



Her Three

BODYGUARDS



MOLLY EDEN

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CHAPTER 1

Taylor

Walking the streets of New York City felt different these days—less vibrant and special. The only thing that was different, though, was the fact that my dad wasn't here anymore.

On rare days like this, crisp spring days with perfectly blue skies, we took walks, not really going anywhere in particular. And I never felt like we needed a destination.

I pulled my coat around me against the wind, looking out onto Central Park to my left. I wanted to get to where I was going as soon as possible. The restaurant that my cousin, Troy, had picked wasn't far from my apartment on the Upper West Side, but the walk felt like it was taking a hundred years.

I crossed Central Park West, heading away from the park. The streets were much busier there, with most people stepping out on their lunch break or changing shifts at their jobs. As an influencer, I was pretty much free to do whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted. But since Dad's passing, I hadn't been posting as much—just the bare minimum to fulfill my contractual obligations from all the brands I worked with.

My mother passed away when I was three, so my memories of her were vague. I missed having her presence, but missing Dad was on another level. So much of my life had been colored by him, and now the world felt like it had lost its brightness.

He was so healthy one day, then he was so sick the next. Just three days after he got sick, he was gone. It was so fast that I still hardly believed it.

“Excuse me, miss?” a middle-aged man wearing an apron asked. “Sorry to interrupt, but you look like you have good taste. Can you tell me which flower arrangement I should get for my restaurant? I picked up a bunch just to see how they looked in the space, but I can’t narrow them down.”

“Oh, sure.” I wandered over toward his van, which was parked near an alley.

“I’m sure someone else can help you out,” Troy said, swooping in from behind me and looping his arm in mine. “Have a good one.”

He hustled forward so fast that I nearly stumbled.

“What’s your deal?” I asked. “He just needed help with those flower arrangements.”

“Taylor.” He gave me a look, one that said, *really?* without feeling condescending. “You had no idea what that guy wanted. For fuck’s sake, he was asking you to look in his big white van. It screams serial killer. I’m so glad I spotted you just in time.”

I looked over my shoulder. The van really was a serial killer van. My face got hot. I just wanted to be helpful, and I loved flowers. The city needed more people willing to help strangers instead of pretending no one else existed.

“It’s broad daylight on the Upper West Side,” I said. “Nothing *that* bad could happen.”

“For most people, yeah. But for a billionaire heiress?” He shook his head. “Nope.”

Again, he was right. My face or name was splashed on every major newspaper in the world, along with the fact that I’d inherited billions. So many journalists had reached out for comment about the passing of my father, when all I was trying to do was survive.

Thankfully, a PR firm our family worked with drafted up a statement for me to release. How was I supposed to write something about Dad when I could hardly accept the fact that he was gone?

We reached the restaurant, a newly opened tapas place. It was perfect—simultaneously modern, minimalist, and bright with the scent of spices in the air. Then again, Troy’s taste was impeccable, so I didn’t expect any less. We were seated right away in the corner, away from the rest of the guests.

Troy ordered us a bottle of chardonnay, since neither of us had to be anywhere for the rest of the day. He worked in the family business, in the steel manufacturing industry. Even though he was only thirty, he was already at the executive level and had a flexible schedule.

“You hanging in there?” Troy asked after the server dropped off our wine.

“More or less.” I sipped my chardonnay, savoring how buttery it felt on my tongue. “It’s just the little things that are getting me. Walking here reminded me of him. I heard a song he liked in Whole Foods earlier today and teared up.”

Troy reached across the table and squeezed my forearm. “That’s perfectly understandable, Tay.”

“It just feels silly. It’s just a song.” I sighed and sipped my wine, blinking back tears again.

“Seriously, don’t feel silly,” Troy said again. “It’s not something you can just get over in a weekend.”

“I know. I think throwing myself back into work will help.”

People heard the word ‘influencer’ and assumed we sat around and took pretty pictures all day, but it wasn’t like that at all. I had a lot of balls in the air between my different platforms, sponsors, and partnerships. I pulled out my phone and checked Instagram. My follower count had only grown since Dad’s death.

I shuddered when I took a quick peek at my messages. I had to block a bunch of creeps later. It was like playing Whack-A-Mole; I blocked five, and ten more popped up. At least most of them weren’t all that threatening, but some of them genuinely made my skin crawl.

And now that the world knew I was worth billions, these threatening messages were flooding my inbox more frequently.

“Speaking of getting back into the normal world...” Troy straightened up, playing with a signet ring he’d inherited from our grandfather when we were kids, then his wedding ring. My eyes narrowed. Fidgeting only meant one thing, and I didn’t like it. “I swear it’s not bad.”

“But you’re about to spin your rings right off your fingers,” I said. “It has to be bad.”

“It’s not *bad*. It’s just big.” He bit the inside of his cheek for a moment. “I’ve hired you bodyguards. Three of them.”

“*What?* Bodyguards? Three of them?” My voice was a tad too loud, so I cleared my throat and lowered it. “Troy, you can’t be serious. I’m not royalty or anything.”

“You’re the closest thing to it these days,” Troy said. “The entire world now knows about your billionaire status because of your dad’s death. You’ve had too many scary incidents happen lately: being followed the other day, the threatening messages. And as the serial killer van incident shows, you’re not fully prepared for what that means. Not to mention that you broadcast the places you go to millions of people on social media. People can put together the dots with some sleuthing.”

I huffed, staring across the restaurant and chewing this over. I didn’t like the idea of having three strangers hovering around me like a baby bird needing protection. But Troy was totally right. I didn’t have an ounce of street smarts. The serial killer van incident today wasn’t even the first time I’d almost gotten myself into trouble. Troy’s husband, Micah, had stepped in to help me once or twice—okay, more like four times—when I was telling strangers at parties too much about my whereabouts.

Trying to pretend I knew a thing about how to protect myself was a recipe for something bad happening. But this felt extreme.

“But won’t it look weird? Having three men with me all the time?” I asked.

“Who cares if it looks weird if it’s keeping you safe?” Troy said. “They’ll be a deterrent. This is serious. It goes beyond your DMs. Remember those creepy texts you got from some random number? The ones with you just at the grocery store, along with that comment that said, ‘you look pretty in pink?’”

I did, unfortunately. I didn’t leave my apartment for days after that message, and we never figured out how they got my number or who they were. They weren’t the only ones to text me, though usually, it was just creepy texts and not pictures of me.

And they would not stop unless I had help.

Even so, having three people guarding me was going to take some getting used to. Were they going to hold me back from living my life? I needed to get back to normalcy as soon as possible, and a bunch of new people around would not help.

Or maybe it was just what I needed.

“I promise you they’re the best in the business. You’ll hardly notice that they’re there, but you can feel as safe as ever,” Troy added.

“I don’t like it. I love my freedom, and this feels like I’m losing my independence,” I said.

“Please,” was all Troy responded.

“I’ll think about it,” I relented. “I just want to meet them first.”

CHAPTER 2

I'd been a bodyguard for five years, starting not long after a hip injury cut my professional football career short. Protecting the wealthy and famous wasn't all that exciting to me anymore. But something about this assignment had piqued my interest.

Maybe it was the opulence of the Bailey Corporation that had my attention. I'd been around some of the wealthiest people in the world, but none of them had offices that managed to be gilded right down to the tasteful doorknobs. The view outside of the conference room window was stunning, showing off Manhattan on one side and Central Park on another.

I glanced at my partners, Cody and Ethan. Ethan was impossibly stoic, so I couldn't tell what was going through his head on the best of days. Cody was more open, scanning the room just like I had. We worked well together despite our differences, so at least I didn't have to worry about that.

But we'd never worked with someone like Taylor. This gig was last minute, so we got a simple dossier on who she was. A billionaire heiress. An influencer. She was much younger than the people we usually worked for, too, at only twenty-three years old.

"Ms. Bailey will be here shortly. She's stuck in traffic," the receptionist who had brought us in said. "I'll be back with coffee as well."

"She's late," Ethan said after checking his watch.

“As if we don’t deal with people who run in their own time zone all the time,” I replied with a snort. Running late was extremely common among our clients, as much as we tried to hustle them places on time for security reasons. At least the receptionist told us what was happening.

A muscle in Ethan’s jaw twitched. “Still.”

“Relax,” Cody said, stretching out one of his legs. “We’ve barely started. You can’t start complaining about that yet.”

Ethan grumbled in response. The receptionist came back with the coffee, and a few minutes after that, a woman burst through the door. She was a blur of glossy dark hair and hot pink clothes.

“Sorry I’m late!” she said, out of breath. “Traffic was awful.”

She finally settled down in my line of sight and... wow. She was gorgeous—big dark eyes, soft features, plush lips. Her olive-toned skin looked soft, as did the thick waves of dark brown hair cascading down to her small waist. Her dress was vibrant and well-tailored, which only brought attention to her long legs and curvy hips.

I swallowed. I had never felt this kind of pull to a woman before, much less a client. I pushed it down as much as I could. Wanting to fuck someone I was protecting was a terrible idea, especially since I formed feelings fast.

How long had it been since I’d even been on a date? A long time, but that was by design. My routine with women was falling too hard, too fast, and getting my heart broken. Finally, my older brother DJ sat me down and told me that I needed to take a damn break from women for a while. His advice was always sound, and being single had worked out well so far.

Until now. Now I was going to have to focus twice as hard on my job.

“Hi, I’m Taylor,” the woman said. “Nice to meet all of you.”

“Nice to meet you. I’m Harrison Davis,” I said. “And these are my partners, Ethan Cooper and Cody Reed.”

She shook my hand first, then the others. Her hand was soft and small, but her handshake was firm. As soon as I pulled myself back together, I noticed the man in a suit who came in behind her. I hadn't even noticed him. Who was he? A boyfriend? Why did I hate that idea right away? I was doing a shitty job at pretending I wasn't attracted to her.

