Carter, Rick was scheduled for release at 10 am. The prison was a good hour's drive from the ranch.

We set out early and arrived at the gates with enough time to spare. I looked around us, and I guess more prisoners were being released because others were waiting around too. Except we weren't there to greet the bastard and congratulate him on his freedom. We were issuing him a serious warning.

I had no idea what this guy looked like, but when I saw the gates open and the ex-convicts start trickling out, I looked over at Carter, and it was how he suddenly tensed up at one individual that I caught on who Rick was. I signaled to Oscar and nudged my head in the direction of the bastard about to check out of the gate.

"That's him?" Oscar asked, observing him carefully as I kept my eyes locked on the bastard at the gate.

Carter's reply was a silent snarl, and that was all the confirmation we needed.

"Let's do this," I said firmly.

We started approaching the gates when a deafening gunshot rang out nearby. We all headed straight to the ground, then another one rang out. Chaos and pandemonium erupted, and people shouted and screamed all around us. I raised my head from the ground, and all I saw were prison guards running. I looked at my other two bros, and they were fine. Oscar glanced up and did the same with Carter and me. I signal to him to remain down. Whatever the hell was happening down there, we were still pretty safe and hidden behind some cars in the parking lot.

We stay on the ground for a few minutes, and my ears are locked on what's going on down there by the gates.

The first thing that sprung to mind was someone had an arranged hit, possibly on a newly released gang member. I focus on the commotion and realize the shooter had been caught and was swarmed by guards. Lifting my head slightly to strain it forward, I still couldn't see what was happening. I looked at Carter and Oscar, and we nodded to get up from the ground.

Upon getting up, I looked around to see who was shot and couldn't believe it. The MOFO, Rick, was lying on his back, guards were ripping his shirt open and starting CPR on him.

"Dad!" Carter yelled, and I saw him running towards the restrained shooter.

*Oh, fuck!* If things couldn't go from bad to worse. Carter's dad must have shot the bastard while he was exiting the gates. Oscar ran after Carter to keep him from attacking the guards, who now had handcuffed his father with his entire body lying facedown on the ground. I bolted towards them, but Oscar took hold of him and kept him from approaching his father.

Everything happened way too fast.

I stood there trying to get my head around what the fuck was going on, assessing the situation. I could see the bastard was bleeding out; medical assistance was there, but if he got shot twice, and it wasn't a through and through, he's most definitely a dead man. Can't say I feel bad for the asshole, but Carter's father is most likely going down for premeditated murder or, even worse, manslaughter.

*Fuck!* This couldn't have ended up in a more messed up situation!

In the near distance, I heard sirens. Most likely local cops and an ambulance.

My eyes darted over again to where that bastard Rick lay, it's only been a few minutes, and it looked as if they had given

up on the body. The man was pronounced dead, and all I could think of was “*good fucking riddance,*” but now we had another massive issue at hand.

I swipe a hand over my face looking at the scene in front of me, trying to decipher how the heck this all unfolded into one massive mayhem. *Fuck this shit.* This was turning into a mother-fucking damned week.

## Chapter 5

### Ava

On Monday morning, I returned to the apartment to find that the guys had already left.

I'm glad Carter didn't have to face this issue independently, and the boys will always have each other's back. But I know now if I stayed, I would never be part of that vital area of their lives.

*To them, I'm just Ava, the princess to be kept on a shelf and admired, like a prized doll that doesn't need to get her precious hands dirty.*

How can I go back to them aware of this and act like everything is okay when I know the truth will constantly eat away at me.

Oscar left a note saying they were sorry about everything and we would figure it all out when they returned. I didn't even bother to look at my phone even though I was sure there were a zillion missed calls and messages from them. I remembered how they behaved when I disappeared to Olivia's for just a few hours after another altercation with Carter before he and I hooked up; so I don't even want to know how they dealt with me being gone overnight.

It's no secret that the boys are possessive, dominant, and protective. None of these traits ever bothered me, but throw in inequality, and I cannot bend for that. Not in the slightest. I would lose all self-respect for myself if I settled for that.

My head kept telling me to cut the cord fast and let them go. Making a clean, swift break was the best remedy. If I sat down to think it through, maybe take a day or two, or spend any more time dwelling over it, they'll be back in New York, and I'm a damn sucker for them. I'll convince myself to give them another chance until it happens again.

These are sexual Adonises. Gorgeous, hot, successful, independent men who could have any woman they wanted. They ooze power and control. The three always become the focus of attention for women wherever we go in public. Heck, even Emma and Olivia were panting all over them when they first met them.

Why on earth would these men ever settle for someone like me?

*Sweet Ava*, the girl next door, who can't even get her shit together career-wise. I'm just a *meh*.

This relationship was doomed from the start. I was asking for trouble thinking these guys would want anything other than a sexual relationship. It's no secret that I lured them into this relationship using sex. I dangled it over them, teased them with it, and promised a good time. Sure, I delivered on my promise, but I was delusional if I thought there was something more between us.

Reverse harems don't exist because no man wants to be serious about a woman who also loves another man. Sure, Oscar and Ben declared their love for me, but it's easier said than done. I watched them yesterday look away when I desperately needed their support over Carter's decision. They didn't care about how I felt, nor how much they all hurt me. Neither of them stopped me from leaving. That hurt.

It killed me on the inside.

All three let me leave without any feelings of remorse. They more or less threw me out of our home so they could make plans without me. Because that's how insignificant I am in their world.

*Our* home? This is *their* home. I'm just the chick who pays rent and fucks the landlord and his two best friends.

My feelings are too invested in this relationship, and I will crash and burn when they become bored and eventually decide to move on from me. I was the fool here to think this could work.

I sat on my bed and wrapped my arms around myself, trying to find some way to comfort myself. That awful feeling of confusion, rejection, and loneliness was consuming me. I looked around my bedroom. So many memories here, on this very bed.

I looked up at the ceiling fighting the tears that threatened to explode.

There was only one way out of this dilemma, even if it was not what I wanted because, fuck, I loved these men with every fiber of my body. I needed to do this to save whatever threads were left from my dignity.

I showered, got dressed, and left the apartment.

I took the subway to work instead of calling my usual Uber; it allowed me to walk a little and clear my mind. When I got to my building, I stood outside, looked up to the floor I worked on, and remembered the day I came here for an interview not so long ago.

The unspeakable number of applications I made just to get a design job with one of the better-known ready-to-wear brands. I was so proud to be offered a position here and become part of a creative team that defined international fashion.

There's a possible risk that this will be my last day here because no one with a properly functioning mind in this competitive industry just ups and goes at the start of their career. But my mental health at the moment trumps my job, so I take a deep breath, walk into the building lobby, and prepare myself for the worst-case scenario.

I got out of the elevator on my floor and walked straight into Ivy's office. While on my way here, I thought of a million different reasons why I need to take a sabbatical. In the end, I informed her that I had a death in the family and had to fly out to Greece.

She looked at me as if I was speaking a different language and sat there with a blank face in silence.



When it finally registered what I was explaining, she scrunched up her face, “Ava, I’m a little confused. People die all the time, darling. Why do you see it necessary to make sure they are dead?”

*Come again?*

I looked at her and wondered if this was what happened after spending thirty years in my industry. The bitchiness overtakes one’s persona to the point that one becomes devoid of human compassion.

“I’m going to their funeral to mourn their passing. That is what people do when their loved ones die.”

“Well, can’t you do that in New York?”

She waved her wrist, filled with thick gold bangles in the air. The sound jingled as she moved.

“Why must you go all the way to Greece?”

I searched her face for any sign of bullshit, but she had a deadpan look. The woman simply didn’t have an emotional bone in her body. I knew she may have suffered from a lack of compassion, but this discussion seriously took the cake in one of the most absurd conversations I’ve had to date.

Ivy was a different kind of individual. Clearly, she wasn’t suffering from insanity but was a mean bitch who survived this industry by treading over designers that worked under her management.

“I’m sorry, Ivy, I can’t have this discussion right now.”

I wasn’t going to sit and explain the etiquette of a funeral and why I would require to travel to Greece. It seems this discussion wouldn’t end until Ivy got her way, and I’m too much in a vulnerable and emotional state to put logic and reason into explaining why people, in general, attend funerals.

I told her I’d let her know when I would return. Surprisingly, she relented, shrugged her shoulders, and waved her bangled arm in the air, signaling that the conversation was over.

She probably believed me because I genuinely looked like shit, as if someone really did die. In my case, it was my heart and soul, and I needed to get away from this city to try and put myself back together before getting stuck somewhere in limbo. If I lost my job upon my return, then that was another price I had to pay; I was already down on my luck. Take a number and stand in line.

“Oh, Ava,” Ivy called out as I walked out of her office.

I turned around to her, bracing myself for the unexpected, thinking she would probably pull some shit and reject my request for personal time off.

“Raphael West is an exclusive studio; many celebrities and clients come here. Next time, please match your outfit to something more appropriate, darling.”

My eyes opened wide. I glanced down at my black t-shirt, skinny jeans, and low-top Converse sneakers. I bit my tongue to avoid replying to the old hag. I should have worn my joggers to completely piss her off and hopefully help give her a brain aneurism. Instead, I gave her a brief nod and walked out as fast as possible.

I took the *one* train uptown to Columbus circle and got a coffee at my favorite cafe. It's my to-go place for comfort coffee. As I sat there sipping my choco-hazelnut latte, I took out my tablet and booked myself an open return flight to Greece. I didn't give it too much thought and hadn't even spoken to my parents, but my decision was made.

I abandoned my cellphone in my bedroom. In fact, I never wanted to look at it again because I knew it would be filled with messages and missed calls from the boys that would make me think twice about leaving. The temptation to forgive them is pretty strong right now, and I can't do it. Not this time, not for the cost of my dignity. When you love someone, you don't just fall out of love because they did you wrong, and I can't just turn off my feelings like that.

And I love three men and times the pain by three.

Triple hearts, triple pain, triple loss.

Most likely, I'll leave my phone in New York, so I'm not drawn to curiosity and peek at their messages. I'll probably just pick up a temporary phone when I get to Greece.

That evening my girls came to the apartment with a pizza, wine, and a tub of Ben and Jerry's *cookie dough*. We had a long chat again about everything, and I know they want me to talk with the guys, but I'm too weak to fight the allure these men have on me.

"They just seemed so perfect, Ava. I can't comprehend how it's gone so south." Olivia passed the tub of ice cream we were sharing over to me.

"The perfect guy is an illusion," Emma blurted out as she refilled our wine glasses. "There is no such man. Ava, honey, live your life on your terms, and never settle for being seconds for anyone. You deserved to be the top dog in this relationship, queen of fucking everything, and if they couldn't see your worth, then fuck them."

"I'll certainly agree to that!" Olivia clinked her wine glass with Emma's, and I sat there with a mouthful of ice cream, giving them a wonky smile while battling out a light brain freeze that had just struck me.

At least I have Olivia and Emma's support regardless that they may not entirely agree with my decisions. Without them, I can't even begin to imagine how I would have survived doing this on my own.

These women have been in my life forever, and if there's one thing I've learned over the past year, no matter which person broke your heart or how long it takes to heal, you'll never have to go through it without your friends. Maybe it's the wine talking and the sugar rush from the ice cream, but I love my girls more than anything.

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The following morning, my insides were all over the place. I was really doing this. This was the final cut. There was not going to be a heart-to-heart goodbye, no face-to-face farewell. There was no one there to tell me I was making a

mistake, only me to remind myself to suck it in and find the inner strength to make the final move.

I took one last look at the letter I was leaving the three men.

*“I’m sorry I’m doing it this way, but I’m too weak to face you and do it in person. It’s important that you know I don’t hold any harsh feelings towards you because I only blame myself for this. I was under some delusion that I was a significant part of your lives, that I meant something important to you. But you all made it apparent the other night that I’m not, and I won’t hold that against you. It is what it is, and I have to convince myself of the reality of the situation.*

*We want different things; my expectations are different from yours. And I’m not going to lie, the truth hurts, but that’s my problem to deal with, not yours. I’ve been getting myself into a big mess with my relationships this past year, so I need a clean break from everyone and everything. I’m going away for a while, and hopefully, in the meantime, I will have found a new place to live too.*

*But that’s also not your issue to worry about. I won’t be returning back to the apartment either. The pain is too real for me, even if it’s not for you. I will organize a firm to collect my things, so they’ll inform you before they come.*

*Perhaps in some crazy parallel universe, we’re a big happy family. But the truth is I’m only hurting myself thinking that.*

*So, here comes the hardest part. I mean every word, even if it’s just written.*

*Goodbye, and I wish you a happy life,*

*Ava”*

I put the letter in an envelope with the names of all the men on it and left it next to my cell phone on the desk in my bedroom.

I checked the app on my tablet, and my Uber was almost within the vicinity. I rolled my luggage out of the apartment, and it took every last willpower I had left to not look back.

I phoned my parents at the airport just before I boarded my flight. I told them my trip to see them was a last-minute decision and I didn't want to explain it on a payphone. I'm just lucky my parents are supportive, even though they have no clue what has caused me to flee to the other side of the world.

I doubt I will be able to ever tell them the truth.

How the hell do I begin? *"Hi, mom and dad. I lived with three other guys and convinced them to hook up with me. I was an idiot to think we could play happy family, but it turns out I was just a sex toy for them. So here I am, used and foolishly trying to pick up whatever dignity I have to sew back together and get on with my life!"*

Sure, that's my life in a nutshell. Humiliation wouldn't even begin to describe how I feel.

## Chapter 6

### Ben

We're now at the police station back in Harrison, and Carter's dad was arrested and held in custody. There's going to be a bail hearing tomorrow. Carter and the lawyer are with his father right now talking. Oscar's sitting next to me, benched over with his elbows on his knees and his head falling into his hands.

I don't think he's taking any of this well, and I'm worried about him having one of his episodes. Ever since Ava moved in, he's had less and less of them, and I know his relationship with Ava is what's helping him.

Two days ago, everything seemed perfect. But over the last couple of days, we've had one disaster after another. First Rick, then Ava, now Carter's dad. This is a totally fucked up situation. How did we get here?

I'm about to lay a supportive hand on Oscar's shoulder, but I spot Carter and the lawyer approaching us. I nudge him slightly, and we both stand up to attention.

"He's been charged for voluntary manslaughter," Carter says when he reaches us. "We're going over to the court for the bail hearing later this afternoon."

I observe him carefully, but he's too damn straight-faced, and I have no idea what's going on in his head. He tends to shut down fast; the man's a control freak.

"That's pretty fast," I comment, unsure if the situation is good or bad.

"My dad has no prior arrests. It's a small town; they don't like to drag things out."

Harrison is more of a community than a town, with a population of about a hundred and fifty people. It mainly serves as a hub for ranchers, and Carter's family is one of the

long-standing families in the area. The people here are either somehow related to them or employed by them. I imagine no one will want to see the biggest employer in the area go to prison for protecting his family from a psychopath. Especially when that bastard tortured and killed his wife.

We arranged to meet with the lawyer at the courthouse after lunch, and the three of us headed to the only place in town serving beer and food.

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I look over at Oscar across the table from me and observe him pick up a fry and pop it into his mouth. He hasn't touched his beer even though I agreed to be the designated driver for the day. While he and I had a long chat last night about our current circumstances surrounding Ava, he seems withdrawn this morning, as if it's sunk in that there's that chance we may never get her back. Add what happened this morning at the prison, and I know he's trying hard to keep his shit together. The man is currently a walking time bomb.

Shit, we really need Ava.

He needs her.

We all do.

Carter is on another planet. He's been quiet and withdrawn too. He has that usual passive shade he puts up, and you can't tell what the hell is going on with him. Except I know my bro like a pro. He's blaming himself for Ava leaving and for what's going on with his father. Years ago, he told us that he's on a constant battleground fighting Rick's appeals ever since he was sentenced, but he's never elaborated on the details.

Carter does keep his private business to himself and only lets out what he deems necessary to those he trusts. Whatever happened with the last appeal, I'm sure he thinks he didn't fight it enough, and now there's a big chance his father will go to prison because of it.

"What your dad did," I start to say and see both heads turn their attention my way, "any of us would have done as

well.”

Oscar gives me a brief nod, agreeing with me.

“I’m pissed,” Carter mutters as he angrily pushes his plate of half-eaten food away from him. “Fuck it, man.”

He shakes his head and mutters something I didn’t catch, but I’m sincerely glad he’s talking because he hasn’t said much since last night, and I know he keeps a lot of shit tightly bottled up in his head.

“I know, man, your dad did what the state should have done. People like Rick should not be allowed out in society. Heck, we shouldn’t have to fund institutions to keep fuckers like him alive either.”

Carter briefly stares into the distance and says nothing for a moment. Without looking at anyone in particular, “Ava. I’m fucking irritated at her.”

Shit, this conversation might be the trigger point for all of us.

“I can’t believe she’s doing this to us.” He shoves his hand through his head, fisting his hair and exhaling loudly as he silently thinks for a brief few seconds before casting his eyes on me, searching for an explanation.

I see Oscar let out a deep huff and push his plate away. He puts his elbows on the table and hides his face in his hands as he lets out another deep sigh of frustration.

“She just got up and left. Without fucking talking to us. What the fuck is wrong with her?”

His voice is irritated, and I know Carter’s just blowing off steam from everything that’s happened and probably directing his anger towards her. But I need to diffuse the bomb and redirect this anger before it escalates with him because Oscar is super protective of Ava. He’ll be looking for an outlet to release his frustration, too, and in no time, I’ll be trying to separate these two from killing each other.

I breathe out heavily, my mind working on overdrive as I need to divert this frustration away from Carter.



“I was angry too, man. We all are confused by her behavior. Then Oscar and I got talking last night. You need to see it from her view. There’s three of us and one of her. She’s the newly added member to the family.”

“She always says what’s on her mind. Ava is forthcoming like that. She’s never given us any indication she feels like this for her to justify running off and leaving us in the cold.”

“I think the other night, asking her to leave may have triggered that thought that’s been brewing in the back of her mind for a while.”

Carter looked at me sternly, “I’m sticking with my decision of keeping her out of this issue, and I’m glad I did. Can you imagine had she been there with us this morning?”

“I know, man. I’m on board with you one hundred percent. As is Oscar. We’re sticking with our decision. I don’t even want to think about Ava having been there this morning during the shooting.”

I look over to Oscar because I’m worried that he’s currently also reliving his past somewhere in his mind. Those random gunshots must have triggered something because he looks like he’s fighting a losing battle within himself. Unlike back when we served in the military, this morning’s situation was different. What happened at the prison was unexpected, it took us off guard, and we were in a vulnerable position.

“Oscar and I don’t question your decision, but we need to find her and make her see it our way too. We deserve to be heard; I know she’ll give us that chance. Come on, this is Ava; we all know she’s a little like us, short-tempered, passionate, but also logical. Let’s not forget that massive heart she wears on her sleeve. We’ve all connected with her on a level that we’ve never done with any other person, and that has got to say a lot.”

I observe the guys and see their expressions slowly change as they absorb my words. Even if it’s just a little faith and hope I’ve given them, it’s enough to get them both out of the rut they’re stuck in. I hope I can deliver on this because it will be brutal if Ava rejects us.

Ava isn't just part of this unit. She's the central and principal part of it. That's why I'm determined to get her back.

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Carter's dad is granted bail at twenty-five thousand dollars and has to wear an ankle bracelet. His lawyer said he will try and get the tracker removed as he's not a flight risk, considering he runs the town's most significant ranch business in the area. Carter posts bail directly at the courthouse.

We're now in a waiting room for his release. The lawyer told us that if his dad admits voluntary manslaughter under duress, they could get the sentencing reduced to the minimum penalty and then apply for parole within a few months.

If it were my woman that bastard Rick murdered, I would have also been waiting by the prison gates to gun him down. Perhaps I would have done worse; wait until he is released, kidnap him, and cut him limb from limb until the SOB bleeds out.

When the lawyer and Carter talked with his father earlier at the jailhouse, he explained that he got a phone call from his brother a few weeks earlier, telling him he was being released. Rick threatened that he was coming for him, then Carter, and would destroy anything associated with the name Collins. His father did report it to the police and tried to get the parole suspended, but it didn't happen. Considering that all phone calls from prison are monitored and that the authorities did nothing to heave the warning, the lawyer thinks there is a chance he could get the sentencing reduced to pre-meditated self-defense if they cooperate with authorities. Otherwise, he faces fifteen years imprisonment.

"So what happens now?" Carter asked the lawyer.

"I will try and get the sentencing reduced, but there's nothing you can do until they announce the new hearing. Your family here has a long-standing history in the community. Everyone knows what Rick Collins did to your mother. Rest assured that there isn't one person in this town who will ask for retribution for his death. Even the authorities here have been lenient with your dad's case. But bureaucracy dictates

that the law is the law, and it must be followed. We aim for reduced sentencing to the minimum amount and then seek early release. I don't see the district attorney going for blood on this case either. It serves no purpose to put a man like your father in prison after what he has been through."

We had a long chat with Carter's father at the ranch and what he'll do about the business if he gets incarcerated. The good thing is that he already has a manager who takes care of the day-to-day running of the ranch, but in the long term, he may have to consider selling.

Oscar and I left Carter and his father alone at the house to talk stuff out, and we walked into town for a beer and some bar food.

The community is small and what happened today is now on everyone's lips, but I gather there is major support for Carter's father.

"Do you think Carter will fly back with us tomorrow?" Oscar asks as he bites into his burger. Throughout the day, I caught him several times checking his phone, and he sent a couple of messages as well. I knew he was checking for any sign of life from Ava.

Hell, I did the same thing and got nothing but static. I swear that woman is stubborn as a mule when her mind fixates on something.

"No idea, but there's no point sticking around until a trial date is set."

I hope Carter returns with us because we'll have better luck getting Ava back when the three of us are confronting her. Most people would feel mobbed when confronted by a group like ours, but for Ava, we are her weakness and her everything all at once. There is less chance she will reject us together than if just one or two approach her.

But, in the off-chance, we might need a *plan B* if things go pear-shaped.

We each had a beer, ate, and returned to the ranch house later that evening. Carter was on the porch with his dad,

sharing a bottle of whiskey. We joined them for a drink, and he told us he would head back with us and return when the trial hearing date had been set.

The following day we were up early again, but this time we headed towards the airport to catch our flight back to New York to deal with yet another open issue. Trouble was, I had no idea how we would end up solving the one that affected all three of us.

## Chapter 7

### Oscar

Ava's letter felt pretty final. After reading it, I sat on her bed, my heart feeling like it had been ripped out of my body. How could this have ended so badly?

My mind is in chaos, trying to come to terms with everything.

Has Ava really ended it? Ended us? Just like that?

Ben and Carter entered Ava's bedroom and saw the look on my face. I stood up and showed them the note she had left for us. They each took the time to read it, both looking as somber as I did when they finished it. We all stood there speechless, trying to process what she wrote. She couldn't have been more wrong about how we felt about her.

For fuck's sake, I told her I loved her enough times. Does that not carry any weight at all?

"We need to find her," Ben broke the silence, saying precisely what we were all thinking. "None of this is right."

"She seems convinced otherwise," Carter rubs a hand over his face, his eyes frowning with frustration. Usually, the dude is stoic as a brick wall, but he was at the edge of falling apart. We all were.

"Then we dissuade her. I'm not letting go of her without a fight," Ben's voice booms deep within the bedroom.

It wasn't long ago when Ben wouldn't have even entertained the thought of committing to a relationship, let alone confining himself to becoming a one-woman man. I chuckled silently regardless of the fucked-up predicament we're in because I have to agree with Ben regarding how we deal with our situation concerning Ava.

Sure, we messed up a little on how we dealt with last Sunday's fiasco, and maybe she's been feeling left out lately,

which for the life of me, I can't figure that last one out. But, if Ava thinks she can just walk away from us without even giving us a chance to redeem ourselves, then she's in for a rough ride.

That letter was fucked up. She wanted this, all three of us, and she will have to deal with it. She can't be more wrong about how we feel about her, and I just want to knock some sense in her. Maybe not literally, but her thinking we just keep her as some kind of sex toy infuriates me. Where does she get off thinking that?

"I spoke to the girls again. They're determined to stay mum on her whereabouts but confirmed she's not with them." Carter said, looking worse for wear, standing firmly at the doorway with his arms folded across his chest.

On top of having to contend with his father's case, he's now struggling with Ava leaving us. I know he's stressed out about blaming himself for this and still sticking with his decision to keep her out of Montana. We are with him on that dilemma because we feel the same way on that issue. Neither Ben nor I blame him for this. There's no way we're letting him take the fall with what happened with Ava.

"She has an uncle. I think she mentioned that he lives in Brooklyn." Ben said.

Carter looked at us and shook his head, "One step ahead of you, bro. His office said he's on some seminar in Washington. I managed to track his cell number through some digging and asked him if he knew where she was. Of course, I didn't want to worry him, so I made up some lame excuse. He said he hadn't seen her in months."

"Yeah, she mentioned they weren't that close. He didn't want her around back when she crashed at his place." I said, thinking of how Ava and I were able to talk so easily and freely with each other. It pained me to think she believed I had no real feelings for her.

"She has a sister in California. She could have gone there." Ben suggested again.

Carter pursed his lips in agitation and stormed off abruptly to his room; we heard the door slam shut. I looked at Ben and wondered what that was about.

He shrugged his shoulders at me, took Ava's note, and shoved it in his back pocket. He can keep it. I never wanted to see the damned thing again.

"Somehow, I don't think she's with her sister." I said, remembering her incident with her sister a short while back, "She spoke to Helena, her sister, some months ago. Ava was afraid to tell her parents about us and thought the best way was to tell her sister first and see her reaction, but that didn't go down too well. I can't see Ava going to her, who would only gloat about how right she was about our relationship. From what I gather, her sister has been somewhat of a toxic sibling to Ava her entire life," I explained.

Ben looked at me, wondering how I knew all this stuff about Ava and why he didn't know enough. Then I realized we all had different specialties in the relationship with her that formed one single bond.

I was the listener, the one she could open her heart and desires with. Our shared creative and artistic talents automatically drew us to appreciate each other spiritually.

Ben was the adviser, the one she could approach with any problem and seek his guidance. His ability to use pathos and logos simultaneously appeals to her naturally sensitive nature.

Carter was her challenger, the one who pushed her to strengthen her inner core and face her demons.

To us, she was our everything, and it troubles me when I think about that letter and how far she was from the truth about just how little she thought we felt about her.

We left her bedroom and went back to the kitchen.

"Most likely, Carter's hacking into something trying to trace her whereabouts." Ben grabbed two bottles of water from the fridge and tossed one to me. He unscrewed the bottle cap and drank a huge gulp.

“This is one time I’m not opposed to him invading her privacy. Wherever she is, we need to go to her.” I said, thinking out loud.

“That, my brother, is the plan.” Ben looked at me and gave me a half-smile.

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The next morning, Ben and I left the apartment; regardless of our predicament with Ava, we had jobs with responsibilities. However, my head wasn’t focused on my work the entire morning. I sat in my office staring at the building plans on my screen, knowing they needed approval, but my mind was completely elsewhere.

“Screw this!” I pushed my hands through my hair and looked out the window across the other skyscrapers around me.

I’ve been fighting with a lot of demons for days. I can feel them inside me, wanting an escape. I pull at the neck of my white shirt; it’s suffocating me. There’s a combination of anxiety, dread, and excitement building up.

It feels hot here in this office. My heart rate is thumping against my chest. These goddamn windows don’t open in this building, and I need air. It’s frustrating, and I just want to break something.

*Smash the fucking window.*

Fuck, I’m a ticking timebomb, about to detonate. I need to release some severe anger build-up. The only place I can think of allowing me to do that is at the boxing club. I look at my watch and stand up. If I don’t do anything soon, I’m going to do something I know I’ll regret later.

My cell suddenly beeps a message notification; I glance at it. It was a message via the chatroom I had with the guys. I quickly picked up the phone and unlocked the screen

**Ben:** *He’s found her.*

My heart pounds wildly, reading his message. Fuck, if this woman has this kind of effect on me, how can I just let her



go as she asked us to? I can't. It's not going to happen. I'll die trying if I have to.

**Oscar:** *Where is she?*

My heart is racing like it's on steroids. Fuck the workout, I need my woman home.

**Carter:** *On Tuesday, she was on Flight AA333 to Athens, with a connecting flight to Heraklion, Crete. Did you know she has dual citizenship?*

I hadn't seen the dude since he stormed out of her bedroom yesterday. I bet he's been working like a madman hacking into databases to find our girl.

**Oscar:** *No, I didn't. So, she's with her parents.*

**Carter:** *As her parents are US citizens, they're registered with the embassy in Athens. I have their address in Crete. They reside just outside Rethymno.*

**Oscar:** *I'm going to get her back.*

**Ben:** *We all are. I've arranged for a private jet to take us this evening; we should be in Crete by tomorrow afternoon.*

I hesitate.

**Oscar:** *Whose private jet?*

I'm dubious about Ben taking his family jet. I know he had a falling out with his parents because he gave up his seat on the board of the family business, and they've written him out of his inheritance. I hope he didn't have to sacrifice anything to get one of the family's private planes.

**Ben:** *My grandmother's. Don't worry, man, I didn't do anything stupid.*

With his grandmother, things are different. She's been on his side since he turned his back on the business to seek his own future.

**Carter:** *I've arranged for a car rental when we get there. It's about an hour's drive from the airport to her parent's house.*

**Oscar:** *So, we're really doing this? We're bringing her back?*

**Ben:** *Yeah, buddy. (wink emoji) We're getting our girl back. (smile emoji)*

I stare at his message, deep in thought. Now my biggest fear was that we get there, and she rejects us. There's a certain kind of candidness in Ava's nature that she can be quite blunt when she makes a decision. The possibility of her sending us back empty-handed was huge, but I didn't bring it up to the other two because I knew they already thought of the worst-case scenario too.

We all know Ava pretty well, and despite her flaws and occasional seriously infuriating stubbornness, we accepted her for who she is. Because when you're in love with someone, you don't just choose bits and pieces of them, you accept every part of them, right down to the unsavory parts, because that's what love does.

Ava is part of me, she's in my soul, the air that fills my lungs, the beat in my heart, the pulse that flows in my veins. This woman completes me; there is no doubt in my mind that I need to get her back.

As a fighter, I've learned that if you're unwilling to fight for what you believe in, don't get in the ring. I knew I wanted Ava from the first time I met her. I fell in love with her soon after, and that final bell has not yet rung for us because, in my mind, I won't allow myself to believe that it has. Suddenly my inner warrior has awakened, and I feel fully charged and ready to face the battle to bring our woman home.

Ava can't leave.

Not me.

Not us.

Not ever.

## Chapter 8

### Ava

The sun is beginning to set, and like every other late afternoon this week, I'm sitting by the water's edge and focusing on my surroundings to clear my mind from the day's thoughts and worries. The scenery is both picturesque and serene. Surreal almost. The sound of the waves crawling gently to the shore, a seagull or two squawking as if they are laughing obliviously in the sky. I watch a lone fisherman with his traditional white and aqua blue kaiki boat in the distance as he tosses rows of nets out in the water.

It's all very meditational as if the scenery is becoming my source of healing.

Another day ends, and the sun slowly dips lower beneath the Aegean Sea. I bring my knees to my chest and dig my toes into the warm grey sand, but the deeper my toes go, the cooler the sand I find.

For now, Crete is my temporary home until I know where I'll go from here. The fun is over back in New York, and the harsh reality of everything became visible to me when Carter told me to leave, and Ben and Oscar did nothing to stop him from throwing me out. Oli and Em said they'll let me know when the movers go to pack up my stuff up at the apartment. Everything I own will be put into storage until I can sort myself out.

I'm back to square one, where I was almost a year ago, with no place to stay and disparagingly single, maybe I have a job to return to, but I hardly doubt it.

I wrap my arms around myself as the hurtful feelings all return, flowing callously into my already wounded heart. The day I stood outside the apartment, shunned by all three of them, telling me to leave, was when my heart broke into a million pieces. Finding my salvation required that I get as far

away as possible from them. I've been trying hard this week to come to terms with my life which suddenly came crashing on me so viciously, and now I feel like I've entered recovery mode.

Learning to live on my own is something I need to accomplish. I have to make my soul happy instead of relying on someone to ignite the fire inside me. Those three men filled my ego, gave me power, and satisfied my desires. But I need to become strong and know my worth because even the sunshine can burn if you get too much.

My parents have been relatively easy-going with my sudden arrival on the island. They picked me up from the airport but didn't ask any questions. When I hugged them at the arrivals gate with tear-filled eyes, they understood that I suffered from emotional trauma and needed somewhere mellow to crash myself into for a while.

Seasons change, people come, and people go, but it's comforting to know that there are those who love me regardless, who will not question my intentions, and will always remain as the comfort zones in my life. Despite my broken heart, I count myself lucky because I have people I will forever love and hold in my heart.

Mom's been tiptoeing around me for a while, asking me odd questions here and there. My parents know something has happened to warrant my sudden flee from New York, but she doesn't want me to get up and leave them, so she avoids asking me directly. They both know if I'm not ready to approach them myself to talk about it, I won't be if they ask either. Their home is so far away from the life I left that it offers me the solace I seek, and I'm appreciative that they haven't yet pushed me for details.

I feel as if my life is like a book; my story is being read and reviewed, and the contents are all good, but the edits are very poorly done, and it's hard to read. It's almost as if the reviewer is saying my life has good elements, but I'm doing everything so very wrong. Well, the reviewer can go suck on a lemon and then take a long hard look in the mirror because they have no idea how to write my book or live my life!

I'm doing my best with what fate has provided me. My life is a constant struggle, one after another, and the insane need to find my equilibrium is a challenge that keeps on relentlessly looping me through, but I'm never able to find the balance.

Once upon a time, I thought I had found a sense of balance, only to discover recently that maybe I never did.

Maybe the answer to my recovery is letting go of what's happened because the past is like an anchor forever holding me down. Maybe I just have to learn to let go of who I was to become who I will be.

I look towards the horizon and watch as the glowing sun, a circle in the sky bursting with burning red and calming yellow, illuminates a quivering path across the water. I stay here until I can only hear the waves carelessly dribbling onto the sand, the birds are gone, the fisherman and his boat are moving away, and there is just enough light to walk back up the steep hill.

I gather my stuff together and take one last look out to the sea before turning my back to it and walking across the sandy dunes, back up towards the main road.

I stand at the end of the street and look up at the steep hill facing me; I need to climb it to get to my final destination for the evening. I'll do it slowly, at the pace I feel most comfortable.

I take a deep breath.

Tomorrow is another day.

## Chapter 9

### Oscar

The warm weather and salty sea air hit us as soon as we departed the plane. It was a small airport, with the runway literally running parallel to the water. We breezed through customs as it was still early in the season for tourists. But that's also the joy of traveling privately; you avoid crowds, security, and all the other shit that public airline travel brings.

Ava's parents lived outside the main town of Rethymno, in a relatively slowly developing area within a five-minute walk from the beach. We found the house pretty easy, thanks to GPS navigation.

The bright white house was a small two-floor detached villa surrounded by an unusual mix of palm, fig, and olive trees. Traditional Greek blue painted shutters that mimicked most of the architecture of the Aegean islands graced the windows. They remained partially closed, which I assumed stayed closed to avoid the hot sun seeping in, thus keeping the rooms cool.

The roof of the garage had been converted into a large terrace, covered in a seriously massive grapevine pergola which I imagined they spent a lot of time there during the more cooler hours of the day.

We parked the SUV rental in front of the house, taking care to avoid the garage doors.

"What if she hasn't told her parents about us?" Carter asked.

Shit, I never thought about that. I was so determined to find Ava that I never thought about what kind of indirect problems our actions might cause her. We might be making matters worse with her, just turning up at her parents' doorstep so out of the blue.

“We’re not going to lie to her parents,” Ben affirmed. “Three dudes arriving from abroad in search of their daughter? Look at us, man. There’s no cover story to us.”

I never thought about that; we’re not exactly your average sized-Joe’s. Ava also mentioned in the past that her father is a traditional man who was shocked when she turned up one summer with several tattoos on her body. Thankfully while a huge chunk of my body is covered in ink, both mine and Ben’s are mostly hidden under our t-shirts and jeans. But Carter has an entire sleeve of angels and demons.

I hope we don’t scare the shit out of them.

Now I’m beginning to think this might actually be a bad idea. None of us have told our families about our foursome relationship, but we’re about to barge in on Ava’s.

“Do you think she’s home?” I look at Carter, knowing he must be thinking the same thing as me.

He shook his head and drew his mouth into a straight line.

“I can hack into a lot of things, man, but I draw the line at hacking into someone’s house.”

“Wait, so you can use a satellite to look into someone’s house?” I asked curiously. I heard about it when I did my stint in the military, but my ranking wasn’t high enough to access such confidential data.

He looked at me with a deadpan face.

“Everything is possible.”

*Shit*, there’s a lot of Carter’s work we really have no clue about.

Ben opened the driver’s door and stepped out. “Come on, let’s do this.”

It was a now-or-never situation. Let’s just hope Ava’s father doesn’t end up skinning us alive. Maybe it was just the intensity of the sun bearing down on us, but I had a deep feeling this wasn’t going to end well, and we were heading towards our funeral.

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Her mother answered the door, and I was almost sure it was her. We were looking at Ava's blonde, blue-eyed doppelganger. While this woman was short and petite with bright blue eyes, there was no missing the shape of her nose, those large almond-shaped eyes, and those high cheekbones.

Ben was right; three big guys like us standing at her doorstep asking for her daughter was probably a little intimidating. Perhaps only one of us should have been at the door and the rest in the car.

"Hi, Mrs. Baros. We're friends of Ava's."

She eyed the three of us suspiciously.

"Ava isn't here. Is she expecting you?"

"No. Probably not. We're why she left New York, and we were hoping she could allow us to talk with her."

"You came all this way for my daughter?" There was a hint of skepticism and interest in her voice and face. The mother's facial expressions reminded me so much of Ava; it was uncanny.

"Yes, mam."

Now, she was curious, but she didn't look like she was even near to allowing us inside her home. She stepped outside and closed the door behind her.

"What exactly is the nature of your relationship with her?" Her voice suddenly became firm and authoritative.

Were we really going to do this?

It's obvious Ava never gave her parents any information about why she left New York. I say we just find a *Plan B*. I cleared my throat, unsure about any of this, but Ben beat me to the answer.

"We're her boyfriends."

*Oh shit*, here we go. Thank god I wore my sunglasses because that eye roll I just gave would have been rude as fuck



if the mother had seen it. If Ava hated us before, she's going to flip out on us big time for this.

A look of disbelief and shock swept the woman's face. It was damn obvious Ava had not told her parents about us.

"All of you?" her voice was suddenly raspy. I think the poor woman almost choked on her voice.

We are royally fucked. There is not going to be any positive outcome following this scenario.

"Yes, mam. We all live together in the same apartment."

Ben, dude, seriously, stop talking. Let's just tell the woman it's all a joke, get back in the SUV and find Ava on her own. This island isn't that big; surely, we'll run into her.

The woman discreetly looked around the neighborhood as if she was looking to see if anyone had just heard this conversation and then opened the door and shuffled us in.

"I think this is better discussed inside," she muttered quietly.

On the flight over, I read an article about how Greece doesn't enforce gun laws on Crete, and almost three out of five men here own a shotgun. It's also common in some rural areas here to still have blood feuds, and that celebratory gunfire is pretty popular. I wonder if her father will either shoot us or skin us alive.

I'm a six-foot-three-man, pretty athletic with well-toned muscle; I fight MMA for fun and have yet to lose a fight. I've lived through gang turf wars and served in the US Marines, but I'm currently shitting my pants with how Ava's father will receive us.

Ava's mom led us inside and up the stairs through the kitchen to the outdoor terrace with the large vine pergola overhead and asked us to take a seat while she searched for her husband.

We all immediately took our shades off. I nervously played with mine between my fingers and waited until she was out of earshot to address the situation with the guys.

“I think there’s a huge chance her father’s going to kill us,” I said, not looking forward to this meeting anymore.

“You think?” Ben said sarcastically, but I could see the fear in his eyes. He had been thinking the same thing. He probably read the same article as I did on the flight over.

Here we are all the way across the world on some island in the Mediterranean, just barging in on Ava’s family life without her permission. If her father doesn’t kill us, she probably will.

“The area is so serenely quiet and remote, it’s perfect for a murder. Or three.” Carter suddenly blurted out. I couldn’t tell if he was taking the piss or feeling the same predicament as us. The asshole is a control freak; I hardly ever know what he’s thinking.

Ben and I looked at him, wide-eyed. Maybe we should throw Carter over to the lions first.

He looked at us dispassionately and shrugged, “I’m only saying the inevitable.”

Fifteen minutes had passed, and we were like sitting ducks waiting here.

“Where do you think Ava is?” I finally ask.

“She probably has cousins or something. It’s obvious she isn’t home.” Ben quipped.

I turned to Carter, “Are you sure she’s even here?”

I mean, what the fuck do we do if she isn’t even here?

He didn’t look at me immediately but sat there thinking.

“Oh, fuck you, man,” I realize Carter had made an estimation. “You don’t even know for sure, right?”

Suddenly Ben turns to him, “Bro?” He looks at him quizzically, waiting for an answer. The lines on his forehead crease with anticipation.

“She’s in Crete. That I’m certain of. Where the fuck else would she go?” Carter’s face is re-evaluating his estimation.

“I dunno...aunts, uncles, cousins. She lived here for a few months. Maybe she made friends?”

Carter turns to me, “She comes all the way to Crete but doesn’t get in touch with her parents. Yeah, man, highly unlikely. She’s here. Stop the fucking panic.”

Ben suddenly relaxes. I’m doing my best to focus on something positive, but it’s been too much of a fucking long week.

Some moments later, the three of us swiftly turn our heads as we hear muffled chatter coming from inside the kitchen. When he comes into our view, it becomes evident that Ava for sure inherited the Greek genes from her father, even though there was a remarkable resemblance to her mother. At least we know where she gets her height and dark wavy hair from.

We all stood up to greet him.

It wasn’t so much of an unfriendly glare he gave us but more like he was trying to deduce what the hell his daughter had been up to in New York.

“Loukas,” Her mother stood beside him, “these are Ava’s friends from New York.” Her bright blue eyes dart between us, observing us carefully. “Sorry I didn’t catch your names.”

I noticed how she used the word *friends* instead of *boyfriends* and wondered if she had told him yet. But judging by his noticeable scowl, I’m pretty sure he knows our role in his daughter’s affairs.

We each introduced ourselves to them.

“Friends or boyfriends?” her father suddenly blurts out as we all sit down. We suddenly see more than just a physical resemblance Ava shares with her father. He was blunt, direct, and wouldn’t beat about the bush.

I opened my mouth to offer a more reasonable explanation, but Ben suddenly beat me to the answer.

“Boyfriends, sir, as in dating,” Ben replied.

If Ben wants to take over this discussion, be my guest. It's his funeral. Throw Ben to the lions first, then.

"Grace said you all live together? With my daughter?" He carefully studied each of us.

"Yes. It's my condo."