"Hi there, I'm Troy. Taylor's cousin," the man said with a smile, extending his hand to me. I shook it, relief melting the tension out of me. "I'm the one who touched base with the agency who connected us to you."

Ethan and Cody shook Troy's hand as well. Taylor took a seat at the head of the table, the big leather seat swallowing her up.

"In these initial meetings, we usually go over the security needs you outlined in the survey we sent you in more detail." I gestured to my tablet, which was sitting on the table in front of me. Ethan and Cody also had theirs.

"Okay, sounds good." Taylor folded her hands in her lap.

I woke up my tablet and went to the survey, which she or Troy had filled out in detail.

"Let's start with who you are and what you do," I said, scanning the page. "First of all, I'm sorry for your loss."

"Thank you," Taylor said, looking down at the table.

My heart ached for her. I couldn't imagine what it was like to lose a parent, especially at her age. I talked to my family a few times a week and went back home to Atlanta whenever I got the chance.

"You've recently inherited a significant amount of money," Ethan said before I could continue. He was always the first one to brush past the niceties. "Have you faced threats from people wanting to harm you in the past because of it?"

"Nothing serious, I don't think." Taylor glanced at Troy, who seemed to agree. "I'm more concerned about my social media presence. I get a lot of messages, and some people try to find out where I am. I've had a lot of creeps recently, too. This has increased exponentially since my father's death."

“You have...” Cody paused, scrolling. “Seven million followers across all your platforms. Not surprising that you’re concerned. That’s a lot of attention.”

Ethan grunted quietly, frowning at his tablet. Taylor’s eyes slid to him, and she fidgeted with her jewelry. It wouldn’t have been the first time that Ethan made a client nervous. Most of the time, it worked for our clients—if he was that intimidating, then he was doing his job keeping away people who wanted to hurt them. But Taylor seemed like a nice person. She needed a softer touch.

“But we’ve handled public figures quite a lot,” I said, giving her a reassuring smile. “You don’t have to worry. Can you tell us what your average day is like?”

“It really depends.” She slid her fingers through her hair, playing with the ends. “But I pretty much always get up and get a coffee at the shop two blocks away. Sometimes I work there, and other times, I take photos for my social media. I also go to a lot of parties and events.”

I jotted down a few notes, as did Ethan and Cody. Securing parties and events was a hassle sometimes, but not impossible. Besides that, her life sounded manageable.

Cody’s brows furrowed for a second. “We’ll need your full schedule going out a few months. Also, please forward us the threatening messages. We will want to investigate those further.”

Taylor’s curious eyes scanned him, too, her cheeks flushing. I wished I could see into her head. It would have made my life so much easier. Was she going to be difficult? No, she didn’t seem like that type. But something was going through her head right now, and it wasn’t just that she was happy to have someone to protect her.

“Okay, I can have my assistant send everything over,” she finally said.

“And give us the names and numbers of everyone you come into regular contact with,” Ethan added. “So we can determine that they’re safe.”

Taylor went a bit pale. “Obviously, the people closest to me are safe.”

Ethan tapped on his tablet with dull thumps. “We don’t do our job well by assuming everything will be okay, Miss Bailey.”

Ethan wasn’t soft by any stretch of the imagination, but did he have to be this intimidating? He was probably just in a shitty mood—as he often was when his schedule deviated due to someone else’s lateness—but we needed to make Taylor feel safe.

“Do you have any questions?” I asked, keeping my voice gentle to compensate for Ethan.

“Are you going to be with me twenty-four seven?” Taylor gestured at the three of us. “Like, in my apartment?”

I pushed the idea of being in her apartment beyond what I had to do for my job out of my mind. Shit, I really needed to get my head in the game. I was good at my job. I really loved my job, something I didn’t think I’d feel after my football career ended. I couldn’t throw it away for a beautiful woman.

“No,” Cody said. “We’ll assess your apartment for potential security weaknesses and put in a security system to monitor you while you’re at home. One of us will get you settled each night and lock the door behind us. If anyone breaks in or attempts to, an alert will go straight to us and the police.”

“Okay. My doorman already knows not to let people up, so I should be okay,” she said. “And will all three of you be with me all the time?”

“Not necessarily. We take shifts being your primary guard, while the other two do all the work of ensuring that your environments are safe and that you aren’t facing any threats,” Cody said.

Taylor nodded slowly at that, a hint of a worried wrinkle on her brow for a tenth of a second.

“Do you have any concerns about that?” I asked.

Her eyes widened, like she wasn't expecting me to pick up on her hesitation. "No, it'll just take some getting used to. Troy, did you have anything?"

"No." Troy smiled. "It sounds like you're in good hands. When can you start?"

"We need to finish up the background work on the people she comes into contact with and set up security at her apartment," I said, sliding my tablet back into its leather case. "But after that, we can start first thing in the morning tomorrow."

"First thing tomorrow, then." Taylor took a deep breath through her nose and gave us a smile. It wasn't a full-on one, which was a relief. I already knew her smile was going to be my weakness, and I needed every ounce of willpower to get my job done right.

CHAPTER 3

Taylor Bailey's apartment was about what I expected it to be: an expensive penthouse on prime Manhattan real estate, decor designed down to every detail. It was a space befitting of a billionaire heiress whose career was built largely on appearances.

Not that what it looked like mattered. The more important thing was that it was more or less a fortress against intruders. Guests needed to get past the doorman first, then use a passcode to get up to her floor. Once we got to her floor, we had to wait in a foyer in order for her to unlock the door to her actual apartment. Cody had replaced the locks and deadbolt with something that even he couldn't pick if he tried.

But just because her home wasn't as vulnerable to intruders didn't mean I could sit back and relax. I double-checked the cameras we'd installed around the foyer yesterday. No blind spots. I rang her doorbell and waited.

And waited.

Was lateness a habit of hers? I checked my watch right as I heard all the locks and deadbolt coming undone. Finally, she pulled the door open, flustered. It didn't seem like she'd stumbled over from bed based on her outfit. She was in snug, pinkish-purple leggings and a coordinating sports bra, her olive-toned skin covered in a sheen of sweat.

She was a stunning young woman. Pretending she wasn't would be ridiculous. Her workout outfit was only emphasizing her curves and ample cleavage, making it hard to ignore the heat sweeping through me. I kept my eyes above her neck.

That didn't help, either. She wasn't wearing any makeup, but her skin was bright and soft-looking. Her brown eyes were doe-like and wide, her lashes ridiculously long.

I nodded at her. "Good morning, Miss Bailey."

"Sorry, I was in the kitchen making my smoothie, and I didn't realize all these locks took so long to open," she said, glancing behind her. "You can come in. I'm running a little behind, so I still have to shower."

I stepped inside. "Do you often run behind?"

"Not usually. I just had a hard time falling asleep last night." She led me farther into her apartment, her attention darting from one room to another. Finally, we stopped in the kitchen. It was gigantic, befitting of a chef. "Um, do you want a coffee while I get ready?"

"I don't drink coffee."

She blinked. "So that's a no, I'm guessing. Water? Tea? Anything?"

"Water, please. If you show me where it is, I'll get it myself."

Taylor walked over to a cabinet and pulled down a glass, filling it with water from the door of her gigantic fridge.

"Thank you." I took a sip of it when she handed it over.

"You're welcome." She ran her hands down her thighs, like she didn't know what to do with them. "I just need to drink my smoothie really quick and shower."

"Go ahead." I checked my phone, where I'd pulled up her schedule. "We have half an hour until we're supposed to be at the coffee shop for you to get work done."

"It's..." Her head tilted to the side as she looked up at me, confused. "It's not a hard and fast kind of thing. I just show up and do my work whenever."

"We monitor the areas where you go ahead of time, so it helps to be there when we planned." I put my phone down on

the counter. “Also, you need time to get things done before your meeting with the organic ice cream brand.”

“Okay.” She picked up her smoothie, a green concoction in a mason jar, and took a sip. “I guess I’ll be back in a bit.”

She disappeared down the hall with her smoothie, a door clicking behind her. I touched base with both Harrison and Cody to see if they had checked the café where we would go soon. It was all ready.

I sighed, running my hand through my hair. I’d been out of the SEALs for five years, but I still kept it military short. Working with a new client always had an awkward period, but this one was even more uncomfortable. I’d get through it. I wasn’t here to be her best friend. I was here to make sure no one hurt her.

Eventually, she came back into the kitchen, fully dressed. She was wearing snug jeans that hugged her hips and a sage green sweater that even I could tell was fashionable. Having her hair pulled back in a bun emphasized her high cheekbones and elegant neck in a tempting way. It had been a long time since I’d had the chance to bury my face in the space between a woman’s neck and shoulder as I slid my cock inside of her.

I couldn’t be having these kinds of thoughts.

I closed my eyes for a moment and pulled myself back together. My work was my life, and I didn’t have much time for dating. I didn’t even want to date, really, especially after the one woman I’d had feelings for had torn my heart out ten years ago.

Maybe I’d find a woman to sleep with for one night to take the edge off. I was dedicated to my job, but I was still a man. I needed to clear any temptation away from my thoughts as soon as possible.

“I’m ready to go,” Taylor said, holding up a black purse.

“Let’s go, then.”

I gestured for her to go ahead. She stopped to grab a coat from her front closet, and we went outside. It was a gray day, a breeze stirring up the strands of hair that had fallen from her

bun. I walked next to her, scanning the people who walked by. Most people didn't give us a second glance, but a few men's eyes lingered on her until they noticed me. Then, they looked away and gave us a wider berth.

We reached the café five minutes later, passing by the dark SUV where Cody and Harrison were waiting without calling attention to it. The café was enormous, given the area of the city we were in, with light wood floors, white walls, and plenty of plants.

"Morning!" Taylor said to the woman behind the counter.

"Hey, girl!" The woman grinned. "It's been a while. Still want your matcha latte with oat milk?"

"Yes, please." Taylor took a step back and eyed the pastry case. "And a slice of that pistachio rose water loaf."