Ava's father's brows drew together as he frowned angrily.

"How the fuck did this happen? Ava never mentioned any of this! You expect me to believe all of you? The three of you are the boyfriends of my daughter? Is she part of some cult?" Then he muttered something in Greek and threw his hands up into the air. I looked over towards Ava's mother, and I wasn't sure if she caught the Greek part because she seemed a touch more relaxed than him.

Fuck, fuck, and more fuck. The man is pissed; he's not even going to hide behind common courtesy. I looked at the guys and wondered if we should just get up and make a runner. This was terrible planning to the core. How the heck are we going to get Ava back when we've just opened an enormous wormhole with her family by just turning up here.

Suddenly Ava's mom reaches out to him and touches his forearm, "Loukas."

It's all she needs to say, and he brings his anger down a notch. It's incredible how she can just calm him with a simple touch. It suddenly reminds me of what I have with Ava.

*Had with Ava.*

Suddenly all goes quiet on this fairly large terrace. The father cocks his head to the side and rubs his dark stubble, his eyebrows raised in the millions of questions flying through his mind. Not even for a minute does he take his eyes off either of us, and I have no idea how he's doing it since there are three of us.

"How long has this been going on? Do you date other people? And what kind of arrangement do you have? Are there more people in this group?" It was fair for him to inquire; he was concerned.

“We’ve been dating Ava for several months. The relationship is just with her,” Ben said, and I could tell he was using caution with his choice of words. “It’s clear Ava never discussed anything about us with you, and we don’t want to cause her any problems. It’s just that Ava left so suddenly, and we want to bring her home. This isn’t a cult, sir. I understand now how it must seem to you but that never crossed our minds to what it could be perceived as by others.”

Ben was right, the entire time, I was more focused on what people might have thought of Ava dating three men, but I never thought about what it could look like overall. We never entertained the possibility that people might think this wasn’t a closed relationship.

This time her mother spoke, but her tone was obviously several notches calmer than her husband.

“Ava is her own person. If she wants to go back with you, that would be her decision.”

I can only imagine how they will not encourage her to return to such a relationship.

“True, but we would like the opportunity to first talk to her before she makes a final decision.”

“Ava never mentioned any of you nor that she had a boyfriend, let alone three.” You couldn’t miss the concern in her mother’s voice, and I wondered how close they were. Ava rarely spoke much about her parents; we had nothing to base our expectations on. At least with Helena, I knew we’d be dealing with a manipulative toxic sibling.

“I think you can understand why. We don’t exactly have the most conventional relationship. We haven’t told our families either yet.”

Her father coughed loudly; I think he may have choked on his own saliva from shock and dismay.

“So you decided to come here instead and tell us?” You couldn’t miss the irony in his voice.

I think the three of us opened our mouths simultaneously, but words failed us. The man wasn’t wrong there. It seems the

three of us keep fucking this up, first with how we handled the Montana affair with Ava and now how we're trying to get her back.

Her mother glanced at her husband and then surveyed us for a few minutes. I think she's read our expressions, and the realization that we haven't exactly thought this through has finally just hit all three of us.

"What do you boys do in New York?" her mother asked, trying to break the uncomfortable silence and probably the icy daggers forming from her husband's side. His eyes were locked on us, probably scrutinizing each one of us.

His youngest daughter was fucking three men, and possibly all at once; I'd probably kill me if I were him.

"Oscar is an architect, Carter is in computer securities, and I'm in financial trading."

Her father gave a half-smile, "An architect, a security specialist, and a money launderer. Sounds like the perfect organized crime unit."

Shit, the man was pretty much right. I wonder how we never realized this. I hear Ben chuckle; I think he was thinking the same as me. I looked over at Carter; the dude sat with his usual solid fixture. I seriously don't know how he does that; he's not human.

Ava's mom suddenly stood up.

"I'll get us some coffee."

She looked at her husband, "Loukas? Do you want your usual?" when he gazed up at her, you couldn't miss his change of expression. The soft smile and the twinkle in his eye gave him away. That is a man with a lot of passion, especially for his wife, and it made me smile.

He gave her a slight nod.

She then turned to us, "Have you boys ever tried Greek coffee? It's like espresso but thicker."

It seemed her mother resigned herself to the idea of Ava's strange love life. But I don't think her father was that easily

swayed.

“I have,” Carter said. “semi-sweet is fine. Probably the same for Ben and Oscar. Thanks.”

Ben and I glanced at him as if we had just met the guy for the first time. What the hell was Greek coffee, and why the fuck would we drink it sweet?

“Ok then, four semi-sweet coffees.” she went inside, leaving us with Ava’s father. I don’t think we’ll be calling him on a first-name basis anytime soon since we haven’t actually been formally introduced.

“So the three of you are Ava’s boyfriends,” he doesn’t wait for a reply; instead, he chuckles to himself and then mutters something in Greek, shaking his head. He then looks upwards and crosses himself, Greek Orthodox style, and mutters, “Kyrie Eleison,” which is pretty universal, meaning *lord have mercy*.

I wasn’t sure who he was praying for God to have mercy on.

Us? Or, Him?

My thoughts go wild with the idea that he might be on the verge of killing us and then, for his defense, plead insanity.

After a short silence, he looks at us with mixed feelings. It felt like we were sitting in a judgment box being analyzed and scrutinized. It was uncomfortable but understandable from his perspective.

From our viewpoint, we were just three men, completely in love with his daughter and wanted nothing but to put her needs and wants before ours. From his view, we were three big muthas fucking his youngest daughter and the cause of her fleeing New York. I had no idea what kind of emotional state Ava was currently in but judging by the context of the letter she left us, I would say highly sensitive and possibly volatile.

We look like some kind of sex or love cult. He asked if there were more of us in this love circle. Fucking hell, her fleeing all the way to Greece justifies this too. I need to

somehow convince her parents that as much as this is what it looks like, it couldn't be further from the truth.

"I can't tell my daughters what to do," he started to say, and I was surprised that he sounded pretty calm after what we had witnessed earlier. "They are their own individual selves. But I need to know this for my own sanity. Are you faithful to my daughter?"

I'm pretty sure he was referring to all three of us. This was something I knew I could handle.

"Sir," I said, glancing at Ben and Carter, "I speak on behalf of the three of us. Ava is the only woman in our life. We love and respect her. The last thing we ever wanted to do was hurt her, which is why we've come here. We want to make amendments and hope she will consider what we have to say."

Her father was keeping his assertiveness intact. There were just so many similar characteristics between him and Ava it was surreal.

He rubbed his mouth and chin with his fingers thoughtfully. He eyed each one of us, studying us with a predator's unwavering attention. It probably hasn't sunk in yet that his daughter was in a poly relationship.

"Well, it's not me you have to convince; it's Ava. As her father, I can't say I'm proud of this situation, but Ava is Ava, and she has always done her own thing."

Now it was our time to chuckle. He looked at us with interest, wondering what we found amusing.

"That's very true," I admitted. "Ava is a very strong-willed, independent person."

Her father looked at us and smiled briefly. My eyes locked with his in this shared understanding. Have I managed a breakthrough with him? The truth was that I loved Ava so much, and I wanted myself, Ben, and Carter to be accepted by her family. I know she has immense respect for her parents, and it would devastate her if she had to be alienated from them because of her life choices.



Then the painful thought struck me, she had already broke-up with us.

“So, tell me. You all love my daughter, but where do you think this relationship will go? Hmm? It’s not like you can all marry her. Have you thought about that? Or is this more of a spur-of-the-moment relationship?”

“Oh, Loukas!” Ava’s mom’s voice trailed onto the terrace, holding a full tray. Ben and I stood up, but Carter was closest to her, got up to help her with it. “Not everyone gets married anymore. Look at Helena; she’s living with Anderson now for years and said they have no intention to marry! Nowadays, marriage is just a piece of paper to Ava’s generation.”

“Grace, Helena is a different case altogether, which we will not open the topic right now. Ava is different from Helena, and you know that.”

“Really?” she looked at him with interest. “How so?” A smile quivered slightly over her face as if she was almost trying to hide her amusement that she enjoyed challenging him.

“I don’t know.” He looked as if he racked his brain for something. “She’s more sensitive, attuned to nature.”

“And what does that have to do with her choice of marriage versus no marriage?” Ava’s mom exclaimed.

The three of us went back and forth watching the banter between her parents, and it was apparent where Ava got her high-strung assertive nature from. Her parents were very opinionated and not afraid to express themselves, even in front of us.

But going back to the matter at hand, perhaps by arriving here, we have just opened up an enormous can of worms between Ava and her parents.

“Ava is going to put our heads on sticks!” Ben quietly muttered to me.

Probably so. And probably dance around the sticks too. I’ve seen how her temper can suddenly flare. She definitely

inherited the fierce Irish and the passionate Greek genes from either parent. Put these two qualities together, and it can become dangerously intoxicating.

The Lord of the Flies with a pig's head on a stick along the beach suddenly flew into my mind. This remote island on the eastern med seems like the perfect place to do it too.

Yup, we're fucked.

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It wasn't more than thirty minutes later when we heard the front door below us open and close. Suddenly all conversation between us stopped realizing that it had to be Ava. My heart raced as I listened to the footsteps coming up the stairs, keys being thrown onto a table. The sound of the flip-flops lifting up and off approaching us. And then nothing. Just the sound of bare feet on the stone floor.

There was complete silence between us all as we waited with anticipation. We never really planned this properly. It was more of a get on a plane and fetch our woman back. That was the bulk of our strategy. I had no idea anymore how this was going to go down. But we were here now, and we were on a mission.

A second or two later, our Greek goddess appeared before us.

Wow. Ava looked good. Her skin was bronzed and golden, her long hair all wavy and naturally lightened by the sea and sun, and her green eye color seemed even brighter than before. She wore a cropped vest where her exposed midriff showed off her tanned and smooth skin, her long dark legs enhanced by the short white denim skirt. She was completely barefoot. There was something so naturally compelling about her, standing under this vine pergola as if Zeus had just produced his offspring, and she's walked through the door to find us here.

The three of us stood up, gawking at her, not sure what to say that would be right or wrong in her eyes. For the first time in our existence, we couldn't muster any appropriate words for

her. We just stared at her in complete awe, like complete wordless mutes.

“What are you doing here?” she asks us, not looking even slightly pleased.

Shit.

We’ve just gate-crashed on her life.

## Chapter 10

### Ava

“Ava, honey, we’re hoping you’d give us the chance to hear us out.” Ben finally said.

Carter, Oscar, and Ben; the three banes of my existence. I never wanted to see them again, yet they stood on my parents’ terrace in Greece, just staring at me. This was certainly a surreal moment.

There was an obvious uncertainty with them about how to approach me, and our emotional and physical distance felt bizarre. To go from never being able to keep our hands off each other to this strange reservation of not knowing how to address each other anymore felt like touching a huge void. It was a strange feeling, like when you’re swimming and want to put your feet down on something solid, but the water’s deeper than you think, and nothing is there.

Confusion, sadness, and irritation engulfed me.

When I left the beach earlier, this was a scenario I hardly expected to be confronted with when I got home. My mom and Aunt Jenny wanted me to join them in town for a coffee before dinner. But when I walked to the top of the hill and saw the shiny black luxury SUV rental parked outside the house, I suspected something was up.

*Of course, Carter.*

I forgot that he has mean hacking skills that would make elite CIA security systems look like child’s play. If these men wanted to find me, he could.

Regardless that I deliberately checked into my flight using my Greek passport, it remains clear that Carter’s talents extend to international waters. I dreaded seeing them again, yet here they were, sitting on my parents’ terrace. Not even in

my wildest dreams did I ever think they would trek all the way to Greece.

All these unexpected emotions running through my head and heart. I couldn't even decipher what I felt because, right then, my emotional psyche was in chaos.

I stood there observing them, speechless, unsure what to say at this point. I wasn't shocked, just surprised.

And they looked good. I can't help what my eyes adore seeing.

Cursing silently, I remind myself that this is what got me into trouble in the first place. These boys were my poison apple. I took a bite and doomed myself to eternal misery.

One thing was for sure, my heart was pounding crazily in my chest with so much excitement and anxiety. But I had to stay assertive and strong. These men were smart and dangerous; one whiff of my weakness, and I knew they would use the opportunity to take advantage of my feelings. I can't let them in, not after how they treated me. I need to remind myself of what they did to cause all this.

*Holy moly!* I looked down and noticed they were in the middle of having coffee and cake with my parents!

*What the fuck?*

A sudden, horrifying thought overwhelmed me. How much do my parents know about them? About us?

"It wasn't necessary for you to come all the way out here," I snapped. "Weren't you all in Montana anyway?" That last bit still stung. No matter how many days passed, what they did to me went beyond hurt.

"Yeah, Montana is for another discussion," Ben brushed it away as if it was unimportant. He doesn't seem to understand that it's the reason why I fled here.

"Ava, of course, it was necessary to fly out here," he continued. "You refused to answer our calls. We returned home and found your note, your phone on your desk, and no way to communicate with you. Do you think it was fair to just

get up and leave us cold like that? Like we meant nothing to you?”

My eyes narrowed hard at Ben; how dare they try and be martyrs in my agony.

*You are Queen of Fucking Everything.*

Emma’s voice rang in my ears, reminding me I had to assert myself over my weaknesses and face them at their own battle level.

“You all wanted me to leave. Carter said it, and none of you stopped it.” I barked angrily, the pain it caused was still very obviously there. “Don’t forget that titbit, Ben.”

“Just the room, not our lives!” Ben exclaimed.

“You let me leave, just like that. It’s the same damn thing,” I muttered, crossing my arms over my chest.

“It’s not, Ava, and you know that,” Oscar suddenly threw in. His voice relaxed, “You never even gave us a chance. You just took off and left.” I could hear the hurt in his voice. Something about that suddenly softened me. He always had that effect on me. Maybe even on each other.

I realized the four of us were still standing. I took a chair next to my mother, too embarrassed to sit next to my father. I probably won’t hear the end of this new discovery about me from him. That’s if Dad ever talked to me again, and I could feel my cheeks turning crimson at the thought of my father knowing the truth.

Couldn’t these guys have just written me a letter or something?

“How long are you here for?” I asked and then wondered where they planned to stay.

“We brought the jet with us. So it’s here until we can convince you to come home.”

I knew Ben came from wealth, so it didn’t surprise me his family had a plane that he could probably use at his own whim.

My eyes widened at the realization of what he had just said. As if I don't have a say in the matter about returning.

*Own it, girl. You can do it.*

I sat up straight, faced all three of them, crossed one leg over the other, and lay both hands over the armrests of my chair.

“What makes you think I want to go home with you?” I stared at them, wide-eyed.

“I don't, but I'm hoping I'll succeed. That we'll succeed.” He said confidently, and I just huffed at him.

“Docinho<sup>[1]</sup>, Just give us a chance.” I avoided Oscar's attempt at eye contact. He was good at making me melt at the seams. He knows my inner weaknesses and how to play them to his advantage. Out of the three, he was the most dangerous to me.

I finally turned my head to my parents. I couldn't believe this was happening right in front of them. My father looked at me grimly. I suddenly became red-faced. He expected various crazy-assed things from me, but I'm pretty sure this was something he never imagined having to deal with. The wearied look on his face told me that I think I had just reached his tipping point with me.

I'm not sure what was going on with my mom. She looked more worried than upset. Perhaps she was confused or trying her best to keep my father calm. Whatever the case, I was utterly unprepared for this.

“Mom, Dad, can you give us some privacy, or shall we leave instead?”

“Of course, darling.”

Mom grabbed Dad and said to take all the time we needed. Perhaps she was eager to get out of that situation and talk it over with him to try and find some sense of what I've been up to.

When my father got up, the look he gave me sent shivers up my spine. He muttered in Greek, “I never thought in my

wildest dreams, sending you back this is what you'd become."

"Loukas!" my mom scolded him, "Stop!" My mom didn't speak Greek but understood a reasonable amount.

"No! She needs to hear this!" my dad insisted in English. Then turned back to me and carried on in Greek, "How much more can my heart take until you become the death of me."

If there was one male in this entire world that had the ability to throw me off my throne, that would be my father. I grimaced and hung my head in shame. He'd never spoken like this to me in my life. It was clear that I was a complete disappointment to him.

"Loukas!" My mom angrily yanked him back inside the house,

My eyes welled up, and it didn't take long until tears ran down my cheeks. My parents, especially my father, were not entirely understanding this situation right now. I mean, where do I start with them? This is worse than the thoughtless topless sunbathing phase I went through when I was fourteen, and my father had to put up with it. I've been doing things my entire life without a care about how it affected them. He put up with so much from me. But I guess this topped the bucket list of things I can do that will eventually destroy him.

The guys suddenly surrounded me. They didn't have a clue what my father said, but they realized it was something that obviously upset me. Oscar and Carter knelt in front of me, and Ben bent forward and embraced me.

"My parents. They don't understand any of this." I let out a snuffle.

"Hey, babygirl, we're here for you."

Almost. These men almost had me. Until it dawned on me that they were the cause of all this. I wiped the tears away from my eyes and stood up abruptly, almost throwing all three backward. I stood behind the oversized patio chairs to put not just distance between us but also a border.

Somehow between my red, puffy eyes, and sniffles, I managed to contain myself. My teeth sunk into my bottom lip



with anger as I flicked my gaze over to them.

“Had you not come here, I wouldn’t be in this predicament. How dare you come and disrupt my life and my parents like this. With no warning, completely unprepared!” I glowered at them.

Oscar and Carter stood up, observing my sudden change of mood. The three of them now stood together facing me

“You gave us no choice, sunshine. We weren’t going to just let you go so easily.”

Well, at least Oscar wasn’t going to sugarcoat things. I glared at all three of them. I must be a pretty expensive sex toy for them to come all this way.

“You did let me go. You shut me out. I had no choice but to leave.”

Ben shook his head, “We understand you’re upset about leaving you out of the Montana plans, but there’s a lot more to Carter’s story we kept from you. You didn’t need to know the gruesome details about the psychopath and what that bastard did to his mother. If he even got a glimpse of you, he would have hunted you down like he did with his mother. No one in Carter’s life was safe while he was alive.”

My ears perked up as I realized he spoke about him in the past tense, “Was alive?”

“Yeah, some stuff happened when we were out there,” Oscar said quietly. I caught on fast by his solemn tone that something more had happened.

I looked at Carter. This was his story to tell, considering he was the instigator of this entire mess. He breathed in heavily and dragged his hand nervously through his hair. I have rarely ever seen *stoic* Carter show any kind of disruption in his ironclad persona. Yet, here, he looks uncomfortable, not because of us, but because of whatever it was that happened in Montana.

“The three of us initially went there to find him upon his release from prison,” he started. “We were only there to give him the warning to stay away. Initially, I planned to go alone,

but with Oscar and Ben, it would have created more of an impact to try and maybe scare him a little. We stood there waiting by the gates for him to be released. Except he was gunned down and killed before we even had the chance to approach him.”

Carter’s voice was shallow, and I could tell there was more that he didn’t disclose yet, and my mind went to all sorts of crazy scenarios.

“Omigod.” I exclaimed in shock, “But you guys didn’t like...you know....” I wouldn’t dare say it. But would they?

“No, not us,” Carter’s entire demeanor was full of melancholy. “My father did it.” He took a seat and sat down. I could see how much this really affected him.

“Oh no!” I gasped; my heart skipped a beat. Carter didn’t often show his inner feelings, but I could tell how much this affected him. “Is your dad okay?”

“I think so. Some weeks ago, before his release, my dad got a phone call from Rick threatening him, me, and anyone connected to us. My dad reported it to the police and tried to get his parole revoked, but it didn’t happen. My father killed him because he wanted peace, and to end the insanity, he and my mother had to endure Rick’s psychotic obsessions for years. Regarding my dad’s current status, I posted bail for him, and he’s now back at the ranch. We’re waiting for the trial date notification. He’s going to be tried for voluntary manslaughter and could face up to fifteen years.” I could hear Carter’s voice break towards the end, and it was clear how much this was tearing at him.

“But he was protecting his family!” I couldn’t believe that the authorities treated his father like a criminal when the criminal was the man they let out of prison.

“Yeah, I know. Considering the nature surrounding the case, the lawyer thinks he could get it reduced with an early release. But he still killed someone, so the law has to apply.” Carter looked down at his feet; I’ve never seen him like this before. He was hurting, reliving a past that had haunted him for almost a decade.

I walked over to him, he automatically stood up to me, and I wrapped my arms around him and rested my head on his chest. No matter how angry I was at them, I couldn't switch off the love I had, and it was clear he was heartbroken.

"I'm so sorry, Carter. This must be really tough for you."

"Even worse to come home and find that you've left us. A part of me left with you, angel." He said quietly. Carter was not the kind of guy to open up his feelings like this. This took a lot for him to admit this.

Swallowing hard, I stepped back from him and looked at the other two.

"The three of you hurt me. I don't know if we can ever return to how we were before."

"Ava," Oscar stood forward and gazed at me. I knew whatever he had to say was serious. Other than Carter, he and Ben rarely called me by my name and usually used their pet names to address me.

"You are the most important person in our lives. You are completely mistaken if you think you don't belong as our equal. You are much more than a friend or a girlfriend to us."

"Honey, you're the center of our world. Do you think we'd trek all this way if we didn't think otherwise?" Ben added

I stepped back, taking a seat on the edge of the terrace wall, furthest away from them, and looked down to the street in thought.

My parents were in the middle of the street talking with Aunt Jenny. She lived across the road from my parents, and the busy-bee that she is, I can only imagine, came out to find out who the visitors with the rental car plates and fancy SUV were. That's island life for you, everyone getting in everyone's business. Aunt Jenny had been badgering my parents to find out why I suddenly arrived in Greece. Except they were reluctant to push me about it.

My parents were generous with regards to trusting me. I think now, in my father's eyes, I pretty much blew it. This was

the tipping point for all the crazy things I've done in my life that he's had to bear witness to.

*"Somebody broke her heart Loukas,"* I overheard my aunt say to my father the other evening. My bedroom window is closest to the terrace, and they must have thought I had gone to bed.

*"It's not for us to ask her. She will tell us if and when she wants,"* my dad replied.

I saw my aunt look up at me from the street and wave. I didn't wave back because I knew she would use it as an excuse to worm her way upstairs and find out for herself who my visitors were. She was the kind of woman who got into everyone's business. Not because she was a gossip, but because she actually genuinely cared.

We all heard the garage door beneath us open, and I looked down again and watched my parents reverse their car out and drive off.

"Ava?"

I turned my attention back to them. "I need time to think. I heard what you said. I know to some degree you mean what you say. I just don't think this kind of relationship is right for me anymore."

I could see them silently thinking, trying to comprehend what I said. I don't think they expected my answer to be so adversely vague. I didn't even expect myself to say out loud what I've been feeling these past few days. But I think it was highly influenced by what my father just told me earlier.

"So you're saying we were a mistake?" Carter clipped.

When I look up at him, I find him staring straight at me with a blank face, but I know him well enough that, judging by his voice, he's not pleased in the slightest.

"No, I'm not saying that. It's just not the kind of relationship I should be in."

"If I remember correctly, this is what you wanted. You brought us each into this relationship. Do you think it's ok to

string us along, convince us to be in this relationship with you and then dump us when you feel it's an inconvenience?" Oscar looked at me, he wasn't angry, but I could see the ache in his eyes.

"No." I simply said, not sure how to elaborate because I wasn't so sure about what I was saying. These were just thoughts I had, and now that I said them out loud, it didn't sound like it was what I wanted either. My heart and mind were in so much conflict with each other that it was too overwhelming to try and attempt to explain something I couldn't understand.

"Ava, we deserve a better explanation. Oscar is right. You brought us together into this, and now you want to throw us aside like we are nothing. Hardly cool at all, and to be honest, I don't believe for a minute that you are the kind of person to do this." Ben was being sincere. He usually was, and this was one of the things I loved about him.

My heart raced. I was angry at myself because my throat choked up with so much emotion combined with my anger at them for coming here and confusing my parents. I want to mourn the end of my relationship in peace, not drag it out. That's why I left New York so suddenly, so I wouldn't have to do this.

I felt like my feelings were all over the place.

I loved them.

I hated them.

I didn't want them here.

I was impressed with them being here.

I was saddened by my dad and hurt by my boyfriends.

I was a basket case about to implode.

"No goddamn it!" I cried out, "It's because I'm so fucking in love with each of you that it scares me to death! The three of you seriously hurt me! Okay?"

My eyes were clouding up, and I prayed I wouldn't cry.

“My heart literally broke when you told me to leave that day. And I don’t want to ever go through those feelings again. To be made to feel like that, by not just one man I love, but by all three! Triple heartache. It almost completely destroyed me.” I blurted out.

Well, that shut them down fast. No one dared talk.

A warm breeze ran through the pergola, bringing with it the scent of the sea air. The wooden wind chimes that hung above me rang their harmonic sounds as we stood still, no one having the nerve to utter any more words.

I was suffocating and couldn’t do this anymore. Their being here was so unexpected. I left the terrace and went inside. By the time I reached the landing, I was hyperventilating and crying simultaneously. I gripped onto the top of the staircase to avoid collapsing. I hadn’t heard the men follow me inside, and suddenly I was being embraced by several arms. I had no idea who was who. But I grabbed the first chest available and sobbed into it.

## Chapter 11

### Ava

My parents arrived home a couple of hours later, except my father didn't come upstairs. I think he was avoiding me. I probably disgusted him.

My mom asked the boys to help her bring the grocery shopping upstairs. Of course, they didn't hesitate to grab everything from the car, including whatever bags she was holding in her hands.

"Ava, your father is at the farm; he's gone to collect a watermelon for us to have after dinner. Why don't you go find him?"

After what he said earlier, I'm not sure I can face him. I wasn't angry at him, it's just I always looked up to my dad as a significant male figure in my life, and after the things he said, I felt ashamed knowing I was his biggest disappointment.

"I don't think he needs help to bring a watermelon from down the road."

My mom sighed, "I think you both need some alone time together."

"I think there's been enough talk between us," I said firmly. Maybe I just was too chicken to face him.

My mom's face softened, placing her hand on my back and gently caressing me, "You know he didn't mean those things he said. Your father loves you, darling. He was just emotional; you know how passionate he gets." Mom was always the diplomatic one, making everyone see reason.

I looked at her, unsure. What my dad said to me earlier drove a knife into my heart. But seeing the hope on my mom's face, I found it impossible to say no.

"Fine." I caved, and I could see her eyes brighten up. "Are you ok with me leaving you with them?" I asked a little

hesitantly.

“Why wouldn’t I be? I’ll put them to work, peeling the potatoes. I’ll need help bringing the extra chairs from the attic and some other things I need from up there. I’m sure I’ll find something to keep them busy.”

My mom seemed resigned to them, although now was not the time to ask her what she thought of the situation; I needed to have this chat with her but in a better setting when the boys weren’t around.

I took the dirt road towards the farm from the shortcut behind the house. It was more of an off-track path with no homes, just open fields. I saw my dad from a distance carrying a wheelbarrow coming in my direction. When I reached him, I noticed two humongous watermelons in it.

“Dad, what are you doing?” I asked. It seemed a little comical watching him wheelbarrow them down the road.

“I only planned to try and see if there was one for us to have after dinner, but there were two fully ripe ones. If I leave the other one until morning, it would be pecked at by the birds.”

We walked silently for a few minutes until I decided to tell him what was on my mind.

“Dad, I’m sorry if I’m a disappointment to you.”

He stopped walking, rested the wheelbarrow, and looked at me straight.

“Ava, you are not a disappointment. I apologize for earlier, my emotions got the better of me, as your mother always says.”

Mom knew Dad so well. He was sometimes difficult, but she knew exactly how to handle him in such a way that he could clearly see her view of things. It’s like they were cut from the same cloth.

“I’m sorry for bringing my problems to you here. You shouldn’t have to witness whatever troubles I’ve gone and put myself into. I’m an adult now, not some child where I run



away with the first complex issue instead of dealing with them face-on.”

“Is that what those men are?” He tilted his head slightly and looked at me curiously, almost like he was trying to read into my thoughts. “Problems and troubles?” He didn’t wait for a reply and picked up the wheelbarrow and continued down the road.

“No, they’re not.” I followed him. “I meant the circumstances surrounding us are problems and troubles,” I say thoughtfully, looking toward the ground.

Dad stopped again, putting the wheelbarrow down once more.

“How did this happen, Ava? I’m trying to understand this.”

He was worried about me; you didn’t need to be Einstein to figure it out. I breathed out heavily and looked out towards the fields.

“I fell in love with three men, all at the same time.” I finally looked at him and bit the bullet, “It was I who encouraged them to become one unit.”

He gazed at me, a little confused. Even though he struggled to comprehend my relationship, I could tell he was trying his best.

“So you are saying they didn’t try bringing you into this relationship?”

I chuckled, “God, no! Carter struggled with it initially. But I couldn’t make a choice without it breaking my heart and two others. I brought them all into this and convinced them it could work.”

“But now it doesn’t?” He asked, his face looking pretty deadpan. I’m not sure I’ve ever had this kind of one-on-one with him about my love life. Sure, with mom, like a zillion times, but Dad’s always been the guy I just look up to and admire. He’s never been the *chit-chatting about boyfriends* type.

“Perhaps. I’m sorry, dad, but I prefer not to bring you into my problems. But you should know that all three men are good guys. I love them very much. They’ve always remained faithful and respectful towards me. We just have some problems which I need the space and time to mull over in my head. Them being here, well, it’s a surprise, but it’s not helping me make a decision.”

“But if this was your idea. This relationship that you instigated. Do you think it’s right to just shut the door on these men and run away instead of facing them with the problems that bother you about this relationship?”

“That’s the entire problem; I can’t do that. Talking with them won’t work.”

My dad looked at me questioningly, “May I ask why?”

“Because I still love them, and I know they’ll sway me too easily.”

“I see,” my dad said thoughtfully. He picked up the wheelbarrow and started walking again.

We didn’t talk for the remainder of the walk home.

I could see where my dad was coming from. I was running away instead of actually dealing with it, and while the boys wanted to talk, I just pushed them away.

It was me. I was part of the problem.

But as much as I loved them, we didn’t see eye-to-eye on equality, communication, and commitment. I couldn’t face another Montana situation with them again.

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That evening, my parents cooked up a feast. My dad lit up the charcoal grill for the souvlaki<sup>[2]</sup>, and my mom said they bought almost a whole pig at the butchers that afternoon.

Well, at least the boys didn’t leave anything for scraps; they generally eat a lot. Aunt Jenny popped by afterward with a large bowl of freshly made cherry trifle which the guys consumed in no time, along with one of the watermelons.

One thing about Greeks is that they love their food and people who show a likewise appreciation. A meal isn't just about eating food; it's the care and love that goes into it and then the gathering of people to share that meal and enjoy the company of each other. My mom isn't Greek, but she's a professionally trained chef and has managed to integrate well within the local culture through her love of food.

The other thing about my paternal culture is that if you arrive unannounced on the Greek side of my family, then be prepared that the Baros women will want to know everything about you. But leave it up to my aunt to inquisitively grill the boys about everything from their tattoos down to their elementary school. They took it like champs, patiently answering every question she threw at them.

I couldn't help noticing that my aunt took a kindred liking to all three of them. What's not to like? They're good-looking, mildly mannered, and have the lean bodies of Chippendales. You couldn't miss the attentiveness they showered my mom to help her out with everything in the kitchen. This kind of respectful behavior and character trait never gets overlooked by my family.

The guys even chatted with my dad, who tends to be sometimes reserved with strangers. He liked to talk a lot about the art of kebab making, and I don't know how much one can make an entire discussion about cubed meat on skewers, but he seems to manage it and hold their interest.

"You gathered yourself some serious lookers, Ava," my aunt leaned into me as we sat on the swinging bench. "And such lovely, well-mannered boys. All three are good marriage material." She casually flashed me a sly smile without even bothering to lower her voice.

With my dark tan and the reddening of my cheeks, I probably looked like a goddamn beetroot. Of course, my aunt has to throw her usual two cents and embarrass me. Oscar caught on and winked at her; she grinned back as if they had some kind of secret code.

*Oh god, let the earth come and swallow me whole.*

Although it was nice to see the boys getting on with my parents and aunt throughout the evening, I had no idea what my family thought of my poly relationship. My parents were utterly deadpan with their opinion. Although my dad angrily expressed himself earlier on in the day, I had to wonder if, by some miracle, he had changed his mind. Our talk earlier by his farm was interesting, but I still can't get a reading on him.

My aunt obviously warmed to them, but she tends to like everyone. I don't think I've ever seen her talk nasty about anyone. But embarrassingly enough, I did catch her a couple of times with her hand reaching out and squeezing one of their biceps. Talk about sexual harassment and creepy older lady vibes! I had to reprimand her several times, but the guys would smile or chuckle with amusement as if my aunt was just being silly.

Even though the guys made a massive effort with my family, I did tell them earlier that I had a lot to think about and needed the space to do so. I still had not decided what to do, and I don't think I could make that decision any time soon. Perhaps they would have to return to New York empty-handed.

I loved all three to the moon and back, but irrespective of how I felt about them, I'm not sure if they understood the commitment they were getting into. They still insist that what they did about Montana was for my own safety. Even if Rick threatened his father, Carter still didn't find out about this until after they got to the prison. So what they did and how they acted towards me in New York had nothing to do with Rick but more to do with positioning their dominance over me.

At the same time, my heart went out to Carter. I can only imagine what is going on in his head, knowing that his father is facing fifteen-year incarceration, and here he is, running across the world to bring me home.

The attempt to dissect and understand all of this made my head hurt.

Things here in Crete suddenly got a lot more serious and today was too overwhelming for my nerves. I needed a break,

and these guys weren't going to give me the time-out I needed. Having them here was certainly surreal, and I'm not blind to the fact that they wouldn't give up or go home without trying their utmost best.

"I'm going to bed." I suddenly announced, and everyone turned to me.

"Alone," I said flatly, clarifying that no one would be welcomed in my bed.

I addressed the boys, "My mom can put you up in the spare room."

"It's fine, honey." My mom said. "Aunt Jenny offered us the extra folding bed, in case you preferred that."

*Oh dear god*, as if things couldn't get more cringe-worthy. Now my aunt and mom are discussing my sex life behind my back. I mean, they had to assume I probably slept with all three of them and decided I was still angry to let them back in my bed.

I closed my eyes briefly and wanted to curl up and die. I quickly stood up and walked inside. The boys got up as well and followed me.

I stopped once we were inside and turned to them.

"Look, I'm sorry, I just need some alone time." I shook my head, "I'm still just trying to process you're all here and having dinner with my family. This is a lot to take in."

Ben wrapped his arms around me and kissed my head, "It's fine babygirl."

Then Oscar, followed by Carter, gave me a hug and wished me good night.

A sudden longing feeling that started as a brief tug at my heart and then swept over me in a colossal way overtook all my emotions. I missed them, I missed their hugs, their kisses, their smiles, and just about everything I gave up a few days ago.

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I didn't sleep a wink that evening. After tossing and turning for the hundredth time, I grabbed my phone from the nightstand to check the time; it was 2 am. I got up, pushed open the blue-colored wooden shutters, and leaned out the window to stare into the serene darkness.

The cool, light sea breeze that hit me almost immediately felt refreshing on my skin. Everything was so still and silent, and I looked up at the midnight sky. I loved the sky here in the Aegean, it was always clear, and the stars forever sparkling bright.

If I concentrated hard enough, I could hear the waves crashing on the shore in the near distance. This was a sound unique only to late at night. You could never hear the sea during the day from here.

Somewhere in the distance, I could hear an owl hooting. Crete was well known for its wild dolphins in the sea and owls on the mainland. My mom once said there used to be an owl that would come and sit with them on the wall of the terrace and stay there all night as if it were a visitor. She thinks the same one spends the season at a different home every year.

I wish I could be that owl, the non-commitment type. But I feel too much and become attached to those I fall in love with. When I spend time with an individual and get to know them, I zone in on their positive nature and develop a fondness for them. Parting ways is not always easy for me.

All I could think about was my three sex gods in the spare room on the ground floor below me. I wanted them so much, and at the same time, they scared me to the core. I was so confused. I knew I had to make a decision soon. It wasn't fair to them, me, or my parents, who had to bear witness to my love life issues.

My room was situated on the corner of the house, so I had window access to the front and the side of the building. I looked opposite the road towards Aunt Jenny's house and saw a lone figure sitting on an outdoor patio chair in the shadows. I narrowed my eyes and zoomed in, focusing on the figure.

*Yowza!*

My aunt was sitting there smoking a pipe! I didn't even know she practiced such a habit and at 2 am, that was a kind of strange behavior for her.

Initially, I thought to just go back to bed and not invade her privacy, but Aunt Jenny constantly goes through our lives, needing to know everything about everyone. Call me curious, but maybe it's time for her to fess up about herself!

I grabbed my flip-flops, held them in my hand as I didn't want to make any noise, and tip-toed out the house, leaving the front door slightly ajar. I was going only opposite the street, so I could see the house from my aunt's front porch.

She saw me approaching her but didn't move or say anything as I unlatched the loud squeaking gate and walked up the steps leading up to where she sat. I didn't take the seat next to her; instead, I pulled myself up to sit on the metal railing opposite her.

"You're up late. I thought you wanted to sleep early," she said as she continued to puff on her pipe. She's never smoked in front of me before yet acted as if it was the most normal thing ever.

I observed the dark-colored wooden pipe as she held it on the edge of her mouth, and the deep hollows of her cheeks sank in as she puffed it.

There was something very quirky about her, and the pipe gave off a touch of eccentricity for a woman. Pretty unusual behavior for her, but at the same time, really cool and authentic. I feel like I've stepped into a parallel universe as I never imagined my aunt as avant-garde.

The smell emitting from the smoke wasn't so dry as one would get from a cigarette. It was more rich, moist, and pungent, with touches of sweetness and spice filling the air around us. I found it pleasant, relaxing almost.

"I couldn't sleep. Apparently, you too, by the looks of it." I say, still trying to figure her out.

"No, darling. This is usual for me. Since your uncle died, I don't go to bed until 3am and sleep through the morning."

“Is that his pipe too?” I finally ask, itching to know more. I know I’m prying, but it’s 2am, and my aunt is in the shadows smoking a pipe, and I think I have a right to be curious.

“Yes. He used to smoke one on occasion.”

“Do you feel closer to him when you sit here alone at night, smoking it?”

She pursed her lips together and remained silent, simply observing me.

After a while, she broke the silence, “Your men seem very nice.”

*Ah*, avoiding my question. For a woman who loves to pry into everyone’s lives, she sure kept her own lips pretty tight.

I sighed, “They are.” And they’re also my greatest dilemma.

I could hear the pipe hit her teeth as she held it in her mouth. I think one could hear a pin drop in the dead of the night in this very remote neighborhood.

“Then what’s the problem?” She batted her lashes, then observed me with a slight quirky grin on her face as if she was indicating that I was free to open up or not.

I heard a rustle in the ground below us, probably a lizard scattering away in the front yard.

“It’s not them, it’s me,” I say after some hesitation.

“Ahh!” she looked heavenward, “That ubiquitous phrase, we all hate to hear!” She gave me a half-smile, not believing me for a minute.

“I have things I need to work out in my head.” Excusing myself for the generic phrase I used earlier.

“Then do so. Those men seem very serious about you. Such opportunities rarely exist in your unique situation.”

I looked at her wide-eyed, surprised by her choice of word, “Unique? You mean unconventional?”



“Unconventional, eccentric, outlandish, uncommon. These are words used by people who simply cannot extend their minds outside their very small realms of life. I prefer to use rare, innovative, pioneering, extraordinary, and original.”

I never really thought about it that way.

“Snow White had her seven *dwarfs*, and people have accepted this phenomenon in all its irony. The world is full of foolish hypocrites.”

“But sometimes people could be cruel and hurtful,” I remembered the hateful things my sister said about me and my relationship, and I could only just imagine what others could say too.

“Hmm,” She puffed on her pipe and observed me carefully, but I knew she wanted to expand, so I waited for her to finish.

“Your Aunt Mary was a love child,” she threw out of nowhere which caused me to gape at her. She ignored the shock on my face and continued.

“To today’s standards, that’s nothing extraordinary, but it sure was a controversy for your fifteen-year-old Yiayia<sup>[3]</sup> back in the fifties in the village.”

“I never knew that.” I was surprised dad never talked about it. But then again, how and why should he have addressed such information without any real purpose?

My father had seven sisters; he was the youngest of the siblings, and Aunt Mary was the eldest. I think Aunt Jenny was the youngest of the sisters. My grandmother, who we all called Yiayia, passed away twelve years ago from a brain aneurysm. She ran a small B&B in the town center, which Aunt Mary took over and continued to run it for a while. She recently sold it as she wanted to retire and spend more time with her grandkids.

My aunt’s voice, although spoken in a low tone, continued.

“Yiayia had already been promised to someone else, but the wedding would not take place until she was seventeen.

Back in the village, during that era, there was no women's liberation; women had a pre-arranged marriage and married a man of their parents' choosing. Except Yiayia had her eye on someone else, someone she had been infatuated with since she was thirteen years old. She pursued him like a cat in heat and wasn't going to take no for an answer from him. When her affair with this boy came out, and she was pregnant with his child, it became the biggest controversy in the village and an embarrassment to her parents. So she and this boy fled their village of Kastri one night and arrived here in Rethymno together. They weren't married, and she was pregnant. At that time, it was the biggest taboo for a young woman on this small remote island. Two fifteen-year-old kids, no home, no money, no education, life was callous and cruel for a long time."

"What happened?"

"She made it work, despite how people saw them, she loved your Papou<sup>[4]</sup>, and he was completely devoted to her. They rented a room outside the town, lived there for a couple of years, and got married when they both became seventeen as they didn't require their parents' permission."

"Does dad know about this story?"

"Of course, darling. So when you work out whatever you need to do, just make sure it is for yourself and not based on some *unconventional* public opinion. Some people live their entire lives extremely happy living with conventional. But you, my dear, are a Baros woman, and we don't do ordinary. We are a rare breed; we tend to swim against the tide of conventional. Be proud of who you are and who you love, regardless of what others think."

My grandmother's story was interesting and inspiring, to say the least. My grandmother went against what was expected of her because she fell in love. Pregnant at fifteen, it must have been a very frightening time for her, but obviously, my grandfather's love for her outweighed everything else. They made it work despite public disapproval, and they went on to have six more children.

Without giving it further thought, I bounced off the wall and gave my aunt a hug.

“Thank you, Aunt Jenny.”

She let out a short, light laugh.

“Now go home, my darling. While I never turn away company at my home, however, at 2am, I prefer to smoke my pipe and reminisce the good old days in peace and solitude.”

I kissed her cheek and ran down the steps towards the front gate. It squeaked loudly again as I closed it behind me, making an echo in the air.

That gate needs some oil, but on second thought, I realized my aunt probably doesn't fix it because it acts as a pre-warning that she has a visitor.

Smart woman.

I crossed the empty road illuminated by the bright moon in the cloudless sky, hearing my footsteps on the graveled road with every step I took. Reaching the opened gate, I ran up the steps of my parents' home, remembering to remove my flip-flops before running up the internal stairs.

I smiled to myself as I lay in bed because, for the first time, I really felt proud of my roots. Yiayia's life story was inspiring, and I only wished she was alive today because I know she would have some pretty wild words of wisdom to help me with my current dilemma.

Aunt Jenny gave me a lot of food for thought this evening, and I fell asleep quite fast, thinking about my grandmother's story.

## Chapter 12

### Ben

Last night after Ava retired to her room, her father spoke about the farm he keeps as a hobby and that he initially purchased it to be a retirement hobby together with Jenny's husband. After he passed away, he continued to maintain it but mentioned that it was sometimes difficult for a single person to handle.

"I've wanted to replace the gas turbine water pump on the farm for a while, but it needs several strong hands to load it into the truck and exchange it for a new one in town." He carefully eyed each one of us with a sly smirk. "Could you three-assist me tomorrow?"

I didn't need to look at the other two to answer him, "Of course, we can do that," I quickly glanced at Oscar and Carter and saw them both focus on us and nod in agreement.

"What time?" Oscar asked.

"It's best we are at the farm at 6am, before the sun becomes too strong, because we also need to return with the new one and set it up to make sure it works."

"Sure, that'll be no problem." I'm going to make an estimated guess that Ava's father won't be sparing us any mercy either, but the three of us want to get in his good books, so we're prepared to do whatever it takes.

I've been drilled by a marine corps drill instructor, so I think I can handle any strenuous work the father wants to throw at me. I understand the game; he doesn't personally hate us; he just doesn't like the idea that his youngest is banging three men, so he's going to see how far we'll go for her.

These people haven't kicked us out; instead, they went off to the market after we arrived, brought home a ton of food, and cooked us a feast. On top of that, Ava's mother refused

point-blank to let us stay in a hotel after Carter suggested he book something online.

Even though the three of us are cramped in a small double bedroom and share a bathroom, we will use this opportunity to have better access to Ava. That's why none of us have complained about the lack of personal space to one other. There is a complete understanding between us; we have one goal and one mission. Everything else is of non-importance.

Ava's initial greeting yesterday was as to be expected. She is shocked and angry, but honestly, I thought it would have been a lot worse for us. Our girl is furious but also hurt and confused, and it's up to us to try and make it easier for her to realize how much we want her back in our lives. She is our everything, but the damn woman is stubborn and strong-minded. Both aren't terrible attributes to have, but it can take its toll when you are on the opposing side of those character traits.

None of us ever imagined being in the position we're in now, which is why the three of us have decided to give Ava the floor to express herself, and we can work on repairing this relationship from there.

I know she wants us to admit we were wrong to not get her involved in the Montana affair, but the only thing we were wrong with is how we handled that situation with her. After the shooting outside the prison, I knew our decision to keep her safe was correct. Ava did not need exposure to some psychopathic killer who might have ended up hunting her down to spite Carter off, and thank fuck she wasn't there to witness the shooting.

I love Ava way too much to even consider the possibility that she could have been there and what else could have happened. We weren't trying to undermine or dominate her in any way, but when you love a woman so much as we do, there's that need to cuddle and protect her with everything you have.

“I can also give you a tour of the farm,” her father trailed on. “I have a lot of fruit trees there, and everything is organic. You know, without chemicals and insecticides. Every other morning I take a bag to each of my sisters. They sometimes make Glyko with the fruit.”

“Glyko?” Oscar cocked his head to the side, his eyebrows raised in question.

“Fruit preserves. It’s a traditional Greek dessert. It’s extremely sweet, and you have it with the Greek coffee.” Aunt Jenny replied and then asked Ava’s mom if we had tried the coffee.

Yes, I have, and thanks, but no thanks, that shit went down my throat like sugary grime. Oscar told me later it was like drinking mud. He was not so far off with that description, but Carter sat there and drank it like a coffee connoisseur. I sometimes wonder stuff about the guy. He’s built differently than most of us.

I cannot even begin to think Ava drinks this stuff, especially if I was to judge based on the capsule coffee she drinks with those flavored creams she enjoys. She won’t go near an espresso, so I’m confident she doesn’t drink the mud coffee either.

Today we were up with the roosters, which for the record, there seems to be more than one in the area. It made me laugh, considering our own personal circumstances. At least we haven’t pecked each other to death, nor have we ever instigated a cock fight. But we were close to having one back in Montana, which made me realize we seriously need our Ava back.

We all had a pleasant sleep, but at some point in the middle of the night, I heard someone walking around the house. It sounded like female footsteps, but the last thing I wanted was to roam around in the hope I run into Ava and bump into her mom in her nightdress instead and have an even more uncomfortable situation. It’s seriously impressive how every sound in the house resonances like an echo at night.

The guys and I briefly chatted after we helped clean the charcoal grill and put everything away last night. We decided we would stay in Crete for as long as it took because we weren't going home empty-handed, even if it risked our jobs. Carter said he could work remotely, as could I, but it was a little more difficult for Oscar as he had a full schedule that he had to put back for this trip. He was more concerned about Ava than his job, but I knew how much he loved what he did, and it would be a massive shame for him to lose it.

“Just stay here until you can. Carter and I have it covered.”

“No fucking way. Do you think I'll be able to focus on anything knowing I'm not here? It's a do-or-die situation, and I'm not leaving here unless it's with her on the plane seat next to me.”

I nodded and gave Oscar a supporting pat on the back. We are a unit and will always stick together, especially when it concerns our woman.

Ava's mom was up and awake with us, preparing breakfast. I'm guessing her intuition caught on with the whole Greek coffee thing as she had a large French press with fresh coffee brewing. Carter and Ava's dad stuck to their muddy espresso shit. We ate out on the terrace again, and I'm beginning to enjoy this carefree, outdoors lifestyle.

After breakfast, we headed down to the double garage. I rode shotgun with Ava's dad in his pickup, and the other two rode in the open cargo to the farm.

Ava had described it as a large garden farm, but while it's not a farm one would cultivate to do business, it's still pretty big. He gave us a tour of the place as he fed the free-roaming chickens and collected their eggs from the chicken coop. It was amusing to see this giant older man carrying a wicker basket chasing hens and calling them by name. It was even funnier that these animals seemed to recognize him as they kept following him around. One even attempted to try and jump onto his shoulder when he stood next to a large boulder.

The man was also pretty serious about his fruit and olive trees.

“I have about thirty olive trees, and every October, I bring my sisters and Grace here, and we harvest the olives. Then I take the olives to the local mill and get them pressed into oil. It’s a fascinating process. It’s enough to make a gallon for each sister and then a bit more for me.”

“I can imagine it must be some pretty good stuff compared to the store-bought stuff,” I added.

He looked at me and cringed, “Argh, the stores put a label saying Italian or Greek, and everybody buys it. My oil is full of flavor, so aromatic.”

He brought his fingers together, lifted his hand to his mouth, and touched them to his lips to express the delicious flavor.

“Grace likes to put a plate out and pours the oil in, and we dip fresh bread into it. It’s so full of flavor it’s delicious.”

“Ava mentioned her mother is a professional chef.” I threw in, hoping it would lead to Ava and her cooking.

His eyes perked up, “Yes, she was an instructor at the culinary school in Manhattan. Cooking is a great passion of hers. I like to cook as well, but with Grace, she enjoys it more, so I like to leave her alone in the kitchen as she makes her creations. Ava also is an excellent cook, although I don’t know if she does anymore.”

“Oh yeah, that we’ve been witness to. She is one talented cook; now we understand where she gets her skills from,” Carter jumped in.

I especially devoured anything Ava made. We all did, even if it was just the once-a-week meal as part of that damn tenancy with those ridiculous terms which I forgot to cancel ages ago. Ava shouldn’t be paying me rent; our home is hers too.

Her father looked surprised and then smiled wide, “Ah! That’s good, so she cooks at home.” He put the basket with the



eggs down, and I could see him suddenly focused on his thoughts.

“Ava is a very passionate person emotionally and mentally; she gets it from her Irish and Greek sides.”

While we agreed with him, we didn't say anything, as we weren't sure where he was going with this sudden revelation.

“What will you do if she insists on not returning with you to New York?”

I looked at the guys, and Oscar opened his mouth, and I nodded for him to disclose what the three of us had already decided.

“Sir, with all due respect to you and your daughter. But we won't take no for an answer.”

“I see,” he said thoughtfully. “But you cannot force someone to do something they don't want to do.”

I jumped in, “The four of us lived all harmoniously until we made a decision recently that Ava didn't like. While we remain behind that decision, we know we handled the execution poorly, and then things escalated, which we weren't aware of how much it affected her until we got home and discovered she had left. We want her to express what she wants because, at this point, we are willing to do anything for her.”

He nodded and continued to casually stroll through the farm, and we silently followed side-by-side.

“You seem like good guys, but why just one woman? I know my Ava is a fantastic individual, intelligent, good-natured, and amazing woman, like her mother, but why do you want to share just one person and not look for a woman for each of you?”

“Perhaps it might help you understand if you can recall the moment you met Mrs. Baros and decided she was the only woman you wanted to be with. That was how it was for each of us, even though we knew we were pining for the same woman,” I said, remembering the first time I laid my eyes on

her at the roommate interview. I didn't know she would be the one back then, but I knew I was extremely attracted to her.

“At first, we remained friends, roommates for a while. But it wasn't easy for us. Living with someone you wanted more than just a friend,” Oscar joined in. “Even Ava struggled with this because, for her, she liked all three of us and struggled for a while with that concept. The guys and I never saw each other as competition. We already had this strong friendship bond before Ava entered our lives. These guys are not just my best friends; we are like brothers to each other. There is mutual respect and trust, but this kind of relationship is a first for us as it is for her.”

“Ava didn't want to have to choose,” Carter chimed in. “The four of us decided to give this a go, and honestly, if anyone had doubts about this relationship, it was me. But Ava proved me wrong. She treats us as individuals, understands each of us and our different traits, and we quickly became a family unit. We need Ava; she is part of each one of us.”

“Going back home isn't an option,” I said, “because Ava is our home.”

After what we just declared to her father, I have no idea what he was thinking. He stood there the entire time, silently listening and thoughtful. His eyes darted to each of us as he focused on who was talking, probably trying to get a good read on us. I'm not sure he understands our relationship fully, but I hope he recognizes that all three of us are in love with his daughter.

“I don't like to see my daughter hurt,” he began, “But whatever happened between the four of you, I also don't think it was intentional. There isn't much I can do for you; obviously, my daughter's position will always be my priority, but you are welcome to stay as long as Ava wants you here. I will leave that decision to her.”

“Well, sir,” I looked at the other two, and they nodded in agreement, “There is something you might be able to help us with. All three of us discussed this on our way over to Greece, and after talking with Ava yesterday, we feel even more

determined. But first, let's get the job we came here for done, and then with your permission, we could discuss it with you in greater detail."

He nodded and took us to a brick hut to show us the turbine. It took us a good forty minutes of intense labor to get the damn thing disconnected and put into the pick-up truck and a good hour of sweat and muscle to replace it and get the new machine up and running.

## Chapter 13

### Ava

The next morning, I expected to see the guys having breakfast on the terrace under the pergola. But there was no sign of them. The entire house was insanely quiet when there should have been three more men.

“If you’re looking for the boys, they’ve gone off with your father to the farm.”

I spun around to see my mom bringing out a tray with two large coffee mugs, some cut watermelon, a cheese platter, and several slices of homemade pita bread.

“Why?” I asked with some trepidation, taking the tray from her and setting it on the large outdoor dining table.

What on earth is my dad doing with them?

Was he planning on murdering them?

I should check if the two shotguns he keeps under his bed are still there. My dad bought them after he was gunned down several years ago from a hold-up in his diner back in New York. My mom mentioned that he sometimes still gets flashbacks of the event. She says he occasionally takes them out to his farm for target practice but has yet to kill anything with a beating heart.

*Thank God for that.*

The guns under the bed give him a sense of relief that he can protect himself, which I think I can relate to. After my altercation with *The Douchebag* last year, I also had the need to do something to defend myself, which was why I asked the boys to train me in self-defense. I’m far from being an expert, but I’ve learned different martial arts disciplines, and while I hope to never have to practice it in real life, it gives me a confidence boost.

“Last night, after you went to bed, your dad asked them if they could help him move a gas turbine water pump on the farm and go into town to pick up a new one. They were up from the crack of dawn, had breakfast, and left a couple of hours ago.”

My father’s farm is a large vegetable and fruit garden that he keeps as a hobby, a place to spend his time and stay busy. But also to keep out of my mom’s hair during the day. Together with Aunt Jenny’s husband, they bought the land just down the road from the house a few years ago and converted it to a mini-farm. After my uncle passed away, my dad kept it up on his own. He often puts together several bags of fresh fruit he grows and then makes his rounds around Rethymno, dropping off a bag to his sisters in exchange for coffee and a chat. Occasionally, I have joined him on the ride into town, but we usually separate once there, and I wander off around the shops until he’s finished. I’ve also developed an insatiable addiction to frozen Greek yogurt and can never visit the town without stopping by the shop. I may have become the shop manager’s favorite customer.

“Jeez, mom, they’ve been here like five minutes, and he already has them working for him!” I rolled my eyes.

My mom chuckled and sat down to join me for breakfast. She pressed down on the French press and poured the fresh coffee into my mug.

“You know your father; he jumps at opportunities. And they were very willing to help out. They do seem like well-mannered men.”

I knew Mom was fishing for info. She is good with all the subtleness and talking around the bush, so to speak. I added a little milk into my mug and brought it to my lips. I sipped my coffee, bent my knee, folded my leg under myself, and picked on the cheese platter, nibbling on a piece.

“They are, Mom. They really are a decent bunch of guys.” I couldn’t fault them in this area.

They were always available for me if I ever needed something. Okay, sometimes Carter was grumpy, but he

wasn't malicious or purposely spiteful; he was more of an introvert. And when he figured out that the girls and I nicknamed him after the seven dwarves, he almost threw a fit. It was kind of funny. He was moody for a couple of days. Cue in, *Grumpy*.

"They seem to be infatuated with you." My mom wasn't going to equivocate around this topic.

"Mom, what do you think of the entire situation, I mean, my relationship with them?" I asked, giving her permission to speak openly with me. If she had something to say, she would say it now.

She gazed at me momentarily and cocked her head to the side thoughtfully.

"Oh darling, it's not for me to say. I hold my own opinion to myself. But it's indeed an unusual type of relationship and interesting, to say the least. But then, on the other hand, there doesn't seem to be any competition between them for you at all. As if all three are resigned to love you equally without reservations. That's pretty unique as men tend to become antagonistic when it comes to a single woman of interest."

"Yeah, you're right there. They don't feel the need to compete for my attention at all. The boys were best friends long before I came into the picture, so maybe that helps."

"I have to say you're a very lucky woman." She looked at me and smiled as she sipped her coffee.

I glanced up at her as I tore a piece of cheese in half and ate the one piece.

"Lucky?"

"In our short life, we'd be fortunate to find one person to fall in love with. You, my dear, have been blessed with three. Three very fine men who would follow you to the end of the earth."

"Three very possessive men," I added. "I sometimes feel like I'm just a play doll for them."

My mom rolled her head back in a fit of laughter.

I looked at her strangely, “What’s so funny?”

“Oh honey, you got that all wrong. You got yourself a three-for-one deal. You are one person who has three individuals pining for her. You possess them, not the other way around. They might be big, handsome, powerful men, but darling, you are at the head of this relationship. You hold the power to make them happy. Recognize it and own it.”

I never really thought about that. But perhaps she was right. Maybe I did get the better deal in this relationship. Then why was I the one kept out of stuff, thrown out of their discussions? Yet, here they are, trying to win my heart again. Do they want to have their cake and eat it too? I just don’t get it.

As if reading my mind, “But,” Mom added, “if it really bothers you, why don’t you just tell them what you feel you’ve been wronged about. I think they’ll listen.”

I stop and think as I hang onto her words for a minute. Maybe I want too much, a lot more than they are prepared to give me. And then there’s how people perceive us, my parents were shocked and my dad’s initial reaction, while it was a spur of the moment, for which he apologized, still hurt me.

“But what about the whole taboo thing of being with multiple men? This is entirely an unconventional relationship.”

“You cannot help who you fall in love with. And when you love three men, and they love you back, what business does an outsider have to judge you? Sure, it’s unusual, and it’s certainly not perfect in the eyes of many. But life isn’t perfect, darling; it’s how you make it matter to you.” She took a plate, added a slice of watermelon, and handed it to me.

“But there are other factors,” I said, taking the plate. “Legal issues, like I could never marry all of them.”

I took a bite of the cold fruit. Sweet, juicy, and refreshing. Perfect for such a warm day like today.

“If you had to pick one to marry. Who would that be?” she asked curiously.

I thought about it but honestly couldn't make such a decision. It's like asking who's my favorite.

"I would rather remain unmarried. Choosing was never an option for me."

"Then you have your answer. Your father and I are old-school. Perhaps your father will never understand the kind of relationship you have, but we would never stand in the way of your happiness. We have never and will never try to take something away from you that gives you joy. Do you remember that summer we came on holiday to Crete, and you insisted that it was in fashion to go topless?"

Omigod, why would she bring that up now?

"How can I ever forget?" I said sarcastically, rolling my eyes.

"You were fourteen years old then, and all of a sudden, you took your bikini top off when we were all at the beach without a care in the world what other people thought. A few other girls on the beach weren't wearing a top either. But you didn't ask us for permission; you just did it as if it was the most normal thing in the world. Your father was a little shocked, but after you told us that you did it because it was just a fashion trend, we decided to allow you to keep doing so, as long as one of us remained close by, regardless of our personal opinion."

I cringed, remembering that time. I saw all these girls topless at the beach with no tan lines, so instead of asking my parents, I just whipped my top off and lay on my towel. I really liked it at the time, being so carefree. I completely forgot that I was half-naked; it felt normal. I know my dad wasn't happy that his youngest daughter was parading on the beach like that, especially when I was much more developed than most girls my age, but they never forced me to cover up. I spent the entire summer on the beach half-naked.

But now, I can't believe I did something like that; I was stupid and naïve. The entire Greek side of the family, aunts, uncles, and cousins, know what my boobs look like, and I shudder at the thought with embarrassment.



The one thing I did get from that summer was that I know it's something I did enjoy doing, being so carefree about my body. But I would never do that in public again, especially not in the age where there are cameras on everyone's cellphones.

I needed to change this discussion because this was part of a past I didn't want to dig up nor remember. Every time I see my male relatives now, I recoil because they all saw my boobs, and I'm pretty sure I gave enough hard-ons to my male cousins during that particular point in time.

*Ugh*, disgusting! A time in my life that I would prefer to forget.

"But mom, how do you feel if I never get married?"

"Of course, I've always dreamed of seeing my girls walk down the aisle on their wedding day. But times are changing, and people's concepts of marriage and relationships are changing. Same-sex couples get married and adopt children now. I've lost count on how many gender identities even exist these days. Maybe one day, the world will accept your relationship. But does public acceptance matter when there is so much love in the relationship?"

I felt my heart skip a beat. "I do love them, mom. I love them so much."

"How do Emma and Olivia feel about your relationship?"

"They encouraged it," I say, remembering how they almost threw me at them.

"Well, you have all the people around you who love you and accept you. The question is, when will you accept yourself for who you are?"

"Our world is harsh and judgemental."

"Indeed, it is, darling. You only partially know the story of your father and me. When I met him, he had just arrived in America from Greece; but what you don't know is that my family didn't want to accept him as my boyfriend. They kept telling me that he was just using me for an American citizenship and that he was not serious about me. My brothers, your uncles, having that flaming Irish hot-tempered blood in

them, and they tried to scare your father off. It wasn't a light warning either; they really threatened his life if he didn't leave me. Your father never told me this until years after we were married. He said he would never do anything to jeopardize my relationship with my family, and they just had to get used to the idea that we were going to be a couple for a very long time. That's love right there."

"Is that why you followed him four thousand miles from home?" I could understand my dad wanting to be in this remote place, but my mom? I wasn't so sure. Did she follow him because he demanded it? I remember when I had to fight tooth and nail with him to allow me to graduate high school in New York.

"I love your father, and I would follow him to the ends of the earth if it made him happy."

"But are you happy here?" My mom was a born and bred Manhattan girl. This island life here in Crete was a far cry from what she was used to.

"We've had our ups and downs. There isn't a place on earth that's perfect. I think your father regrets somewhat being so far away from you and your sister. We're talking about maybe buying something small back in the US and spending some time between there and here."

Well, it would be nice to be able to see my parents more often.

"What do you think I should do about the boys?"

She took a fork, grabbed another slice of watermelon, and put it on my plate.

"Oh honey, that's certainly not up to me to tell you."

"Do you like them?" I asked curiously, taking a bite from the piece that had just landed on my plate.

"I do. They are very handsome men. And from what I understand, successful? I overheard yesterday that they came on a private jet?"

“Oh yeah, that’s Ben’s grandmother’s jet. He has a close relationship with her. I don’t know the exact details because we’ve never discussed our financial statuses, but she’s giving him the apartment, and he has a trust fund of some sort. That’s all I know.”

“And they all met at Columbia University?”

I guess it was question time. Shame that she was busy in the kitchen last night when Aunt Jenny quizzed them in detail about everything in their lives.

“Technically, yes and no. Ben and Oscar served together in the Marines. Oscar had signed up for the three-year education sponsorship, as did Ben, but he never got one because of his family’s financial status. Before attending Columbia, they did a tour together at a couple of bases in the Middle East. They met Carter during fresher’s week; he was on a scholarship program. They all moved into Ben’s apartment in New York, and they’ve been inseparable since.”

“Why would Ben need educational sponsorship if his family is well-off?”

“Well, he doesn’t have a good relationship with his family. They wanted him to join the family business, and he wanted to make it on his own, but they refused to help him, so he gave up his seat on the board of their company. His parents threatened to write him off money-wise, so instead of relenting to their demands, he wanted to prove he could make it on his own and joined the army and applied for the financial support program. Then his parents disowned him. When his grandmother saw his determination, she decided to secretly step in and assist him. Ben is a pretty self-sufficient guy; even though one would think his background would have rendered him as rich and spoilt, he’s hardly that at all.”

“That’s very commendable. And Oscar? He mentioned his background is Brazilian?”

While I knew a big chunk about his background, I knew that part of his life was very private for him and chose not to elaborate. The same went for Carter too.

“Yes, his family is originally from Brazil, but he grew up in Florida, and considers himself American, through and through. Carter grew up on a cattle ranch in Montana and moved to New York when he began his studies.”

“They are all pretty intelligent, young, successful men who were determined to have a bright future from such a young age.”

“Yup,” I said proudly.

“And, yet here you are, not sure what to do with them, and these men are literally at your feet, wanting you to love them.”

Shit. She was right.

I didn't say anything further. Instead, I finished my coffee, grabbed a slice of toast and cheese, and got up.

“Mom, I'm heading to the beach. If they happen to come back, tell them I went into town. I need space to think.”

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I spent the greater part of the morning at the beach like I had been doing these last few days since I've been here. I swam in the sea, read my romance ebook, put my iPods on, and drifted off, lost in music while lying on my towel on the sand in the warm breezy sun.

It was still late spring, so summer tourism had not yet started. If locals went to the beach, most went to the center of town, not this particular one that tended to be pretty remote during this time of year.

I closed my eyes and concentrated on the warm sun hitting my skin. I shut my music down and focused on the calming sound of the waves dribbling up the shore and dragging back in again. With my eyes closed, the serenity and soothing ambiance around me couldn't get much better than this.

The slow rhythmic crashing of the waves and sea sounds must have rendered me to lightly drift off to sleep, and it wasn't until I could feel a large cold shade hover over me,

bringing me to awake and open my eyes to see there were, in fact, three dark figures standing over me.

Ones that I would recognize anywhere.

“How did you find me?”

The three of them were all shirtless, standing there, hovering. Of course, my eyes drifted from their perfectly chiseled abs and chest to their beautiful faces.

Taking in a long breath, I took in the sight of them. They stood there in their glory as if Zeus had just cast them out of the cloudless Aegean blue sky like Greek gods.

It’s hard when one of them is around me; two are far too tempting, and all three of them? Fuck, I’m ready to self-combust.

“Your mom,” Ben says, and I frown.

“I told her to tell you I was in town,” realizing my own mom betrayed me. *Argh!*

“Yeah, she said that too,” Carter pulled his shades up over his head, squatted down, and looked directly at me.

“I need time to myself,” I said bluntly, trying very hard not to blush under the intense gaze he gave me. The penetrating stare all three were giving me.

“We could help, you know,” Oscar sat down on the sand opposite me; Ben followed.

They were going to ignore my request to have some space between them and me.

“Did my dad work you to the bone yet?” I teased, giving them a lopsided grin. I didn’t want to talk about us just yet with them. I wasn’t ready.

“Your dad had us up at the crack of dawn moving this mother-fucking tank that weighed a ton. Hauled it into town, then hauled another one back and installed it while he sat there barking us commands under the shade of his beach umbrella having a beer.”

I cracked up laughing. “Aww, he must like you. He never did that with any of my boyfriends before.”

“Or hate us to the core.”

“The three of you are sleeping with his youngest daughter. What did you expect? My dad is going to torture you, see how long it’ll take till you break, and probably have some fun with it too,” I knew that was the reality of the situation. My dad could be ruthless in order to protect his family; after all, back in New York, he sustained a bullet while protecting his staff. He’s pretty strong in shielding people he feels responsible for.

Dad could be pretty dominant as well, and I know the guys will do whatever is necessary to support our relationship with my parents, even if it goes against their alpha personalities. But also, if my Dad was spending this much time with them, it meant he was seriously considering accepting all three of them. This was then a significant game-changer for me.

“Sunshine, if it means making you happy, then we’ll take whatever hard labor your father throws at us,” Oscar gives me a wink.

I cleared my throat, flicking my gaze between them before taking a deep breath.

“I came here to Crete to get away not just from you, but everything, my entire life in New York. Never in a million years did I ever expect that you’d be getting on a plane to come here. And that alone says a lot, so I recognize your efforts. But saying that you want to bring me home is not enough for me. Not anymore. The truth is I want more and need things to change in my life, but I don’t know exactly what that is, and I’m trying to figure that out.”

“While you figure it out, just remember we love you and want you to be open with us. So whatever questions you have, we’re here for you, babygirl,” Ben said and moved closer to give me a hug.

The three of them got up and said they were giving me the space I wanted. I wasn't sure what that meant, but I didn't want to ask either.

I didn't lie back down on my towel, I stayed there with my knees tightly drawn against my chest and wiped the tear that escaped my eye. I think I knew what I wanted, but I was afraid they wouldn't be able to give it to me. Or willing to give it to me. The latter was probably the hardest for me to accept that it could be the end scenario for our foursome.

## Chapter 14

### Ava

I walked home from the beach, thinking I would be back just in time for lunch, only to find Dad was out, and the guys were on the terrace with Mom. Carter and Ben played with two of Aunt Jenny's kittens while Oscar and my mom flipped through some old family albums.

Finding two sex gods, sitting and holding these cute little creatures in the most adorable way, sent a titillating and captivating feeling to my core. It was like sexy, hot, loveable, and cuteness had been thrown into a blender, and my emotions were going berserk.

"Mom, can I borrow your cell phone?" She nodded. I picked it up from the table.

After unlocking it, I opened the camera app and took a couple of photos of Carter and Ben with the kittens because these were going into my private collection of *hot men with cute animals*. Of course, I didn't have one, but I do now.

"Now, all I need is for your t-shirts to come off," I said as I clicked away. They looked up at me, and their dazzling smiles nearly floored me.

"Having fun, Ava?" Ben asked with a grin and a hint of a smirk, but his eyes lingered on me. There was a longing on his face, full of desire, and it almost made my legs buckle.

"It's like hot firemen with fuck-me bodies and cute kittens calendar." I winked at them, trying my best not to lust after them because, heck, these two men make my heart miss a beat.

I think my mom almost choked on the water she just sipped. *Oops!* I tend to get carried away with these guys.

I watch Oscar take the glass from her and put it on the table as she tries to recover from shock at my use of language.



He's attentive and charming like that and is quickly captivating my mom's fondness.

"Didn't you have one of those Australian firemen and ...."

I interrupted my mom before she could embarrass me, "Yes, mom, like years ago."

I admit I had that infamous Australian fireman and cat calendar hanging up on my bedroom wall one year when I was at college. But if I was going to be honest, my three men were even more drool-worthy. It's like, be careful what you wish for because, *oh gosh*, these boys were mouth-watering, delectable creatures that won't stop telling me how much they're in love with me.

I sent the photos I just took to my email address and put the cell phone back where I found it.

"Is that Ava?" Oscar asks with amazement. I see his eyes brighten up with excitement as he points to a photo in the album.

My mom leaned over to see what he was looking at. The corners of her mouth turned into a smirk, "Yes, that was during her topless beach phase. We were just discussing that this morning, weren't we, honey?" She looks up at me with a smile.

My mouth turned into the widest O in shocked horror.

Ben and Carter carefully put the kittens down and rushed over to see what Oscar was looking at.

"Mom! For christ's sake! Why the hell would you put those photos in an album where just anyone could find them!"

"Wow, Ava, you looked hot. How old were you?"

I don't know which of the guys had asked because my mind was still reeling with shock and dismay. How could she do this to me?!

"She was fourteen."

"I didn't know you go topless?" Carter grins at me.

*Oh, fuck!*

“I don’t.” I grit my teeth, glaring at Mom. “It was just the one summer.”

One summer that my mom will never let me forget.

Oh god, this is embarrassing, I could feel my skin warming into a bright crimson color, and I had no control over it. How could my mom do this to me?

“Ava decided it was in fashion to go topless on the beach,” my mom so nonchalantly explained. “So that summer when we came here on holiday, she decided to do just that.”

“Good God, mom, why?” I look at her painfully. “I thought I got rid of every photo!” I was bright red, and there was nothing I could do about my cheeks burning up. The boys stared at the photos as if they had never seen my breasts before.

“Darling, your father and I have always supported your decisions. But I always said be prepared to face whatever consequences emerge with every action you do. And every time you remove a photo, another goes back in.”

“Mom, seriously, people come here, and anyone can go through these albums,” I retort.

“The only people who come here are relatives. And they’ve already seen it all.”

My mom’s voice was candidly derisive. I knew that my actions would come back to haunt me one day, but this was such an insensitive thing to do to me.

“No, they have not!” But I already knew my answer was not exactly correct.

“Ava, there’s nothing to be ashamed about. I mean, it’s us, and we’ve all seen it all.” Oscar looks up and winks at me. As much as he tries to downplay this, he’s just made it tons worse.

I roll my eyes in horror, “Omigod! God, please kill me now.”

“But the next summer, she wore a one-piece; apparently, the previous topless summer trend was over.” My mom explained, and I never told her the reality of what changed my mind.

The truth was, by the end of the summer, I realized all my male cousins were avoiding me, not just at the beach but also when we visited their homes. My sister, Helena, said it was because after seeing me like I was, it gave them all hard-ons, and they could no longer talk to me without imagining my breasts anymore. I was so embarrassed that when we flew to Greece for vacation the following summer, I avoided everyone and covered up like a nun telling everyone it was the fashion. My parents and relatives just put my strange clothing trends towards fashion eccentricities. I could never tell anyone my true feelings.

To this day, I shy away from my male relatives. I’ll never forgive myself for my naivety. Back then, I wasn’t a child; I had already reached puberty and wasn’t even close to being flat-chested. Perhaps if I were, things would have been easier. But no, I was blessed with fully blossomed boobs from a young age, and I had to expose them to all of Crete and beyond.

Mom never showed Douchebag Josh these photos when he visited after high school, so I don’t know why she was so keen on exposing me now. I’m not sure if my mom realized how sensitive this era of my life was to me. I was so angry and embarrassed that she could bring up such a part of my life that I wanted to shut down.

When I felt the tears flooding my eyes, I stormed off to my room and flopped on the bed. I simply cannot escape from embarrassing situations these days. First, my parents find out I’ve been sleeping with three men, then these three men find out about my topless era and think it’s so cool. I just need a break; where the hell do I have to go to get it?

Suddenly there was a knock on my door, and see Carter’s head pop through the crack. He doesn’t move until I call him in. I seemed to be snapping at everyone these days, and I think

he was playing it safe to stay there, so he didn't get his head bitten off.

"Hey," I say, wiping a tear from my face. "Come in. I won't bite."

"Good, for a minute there, I wasn't sure." He grins and flops on the bed beside me.

"Everything is overwhelming," I sat up against the headboard beside him.

"I can see that." His gaze was encouraging, but all he did was state the obvious.

"I spoke to my mom about us this morning," I said, picking at the hem of my camisole and avoiding eye contact. I know if I did, I'd might burst out crying. I don't know what's wrong with me these days. My breakup with these guys has made me into an enormous emotional mess.

He didn't say anything. I finally looked up at his deep green eyes; he wore contacts today. He mentioned earlier that constantly switching between glasses and sunglasses was annoying. I liked him both ways; he's a gorgeous man, and I knew that from the moment I laid my eyes on him almost a year ago.

His silent observation was my cue to expand on my previous declaration.

"I asked her how she felt about our relationship. She said it wasn't her place to cast judgment and wouldn't get in the way of my happiness. That's when she brought up the whole topless faze and said while she and my dad didn't exactly feel comfortable about it, she said that my reasons for doing so weren't troubling and that since I felt comfortable doing it, they allowed it. But just now, even you heard her say that there's a consequence for every action, and I can't help but think she's punishing me for something I already regret doing."

Carter looked at me thoughtfully, taking in everything I said. It took a few minutes to gather his thoughts until he spoke. I realized a while back he sometimes took his time to

reply to something he deemed important, and I knew to be patient.

“I think she’s trying to tell you that your decisions are your responsibility as an adult, but with every action, there’s always going to be an equal and opposite reaction.”

“But why does she have to dig in the knife and embarrass me more when it’s clear I already am? It’s cruel and mean.”

“Ava, have you ever considered the idea that your mom is very proud of you? I don’t think she means to embarrass you at all. The bigger question here is, are you embarrassed with our relationship?”

I looked at him, but his face was completely deadpan, and I was caught off guard with such a direct question. Then again, who was I kidding? This is Carter for you, always one step ahead to surprise you and whip one’s conscious awake.

“No,” I said almost immediately.

“Not in the slightest. I could never feel embarrassed by what we have. It’s just I worry about what my parents think of me.”

“I think your parents love you very much. You are fortunate to have that kind of support and stability in your life.”

I paused to consider what he was suggesting. Carter was right; maybe I was overreacting. I don’t even know why I was upset at the guys looking at photos of me topless, considering the level of intimacy we shared with each other already.

“But Ava, those photos of you, they are smoking hot. If you ever want to do that in private or in public, and I think I speak on behalf of the other two as well, it’s totally fine by us.” A sly smile emerged as he grinned wide.

*Aha!* Once again, I cracked the Carter Collins’ stone-clad persona!

It was a little strange because these were usually the kind conversations I had with Oscar. But perhaps my connection with all three had already advanced to a stage where we all felt

comfortable talking about our innermost feelings. I felt this was an important turning point in my relationship with Carter.

Reaching out to him, I touched the side of his face; I like his stubble. He's been sporting it for a while; it makes him rough and sexy. Slowly my eyes gazed up at his, and our eyes locked with each other. I leaned in and kissed his lips. There was no tongue, just soft, gentle brushing of the lips. Every move was tender and intimate, and I felt his hand slowly caress my arm. This was our first kiss in over a week, and it felt so good, as if it was the first time we were doing this. Time stopped, and my breath caught somewhere in my chest as he kissed me back.

I put my arm around his waist and pulled away from his mouth, dragging my head to his chest, and melting into his body. His arms wrapped around me as he moved me to lay on the bed together.

Carter continues to caress my arm and keeps me close to him, making me feel cherished and desired. We remained like that for a while without feeling the need to talk. It felt good, and I missed this.

I missed this with all three of them.

I adored the comfort of being cocooned within their bodies. I felt so safe and protected. Maybe I liked being submissive once in a while. Was that really bad? Wanting to be taken care of by my men once every now and then? After all, I take care of them in my own way too, according to their needs. And for sure, each one had specific needs, and none dared express them. It was like this natural gift I had with them to pick it up on my radar.

I don't know how long we stayed like that, but when there was a knock on the door, we both turned to look up to see Oscar pop his head inside.

"Hey, everything good?" he asked, observing me in an embrace with Carter and smiling placidly at us.

"Yes," I said and looked up at Carter and smiled as I saw his eyes looking down at me too.

“Your dad is back, and your mom asked to fetch you. Lunch is almost ready.”

Reluctantly I let go of the embrace with my sex god and got up to follow my other one to the terrace.

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The boys and Dad were busy out on the terrace eating watermelon and chatting away about god knows what. It was interesting to see Dad hasn't skinned them alive yet, so I hope none of the guys slips up and says something that might derail my dad.

I remained in the kitchen helping my mom put lunch away, every so often glancing nervously out the window to check on them that all was well in the male world.

“If he was going to do it, he would have used the opportunity when they were at the farm earlier. Easier to bury the bodies.”

I whipped my head around, “Mom!”

A burst of soft laughter erupted from her as she tossed me a dishcloth.

“Your father may not understand it all, but he sees how they act around you, which is something he can relate to. In case you don't realize it, he was once their age too. He and I were engaged around the same age you are now.”

“It just makes me anxious,” I say, drying the large glass bowls. “I had never seen Dad that way before yesterday, so I'm a little more than nerve-racked.”

“Evidently.” My mother doesn't give me the chance to respond as she heads into the pantry room and starts rummaging around.

I look out the window, and Ben catches me looking at them. He doesn't say anything to the others; instead, he secretly smiles and winks at me. I return to what my mother tasked me to do. I know I'm being influenced by them being here, and I'm not sure I can think clearly.

“Oh darling,” I hear my mother’s voice behind me, “do you mind picking up some fresh coriander, a couple of eggplants, and a few other things from the market later? It’s for the moussaka tonight. Your father brought some fresh fish from the market earlier. He wants to grill them for dinner. I thought I’d make the moussaka as I know you love it.”

“Sure, I can do that.”

“Take the boys into town with you as well, it would be nice to show them the old town and fortress.”

I observe my mom, and I wonder if she understood me at all this morning when I said I needed some alone time to think.

Sensing my frustration, “Darling, use the opportunity that they are here to talk with them. I think all they want is for you to open up.”

“Have you been talking with them about me?” I looked at her curiously. That would be a step too far toward invading my right to privacy. It wasn’t something I could appreciate the boys doing with my parents.

“About you, yes, but not your relationship problems. I see three men who are desperate to take whatever crumbs you are willing to throw at them. But don’t let them starve. It’s not fair to them or you.”

I threw my arms around her and rested my head on her shoulder. “I’m sorry I yelled at you earlier. It was stress, but that’s no excuse to have raised my voice and get angry like that.”

She gave me a hug and kissed my cheek.

“It’s fine, darling.” Then out of the blue, she whispered, “Your men; they love you. I hope you realize this.”

“I do, mom,” I whispered lightly.

I let go of her just as Oscar came in and asked if I wanted to go into town with them. Well, that was a coincidence.

“Sure, my mom wants me to run some errands for her.”



## Chapter 15

### Ava

Ben drove us into town in the SUV rental. I directed him to the public parking area just outside the main center. Considering the uncountable narrow winding streets of the old medieval town, it's easier to walk than drive. Most roads are closed off to automobiles, so walking is generally much faster.

Of course, strolling leisurely with three mesomorph giants with the faces and bodies of gods was bound to attract the attention of the locals, who either just stared at us or would ask me in Greek if they were anyone famous.

At one point, purely for my own entertainment, I started telling people they were the latest Marvel superheroes and that we were filming on the island. I hid my amusement well, and the guys were left confused, staring at the people looking at them and pointing. A few random people took photos with their phones, and the confused faces on my men were priceless.

"Hey, anyone up for frozen Greek yogurt?" Oscar pointed out across the street.

I looked at the shop that provided me with a product to drown my miseries since I arrived on the island.

"I've been there. It's delicious. You can add your own toppings, too," I said, smiling with another plan hatching in my head.

While the guys entered the shop, I briefly stopped and chatted with the store manager at the front, whom I've gotten to know these past few days. I told him the guys were famous Hollywood actors, and he offered us free ice cream if he could get a photo with the guys.

It was pretty hard to keep a straight face, watching in slow motion the expression of my men, standing there trying

to figure out whether the man was for real when he pulled out his phone and asked to take a selfie with them.

Oscar insisted on paying and dropped the money on the counter. They didn't miss when I shrugged my shoulders at the manager and mumbled something in Greek. They finally sussed me out that something fishy was going on, especially when I couldn't hide the obvious smirk on my face.

As we took to the streets again, the guys' suspicions grew.

"Ava, what did you tell that man in the store?" Carter asked as he passed me his cup to try out his frozen yogurt.

"Or the half a dozen other people in the other shops we were in?" Ben added.

"Nothing. Why?" I said, handing the cup back to Carter. "This stuff is delicious."

I didn't take any frozen yogurt for myself because I had big lunch and wouldn't dare add dessert to my growing hips.

"Because you're trying very unsuccessfully to hide that grin," Ben added as he spoon-fed me his.

"Mmm," I say, enjoying his offer. He had added strawberry sauce to his cup.

"I may have told people a little white lie for my own amusement," I said, walking ahead of them.

"Sunshine, get your cute butt back here."

I looked back and saw all three had stopped walking and were a few yards behind me.

"A few people asked me if you guys were anyone famous." I nibbled my bottom lip, trying to keep myself from laughing. "I said you were part of the new Marvel superheroes, and we were filming on the island."

Oscar chuckled, and even Ben and Carter were amused.

"They believed it?" Ben asked, now finding the entire scenario funny.

“People in Europe tend to be really gullible. Before I lightened my hair, I was often asked if I was Gina Carano because of my American accent and Southern European heritage. It gets amusing if you resemble even a fraction of a celebrity. And people are desperate to meet celebrities and post their selfies online.”

Ben put his arm around my waist and kissed my lips, “Nah, baby, your breasts are bigger than Gina’s. And you’re a ton prettier. She hasn’t got anything on you.”

I remained a little stunned because it was the first time since he’s been in Greece that he tried anything remotely affectionate with me. I licked my lips, liking his taste. Strawberry was my new favorite flavor.

I had to do a double-take. Were we all back to normal without having discussed anything? Did they think I had put the past behind me because I wasn’t yelling or arguing with them?

There was no escaping the truth, I loved them, and they loved me, but just how far were we all willing to go to maintain our relationship? I couldn’t return to New York with them and pick up where we left off. There was no way I could do that anymore, things changed for me, and if they weren’t ready to adapt, then they were hoping for a lost cause. As much as I wanted them, I also needed to keep my morals and self-worth intact.

The boys needed to change their way of thinking, or they would return empty-handed.

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Thankfully the local market was still open. It was a kind of an open-air permanent farmer’s market with stalls, mainly selling deli foods, fish, cheeses, vegetables, and fruits.

I had the list of things my mom asked, and the boys insisted on helping me.