"You got it." The cashier's eyes flicked to me. "And, um, are you with her?"

"He is. It's..." Taylor gestured vaguely, like she was trying to explain herself without speaking. Somehow, the cashier got it. Then again, it wasn't like I was similar to the men she likely dated. I was dressed in a dress shirt and tie, plus a dark coat and an earpiece. I was obviously a bodyguard, which was the point.

"Ah, that kind of thing," the cashier said. "Well, do you want something?"

"No, thank you."

"Okay. We'll have that ready for you in a second." The cashier nodded to a barista, who started making Taylor's drink. Then, she put a slice of the loaf on a plate with a spoon and pushed it across the counter to Taylor.

"Thanks!" Taylor pulled out her wallet and handed over an American Express Black Card. "Can you charge me two hundred for the next people who come in? And add the same amount for tip?"

"Sure thing. Thank you so much." The cashier took her card and poked the touchscreen register before inserting

Taylor's card.

I blinked, but pulled my face back to neutral. I wasn't sure why I was surprised. Four hundred dollars on just coffee, and a very hefty tip was absolutely nothing to a billionaire. But why hadn't she paid for her own drink?

"I get free drinks because I also post about the café on my social media," Taylor said, as if she'd read my mind. She walked over to the seating area. "So I always like to give something back and brighten someone's day."

I grunted in acknowledgment. At least she was generous.

"Let's see..." Taylor assessed the open tables, as did I. I wasn't going to sit with her to give her some space, so I had to pick a spot where I could see who was coming in and out and who was near her. "This spot's perfect."

She put her plate on a table with plenty of natural light, then put her bag down. Her back was to the door, so I picked the table across from her, facing her. She pulled out her laptop, notebook, camera and small tripod. The barista put down her latte, and Taylor thanked her.

She started moving things around on her table, positioning them just so. Then, she took pictures with her camera, then her phone. Once she was satisfied with what she'd photographed, she put her camera away and actually started eating and drinking. After she took her first few bites, letting out hums of pleasure as she did, she pulled out her phone again and started tapping around.

"You're posting that right now? With your location tagged?" I asked. My tone was brusque, making her jump.

"Yeah." One of Taylor's perfectly groomed eyebrows arched up. "Why?"

"Schedule it for later. You shouldn't broadcast your location."

She sighed out of her nose, her shoulders sagging. "I do that all the time. It's just for my Instagram stories."

“That was before you had us. Schedule it for later, preferably tomorrow.”

The deflation in her posture turned rigid with annoyance. “Fine, whatever.”

I sat back in my seat and watched her tap around on her phone.

“Wrap things up,” I said. “We need to get to your meeting. There’s traffic.”

“Already?” She checked her smartwatch. “I usually don’t leave for another five minutes to get across town.”

“Again, we need to get to locations early. The car is already waiting for you.” I slid my tablet back into its case. “Let’s get going.”

Taylor packed up her things, not looking at me. A tinge of guilt, an unfamiliar feeling in my work, came up. She wasn’t being a petulant child, but she obviously wasn’t happy with how things were going. But she had to get used to it, just as I had to get used to her. I wasn’t used to being affected by my clients in a way beyond the professional sense. But Taylor was different, apparently.

I shoved my guilt down. I was doing what I had to do to make sure she was safe.

I walked her outside and opened the door to the black SUV. Cody was in the driver’s seat, and Harrison was in the front passenger seat.

“Good morning, Taylor,” Harrison said with a big smile.

Taylor brightened immediately. “Good morning.”

“Ready to head out?” Cody asked, glancing over his shoulder at her. Taylor nodded and buckled her seatbelt.

He drove off. Harrison filled the silence with small talk, asking her about how her day had been going so far. In addition to my serious attitude, Cody could be intense, giving off a sometimes-helpful, dangerous air, so I was grateful for Harrison to add balance. It seemed like Taylor was going to be easy to manage in some ways, and difficult in others. I just

hoped she wasn't going to start pushing back against me for being so stern.

CHAPTER 4

Having three huge, hulking men around me at all times was really, really hard to get used to. They weren't in my face all the time or anything. Aside from Ethan, who had stayed on my ass for every little thing the day before, the others stayed behind me. I'd gone to the rest of my meetings and dinner with a few friends without much fanfare, at least.

But they were distracting in that they were all ridiculously hot. Seriously. Where did Troy find them? A security firm that produced security guards who were so handsome that they distracted any would-be attackers?

I'd only gone to meet them to appease Troy. I really didn't want bodyguards. But as soon as I saw them, I relented. It wasn't just about them being hot, though. They made me feel safe, and although having someone with me at all times would take some getting used to, I liked knowing that someone was protecting me.

Harrison was enormous, probably around six-foot-five and burly in a way that made him look like a big teddy bear. His dimpled smile, which he flashed often, made my insides melt like chocolate under the sun. And the way his light brown skin crinkled around his eyes when he was smiling made me flat out weak in the knees. Of course, he had to go and be nice on top of that. I wasn't supposed to immediately form a crush on my bodyguard.

Cody was Harrison's opposite in a lot of ways. His blonde, slightly long hair, tanned skin and blue eyes should have made him look like a surfer, but something about the way he moved

and acted made him feel dangerous. Not in the way the people trying to stalk me felt, but dangerous in a sexy way I never thought I'd be into.

Then there was Ethan. I never thought I'd be attracted to a guy who drove me a little crazy and irritated me with his stiff ways. I would have been able to tell that he had been in the military even if Troy hadn't told me. His upright posture, short brown hair, and square jaw made him look like he was the poster child for the Navy. But he clearly didn't like me all that much, so it was a tiny bit easier to pretend I wasn't salivating over his muscles. Just a tiny bit, though.

I sighed, tying my hair up in a bun and studying myself in the mirror. I was going to spend the morning at the spa, sponsored by one of the skincare brands I worked with, so I hadn't put on makeup. These were my favorite days as an influencer. I loved being pampered.

My doorbell rang right on time, and my stomach flipped inside of me. Shoot, I was running late again. My guards had my schedule, but I didn't have a schedule of who was going to be my primary bodyguard on what days. Was it going to be Ethan again? I tried to imagine him in the spa, frowning and poking around the calm space. Ugh. Definitely not what I wanted.

After adjusting my robe to cover up as much as possible, I rushed across my apartment to the door and started undoing all the locks they'd installed. Before, I'd had a smart lock that opened whenever I got close with my key fob, but they'd taken that away just in case someone stole it from me.

I opened the door to find Harrison, and I tried not to look as excited as I felt. He flashed me one of his huge smiles, those dimples deepening. His eyes flicked over my body, making warmth spread through my chest. He hadn't leered or anything; he was probably just noticing the fact that I wasn't dressed and ready to go. But still, some interest was there.

I wasn't experienced with men, but I wasn't stupid. I knew that I was beautiful, and that men were attracted to me all the time. But something about *him* being attracted to me felt good.

This was so bad. I tried to focus on his outfit and earpiece, which broadcasted the fact that he was a bodyguard. A bodyguard whom I absolutely could not form a crush on.

“Morning,” he said. “I’m guessing you still need to get dressed.”

“Yeah, sorry. It’ll only take me a minute.” I stepped back to let him inside. “You can have a seat if you’d like.”

I rushed back to my bedroom and threw on some leggings and a soft, stretchy hoodie that hugged my body. By the time I came back out, Harrison was standing in the front room of my apartment, looking at the art on my walls. I took a second to check him out before I came down the hall.

“I’m ready,” I said.

“Off to the spa, then.” He opened the door for me and ushered me out of my apartment.

Once again, a black SUV with darkened windows was idling in front of my building, Cody standing outside wearing sunglasses. He nodded at me and opened the door to the backseat.

“Good morning,” Cody said.

“Morning.” I slid inside, and Harrison got in after me, closing the door.

Ethan was behind the wheel, his hands already on it.

“Good morning, Miss Bailey,” he said. “Buckle up, please.”

I resisted the urge to roll my eyes. I wasn’t a child. I was obviously going to wear my seatbelt.

“So you have the spa this morning, then you have the rest of the afternoon to get some work done,” Harrison said. “What do you have to work on?”

Yet another reason why I liked Harrison—he seemed genuinely interested in what I did, and not just because he had to know to protect me.

“I have a lot of content to edit.” I had a full-time editor because I posted so often, but I liked doing it. I was good at it, too, so I still edited some photos and videos every week. “So I’ll probably be sitting in my office, staring at a screen until I get hungry enough to order dinner.”

“Editing video? Or photos?” He was looking at me as much as he could in the relatively small space. He was so huge that he blocked the view out the other window.

“Both.” My cheeks flushed. “I don’t edit my photos too much, because I want to remain authentic. But I touch things up. And I tend to bulk-record videos, so I’ll mostly have to do that. Vlogs and stuff about cooking or fashion.”

My audience was overwhelmingly female, so I doubted he’d be interested. But still, he looked like he was.

“So you’re a burgeoning chef, too.” Harrison’s smile widened toward one side, deepening his right dimple.

“Hardly.” I laughed. “I just like to make healthy recipes, and that’s what my followers want.”

“I see. So you won’t be whipping up a four-course meal for twenty-five guests any time soon?” He slid his finger underneath the band of his watch. His hands were just as big as the rest of him, and that had my thoughts jumping right into the gutter.

My face got even hotter. I was still a virgin by choice. I’d gone to an all-girls boarding school, where I was too shy and, to be honest, awkward to talk to guys from the nearby all-boys school. And during and after college, I was bombarded with male attention to the point where I wanted to take it super slow with the guys I did pick.

I kept my distance from a lot of men, not knowing if they liked me for me or for my family’s money. I’d had one boyfriend, and to his irritation, I didn’t really go past taking my shirt off with him.

Basically, I usually had a lot of self-control. I touched myself from time to time when I was in the mood, but I wasn’t lusting after men’s hands. Now all I could think about was

how Harrison's big hands would feel on my body. Maybe even between my legs.

I pressed my thighs together, then remembered that he'd spoken.

"Oh, definitely not," I said with a chuckle I hoped wasn't as awkward as I felt. "And hosting parties isn't as fun as attending them. I can never have fun if I'm worrying about people being tended to."

"Good thing you have a lot of parties coming up soon." Harrison glanced past my head out the window. "And good thing you have this spa day to relax before all the events you have."

"Yeah. It's been a while since I've been to a masseuse."

The muscles in my back were tight from Pilates and general tension from everything that had been going on, and my skin wasn't as glowing as it was before. A lot of my job required regular upkeep—workouts, haircuts, extensive skincare routines, perfect nails, everything. Some of my followers took it upon themselves to shred my pictures to pieces, pointing out every flaw I hadn't hidden or airbrushed out. I didn't have thin skin, but I wasn't impervious to people's comments.

"It's definitely relaxing," he said. My eyebrow went up in question, and his grin widened. "I've been to spas before. Mostly when I played football and needed massages to loosen up my muscles. My sisters dragged me along with them, even though the team's massage therapist was available. I think they just wanted to see me get a pedicure."

I laughed, trying to imagine this enormous man in a pedicure chair. "There's nothing wrong with men having well-groomed feet. It was sweet of you to go with them."

"It was fun. And pedicures aren't that bad." He shrugged his huge shoulders.

"So you have sisters?" That made complete sense. He seemed to be more sensitive and perceptive than Ethan and Cody were, like he'd grown up with a lot of women.

“Two. And one older brother.” The warmth in his voice and eyes melted my heart. “They’re all back in Atlanta. My parents and the rest of my family are still there, too.”

He showed me the lock screen on his personal phone. It was a photo of all of them. His mom was a petite black woman with his big smile, and his father was big, blonde, and strapping. His siblings looked like a mix of both of them, though his older brother looked the most like him.

I’d always been jealous of people with a lot of siblings and cousins. Growing up as an only child was sometimes lonely; honestly, Troy was the only cousin I liked and interacted with regularly.

But before I could say anything, Ethan cleared his throat and pulled over to the sidewalk.

“We’ll check the area,” he said, undoing his seatbelt and opening the door. “Stay here until Harrison escorts you inside.”

I sighed, checking the time on my phone. Traffic wasn’t as bad as it usually was at this time, so I was a few minutes early. Ethan was probably thrilled. Cody nodded at Harrison through the window a few moments later.

“Okay, we’re good to go.” Harrison opened the door and got out, holding the door for me.

He escorted me inside while Cody and Ethan came back to the car. Once I was inside, my shoulders relaxed. The actual spa was several floors up. The receptionist must have known Harrison would be coming with me, because she didn’t seem surprised that he was there. He stood out in the calm, cool-toned colors of the spa.

“Hello, Miss Bailey,” the receptionist said. “We’re so glad to see you. I’ll take you back so you can change, and we’ll start with your hot stone massage.”

“I’ll be here,” Harrison said, sitting down on a bench in the reception area.

“Okay, see you later.” A bit of tension I hadn’t even realized was in my limbs disappeared. No one was going to

burst into the spa and try to kidnap me.

With Harrison guarding the entire place, I let myself sink into the peace of my spa day. I got everything from a scalp treatment to a pedicure and everything in between. By the end of it, I felt like a new person.

I changed back into my clothes and returned to the lobby, where Harrison was waiting. The receptionist was eyeing him, not even bothering to hide the lust in her gaze. Harrison didn't notice—he just brightened up when he saw me.

“Ready to go?” he asked, standing. He was so tall that I had to tilt my head back to look up at him. I wasn't particularly short, either.

“Yep, ready.”

He opened the door for me and let me go through, guiding me down to where Cody and Ethan were still waiting. Cody looked at me in the rearview mirror as I slid into the backseat.

“Back to your apartment?” he asked, not taking his eyes off of me. He was just as quiet as Ethan, but when he did speak, it sent a thrill through me. His voice was deep and raspy. I wanted him to speak more.

“Can we pick up food on the way?” I asked.

“Sure. Just tell us where you want to go,” Cody said.

I picked one of my favorite ramen places, and Cody drove us there. Ethan got out to order for me, so they didn't have to scope out the whole place, leaving us waiting in the car.

“Did you like the spa?” Cody asked, still watching me in the rearview mirror. The low light in the car still caught his blue eyes, making them so intense that my heart fluttered.

“I loved it. It was nice to relax.” I fiddled with the strap of my bag and looked down at my newly painted nails.

“And to get away from our asses for a little while?” Cody finally turned to look at me, pushing his fingers through his hair. The hint of humor in his eyes made it easier to hold eye contact with him for more than a few moments.

“What do you mean?” Harrison’s smile became more of a smirk for a second. I still loved it. “We’re delightful.”

“As if it’s not a big adjustment.” Cody laughed, the sound warmer than expected.

Harrison’s expression turned serious, and he looked me in the eye. “In all seriousness, we’re working for you. If you have any problems, just tell us, and we can work it out. Okay?”

My heart flipped around in my chest at his sincerity. Maybe he was just doing his job really well, but what if it was something more? It was becoming something more for me, way faster than I ever thought it would. He just made me feel safe, and it had nothing to do with the fact that he looked like he could fight fifteen men at once.

“Okay,” I said. “I promise I’ll speak up.”

Our moment was shattered when Ethan opened the door again, sliding into the front seat.

He kept the paper bag in his lap. “Let’s go.”

Cody pulled off, leaving me to wonder how I was going to manage these feelings.

CHAPTER 5

I'd barely known anything about influencers like Taylor before this assignment. To be honest, her life felt low pressure and high pressure at the same time. Low pressure in the sense that so much of what she did was fun—going to get free food and free spa treatments, working from wherever she wanted, buying beautiful things with her basically unlimited money.

But on the other hand, she had to do it in front of millions of people. We also monitored her social media for potential risks, and the amount of hate she got was ridiculous. She got a lot of praise, too, and had a huge fan base. Still. That had to get to her.

But she was still so damn sweet. We'd been on this assignment for a week, and every single day, I was surprised at how upbeat she was. Naïve as fuck, yes, but her innocence was somehow endearing.

And arousing. That sweet face and attitude, her perfect ass, and surprisingly ample tits were a lot to ignore. I absolutely had to ignore those feelings. All three of us were damn good at our jobs, and I wasn't going to be the one who fucked it all up because I was thinking with my cock.

I ran my fingers through my hair, then checked the time. Ethan, Harrison, and I were sitting in her living room, waiting for her to get ready for an event she had. It was going to be on a rooftop in Brooklyn, in celebration of... something a skincare company had done. Fuck if I knew. Taylor was their brand representative, which was all I knew about her association with the company.

But we'd done all the security preparations by examining the space earlier. It was going to be a big event, so all three of us would be with her throughout the crowd. It was going to call attention to her, but at least the space would be filled with people, so it wouldn't be quite so obvious.

"Don't," I said to Ethan, who was about to stand up and go ask her if she was almost ready.

Ethan's eyes narrowed. "What?"

"You know exactly what." I smirked. He and Harrison were my best friends after working together for so long, and I knew the fact that she was always slightly late was driving Ethan insane.

Ethan flopped back into his seat. "She's running late."

"It's a party. No one shows up on time," Harrison said. "She has to get ready."

Taylor had been getting ready for about an hour already, which didn't surprise me. She spent a significant amount of time on her skin and her makeup most days when she had to go out, but it was her job. Of course, she put in hours. And she seemed to enjoy the process, based on the loud, out-of-tune singing to Dua Lipa coming from her bathroom.

"I understand that she needs to get dressed. But it's just that..." Ethan sighed out of his nose. "I can't control how long she takes to put on her makeup."

"There we go," I said, crossing one ankle over my knee. Ethan tried to have a chokehold on every situation, sticking as close to the rules as possible. Trying to get him to unclench was part of Harrison's and my life work.

Ten minutes later, the sound of high heels clicked down the hall.

"Okay, I'm ready!" Taylor called out.

She rounded the corner, and all three of us just stared. She looked unbelievable. Most days, she didn't *look* like she was wearing a lot of makeup, so seeing her with shimmering eyeshadow and red lipstick was new. But it emphasized her

features instead of covering them. And then her dress, which was a shimmering deep purple, made her body look sinful, not exposing too much skin but hugging her waist and hips. It stopped not far below her ass, and with the heels making her long legs look even longer....

Shit.

“I’m ready to go,” Taylor said again, pulling us out of the stupor.

“Right. Let’s go.” Ethan slapped his hands on the armrests and stood up.

I followed suit, then Harrison. As she walked in front of us, we got a view of the dress’s low back. Her hair was up in a bun, so we got a good view of every inch of exposed skin.

Even the doorman complimented her on our way out to the car. None of us spoke that much on the drive over. I was in the backseat with her this time, and she spent most of the time scrolling through social media. Even the scent of her perfume was getting me hard. I’d gotten in the habit of jerking off more when we were off duty, just to avoid moments like this, but I didn’t know how much her being dolled up would affect me.

We made it to the event space, and the event was in full swing. Security acknowledged us on the way in, and Ethan stopped to talk to them and get additional updates. Harrison and I brought Taylor up to the roof, where the party was. The moment the doors to the elevator opened, we were blasted with loud music and a big crowd of people, mingling and dancing.

I switched into focus mode. Crowds were always tricky. We were supposed to let Taylor have a good time at the party, which meant that we couldn’t keep her in the best place for surveillance. Both Harrison and I flanked her, scanning the room and keeping an eye out for potential threats.

A big neon sign was the background to their equivalent of a red carpet. The party organizers ushered Taylor over to the photo space, where she posed and smiled for a few pictures

before being swept over to the drink area. The bartender handed her a hot pink drink, which she delicately sipped.

“Oh, that’s good,” she said to herself, looking around. “I’m going to look for my friend. She should be here.”