“I’ll get the eggplants and fresh feta cheese. Can you get me one large bundle of fresh coriander?”

I collected everything I needed and took the basket of items to the cash register. I looked to see where the boys were and saw them roaming around the lettuce and leafy green section with confused looks on their faces.

There was something very entertaining about them as I stood and watched with interest as Ben and Oscar picked up various items, smelled them, and shrugged their shoulders. Carter was on his phone and then showing the others his screen. I chuckled as I shook my head.

None of them had the nerve to admit they had no idea what coriander was. It's amusing because I don't think these guys ever had to select their own fresh produce. Back in New York, they purchased all their groceries online. Occasionally, I ventured down to Union Square's farmer's market on a Saturday morning to collect a few items. But I had never taken any of them with me, so I hadn't realized they were that clueless.

I continued to watch them with amusement as they seemed utterly lost within a sea of salad leaves.

Finally, Oscar seems to spot something, picks it up, and the guys nod in agreement. They catch me observing them and come over, proudly showing me a bundle of herbs.

"Do you guys even know what coriander looks and smells like?" I said, holding up a bundle in my hand.

"The correct term for it is cilantro," Carter says confidently.

"No, not here. Good luck asking for cilantro in Europe unless you're in Spain." Giving him a lopsided grin as I knew he didn't like being wrong on trivial knowledge.

His mouth set in a hard line, and Ben and Oscar looked at him and grinned because Carter is hardly ever caught out with being wrong on facts. I giggle a little because it was kind of cute watching him become annoyed with the three of us.

"But sunshine, I already got it," Oscar presented me with his bundle.

I took it from him and held both bundles of herbs in my hands.

“You picked up parsley,” I said, not bothering to hide my smirk. “Coriander is more pungent and has a deeper green color, and the leaves are more rounded.”

I pushed the parsley back into his chest and told him to put it back where he found it.

“I guess that’s our lesson of the day,” Ben’s thousand-watt smile was there, as usual, making my knees weak.

“Ava!”

The voice came from behind the guys, and I glanced over them as I heard my name to see a familiar face. It was my cousin Manolis, Aunt Mary’s son, and he ventured closer to me with a big happy grin.

The guys parted to see who it was behind them, and my cousin used the opening to approach me. I leaned into his embrace as he gave me the customary hug and two-cheek kisses. As Manolis speaks mostly Greek, we proceeded to talk in Greek.

Interestingly, my Greek fluency had increased significantly, having only been here for almost a week. I always understood better than I could speak it and my grammar and accent were terrible, but everyone here seemed to understand the gist of what I was saying.

“My mom mentioned in passing that you were in Crete. When did you get here, and how long are you staying?”

“Oh, it was just a spur-of-the-moment thing,” I said, trying to play it off that my visit was no big deal. “Not sure yet when I will leave. I have an open return flight back home.”

Home. I don’t even know where that is anymore, even if the boys will argue till they’re blue in the face that home is with them. I really dreaded this conversation I needed to have with them. Surely if the guys came all this way, they would be willing to change their habits for me. Wishful thinking?

“Then you should pop by for dinner one evening. Stella and the kids would love to see you.”

I could feel my men suddenly gather around me, and Manolis’s eyes wandered over to them. I switched to English for their benefit.

“Guys, this is my cousin Manolis. He is my Aunt Mary’s son. He and his wife are teachers in the local elementary school here in Rethymno.”

The guys leaned in and shook hands with him. I had no idea how to introduce them.

*Boyfriends?*

But we broke up. But even if we hadn’t, telling my cousin I had three boyfriends would open up a can of worms I wasn’t prepared to venture into. If I say friends, it makes our break-up final.

Was it final? I mean, I broke up with them via a note. I was so confused with my current situation. I’ve already kissed two of them since they arrived here. One minute I tell them they’re wasting their time, and the next, my lips enjoy theirs. The entire reason for fleeing so rapidly from New York was so I wouldn’t have to deal with precisely this.

Doubts and confusion seep into my mind.

Sensing my hesitation, they took their cue and said they were my roommates from New York. I caught Oscar winking at me, and I was relieved that I didn’t have to start giving any explanations to the rest of my relatives.

“So you are all here staying with Ava’s parents on holiday?” Manolis asked curiously. This was typical island behavior, always needing to know the details.

“Short holiday. We stopped by to visit Ava at her parent’s house. Then we hope to fly home *altogether*.” Ben said, stressing the words *altogether*, and I could see the optimism in his eyes, knowing that it was for my benefit.

“Ah, touring Greece!” my cousin exclaimed. “Yes, this is the best time of the year to visit when there are fewer tourists.”

Manolis smiled at all of us with a totally clueless grin, and I, for one, wasn't going to correct his wrong assumption.

“Well, we should get going. My mom is expecting the shopping back home. Give Stella and the kids hugs and filakia<sup>[5]</sup> from me.” I said, and we gave each other the customary goodbye kisses.

“Don't be a stranger, Ava. My invitation also extends to your guys.”

*My guys.* I know he meant that on a friendly level but were they still my guys since I officially broke up with them?

I smiled at him and watched him leave.

“He seems welcoming,” Ben said, breaking me out of my thought, and I suddenly looked up at him.

“Most Cretans are. It's in their nature. They are also a nosey breed. Thanks for that.”

“Sweetie, our privacy extends only to immediate family. Even then, me and the guys need to work on that with ours too.”

“No!” I snapped. “You extended it to immediate family without my permission because it suited your agenda without a second thought to my feelings.” I snarled at him and walked off to pay the man at the cash register.

Ben took the bag with the paid items from me, and the three of us continued to walk through the town in uncomfortable silence. My mind felt so clouded with a complete overload of emotions and thoughts that, at some point, I knew I had to offload my reflections and talk things out with them.

It wasn't long before I heard someone calling my name nearby.

“Ava? Ava Baros?”

I swiveled my head towards the voice and couldn't believe who it was. The one guy who made last summer in Crete the most enjoyable six weeks I ever had on the island.

He walked up to me with a massive smile on his face.

“Petros! Omigod!” I threw my arms around him and gave him a peck on either side of the cheek.

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## Ben

The three of us just stood and watched the asshole literally grab our woman by the waist and spin her around as he kissed both sides of her cheek.

“Cousins?” Carter stood to my right. His narrowed eyes bore into the guy as if he was already mentally ripping him to shreds.

“No chance,” Oscar muttered. “The kiss lingered too long, even for Brazilian standards,” Oscar stood next to Carter, his eyes glued on the guy, glowering at him.

It was apparent Ava and this new guy were not relatives. My eyes lingered on his one hand that remained on her waist.

As if on automaton, the three of us simultaneously stepped closer to Ava, surrounding her like hawks waiting to pounce on the mutha if his hand dipped half an inch south of her waist. They were talking in Greek, so none of us understood a word they spoke. I caught his eyes cast a glance at us, noticing our glares, and he said something to her. She suddenly stepped away from his hand on her waist.

*Good girl.*

“No, not my bodyguards.” Ava switched immediately to English and gave him the sweet innocent smile she is known for.

No fucking way. This asshole, whoever the fuck he is, doesn't get to share her smile. He doesn't get to share her at all. And one thought stands out amid all these crazy things spinning around my mind, no fucking way are we leaving the island without Ava. I'll stay here and buy a goddamn house if I have to because the way this guy observes her, it's evident that



he won't hesitate to fly in and scoop her up as soon as our feet are out of here.

"Guys," she turned to us, still grinning, "this is my old friend Petros."

There's more to this story. I know it. There's been a shared intimacy between them in the past. They look way too cozy with each other, and I don't like it.

"Come on, Ava," he tried to pull a frustrated teasing attitude, "now I'm just in the old friend zone? Maybe *ex-best lover* or *best lover ever had*. Something with a nicer ring, darling."

He gives her a big flashy smile, and I want to take his mouth and shove it up his ass.

*Is this dude for real?* I stare at the guy wondering if he's a masochist because I'm ready to serve him on a platter to the seagulls at the beach.

Oscar glances at me, our eyes meet, and he wants to take the asshole down. Carter was in his zone, glaring, ready to dive on the SOB just for ogling our woman.

Fuck, I need to get it together to prevent these two from killing the dude. They're fully capable of doing that. I remember what they did to her douchebag ex after he assaulted her.

"Well, that would be inappropriate." I hear Ava say. "Considering these are my boyfriends, introducing you as an old friend would be better than sticking you in the summer fling category."

Yeah, asshole, *our* girlfriend.

I'm also sensing she's saying that for his benefit. She didn't miss the scowling looks on our faces when she glanced back at us.

He appeared stumped as he gawked at us. I can only begin to imagine what's going on in his puny mind.

"Boyfriends as in all three?" I watched him swallow hard. Yeah, she's *ours*.

She gives him an easy-going smile, “Yup, dating all three.”

That’s right, and there’s no extended invitation to our party of four.

I’m pretty sure Ava sensed the bloodthirst quench we were suddenly developing for this guy, especially as it was clear he was seeking to ignite whatever past they once had.

We were protecting our dominion, and she was maintaining it.

There was complete silence as he stood digesting what Ava just divulged, looking at each of us who glared back at him. Then out of nowhere, his mouth slowly curved into a giant grin, and he reached out to her, affectionally caressing her upper arm.

“Bravo, Ava, you always had a good appetite!”

*The fuck?*

Ava must have realized the steam coming from the three of us as she quickly stepped back towards me as a sign for us to back down. If he didn’t touch her again, I might consider it. That’s our woman he’s feeling up.

“Are you still working at the club?” she asked, quickly changing the topic.

“I run it now! I just arrived in Crete this morning ahead of the summer season. I also run the sister club in Athens, but we will shut it down for the summer. It’s opening night tonight. You should come.” He looks at the three of us, “Bring your friends too.”

Thanks, asshole, but that will be a firm no.

“Oh, that might be fun,” Ava says, and I hope she isn’t serious. “I wanted to bring them into town to show them my old haunts. Perhaps we’ll pass by if we have time.”

“Have you taken them to Super Paradise yet?” He leashed out another cocky grin at her, and he’s more than just annoying me.

Ava's cheeks suddenly burst into a pale crimson color as she struggled to find words. None of us missed her abrupt demeanor, and I could see Carter discreetly taking out his phone and searching for the place on a search engine.

"No, Petros, that was your favorite place, if I recall. Not mine."

Her voice was firm, but I could tell there was a vague awkwardness in her tone. It was clear she felt uncomfortable with this topic, and now I was dying to find out what this place was.

"Oh, come on, darling, you enjoyed it." He winked at her again. I was going to pull his eyelids from his face any moment now. This asshole was seriously testing my patience.

I looked at Carter to see if he got any results. I could see his entire face suddenly darkened. *Fuck!* Whatever this place was, it was clear it would not be to our liking knowing she went there with him.

Ava shook her head and gave him a scornful smile; he was an idiot if he couldn't see that he had just lost major footing with her.

It seems he does and changes his tactic, "So what you doing here? Are you back for a holiday?"

"Visiting my parents," she says with a strained voice and clears her throat. I can now tell she's also become a little reserved because she's not going to admit to him that she fled from us to be here.

"Introducing them to the boyfriends?" He defiantly exaggerated the 's' and then chuckled.

Is this Greek ass mocking us?

"Doing a bit of sightseeing, you know," Ava replies, but I notice her voice is a little frayed. "What one usually does when they go on holiday."

She's not giving away any details about herself, which means he's of no significant importance to her, and I relax a little. I know my girl well.

Suddenly, Oscar tackles Carter and shuffles him to the side, dragging him away discreetly. I must have missed his attempted lunge at the dude. Thank the fuck, Oscar caught him before he beat the shit out of this guy. It would not have ended well. Whatever he found online about that place consumed him with enough rage to want to destroy him.

I stayed with Ava watching Oscar, still holding Carter and walking him away from us. She observed them from the corner of her eye as they continued onwards, while this guy remained utterly oblivious to what had just exchanged. Oscar has just saved this asshole's life.

Ava has reverted to talking Greek with the guy; he laughs and says something back. I step into her side, claiming my woman as my arm slips around her lower waist, casually dropping my hand on her hips. It's a clear sign that she's taken, and I'm glad she leans her hips towards my side to solidify my rights over her.

Then he turns to me, "It was very nice to meet you, uh," he holds his hand out.

"Ben," I say, letting go of Ava to take his hand, devolving into an alpha-male tug-of-war, but I give it to the MOFO; he holds his own well.

Earlier my attention focused on his intentions and demeanor, but now I observe him more carefully.

Of course, Ava has a type.

Tall, athletic, well-built, tattoos.

He tried to up the ante on me by attempting to put his other hand on my shoulder, but that didn't fare well for him as I let go of his hand fast enough, which knocked him a little off-balance.

The corners of his eyes crinkled for a brief second, and then he turned his attention back to Ava, "I don't know where the other two boyfriends are, but I hope to see you all at the club."

He says something to Ava in Greek again and leans in to kiss her cheek, but within seconds my arm is claiming her

waist again, and as he tries to put his hand around her, all the dude grabs is my arm. Ava doesn't try to evade me either.

Realizing he won't win this, he lets go, looking confused. He throws out another cocky megawatt smile at her and backs away. And just to even the score with me, he gives her a wink and blows her a kiss. I'm about to pounce on him, but Ava shoves her arm into my chest and waits until he's moved far along the street.

"Don't you dare," she warns crossly, "and before you ask, he was just a summer fling. It happened way before I met you. Did you expect me to be a virgin when we met?"

"Ava." I start, but she holds her hand up to interrupt me.

"No excuses. How often have I put up with women flinging themselves at all of you? Ex-girlfriends, ex-flings, random women. Sure, I get possessive, it's natural. But there's a huge element of trust, and I don't act like some crazy banshee trying to beat everyone up."

"Ava, it's different with guys." If I say she's mine, she will explode all over me, so I avoid using those exact words. "Perhaps you missed the memo, but this guy was obviously trying to rile us up."

Her brows snapped together, "I know that! And, he succeeded, and that doesn't say much for you three, does it?"

I stood there knowing full well to remain silent because our position to mark our woman was well and justified. Call it a male thing, but there is such a thing called mate guarding.

She knows what I'm thinking. She looks into my eyes and sees exactly how possessive I am, and I don't give a shit. This is my woman and me, and I won't just let some asshole think he could walk right in and carry on like he still stands a chance. I sneer at the thought.

"Let's go find the other two," she says and walks off, hot under the collar, towards the direction of where we last saw Oscar and Carter heading.

The old town is a maze you can seriously get lost in, but Ava seems to know her way around, and thankfully we find

them sooner rather than later.

“What’s going on here? Carter?” she asks with obvious concern, her eyes darting like crazy over him, waiting for an explanation.

The guy looked like he was about to blow a fuse. It was good that Oscar reacted just in time and removed him from that situation.

After a deep breath, he let out a long sigh and stepped closer to her.

“I don’t get you, Ava.” Carter’s voice is sharp and vexed.

I don’t like his tone and how he’s addressing her, I get in between them and push my hand on his chest.

“Calm down, buddy. Turn it down a notch with our woman,” I say with some concern.

Carter is usually a control freak with almost no shortcomings that could knock him off his absolutist stool. But there is a flaw to his monocratic mind. Ava is his Achilles heel, and if something from her overwhelms him, it will undoubtedly find its way to this flaw and knock him down, and without wanting it, aggressive words begin to free fall from his mouth that might be considered offensive.

He nods at me, recognizing the truth in my words, and relaxes his tense expression.

He stared at her, full of frustration and anxiety. She certainly took him out of his comfort zone. He possesses a look that only a few people get to see, and it’s not a privilege to bear witness of. It’s dark, deadly, cold. Thankfully it’s not currently aimed at Ava, but I saw it earlier with her ex.

“We had a talk earlier about how that topless era affected you. But now I find out you went to nudist beaches last year with your boyfriends.”

*Nudist beaches? With that asshole?* Is that what this place was? I automatically crossed my arms over my chest and stared at her. I think we all deserved an explanation, and Ava better not even try to keep mum about this topic.

Ava pursed her lips together before she opened her mouth again to talk.

“No, it’s not what you think. You all have it wrong, and I’m sorry it came out that way. But I don’t want to stand here and discuss it on the street.”

There was the uncomfortable silent walk back to the SUV for all of us. Ava denied going nude publicly, but there was still an untold story, and we deserved to know it. As soon as we were all inside the vehicle, I switched the car on and ran the a/c but kept the car in neutral.

Ava sat shotgun and turned her entire body to face us.

“Petros was a summer fling I had last summer before flying out to New York. I was here the whole summer. I met him at a club; he was the bartender there. We hooked up fast and had a summer romance. That’s all it was. But we spent a lot of time together, and I got to know him well. We felt comfortable with each other. I knew I was leaving; he knew that as well. We never kept in contact, but we ended on friendly terms. Super Paradise Beach is a nudist beach outside the town. He took me there a few times, attempting to get me to go nude, he goes there a lot, but I’m really not into that kind of thing, not in public around other people. He was unsuccessful. I never even lowed a bikini strap, let alone take any item off.”

She looked specifically at Carter, “I made that mistake before as a teenager. I have no interest in doing that again. I don’t have it in me to take my clothes off in front of strangers. Trust me when I say I didn’t sunbathe nude with him. But that’s not to say I didn’t fuck him. You guys also had other people before me, so expect the same with me. You need to play fair with me. When Petros said I enjoyed Super Paradise Beach, he referred to the few times he took me there after the club closed, when there was no one there. We’d go skinny dipping, make out in his car, and have sex afterward because that is what people do when they hook up. After I left Crete, we never kept in touch. I never asked for his number or e-mail address. But we had fun, and it was a nice summer memory. Petros always treated me well, and I honestly don’t have

anything bad to say about him. And he didn't miss the possessive, dominating, idiotic way you guys acted around me. He was riling you up on purpose for his entertainment. As smart as you are, you can also be very silly boys."

Again, I have to reiterate our stance; we were marking clearly what was ours. Oscar, Carter, and I understand our bro-code. Something Ava will never understand, but I'm not going to open this topic with her.

"So, do you like skinny dipping?" Oscar asked, breaking the silence between us. There's an apparent breezy tone in his voice, but his eyes lighting up gave his feelings away.

"When there's no one else around, yeah, it can be a lot of fun." She replied with a devilish smile.

I smiled at Oscar and Carter, and they returned it with a furtive one that indicated the three of us were in agreement with the obvious thought that passed between the three of us.



## Chapter 16

### Ava

We didn't stick around town and instead drove back home only to discover a note my mom left me saying she, Dad, and Aunt Jenny were visiting Aunt Eleni in Georgiopoli and would be home just before dinner time. She also wrote that she had made mango ice cream and waffle cones and to help ourselves.

"Anyone up for homemade ice cream?" I asked, taking the container out of the freezer and getting the scooper out from the drawer.

"No, sweetie, the frozen yogurt earlier was enough for me. I'm going for a run on the beach instead."

I watched Ben quickly glance at the other two and walk out of the kitchen.

"I'm going to join Ben," Carter announces and takes off.

"None for me, sunshine, thanks," Oscar says. I was half expecting him to join the other two, but he heads out to the terrace, flops into the large wicker armchair, takes his phone out, and starts scrolling.

I join him outside a minute later with my ice cream cone and sit on the wall overlooking the street below. It's mid-afternoon, and the usual serenity and quietude surround us in the neighborhood. I hear the odd dog bark in the distance, a scooter backfiring somewhere further away, but it's the constant chirping sound of the crickets, which for the life of me, I have no idea where they hide, yet it sounds like there are hundreds of them closeby. They can go on for hours, every single afternoon.

Most houses in this particular area of Rethymno are holiday homes. They will start to fill again once the full summer hits, and more people will eventually trickle in, especially in August when most of Greece takes their annual

vacation and leave the mainland for one of the islands. I have cousins from Crete who work year-round in Athens and return every August to visit their parents.

I hear the front door shut below us and lean back a little over the wall to watch Ben and Carter below do a quick stretch before they take off down the road. They're shirtless, wearing board shorts, and looking awesome. Their bodies are broad and well-muscled, and the afternoon sun is glowing off their skin. My eyes cannot peel away from the two men and remain glued, admiring them until they jog off, and I see them no more.

"Sunshine, watching you eating that cone like that gives me a serious hard-on."

My attention draws to Oscar, and I see him adjust himself.

"I'm eating ice cream on a cone. How else do you expect me to eat it."

"Babe, the way you use your tongue, it's next level toxic."

Shit, I must have been subconsciously doing something with my tongue as my eyes and mind stood frozen over watching Carter and Ben.

"It's called licking an ice cream," I say with a touch of sarcasm.

"It's seducing an ice cream and mocking me because baby, I've had blue balls since you left me. I've been hard since I arrived here; I think of nothing but you, sunshine. Thinking all the time about the things I want to do to you. Fuck, and that use of your tongue, swirling it around the cone, licking, sucking..." his voice trails off, and I see him adjust himself again. His smile has a devilish charm, and it does something to me that feels like a pinch between my thighs, forcing me to clench my core. That kind of sexy grin Oscar gives me should be illegal.

Something wildly wicked and amusing passes my mind. Since Oscar thinks I'm acting seductive on purpose, he has no

clue what I can do with my tongue and an ice cream cone when I'm entirely conscious of my actions.

Oh boy, he is so going to regret triggering me.

I smirk as I casually lick the cone, making sure I keep eye contact with him. I lick the tip, circle my tongue over it, and then suck it until I hear him groan.

I swivel my tongue around the ice cream again and drag it up to the tip and down again.

"Fuck, babygirl," I hear him breathe out and then the sound of a zipper, and my eyes follow down to his crotch to see what he's doing. His hand is down his shorts, rubbing himself.

I stop what I'm doing.

My eyes are fixed on him, like a drug addict who has been trying to detox and is suddenly tempted to go off the wagon, I can't look away, and it's getting me all hot and flustered. Watching him is making my panties wet, and there isn't a damn thing I can do about that. My mind is dancing and flowing like hot lava with erotic thoughts because I know what kind of delicacy lies in his hand.

He only needs to look at me, and he's noticed how charged up I've become. He grabs the hem of his shirt and pulls it off. My eyes go wide at his beautifully tattooed torso, and I know right there that I'm a goner.

Oscar stands up, unfastens his shorts, and pushes them together with his boxers down his legs all in one go. He stands there under the vine pergola, magnificent and naked in all his glory, like the God he is.

I sigh loudly as soon my eyes land on his wonderous peen already shining with pre-cum, and throw all caution to the wind. I've had that wonderous dick before, and I know all the nasty things it can make me do because it's the goddamn devil.

Forbidden, illegal, and immoral. Three words that describe what having sex with Oscar is like.

Fuck, I really miss him. Especially him inside me.

He's a man filled with lust. It's deep and addictive, and that look he's giving me right this moment makes my legs want to buckle. My cheeks burn with all the wicked things I want him to do to me.

As if feeling my raw, hungry desperation, a cocky grin returns to his luscious lips, and he saunters over to me, his eyes all glassy with pure lust.

"No fucking way do you think you can get away with that. Broken up or not, Ava, I'm going to get you naked, taste that sweet pussy of yours, tease you, work you up, have your pussy grind against my face and then fuck you until we're both totally spent."

I swallow hard; I don't care about taking the moral high ground. Not when the heavens throw this sex god with the devil's cock at me.

I have no control, no self-preservation. Take me as you must.

"Please, do so," I manage to squeak out.

He takes the forgotten, melting ice cream cone from my hand and puts it into a nearby planter, then lifts me to stand up with him, takes my hand, and licks the ice cream from my fingers, slow and seductive. His eyes don't leave mine as he does so. I've never had my fingers sucked quite like that before, and oh....

*Fuck, fuck, fuck*, he's just discovered another erogenous zone on my body.

He finds the hem of my sundress and slowly lifts it over me. His hands skim my bare skin, creating a titillating effect on my core. He tosses the dress aside, his eyes never leaving mine, and unhooks my strapless bra, allowing it to freefall to the floor.

"Fuck," he breathes out slowly as he observes me. He tilts my chin up, and it's almost as if his eyes become lost with mine. "My beautiful, Ava. I've missed you, woman."

My eyes and hands drift to his shoulders; they have a mind of their own as they softly caress his ridged lean

muscles, all the way down his inked six-pack to his v-muscle, and stroke his beautiful hard arousal.

How I missed all this.

All of him. Everything that we once had.

I glance up and see him watching me; our eyes lock, and that's when I lean up to him and take his lips. A molten, passionate kiss. A mixture of wild and raw with no inhibitions. There was a time long ago before we happened when I fantasized about kissing him, and the reality is much...ahh... so much better.

I wrap my arms around his neck. His hands are suddenly under me, scooping me up in his arms, and carries me through the kitchen to my bedroom, closing the door with the back of his foot.

Upon laying me down on my bed, he climbs onto it and proceeds to kiss the inside of my leg, all the way up my thigh, lingering there, teasing me.

“How wet are you for me, babygirl?”

“Check for yourself,” my voice is raspy.

He looks up at me and grins, pleased. But he doesn't do what I want; instead, he climbs up further, kissing my torso until he reaches my breasts. He grabs one with one hand, and with the other, he leans in and takes my nipple into his mouth. I hear him groan deeply against my breast, and I lay my head back onto my pillow and close my eyes, enjoying the exciting sensations going through my body and mind.

His tongue starts to circle my peak, and I let out a light moan arching my back, letting him know I need those lips elsewhere.

“Patience, horny little one,” he murmurs against my breasts.

The carnal need to feel him inside me blew up like a hand grenade the minute his hand slipped inside my panties.

“Fuck, babygirl, you're so wet for me.”

“Oh god!” is all I can say as I bite my lip to stop my cries.

He immediately moves lower to remove the last remaining garment on me.

“I’m going to fuck you with my mouth now, grind as much as you want on my face, babe.”

He spreads my legs wide, and his head dives straight to my core as his hands move under me and grabs my ass firmly.

Struggling to keep myself from exploding again as soon as his tongue finds my clit, I fist the bed sheet as tight as possible and cry out.

I open my eyes and see him watching me, measuring my progress as his mouth and tongue work like a machine on me. Lucky for me, Oscar is not just a talented lover but also a performer, and he is always hellbent on blowing my mind.

*Oh, sweet bejesus!* I can feel his tongue going to town, getting as deep as he physically can, and I’m about to self-combust.

As soon as he adds his finger to work, that’s it. I lose all self-control as the spasm ricochets through me. I open my eyes to find him still gazing at me, a slight smirk working its way up his mouth.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” I ask curiously, out of breath, as I slowly come down from heaven.

“Because I’m not done with you. Flip over.”

I do as he says.

“You’ve been wearing a thong,” he says, surprised.

I guess he noticed the lack of tan lines.

“Occasionally, I do.”

I mean, it’s my ass, not my breasts or pussy, that’s exposed.

“You have a gorgeous ass. You should show it off more,” he says as he gently caresses and squeezes my butt cheeks.

I'm aware I may have gained some weight in the last week I've been here, nibbling here and there on my mom's delicious cooking. Don't get me started on the frozen Greek yogurt; that stuff is lethal. The guys haven't said anything about my weight gain, so maybe they haven't noticed.

"So plump and juicy," I hear him say.

"And fat," I add.

"Fuck no, sunshine. Don't ever think that." He slaps my butt.

"You're just desperate for sex, you'd say anything."

I hear him sneer, "You think that, babygirl?"

Suddenly his hands spread my legs, and his wet finger traced the inside of my cheeks, past my hole, finding my slit, and pushed one finger inside me. I cry out with pure pleasure.

"Nah, girl. Your desperation for my cock is pretty loud and crystal clear."

I lift my ass up, wanting more, except he withdraws his hand and leaves me confused.

"Why did you stop?"

"Say it. I have a beautiful ass."

"You have a beautiful ass."

Oscar chuckles, "No, babe. I mean you."

"Oh. Why?"

"Because I need you to know how beautiful and sexy you are to me. I won't stand for bringing yourself down."

"I have a beautiful, sexy ass. And I need your dick inside me."

He slaps my ass again; I like it when he does that.

"I don't have a sexy ass?"

Slap again, and I gasp with pleasure this time.

"I have a juicy and sexy, firm ass that loves to be smacked and kissed and occasionally fucked."

“That’s right, my sexy goddess.” He kisses my butt cheek and flips me over.

“I want to see your beautiful face when I thrust inside you and watch you come apart again,” his eyes darting all over my face.

A throaty moan escapes me as soon as he plunges his massive dick inside me, filling me so completely that it steals my breath from my lungs. I gaze up at him, feeling him thrust deep inside me; his handsome face, those light amber-colored eyes, and his heavy concentration on my face watching me as my breathing and moaning get louder.

“Fuck, that feels good,” he groans, “I’m getting close, babe.”

He slips his hand between us to my clit.

Suddenly that feeling takes over me. The one where I’m about to shatter into a million pieces any second now. I cry out with my release, my body tensing up as my orgasm washes over me, my body convulsing, and I feel like I’m being pulled under.

He groaned like a ravenous beast, “Christ, you’re gorgeous when you come. Tell me you enjoy this. Tell me this is what you want.”

“Yes, I do, Oscar,” my eyes watered up. “I want all of this. I want you, Oscar ....”

A possessive growl unfurls deep inside him as he thrusts hard a couple of times before releasing himself with whispered curses and kisses on the inside of my neck.

He’s barely finished coming as he repositions himself and sinks between my legs again.

I look down at him, and our eyes meet once more.

“I’m not yet quite finished, my love,” he sinks his face into my core and starts all over again...

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Oscar



“You’re so wet for me, baby. I want to make you feel good.” I mutter into her pussy. It’s mixed with her pussy juices and my cum. I don’t care that I’m lapping it all up, *fuck*, I’m just going to fill her up soon enough again.

She’s grinding herself against my face; I love it when she does that. That’s my good girl; she’s following my commands.

“Touch yourself, baby.”

As soon as I feel her fingers slide down, I lift my face from her. “That’s it *benzinho*<sup>[6]</sup>, *fuck*, let me see you circle faster.”

I hear her moan lightly, and I slip a finger inside her. *Você me deixa com tesão.*<sup>[7]</sup> Good girl. I want her so bad. I stare at her eyes, and her moans sound like music to my ears. My cock is hard, and I’m getting impatient. I want more.

Come on my fingers, babe. How badly I want to fuck you.

I add another finger inside her. At this rate, I can probably stretch her more and fit four fingers inside her; instead, I bend down and lick her clit as she continues to rub and draw circles on it.

She’s suddenly moving faster, bucking her hips, and I match the movement of my fingers, add a thumb over her clit, and press down hard.

She cries out with pleasure, and I feel her convulsing, her tight wall clenching.

That’s good. Soak my fingers like a good girl.

I wrap my arms around her, my body against hers so she can feel how hard I am right now. My pre-cum gliding on her skin. *Fuck*, she feels so soft, so good.

I move my head to her chest, circle my tongue around her nipple, suck on her peaks, and slowly move my mouth upwards to kiss her neck, jaw, and lips.

God, her lips feel so good, so plump and soft. I move upwards and kiss the tip of her nose and then her forehead. I love every inch of this woman.

“Você é Linda.”<sup>[8]</sup>

I meet her forehead with mine and breath out heavily.

“Estou completamente apaixonado por você<sup>[9]</sup>,” I whisper softly.

“Tell me more, Oscar.” She breathes out.

I dip closer to kiss her ear and whisper as my hand sinks to her slit.

“Você é tudo pra mim.<sup>[10]</sup> Meu Docinho.<sup>[11]</sup> Você é o mundo para min.<sup>[12]</sup>”

She arches her back up and hisses lightly. I know speaking in Brazilian turns her on.

“Tell me how much you want me to fuck you,” I whisper again in her ear as I gently kiss her neck and rub my finger along her slit.

“I need you inside me. Fill me up, Oscar. God, fuck me like you mean it. Show me how much you want to possess me, own me, make me your goddamn slave.”

Fuck, when she talks like that, she owns my cock.

I press my hard dick against her slit and slide myself inside her. I can feel her tight walls clench against me. Fuck, it feels good.

I slip my hand between us again to her clit. I want her to come while I'm inside her. She groans loudly.

“Be loud, baby, show me how much you love my cock inside your tight pussy.”

I fuck her hard into the mattress, and I can feel her clenching. It feels so damn good being inside her. Fuck, baby, don't stop. That's so good, so fucking good. I rock against her, grinding, moaning. Keep going, baby.

Rocking my hips in and out of her titillating pussy; she feels so good. Come on my cock, babe. Faster, faster. That's good, my good girl. Meu amor.<sup>[13]</sup>

“You feel so good, baby.”

She wraps her arms around my hips and digs her nails into my ass cheeks.

I'm getting close, that's it. Fuck. I want to fuck her harder. I feel her clenching again. She screams out my name; that's it, good girl.

I'm yours, Ava, and you're mine.

God, this feels so good. “Fuck, I'm coming,” I grunt; that feels so good. “Do you feel me pump inside you?”

“Yes,” she moans, “Oh God, Oscar. Yes. Omigod!” She screams once more and digs her nails deep into my skin as she climaxes again.

“Fuck, you're amazing, babe.” I look down at her, our eyes meet, and we smile at each other.

I'm never letting her go again.

She's mine.

Fuck, I'm hers.

## Chapter 17

### Carter

It's day two in Greece, and just when I think we're making progress with Ava, she shuts us down faster than a bolt of lightning. Earlier at the market, we felt we made some development, but she suddenly turned back to being angry and scorned Ava.

It's hot and cold with her, and we should know how to deal with it by now. But unlike other times, she has never written a letter saying she was dumping us and fleeing halfway across the world. This time it's different, and I'm struggling with how to handle it.

We all are.

I'm done being angry at her; now, I just want her back. Months ago, she wormed her way beneath my skin, and now I have no intention of letting her go. Ava belongs to me.

Watching her break down yesterday afternoon after we arrived tugged at my heart, and it was probably when we all realized how serious this was and how much more it affected her than she was telling us. Ava's hurting, but she's unable to tell us what she wants, and this worries me because usually, she's good at expressing stuff.

It's evident she wants to talk with us, and something in her mind prevents it. Ben thinks we should give her space, but not too much. He feels that being here and reminding her of how great we've always been as a unit will help her open up to us more. We just need her to do it; once she does, we'll know how to deal with it.

But the big step needs to be taken by Ava first. We're here for her for every step she takes that will finally lead her to tell us what she wants.

Both Oscar and Ben feel positive that Ava will do the right thing, and they base it on the fact that she still looks at us how she always has. Her face is full of desire and lust, and when I see her looking at any of us, it's obvious there's a ton of attraction. But I also know her well enough to realize Ava can be stubborn, and when she gets her head stuck on an idea or belief, she will contemplate it until it wears her out. So unlike the other two, I'm stuck on the fence about what she decides.

Ben and I ran along the beach this afternoon, starting from Ava's parents' home and all the way down the boardwalk to the old fortress. I mentioned to Ben the medieval fortress is probably something Oscar would get a kick out of visiting since he loves old cultural architecture, and we agreed to visit the place before we leave Crete.

"We should rent a boat," Ben said as he looked out at the speedboat rentals by the marina. "Some skiis too, and take it out for a morning run on the sea."

I looked at him and wondered how serious he was taking this trip. "This isn't a damn holiday."

"I know that. I'm not a fucking fool. But it's an opportunity to get Ava alone. If it's not her parents at home, there's almost always someone popping in, her aunt or another neighbor. Her parent's home is like this freaking visiting intermittence, and they don't even lock the front door during the day! Then if we take her into town, she's gonna run into a cousin...."

"Or ex-boyfriend," I add.

Ben casts me a brow.

"Bro, don't even go there. He seriously pissed me off."

"He pissed all three of us off."

"We should just put a list together of all of Ava's exes and then invite them to our fight club."

I sniggered with some satisfaction because I knew they wouldn't survive, "How many does she have?"

“I don’t know, actually. But it’s interesting how they tend to pop up at the oddest places.”

I chuckled and shook my head, “True that.”

Before returning, we decided to take a quick dive into the sea and air-dried ourselves on our walk back up the hill to the house.

Over the last two days, I’ve seen a lot of people go and come into this house. Some stop for a coffee and chat, others say they are in passing and stay for a brief few minutes. Then other visitors might sit on the terrace under the pergola with Ava’s father playing backgammon and drinking iced ouzo, which seems to be the game and drink of choice in Greece. Ava claims she can play it but not very well, yet I’ve seen her and her dad at it, and I’m pretty sure she’s got a big competitive streak.

But what completely stopped Ben and I in our tracks as we approached the house this late afternoon was finding a black and white goat by the door with a leather collar and bell attached, tied with a long rope to the front gate.

“What the fuck?” Ben looks at it perplexed.

“It’s a goat,” I reply, still staring at it.

“I know it’s a goat! What the fuck is it doing here? Is it someone’s pet?”

“No idea, bro. These islanders are getting odder by the minute.”

We maneuvered around the animal after it bleated at us a few times. Of course, the front door was unlocked, and after a few tries, I managed to shut it without getting the excited goat escaping inside.

Oscar had just come out of the shower as we approached our room. He seemed to be unusually pretty cheerful.

“You know about the goat out front?”

“What goat?”

“Dude, there’s a goat with a collar and bell tied to the front gate by the door!”

Oscar looked at me with excitement, “No way! I think Ava’s parents have some visitors, but I haven’t been upstairs.” He tossed his towel on the bed and put his boxers on.

Ben grinned, “Maybe one of Ava’s exes found out she’s back on the island and brought her a gift.”

The three of us had a good chuckle.

I looked at Oscar; there was a sparkle in his eye, which I hadn’t seen in a while.

“What’s going on with you? Did you and Ava talk?”

“Talk? Yeah, we talked. Like exchanged a few words here and there. But not so much.”

I watched him get dressed and take the towel to dry off his hair. He seemed alive, and I wondered what happened between him and Ava while we were out.

“Dude, you keep staring at me like that, and I’m gonna think you have the hots for me.” He hung the towel on the hook behind the door.

“Go fuck yourself, cocksucker. I’d rather have blue balls.”

“Speaking of blue balls,” Ben interrupts, “Ava in that white triangle bikini earlier ....”

“Dude, couldn’t take my eyes off her. My dick was in so much pain, had to readjust a few times.”

“Fucking hot!”

“Yeah, but wait till you see her in a thong bikini,” Oscar’s declaration caught our attention, and we both turned to him.

“She wears a thong bikini?” Ben asked, surprised. “How do you know this?”

“She told me.” Oscar grinned.

“I thought she doesn’t like going nude in public?” I asked, a little confused about Ava’s beach behavior.

“Most women wear thongs on the beach these days. You should see Miami and LA; all the women are wearing them.” Oscar declared.

“Most women in Europe go topless too,” I added.

“Wrong,” Ben interjected. “That’s an old misconception. Most Europeans cover up these days.”

Oscar said he was going out to see the goat. Ben told me to use the shower before him as he needed to catch up on some work emails.

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I had just reached the top of the stairs when I heard Ava exclaim loudly.

“MOM!”

I walked into the kitchen to see her red-faced and angry, arguing with her mother.

“Everything okay?” I ask, my eyes darting between the two women.

Ava crossed her arms over her chest, obviously frustrated about something, but I was unsure who it was directed for exactly. I looked out onto the terrace and saw Oscar standing by the grill, having a beer with Ava’s father, and another man I had not yet seen pass through here before.

“You cannot let him leave it here!” Ava gritted through her teeth.

“Darling, you know how he is. He gifted it as a token of appreciation for his favorite cousin. It’ll be an insult to reject it.”

“MOM!” she gritted her teeth.

I walked up to Ava and put my hand on her lower back. “Angel,” I said, wondering what’s got her all riled up, thinking that most likely it had something to do with the goat.

Her mom chuckled and waved her hands in the air, “Alright, alright!” she surrendered. “I couldn’t see your father skinning the animal anyway.”



She grabbed the vegetable platter and went out onto the terrace.

“That goat,” I said, swallowing hard, trying not to burst into laughter.

“Yeah, my cousin Nikolas’s goat.”

When she turned to me, I was glad to see her face slowly relax from whatever irritation had bothered her earlier.

“He’s Manolis’s older brother and a butcher who owns his own farm. He brought the poor animal here as soon as his brother told him I was on the island. News travels fast around here.”

She rolled her eyes.

“Last summer, he brought a rabbit, except it was dead and already skinned. The man is sick as fuck. But apparently, it’s really normal village behavior here. People bring you live animals as a token of appreciation.”

She looked at me, “They expect you to kill the animal and then invite them for a meal.”

“You know my Dad has a cattle ranch, right?”

“Yeah, so?”

“We tend to eat a lot of beef.” I chortled

She pushed me away, and I grabbed her waist and pulled her over, planting a kiss on her cheek.

“You know you’re fucking sexy when you’re hot and flustered, so much so, that my mind goes through all the things I want to do to you. And it isn’t the innocent kind either,” I whispered in her ear.

My lips just brush her neck, and I take in her intoxicating scent. I can smell the vanilla body cream she likes to use, and I love being this close to her.

I let her go quite fast and left her alone, contemplating her thoughts in the kitchen. I joined the others on the terrace. Because when I leaned in as I did, she gasped, expecting more from me, but I wasn’t going to make it so easy for her. She

must have forgotten that between me and the other two, I'm the most resilient one to her allures.

Ava has got to ask me if she wants me to be hers, even if I'm willing to give myself up to her on her first attempt.

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After a second evening of Ava's parents' big feasts, which I now realize must be a Greek trait because even Ava goes all out with the once-a-week meals she cooks back at home, I settled on the terrace with my laptop and tablet to catch up with work.

Everyone else set off to bed, but I stayed on for a couple of hours afterward. Being outside works best for me as I connect to the internet via a space satellite when necessary.

Nighttime here almost reminds me of being back at the ranch. It's pretty remote, and any sound can be heard as an echo from miles away.

"Hey."

I look up and see Ava. She's wearing a white vest and soft grey sleep shorts. I can also see she's braless, and her nipples are as hard as little pebbles.

A light sea breeze passes through, making the hanging windchimes on the pergola create carefree melodic tones as they get caught within the small draft. I glance again at her perky hard nipples with an intense craving to rip that flimsy top apart and run my tongue over those peaks.

"Couldn't sleep?" I ask, closing down the screen I was working on and disconnecting the connection to the system I was linked with.

"Can I be honest?"

I see her take a seat opposite me by the table, and I'm curious about what she wants to chat about.

"Sure," I say, deciding to shut my work down for the night.

“We’ve never really had our own time together. Not like I’ve had with the other two.”

I chose my words carefully because Ava finally decided to open up with me. This is the opportunity I’ve been waiting for from her.

“That’s right. We haven’t.”

“But you made a date for us. I left my phone back in New York, so I can’t access my calendar.”

“I never deleted it. It’s still there.”

“But I’ll probably miss it, as I’m here.”

“I’m here too, with you.”

Silence fills our talk gaps.

“It’s so quiet here, isn’t it?” she says, and I know she’s eager to talk more, but maybe not here. “I’m so used to New York and the noise, and I can’t sleep with all this quietude!”

“Then let’s go for a walk,” I suggest.

“What now? It’s almost 1 am!”

“A light stroll and some fresh air might help you sleep better.”

“Okay,” Ava gets up, and I follow.

After dropping my stuff by the bedroom door, I follow her to the front door.

That damn goat is still here, but thankfully it’s now taken to rest at the corner of the front garden.

Once outside the gate, she asks me, “Where to?”

“We can take the road that leads to the beach.”

“I love the beach at nighttime!”

I smile at her.

“Then let’s go.”

We talked briefly on the way, and I learned that her Aunt Jenny owned the house her parents now live in. She and her

husband built it thinking their son would settle back in Crete after his studies in Athens, except he met a Greek-Australian student there and moved to Sydney with her. Then her father and mom took the opportunity to purchase the house and move here permanently.

I am surprised that they built an entire house for their son and asked her if it was a usual thing Greeks did concerning their children.

“Oh, that’s a very Greek thing to do. Although it’s getting less common these days. But most of the islands have retained many of their older customs.”

“Your mom seems to have settled well,” I say, knowing that her mother wasn’t Greek but seems to have picked up on the language.

“I think she would follow Dad to the moon. She’s going with the flow here, and she and Aunt Jenny are like best friends now.”

“It’s good that she has people to keep company with.”

We chat a little more until we hit the sand, take our slides off, and walk the remaining way until we’re closer to the water and sit down.

The waves gently crash upon the shore, and the moonlight is pretty strong in the clear night sky. The horizon is distinctive, with the soft moonlight reflecting on the water. The bright stars mirror themselves over the water, making a glowing twinkling effect everywhere. There isn’t a soul to be seen or heard anywhere. The sound of the sea and the light warm breeze puts my mind at peace.

“What did you plan on that date for us?”

I realize she meant the one that we never had.

“I planned to show you the real me.”

“I know who you are, Carter.” Even though it was dark, there was enough moonlight to show Ava rolling her eyes. The woman is tenacious. I don’t know how many times I’ve reprimanded her for doing that in the past.

“No, not in the way I want you to know me.” One that I’m not sure you will understand either.

She thinks for a brief minute before replying.

“In a non-angelic way? Like how you whispered in my ear earlier before dinner?”

“Yes, Ava. I want to do things to you that I’ve been hiding because I’m not sure what you’ll think of me afterward.”

“Can you show me?”

I stare at her, wavering.

“Just a small taste?”

I could see her eagerness, but if I do this with her, there’s no turning back after this, and I might ruin it for everyone.

“I want to see you, Carter.”

Her eyes sparkle from the moonlight glinting off the water.

She looks so innocent.

She’s asking for this.

“Remove your clothes, Ava,” I say without further hesitation.

“What?”

“You want a taste of who I am. Then I’ll give it to you.”

“Oh,”

“Remove your clothes. Don’t make me repeat it.”

I can see the surprise in her eyes as she tries to second guess me.

“Or what?”

I narrow my eyes at her. I drift to that place deep in my subconscious mind, where I feel the intense energy and Pandora’s box opening up and taking over my psyche. I become the enforcer, the disciplinarian, and the protector.

“Don’t test what I’m capable of.”

She submits with a nod of realization of what is happening, and seconds later, I see her take her top off. Her large bouncing beautiful round breasts appear before me. Her nipples are like two deep pink rosebuds, hard and excited.

My eyes zone in on the two lotus flowers peaking out from under her breasts, held together by a chain in the center. I know every line and detail of that tattoo like I drew it myself.

I observe the small feather design on her ribs that Oscar recently tattooed on her. They got matching ones. The fucker tattooed his own on his thigh while she watched. I don’t know how anyone can tattoo themselves like he does.

Ava stands up, pulls her shorts down, and then her panties. That colorful butterfly sitting happily at her entrance, daring me to touch her.

*Fuck*, my woman is beautiful, and her body is lethal.

“Now?”

“Stand there.”

I look at the gorgeous body of the woman I’m in love with and see how willing she is to do this for me. I won’t take this too far, it’s only a light version, a kind of teaser, but I can see the willingness in her eyes to participate in whatever I plan for her.

I won’t let the demon out just yet.

“Turn around and bend over.”

She does exactly what I ask of her, and wow, what a beautiful view. I grab her clothes and pull them away from her. I take her panties and rip through the lace, causing the seam to come apart.

“Was that my clothing you’ve just ripped up?”

“You don’t get to talk unless I allow you to.”

She stays silent. I get up from where I’m sitting and smack her juicy ass, and she gasps softly.

“That’s for trying to challenge me.”

I slap her other ass cheek, “that’s for speaking without permission. Now stand up straight and put your hands behind your back.”

She does exactly as she’s told, and I use her panties to tie her wrists together behind her back. I make her lie down on the sand. Those stunning big green almond-shaped eyes stare innocently back up at me.

“Ava, are you okay so far?” I ask tentatively, breaking out of my character because it’ll kill me if I make her miserable. I should have given her a safeword, but I don’t plan to go too far with her.

“I’m turned on, actually,” she says, and her eyes dart towards mine.

I’m floored by her response.

“Open your legs.”

My eyes travel from her face to her breasts, down to her smooth, gleaming wet pussy. Friggin hell, she’s right about being turned on. I want to fuck that butterfly as it stares back up at me, drawing my attention directly to it.

“Wider. A lot wider.”

She opens her legs and shows me her beautiful pink and creamy pussy, and I’m about to relive some of our most precious moments. I crouch down, position myself between her thighs, and hold them open with my knees. My fingers begin to explore her body, one I already know exceptionally well. I first stop at her hard nipples, taking them between my two fingers and pinching them before tugging them and hearing her moan lightly. Her eyes watch my every move until she closes them.

“Eyes open, angel. Keep them open unless I say otherwise.” I say firmly.

I want her to watch me torture her because I will.

I yank her nipples again, and she arches her back in ecstasy and tries to move her limbs, but her wrists are tied

behind her back, and I'm in control of her legs.

Again, I tug and watch her roll her eyes back and then refocus on me. Leaning in, I take a nipple between my teeth, and I can hear her gasp with excitement as I tug and then soothe it with my tongue.

Ava is moaning and lightly bucking her pelvis, and I know she wants to come undone, but I'm in control of this. I lean back up again and stare at her.

She looks at me, wondering what she's done wrong and why I stopped.

“You're not going to come until I tell you to.”

She nods.

“Good girl.” I kiss both nipples.

I sit up, still holding her legs apart with my knees, and run my fingers down her body and around her butterfly, but I don't touch her slit. I can see how glistening her pussy has become, and it's evident she's enjoying this.

Her eyes watch me, begging me. But I refrain for a moment until I quickly pass a finger over her slit and hear her hiss. Her nerves are supercharged.

I do it again, and this time her hissing is mixed with desperate moans. She won't say anything because she knows I'm controlling her happiness right now.

I sweep my finger again, but this time I push it deeper between her folds and slide through it quickly, thanks to her excited pussy juices acting as lube. She moans louder, and I can see the torture in her eyes, but she still won't demand me to release her.

She quickly squeezes her eyes shut, seeking solace from her sexually tormented urges.

As a reward, I stick a finger inside her, and she opens her eyes wide at me, letting me inside her soul. As another reward, I place my thumb on her clit, caressing and circling those highly aroused nerve endings.



She cries out loud. I pump her with more fingers, my thumb tickling her clit. Wanting more, she starts to buck her pelvis again, and I remove my hand.

“Naughty, naughty, angel.”

She looks at me, knowing what she did, and bites her lip realizing her mistake.

I pinch her clit again, and she groans hard. I pull away, and she giggles. I keep doing that until she’s got a wide grin on her face, and I almost smile back.

This woman can affect my stoic attitude even in my Dom mode. How she does it is beyond me.

I slap her pussy, and she lets out a soft moan. She likes it, so I do that again, except this time, I let two fingers slip inside her and remove them fast. She’s so wet; it’s not hard to push through her.

By this point, it’s not hard to make her come either.

Crouching over her, I blow on her pussy, she softly groans, and I blow harder before sweeping my tongue throughout her slit.

I look briefly at her face, and she’s staring right at me, her eyes desperately waiting for my permission to give her what she’s craving.

“Come for me now, angel.”

My mouth returns to her pussy to savor her taste and rest my tongue on her clit, as my fingers fill her. My eyes wander to her face. She’s watching me. I rotate my tongue, and my fingers push deeper, finding the puffy patch of tissue inside her; her eyes open wide as she screams out her orgasm, and I watch her climax and feel her sex convulsing around my fingers and tongue.

She’s panting and out of breath. I wait for a moment to remove my fingers from her pussy and for her to find herself before sitting her up and releasing her wrist binding. I shove the ripped panties into my pocket and wrap my arms around her, caressing her neck and back, smoothing her hair down.

“You did well, my angel. I love you so much.” I whisper in her ear.

“I love you too, Carter. More than anything, I love you.” She murmured. “Now kiss me, please.”

My chest was so tight with emotions. I leaned back to see her face, and there was so much emotion in her gaze, more than I’ve ever seen before, and it struck me speechless. Tonight I gave her a slight glimpse of the darkness that possesses me, and she bore witness to it; she’s accepted me, who I am, right down to the rotten bits.

I take her lips fast, savoring every moment because I know now that home is a person, not a place. Ava is my home.

## Chapter 18

### Ben

The guys woke up early, wanting an early run on the town center's boardwalk before the hot sun hit the island. I planned to join them, but we caught Ava's parents on their way out. They reminded us that they were visiting Loukas's aunt in a nursing home in Heraklion, an hour's drive away, and would be home late afternoon.

I told the guys to go on without me and arranged with them to meet later on at the beach. I stayed back to wait for Ava to wake up in case she wanted to join us.

The terrace with the vine pergola is like outdoor living. I bet one can probably even sleep out here if they wanted to. The neighborhood is light years away from any sign of life, yet one could be in the bustling town center within a thirty-minute walk.

I set up my remote office on the table outside and became so focused on my work that I didn't realize the time until I went to pour myself a glass of water from the bottle and saw it was empty.

It was a quarter to ten, and Ava was unusually still sleeping. She went to bed before all of us last night, so I was getting a little worried as she had yet to make an appearance. I put my stuff away and stood outside her bedroom door to try and hear any sign of life.

I knocked lightly, "Ava, it's me, Ben."

I heard a muffled voice but couldn't quite make it out. Without waiting for an invitation, I opened the door to find Ava cuddled up under a white sheet.

Some of the shutter leaves were a little open, allowing the bright mid-morning light to shine through the shafts, creating

an almost glimmering ethereal effect through the darkened room.

“Ava, honey,” I strode over to her and sat on the edge of the bed next to her.

Her sun-bleached streaked hair was splayed across her face, and I gently brushed several strands away, observing her as she slowly awoke. Her big green eyes opened up and stared at me.

“Ben,” she whispered.

“Yes, darling,” I breathed out, missing her in my arms. Being able to hug her and kiss her whenever I wanted was a privilege to which I no longer had automatic access.

She gave her body a quick stretch as I watched her top rise above her abdomen, giving me a glimpse of her smooth tanned skin. Her innocent eyes caught mine and asked me where everyone was, and I told her.

“What time is it?”

“Almost ten.”

“Really?” she looked at me, surprised. “I can’t believe I slept through the morning. I haven’t been sleeping well lately.”

My hand gently caressed her cheek, “Nor have I, babygirl. You’re what’s missing in my bed.”

She looked up at me, and our eyes locked for a brief moment as she took my hand that was caressing her cheek, brought it down to her lips, and kissed it.

I wasn’t expecting that kind of tender affection, not at the moment with the way our current relationship stood.

She scooted herself over, “lie with me?”

Not one to miss such an opportunity, I kicked off my slides, lifted her sheet, and slid into the bed right up against her. It was a single-sized bed, so I didn’t even have to pull her over to me. Instead, I draped my arm over her entire body and cuddled her close to mine. My heart pounded wildly at the feel of her in my arms.

The carnal need in me to feel her naked body against mine, warm and alive, was itching to come to the surface.

“There’s nothing more I want than to get you naked and taste every inch of you,” I admitted exactly what was on my mind. I had nothing to lose at this point.

She didn’t reply, and I took that as my next cue. I brushed my lips gently against hers, our breath merging. She reacted by sampling my top lip with the tip of her tongue before pulling it between hers and giving it a gentle tug. I pulled her closer to me, held her face in my hands, and feverishly attacked her lips with mine because, damn it, I’ve been craving her for a long time.

I kissed her neck hot and hungrily, feeling her melt in my arms. I reached under her top, grasping her fully rounded breast, cupping it, my thumb stroking her nipple. She buried her fingers in my hair and moaned as my other hand slid between her legs. I slipped two fingers inside her panties and caressed her wetness.

Her hand went searching under the waistband of my shorts, I quickly undid the fastening, and she found what she was looking for and rubbed her way up my length. I could feel her thumb teasing the tip of my cock, using my pre-cum as lube as she slowly slid her hand up and down.

I wanted more and let go of her, pulled myself away, and stood up from the bed, pulling my t-shirt off my body and pushing my shorts and boxers down in one go.

She stared at me with a sly smile, and I knew she was begging me with those beautiful green eyes.

“Like what you see?” I asked, giving her a megawatt smile as I leaned towards where she lay and pulled down her shorts and panties. She removed her top, and I asked her to sit up. I climbed the bed underneath her and positioned her on top of me. She grabbed my length again, stroking the entire length hard until she placed herself over me, and I thrust into her.

She rode me fast and hard, and I gripped her hips, slamming her down against me, forcing myself deeper with

each thrust, my eyes on her butterfly as I watched her body move up and down on my dick. Fuck, it looked and felt so good. She leaned down to momentarily kiss me. We kissed so hard we bit each other. It was raw, toxic, and unbelievably lethal.

My hands slid upwards to cup her large bouncing breasts as she rocked her pussy against my cock, rotating and grinding her hips, using my length for her pleasure. I tugged at her nipples and smiled as I heard her groan.

I could stay like this forever, watching her fuck me.

Instead, I decided it was time to make her come. My fingers finally found their way to her clit, and pinched and tweaked it to utter perfection. She leaned backward, arching her back, grabbing onto her ankles, a maneuver I know she liked because it gave me better access to stroke her and, at the same time, allow me to watch myself fuck her butterfly. I could never grow tired of this amazing woman who was like a mystic deity which only a few privileged were blessed to witness her miraculous intimacies.

Suddenly her nails grip my chest as she leans forward again, and I watch her come undone. She cries out in ecstasy and continues to ride out the aftershocks on my cock, grinding herself against me, urging me to come with her. I thrust my pelvis feverishly, my body tensing with every rapid pounding inside her.

A possessive growl unfurls deep inside me as I pump within the tight, hot walls of her body. My release is like a tidal wave.

“Mine,” I growl.

“I am yours, Ben,” she murmurs softly and collapses over my chest several moments later.

I smile placidly as my hand smooths her hair, running it down her back, caressing her as I hear her purring and breathing softly into my chest. A smile slowly makes its way up my face. I feel like my heart is blooming because this

woman, this goddess, possessed every part of me, right down to my soul.

My life is changed forever because of her.

Real love does that to a person.

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“Let’s get one of those sofa surfers,” I suggest as we look at what’s available at the water sports hut.

“Or a banana float,” Oscar suggests.

The four of us look out towards the water to see the floating toys.

“I’m not doing no fucking banana,” Carter grumbles.

I wonder how the four of us have ever managed to do anything in agreement. I look over to Ava, who has yet to suggest anything.

I realize, *yeah, we have*. She’s the one thing us guys are in harmonious agreement with.

“Babygirl?”

Since our unexpected steamy session earlier, I haven’t tried to touch Ava affectionally, but a million things are floating around in my mind about what happened. What we had was far from sweet. It was raw and carnal, and thinking about it turned me on again.

A sly smile works up that pretty face of hers, and I know that look, she’s got something fun and wicked planned.

“Duo rings. We team up two and two. The first team to fall off loses.”

Here in Greece, I’ve seen more and more of a competitive nature in Ava, and I’m not complaining about it. In fact, I like it. I know when she’s passionate about something, she attacks it with full force, and I’m not talking about us men exactly. When she wanted to learn martial arts, she put her mind and soul into it, and up until she left us recently, she was still receiving instructions under our guidance. She’s come a long way since that event with her ex, which almost destroyed her.

That SOB asshole who attacked her, harmed our woman. We took care of him, well and square. No one lays a hand on our woman the wrong way and expects to walk off unscathed.

I see the other two smiling in agreement with her. The honest truth is that we all have some kind of competitive nature within us. Remarkably, it stops with Ava. There is an understanding between us, she belongs to the three of us, and somehow that power of comprehension seems to be drawn from Ava's natural strength to give each of us what we need.

“Ok, babygirl. I'm playing against you.”

She eyes me carefully, sizing me up, and then playfully smiles. “You're on.”

I take Carter for my team only because I'm not sure how much antagonism is still between them about the Montana incident, and I'm not about to risk what we've been building up since we arrived here in Greece.

“What's the prize?” Carter asks, and I know he's got something evil on his mind.

“You have a suggestion?” I grin at him, he's stoic as usual, but I know my bro and how he works.

“Losers milk the goat; winners get to film it,” he announces, and I have to say, the man is a genius.

“You're on,” Oscar chuckles and swings his arm over Ava's shoulders, claiming her as his teammate.

“If the two of you lose, you'll have to wax your legs,” Ava blurts out, and a small teasing smile creeps upon her face. Oscar bursts into hysterical laughter.

“Oh, I'd like to watch that and film it too. Buttholes included,” he adds, sending Ava into a fit of giggles as she grabs onto his arm, struggling to stand up, and collapses onto him. He grabs her, both laughing like drunken fools. It almost made me laugh just watching them.

“You're on,” I say, and Carter opens his mouth to object. “We'll take it, regardless. If they lose, they have to milk the goat. If we lose- which we won't- we'll wax our legs.”



“And your buttocks,” Oscar adds.

“Wax his buttocks; you’re not getting anywhere near mine,” Carter snarks.

“I’ll wax yours, babe,” Ava winks sweetly at him, and it was difficult to stifle my snigger.

Carter looks at me, shakes his head, and mutters something under his breath.

Oscar takes hold of Ava and lifts her over his shoulder, “It’s me and you, sunshine.” He smacks her ass, and I hear her giggle as he carries her off to get her fitted for a life jacket.

“Each ringo is forty euros for ten minutes,” the leathery dark-tanned man running the water sports center tells Carter and me.

“Are you the manager here?” I ask.

He nods, and I give him my card.

“Keep the tab running. This will go for longer than ten minutes; keep it going until someone falls off.”

The man smiles at us, “A competition?”

I nod.

“Tell the boat driver to make it evil,” I explain, and the man chuckles.

“You sure about that with the girl?”

We turn to see her over by ringos with Oscar, they seem to be talking strategy, and I have no idea what kind of tactic they can have with this competition. It’s a *hold-on and stay-on* type of affair. Then again, it wouldn’t surprise me if they’ve both done ringos before and know some technique for weight distribution.

“If there’s anyone I’m most sure about, it’s her,” Carter replies, and I smile at him in agreement.

Ava’s very resilient regarding strength, stamina, and determination. We’ve each trained her for months. She can

hold herself up well in a fight, she'll be determined to win this today, but she won't, not when she's up against Carter and me.

But then there's Oscar, and that's when maybe I reconsider. I know what he's like when he's in the cage. The man is a bit of a legend in the underground New York fighting scene; he never loses. He'll be hell-bent on not losing today, especially for Ava.

When the man goes off with my credit card, I look over to see where Ava is. I see her with Oscar choosing life jackets. Using the opportunity that they are out of earshot, I pull Carter a little away from everyone.

“Me and Ava. This morning. She was willing and able.”

He lifts an eyebrow, “You mean...”

I grin because it was fucking amazing too.

He smirks, taking my grin for what it was worth.

“Yup. She initiated it. How have you and Oscar been doing? Any luck?”

He nods, “I spoke with Oscar earlier. They both had their moment yesterday when we went for a run. Although I'm not sure who initiated it, he says she was eating her ice cream provocatively. You know how he is; the horny bastard will pounce on Ava without needing any excuse.”

I chuckle, remembering their shower incident when she moved in with us.

“She found me last night.” He admits. “I was working late out on the terrace; she said she couldn't sleep, so I suggest a stroll on the beach. After that, it was all her initiative.”

I nod my head, “Your plan definitely worked. She's had private time with each of us and felt comfortable initiating whatever she wanted to have with us. She's ready to have that talk now. She wants us and this relationship.”

“When do you suggest we have this talk?”

“After lunch, let's suggest we visit the beach by her parent's home. It's pretty quiet and empty there in the

afternoons.”

“Good plan.”

We look over to Ava and observe the male shop assistant attempt to fit her with a life vest. Oscar moves in and takes over. She looks up at our man and smiles tenderly at him. We are super possessive of her to a fault, but it's pretty evident that she likes that kind of attention from us.

That sly vixen can't resist us, no matter how hard she tries to convince herself it's over between us. She took each of us in secret, all within twenty-four hours, and I know she's aware she'll never get three men like us willing to share the world with her.

I am sure she will come home with us now.

## Chapter 19

### Ava

I'm not sure what's going on between the guys and me. I've had them each in a row, and as I stare at them right now, my insides are still panting for them. They're standing on the beach shirtless, their broad, well-muscled, tattooed chests out on display, and their handsome faces are hidden behind Ray-Bans.

They're my men.

Or were.

I'm not sure anymore.

Confusion seeps inside me. What am I doing? I'm jumping from dick to dick, and I'm supposed to be broken up with them. I initiated this break-up, and I'm secretly going around and doing intimate stuff with them.

I wonder if they compared notes with each other? They do almost everything else together, even fuck their girlfriend, often at the same time.

They must have spoken about me, and I'm dying to know what they're saying. What do they think of this entire scenario? We're like broken up and not broken up.

Last night with Carter, we certainly moved our relationship up a notch. I did things I know I would never have attempted with anyone else. In fact, were it anyone else, I would have been running for the hills. But with these guys? I'd do anything and everything. Because I trust them, they would never force me to do anything I feel uncomfortable doing.

So if I feel this way about them, why do I feel so withdrawn and scared of telling them what I want? I've shared everything with them, and Carter shared himself with me last night. I saw inside his soul, and while it's dark, it's also very

loving and passionate. He gave me himself last night and let me see his internal scars. He's willing to give everything to me, and it's something I don't think he's ever shared with anyone else.

“Sunshine, ready for this?”

I turn to Oscar as I climb the large green and white air ring in the shallow water and take my place, holding the handles on either side of my shoulders.

“You bet ya!” I'm excited.

He climbs the ring but leans over and plants a big wet kiss on my lips. Instinctively I kiss him back, and he takes my move to linger on a little. His tongue lightly brushes the tip of mine before he leans away from me and positions himself next to the two handles.

“You know we're gonna beat the other two.”

I look over at them on their ring and grin. “Yup!”

I'm focused and fully charged to win.

The boat driver pulls us out slowly until we're way past the red buoys in the sea that marks the swimmer's area.

“Let's do this!” Oscar yells enthusiastically.

“Yes!” I say, smiling and gripping firmly onto the handles.

I feel the driver start to take off as the rope to our ring straightens out, and we feel the forceful tug. I've done the ringo before and the banana and sofa ring, so I know what to expect, but the thrill and excitement are always different and unique each time.

My adrenaline is pumping like crazy and probably even more than usual because of my bet against Ben and Carter. But I am so focused on staying on this thing that I don't have the chance to think much. I have no idea how long it's been since we started this competition, but none of us is willing to forfeit the game. And the driver is crazy; he's taking us in circles of eight, wave over wave, at faster speeds. Our ring took us a few

meters into the air several times, but we managed to use our weight to slam ourselves back down.

I don't have a chance to glance over at the other two, but I assume they are still at it since the boat continues to speed on.

Then bamm! We flip over, but neither Oscar nor I let go, and now were clinging on for dear life as half our bodies are dragging through the water.

“Don't let go!” I shout to Oscar and position myself better as this psychotic boat driver rams us into wave after wave.

I manage to get my upper body a little higher onto the ringo, but as our weight is no longer distributed over it, it's flying at us vertically, and I call out to Oscar to get his weight down on it.

I turn to him, and I swear that for a split second, I'm sure I saw bare ass skin sticking out of the water. I glance over at him again.

Crash! We drop hard onto another wave, and I struggle to turn to Oscar. His vest is still on, but he's lost his shorts. The guy is literally going shortless, hanging on with dear life to this ringo. I'm cracking up laughing, so much that I lose the strength of my grip on the handles and fly into the air and slam into the water, yet I'm still laughing and choking on water as I try and come to terms with Oscar's naked ass.

What the hell happened? And where are his shorts?

I can't keep afloat; I'm still laughing, and if it weren't for this lifejacket, I would have drowned in hysterical laughter. All three men swim up to me. Ben immediately grabs my waist and pushes me upwards.

“She's laughing, not drowning!” Carter exclaims.

In between my laughing fits, I manage to point out that Oscar lost his shorts somewhere.

“How the fuck did that happen?” Ben looks at him, smirking, trying to stifle his laughter.

“I was holding on for dear life, and all of a sudden, I turn to Oscar, and I see his bare ass, and I totally lost control,” I say, choking through the water and still unable to control myself. Ben keeps hold of me and lifts me up above the water again.

“I felt it sliding off, but you shouted, *don't let go*. If I did, we would have lost, babe. I didn't want to disappoint you.” He looks at me all sheepish.

I couldn't resist. I break free from Ben's grip and float over to Oscar. I wrapped myself around him and caught his lips with my own.

“Is everything ok?” the driver asks. His assistant is already pulling in the rings towards the boat.

“Yeah, we had a bit of an accident.” I say, “One of the guys lost his shorts along the way somewhere.”

The driver and assistant look at us bugged-eyed and can't help their grins working their way up their mouths.

“That's never happened before,” the driver chuckles. “We can try and drive around to look for it, but it could be on its way to Egypt by now.”

I think we all laugh at that, including Oscar.

“Did you bring extra clothes? Or a towel?” the man asks.

“Shit, no, I went out jogging with Carter.” Oscar looks at Ben and me, “I don't even have a t-shirt.”

“A t-shirt isn't going to cover your ass,” Ben says with amusement. “Use my towel or Ava's.”

“Yeah, babe,” I say, “I could lend you my dress if you prefer.”

He looks at me and bites my ear, “if that will turn you on. I will do it.”

My head leans back in laughter as I'm still clinging to him, “Not even close. I like watching guys who fuck guys, not watching guys who dress like girls.”

He grabs my ass cheek and squeezes it.

I follow after Carter to climb the boat. He lifts me off the ladder as I hop on the deck and quickly grab my bag I left in the corner of the boat earlier and wait for my guy to climb up so I can pass him my towel. He had already taken the vest off in the water, saying he would look ridiculous wearing the bright yellow clothing with his dick hanging out. I watch my sex god climb naked onto the deck, almost losing my breath. He is so handsome.

Oscar confidently struts his way towards me, without much care in the world that he's not wearing anything. I actually think he seriously has no qualms about public nudity, and I wonder if he was a Roman gladiator or an ancient Greek athlete in a former life. He definitely has the charisma and the body of one.

"You plan on giving me that towel, or do you want to remain staring at me? For the record, the latter works just as fine for me." There's that sexy grin of his, the one that should be illegal because it does things to me that are x-rated.

I hand him my towel without further words. He takes it and wraps it around his lower waist. A few seconds later, I feel a towel draping over my shoulders and Ben's body against my back, his arms around my waist and his head dropping on my shoulder. His breath is on my neck, and I feel the heat rushing up my body.

Just as I think he will kiss me, he whispers in my ear, "I'll enjoy watching you milk that goat later."

Oh, he's in for a big surprise!

I say nothing, and behind my grin lies a very sly thought.

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"What do you mean she has no milk?" Ben and Carter look at me as we enter the gates of my parent's house.

Oscar turns and locks the SUV with the key fob and joins us.

"Nikolas is a butcher," I explain, "his goats are raised for meat, not to produce milk. This is a meat goat."



I see Carter furiously looking this info up on his phone. He's red-faced because he doesn't like to lose, even though he'll never admit it. And now I have one on him.

"You knew that when you agreed to the bet," Ben says flatly. He knows he's been outwitted, and he's another one with a competitive streak. Heck, the four of us have the bug.

I gazed at all three of them and smirked.

"You outsmarted me once with that damn tenancy agreement. But I learned my lesson. You can never outwit me again. Not even Carter." I walk past them with my head up proudly and into the house.

And I know all three pairs of eyes are staring at me as I walk away. I might have added a bit of a provocative swing to my hips, too.

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We had a late lunch, and the four of us decided on an afternoon swim, so we headed to the beach near the house.

A few stragglers were left on the beach, a mom with her kids and a few older people sitting on foldable deck chairs reading books and newspapers. If it were further into the summer, the beach would have been packed at least until sunset.

I laid my towel on the sand and sat down crossed-legged facing the sea. The three of them sat down on the sand around me.

"Before you guys arrived, I was here every afternoon and would meditate. It can be very peaceful here, especially at sunset."

I'm not sure how to begin this discussion. This was the conversation I wanted to have with them, but I had not thoroughly contemplated its execution strategy. I knew what I wanted from this relationship, and this talk was a matter of now or never.

"Is everything ok between us, babygirl?" Ben asked with hope written all over his face.

I wish I could say it was. I adjusted my legs to sit on my knees, giving me an equal height with them.

“How I feel about you hasn’t changed. It’s just... well... do you ever think about our future? This is a pretty unconventional relationship.”

Oscar grabbed my hand and held it. “Are you doubting how serious we are about you? Because look where we are, honey. We crossed an ocean to find you. This is serious. We are serious.”

I breathed out heavily, squeezing his hand in acknowledgment but frustrated that they weren’t getting me at all.

Realizing my frustration, Carter stepped in, “Ava. You need to be clearer. What is it you want from this relationship?”

And that was indeed the million-dollar question I’d been thinking about since they arrived here yesterday afternoon.

I looked at the three of them. I’ll tell them, but they all have to agree; otherwise, I don’t think I can do this relationship with just one or two. I wanted all of them, it was how our dynamic worked.

Taking a heavy breather, realizing that this was it. This was what I wanted, and I couldn’t bend my needs. It was all or nothing, and I was scared out of my wits that it may not go my way, but I knew I’d have to stick to my guns. All six eyes waited patiently for me to begin.

“I want commitment. I want equality in the relationship. I want honesty, trust, and understanding with each other. Be respectful of each other. No secrets. Full transparency between us. There are four people in this relationship, which means each person is just as important as the other. This is a no-compromise deal. It’s everything or nothing at all.”

“That saying,” I looked at Carter, “your work is an exception. I understand you need to keep it separate from your personal life.” I thought I should add that in case he thought otherwise. I saw him bow his head slightly in appreciation.

They all nodded their heads in agreement.

“We’re in it for the long haul, Ava. I speak on behalf of the three of us. This is what we want too. We are fully committed to you and want you home and in our beds because we fucking miss you, darling,” Ben moved closer to me and hugged me.

Oscar followed as soon as Ben let go, “You and us, babygirl. It was always written in the sands.” He leaned in and kissed my lips, lingering on a bit longer, but I didn’t discourage it. I melted against his chest because that kiss was what I had longed for from each of them for so long.

“Ok, man, stop being greedy; let me have some of my woman too!” barked Carter.

Oscar let me go and winked at me as he pulled away. I smiled back and turned to Carter.

He took my hand in his, brought it to his lips, and lightly kissed it.

“I know, we’ve had our ups and downs, but regardless of whatever mood swing I’m in, or shit that blasts out from my mouth unfiltered, know that you’re always here,” he took my hand and put it on his heart. “And if I ever hurt you, it will never be on purpose, but I’ll find some way to fix it when I do. I promise you that.”

I know it took a lot for him to admit this about himself, especially in front of the other two.

“I believe you,” I said as I looked up at his face, our eyes connected, and for a while, we didn’t say anything until he cupped my face and kissed me like there was no tomorrow.

When I pulled back, I licked my lips to savor his taste on my lips. God, I missed his wild, raw kisses; even if he did kiss me like that last night, I could never get enough of him. Any of them.

There was something very intimate about our moment. I looked at the three of them. These are my men, my boyfriends, and they are mine. I smile at them, a genuine smile coming from my heart.

“Ok, so who’s in for getting Ava into the water because I don’t think I’ll be able to hide my hard dick for much longer!” Ben called out. He stood up and effortlessly scooped me into his arms, stealing a kiss from my lips.

“I fucking miss you, baby!” he shouts out.

He carried me out into the sea until the water was his waist-high and put me down.

Oscar and Carter remained on the sand to give Ben and me some time alone.

He put his arms around my waist and pulled me close to him.

“I love you, Ava. I don’t think I could ever cope with losing you like that again. It’s not just me but the others who feel the same way. Promise me you won’t ever leave us like that again. It fucking wrecked me.”

“I promise you that I’m yours.” I hugged him, wrapped my legs around him, and squeezed him tight.

My lips slowly moved towards the crook of his neck. God, I loved how he felt against my lips. The scent of his skin, the taste of him, everything about this man excited me and made me crave him to the point of losing myself over him. My hands combed through his wet golden hair, caressing his strong shoulders and powerful arms. Slowly, my lips moved to his jawline, cheek, and then his mouth. He groaned lightly when I nibbled his lower lip, his hands along my back, moving down my bikini bottoms and cupping my ass. I didn’t stop kissing him even when his hands moved up my back and untied the strings to my bikini as he slowly removed my top. He hugged me closer so that his chest was against my bare breasts.

He moved us around so that my back was facing the beach, and only he and the Aegean Sea had a view of my front.

“You are so beautiful,” He caressed my breast and pinched my nipple, making me giggle.

“Are you ticklish, peaches?” he smiled amusingly.

“Call me that again.”

“Peaches.”

“I love you, Ben. I love you so much.” I kissed him hungrily, desperate for his taste.

His hand slid down the front of my bikini bottom; he found my slit and stroked me gently. I hugged him closer, my face in the crook of his neck, moaning slowly. His fingers now tracing my folds, working his way slowly to my clit. His other hand held me close to him as the small waves threatened to move us apart.

“I want to make you come, my darling,” He whispered in my ear, and finally, his fingers rubbed my pleasure zone. I cried out, biting into his neck to stifle my cries, making him groan with pleasure. His fingers entered inside me, feeling for my g-spot.

“Come apart for me, darling,” he murmured into my neck

“Oh god, yes!” I released another moan and swallowed my voice, biting down hard onto his shoulder to hold my cries inside again.

He placed his fingers under my chin, lifting my face to his, and set his mouth against mine as he rotated his fingers inside me, and I gasped into his mouth.

“Oh god, I’m coming!” I no longer have control of my body. His fingers rotated at a speed I knew would take me over the edge. He held onto me as I rode his hand and began to shatter into pieces.

“Come undone for me, Ava. Let go of yourself, baby.” I heard him say.

I felt Oscar and Carter now against my back. Carter’s arms wrapped around my chest. He lifted a breast in each of his hands, playing with my nipples as he kissed the side of my neck. Oscar steps closer, taking over where Ben’s mouth was on my lips, and all of my nerve endings light up with the full contact of their bodies against mine, surrounding me, holding me up as my orgasm ricochets through me like an explosion

going off inside me. Oscar and Carter take over as I'm entirely lifeless.

I wrapped my arms around Oscar as he took over where Ben was standing in front of me, and Carter was now holding me from behind, kissing the back of my neck. I look up and see Ben's shoulder and neck with a few bites mark.

"Oh god! I'm so sorry," I looked up at him wide-eyed.

He smiles and kisses my cheek. "Do that again to me some time. I almost came." He gives Carter the top to my bikini. He takes it and wraps it around me. While Oscar adjusts the front part, ensuring my breasts sit behind the fabric, Carter ties the back and neck strings.

"I like this bikini; you make it look hot," Oscar said as he smiled at my breasts.

"I'm still waiting to see you wear that thong bikini." Carter spills out.

"You told him?" I looked at Oscar.

Carter chimed in before he could answer, "Babe, last night..." He lightly reminds me as he caressed my butt.

I changed the topic because I'm pretty sure they've all exchanged notes of my sexual adventures with them over the last two days.

"You know, other than this morning. This is our first real beach date as a foursome."

"A first of many more to come, sunshine," Oscar said. Carter squeezes my hips. I'm half sitting on his hips, half on Oscars. But I'm sure I could feel Carter's hard-on.

"Oh, Carter? Is that a banana in your shorts, or are you just happy to have me sitting on you?" I heard him chuckle and pull me away from Oscar as he lifted me up in the air and threw me into the water.

"Oh, that was mean!" I cried out at them as I pulled myself above water.

Carter came after me, as did the other two. I ran towards the shore with the three of them behind me in hot pursuit.

I ran towards my towel, fell onto it, grabbed my sunglasses, and the other three stood above me, dripping water.

“We didn’t bring any towels.”

“Well, you can stand there and dry off while I sit here and enjoy the view.” I looked at each of them, taking in their beautiful faces, their perfectly corded muscles, and very noticeable aroused cocks to which the wet fabric of their swim shorts clung on to.

They were pure sin.

It didn’t help that these men ticked every cliché box on my sex god list. They looked like those chiseled guys who lived in Pinterest and Instagram -land and had arm veins as thick as sausages. A burning desire erupted in between my thighs. Shit, there is still the odd handful of visitors, even at this time of day.

“Ok, this isn’t working for me.” I get up and collect my stuff.

“Too hot for you to handle?” Ben says, daring me.

“Definitely. And if it weren’t for my parents and aunt living up the road and being related to half of Rethymno, I’d be tearing your shorts off and sucking your cocks dry.”

I think that silenced them for a while or hardened their dicks even more if such were possible.

Ben pats the other two on their backs and smiles, “Gentlemen, I believe we got our girl back.”

“So, sunshine, when are we looking to go home? Because I’m suffering from a serious case of blue balls that are in need of some tender loving care.”

I glanced at Oscar; he really did look like he was in pain, even though I had him yesterday. The guy had a constant lustful overdrive.

“Yeah,” Carter jumps in, “I’m rooming with these two horny bastards. I am sure I will wake up one morning and find them sucking each other off soon.”

“Fuck off, virgin Mary. We’ve sucked each other off in front of you before.” Ben argues.

“That’s true, babe,” I say to their defense and miss watching them do so.

“And each time, I was busy pleasuring our woman,” Carter said, draping his arm around my shoulders.

Oscar took my beach bag and slung it over his shoulders. It was a pink and white canvas bag with flamingos and pineapples and quite possibly the most girly item I owned. But with Oscar and all his heavy smoldering masculine persona, the bag somehow made him look both comical and cute.

“Let’s go,” he said, sliding his phone back into my bag, “your mom sent a text to tell us that they’re back, and your father has the grill going, so we should start heading back. Your cousin Nikolas picked up the goat and left Kleftiko. What the hell is Kleftiko? Is this another Greek animal?”

“It’s slow-cooked lamb cooked in a traditional Greek outdoor oven. You and my mom exchanged phone numbers?”

I looked at him, surprised. I didn’t mind that at all, just surprised they hit it off so well. But then again, this is Oscar, he might be a big, brooding-looking man with all his tats and muscles, but he’s a huge softie when he feels comfortable enough with the right person.

“Yeah, she’s going to send me a couple of your topless photos.” A little evil grin cropped up on the sides of his mouth.

“No, she’s not. She would never do that!”

Would she? My mom could be pretty wicked sometimes.

“What’s wrong, sunshine? Are you saying I can’t have a topless photo of you?” He was dead serious, and I can only



imagine the others remained quiet on purpose because once Oscar gets one, they all will.

I scrunched up my nose, “Not when I was only 14. That’s just creepy.”

Ben jumped in, “But you would allow one for now?”

His tone was way too enthusiastic, I needed to shut the three of them down.

“No. Absolutely no photos of any private body parts!”

“Ava, you’re a prude.”

“And proud,” I retaliated fast.

“Ah, but I have one,” Oscar blurted out, and I remembered sending him a semi-nude one when we first hooked up.

“That wasn’t a nude photo. I was covering my breasts, and you can’t even tell it’s me, I partially cropped out my face.”

“Your beautiful ass is clear, and so are your tats. There’s no mistaking it’s you.” He zips out his phone from my bag and shows me.

OMG, I’m his screen saver! I don’t know if I feel flattered or want to kill him. The other two lean over to look.

“Ava, that’s a nude photo. Remember what you said about equality?” Carter was testing me for sure.

“Fine!” I gritted my teeth and rolled my eyes, “I’ll make you each a photo and send it to you. But none of you can use it as your phone’s screensaver. What if someone sees it. I don’t know.... like my parents!”

*Oh God*, I’ve already embarrassed myself in front of them enough times to fill a lifetime of uncomfortable, cringe-worthy moments.

“I’d like one with your butterfly,” says Ben, and then the other two chimed in agreement.

“Fine,” I rolled my eyes. “How about a photo with each of your cocks in my pussy?”

They all looked at me as if I was the holy grail. I could only imagine their eyes were twinkling with excitement behind those sunglasses they wore.

“You’d do that for us?”

“Fuck no. You’ve all just forfeited your rights to getting any kind of photo from me.”

“Ava, you’re a straight tease.”

“Get in line and pick a number,” I say, walking in front of them, and I know their tails are still wagging with hope.

Never going to happen.

We talked about our return to New York as we walked up the hill.

“I still have an open return ticket,” I chimed just as Ben got off the phone with his pilot to find out if the plane was still available or if his grandmother had called it back.

“I’m not arguing this. You’re flying back with us on the jet.” Ben said firmly.

“We could leave the day after tomorrow, then Ava gets a day with her parents, and we could be back at work by Wednesday,” Oscar suggested.

“Is that good for you, peaches?”

I nodded at Ben, knowing I probably won’t have a job to go back to and had no idea how I would be able to continue paying rent. My entire salary at Raphael West went towards my rent, and my freelance jobs gave me the extra spending money. The freelancing was not enough to support both my living expenses and accommodation. I still had a small chunk of the check my dad gave me last year when I first moved to New York, but it would only help pay for a couple of months’ rent.

I was really fucked money-wise.

Perhaps, I would stay silent and first see what happens with my job before talking with Ben. Just because I was his girlfriend didn't mean I required special privileges, but he needed to know where I stood financially because my savings would dwindle quickly if I couldn't get a permanent job soon.

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We had dinner with my parents and, later in the evening, decided to hit a bar or two in the town center but agreed to avoid Petro's club. As much as the guy was always good to me and was generally a nice person, he tried to wind up the guys, even though they were really asking for it.

At the end of the day, I have to see it as it is. If the shoe were on the other foot, how would I have reacted had it been an ex of theirs? So far, I haven't run into any, but I see women eyeing me whenever we visit a few of their old haunts in New York, and I speculate a little.

I'm super possessive of my men as they are of me, and maybe a psychologist might argue that it's not a good relationship trait to have, but it seems to work with us. I love their jealous natures, selfishness, and total unwillingness to share me with other men, and they love the attention I give when other women approach them. It's probably toxic, but the four of us get off on this fun factor, so *blah blah blah* to the naysayers who think they know better. It works because there is trust between us. Deep down inside, we know none of us would ever stray.