“We’ll be behind you,” I said.

She slipped through the crowd, saying hello to people and giving hugs every once in a while. Sometimes people noticed us, but a lot of them were already drunk. Great. Drunk young people in a crowd was even worse, but nothing we couldn’t handle.

Taylor found her friend, another young, pretty woman who I recognized from monitoring her social media. Her name was Francesca, and she wasn’t a threat in any way. Francesca glanced at me, then at Harrison, then back at Taylor.

“They’re my bodyguards,” Taylor explained over the pounding music.

“Oh.” Francesca’s eyes widened before she blatantly checked me out. “Really?”

“Yeah?” Taylor looked over her shoulder at us. “It’s no big deal. They’re just here to watch.”

“Okay, no biggie.” Francesca gave Harrison one lingering glance before she went back to talking with Taylor.

Taylor wasn’t much of a dancer, so she, Francesca, and a few others who stopped by just talked. I kept my attention on the flow of guests through the party, getting updates through my earpiece from Ethan, who was posted near the door.

Eventually, Taylor shivered—heat lamps were around the perimeter, but even the heat from the crowd didn’t reach the center.

“Here, let’s go toward a heat lamp,” Harrison said.

We ushered Taylor, Francesca, and another friend to a heat lamp. I locked eyes with a man as we walked. He looked like all the other influencers here: well-dressed, good-looking, probably in his early twenties. But the look in his eyes, filled with irritation and aimed at Taylor, put me on high alert.

“Keep an eye on your four,” I told Harrison, keeping my voice low. “Dark hair, printed button-down shirt. He’s eyeing Taylor.”

Harrison nodded. “Got it.”

We got Taylor settled near the heat lamp and stood so we were watching her surroundings. The same guy came closer. Security had searched everyone, so I wasn’t worried about him having a weapon. But I didn’t want him to hassle Taylor. My gut was telling me that he wanted to, but I couldn’t shove him away if he didn’t do anything.

The guy muscled his way to where Taylor and Francesca were talking and laughing. The smile dropped right off Taylor’s face when she noticed him, but she put a weaker version of it back on.

“Hey, Kenneth,” Taylor said.

“Taylor. Didn’t know you’d be here,” he said.

He tucked his free hand into his pocket. He hadn’t really noticed or acknowledged me and Harrison. Or he was trying to act tough by pretending we weren’t here. Yeah, this kid hadn’t been in an actual fight in his life. If he had, he would have at least looked more unsure about being around two men who could have easily kicked his ass.

He wasn’t all that much younger than me, so maybe it was just a phase. When I was in my very early twenties, I was all about surfing, doing petty crimes, and trying to act tough.

But now, I wasn’t that man. I’d learned the hard way that my actions had consequences, and I doubted this kid would ever learn.

“I didn’t know you’d be here, either,” Taylor said.

“Is there even a reason for you to be here?” Francesca asked, looking Kenneth up and down.

“What, I can’t talk to my ex-girlfriend?” Kenneth asked with a fake smile.

I took a step closer to Taylor. So this was the kind of guy she dated? I hated the fact that he’d touched her before.

Everything about him screamed douchebag. A flare of jealousy came up, too. He'd kissed her. He'd slept with her. Things I'd never do to her. Things I shouldn't have wanted to do because this was my fucking job.

"If you're going to cause a problem, then you can't," I said.

Finally, Kenneth noticed us. He made eye contact with me, his eyes hazy. A drunk ex-boyfriend? Even worse. He took a long sip of whatever his drink was, his stance unstable.

"How would I cause a problem?" Kenneth put his hand on Taylor's shoulder, making her flinch. "We're friends. Like you said."

Taylor gave me a pleading look, which was all I needed. I got into Kenneth's space, and he let his hand drop.

"Don't touch her," I said, keeping my voice as level as possible despite the white-hot hatred bubbling up inside of me.

I was glad I wasn't the kind of man I'd been at Kenneth's age. I was more than happy to use my fists first and ask questions later back then. I had to be like that back where I was from. I grew up in a beachside town, but that didn't mean it was nice.

"Who are you? New guy?" Kenneth asked. "Y'know she's frigid as fuck, right? You're not getting into those panties."

A bolt of surprise shot through me, but I kept my face neutral. She was a virgin? She was only twenty-three, so it wasn't that unusual, but I assumed she would have slept with a boyfriend. Based on the looks she got all the time, she probably didn't have a shortage of dates.

But the fact that this piece of shit was throwing her decision not to have sex with him back in her face was enough to make me forget about that surprise. I fucking hated assholes like this who felt like they were entitled to sex. If Taylor hadn't wanted him, she hadn't wanted him for a good reason. I didn't have to dig too deep to figure out why she might not have wanted to lose her virginity to him.

“You need to go,” Harrison said, stepping in as well. I felt the anger radiating off of him, too.

Kenneth wasn't so drunk that he'd try to take on the two of us. He stumbled back.

“Whatever,” he said, leaving.

The people around us had noticed something was going down and were talking in hushed tones. I glared at them, and they dispersed, the music filling the air again.

“Sorry,” Taylor mumbled, looking down into her drink.

“Why would you apologize? You didn't do anything,” I said.

Harrison lifted his hand, as if he was going to put his arm around her shoulders to comfort her, but he stopped.

“If you see anyone else who could give you trouble, then tell us right away,” I said. “Okay?”

Taylor nodded, then sighed. “I think I need another drink.”

We followed her to the bar, and I tried not to let my emotions take over. My anger. My jealousy. My curiosity about how and why Taylor was still a virgin. None of it was my business—what she did with men wasn't my problem unless they were a security threat. But that didn't stop me from being even more curious about her than ever.

CHAPTER 6

“**Y**ou’re early!” Taylor said to us when she opened the door to her apartment. Once again, she was in a robe. It wasn’t skimpy, to my relief.

Who was I kidding? It showed more than enough skin for blood to rush to my cock.

“We are,” Ethan said. “So hopefully we’ll leave on time for your meeting with Neil.”

Taylor stepped back to let us in. “We totally will. I don’t have to dress up all that much for Neil.”

Neil was her father’s former business partner. He was semi-retired, sitting on the board of the Bailey Corporation and managing her finances for her on the side. She was supposed to meet with him once a month to keep track of what was going on. She’d known him her whole life, so hopefully, we didn’t have anything to worry about.

We went to wait inside her living room while she went to get dressed. Sometimes, when Taylor said that she wasn’t going to take that long, she took a half hour. But today, she came out in five minutes, dressed down in jeans and a sweater. Did every pair of her jeans have to fit her so perfectly? I kept my eyes off her ass as much as I could when she walked ahead of us.

To my surprise, Ethan was checking her out, too. That made me feel better. His willpower was like steel, and if he was cracking, I didn’t feel too bad about it.

We got Taylor into the car and drove off to the Bailey Corporation offices.

“I don’t think I’ll need much guarding today with Neil,” Taylor said, pulling a hair band off her wrist and putting her hair up in a bun. “I’ve known him for ages. We’re not related by blood, but he’s like family. I trust him.”

Her ability to suss out who was trustworthy wasn’t her strong suit, but I kept that to myself. Now I was on even higher alert. Neil was a part of the audit we did of everyone she came into contact with somewhat regularly. Nothing had really popped up on him, besides the fact that he’d been in business with her father for a long time. But he was now on the board of the Bailey Corporation and not actively working in day-to-day operations. He was twice divorced and lived on the Upper East Side. No children. No criminal history.

Surely her father had put Neil in charge of them because he trusted him, but still. Anyone managing someone else’s billions had to be monitored closely, especially when it came to Taylor. The incident at the party with her shitty ex had only made the protective streak inside of me roar to the surface. Well, even more than it already had.

I hated seeing how that guy had talked to her and talked about her like she didn’t exist. Obviously, they had broken up for a good reason.

By some miracle, Cody found a quick route to the offices, so we were early.

Ethan’s face was neutral, but he had to be delighted to have made such good time. He walked on Taylor’s left, with Cody behind her and me to her right. The Bailey Corporation offices were just as luxurious as they had been during our first meeting with Taylor. We flanked her as we walked through the building, several people stopping to say hello to her.

Finally, we made it up to the meeting room where we’d first met her. Inside was an older man—maybe in his early sixties—wearing an expensive suit. He was the kind of man who put a lot of effort into looking younger with plastic surgery or fillers, but it had the opposite effect.

He smiled broadly at Taylor and held his arms open for a hug. Taylor walked into his arms and hugged him back politely. But Neil held onto her for a beat too long for my comfort.

“So good to see you,” Neil said. He turned his attention toward us. “And you must be her security team.”

“We are,” I said, extending my hand to him. “I’m Harrison Davis.”

“Harrison, good to meet you,” he said. Ethan and Cody introduced themselves as well. “I’m afraid this meeting will be quite boring, so you can wait outside.”

I hesitated, but he had a point. We didn’t need to be involved in this conversation. But I didn’t like the idea of her being in there alone with him for some reason.

“We’ve been tasked to be with her at all times when she’s in public, regardless of where she is,” I said. “And we like to stick to protocol. It’ll just be one of us, and as the contract we signed states, everything we overhear is strictly confidential.”

Neil studied me for a moment, not quite frowning but not neutral, either.

“Fine. It’s protocol.” He smiled again, his teeth bright against his tanned skin.

Today was my turn to be Taylor’s primary guard, so I stayed while the others went outside. Neil and Taylor sat down at one side of the table, and I sat down with one seat between me and Taylor. Neil pulled out some documents and spread them in front of her.

“Okay, let’s get started,” he said. He moved over so he was sitting right next to Taylor. Even from where I was sitting, I could tell he was a tad closer than he had to be.

He started talking about Taylor’s various investments and properties. I didn’t know everything he was talking about, but I heard hundreds of millions of dollars thrown around.