After a few drinks, the guys suggested we visit Super Paradise. I guess they wanted to even the score, and I was totally down with that. In fact, I was looking forward to seducing my men tonight and giving them something to remember our Cretan trip, even if the visit here was all for the wrong reasons.

There was no way I could remember how to get to this beach by memory and especially in the dark, so Carter brought it up on the GPS. As we approached the area, I began to recognize it.

“It’s the next beach section down. This one is Paradise, where its only clothes, the Super Paradise is nude, and during the summer, it gets packed; it’s very much a hedonist beach.”

“There’s nothing separating the two beaches?”

“No, not that I remember. It gets pretty crazy during the height of the summer, you could end up wandering into Super Paradise, but you immediately spot the insanity and either stay or go.”

“Sounds like South Beach,” Oscar turned around to me and winked. “We need to visit it one day.”

“I’d love to,” I grinned back.

I know he grew up in Miami, and his aunt still lived there, but I had no idea if they were close or the nature of their relationship. A world I knew that one day he’ll open up to me because I was also in it for the long haul with these men, and I looked forward to exploring every detail about them.

We arrived at the parking area, which was primarily an off-track dirt road. I was thankful no one else was parked here this evening.

When Ben switched off the headlights, the darkness hit all around us, and the moon glowed, and stars sparkled in all their glory from the clear night sky.

I looked out towards the sea that stretched out into infinity. The moon was shining its silvery reflection on the water, making a ghostly dark and wan scene on the beach. But there was something very beautifully compelling about it too. We all felt attracted to whatever it was that drew us here.

I slipped off my heels, left them in the car, and led us through the small sand dunes to the water’s edge. We all stood there looking out into the water.

“It’s beautiful here, isn’t it?” I said, and suddenly the men faced me.

“Show us, Ava,” Ben whispered, and they began to undress me. Slipping me out of my dress, taking off my bra, and sliding down my panties.

I walked toward the sea without looking back at them or asking them to join me. It was cold but tolerable, and I continued to walk until it was waist-high, and I turned to see them standing and looking out at me. They had already undressed too.

After sinking myself into the sea, I stood up, letting the water drip down my body, and held my arms out to them. They proceeded to come toward me.

My real-life Adonises; astonishingly beautiful, lustfully sexual, hearts of gold, and best of all, they were mine.

When they finally approached me, we didn't speak. Instead, one cupped my breast, and another took the other breast. The third stepped behind me, holding me close to him, his lips on the crook of my neck, savoring me as his hand slipped to my front, down towards my slit. His fingers on my clit, stroking me gently, working his two fingers in a rotating motion, and keeping his lips and tongue on my neck and shoulders.

The other two tugged at my hard nipples, causing me to moan loudly. I grabbed onto their shoulders and squeezed hard, struggling to maintain the inferno that was about to explode inside me.

They tugged them again, and I cried out. I could feel the sweeping motions on my clit as two fingers slid inside while the thumb continued to leisurely transport me to heaven.

Quickly, I began to lose control of my legs.

He kept me steady from behind, holding me firmly as his fingers continued tantalizing me. The other two each took hold of my legs, held them up, and pulled them wider apart. My hands grabbed onto the shoulders of the man behind me

“Oh my god!” I moaned as my grip on him clenched tighter.

I could feel it coming, that point where nothing else mattered than the need to find a high, and it was about to take complete control of my body. The other two continued pinching and sucking on my nipples, taking turns to kiss me,

their tongues playing with the tip of my tongue. My nerve endings were about to go haywire.

“Let us hear you, baby,” one of them whispered.

That deep voice resonated through to my core. I cried out as I went over the edge, and the three of them caught me as I lost control of my limbs and body.

Suddenly I found myself in his arms as he carried me out of the water and lay me right by the shore. The other two stood nearby, observing me. I watched them as they fisted and pumped their shafts.

The waves crashed against the shore and slowly dribbled around me as they flowed back in.

The one who carried me here leaned over and kissed my mouth as he mounted me and pushed his way inside me, stretching me, filling me up. He began thrusting. I countered his rhythm in perfect symmetry. We were in our intimate moment together, body and soul connected.

He rolled us both to the side without releasing his cock from me. I draped my leg over his thigh, his pelvis grating against my clit. It felt wonderful.

I wrapped my leg around his waist, pulling him closer to me. My hands gripping tightly on his strong arms. He kissed my lips, and I opened my mouth as his tongue explored mine.

His grating became faster as he knew he was reaching the end, groaning deeper into my mouth as he gripped my hips, rolled me over to my back again, and continued to pound into me.

With one heavy grunt and three deep thrusts, he tensed up and released himself inside me.

“God, that feels so good,” I said as I tightened my muscles around his cock. He suddenly gazed at me and groaned, and I smiled with satisfaction because I knew what that did to him every time.

He leaned down to me, his face radiating with happiness. I’m glad I have the power to make that happen. Leaning closer

to my face, he took my mouth in his and sucked on my lower lip, then slowly broke away and leaned down to kiss each of my breasts.

“I want to spend forever with you,” He whispered softly in my ear and stood up.

My second man came closer to me. His erection was stiff and wonderful; I reached my hand out to him, inviting him to come to me.

He took my hand and kneeled down, taking me in completely before leaning down to kiss me, moving his lips from my mouth slowly towards my breasts as he lightly used the tip of his tongue to circle each of my hardened peaks. I sighed with delight with every flick he made using his tongue.

He gradually moved further down towards my belly button and kissed and licked me; I giggled lightly. He looked up at me and grinned because he knew it was one of my tickle spots.

But quickly enough, a severe deep carnal look took over his face, his eyes darkened, filled with lust and desire. As if on automaton, I spread my legs open for him. He lifted my leg over his shoulder and didn't lose eye contact with me as his hard cock penetrated my core. With every grind he made, I saw the rush of orgasmic ecstasy in his eyes, thrusting deeper inside me, filling me with his length. I pulled my leg down from him, wrapped both legs around his body, and grabbed his ass as I pushed him to invade me more. My hip thrust countered his own rhythm; we could hear our bodies slap against each other.

I looked up at him and told him how much I loved him, and he groaned deep from within his chest, finding his release as he moaned loudly with one final push, and I felt his entire body tense as he spilled himself inside me.

He collapsed on top of me but made sure not to crush me. He leaned into the crook of my neck and whispered, “I'm so fucking in love with you.” But before getting up to wash himself in the sea, he planted a kiss on my sweaty brow.

My third Adonis kneeled beside me, his eyes darting all over my face, stopping at my eyes. I took his hand, placed it on my left breast, and arched my back, inviting him to take me.

Tonight, I wanted them to take me one at a time while the other two watched. When it comes to my three men, I'm an exhibitionist, and I like them watching. My three voyeurs. I have no inhibitions with them, and they have none with me.

His fingers traced the hardness of my nipples, and I flinched because every nerve ending in my body was on fire. I was supercharged and about to explode any minute again. He knew I was heavily aroused and kissed me lightly, his tongue gently licking my lips, making me smile. He smiled back, caressing the side of my face, telling me I'm his goddess.

I pulled his shoulders down on me and squeezed his butt, he wanted to mount me too, and I was eager for him to do it. He settled himself in between my legs, and I lifted my hips to him. He didn't need any more invitations, he bore down on me, and I spread my thighs to accommodate him. I gasped loudly as he entered; my core was stimulated and hungry for him.

"Fuck me harder," I said as I cried out, begging for him to go deeper and faster. I pressed him hard against me, my legs curled around his body. He got into a rhythm and gradually thrust harder and faster against me. The feeling of his cock withdrawing and pushing back into me was so good.

"Fuck, you feel so good. Scream for me, baby," I heard him whisper into my neck, and I screamed my orgasm out into the silent night.

Suddenly the delicious, hot, erotic wave of euphoria took over my body as I cried out again and hit my climax. My core pulsed around his cock, and he felt it as he smiled and released himself with one long deep groan.

He held himself up with his arms and looked at me as I descended from my high. He kissed my nipples, and I giggled. I heard all three of them chuckle. They know how I become



when I've been stimulated to the point where my nerves sit on end, and everything becomes super sensitive.

He leaned into my neck and whispered, "Love isn't a strong enough word to describe my feelings for you."

I could feel his warm breath on my neck, and when he pulled away, he momentarily stopped to look at me as I gazed up at him. Our eyes locked, and I was rendered utterly speechless by what he had just declared, by what all three men have whispered to me tonight.

He smiled tenderly at me before getting up to wash in the water. I lay there in the sand and closed my eyes. I no longer had any strength left in my limbs to get myself up. Maybe at some point, I will wash too, a little later perhaps. I was happy where I was. I sighed lightly.

I felt one of my men lift me and cradle me in their arms, realizing we were going into the water, where the other two were. He remained holding me while the other two washed me, making sure every inch of sand and their fluids were removed from my body. I opened my eyes, looked at the three of them, and said softly, "I love you," before closing them again. They knew I meant it for the three of them.

We sat on the beach for a while, but my Adonis didn't let me touch the sand, he continued to cradle me, and I draped my arm around his neck, lay my head against his chest, and closed my eyes.

I don't know how long I had drifted to sleep, but I awoke suddenly, remembered where I was, and hugged him tighter. He kissed my head and telling me it was time to go. So they helped me get dressed and then dressed themselves. They opened the car door, and I hopped in, remembering my shoes were in the back seat, but one of them was already holding them and put each shoe on my feet.

We drove home in silence, and the one driving gave me his hand, and I cuddled it in mine, smiling placidly as if in a beautiful dream.

I'm happy.

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Once inside the house, I told them I wanted to have a shower upstairs and would join them in their room tonight. They nod, and I take my shoes off as I tiptoe silently up the tiled stone stairs taking care not to wake my parents up. I quickly get undressed in the bathroom, shower, wash my hair and get as much sand out as possible from all those annoying places.

Sex on the beach was so romantic and incredibly magical. I've done it before, and I'll do it again despite finding sand in places on me where I had never had sand before.

I step out of the shower, wrap a towel around me, comb through my hair, brush my teeth, cream my skin and head off downstairs.

There are three single-size beds in the boys' room. One is a portable bed. As tiled floors tend to make a lot of noise when pushing heavy furniture, Carter and Ben move the two main beds together as quietly as possible.

I remove my towel and drape it onto the footboard of the bed. Lifting the bedsheet up, I slide myself under it. Carter takes the towel from his waist, hangs it behind the door hook, takes mine, and hangs it next to his. Then he slides himself next to me and wraps his body around me, kissing my bare shoulder.

Oscar enters the room. His hair is still wet from the shower he just finished taking. He sees the bed arrangement and smiles. Ben takes his turn in the bathroom.

I can feel Carter's arms embrace me firmly against his body, pressing his length against my buttocks. Oscar takes off his towel, hangs it up, and gets into the second bed. Facing me, he gives me a toothy grin and steals a kiss from me.

I can hear the running shower in the bathroom next door come to a stop. I won't close my eyes until Ben is in our bed too.

He enters and frowns when he realizes he gets the outer place on this makeshift bed. Oscar winks at me. Ben removes

his towel, flicks the light switch, and gets into bed next to Oscar.

I have all my men back with me.

Finally, my eyes shut, and I drift immediately to sleep.

## Chapter 20

### Ava

The chickens from the neighbor's garden behind my parents' house woke me up, and someone forgot to flip down part of the leaves on the shutters, so the bright light was shining through the open strips.

I open my eyes to find Oscar on his stomach, lightly snoring away, and Ben at the end of the bed cuddling up to him also somewhere in la-la land. I smile wholeheartedly because they look so adorable together. I missed this.

Behind me, Carter senses me awake and squeezes me in his embrace. This temporary bed situation is pretty small compared to what we are used to, but we make it work as tight as it was.

I slowly maneuver myself to face Carter without waking the other two.

We don't say anything, just lay and stare at each other for a while. I lean in and kiss his lips, enjoying the moment. Even after a night of sleep, the guy still tastes minty. We continue to kiss for a while until I feel his arousal growing.

"Hmm, is someone getting horny?" I murmur, and he pulls me closer to his body to feel his length. I love feeling his hard naked body against mine.

"We're all fucking horny, Ava," I hear Ben mumble from behind me.

"Tough call, but today is a no go for me. This morning I can feel the soreness after what we got up to last night; I'm chafing and need a day's rest."

Carter pulls the sheet down and sits up to have a look.

"You are a little red," he lingers on as he examines me, throws the cover back over, and lays back down. "Does this happen a lot, angel?"

His eyebrows draw to a frowned concern, but I don't need any of them worrying about me. I can take care of myself in that department.

"No, only when I take the three of you. It's not the first time it has happened, I usually use aloe vera gel, but I didn't bring any with me. Don't worry, it will go away by tonight. But I just want some rest tonight."

"It's gonna hurt, babe, when you walk." Carter kisses my cheek and nuzzles closer to me.

"Peaches, just a thought, but have you thought about leaving some hair there so it can take the friction and not chaff?"

"She hates body hair," Oscar mumbles next to me. I turn my head towards him, his eyes are still shut, and he remains lying on his stomach.

It's true, I hate my pubic hair, it's dark and thick, and I have to shave it every few days. I hate it to the core.

"I'm not complaining," Ben says, "Just trying to find a solution."

I turn around on my back to look at Ben, who's now sitting up in bed.

"Oscar's right. I've had most of my body hair lasered off. I plan to get a full Brazilian lasered when I can muster the courage to do so because the pain is real."

Oscar spreads his arm across me and cups my boob, "Babygirl, I hope you're not referring to this hot-blooded Brazilian."

I giggle.

Ben gets out of bed, looks in his luggage, finds what he is looking for, and throws the tube of lube to Carter.

"Try this on her; it might help."

Carter pulls the sheet down, adds some lube on his fingers, and gently works the gel on my vag lips.

“Oh, that feels good!” I say and close my eyes, letting the coolness of the gel soothe my skin.

“Use some of her own pussy juices too.”

I open my eyes and discover Ben standing at the end of the bed, giving Carter directions and staring directly at my vagina with interest.

“Um, ok, it’s seriously awkward that my pussy is the current topic of attention,” I say, a little mortified.

“Sunshine, your pussy is always our current topic of discussion. Even when you’re not around,” Oscar admits in a deep, sleepy voice and rolls over to nibble on my ear.

Ben’s attention is drawn away from what Carter is doing, and he looks up at me and smiles.

“Yeah, peaches, we’re only happy to take care of your pussy for you. It’s our most sacred and protected entity.”

“That’s good to know,” I say with clear sarcasm in my voice.

Carter’s fingers suddenly are getting me aroused, and I know whatever he’s doing down there, he has a mission.

And quite frankly, I’m ready to help him succeed.

My hips start to take on a life of their own. Ben’s bright blue eyes suddenly darken as he watches me arch my back up and open my legs farther apart. Oscar’s mouth and tongue are now sucking and circling my nipple.

I moan lightly as Carter’s fingers find my pleasure spot.

Knowing the level of noise I make when I’m excited, “Guys,” I breathe out heavily, trying to find my voice. “My parents’ bedroom is on the level above us.”

Ben quickly closes the windows, Oscar’s mouth takes over mine entirely, and I cry out into him. Thankfully his mouth minimizes my cries and moans.

The orgasm came quick, and I was completely sated and lay there with my eyes shut, still floating on a high.

All three men climb back into bed with me.

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Last night after dinner, I took my parents aside and spoke to them about rekindling my relationship with my men and that I planned to return to New York with them the day after tomorrow. They only said that as long as I am happy, so are they, and since I am an adult, they will support me in whatever decision I make.

The guys mentioned they wanted to rent a boat and go water-skiing before we left. I've only tried skiing once, years ago, and discovered that it's not my kind of sport. They said I was welcome to join them, but it was also okay if I wanted to spend my last day with my parents.

This morning at breakfast, my parents announced they were going shopping and that I could tag along with them if I wanted. I love my parents dearly and would have loved to spend time with them, but I made the mistake of going on one of their food shopping tours last summer.

My parents' idea of grocery shopping in Crete is making it an entire morning event. Their usual starting point begins outside the local farmer's market hall at the coffee shop. They like to take a table closer to the public pathway, so all the people they know stop by and chat on their way into the market. But even when my parents finish their coffee, they might stop at someone else's table they know and stand there for another twenty minutes chit-chatting with them. Then they spend about two hours strolling around the market, outside first and then inside the hall, and conduct more chats with the vendors they know, picking up a few bags of produce here and there, which for the life of me, I cannot understand why they can't buy everything from one stand. My cousin Nikolas's butcher stall is usually their last stop in the market hall. If he's there and not at his shop, he will insist on treating them to a coffee or a frappe<sup>[14]</sup> and a *glyko*.<sup>[15]</sup> That's another thirty to forty minutes right there because it is an insult to go to a relative's place of work and not accept their invitation for coffee or a treat. So after a good three hours at the farmer's market, which ideally could have been conducted within thirty

minutes, they get in the car, drive to the big chain supermarket just outside the town, and spend another thirty minutes there.

Thank you, but no. Life is way too short for this seriously prolonged grocery shopping event.

Instead, I join the boys on their morning boat trip.



## Chapter 21

### Carter

As Ava got out of the vehicle and walked ahead of us, my eyes did their usual thing and focused on her ass. After all, the woman has a great butt. It's not big, but not small either, perky, grabbable, squeezable, and one that I especially love smacking. And it compliments her tiny waist and big boobs. Her ass sways like a pendulum when she walks, and I know that she sometimes does it on purpose for us, especially when she decides to walk in front of the three of us.

Today she wore a thin material dress that hugged her curves over her bikini, and I watched her hips sway as she moved and realized she was wearing her thong.

My hands clench as I groan silently.

I licked my lips in anticipation of seeing that sexy heart-shaped naked ass out on display today. I looked at the guys, but I'm pretty sure they hadn't yet noticed. Oscar, for sure, would have already had his hands all over her butt if he had discovered what she planned to release. He probably would have whispered something dirty in her ear about making out behind the bushes; she would probably turn red and casually push him away, giggling, and suddenly become hot and flustered because we had that kind of effect on her.

I smile because I'm so glad we have her back. It's never dull when she's around. Ava won't fail to disappoint us on our last day at the beach.

We had already pre-arranged this boat trip from yesterday, so they had all the equipment ready for us to inspect before the man working at the watersports center loaded the boat.

The manager approached Ben, "We have reserved for you as requested the 200HP, 19Ssi. She's a real beauty."

I noticed the man may have given a side glance at Ava when he said the last part of his sentence, but I'll let it go. Look but don't touch is our policy concerning men with our woman. She puts up with a lot of unwarranted attention we get from other women, so it's only fair. But for the record, I'll destroy any asshole if he ever lays a hand on what's ours.

While Ben went with the manager inside the hut to deal with the billing, Oscar and I remained with the shop assistant going over all the equipment.

I would usually expect the gear to be used and scratched when renting from these resort watersports centers, but this manager went out of his way to provide us with his better equipment. Considering the tip we left him yesterday, he knows what he'll receive if he delivers today. The wakeboard looked almost new. The two sets of skis, bindings, and tow rope seemed pretty decent.

"Do you have ski gloves?" I asked the assistant. He nodded and went inside to retrieve a pair.

"Sunshine, you want to try out waterskiing?" I heard Oscar ask Ava as she neared the water's edge to dip her feet in.

"Not my sport, babe. But I'm happy to cheer you on and take photos," she smiled sweetly.

I loaded the equipment into the boat that sat in the shallow water; moments later, Ben came out with the boat's keys.

"Angel, give me your bag. I'll take it into the boat so you don't have to carry it through the water."

"Oh, okay, thanks." She handed me her bag, "Hmm, in that case, I'll put my dress in my bag so it doesn't get wet." Without any pre-warning, she pulled her stretchy dress over her head, threw it into the bag, and proceeded towards the boat.

There wasn't a man standing on the beach whose eyes didn't wander over to our girl's ripe and rounded, heart-shaped, naked ass. We stood still, silently gazing as Ava entered the water, her long wavy hair flowing in the light

breeze, wearing that white triangle thong bikini. She looked like a Grecian goddess entering the clear blue Aegean water.

And she was mine.

All three of ours.

I quickly followed behind her to assist her up the boat ladder. The other two weren't far behind, and I could hear Oscar groaning about what he wanted to do with her ass. I chuckled because I wondered what happened to his voice a minute ago. Usually, he'd be the most vocal about how horny he is for our girl, but her recent reveal must have temporarily shut him down.

As Ben has a boat license, he took us out to sea. As soon as we were tugged out deep enough, he let the twin motors sink into the water and started them up. I unhooked the binding connecting us to the boat tugging us out, and Ben gave the man a thumbs up that all was good.

The three of us are pretty savvy with wakeboarding and prefer a slight choppiness to the water for jumps and tricks. But also its best performed at a faster speed, hence the pre-order of the boat with the higher hp. Oscar and Ben also enjoy waterskiing, but I'll usually stick with the former.

As soon as we hit deeper coastal waters outside Rethymno with no chance of running into other speedboats or jet skiers, I went to work with equipment.

“Carter, do you want to go first with the wakeboard? Oscar and I can go double with the skiis.”

I nodded, Oscar and I didn't have a license, but that didn't mean we didn't know how to drive a boat. We each got a good thirty minutes on the water until we decided to call a break, and Ben lowered the anchor. We'll probably do another hour or two before calling it a day.

Ava said she was heading over to the bow to lie down and catch some rays. She loves her sun, that's for sure, and her golden tan looks fantastic on her.

We watched her climb over, and I was about to comment on her ass once she was out of earshot, but then she whipped

off her top and lay down on her back.

“Fuck,” I blurted out, trying to catch my breath. Ava was full of surprises this morning.

“Now that is an open invitation,” Ben said, licking his lips, and I knew there were hungry eyes behind his Ray-Bans.

“Hell, yeah,” Oscar suddenly pushed his shorts down, climbed the boat’s edge butt naked over to Ava, and lay down beside her.

“I don’t think we’re all going fit on the bow,” I said, opening the cooler bag and handing Ben a beer.

He managed to peel his eyes away from naked Ava and grinned at me. We both resigned ourselves to sit on the stern and leave the two nudists to their own devices.

“Last night was pretty awesome,” Ben said as he took a sip from his can.

It was fucking magical.

“We got our woman back,” I grinned. I don’t often smile, but I’ve noticed if it concerns Ava, my mouth has a mind of its own.

“That, my bro, deserves a toast!”

“I’ll certainly drink to that.” We tapped our cans together and took a swig.

“I spoke to Ava’s dad earlier,” Ben said quietly, “everything is set.”

“He’s been pretty cool around us, considering the first day we arrived.”

“Ava’s the apple of his eye. Any damn fool can see that, and I’m glad she was able to mend things with him. I don’t think she realizes her power over men, regardless of how they are related to her. Her dad would do anything for her to make her smile, he accepted us schmucks, and he still cannot wrap his head around our relationship.”

“Then there’s us who will bend over backwards, drop our lives, and travel halfway around the world for her.”

“Very true. And, man, what about her cousin? He brought her a mother-fucking goat because she made an appearance on the island! A goddamn living, breathing goat as an offering. Who the fuck does that?”

We both chuckled and looked at Ava, the sun beaming down on her skin, her round, perky breasts out and proud, like a goddess basking in the sunlight over the sea. The blue sky, the slight breeze, and the Mediterranean waves definitely helped set the atmosphere around her.

As if reading my mind, “A true Grecian goddess,”

“In every sense,” I agreed.

“She has us by the fucking balls, right?” Ben stated with a laugh, and he was right.

She fucking owns us.

This woman entered our lives almost a year ago and, without a doubt, changed us three forever. Never in a million years, when I met these two men six years ago, did I ever think we’d fall in love, let alone end up sharing a woman between us.

But it’s who this woman is that fascinates us. She’s spunky, feisty, and will never take “no” for an answer. She will speak her mind, share her point of view, and wouldn’t hesitate to fight and use her claws to battle for what she believes is right. She is clever enough to compromise on certain things if it means getting her way in the end. Her strong-willed nature loves a challenge, and we’ve seen much of that here in Crete. Her competitive nature is sexy as heck.

She annoys me from time to time but looking at the bigger picture, we are at her mercy and proud to be there. It’s not about us; it’s about her because we aren’t the *fantastic foursome* without her.

“Nervous about tonight?” Ben brings me out of my daydreams.

“Not a chance, man. This is what it’s about.”

“Ata boy!” He grins and continues to gaze over at Ava as he sips his beer.

We both do, there’s nothing more stunning than that image right there, and I want to memorize it, lock it up in my mind, and never forget how content I feel as I do right now on this boat.

And tonight ... tonight is going to be incredible.

## Chapter 22

### Ava

After lunch, the boys headed into town with my father on some task he needed them to help him with. I swear my dad was seriously abusing the opportunity to use them at his disposal.

“Don’t you think dad is overdoing it with them?” I asked my mom as I helped her put lunch away.

“Leave them be. The boys seem to be more than willing to help out. At least they’re all having their male bonding moment. Your dad’s always wished to have a son-in-law; now he’s got three. You know the saying, be careful what you wish for!” my mom chuckled at her own humor.

“Well, they’re not exactly sons-in-law, are they? They’re my boyfriends, not husbands.” I retort and push myself up to sit on the counter as I watch my mom organize her kitchen.

My mom stopped what she was doing, looked at me, and gave the briefest of a smile.

“And please speak with Aunt Jenny,” I remind her. “Her little hints of marriage she throws in out of nowhere in any given conversation is embarrassing. The last thing I need is to scare these guys into thinking I’m desperate to be married. Or that you guys are going to start pressuring them into marrying me, or whatever poly relationships do.”

Geez, I never researched that. I know you can’t legally marry more than one spouse at the same time in the US, but what do people do in situations like mine? Maybe I should ask a Mormon. But then again, they have weird customs. I’m probably a sinner in their world. No, perhaps not ask one. I did find a couple of poly people on TikTok, so maybe I can reach out to their community. But honestly, I don’t want to be part of some community; I don’t want to be labeled as anything, nor discuss my sex preferences because it’s exactly where one’s

mind drifts to when a woman appears with three boyfriends. No one looks at a woman with one boyfriend and mentally calls her a slut on first impression. But take three or more men, and the woman must have some glorious, magical vagina.

“Oh, but marriage wouldn’t be so bad, would it?” My mom suddenly throws out of the blue.

I raised an eyebrow at her. “No, I guess not,” I reply thoughtfully. “But Aunt Jenny is overdoing it.”

“Okay, darling, I’ll have a word. But you know she doesn’t do it to embarrass you. She loves you very much.”

The dishwasher signaled it was finished, and I jumped down from the cabinet.

“I know.” I resigned to my aunt’s natural busybody habits, took the clean plates out of the dishwasher, and stored them in the cupboard.

“Have you met Helena’s boyfriend?” I asked curiously, thinking about how she tried to shame me about my poly relationship. Those ugly things she said still hurt.

I have seen my sister precisely four times in the last five years, even though we facetime each other maybe every few months. I didn’t have the best relationship with her. This is probably because of our huge age difference and the princess attitude she possesses, which I blame my parents for. I never knew anything about her life, but she often liked to heavily criticize mine for it, even though she barely knew what went on in my life.

“Yes,” was all my mother said about meeting the boyfriend. I only knew that my sister dated some filthy rich film director guy she met on the set that she was doing the make-up for several years ago, and they’ve been together ever since. But I didn’t know his name or anything else about him.

“And, obviously, there’s more you’re not telling me.” I suspect my mother was holding back, considering her lips drew into a straight tight line.

“He’s a nice man.” She said, her eyes darting everywhere but refusing to land on mine.



Now I'm dying to know what *perfect Miss Prissy* is up to that my mom is too embarrassed to say.

"Come on, mom, I have three boyfriends, and we all sleep in the same bed. Surely you cannot get more uncomfortable with that knowledge about your daughter."

"Ava!" she yelled.

"As if I don't know where you slept last night." She mumbled sarcastically.

"I'm a grown woman, mom. I live with these men. You hardly expect me to sleep in a separate bed when we visit." At least I broke the ice about where I'll be sleeping tonight. I know it's hard for my parents to understand my relationship, but I'm not going to sleep in a separate bedroom from my partners anymore. "Or we can go to a hotel if you prefer."

She looked at me wide-eyed. "No. It's fine, Ava. I was brought up a Catholic, and your father and I are old-fashioned in this area, but we realize that times are changing, and we have to respect and accept your lifestyles. Both yours and Helena's."

"Omigod, mom! Just tell me about Helena!"

*Oh boy*, I so needed to have ammunition for the next time Helena calls me out for humiliating the family. She had been doing it my entire life, and she's so perfect in every way that I can never call her out on her shit.

"Your sister is dating a man significantly older than her." My mom said, red in the face. I couldn't believe my mom was too embarrassed to tell me.

"Come on, mom, just tell me, how much older?"

I'm so intrigued now. As Olivia likes to say, this piece of info is *totally juicylicious* news.

"He's 73 years old." She bit her lip, avoiding eye contact with me as she dipped her head low and continued to wipe down the kitchen countertops.

"WHAT?!"

That had to sink in a little. Little miss perfect isn't as exemplary as she likes to think she is.

I started to giggle, but it turned into a full-blown laughing fit. My mom looked at me as if I had suddenly gone insane, but I could see her lips quiver into a smile, and soon we were both belly laughing into one of those uncontrollable, full-blown hysterical laughing fits where you end up out of breath and in tears.

It must have gone on for a few minutes until we had to take a chair by the kitchen table to steady ourselves up.

"Omigod!" my mom said as she wiped her tears, taking a tea towel to her face and trying to catch her breath, "Oh my word! I really needed that!"

I'm still biting my lips, trying to prevent any more giggles.

"He's older than dad!" I say and giggle; my mom does as well.

"Do they even have sex?" I ask with a sudden revulsion and cringe at the thought.

Droopy balls! Ughh!

"Oh my gosh! Ava! How can you ask your mother that?"

"Well, it's only natural to ask. He's 43 years older than her. He must be using Viagra or something."

My mom suddenly gasped, "I just realized Anderson was 43 years old when she was born," She put her hand over her mouth at the sudden realization of how creepy that was.

"Well, it's no wonder Dad's been spending time with the boys. Can you imagine him asking the 73-year-old to help him pick up the gas turbine water pump into the truck? The man will drop dead!"

"Oh, Ava!" She throws the dishcloth at me, "That's just mean!"

"But very real!"

“You will have to respect your sister’s choice of partner, just as we do of yours.”

Except my sister was pretty nasty to me when I told her about mine. In fact, she had me in tears. It’s not something I can easily forget.

“Fine. Don’t worry. But don’t expect me to hold my tongue if she gets on one of her high horses with me.”

“Just try,” my mom urged.

I rolled my eyes, but thankfully my mom didn’t catch that. She’s been going on about my eye roll forever.

“I think I’m going to have a lie down in my bedroom unless you need me for anything.”

“No, sweetie, go do that. I’ll wake you, and we can have a coffee together on the terrace.”

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I had no idea how long I slept, but it was almost sundown. My mom woke me up, and I joined her on the terrace.

“Mom, why didn’t you wake me?” I used the straw to sip on an ice-cold frappe she had just prepared for me.

“You looked so peaceful and probably need the sleep. You have a long flight home tomorrow. I didn’t want to disturb you.”

“Are the boys and dad back?”

“They came home, showered, and then your dad needed them at the farm to take a look at something.”

“Mom!” I gaped at her. “Come on! That’s seriously over-doing it! Tell dad to stop it.”

I had the mind to march over to the farm, but I was secretly enjoying the fact that my dad had hogged them from me. I was happy that he was making an effort with them since I know now how bad he had it with Mom’s family. Growing up, I never understood why my mom’s side of the family wasn’t close with us as my dad’s family was. At least now I

know. If my Irish side couldn't respect my dad, then good riddance to them.

She shrugged her shoulders and drank her coffee. Her phone vibrated; she looked at the message and closed the screen.

"Who was that?" I asked curiously.

"Aunt Jenny, reminding me to pick up the pastitsio from her for tomorrow's lunch. I thought we could have an early lunch before you all leave. Those boys can eat enough for an army in one sitting! Do you cook for them?"

"Once a week. But yeah, they do like their food, but they also exercise a lot, so I guess they need the fuel."

"Yes, darling, I can see that."

"Mom, have you been checking out my boyfriends?" I tease her a little, but she laughs lightly.

"God no, darling. Aunt Jenny has. She calls them *hypermen*. The Greek version of Superman."

*If only she knew that I call them my sex gods.*

"Oh! Do I need to wash out your tongue with soap?"

"Oh dear, I'm talking out loud again?"

"You've been murmuring your thoughts under your breath since you were a little girl."

I sunk deeper into my chair.

"While we wait for the men to return, why don't we go for a stroll?"

"What now?" I looked at her, surprised.

"Well, it's my last opportunity to spend time with you. Come on, let's walk down towards the beach."

"Um...ok, sure." I was a little beat from today's activities, but I had no idea when I'd see her again, so I wanted this time with her.

We strolled down the hill which led to the main road. Just before we crossed it, I saw some torched lights coming from

the beach area. I wondered if someone was having a beach party. But at this time of year, it would have been unusual. We crossed the road, and my mom led me towards the lights.

I hesitated and pulled her to a halt.

“Mom, I’d rather avoid people. Come on, let’s go home.”

“Ava, where’s your fun? Let’s go see what’s happening.” She hooked her arm in mine and dragged me closer.

Within minutes I spotted my dad standing at the edge of the beach closer to the road. He saw us and smiled. I looked onwards towards the lit torches set up in the sand. My three men stood there waiting for me. A humongous blanket opened out over the sand with an entire picnic feast and several bottles of French champagne on ice.

“What’s going?” I asked, a little bewildered.

“Honey, you asked me a question yesterday morning,” my mom took my hand in hers. “My advice is to go to them and live your life full of happiness. Your dad and I are going home. Enjoy your special evening.” She unlocked my arm with hers and kissed my cheek. I looked at my dad, and he smiled. They turned away and walked off arm in arm towards home.

I looked at my men waiting for me and walked over to them.

Well, this was a huge unexpected surprise.

“Is this what you’ve been up to all afternoon with my dad?” I asked as I approached them.

“For the most part, he helped us plan all this. But he did throw in a couple of heavy-handed chores for us in return for his help.” Carter said, grinning wide. He doesn’t often smile, but when he does, I know it’s reserved just for me, and it’s the kind of beautiful smile that makes my belly flop.

“And we did stop by to see you earlier, but you were passed out asleep.” Ben came and gave me a kiss on the cheek.

All three of them took me closer to the water. It was so serene here that only the calming sound of the waves breaking

on the sand could be heard in the dark night. The moon wasn't as bright as the previous evening, but the fire from the tall torches cast a light golden glow around us.

“Ava,” Oscar took my hand and kissed it, “The three of us want to pledge our commitment to you. We give you our word of honor that we will always be there for you,”

“and love you,” Carter said.

“and respect you.” Ben got down on his knee, followed by Oscar and Carter.

I gasped in both confusion and excitement as I stood there in stunned silence.

Ben continued, “We each got a ring to wear as our promise that we are fully devoted to being committed to you and our relationship. We know marriage to the three of us would never be legal, but we would be asking you to marry us if it were. So instead, we will wear the rings and vow to have only you as our partner for as long as we live.”

He took a ring out of his pocket and held his hand out for me. I put my hand in his.

A surge of overwhelming emotions got the better of me, and tears of joy streamed down my face. This was more than what I ever thought I wanted. Much more than I ever expected they would be prepared to give me.

“Ava, with this ring, we promise to always be in a committed relationship with you.”

As he looked up at me, his pale blue eyes reflected the warm dancing glow from the light the flames emitted. He stood up, wiped the tears from my face, and embraced me. His lips gently brushed against mine. I nervously took the ring and slipped it on his ring finger.

Ben pulled me closer, held my face in his hands, and drew his face to mine. He kissed me deep and meaningful, and I wanted him to linger on, except he pulled away.

“Darling,” He whispers softly in my ear, “you have two other boyfriends waiting for you.” He kissed my forehead

before I moved away from him.

I stepped towards Carter. His smile radiated so much happiness; I don't think I have ever seen him glowing with so much bliss. It immediately did things to my heart that I can't explain in words.

“Ava, this ring is a symbol of our honor, loyalty, and respect for you and this relationship, and it represents our future.”

I did the same with Carter's ring as I did for Ben. He embraced me tightly when he stood up and kissed my lips, soft and tender. I melted as his kiss deepened and lengthened and gradually became more heated. I wanted more, except I knew there was one more man I had to get to.

When he let me go, I turned towards Oscar.

“Always the best for last. Come here, sunshine.”

He took my hand, “Lovers and best friends. That describes you and us. This ring expresses our love for the whole world to see.”

I slipped the ring onto his finger. He stood up and took my face in his hands and kissed me hard and full of passion.

When he let go, I saw Ben and Carter had come closer to us.

“I did say the best is always last, and now I get the chance to put your ring on behalf of all of us,” Oscar said with a devilish grin.

Ben handed him a ring; it was a thinner version of theirs with the same crossover style, except mine had a triple crossover with three red diamonds.

“That's, of course, if you want to,” He added.

“What? Are you crazy?!” I looked at him wild-eyed. “Of course, I want to!” I said without a second thought.

He chuckled and slipped the ring on the same finger they wore their ring on. They all huddled close to me, giving me hugs and kisses all over my face, making me giggle.

I stepped back and gazed at my ring and then at them. Adoration filled their eyes, and I basked in this feeling of tranquillity and happiness. The three of them closed the distance between us, Oscar wrapped his arms around me while Ben stroked his fingers through my hair, and Carter stood behind me, planting bites and kisses on my bare shoulders.

“I love you,” and they knew it was for all of them.

Soon after, we sat on the blanket to eat, but I was way too excited. My curiosity got the better of me, and I quizzed them with a dozen questions. The guys explained that they had my ring engraved to hold all their names on the inside part and on theirs my name.

Seeing that I wasn't eating, Ben grabbed my waist, sat me on his lap, and started feeding me. At first, it felt funny, and every time I tried to pull free from his grasp and reach for something, he would make a low rumble in his chest and drag my hand back to his thigh. Eventually, I gave in to his whims, and I decided his feeding me was kind of hot, and the growing arousal I felt on my bottom confirmed Ben thought so too.

When he fed me the delicious dark chocolate fudge cake, I closed my eyes, letting all the sweet and bitter orgasmic flavors tickle my tastebuds, and a deep, loud moan escaped my lips. Realizing my emotions got the better of me, I opened my eyes to find all three men silent, Carter and Oscar staring at me wide-eyed. I didn't need to know Ben's reaction. I felt it in his lap.

“Jesus, sunshine, I know you said no sex tonight, but, baby, was that an invitation?”

“So sorry, I got carried away. I've never tasted a dark chocolate cake like that before. This cake is delicious.” I assumed the boys got a lot of help from my mom with regard to the food and dessert.

“So did I, listening to you. You trying to make me cum in my pants, peaches?”

“I'm sorry,” my voice is light and apologetic.



“Never. Never apologize for something like that. In fact, when you’re feeling better, I’m going make sure I take your pussy to the point that your sweet voice sings so loud while I’m cumming inside you.” I feel Ben’s hot breath on my neck as he whispers in my ear.

Had I not still been sore from the previous evening, I would have taken him right there and then. Heck, I look at the other two, their eyes burning pure desire for me; I would take all three right now if I could.

I just couldn’t believe they planned all this, and when I asked for commitment yesterday, they were more than willing to give me what I wanted and go one step further and vow it was for life.

They didn’t just go a step further, they eternally solidified our relationship as one family unit. And I had never been happier in my life than I was that evening.

## Chapter 23

### Ava

It's our last morning here in Crete, and I honestly can't believe how much things have evolved for me in just a few days. Last week I arrived here heartbroken, devastated, feeling as if I was sitting at the bottom of a dark pit, wondering how to move forward.

I raise my hand up to my face to look at the beautiful ring on my finger. The ring my men gave me last night after they pledged their lifelong commitment to me. I simply have no words to describe how I'm feeling.

I've gone from the lowest point in my life to feeling like I'm on top of the world, and I know that it's only natural to worry just a little that I might crash at some point. But I'm hoping fate will give me a moment longer to stay on this high because I am genuinely and ecstatically happy.

These three men did this for me, and every doubt I ever had about what I mean to them has completely diminished. First of all, I never expected them to ever follow me here, but then they went one step further to make an effort to get to know my family.

And they must be mistaken if they think I haven't noticed the little things they've done, which are so out of their normal comfort zones to appreciate even my crazy idiosyncratic relatives.

They've each patiently sat with Aunt Jenny to listen to her chat about her six recently adopted cats, had a beer or two with my maniac cousin Nikolas, and talked about his goat farming adventures back in his village.

These guys have the patience of saints with my family, even though I sometimes want to cringe with embarrassment with how insane my Greek relatives are. But the most important aspect is that whatever or with whomever they

might be held up with, I would catch their eyes briefly wander over to wherever I am, our eyes meet for a couple of seconds, and nothing but pure desire radiates from them. These kinds of instances make my heart skip a beat and cause my belly to make a couple of summersaults.

And then there are the times when I catch my men absentmindedly glancing my way; regardless of where we are, who we're with, and what we're doing, their eyes are filled with lust, longing, and bliss, and I can't explain in words how that makes me feel. I've never had that before with a man or with anyone. Now I have six pairs of beautiful eyes looking at me as if I'm the holy grail, and despite their own eccentric character traits, which I have to admit exists, I love them equally back.

I turn my head towards Carter, he's got his eyes closed and his arm protectively draped over me, breathing deep. On my left side sleeps Oscar with his leg draped over mine. He's sleeping on his side instead of his usual stomach position, so he's not snoring away. But if I recall last night, I fell asleep in Ben's arms, so I'm not sure how he's now on the other side of Oscar. I shake my head amusingly and wonder why they changed sleeping positions overnight, especially when there's always an argument between those two about who gets to sleep next to me.

Since last night I've been thinking about the girls back home and how much I can't wait to tell them all my news. Finally, I get to share something so good in my life with them, and I know they will be genuinely thrilled about the guys and me.

Rather than wake everyone up, I slowly try and slither under the sheet to the foot of the bed, but it's a little difficult sandwiched between two men cuddling me like a teddy bear whose limbs are dead weight. I wiggle as quietly, and as little as possible, but then Oscar must have felt me, and I should have known that the heaviest sleeper of the three won't be in a deep sleep when he's not in his usual sleeping position.

I feel him wiggle under the sheet to join me.

“Going somewhere, sunshine?” He looks at me with an amused grin.

“Shhh! I didn’t want to wake you guys up. I’m just slipping out for a bit.” I say, and I can’t see much under the sheet, but there’s a smirk working its way up his face.

Oscar lays his hand on my hip, caressing my skin. “Fed up of us already?”

As he brings me closer to his body, I feel his arousal on my thigh.

Of course, this man is horny all the time. Here is a man filled with lust that’s deep and utterly delicious.

There is no escaping this guy, and I roll my eyes, “I need to use the bathroom.”

Nope, that’s not a deterrence for him; instead, I see a sparkle in his eye, and his smile grows even wider.

“You know what they say about a woman with a full bladder. She experiences even more intense orgasms.”