“Now that we’ve gotten the boring stuff out of the way, we can talk about some investment ideas I have for you.” Neil

reached across the table and grabbed his laptop. “There are a lot of opportunities that could grow your wealth.”

He sounded like he was going to push a pyramid scheme on her. I checked on Taylor, who simply nodded and folded her hands on the table in front of her.

Neil’s tone had been upbeat before, but now he was animated, like he was telling her the cure to all of her ails. Alarm bells went off in my head. I’d had family members who ended up in situations like this, where someone was trying to sell them on something that benefitted the seller more than them. I was sure he was getting paid to get Taylor more money, and that benefitted them both.

So why were my mental alarm bells ringing?

Maybe it was the fact that he gave off creep vibes. He’d probably been around Taylor since she was a child, which made it even worse. At least she only met with him once a month or so.

Their meeting ended, and Taylor gave him another hug. Yet again, he held onto her a beat too long for my comfort. I locked eyes with him as they hugged, and he stepped back, avoiding my gaze. I hadn’t intended to flat out intimidate him like Cody would have, but apparently, I had.

I led Taylor outside, where the others were waiting.

“See you soon, honey,” Neil said as we walked away.

“See you!” Taylor waved and smiled. Did she notice that something was off about that man? Unfortunately, I doubted she did.

We escorted Taylor around for the rest of the day, taking her to her favorite lunch spot, a location for her to take photos for Instagram, and finally, Pilates. While she was inside, I turned to Ethan and Cody.

“Did Neil rub you two the wrong way?” I asked.

“Yep,” Cody said. “Kind of off-putting.”

“And creepy. I didn’t like the way he looked at her,” Ethan said, looking at the door to the Pilates studio. “He didn’t ping

any alarms in our background search, but I'll look again.”

“Sounds like a plan,” I said. My gut feeling was too strong to ignore, and I didn't want anything to happen because I'd ignored it.

CHAPTER 7

I was getting used to taking Taylor to these influencer events. All of them were more or less the same—very trendy, highly decorated spaces. A lot of food, and a lot of beautiful people. Today was no different. She was attending yet another influencer luncheon, this time in Soho.

But I still wasn't fully used to Taylor the way Cody and Harrison were. And she obviously wasn't used to me, either. She was friendly, of course, but she didn't smile like she did whenever she talked with Harrison, or laugh the way she did when Cody said something quietly funny.

It was killing me. I wasn't jealous of my partners—I was glad that they were there to make Taylor feel comfortable. But admittedly, the attraction I felt toward her was making the whole situation confusing. First, I had no idea why she, of all women, had such a vice grip on my attention.

A lot of it was physical, which only got more and more intense the more I had to watch her try on different outfits and go to parties. But it went beyond that, and the reasons why were escaping me. She wasn't my type whatsoever. She was soft and naïve. Sweet without much bite to her attitude. I felt like I was too hard for her, like pairing a slab of concrete with a down stuffed pillow.

I was attracted to women who weren't afraid to push back. And from what I'd seen, Taylor wasn't really like that.

I blinked. Why was I thinking about her as a viable romantic option in the first place? She wasn't and never would be. Not only did we live in separate worlds, but I was ten years

older than her, and I was her bodyguard. And I wasn't the kind of man who deserved a woman like her, anyway. We'd never work.

I waited behind Taylor while she looked over the big seating chart at the entryway of the event. Today, she was more dressed up in a mini-skirt, high-heeled boots, and tights. The combination made it hard for me to pull my eyes away from her legs.

I focused on the seating chart, studying the names. I'd gotten a full list of the attendees beforehand, so the names were familiar. I spotted Taylor's name at the same time she did.

"Oh, great," she said to herself as she found her name card. She plucked it from the chart. "I'm back here."

She walked toward the table, her footsteps dragging, and sat down with a few other women. I took a seat behind her, close enough for me to hear, but not so close that I was obtrusive. Taylor chatted with the others at the table, her tone upbeat and happy despite her clear disappointment at where she was sitting.

That was, until a tall woman with her hair in a pixie cut sat across from her. Jacqueline, if I remembered correctly. I immediately didn't like her. She looked down her nose at everyone, even as she smiled.

"Hi, Jacqueline," Taylor said, her voice bright even though her shoulders had visibly sagged.

"Hey, Taylor," Jacqueline replied, with contrived enthusiasm and a fake smile that didn't quite reach her eyes.

Appetizers arrived, and the people at the table started chatting. Jacqueline dominated the conversation, talking over people.

"I absolutely *adored* Tulum. Y-Vitamins really treats their influencers well," Jacqueline said, taking the most delicate bite of salad I'd ever seen. Her gaze turned to Taylor, and she tilted her head to the side. "I thought I'd see you there. I thought you were one of their influencers."

This woman was the worst. Was she intentionally condescending, or was she just like this all the time? Not that it mattered. Her tone suggested that she knew the answer already, but she wanted Taylor to say it.

“No, I ended my relationship with them. I started working with a different vitamin brand. They do hair vitamins, mostly,” Taylor said. Her tone was the same sweet one as always. She had to have noticed Jacqueline’s tone, though. I didn’t have the patience for people like Jacqueline.

“Oh, no.” Jacqueline faux-pouted. “I heard they were cutting a lot of influencers who weren’t a good fit. It’s a shame. Tulum is so lovely.”

I was glad I had good control over my expression, so I wouldn’t scowl harder than my resting face was. Taylor probably had more money than all the people in this room combined. She could have bought five houses in Tulum if she wanted to. Why was Jacqueline trying to put Taylor down? Because she didn’t have much else to go off of, probably. What was her problem with Taylor?

I couldn’t imagine Taylor doing anything to piss Jacqueline off. The only reasonable explanation was jealousy.

Someone else cut into the conversation, and it drifted to something else. Taylor pushed back from the table and turned to face me, her eyes slightly tired.

“Just running to the bathroom to wash my hands.” She wiggled her fingers. “They got sticky from those appetizers.”

I followed her to the bathroom and waited outside. It didn’t take her long to wash her hands.

“That’s better,” she said when she came out. “I needed a break from Jacqueline, too, honestly.”

“Understandable.” I gestured for her to go ahead, but she walked alongside me instead of in front of me.

“She’s just so nasty,” she continued. “I don’t get it. I’ve literally never done anything to her.”

I wasn't sure what to say to that, even though I felt her pain. I'd dealt with people like Jacqueline throughout my life, who didn't like me because I existed. But expressing that felt like showing her my weak spots, and doing that wasn't my style.

We went out to the table again, where everyone was still laughing and talking. Jacqueline trained her gaze on Taylor, her lips pursed together like she was tasting something bad. But she didn't say anything, at least at first. The conversation flowed well around them, bouncing from travel to the ins and outs of YouTube. Then Jacqueline struck.

"I'm just proud that I made it to where I am without help," she said, looking at Taylor. "It feels so much more satisfying knowing that."

Jacqueline might as well have said Taylor hadn't ever worked for anything in her life and that she hated her for it. The table fell silent. I expected Taylor to push back from the table and leave again, but she just cleared her throat.

"Was that dig intended for me?" she asked.

"What dig?" Jacqueline's blue eyes widened, feigning innocence. "You're just projecting, I think."

"You know that's not true, Jacqueline," Taylor said, her voice steady and strong. "You've always had a problem with me, even though I've always tried to be nice, and I'm not going to put up with it anymore. I want all of us to have a good time without this toxic behavior, so if you have a problem with me, bring it to me directly. Or even better, keep it to yourself and be a bigger person who doesn't feel the need to say things like that."

The silence around the table spread even further, the energy deeply uncomfortable. I was honestly impressed with Taylor. Her posture didn't shift. But Jacqueline's did, pushing back from the table and stalking off toward the bathroom.

The awkwardness still lingered in the air until a photographer came by. Once he took a few photos, the conversation started up again. The rest of the lunch went by

quickly, especially since I was turning what had just happened over in my head again and again.

I hadn't expected to see that side of Taylor. I expected her to be the same sweet girl as always. But sweet didn't necessarily mean soft in Taylor's case, and my respect for her grew as much as my attraction did.

"I'm stuffed," Taylor said at the end of the meal, putting her hand on her stomach. "I'm ready to get back to my place and nap, honestly."

"Then let's get you back home."

She smiled up at me, and my neck heated. I gestured for her to go ahead of me so she wouldn't notice.

I wanted to go work out, take a walk, take a shower, anything to distract me from her. I was falling for her faster when I didn't want to be falling at all.

CHAPTER 8

A lot of days, I had somewhere to be in the morning, then somewhere to be in the afternoon, with time at home in between. To save time, my bodyguards usually hung around my place, working on whatever they did to keep me safe.

But today, it was just Harrison at home with me while Cody and Ethan went to scope out a few spaces where I wanted to throw a party for Troy's upcoming birthday. I still wasn't sure what that involved, but I was grateful that they were going to help me pick a place. I didn't want to book a space that looked perfect, only to find out that it wasn't easily secured.

I bit my lip and tapped away from my DMs on Instagram. Several from a few creeps had gotten through to my main inbox. I could have closed them, but a lot of times, brands reached out to me there despite the email address I had listed in my profiles. I didn't want to miss anything.

My gaze drifted up from my screen and onto Harrison. He was sitting across the table where I liked to work, looking at his own laptop. He'd taken off his suit jacket, leaving him in just a tailored white button-down shirt.

And he'd rolled up the sleeves to the elbows. I could barely keep my eyes off of his muscled forearms. It didn't help that I was still obsessed with his huge hands. Every single night, I lay in bed and let my hands slip under my panties, rubbing my clit and pretending it was him doing it.

Did he know what he was doing to me? I'd *never* fantasized about anyone like that before. And just thinking about that made something inside me clench. I pressed my thighs together.

I wanted to do something about it. I never thought I'd *need* to relieve sexual tension, but here I was. The only problem was... how? It wasn't like I knew how to seduce a man. I'd barely even made out with guys, much less anything beyond that.