My eyebrows are almost touching my hairline with surprise, and he’s still grinning like a Cheshire cat.

“I’m serious, babe.” He sees the disbelief in my eyes. “Scouts honor.”

“Ha! Now I know you’re BSing me. You were never a scout.”

He cocks his head at me with amusement.

“I, Oscar Santos, do solemnly swear that I will give you, Ava Baros, the orgasm of your life against all men, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of your pussy on which I am about to enter. So, help me God.”

No freaking way did Oscar just recite a revised version of his pledge to the marine corps.

Despite the fact that I'm trying really hard not to wake the other two up, laughter is slowly escaping me as I attempt to keep my mouth shut, but my eyes are almost tearing up. Oscar is grinning at me, and I don't know how I can resist him after this.

He runs a finger along the side of my chin, and he knows how I'm feeling. He looks into my eyes and sees I want to try this out. That cocky grin returns to his face.

I slowly make my way up to his face and kiss his lips, despite that, I'm still struggling to keep my hysterical sniggering at bay.

"Ok, you win," I surrender to his advances and submit my body against his.

He leans down to me, so his lips brush against my ear as he murmurs, "I always win, Ava, I'll never give up what I feel for you, and right now, I own and command your pussy. I'm going claim what's mine and fuck those sweet pink lips that are crying for my dick, from here to eternity and hear that beautiful voice of yours cry out my name like the fucking sex god I am."

Shit, it's not so much what he says that almost makes me drenched with desire, but his deep voice resonating throughout my body and the way he grabbed me and caressed my ass in such a way that I know he was making a claim on me. I fucking liked it. I know I shouldn't have a man want to own me like that. But right this moment? I approve it. I shouldn't. I really shouldn't allow him to say things like that, but I can't help but totally approve.

"Fucking own me then, fuck me and possess me. Take what's yours." I whisper, my core throbbing for him to take me as I wrap myself tightly around his body.

I don't need to see his face because I can hear him groan and feel his cock grow and twitch against my body. His hands squeeze my hips, as his lips sink into the crook of my neck as he takes my permission to sinfully attack my body.

We're right under the sheets in-between the two other men I love who are lost in sleep with no clue of the carnal onslaught going on right under them.

Oscar slowly slides himself down my body, his hands taking hold of my breasts, carefully sucking and rolling his tongue over my nipples, but he doesn't linger on as he moves his way down my body until he reaches the aching space between my thighs and plunges straight onto my core. He's not polite or cautious about this, he loves my pussy with the whole of his mouth, and when his forefinger replaces the work of his tongue, brushing against a spot inside me, I almost explode.

Except he stops abruptly, climbs on top of me, and thrusts himself inside my core. I grip his hair as he pounds into me, and I bite his neck to keep from screaming.

Suddenly light befalls on us, and I realize the sheets have been lifted above us, but I'm in no mood to stop. We're both so caught up with the pleasure pulsing through us that I shut my eyes and stars burst behind my eyelids as I cry out his name.

Oscar suddenly shifts himself as he slams down on me, his cock brushing against a spot inside me that has ecstasy crashing over me. I can hardly breathe as I almost scream out. But someone's mouth finds its way over mine to keep me from screaming the million decibels trying to escape. I sink my nails deep into Oscar's and whoever's shoulders the person kissing me belongs to as the wave rides over me, again and again, until there's nothing left inside me.

Oscar and I collapse in a heap together, and the mouth that was once over me lifts off.

I stay there with my man on top of me, sated and out of breath.

"Fuck, peaches, if I knew you'd be that horny this morning, I wouldn't have left you to take a shower last night."

I giggled because it wasn't exactly how this happened. Oscar knows precisely how to rile me up. *The horny bastard.*

“Whoever placed their lips on mine to muffle my screams. Thank you.”

“Always a pleasure,” I hear Carter say, and he crawls over and gives me a peck on the lips.”

“Okay, Oscar, get off me cause now I really will pee myself. You’re lying directly on my bladder.”

He chuckles and rolls off.

“Do you believe me now?” He asks, and there’s a teasing twinkle in his eye. Ben hands him a wad of tissues, and he starts cleaning me up between my legs.

I slide off the bed, grab one of the guy’s t-shirts from the floor, and put it on.

“I don’t know how or why you knew that fact, but that was fucking intense.”

I saw the other two look at us with confusion, but my urge to use the bathroom was now painful, and I didn’t wait around to explain it to the other two. Instead, I leave them and close the door only to hear Oscar begin explaining what happened between us.

Instead of using the boy’s bathroom situated right next to their bedroom. I hop upstairs to my bedroom, grab my phone off the charger, run to the bathroom next to my room and release that growing, cramping urge in my bladder before it explodes.

It’s almost 1 am on a weekday in New York, but I try anyway. I unlock my phone and open the private chatroom app I have with the girls.

**Ava:** *Hey ladies, anyone up? I have some amazing news to share. Exciting. Like off the charts. (emoji face with stars in eyes x 3)*

I wait for a minute, realizing maybe they’re both asleep. Then a notification pops up.

**Emma:** *Girl, if you tell me you got married or are preggers, I’m going to scream at the top of my lungs and give Rob a heart attack.*

**Ava:** *What? No!*

Why would she say that? I haven't texted her since the guys arrived here. They still think I'm in Crete to mend my heart.

**Olivia:** *Em, don't spoil it. Just let her tell us.*

**Olivia:** *Hey A, how are you, honey?*

**Ava:** *What are you two on about? (furrowed eyebrow face emoji)*

**Emma:** *(zipped face emoji)*

**Olivia:** *Tell us what's going on, Ava. We're both dying to know.*

**Ava:** *Why do I get the feeling you already know something?*

**Emma:** *We know a lot of stuff. Your two besties are kind of built that way. Now spill.*

**Olivia:** *Yeah, cause I snuck out of bed and hid in the bathroom so I don't wake up Luke.*

**Emma:** *I'm sitting on the bathtub edge because I just got home. Rob's fast asleep, but I doubt he'll wake up soon. (rolling eyes emoji)*

Wait. What? Reading between the lines, why is Emma out till 1am? It's not really my business, but it's something I need to ask her when I see her in person.

**Ava:** *Wow, we can be so far apart but still find ourselves in the same location. I'm in the bathroom too.*

**Olivia:** *Really? (smiling emoji) I love how we can be totally in sync with each other! (hearts in eyes emoji)*

**Emma:** *Yeah, sure, maybe our periods are in sync too with the moon and all that shit. Ava, honey, I'm standing here in my thong, staring at myself in the mirror, and the longer I see myself, the more I think I might need Botox. So girl, you spill the beans or I'm hanging up and booking myself an online appointment with NY's Botox King.*



**Olivia:** *No Em! Don't get botox! It's like the worse thing you can do to your face!*

**Ava:** *I totally agree with Oli on this. Plus, we're still way too young for this shit!*

**Emma:** *Then tell me what's so important, A.*

**Ava:** *The guys flew out to Crete.*

There's no response, so I assume they're waiting for more.

**Ava:** *My parents know about them. About the four of us.*

Again there's no response.

**Ava:** *Can you two just show some form of life?*

**Olivia:** *(hands clapping emoji)*

**Emma:** *Jesus girl. (eye roll emoji) Why don't you just give it up?*

**Ava:** ?

**Emma:** *I'm referring to Oli's (hands clapping emoji)*

**Olivia:** *So.....what happened, A? Are you guys back together? (Toothy smile emoji)*

I leave the chat room and open a conference call with both. Upon hearing their answer, I launch into my suspicions.

“Why am I guessing you both know more than what you care to admit?” I say firmly, wondering what my two best friends have gotten themselves up to behind my back.

“We never gave your location away. But when Ben phoned me to tell me they were in Greece, I assumed somehow you got in touch with them.”

I wasn't going to give away Carter's secret hacking talents. “Yeah, well, they flew out to the island a few days ago and stayed at my parent's house, trying their best to win me back.”

Then it hit me. Why would Ben phone Olivia to tell her they were here?

“I don’t get it,” I said, confused, “Why would Ben phone you to tell you where they were if you refused to tell them in the first place?”

“Because he knew we’d be helping you with the move, and he asked us to hold off with the removals company.”

“Oli, tell her the truth.” Emma, butt in. “Ava, he begged her. Literally pleading on the phone, asking to give them a chance to work things out with you. Girlfriend, when a man like Ben Harris grovels like that for a woman he claims to be in love with, you gotta be stupid to deny him his request. I love you like a sister and will always take sides with you, but we decided against your wish this time.”

“For your own good,” Olivia added.

“Of course, we were angry at them and told them our mind. Oscar phoned me twice, and believe it true that even Carter phoned me, and I know it must have taken that grumpy ass man a hell of a lot of desperation for him to see me as his last resort, bite the bullet and phone me. And I gave all three a good whipping of words.”

Wow, I knew Carter kept a distance from Emma because she was too outspoken for him, but to let go of his preconceptions and phone her to find out my location is significant.

“Well, we worked out our differences.”

“And?” Olivia’s voice was full of excitement.

“You guys already know, right? Ben must have told you two what they planned.”

Both stayed silent.

“They asked me to be their life partner and vowed their lifelong commitment to me last night.”

Somehow I think they already knew this would happen, but I could hear their excitement ringing loud in my ear.

“Yay!!” yelled Olivia happily.

“Oh girl, I’m happy for you!” boomed Emma.

“Did you guys already know?”

“Well, that’s what convinced me,” Olivia admitted. “Ben said that the three of them wanted to show you how committed they were to you.”

“Tell her his actual words, Oli; I almost fainted when you told me.”

“Oh god, yeah. So Ben said, *Ava is the only woman I’ll ever love. Heck, the only woman all three of us will ever love. We’ll move mountains to keep her if that’s what we have to do, and if that means to keep changing ourselves for her, then we’ll do it because she’s our everything, our central unit. She is the last romance we’ll ever have because she completes us.* Ava, I think I fell in love with Ben after saying that.”

I nearly fell off the toilet seat from losing my breath.

“So, you see,” Emma explained, “we couldn’t deny them the chance to try and reconcile with you. Any man who can open his heart like that and express himself as he did is worthy of a chance.”

My mind was still swirling with Ben’s words, and while all three expressed to me last night similar, just knowing that they could open themselves up like that to my closest friends to convince them to help get me back literally sucked the wind out of me.

“Ava, you still there, hon?”

My senses were slowly drawn back to the phone call, “Yeah, I’m just floored by Ben’s words. They all said something similar last night when they presented the rings.”

I heard them both squeal with joy as soon as they heard rings.

“That’s also why he needed our help,” explained Olivia. “They needed your ring size. Since you rarely wear any, he asked if we could check your jewelry box at home to see if we could find any. Oscar remembered your Swarovski owl ring, and I remembered that ring because your parents got it for you just before they left for Crete, and he said you wore it a few weeks ago at The Residence.”

“Man, that guy has the memory of an elephant!” Emma exclaimed.

“Carter’s worse; his mind is photographic. Oscar just remembers anything that’s on me that he can take off. Jewelry included.”

The women burst into a fit of laughter.

“Girl, you got your whole life cut out with these men to keep you on your feet!”

“And off her feet. Three dicks, Oli. Our girl owns three cocks. She’ll never be *on her feet* again!”

I hear them burst into a fit of giggles again.

“Okay, okay....” I say through their laughs.

“Ava, honey. Trust me when I say this; you’ve caught three of New York’s finest. You’re the envy of every single woman’s fantasy. I’m proud of you.”

“Show us your ring. Switch on your camera,” Olivia happily asks.

I suddenly realize I’m still sitting on the toilet. I wipe myself, get up and flush it.

“Shit, woman, were you sitting on the toilet this whole time?”

“What?” I said, realizing what I had just done. I had gotten so caught up with our discussion that I never realized flushing the toilet would be so loud. “I just had to pee,” I said, excusing myself. “Anyway, both of you are in the bathroom too.”

“We weren’t relieving ourselves, girlfriend!”

“Well, I had a deep urge to pee. Anyway, I’ve peed in front of you before!”

“Sure, at a club or music festival with limited stalls, we huddle in together, so we don’t have to stand in line!”

“Yeah, and enough alcohol in our system to not give a shit either!”

“You’re both bullshitting me!” I raved.

“Yes, we are! If we can pee in front of our boyfriends, it’s no biggie with our bestie.”

“Except taking a dump. I draw the line there.”

“Ewe...”

I leave the girls’ voices trail off because my mind wanders over to the fact that I’ve never peed in front of the guys. Even though they’ve done it enough times around me because they rarely ever close the door, and if it’s open with me inside it, they just casually walk in, do their business, and leave like it’s no biggie.

I’m a bathroom prude when it comes to the opposite sex. The whole bodily function thing is a big *hell no* for me. I won’t fart in front of them either, even if they have, and they’ll just laugh when I do my best to avoid looking at them directly. Is that bad if the girls say they’ve done this in front of their men, and I shy away from it?

“I betting Ava hasn’t popped a squat in front of her men.” Emma’s egging me on like she always has.

“Like you said, Em, I haven’t been drunk enough to not give a shit!”

“Ahhh! Em, she got one on you! Good one, A!” Olivia exclaimed.

I opened my camera and turned it towards my ring finger to change the topic.

“Oh! That’s lovely, and the boys have identical?”

“Yeah, but without the three diamonds, of course. All four rings are platinum. Their names are engraved on the inside of mine and my name on the inside of theirs.”

“Love it, Ava. I’m so happy for you. You sound so happy too.”

I switched the camera to my face. “I am. I really am very happy.”

“Aw, you look it too!” Olivia said wholeheartedly.

“I’m hesitant to tell you this, but you should be aware,” Emma chimed in. “You probably haven’t realized it. But those red diamonds on your ring are extremely rare, like so rare they’re about a million dollars a carat.”

I gasped loudly from shock. I remembered asking the boys about the unusual color last night and asked if they were rubies, but they said they wanted something unique to match my personality and confirmed they were diamonds. I have three of these stones, one on each crossover.

“I’m guessing by the look on your face they didn’t tell you.”

I looked at the stones carefully. They didn’t look like full carats. Not that it mattered, but bigger would have looked ludicrous on this ring shape, so I’m glad they didn’t go for bigger

“Are you saying I’ve got a million dollars on my finger?” I asked nervously.

“Probably, maybe more. I thought you should know, so you shouldn’t be just leaving it anywhere.”

I’ll never take this ring off my finger again because I’m scared to death of losing it. *Holy Moly*, I couldn’t believe these guys spent so much for just this one ring!

“But also, babe, I don’t think this commitment was a spur-of-the-moment thing. Obtaining such rare diamonds takes time. You just can’t walk into a shop and ask for them. If you ask me, I think these guys planned to commit to you.”

“Like before I left New York?” I suddenly paled. What a whopping idiot I was to run off and abandon them when they wanted to pledge their commitment to me the whole time.

“I would probably think a few weeks before. But hey, Ava, the past is the past. You wouldn’t have known this.”

“Yeah, Ava, it’s the past, sweetie. Look at the future. The bigger picture is that these guys love you and would have done anything to get you back. Now enjoy your lives together.”

“But I fled. I broke their hearts.” My heart nearly dropped down to my gut. I felt suddenly awful. “Oh god, what did I do?”

“You pledged your lifelong commitment to them last night. That’s what you’ll do moving forward.”

Emma was right. I’m glad I know this now, but I won’t tell the boys what I may have discovered. I’ll forever be grateful that they came fighting for me, for us, and never gave up.

## Chapter 24

### Oscar

Ava decided to spend her last morning with her parents at their house. The guys and I decided to visit the beach one last time. We did try to coax Ava into joining us, but she didn't know when she would see her parents again and opted to stay behind with them. That was fine by us. None of us were close with our families, at least not as close as Ava was with hers, so it was good that she kept that connection to them.

I dread meeting the sister, mainly because I bore witness to how she made Ava feel when she reached out to her about our poly relationship. If I look at Ava and her parents, I don't understand how the sister turned out the way she is. I don't fear facing such a person, but I don't know how much I can contain myself if I see her negatively affecting Ava. I'm pretty sure the other two won't like it either, but it's probably best I pre-warn them about Helena, the toxic sibling.

"I'm leaving you boys to your own devices," Ava jokes as she kisses us out the door.

"That would be pretty dangerous," Carter said with a deadpan expression. I don't know how this guy can always keep such a straight face, even when he is being funny.

Ava loves to act playful and especially when testing Carter's patience. This time she pinched his ass, and he growled at her. She held her head back and laughed wholeheartedly. She loved taunting him, and it was obvious he secretly liked it but would never admit it. His response was to grab hold of her waist, pull her close to him, and bury his face into the crook of her neck as he nipped at her skin while she giggled and squealed, attempting to break free from him.

We ended up going to the same beach we were with Ava last night. What took place yesterday was pretty unreal, and we spent the remainder of the evening eating, drinking, and



chatting away into the evening until she started closing her eyes. Ben took Ava back home while Carter and I cleared up. She was already in bed, fast asleep in his arms, by the time we arrived home. I think the entire day had been overwhelming with excitement for her. The best part was seeing a placid smile on her face as she slept. This morning I awoke to find her staring at her ring with a huge grin plastered on her face.

I'm glad we were able to do that for her. It's been a while since I've seen her with this kind of contentment. The type where I can actually see her soul smiling.

As soon as we got close enough to the water, we dumped our towels on the sand and headed into the sea.

"Last night was epic," I say to them.

"Yes, it was. If you asked me a year ago about committing to anyone. I would have laughed my ass off."

"That goes for all of us," Carter agreed.

"We're in this for life, with each other too. It's fucking insane, man." But I knew that when we agreed to do this with Ava.

"I couldn't have chosen two better men to share my dick with." Ben teased.

"Fuck you, gaytard. We share Ava with each other, not our dicks." Carter quips as if we don't need reminding that the bastard is a straight-laced hetero.

Technically, I am too. Ben and I haven't gone all the way yet, and this morning he brought up the *sex train* idea he's been talking about since the three of us hooked up with Ava. We'll see how that goes when we get settled back in New York.

I changed the topic because I could see the look on Ben's face wanting to entertain himself at Carter's expense. Like Ava, Ben playfully enjoys taunting him, except Carter doesn't take any shit from him like he does with her.

"Her parents seem supportive. Even though, I admit, her father scared the shit out of me when we first met him."

“What do you expect? Three big guys arriving at his doorsteps announcing we’re all fucking his little girl.” Carter said.

“I’d kill us too if it were my daughter,” Ben said subconsciously.

I look at him, surprised. I even noticed Carter’s eyebrows had raised up.

Seeing our reaction, he added, “Why not? Being bound to Ava means having kids with her at some point.”

“I don’t think she’s thought that far,” Carter said. For once, this was something I had info on that he couldn’t hack into.

“She wants kids, just not right now.”

They both looked at me with intense curiosity.

“She’s told you?” Ben said with interest. If I didn’t know any better, I’d think he’s super keen to start a family with her.

“She’s mentioned it in passing. She’s been having problems with her monthly flow. I suggested she should see a doctor about it, but she says the only way to fix the problem might leave her sterile, so she’d rather have kids first before she attempts to get surgery.”

“Yeah, I’ve noticed that about her time of month too. She can’t do anything about it?” Ben asked. I was surprised he took such an interest.

I shook my head.

“It’s not every month.” Carter said, “It occurs tri-monthly when she skips on the placebo pills; then she gets her full period.”

“Why does she skip them every three months?”

“That I don’t know. You’d have to ask.”

“I won’t because that will imply I’ve been snooping, and you know how Ava gets with that kind of shit. So why have you been doing it?”

I look at Carter, knowing if she were to ever catch him snooping in her stuff, there would be hell to pay. She has the fiery Irish terrier blood mix in her; I just don't mess with that shit.

“She keeps her pill dispenser on her dressing table, along with her vitamins. We are all in there often enough. So if it's out, it's open game.”

“That's so messed up, man, but good luck explaining that to her if you get caught.”

We'll attend his funeral once Ava finds out and guts him like a fish.

Ben and I get out of the water. I hit the ground and do a set of push-ups, followed by bodyweight squats. Ben takes off for a short run along the coast, and I see Carter staying in and taking a couple of laps across the water.

The three of us are athletic nuts. We're usually at the boxing club almost every day, including weekends. Since we've been in Greece, we've tried to grab whatever opportunity we could to do some form of work-out, but it's not close to what we're used to doing.

I've got a massive urge to get behind the rings and fight someone. It's not because of the problem with my mental state that keeps erupting because it doesn't anymore, but I had a lot of stress between Carter's dad and Ava leaving, and I need to find a release for it.

Ava's pretty good with keeping me relaxed, as does Ben, but they know I need the fight to discharge all that toxic shit clogged up in my psyche. That morning I heard those gunshots at the prison, it was too close for comfort, and for a short moment, it took me back to that dark place in my mind, when I was five, and the gunfights I heard while held up in that cubby. Thankfully Ben was with me in Montana because I don't know how I could have coped that morning without him.

On the walk back up to the house, I ask Ben if he plans to keep collecting rent from Ava. Carter nor I pay him, and he

doesn't need the money, but the apartment is his, so it's his decision.

He suddenly stops walking and brushes his hand through his hair, looking severely uncomfortable.

“Shit. I should have stopped her paying months ago, right after we hooked up. Carter, man, why didn't you remind me? You take care of all the household expenses.”

Carter looked at him, “I did tell you. But I ain't your damn PA to remind you.”

“Fair enough.” He wasn't going to argue.

Carter was right.

“I'll tell her once I get the chance. Probably tomorrow on the plane or something.”

“You know, she's probably gonna resist. You know how independent she wants to be.”

He looks at me and sniggers, “Yeah, I know. But I can't collect rent from her. Not when she was our girlfriend, and especially not when we pledged our life commitment to her. She's got to see sense in that.”

## Chapter 25

### Ava

I'm sitting on the plane, waiting for take-off. The joy of having a private chartered flight was that we could choose our own available flight slot. Of course, not having to deal with the hassle of crowds and the headache of airport security goes without saying.

"You ok, babe?" Ben took my hand in his, and I glanced down at it and smiled. All of them wore their rings, and my heart began to flutter every time I saw mine. I'm still over the moon. It's almost as if we are as good as engaged.

My mind quickly drifted back to Ben's question, "Yes, just thinking of tomorrow and dreading going back to work," I said without much emotion.

I looked away because I didn't want him to see how much I didn't want to go back to that office and face the fury of my boss.

"Are there any problems there?" Ben asked; maybe he was concerned or just curious. I wasn't sure. Probably both.

"Not more than usual. I'm dreading going back because I might not have a job anymore. I didn't exactly give them any lead time that I would be away."

My career is going to be pretty much over if I get fired from Raphael West. I basically got up and left without giving much notice period to personal time off. No one will be interested in hiring me after this.

Ben squeezed my hand, "You're too talented a designer for them to let you go."

"Designers are a dime a dozen. Trust me, I know the competition is tough."

He frowned but didn't say anything further until we were in the air.

“Ava, I was going to bring this up when we got back to New York, but now is as good a time as any. You should stop paying me rent going forward.”

I looked at him, stunned. There was no way I was going to be a pity fool.

“Just because I told you I might not have a job tomorrow doesn’t warrant me to be your charity case,” I said firmly.

“No, sweetie, that’s not it. You are my girlfriend and, after last night, my life partner. That means what’s mine is yours, and that goes for Oscar and Carter too. We all live together, one family unit.”

I opened my mouth to say something, but I wasn’t sure what to say. Object? Say thanks? No idea where to go after what he’s just said.

*Life-partners.* I subconsciously twirled the ring on my finger.

Sensing my thoughts, he added, “I should have done this long ago. The other two don’t pay me rent either. So why should you? Are you part of this family or not?”

“Yes, I am,” I was thrilled to be in my position. I didn’t care how I got here; I was just going to enjoy being in love and living in bliss. I just needed time to come down from the feeling of being high. A week ago, it was all over for me, and today they are my life partners.

“Then that’s settled.”

He unfastened his seat belt and got up.

“Come on, babygirl, I’ve been waiting two days for this. I looked at him quizzically and followed him towards the rear of the plane. Carter and Oscar followed not far behind me.

He opened a door, and we entered a bedroom. A fucking bedroom on the plane! I had never seen anything like this before. Okay, I had never flown on a private plane, but this took flying to the next level. It was only a full-sized bed, and there were also two additional leather armchairs. It wasn’t a

massive area of space, and the four of us in there felt a little cramped.

Carter closed the door. I can only imagine what the flight attendant thought of us.

“We never got to consummate our commitment ceremony last night,” Oscar looked at me with nothing but carnal lust and desire in his eyes.

He brushed my lips with a soft kiss, and I wanted him to linger on and kiss me deeper. He pulled back and laid kisses on my neck, cheek, and forehead.

He whispered in my ear, “Patience, my little horny devil.” A cocky grin escaped his lips.

He laughed lightly before claiming my lips in a more intense kiss that was a mixture of raw and wild. My heart was pounding wildly, knowing this was just the beginning of a triple inferno that would eventually consume me.

“I think that’s much better,” I murmured against his lips.

Carter stood behind me, lifted the hem of my t-shirt over my body, unhooked the back of my bra, and slid the straps off my shoulders. Oscar gave me a peck on the lips before he knelt down in front of me, took my sneakers and socks off, and then unbuttoned my jeans and slid them down to my ankles as Carter helped me step out of them.

I stood there wearing nothing but my thong, and from the corner of my eye, I could see Ben undressing. I felt Oscar’s hands on my hips as he slid the remaining cloth down my legs. His mouth touched the outer lips of my slit in a feather-light kiss.

Carter, still behind me, cupped my breasts, circling my hard nipples with fingers he’d just wet with his own saliva. He leaned forward and ran his tongue down my neck, digging into the hollows of my collarbone. I tilted my head back and softly moaned, liking what he was doing to me.

Slowly, I could feel fingers entering inside me and a warm tongue flicking my clit. I moan lightly and open my

eyes to watch Oscar on his knees, spread my legs a little, get in between them, and his face dive back into my pussy.

My eyes drift over to Ben. He was now nude and sitting in the armchair, slowly fisting his already hard cock, watching us with glazed eyes as the other two prepared me for him.

I leaned my entire body weight against Carter, "I've got you, angel," he whispered in my ear as he continued to play with my nipples and now nibbling my neck and shoulder, using the tip of his tongue to make titillating wet circles on my skin.

I suddenly cried out as Oscar hit my g-spot, and my legs became like jelly as I continued to moan and pant, and finally, my release hit as my body shuddered. I opened my eyes and turned to find Ben on the bed and his cock at full mast.

"Come to me, babygirl," He called out, looking wildly sexy and devilish. I climbed the bed, crawled over, and straddled him because I knew he loved me in this position.

Lifting my hips, I slowly mounted his length and slid my opening onto him. Hearing him hiss as I take him completely inside me, I leaned towards him and kissed his lips, giving him tongue. His tongue played with mine as he completely consumed me.

I leaned back up and continued to gently rock against him as he caressed my breasts, worshipping them and rubbing my hard nipples against his palms, every so often releasing a groan.

Arching up my back, I leaned backward and grabbed hold of my ankles, giving him full access to my slit, and his fingers explored the shape of my butterfly tat and my clit. As soon as I felt his thumb rub me in circular motions, I moaned loud.

The prickling sensations are getting stronger. I begin to ride him harder, plunging myself deeper with every thrust.

"Ride me, baby, keep going," he moaned loudly as one hand squeezed my thigh, and the other continued to play with my clit.



He held off until I climaxed so he could feel the contractions as my muscle spasms pulsed around his cock. I clenched my muscles even tighter to give him that extra reward.

“Fuck” he breathes as I feel his arousal inside me jerk a couple of times. I know he’s finally releasing himself to fill me up with his cum.

I leaned down and kissed him; I’m a little sweaty and out of breath, but I’ll be fine in a minute. His smile is filled with adoration.

Ben flipped me over on my back, and I noticed that the other two were also now undressed.

“Ava, look at me.” My eyes darted back to him, and he leaned towards me and took my lips with the kind of kiss that literally took my breath away, making my skin tingle with electricity, leaving me dizzy, drunk, and wanting more. The man is a mage, and he has bewitched me.

Knowing what he’s done to me, he smirks as he gets up from the bed, and my eyes follow him until he’s inside the bathroom.

Oscar climbs the bed and kisses me. That kiss Ben gave me prepped me for the next man because the need to have Oscar’s cock was overwhelming.

“I want you to come inside me,” I rasped, looking up at him.

“You sure, sunshine?”

Carter now also joined us and gave him a tub of lube.

I nodded, “You and Carter, I don’t think I’ll be needing lube, babe.”

Carter leaned down to me, and his mouth went directly to my hard nipples, taking them in between his teeth. I hiss loudly, and his eyes looked up at me as I smiled with pleasure biting my lower lip. Ben had left my nerves on edge earlier; I was now super sensitive to even the lightest touches.

Oscar lifted my left leg over his shoulder and plunged himself inside me. Between my wetness and Ben's cum, his cock slid straight in. He grinned slyly, threw the tube onto one of the armchairs, and started grinding against me.

I grabbed and fisted Carter's cock as soon as his lips found mine. I heard him groan against my mouth and then leaned back up to watch me use his pre-cum to lube the tip of his hard length. He reached out for my nipple, taking it between his fingers as he squeezed and tugged it making me moan loud.

"Harder!" I cried out to Oscar, intoxicated by the growing arousal I was suddenly getting again with both men working on my body. I let go of Carter as the intensity of reaching my climax engulfed me.

Oscar went faster, plunging and thrusting, watching his cock appear and disappear; he glanced back up to smile at me. We both reached our peaks almost at the same time as I gasped louder, and his groan was deep from within his chest. I feel his final deep thrust as he found his release. He let my leg fall and collapsed on me, taking care not to crush me. He looked up at me and kissed my lips.

"You're so beautiful. Sunshine, I love you so much," He mumbled so low that only I could hear.

He kissed my lips before getting up, and Ben handed him a warm wet cloth. Oscar cleaned me, wiping off all the excess cum on me. "Baby, you're covered in spunk," He grins at me.

It belonged to him and Ben, and I didn't care.

I put my fingers on my clit, took some of the spent juices, and put it into my mouth, taking it out very slowly. All three men watch me, wild-eyed and excited.

"Carter," I sit up and call out to him. He comes over to the edge of the bed, and I fold my knees underneath me. Now at his chest level, I tilt my head forward, and my mouth finds his pierced nipple. I take the horseshoe-shaped nipple ring between my teeth and tug at it.

“Ava,” he whispers. I know what it’s doing to him and tug at it again. Hearing him moan makes me smile, and I let go.

My hands wrapped around his firm buttocks, and I give them a squeeze as I leave a trail of kisses from his chest and down his abs towards that phenomenal V-muscle that wets my core every time I see it on any of my men.

Finally, my lips reach the smooth tip of his deliciously thick cock. It’s solid, hard, and I know as soon as I wrap my lips around it, he is going to explode.

Instead, I tease him with the tip of my tongue circling the top of his cock. He hisses, whispers curses, murmurs my name, and fists my hair. My mouth takes his cock as I suck; my tongue plays with his barbel frenum piercing, and I quickly release him.

“Fuck, woman. Stop teasing me,” he looks down at me, still holding onto a fist full of my hair. “Get back on the bed, Ava, I’m going to fuck you now.”

Except this time, I want something else from him. I release my hold of him, crawl to the center of the bed and get up on my fours, with my back arched up, giving all three men a nice view of my ass.

“Fuck me, what a beautiful sight,” I heard one of them say.

“Fucking hell baby, you got a lot of energy,” Carter said as he mounted the bed, caressing my ass and smacking it gently.

“You boys give me energy. Are the other two watching?”

“We’re right here, peaches.”

“Good because I want an audience.”

“Godamn, babygirl!”

Carter caressed his dick against my crack, then inserted a finger into my pussy. I was still wet and in need to be filled.

“Anal or pussy?” he asks.

“Babe, take whatever pleases you,” I murmured.

“Fuck, angel, you’re gonna have me cum before I even enter you.”

He grabbed my hips, left a trail of kisses down my back, positioned himself, and plunged himself into me. Carter has the thickest dick between the three, and his frenum was pierced, so it was double the pleasure because he knew how to use and take advantage of it as additional stimulation. I loved this position with him. I also liked the occasional slaps on my butt cheeks, which he enjoyed giving me.

His hand gripped tighter on my hips; I knew he was holding out longer for me. I countered his rhythm in perfect symmetry. I could hear him moaning lightly and my butt slapping against his pelvis with every hard thrust. Knowing that the other two were watching us got me even more excited.

He pulled out and slammed back into me. I fisted the bedsheets because I knew the feeling was nearing and threatening to rip through me. My skin felt like it was set on fire, and without warning, my orgasm ripped through my body, wave after wave of ecstasy crashing through me, my heart pulsing like it was on steroids.

“Oh god!” Another deliciously hot wave approached the center of my core, about to rip me apart again. When it came, I screamed and cried as I gripped the bed covers harder, and the sensation intensified, longing for the release and the feeling that took over my body.

With a deep groan, Carter allowed himself the release he was holding. I could feel him pulling out of me and warm fluids dripping down my inner thighs. I rolled over, drenched in sweat and cum.

Completely drained of life.

Carter collapsed next to me, “Fuck, angel, that was pretty incredible.”

He wrapped his arms around me, cuddled me, and kissed my sweaty brow. “You are amazing,” he whispered, and I

closed my eyes as I floated subconsciously in utter bliss, humming happily.

One thing for sure is that these men have taught me that my body is capable of much more pleasure than I've ever imagined. I might be exhausted to the core, but my aura is glowing like there's this imaginary halo over me as if I've been blessed by the divine Aphrodite herself.

Oscar approached me, "Fuck, babe, that was some performance!" He scooped me out of bed.

"Come on, let's get you washed first before your well-deserved nap."

He took me to the bathroom and set me down. I looked around. It was large enough to fit one person but a little tight with two, but we made it work. After stepping into the running shower, we lathered each other up and rinsed off under the single showerhead. Oscar wrapped a towel around me and one around his waist.

Entering the bedroom, I saw my clothes folded up in a neat pile on the armchair, which I knew one of the boys did for me, and the bed turned down. I love how they took care of me, even for the simplest things.

"Get into bed, babygirl," Ben said as he slipped his towel off his waist and threw it on the edge of the bed.

I took my towel off and got into bed. Oscar was busy drying himself off and proceeded to get dressed. I watched Carter disappear inside the bathroom.

Ben slid in with me. I could smell the fresh soap on his skin, imagining that he must have had a quick shower when Oscar took me. I turned my back to him, and he draped an arm around my waist, pulling me closer to him. I love it when we spoon, the feeling of his naked skin against mine, cocooning myself into his embrace.

Talk about joining the Mile High Club; I think I just broke the club and took it to the next level with the porn fest I just participated in.

I giggled at the thought.

“What’s so amusing, gorgeous?”

So I told him.

He laughed lightly, “Welcome to *Titans Airways*, where turbulence is our signature pleasure.”

That made me chuckle. I squeezed his hand and snuggled as close as possible into his body.

As soon as I closed my eyes, I drifted into a deep sleep.

## Chapter 26

### Ava

I dread going to the office this morning and facing the wrath of Ivy after a week of fucking off from work. On top of that, I got my period today. It wasn't scheduled either, it's just that when I left in haste last week, I forgot to pack my pills and vitamins. I could have visited a doctor and obtained an emergency prescription when I arrived there, but I didn't think I'd be sleeping with anyone so soon after breaking up with the boys.

Except *they* arrived, and we had sex. A lot of sex. After the first session with Oscar, I quickly googled to see if I could get pregnant. Thankfully the missed days will act like the seven-day placebo pills. So, I'm not worried about being pregnant. And now I have my period, so there is no chance of sex for another five days. I'll start the pills all over again at the start of the month. I'll just tell the guys to use condoms for fourteen days. They're not going to like it but better safe than pregnant. I'm so not ready to go down that path yet. There's still a lot of stuff I want to do before becoming a mom.

Oscar once mentioned in passing that he sees himself having a busload of children, and I think he and I will need to chat about the realism of his dream at some point down the road because I think he might actually be serious about it. I refuse point blank to be his baby-making machine, and I'll just have to find a clever way of bursting his bubble.

The elevator door opens, and I walk through the grand entrance to the studio offices of Raphael West. I notice people turning to look at me. Sure, with the tanned skin and healthy glow I'm sporting, I look like I've been somewhere exotic and not to a funeral.

"Nice tan," Miranda smirks. She's a first-class bitch, and from a professional point of view, she hasn't got the design talent to be at the level she's at; she'd be much better as

someone's PA or working as a sales assistant in one of Raphael's boutiques.

"Ivy's been looking for you." She doesn't look up from her screen. "For almost two weeks."

Technically six workdays, but my idiot colleague cannot count. I ignore her and enter my office. I've got about an hour before Ivy will be at work. Perhaps I should start packing. I look around, and there is absolutely nothing personal here.

This has been my place of work for almost a year, yet I never bothered to personalize anything. I was never happy here, to begin with. I've been coming to this job day in and day out, putting in the late hours. For the last five years, I've been working hard just so my resume can look good, and I'm still not satisfied with where I'm at.

I love my job and enjoy the work I do; I just never fell in love with the company or the people I work for. It saddens me that I never really fit in here because my work is in top form.

Perhaps my priorities are not in the right place. Without considering my resume, I ask myself, what job in this industry would give me the most gratification?

I'm sitting here racking my brain, and I don't even know. I slaved five years of my life, and I haven't a clue what the fuck I want to do other than be a fashion designer?

God, I'm so pathetic.

My phone suddenly notifies me of a message from the Titan's chatroom. I swipe it open to see it's from one of my men.

**Ben:** *Hey peaches, just a thumbs up for today. If you need someone to come bust some balls today. Just let me know.*

I love how he wants to look out for me; it's so sweet. I don't need his help, but I like the attention.

**Me:** *Thanks, the only balls that will be busted today are mine. Things looking bleak (straight face emoji)*

**Me:** *Balls: figuratively speaking.*



**Oscar:** *What's going on, sunshine? Is someone giving you trouble again?*

**Ben:** *Again?*

**Me:** *It's too LW<sup>[16]</sup> to explain here.*

I may have mentioned briefly to Oscar about my true feelings working here.

I look up and see Ivy going into her office. She never arrives this early.

**Me:** *Gotta go. Shit's about to hit the fan.*

I shut my phone down and popped it into my bag. I don't even want to open my computer right now. I'm like a sitting duck, knowing something will go down any minute, and the anticipation is killing me. I get up and walk over to Ivy's office.

Her assistant stops me.

"Do you have an appointment?" Her tone is sharp and condescending.

I look at her as if she's an ignoramus. If it's my last day here, I should treat everyone to a taste of their own medicine. I'm so done being *nice Ava* here when everyone else insists on acting like a first-class bitch.

"Luisa, when have I ever needed an appointment to see Ivy?" Ignoring her further, I walk past her, knock on the office door, and enter.

Ivy looks up at me, giving me the once over.

"Can I help you?" she asks, her voice is ice. But there's nothing unusual here. I've never felt any warmth from the ice queen.

I'm still convinced she is going through *the change*; there is purely no other excuse for her rotten behavior. The devil wears Prada, Christian Dior, and sometimes Raphael West.

"I just wanted to let you know that I'm back and hoping we can have a one-on-one today."

She looks at me with a blasé face. How much Botox did she get in her last session?

Botox King here in the city is well known for his top-class celebrity clients, and I know Ivy visits him. I wonder if I should snap a photo of Ivy to show Emma what one looks like after years of injecting your skin with this shit. I think I'll age gracefully, and when I'm Ivy's age, maybe a couple of microdermabrasion and chemical facial peels here and there, but anything with a needle and knife stays off my face.

"It's pretty urgent," I add. I have no idea what I want to talk about or why I'm pushing to meet with her.

"Well, as it happens, if you bothered to look at your schedule this morning, you would have seen that there's a meeting with Joy White. If you have something to say, say it then."

Joy White was the HR manager. So, I was getting fired. It's not like I didn't expect it. It just kind of sucks that it's now become more real.

"Fine," I say and shut the door as I leave.

I go back to my office and open my computer. I'm glad I put my out-of-office message on so my email inbox isn't bombarded with e-mails. While it's downloading, I check my calendar. My meeting is in the showroom and starts in two minutes. I don't bother with my emails, log off, collect my handbag, and take it to the conference room.

I've heard through the grapevine that when designers at the higher-end clothing brands get fired, they are immediately escorted off the property and are not allowed to return to their desks to collect their personal items. They have to put in a request with their legal representative, and their personal items get inspected and checked and then couriered to their home.

Like hell, would I have a colleague, like Miranda, go through my bag and phone. I'm taking my shit with me.

I walk into the showroom and see Ivy and Joy already waiting for me. I sit opposite them at the conference table and put my bag on the chair next to me.

“Hi Ava, thank you for joining us,” Joy says with her usual fake corporate smile.

Did I have a choice to be here, and she’s thanking me?

I don’t answer. So, she continues.

“It’s been brought to my attention that you were recently away for six days. Is that correct?”

Thank god someone in this company can count.

“I told Ivy I was initially taking two weeks off for a personal emergency, but I was able to come back earlier and emailed her this info yesterday.”

“Ivy brought to our attention that she needed you here in the office last week, but you insisted you needed to go.”

“Her words were along the lines of, why couldn’t I do the mourning here in New York and skip the funeral.”

“I said no such thing!” snapped Ivy.

“Why am I here, Joy? I had to attend a funeral in Greece, Ivy didn’t want me to go, but I needed to be there because that is what people do when someone close to you dies.”

“You are here because you cannot just take off on a whim when you feel like it,” Ivy barked back

I looked at Joy, wondering if she would intervene or at least reprimand Ivy for her disrespectful behavior. It was for a supposed funeral. What is wrong with these people?

Ignoring Ivy again, I addressed Joy, “Ok, so what’s the next step?”

I gave up arguing and running around in circles. I wasn’t going to argue with stupidity.

“We have reviewed Ivy’s complaint and found it within the grounds of conducting a disciplinary action in response to unauthorized absence.”

If I ever did have a death in my family, and I would be treated in the same shitty matter as I am now, I would be devastated. Because not only would I have to mourn the loss of

a loved one, but receive a stick up my ass for going to their funeral.

“So, after careful consideration, we have agreed to put you on a performance plan. It will include a measured progression of actions that can be taken as the situation progresses.”

What the ...? Are they f’ing serious?

“Performance plan for taking unauthorized absence? I don’t get the connection. Is my work performance under review as well?”

“In lieu of your attendance, or lack of, your work level had significantly decreased, and therefore underperformance is a factor,” Ivy replied, looking all smug.

She was talking out of her ass. I bit my lip to prevent myself from telling this witch where she could shove this job. Maybe she could treat any other desperate designer like this, but I’m fed up of bending over backward, taking shit from people who do not appreciate me as a human being.

“So, nothing before last week from my performance is considered here.”

“It is, and that is why we haven’t let you go.”

“Yet.” I finished her sentence.

“Excuse me?” Ivy looked at me, and I’m not sure if she was supposed to give me a wide-eyed stare, but she got so much Botox that her entire face had stiffened and looked paralyzed to the point that she looked permanently shocked.

“I was just finishing your sentence,” I replied, cool as a cucumber.

I refuse to be deterred by this woman who thinks she’s god’s gift to fashion yet has often claimed my work as her own.

“So we will need you to sign these documents so we can start the process,” Joy urged, eager to get this meeting over with.

I looked at both women, “Why would I do that?”

“Oh, come on, Ava,” Ivy said, “Just sign the documents so we can get back to work.”

Perhaps Ivy was used to working with desperate dumbos under her management, which is why she could keep her position here for so long. *Control and subdue* should be printed on her business cards under her name.

“Ok, let me put this in Layman’s terms. Why would I sign a disciplinary or a performance action document when I disagree with it?”

I’m sure Ivy has just frowned, but it’s difficult to confirm behind her frozen mask.

“So you can continue working here, Ava. Do you not understand the seriousness of the situation?”

“I think *you* don’t realize the seriousness of the situation. From the first week I started here, we began to overhaul the brand into a younger, appealing, more marketable collection, using prints from diverse underground artists that have become the brand’s signature feature. And now you are prepared to let your senior designer, who instigated this new look for the label, walk out of this office and let her take the best talent you have seen in a decade.”

“We’re not letting you go,” Ivy sneered at me.

“You’re failing at letting me stay too.”

“That’s not what we want.” Joy said calmly.

“Then drop the disciplinary action.”

“Sorry, that’s not possible.”

“Then it’s not possible either.” This time there’s no bending over backward from me. It’s my terms, or I walk.

“So, where are we right now?” Ivy asked, a little confused. At least her voice gives me some hint of where her current disposition is because her face is currently frozen and unavailable for nonverbal communication.

“Exactly where we started, when I came into this room.”

“Can you be more specific?” Joy looked at me, suddenly realizing where this meeting might be heading. Perhaps they’ve never had people walk out of this company. I mean, who is that insane?

“Can I continue working here without the performance program?”

“I’m afraid not.”

“Then we have nothing further to discuss.” I stood up, put my bag over my shoulder, and took the cue to leave.

“Ava?” Ivy called out. This time her voice had softened, and for a split second, I really thought she had changed her mind.

I turned and looked at her, realizing quickly that I had gotten my hopes up too soon.

“That artist you’ve been using. Can you message me his contact details?”

That’s when I realized I did have something personal at work to take home with me. And on second thought, how dare she call him *that artist*?

He has a fucking name, you imbecile!

“No can do, sorry,” I replied, raising my chin slightly.

“But he works for us.”

Oh, for heaven’s sake! You don’t even know his name!

“That’s where you’re wrong. *He* works for me. I introduced his work to you; I’ve been negotiating his prices and terms with you.”

“You realize we can obtain his details regardless of whether you give them to us.” I had an itch to wipe that smug smile off Ivy’s face.

“Of course, you can. It’s a free world. But Oscar Santos, the artist whose name you don’t even remember, is my partner. That means he belongs to me. So, I’m taking him and his work with me where I go. You want his work? You’ll have to negotiate that with me.”

Shit, I'll be needing to discuss this with Oscar. This is going to be one awkward discussion with him. I don't even know if he wants me to do this for him.

"Ava, you're walking a very thin line here. Especially your reputation in the industry."

Ivy is treading in dangerous waters with me.

"Is that a threat?" I looked at both women.

They remained silent.

"Let's make sure it's not."

I turn to Joy, "You're witness to what was spoken today in this room."

I walked out of my job with my dignity intact, broke, and unemployed.

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It was close to 10 am, and it did feel weird to be outside the office with nothing to do. So I walked over to Bryant Park, took one of the park's green bistro chairs over to a table, and sat down. I took my phone out of my bag, thinking I should start looking at the online fashion sites for job vacancies. Stage one was a place I seriously didn't want to be back in, but here I was once again, and the feeling was full of dread.

As soon as I opened my phone, it notified me of messages from *The Titans* chatroom.

**Ben:** *Peaches, let me know what happens today. K?*

**Oscar:** *(double heart emoji)*

I know Carter was off radar until Thursday morning.

**Oscar:** *Thai tonight, anyone?*

**Ben:** *I'm in.*

**Me:** *Did you know they have movie nights at Bryant Park?*

**Oscar:** *No, I didn't know that. Do you want to go?*

**Me:** *Sure. (smile and kiss emoji)*

**Ben:** *Babe, what happened? Tell us.*

**Me:** *There's nothing to tell. They put down unreasonable terms. I walked out.*

**Ben:** *Where are you now?*

**Me:** *Bryant Park.*

I spent the next twenty minutes scrolling through the job ad section of the more popular online trade industry periodicals. I took out my notebook and scribbled some notes. I was completely fixated on what I was doing that I didn't notice the two individuals standing over me.

"Sunshine."

I looked up and saw Ben and Oscar looking down at me.

"What are you two doing here?" They were the last people I expected to see here.

"Seeing how our girl is doing," Ben said.

They brought two more chairs to my table nearby, and each kissed me before sitting down.

"Well, welcome to my new office, boys!" I said sarcastically, although I was feeling a little shit now.

"You want to talk about what happened?"

"Not really. They threw a disciplinary action in my face, but when they added a performance program on top. I told them I was walking. Sure, I got up and walked out of my job responsibilities for several days, but I gave them a legit reason before I did so."

I would have taken a pay cut for the days I was out if they offered it but not the actions they wanted me to sign off for. Had I signed them, it was as good as admitting I am a poor performer, and it will go on my employment record and potential future references.

"But I know I'm good at my job. I wasn't going to sit there and let them walk all over me like that so I can become their bitch slave."



“Good for you! You’re too talented to put up with that kind of treatment.”

“Talking about talent,” I looked at Oscar. “I’m really sorry. I may have said something to which I should have consulted with you first. My pride took a beating, and I got a little defensive...and maybe possessive.”

He didn’t look worried, just curious, “What is it?”

“When Ivy asked for your contact details, she didn’t actually ask for your name. She said *that artist*, and it pissed me off, like so disrespectful. So, since I brought you into the company and negotiated the deal, I said that you go where I go, which means any work they commission to you goes via me.”

He looked at me thoughtfully but didn’t say anything

“I know, I shouldn’t have said that, and I’m really sorry. It’s just they tore me apart, and I was upset and wanted to hold one up on them. But you’re a hot commodity to them and.... fuck.... I fucked up, didn’t I?” I looked at him shamefacedly.

He smiled, “No, babe, not at all. It’s really nice to have an agent rep me. At the end of the day, if it weren’t for you, I wouldn’t have had that gig. Plus, if we’re being honest with each other, you created all the print artwork, so half of that work was yours. We’re a team in this.”

“So you’re not angry?”

He shook his head, “Not even in the slightest.”

“You know, peaches, I think the two of you may be on the right path to something.”

We both looked at Ben.

“Think about it. I’m not going to tell you. But you two have very creative minds and work well together. Just stating the obvious. I’m going to get us a coffee. See you in ten.”

We watched Ben walk over to sixth avenue towards one of the nearby delis.

Oscar turned back to me, “If someone was to ask you what would be your ideal job in fashion, what would that be?”

“If you asked me that yesterday, I would have said working with a big ready-to-wear designer or brand. That’s what I wanted for the last four to five years, working my ass off trying to get the most impressive resume to land that job. I did everything right, attended the top school in my field, and did an internship year in Italy. But it’s like no matter how hard I try, I can’t catch a break. It’s not like I have no talent. My instructors at CSM praised my work. If I didn’t have what it takes, trust me, my school wouldn’t have kept me in the fashion program. Yet here I am broke, unemployed, sitting in a park mid-morning in the middle of the week, and I don’t know what the fuck to do.”

Gosh, I sounded so pathetic!

“Maybe you’re looking at it wrong. You have an affinity for seeking out the lesser-known but talented creative people in our society, be it people, artists, or musicians. What would be the most ideal kind of work you’d like to see yourself doing from a fashion industry direction?”

“If I tell you, you promise me not to think I’m crazy or laugh? Because this really goes against industry standards.”

He looked at me thoughtfully, “I would never laugh at you, sunshine.”

“It’s a topic I often talk about with Oli and Em. My idea stemmed from observing designers conduct sample sales every season to get rid of showroom stock, and unless you have inside info, you don’t know where the really good sales occur. But I always do, and I usually send a message to the girls. But here’s the kick, sample sizes are always in size zero or four. That’s the industry standard for model size. But America’s average clothing sizes based on selling analysis are sizes eight and ten. Mine and the girls’ average clothing size is eight. So the three of us struggle at sample sales. I’m lucky if I can get into a size six, which is pretty rare, and I probably could if I don’t eat for several days. And that’s the thing. The industry, fashion week, and magazines all talk about being fit and

healthy. But it's all BS because girls like me, Em, and Oli are healthy and fit, but where are we on the catwalks or in brand promotions and campaigns? Fashion week is full of size zero models. The market is filled with either skinny or obese but nothing in between. It's as if we don't exist."

"You make a valid point."

"So I would like to work for a designer who puts real women at the forefront of their brand image and works with diverse, talented artists and designers. It doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, the color of your skin; it's about real talent and creativity and cooperating as a team to make something special and unique."

"Does anyone like this exist?"

I sighed, "No."

"So why don't you do it?"

I looked at him, stupefied, "On my own? No, I'm not ready to do that."

Ben came back and handed us a coffee each. He took his blazer off and hung it behind the chair.

"I think I will stick with the freelance gig for a bit and sniff around the market. Freelancing gives me wider access to different markets and brands and allows me to see everything from an outsider's perspective. Maybe then I can be more confident to branch out independently."

"That sounds like a smart plan," Oscar winked at me.

I sipped my coffee and breathed out heavily.

"What's on your mind, peaches?"

"Well, I lost my 401k, plus my medical, now that I'm no longer employed. I'm not sure what happens from here."

"You can roll your 401k into an IRA; I can help you with this." Ben smiled. "Regarding medical, you can purchase your own as a self-employed person, COBRA is ideal, but it's not cheap. As a freelancer in your industry, I think you might be

able to get group health coverage. Let me look into it. But these aren't issues to worry about. Focus on the job, babygirl."

"Yeah, and I don't think I need to say this, but it goes without saying. Financially, we're here for you. So don't stress about that." Oscar said

"Thanks, but money-wise it's not necessary. I don't even want to go there."

"Babe," Ben looked at me disapprovingly, "We pledged our lifelong commitment to you a few days ago. That means what's ours is yours. You're not just our girlfriend. We are a family, one unit. We support each other emotionally, financially, and the whole fucking package. Got it?"

"And we also include Carter on this topic because he can't be here to say it himself," Oscar added.

"Yes," I said wearily. I was pretty much floored by what they just said and unsure how to respond. I've never been in such a position with one boyfriend, let alone three, who wanted to take care of me as they did.

"Good then," Ben took my phone and unlocked it. I once gave him access to use it and never deactivated his face recognition. "Going forward, you'll use my Uber account, for starters. I'm just switching the accounts, so you now have access to mine." He put the phone back on the table.

"That seriously wasn't necessary." I muttered, "Don't treat me like a charity case."

Ben got up to throw his coffee cup in the garbage and then came over to me and pulled me up to him.

"Baby," He slid his arm around me, "Let us take care of you, stop fighting the inevitable; we're here to stay, so get used to it." His lips lightly brushed mine. "Please." He whispered as his lips moved to my cheeks.

I rolled my eyes and pulled away from him. "Fine," I surrendered. "But you need to understand, it's not easy. I was brought up to be independent, so I will fight you on stuff."

He smiled at me, “Okay. I’ll heed your warning. But just so we’re clear, don’t hesitate to approach either of us if you need something.”

I rolled my eyes again.

“Ava Baros, was that an eye roll?” Ben scolded, finally calling me out. I guess two in a row did it for him.

Oscar chuckled in the background. “Submit to the challenge, man; I did a while back with her.”

I could tell Ben wanted to say something, but he kept his mouth closed, causing me to laugh. I guess he couldn’t control himself either and laughed lightly.

“Fine, whatever. I have to get back to the office.” He unhooked his arms around me, picked up his jacket, and put it on. I adjusted his collar for him.

“Ava, take an Uber home or wherever you want to go. I’m heading to the boxing club later with Oscar. Do you still want to go out for dinner tonight? Thai’s good?”

I looked at his bright blue eyes, hiding that I was having severe menstrual cramps and didn’t have much of an appetite today. I took two doses of painkillers this morning, and they were starting to wear off.

“I think I just want to chill at home tonight,” I hoped they wouldn’t object.

“Fine by me, let’s order in, or we’ll pick something up on our way home.”

He leaned in and took my mouth with his. His kiss engulfed my senses, stealing away my worries.

I loved kissing this guy. After all the drama we’ve had, I’ve learned that after a while, one comes to understand the difference between kissing someone and falling in love.

Ben smiled and let go of me, grabbing his cellphone from the table and typing something.

Oscar grabbed me and sat me on his lap. “I have a few minutes before I go; fancy going behind the bushes?” He

nuzzled his face within my hair, breathing in. I swear I'm sure I just felt his arousal.

“Blue balls much?” Ben teased and slipped his phone inside the inner chest pocket of his jacket.

I giggled, and Oscar squeezed my hips.

“I'll catch you later, man,” he said to Oscar and then looked at me, “Any preferences for dinner?”

There was no missing the hot intensity of his gaze, and while Oscar was vocal about his arousal, Ben tended to be more about eye contact.

Two men out in the open, lusting after me. I felt like I must have stumbled into heaven and had no intention of ever returning to earth.

“Surprise me,” I say.

“My kind of woman,” both say together and then chuckle.

I watched Ben leave. He only ever wore a tailored suit when working, but damn, that boy worked it well. I could tell that almost all his suits were Italian and tailor-made to fit his physique. He's also caught me a few times checking out his ass whenever he's wearing tailored outfits, which these days, I don't mind, but before we started dating, it was pretty uncomfortable. He always found it amusing.

“He does have a nice ass, doesn't he?” I hear Oscar say, bringing me out of my daydream.

I still sat on Oscar's lap with my arm draped around his shoulders.

“Actually, all three of you have lovely asses,” I say as I attempt to get up from him, but he's firmly holding me down, and I suddenly feel why. Yup, the boy had a hard-on, and it was poking itself right on my butt cheek.

“I have the best cock. Just admit it,” Oscar says with a wink.

“Right now, the cock is trying to poke itself into my ass,” I noted and gave him a cheeky smile.

“I can’t control what my cock likes,” he smirks.

I rolled my eyes, “Ah, so original, Santos. What can I say?” I drank the rest of my coffee and put the empty cup on the table.

“So, is everything ok with you?” He asks, concerned.

“Yeah. It’s a bit scary, you know to suddenly have no job.” I look away. I know he’s just worried about me, and there’s no reason to make it worse than what it already is. At the end of the day, a career at Raphael West was never meant to be. Maybe fate has something better for me.

He takes my chin with his hand and turns my face to look at him. I adjust my body to face him better.

“It’ll be fine. I promise,” he reassures me. “And, anything you need, don’t hesitate to ask. Okay? We’re in it together.” I looked at his light amber eyes. If they were the windows of his soul, he was as genuine as it gets.

I pursed my lips and nodded.

“So, what’s your plan for today?” He asks, and I’m glad he’s changed the topic because I don’t want to dwell on my financial status or recent job loss.

“I think I will work on some freelance projects and free up my evenings a little better. Work on my schedule, plan on taking over the world...How about you?”

He chuckled, knowing I had partially quoted Pinky and the Brain, a cartoon show he and I have watched several weekend mornings.

“I should also head back to the office.”

“I think it’s really sweet that you and Ben came all the way here just to check up on me.” I gave him a peck on the cheek and stood up. He got up and grabbed the two empty coffee cups, tossed them in the trash, and returned to me.

He wrapped his arms around my waist and kissed me, “See you later?”

“Yes. Now go, so I can check out your sexy ass leaving.”  
The smile on my face felt like it went from ear to ear.

Like Ben, he only wore tailored suits to the office. Oscar’s were usually in his signature all-over black color, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen him with a tie before. I had no idea how many suits they owned, but I know Oscar was a clothes horse judging by the size of his closet. Ben was a Brioni and Zegna fan, but Oscar usually wore Tom Ford for suit brands. I also caught Ben in a three-piece once or twice in the past, but I think he only wears it when he’s got some important corporate meeting.

Oscar raised an eyebrow at my comment and strutted off. He even did a little wiggle for my benefit, which cracked me up; he turned his head over his shoulder and winked. I watched him until I completely lost him in the sea of people on sixth avenue. My smile didn’t disappear with Oscar’s fading into the crowd; it remained plastered on my face long after he left.

The fact that they just dropped everything to come and see me meant a lot to me. It wasn’t necessary, but it very much showed how these men were a huge and vital part of my life and I theirs. I may be unemployed and broke, but on the bright side, I have a family and a strong network of people to see me through this challenging stage in my career.

There was a time when I considered myself a hopeless romantic looking for love. Real love. That ridiculous, inconvenient, all-consuming, can’t-live-without-each-other kind of love. They say a person can fall in love three times in their life, but I’ve used up all three falls at once. I found it with three men. That kind of love has my heart pounding wildly every time I’m in their arms, or I get lost in their eyes, and in return, I bask in the adoration that fills their eyes when I catch them gazing at me. With them, I feel calm and carefree.

I once thought I needed to make my soul happy instead of relying on someone to ignite that fire in me. But perhaps having someone to share that ignition with is much more exciting than doing it in solitude. And I had three people to do that with because they know my worth and have helped me



realize just that. We are a foursome, a family unit, and these men complete me.

Maybe it's really not that scary after all.

*The End.*

*Or not....*

*Read the Epilogue for a cliffhanger ending and continue to Book 3, **Gods of Latin Anarchy**.*

# Epilogue

## Carter

I'm going to open up my world to her. My biggest fear is that I go too far, and she rejects my closeted lifestyle. Ava thinks she knows what she's up against because of the taster I gave her back in Greece, but I'm afraid she hasn't got a clue that there is more to me. A lot more.

We returned from Greece last week, and this Friday, I'm taking her to Company X. It's a baroque fantasy burlesque-type performance with whimsical storytelling. It's pretty unusual, a touch erotic, and very outrageous, but I think it's something Ava will appreciate. I know she goes to many off-off-Broadway shows with her girlfriends and has an affinity to support the lesser-known artists of all genres.

I didn't tell her where we were going, but I got confirmation from Olivia that she hadn't been there before. The only clue I gave Ava was that she should dress up.

After the show, I'm bringing her back home, and I've arranged dinner for us. If all goes well, I will introduce her to *the secret life of Carter Collins*.

I wear black leather biker pants that are pretty snug, with a fitted black dress shirt and black biker boots. I swap my glasses for contacts.

Ava meets me in the living room, and I know she has no idea where she's going, but I think she has an inkling about how our night might end up, and she decides to dress up for the part. Gazing at her, I am completely in awe.

She's wearing a short black corset style A-line dress, it has a kind of bustier top in crepe fabric, but it's outlined in black leather binding. She's wearing black tights and those crazy, *fuck me* patent black Louboutin stilettos that give me an arousal every time she wears them. Maybe because she once wore them wearing nothing else while fucking all three of us

at the same time. But it's those plump red lips that get my dick hard. Ava rarely wears heavy makeup, but I know she does it just for me with this outfit, and I absolutely love it.

"Looking hot, angel." My eyes are all over her. The temptation to just skip the show and dinner and unwrap her right now is strong.

"Wow, Carter, you are sizzling." She brushes her hand against my neck, sliding it to the back as she brings her chest up close to mine. Her eyes are darting all over my face, and damn, she smells delicious; the sweet vanilla scent lightly fills the air around her.

I take her hand to lead her out, "Come on, let's go before the temptation overwhelms me."

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The show was a success. At one point, I turned to look at Ava, and she was so concentrated on the performance. Her eyes were completely fixed and captivated, and this cute upwards edge on either side of her mouth told me she was happy to be there.

On the drive home, I told her I had organized a catering service to come over to ours and hoped she was hungry. Prior to the date, I arranged for the guys to stay clear of the apartment that evening. It's pretty cool how the three of us can respect our personal time with Ava.

"Ohhh, you're going all out for me. I like it!" She grinned.

"It's our first real date, one we've never yet had," I admitted, and Ava burst into a fit of giggles.

"What's so funny?"

She grabbed my hand and held it on her lap. I actually liked driving like that.

"Well, our relationship isn't conventional, to say the least. For starters, we've been fucking each other like bunnies, then pledged our lifelong commitment to each other, and finally, we go on a date."

“Well, when you put it like that, it does sound strange.” Geez, I’ve done everything backward. I nervously pulled my hand from her and pushed it through my hair. I’m surprised she even wants to be with someone like me for life.

“Hey, sexy.”

I glanced at her upon hearing her sweet voice, she smiled and continued, “I am happy. With you.”

Ava is good with words, and suddenly all doubts are cast out the window.

\*\*\*

I had sent the caterers a message while we were on our way home. They arrived within minutes of us.

We sat on the sofa in the living room, and I opened a bottle of champagne to drink with Ava while the caterers set up everything on our dining table and used the kitchen to prepare the food. We started with the appetizers by the sofa, oysters fresh from Delaware Bay.

“I’ve never eaten oysters,” Ava whispers to me after the server leaves us. There is an almost cute childlike manner to her virtue.

“Is it because you have never been tempted? Or the opportunity never came up.” I whisper back.

She smiles, “Probably a bit of both,” She looks at the plate with the six shells on ice. “I don’t know how to eat them.”

I chuckle at her genuine innocence. “Here, I can show you,” I pick a shell and add some lemon to it. “You can add lemon or sauce. I prefer them with lemon as it counteracts with the intensity of the oyster flavor.”

Then I showed her how to use the fork to slightly loosen the oyster from the shell.

“What about all the water in the shell? Shouldn’t you have drained it?”

“Ahh, no. That’s the oyster liquor; it’s a natural juice of the oyster. So it’s best to slurp the oyster down.”

“Slurp?” she looks at me doubtfully. “Are you sure? Aren’t like oysters an aphrodisiac? How exactly is slurping sexy?”

I laugh lightly; she has a point. “Well, feel free to chew on it, but it might be difficult if you’re not used to eating it.”

I hold out the oyster to feed it to her, “Are you ready?”

“I’m nervous,” she says with a smile. I start to think this is a bad idea, but then she tells me, “Ok, I’m ready. Now or never.”

As I put the shell to her lips, she takes it, and I tilt it upwards.

She swallows it quickly, starts giggling, and follows almost immediately with a sip of her champagne.

“And?” I ask, waiting for the verdict.

“Slimy little suckers,” she grins wide, and I burst into laughter.

She has another two, and I three. A short while later, the server says the dinner is ready.

We have a two-course meal, followed by dessert, which we share. Delicious warm brownie sundae and the happy look on Ava’s says dinner was a success.

“Oh my god,” she says with a mouthful of dessert. She swallows, “Hands down! This is like the best sundae I have ever had!” She says cheerfully.

After the caterers clean up and clear out, we sit on the sofa finishing up our wine from dinner for a little while longer.

“Wow, Carter, I have had the most fantastic date ever. You’ve spoilt me well. Thank you.”

Ava’s face is beaming with genuine happiness, and I’m satisfied that I’m the one responsible for that.

I've only ever done this once, going all out, and that's been for her. There has never been another woman who can infuriate me, and at the same time, I can love so tenderly. She is the only person I have ever deemed significant enough to warrant the effort of doing something like this for. Ava is worth deserving this kind of attention from me, and I plan to give it to her for life.

She moves closer and kisses me gently on the lips. It's soft at first, and I follow her lead, then she bites my lower lip, making me moan. I pull back.

"Let's go to my room," I suddenly suggest. But in all honesty, I planned for it.

There's a particular gleam in her eye. In all the months she's lived here, I've never taken her to my bedroom, as pathetic as it sounds.

She doesn't say anything, instead nods and puts her hand in mine. I'm nervous because I'm about to share my world, mind, and fantasy with her.

Months ago, the realization of how I feel about her hit me hard. Love is a drug, like amphetamines, morphine, and barbiturates, and I've been on a fucking high for a while, hoping I never crash. The intensity of feelings I have for this woman is insane. I want to own her.

Scratch that; she already owns me because I would never have done this for anyone else.

She's standing next to me patiently in the hallway outside my bedroom and smiles at me with reassurance. I open my bedroom door for her, allowing her to walk into my den, and a rush of her sweet intoxicating scent is left in my wake. I close the door behind me and watch her like a lion stalking its prey.

Suddenly doubt is cast in my mind. Exposing her to all the dark shit in my mind would be ruthless.

"This is crazy." I hear myself say out loud.

She whips her entire body around to face me with a mischievous smile.

“Lucky for you, I like crazy.”

And, just like that, she became my salvation.

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## Ava

I’ve just walked into the one lair that remained secretive and hidden from me, which seems almost as if it’s been forever. I look around. Everything is sleek and dark but not uninviting. Like every other bed in this apartment, Carter’s is the same Alaskan size. It’s built into a cemented alcove with dimmed lights.

One entire wall is made up of a floor-to-ceiling bookcase filled with books. I remain surprised because a techy guy like Carter reads physical books instead of electronic ones.

I look up as I turn my head and see a similar second-floor alcove like Ben’s bedroom, but it’s much smaller. I can see several flat screens in a row mounted onto the wall up there, a long desk with a dual monitor set up that seems to be running data on a loop. Whatever Carter does for a living, it’s some multi-high-tech shit. I’ll never ask him directly or demand it from him, but I bet he can control the world from his mini-control center.

Under the balcony alcove is a large walk-in closet. I remember Oscar saying that Carter had a half bathroom which was why he shared ours. I couldn’t figure out where it was, though.

“This is crazy,” I suddenly hear him say, his voice filled with doubt.

Oh no, you don’t, Carter Collins! You don’t just bring me here and then chicken out!

“Lucky for you, I like crazy,” I say because whatever he had planned tonight, I was in one hundred percent.

“Ava...” I knew he was about to bail on me, and I had made progress this far with him.

“Chicken shit?” I say with an amused smile.

He looked at me wide-eyed. “What?”

“Carter, the chicken, is bailing on me.” I clucked my tongue at him.

I could see his green eyes begin to darken. *Ahhh*, the demon in him is coming out to play. I saw it once back on the beach in Crete, so I recognized it now. Excitement and anticipation suddenly seized me, and I couldn’t wait to become his submissive again.

“You need a safeword.”

“Unicorn,” I blurt out without hesitation.

Whatever he’s into, I wanted in.

Carter raises an eyebrow at my word choice, but I just smirk at him.

“Undress and get into Seiza<sup>[17]</sup>.”

I nod my head.

“Can you unzip my dress, please?” I turn my back to him and hear the zipper as he slides it down. I’m already aroused, and he hasn’t even touched me yet.

I pull the dress off my body and drape it on a chair. He’s watching me with hungry eyes because I’m wearing hold-ups and a black lace lingerie set. It was a little surprise for him, and I’m glad he looks pleased.

I take my time because I want to enjoy his eyes watching me with ravenous desire. Facing him, I unhook the back of my bra, let the straps slide off my arms, and tossed it to the side. My eyes don’t lose focus from his.

I gradually slip my thong and slide it down my thighs, allowing it to drop to my ankles. The only item of cloth left on me are the black thigh-highs and my patent shoes. I see him lick his lips; his eyes glow possessively as he watches me. I walk to his bed and sit down. Carter follows and kneels in front of me.



“Allow me,” he says, looking up at me as he removes my shoes, one by one. Then he takes my tights and removes them slowly, allowing his thumb to caress my skin as he rolls it down my leg. He does the same with the other, grabs a pillow from the bed, and puts it on the floor so I can use it when I sit in the requested seated position.

He presses a security pad, and a wide drawer automatically opens at the bottom of the bookcase. He takes out two long black silky cloths but doesn't close the drawer.

He walks over behind me and begins to loosely braid my hair. I remain quiet because I've read about such acts in some of the erotica novels I sometimes read, so I don't question him. He takes the one silky cloths and ties the end of the braid with it. Then he takes the other, covers my eyes like a blindfold, and secures it by tying it at the back of my head.

I stay silent even though I can no longer see anything; my other senses are on high alert.

I hear him walk back to the drawer; he takes something out and unzips a bag. He's preparing something; I should be nervous, but instead, I can feel my core getting even more aroused.

A few moments pass until he comes back to me and takes my hand, “Stand up,” he says and guides me to somewhere in the room.

“Spread out your arms and legs.” I do as he says.

I can feel him tying my body up with rope. It's a soft rope, not rough nor chunky.

“I'm making a Hishi Karada, a kind of rope dress for you,” he explains,

I stayed silent because there was nothing for me to say. I submitted to him the moment I walked into his den.

He ties me up and makes knots with precision and skill. I can't see him, but I can feel the rope braiding around my body, crisscrossing, tightening around my breasts, and down my abdomen.

I can feel with every pull that he's in control of how tight these ropes are pulled. He gently pushes my arms downward, takes my hand in his, and leads me elsewhere. I've given him complete trust, so I walk without fear that I've lost my sight. Gently easing my shoulders, I sit on his bed.

"Lie down," I hear him say. Considering my entire abdomen is tightly roped, it's not easy, but I do as he says. Then I hear something rattling, and he takes each of my wrists and attaches them to soft bindings above my head.

Each of my ankles is tied in the same manner as my wrists. A moment later, I hear a swoosh sound, and my arms and legs are spread-eagled. I am now tied up, exposed, and at his mercy.

Perhaps had it been at the beginning of our relationship, I would have been out the door running for the hills the moment he asked me for a safeword. But I know Carter, he pledged a promise to protect me, so I have given him my body to do as he pleases because I know he will ensure my safety in doing so.

I can feel his hands gently caress my neck with light feather strokes. His hands continue to move onto my collar bone, around my breasts, my abdomen, my hips, and my slit. I gasp at his touch there, but he doesn't stop until he reaches all the way to my toes, then works his way back up to my slit again, where I flinch, and he starts down my other leg and back up again using the same light technique up my body.

Something wet touches me, and I instantly recognize his lips and tongue. He does the same procedure on my body as he did with his hands, except now he is tasting every part of my body. He stops at my nipples which are rock hard. I can feel the tip of his tongue circling each one, flicking them, sucking them.

My nerve ends are alive and begging for more. When he finally arrives at my slit, he slides his tongue over slowly, and I hiss with pleasure, but, *damn it*, he doesn't stop and proceeds down my legs. When his lips and tongue pass my slit on his

way back up again, I want him to stop and linger, but he doesn't.

I need more. Please lick me more down there.

I feel him taking my breasts and clamping my nipples. Fuck, it hurts but still feels good. I hear him removing his own clothing, casting everything aside. The need for his touch is driving me crazy.

Come back to me, touch me. I'm going crazy.

I lick my lips and bite down on them to suppress my urging need because I dare not say anything.

I feel him climbing the bed. He's now in between my legs; his fingers are caressing my legs, gently moving upwards. His hands stop gliding, and he massages my inner thighs. I try to lift my pelvis to show him what I need, except suddenly, the ropes around my ankles are tightened, and I can no longer thrust my pelvis. It's torture, I need his hands on my pussy, but they remain on my inner thighs.

He brushes his fingers on my slit, and I cry out automatically. It's getting too intense. I feel like my brain will go haywire if I don't get that release.

"Please," I whisper desperately.

He says nothing. Then I feel him move. If he doesn't do anything soon, I'll mind fuck my own pussy.

His tongue, oh thank you, God. He plunges his tongue deep into me, and I cry out in ecstasy.

I want more, fuck me more. I cry out a deep groan, but I dare not speak again. He let my first break of silence go, I don't think I'll be lucky a second time, and I won't challenge him because I need this. I'm too afraid he'll stop.

He's using his thumb now to circle my clit. I'm so close to reaching my climax. I'm crying and moaning. Suddenly he replaces his tongue with his cock. The feeling of his cock withdrawing and pushing back into me, his frenum piercing hitting all my sensitive spots, feels so damn good. He gets into a rhythm and then gradually thrusts harder and faster.

That fucking piercing is the *Holy Grail* because he knows how to use it to hit that one spot inside me, and I'm going right over the edge. As he releases the clamps and loosens the ropes around my body, I feel blood rush to my nipples. I scream as the tingling ecstasy hits every fiber of my body. I start my descent into a complete free falling, earth-shattering orgasm.

I'm convulsing and realize I'm having multiple climaxes, one right after the other, and I can't stop yelling them out either.

Carter doesn't stop pumping either, I can hear him grunting, and he's hellbent on blowing my mind. I feel his large erection inside me as he groans loudly just before his release.

"Fuck," he groans deeply. He stays inside me until his own convulsions finish. I hear him get up and immediately release my wrists and ankles. I patiently wait until he releases me from the rope dress, and my skin breathes the welcome release.

Last is the blindfold, and when he pushes it off my face, he is right there as my eyes refocus. He kisses me lightly.

"You did well, my love. Are you ok?" He says as he wraps his arms around me.

"Yes, but tired," I say as I hug him back. "That had to be the best orgasm I've ever had!"

I see the smile creeping up his face. Whatever uncertainties he had disappeared and was replaced with a tender expression.

I watch him as he puts everything away. I look down at my body and see an intricate red pattern on my skin. My legs are still a little wobbly, but I climb out of bed and walk over to the floor-length mirror.

Wow, there's an imprint all over my body of where the rope had been. I have bite marks on my collar bone. When did that happen? I don't remember him biting me.

He comes up behind me, wrapping his hands around my abdomen and nuzzling his face on my neck.

“They should disappear within a couple of hours,” he says softly.

“I’m not worried. They look like a beautiful work of art. I was wondering about the bite marks.”

“Sorry, babe, I got carried away.” He lightly kisses them. “Come, let’s get to bed; we need some sleep, otherwise, I’ll be tempted to fuck you again.” He slides the ribbon out of my hair and releases the braid.

I get into bed, and he slides in next to me, offering me his arm as I cuddle close to his chest.

I look up at him, “Carter, I’m in love with you so much, you know I’d go to the ends of the earth with you.”

He smiles wide and kisses my forehead, “I would do the same with you. I love you too, my sweet angel.”

Squeezing me tighter, he whispered in a deep voice, “Tonight, I let you see me, and I don’t let people inside my world. And I see you too now.”

I smiled at him and dragged my head downwards towards his chest as I closed my eyes and drifted into a deep sleep.

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We were awoken by a hard knock on Carter’s door. I could hear Ben’s voice on the other side.

“What time is it?” I ask with a groggy voice.

“3 am.” I feel Carter carefully release me from his embrace. “Stay here, angel.”

He pulls the covers back over me, and I hear him walk over to the door. The door has been left a little ajar, but he’s now behind it. Male voices are talking, whispering. It’s Ben and Carter’s voices, but it’s all mumbled, and I can’t make it out.

“Is everything ok?” I cry out. A little worried, I get up and grab Carter’s shirt from last night, but I don’t button it up.

I open the door to see a nude Carter and a fully dressed Ben standing outside the bedroom. There’s no missing the

angry look on Ben's face as soon as he sees me and yanks the shirt I'm wearing open.

"The fuck, man?!" He looks at Carter, fumes coming out of him.

I look at myself. The red marks have faded somewhat but have not disappeared.

"You had to? Really? To her?" Ben furiously glares at him.

"Hey!" I snap, "I'm right here! I consented to it," I start buttoning the shirt down. "So you want to tell me what's going on?"

"I think it's better over coffee." Ben proceeds towards the kitchen.

It's three in the morning. Why are we having coffee?

I pass Oscar's door and see it's slightly open. Usually, when he's sleeping, he closes it. They all sleep with their doors closed, including me, except when the four of us sleep in my room.

I open his door wide. The curtain blinds are still open, so some of the city lights filter in, and I see his bed is unmade.

I walk into the kitchen, "Where's Oscar, and what's going on?"

Ben doesn't say anything and continues with the coffee prep. Carter comes back a minute later and is now wearing boxer briefs. He approaches me and takes my hand in his.

My eyes are following Ben, something has happened to Oscar, and he's trying to find a way to tell me. I take my hand from Carter and bang my palm hard on the marble counter.

"I'm not a child, and I don't want coffee! Fucking tell me now!" I demand.

He stops what he's doing and looks at me, "Oscar's been arrested. He's being held downtown."

"Arrested? For what?"

The only thing that springs to mind is the unsanctioned fights he participates in, and perhaps they got raided for illegal gambling. But, he only fights once a month, and since we've been together, I've attended all his fights. He would never do a fight without telling me.

"A fight broke out last night at the boxing club, two rivals. Oscar was in the weight room at the time. When he heard the commotion, he tried to help the club owners, who were there at the time, break up the fight. When the police arrived, they arrested everyone regardless."

"Ok, so he's innocent. Can't we just get him bailed out or something? Why is he still there?"

"When they took them all down to the precinct and started processing them, something strange came up on Oscar's data," Ben said.

Carter grabbed my hand and held it tight.

"Like what?"

Ben breathed in heavily and put both palms over the counter.

"His id and social security are both fakes."

"What?" I said, disbelieving.

"At first, they thought he was a known criminal, but they haven't got anything on him. Nothing."

I didn't understand. Oscar served the marines; of course, they must have something on him.

"After I got the call from Oscar, I went down to the precinct downtown. I met with him. He has no clue about himself either. He suspects that when his family entered the US, the FBI fucked up his paperwork. He was too young to remember anything."

"His aunt might know."

"Yes, exactly. I'm going to wait until the morning to call her as well as a lawyer who deals with immigration issues."

He approaches me and puts his arms on my shoulders, “Ava, sweetheart, everything will be ok.” He leans in and kisses my forehead.

“Let’s skip the coffee and get some sleep instead,” Carter suggests.

“I don’t think I can sleep, knowing Oscar is being kept in some jail.”

“Ava,” Carter now stood beside Ben, “We’ll go tomorrow morning to visit him. But a lack of sleep will do no one any favors. At least come lie down with us.”

I follow them to my bedroom. Ben undresses and puts his clothes on my armchair. He slides into my free side, and I nuzzle into his arm as Carter spoons me from behind.

By morning my bed was empty.

I jumped out of bed to find Carter making breakfast. That causes me to do a double-take because both he and Oscar can’t even cook an egg. Upon closer inspection, I see he is making toast with melted cheese sandwiches. It’s probably the extent of his cooking skills.

“Ben left an hour ago. He’s gone to meet with the lawyer at the precinct. Go have a shower, get dressed. We’ll have breakfast together and join them.”

“You eat while I shower. I don’t want to waste time. Can we take the Harley to avoid the traffic?”

“Yes. Ava, honey, eat something.” He set out a plate and a mug of coffee for me on the kitchen island.

I ignore him and return to my room. As expected, I lost my job at Raphael West a week ago, but at least I still have a few freelance projects to keep me going until I find something more permanent. Now hell will freeze over because I’m not losing my man, not after all the shit we went through after our break up.

“Carter,” I call out from my bedroom as I get dressed.

He comes in and stands at the door.



“Do you think they will let Oscar come home today?”

His arms cross over his chest as he leans against the door frame.

“I don’t know, angel. They take immigration fraud seriously; usually, there is no bail on these kinds of charges. They hold people until they release them or fly them home.”

I sit on my bed because I think I almost lost the will to stand.

“Oscar’s home is here, with us.” My voice croaks; I couldn’t even entertain the thought that he might be deported.

Carter comes over to me, wraps his arms around my body, and kisses my head.

“I know, babe. He’ll come home. Ben and I will make sure of it. Come on, finish getting dressed.”

I decide to skip coffee and breakfast, eager to get downtown.

Meanwhile, Carter is notified of a message on his phone, he takes it out from his back pocket, and I quickly glance up at him as I lace up my sneakers.

“Shit,” he hisses. “It’s from Ben. They’ve moved Oscar to an immigration detention center, and we should meet them there.”

“What the fuck?” I can’t believe how all messed up this suddenly became.

*To be Continued in **Gods of Latin Anarchy**, Book 3 of The Titans Series*

New Release

# The Titans Series

## Book 3

### Gods of Latin Anarchy

**And then there were three....**

Who is Oscar Santos?

That is precisely what the authorities want to know.

He's being held at an immigration detention center for illegal migration and risks being deported or, worse, charged as a possible terrorist for falsifying his documents when he joined the Marines.

On top of everything, Ava discovers Carter has disappeared from her bed in the middle of the night without any explanation. Ben explains to Ava that Carter has orchestrated a scheme to get Oscar back home, but it's dangerous, risky, and illicit.

Over a distant but watchful eye, Carter, the mastermind behind the plot, instructs Ben and Ava to carry out a series of tasks while he keeps himself under the radar of the local authorities.

***How far are Ava, Ben, and Carter willing to go to get Oscar back home?***



Pre-order GODS of Latin Anarchy. Out December 2022.

## About The Titans Series

**The Titans Series** is a group of reverse harem contemporary romance novels. Each book in the series introduces a different story about Ava's adventures and life journey with her three male roommates, Ben, Oscar, and Carter. Every book is written to be read as a standalone with a HEA chapter ending. However, the epilogues of each book in the series act as the introduction to the next book and will end on a cliffhanger.

Three books are planned to be released in 2022, with more coming in 2023.

**Gods of City Glory** is the first in the series.

The books can be found on Amazon as Ebooks and Paperback and are also available on Kindle Unlimited.

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## *About the Author*

Marian Andrew is an original New Yorker with a British education and currently lives in Germany with her husband, son, and two cats. Working as a fashion designer for the last twenty years has allowed her to live and work extensively throughout Europe and America. Her career has taken her to several places in the Far East, Middle East, and North Africa, constantly gathering ideas, inspiration, and experiences throughout her travels.

Marian hosts a fortnightly podcast, *Marian Andrew's Indie Books & More*, that aims to support indie and hybrid authors within the writing community

She is the author of the novels *Hustle*, *Hustler's Salvation*, and *Hustler's Redemption*, which are part of the *Hustle Trilogy*, the rom-com *Love In A Pandemic*, and the paranormal romance *Evanescence*. She has also written the dark romance novels *Betrayal*, *Forbidden*, and *Devoted*, part of *The Izzy Nichols Story* series

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*GODS OF .... , 4 (title release coming soon)*

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[1] Brazilian Portuguese pet name meaning “little sweet”

[2] Small pork chunks cooked horizontally on a spike over a grill. Similar to kebabs.

[3] Greek term for ‘Grandma’

[4] Greek term for ‘Grandpa’

[5] Greek – little kisses

[6] Brazilian Portuguese - precious

[7] Brazilian Portuguese – you make me so horny.

- [8] Brazilian Portuguese – You are beautiful.
- [9] Brazilian Portuguese - I am head over heels in love with you.
- [10] Brazilian Portuguese - You are everything to me.
- [11] Brazilian Portuguese - My little sweet (petname)
- [12] Brazilian Portuguese - You are my world.
- [13] Brazilian Portuguese - . My love.
- [14] Frappe is a popular Greek frothy iced coffee drink.
- [15]. Glyko is a traditional Greek sweetened fruit preserve.
- [16]. LW – acronym for long-winded
- [17] Seiza is a Japanese traditional floor sitting style, sitting down with both legs set at about a 180-degree angle and both femurs on both lower legs.