Maybe it was something that would pass. But the longer I had to force myself not to ogle him, the less I was sure about that.

"Everything all right?" Harrison asked, snapping me out of my daze.

"Yeah! Totally good." I smiled. He smiled, too, making my stomach do backflips. "I think I need a break, though. Do you want any coffee?"

"Sure, if you don't mind."

I got up and went to the kitchen, my face burning. I resisted the urge to look back if he was looking at me. He'd definitely looked at me before, even when I wasn't intentionally trying to be sexy. But today, I'd tried. I had a professional photoshoot this morning, so I'd come home and changed into a matching tank and pajama short combination.

My shorts were *short*, and my tank top was thin. I wasn't bold enough to go without a bra, but I was wearing a bralet that didn't hide much. But it was honestly cold inside, so I'd thrown on a long cardigan and some knee-high socks.

I started making us coffee and stole a look at his profile. He was so big. He'd said something about being a pro football player in the past, and I believed it. I didn't know that big, muscled guys were my type, but they were. Something about his size mixed with his easygoing, sweet nature made me feel safe. Like I was being protected by a friendly bear.

Harrison, Cody, *and* Ethan all did it for me, which was another crazy thing. When I wasn't thinking about Harrison's

hands, I was thinking about Cody's mouth and the way one side quirked up when he told a joke.

And if I wasn't thinking about Cody's mouth, my thoughts were consumed by Ethan's deep, stern voice. It still drove me a little nuts when he was uptight, but the deep rumble of his commands touched a part of me that I hadn't even known was there.

I blew out a breath through my nose and topped my coffee off with oat milk. I'd learned Harrison took his coffee black every time. I brought his coffee to him and set it down.

"Thanks," he said. "I actually just got a notification from the doorman that you have a package. I'll go get it. Be back in a second."

"Okay." I watched him go. Even his butt was nice.

I managed to get a few emails done while he was gone, getting my package. They always opened them for me now to check for contraband, even though I mostly got clothes, skincare products, and makeup. I wondered what today's package was.

Harrison returned with a box under his arm, an odd look on his face.

"What goodies did I get today?" I asked.

"Swimwear." The closer he got, the more I noticed a reddish flush under his brown skin.

"Oh, fun." I took the box and put it on the table. I pulled out a bikini top. Or at least I thought it was, because it was microscopic.

My eyes widened. Brands sent me things to try on, but what platform was I supposed to model this on? I couldn't be *this* naked on any of them.

Harrison eyed the piece, his Adam's apple bobbling in his throat. The heat in his eyes gave me a wicked idea. Was it going to backfire? I wasn't sure. But I was alone with him, and my lust for him was growing. When was I going to have an opportunity like this again?

“I guess I’ll film a try-on haul,” I said, rifling through it to find the note from the brand. “Would you mind helping me with the lighting? I need a second pair of hands for this ring light.”

Which wasn’t true, but it didn’t hurt. He’d seen me set it up before, though. Was he going to see right through me?

“Sure thing.”

Harrison got up and followed me. I grabbed the ring light in question from my filming space, and he helped me with the tripod. I set it and my other lights up. He stood with his hands in his pockets, a rare look of apprehension on his face.

“Want to watch me awkwardly film myself?” I asked, giving him a cheeky smile.

“You aren’t awkward at all,” he said, leaning against the doorframe.

“Then do you want to watch me film not-awkwardly?” I asked.

Usually, the guys didn’t stick around to watch me film, but I wanted to see the look on Harrison’s face when I tried these on. I needed a good excuse to get him to stay.

“Sure.” He shrugged and wandered farther into my filming space.

Thankfully, I hadn’t taken off all the makeup from my shoot this morning, so all I had to do was change. Usually, I filmed my intro first, but I wanted to dive right into the swimsuits. I took the box into the adjacent room and rifled through it.

The swimsuits weren’t something I’d usually pick for myself, but they were cute. I picked a one-piece first, mostly for my own nerves. I wasn’t ready to be mostly naked in front of him, as much as I wanted that deep down.

But this white suit showed plenty of skin. It dipped all the way down to my bellybutton, the leg holes cut high and the back crossed with a number of straps. I wiggled into it,

contorting to get the straps to lay flat before I realized the opportunity.

“Hey, Harrison?” I asked. “Can you help me with the straps on this suit?”

“Yeah, sure.”

I walked back out into my filming space. Seeing the way Harrison’s eyes widened made me bold. I put a little more swing in my hips and turned. He didn’t touch me at first. Finally, he did, his fingers delicately moving the straps and helping me put them flat.

“There we go.” His voice had deepened even more. “All set.”

“Thanks.”

I pressed record on the camera and took a few steps back, checking myself in the viewfinder. This was *very* skimpy. My breasts were moments from popping out.

“Okay,” I said, posing in frame. My brain went completely blank. Usually, I said something about the price, how it fit, and how it felt, but I was speechless with Harrison’s eyes on me like this. “So...”

I went to fiddle with the camera again, then stepped back. The heat in Harrison’s gaze was making me pulse between my thighs like crazy. I took a deep breath and focused on the spot where I always looked when I filmed.

“All right. So this suit is called the Darcy, and I got it in white,” I said. “It comes in pink and floral, too. I like it, but the leg holes are a little... y’know. Tight, I guess? And the straps in the back were a little difficult to fix.”

Did it come in those colors? Did what I’d said about it even make sense? I thought that was what the note from the brand said. I was going to have to record this all over again. I paused for a second, then stopped the recording with a sigh.

“Do you want me to leave?” Harrison asked.

“No!” I said, a little bit too loudly. “I mean, it’s cool. It just takes me a while to get warmed up, y’know?”

“I get it.” He sat down in the plush pink seat behind the camera.

He threaded his fingers together on his lap, like he was trying to keep them occupied. My heart skipped a few beats. I wasn't sure I could make the first move. Did I need to push the envelope? Be more forward?

“What do you think of this one?” I asked. “Does it look good? Like, would you... I don't know, approach a woman at a pool if she was wearing this?”

I was being so obvious. My flirting skills were a bit of a mess. But I was already diving in, so I couldn't climb back out. I was equally torn between throwing on a robe and stopping and rushing forward with excitement.

“I probably would. It looks very good,” he said, his voice tight.

“I'm going to go change into the next one,” I said, my face hot.

I changed into the next suit, a tiny pink bikini that I actually loved. It was a touch too small on the top, but the bottoms fit. I adjusted my breasts, so they weren't going to fall out right away, and went out into the room again.

Harrison said something under his breath when he saw me, shifting in his seat and grabbing one of my many throw pillows.

“All right,” I said, pressing record. “This is the next suit, which is called Maria. It only comes in this hot pink, but I can see them releasing more colors in the future.”

Harrison was still watching me, his hands gripping his knees.

“I think the straps could be a little bit more comfortable.” I adjusted the straps, and one of my boobs slipped out from under. I let out a squeak of surprise and tried to cover myself. “Definitely going to edit that out.”

“Taylor,” Harrison said, his voice even raspier. “Stop recording.”

I did, my face growing hot. He stayed in his seat and moved the pillow on his lap. The bulge in his crotch made my nipples harden through my suit, shivers of anticipation running up and down my spine.

“What is it?” I asked, my heart pounding so loudly that my voice sounded small.

“I just...” He swallowed. “I’m struggling here.”

Both of us knew exactly what he was talking about. I had to make a decision: forward into the unknown, or back. But if I held back, who said I’d ever get a chance with him again?

“It’s okay,” I said softly.

“Come here, then,” he said, putting his hand out.

I took his hand. He pulled me into his lap, straddling him. I sucked in a breath when I felt his erection between my legs. I tentatively moved my hips, and he squeezed my waist.

“Don’t, not yet, sweetheart.” Harrison pressed his lips to my neck, making my pulse race. “You have no idea how much I’ve wanted you these past two months. And seeing you in these teeny fucking swimsuits has me at the edge already.”

His hands skimmed up my waist and back until he was cupping the sides of my face. Then he finally kissed me. His lips were soft, and he smelled like citrus and spice. I hadn’t kissed many men, but his kiss was by far the best, the most intoxicating. I sank into it, trying to ignore the massive thickness threatening to burst out of his pants.

I’d seen a man’s cock in person before, but it wasn’t impressive. But I could tell Harrison’s was huge. My heart fluttered as our kisses deepened. He had to know I was a virgin after the incident with Kenneth, right? I knew I wanted Harrison in ways I’d never even thought of with Kenneth, but that didn’t make it any less terrifying.

Harrison’s hand cupped my breast, its size swallowing it. His thumb brushed against my hard nipple, making me moan. The sensation sent shocks of pleasure down to my clit.

“You like that?” Harrison asked, his mouth inches from mine. I could only nod.

He eased the bikini top up, my breasts bouncing free, and just stared at me for a moment. The pure desire on his face, his brown eyes blazing, made me feel like I was a goddess who had crash-landed into his lap.

He tilted me back and sucked one of my nipples into his mouth, making me cry out. Oh, my god. I’d never felt anything like this before, like all of my nerves were vibrating to the perfect frequency. I couldn’t help but move my hips, grinding against his erection. The movement eased the growing need inside of me, but not enough. Not nearly enough.

“Touch me,” I whispered.

“Where do you want me to touch you, baby?” Harrison asked, his mouth leaving my nipple with a wet pop. His hand traveled down my stomach and between my thighs, cupping my mound. “Here?”

“Yes. Please.” My heart was going to explode out of my chest, and I was soaking the bottom of this bikini.

He just left his hand there. Still mouthing my nipples, but not going anywhere else.

“Harrison,” I whined.

“What?” He pulled back, one of his dimpled grins on his face. “I’m touching you where you told me.”

“Touch *me*. Underneath.” I huffed, rolling my hips to rev him up.

He finally did as I asked, his fingers slipping underneath my bikini bottom. The rough pads of his fingers on my swollen clit were perfect, just the right amount of pressure in just the right places. My breath came in little pants as he stroked me, his finger dipping down to my entrance and just barely going inside.

I sucked in a breath. I’d wanted his fingers inside of me for so long, but now the size of them was intimidating.

“Here, let me take these off.” Harrison gently pushed me off his lap and pulled my bikini bottoms down, leaving me fully naked while he was dressed. “You’re so beautiful, Taylor.”

I flushed right down to my nipples. His fingers slipped between my legs again, just barely dipping inside.

“You all right?” he asked, looking into my eyes. The lust had softened into the regular, sweet Harrison, letting my heart slow.

“Just a bit nervous. I’ve never really done anything like this before.” I pushed his thick curls out of his face. “With any guy.”

“Then we can take it slow and focus on you.” He stood up, too, and put me down in his spot.

He sank to his knees and was still so huge in front of me. His hands slid up my thighs, parting them. I’d never felt so exposed, the air of the room cool against my wet pussy. The way Harrison’s face lit up when he looked at me only made my anticipation climb.

He slid his arms underneath my legs and pulled me forward, his mouth going right to my center. The heat and pressure from his tongue against my clit had me taking in deep breaths, the shock of the pleasure so intoxicating. The tip of his tongue moved in slow, rhythmic circles, awakening every nerve in my body extending from my center.

I gasped, my thighs clamping around his broad shoulders. His mouth felt wildly different from his fingers, but in a good way. The pleasure was so much more focused, his tongue dancing across my flesh.

My hips bucked, and I dug my nails into the arms of the couch. Pressure was building up inside of me, threatening to break. My toes curled as his finger pushed at my entrance. I squirmed as he worked his finger into me, little by little. The stretch didn’t hurt, but it was snug.

“Fuck, so tight,” Harrison said before teasing me with his tongue again. “I want my cock in this pussy someday, but not

today.”

“Why not?” I asked. Okay, whined, really, but I wanted him. All of him.

“Because we should take it slow.” He pumped his fingers in and out of me. “Get you used to being filled. I’m a lot to take.”

“Can I touch you, at least?” I asked. He curled his finger just so, making me cry out.

“No. I can’t get enough of how you taste. Absolutely perfect.” He dove back in.

The combination of his fingers, mouth, and tongue was too much. The pressure inside of me built and built until I could barely stand it. He had to keep me still with his elbows, the sounds of my cries filling the air.

I flew over the edge, the orgasm ripping through me so hard that it blotted out all of my senses. I was just that feeling, all pleasure and nothing else. I came down from my high and sagged into my seat.

Harrison sat back on his heels, his face damp with me. My cheeks flushed. Was I too wet for him?

He sucked on his fingers, the ones that had been inside of me. The way he savored the taste got rid of all of my fears. He was into me. He wasn’t going to suddenly pull away or make me feel weird about how my body had reacted. The lack of anxiety made me bolder.

“Can I touch you now?” I asked.

“Yeah.” He frantically unbuttoned his pants, pushing them and his boxer briefs down. His cock jutted out, thick and hard.

His arms wrapped around me, pulling me closer. I was lost in his embrace. His hardness rested against my stomach, and I couldn’t help but imagine him plunging his erection into me—hard, deep, and fast.

We weren’t going to have sex, though. At least, not today.

I tentatively reached down, and he took my hand, guiding it around his hardness. He put his hand over mine, pumping up and down with the right amount of pressure. My hand moved up over the tip of his cock, and then down to the base over and over. Pools of wetness formed between my legs from the feel of his skin against mine.

I loved the feeling. He was so hard underneath the soft, velvety skin. His breaths were coming in pants. Eventually, he started unbuttoning his shirt, revealing his chest. He was strong, his muscles perfectly defined. I let my other hand explore his chest, my fingers brushing his nipples.

He groaned and arched his back into my touch. He moved my hand faster, and his cock jerked in my hand. His arousal pooled at the tip of his cock and slid onto my hand, and I used it to lube him up.

“Just like that, baby. Get on your knees.” His eyes fluttered closed, and I did as he said, falling to my knees. “I’m gonna come.”

A few more pumps, and he was coming all over my breasts with the most delicious-sounding moan I’d ever heard. His impressive chest heaved up and down as he caught his breath. Finally, he dropped to his knees and pressed a kiss to my forehead, then rested his forehead on mine.

The gentle, affectionate touch made my heart expand. I was so glad my first orgasm with a man had been with him. I rested my head against his chest, savoring the moment before the real world came back in.

CHAPTER 9

At the moment, I didn't have a single regret or second thought about going down on Taylor. How could I not give in to temptation? Seeing her in those swimsuits, her full breasts spilling out of the top, was like every fantasy I'd had about her since I'd laid eyes on her.

I'd replayed the memory of her coming all over my face and me coming all over her tits in my head again and again.

Until now, after the reality had set in overnight.

What was I thinking? I definitely had feelings for Taylor, but she was a client. My priority had to be doing my job. But I was already in too deep. I saw her every day, but I still got that warm feeling in my chest each time. I wanted more time to talk to her and hear about how she viewed the world.

I wanted all of her and to give her all of myself.

How did this always happen? I never set out to lose myself in someone like this, but it just ended up that way, even when falling for someone was an awful idea. Every woman, from my very first girlfriend, who in retrospect was terribly toxic, to my most recent one over a year ago—I crash landed into love, with emphasis on crash.

I ran a hand down my face and rested my elbow on the ledge next to the car window. We were on the way to get Taylor to take her to a photoshoot.

“You all right?” Cody asked, keeping his eyes on the road.

I wasn't, and unlike Ethan and Cody, I was barely capable of hiding my true feelings. They were going to notice that

something was up eventually, and I had to tell them. I tugged at my curls and sighed.

“I went down on Taylor yesterday while you two were out,” I said in one breath.

The silence in the car was a sharp contrast to the chaos of Manhattan outside.

“And that’s it?” Cody finally asked, honking at someone who was blocking the road in front of us. “You didn’t do anything more?”

“She got me off with her hand. I didn’t want to go further since she’s a virgin.” I tried not to jiggle my leg and shake the whole car because of my nerves. “It just kind of happened. She was trying on these tiny ass swimsuits, and it just... I lost control.”

“I’d break, too, honestly,” Cody said with a shrug. “She’s gorgeous. And a nice girl, on top of that.”

“She’s very tempting,” Ethan added, his posture stiffer than ever. The fact that he’d admitted it was a shock. Ethan never, ever admitted how he felt when it came to beautiful women. But I knew the other shoe was about to drop. “But we can’t do anything physical with her. She’s our client. Our biggest priority is making sure she’s safe.”

“I know.” I looked out the window. Neither of them had sounded jealous, to my surprise. Not that I expected them to be, but it made me curious. “I know I fucked up, but aren’t you upset that I made a move when you’re both into her, too?”

“Me?” Cody glanced at me over his shoulder. “Nah. It’s not like she was dealing with some asshole like her ex. If she was going to be with anyone, I’m happy it’s you.”

“Yeah. You’re a good person. I trust that you’ll keep her safe,” Ethan said. “But that still doesn’t mean that you can have a physical relationship with her.”

“Thanks.” Some tension fell from my shoulders. Resisting her was going to be damn near impossible, but I had to try. I wasn’t going to screw up my job—and my closest friends’ jobs—because I couldn’t keep my dick and heart out of it.

We reached Taylor's building and went inside. We were familiar with her doorman, Shipley, by now. He was a good guy, upbeat and friendly. But today, he was serious.

"Everything okay?" I asked.

He shook his head. "There was a bit of an incident with Miss Bailey."

"Is she all right?" Cody asked, his fist clenching.

"She's fine. It's just that someone tried to get inside her apartment earlier today, posing as an Amazon delivery person," he said. "I have the security footage, if you'd like to take a look at him."

"Please, show us," Ethan said, a frown creating lines on his forehead.

Shipley made sure another doorman was manning the front desk and ushered us back to the security room. After a few moments, he pulled up some footage of the lobby. Thankfully, the building hadn't been cheap on the security cameras, so the resolution was good.

The video clip showed a tall, lanky man holding an Amazon package coming into the building. He had his head down, but another camera angle caught his face. He didn't look familiar, but we had the ability to see who he was.

"Send us a screen capture of that," I said. Shipley nodded and quickly did so, sending it to our secure email address. "Keep going."

The man tried to walk right by the front desk without checking in, and Shipley stopped him. They exchanged a few words, the man with the package getting agitated.

"Basically, he was saying he had permission to deliver this package straight to Miss Bailey," Shipley said. "I told him that couldn't have been the case, and he got upset. I threatened to call the police, and he left."

Cody's frown deepened, and he ran his fingers through his hair. "Thanks for stopping him. Does she know this happened?"

“No. I didn’t want to alarm her when all of you weren’t here,” Shipley said.

“Okay. We’ll go check on her now,” I said. “Thanks again.”

A sour taste filled the back of my mouth as we went upstairs. I was glad that Shipley had stopped this guy, but someone coming into where Taylor lived was the last thing we wanted. Not only had someone figured out where she lived, but they knew her apartment number and were very hellbent on getting up to see her. To do what? Kidnap her? If the guy had to figure out a way to get inside using a disguise, he’d have to find a way to get out with her undetected, a huge hurdle.

So, was this guy just coming upstairs to hurt her?

We reached her door and texted her to let her know it was us. She came to the door moments later, wearing leggings and a cropped t-shirt. Her face lit up when she saw us, but her smile faded when she saw our somber expressions.

“Everything all right?” she asked.

“No. We need to talk to you about something.” I came inside. I wanted to pull her into my arms and not let go, but instead, I walked past her to where she liked to work when she wasn’t in her office. “Someone tried to get up to your place. Shipley stopped him. But we’d still like you to take a look at these photos to tell us if you know this man, okay?”

Her skin paled. “Okay.”

We sat down around the table, and I opened the photo that Shipley had sent of the intruder. I slid my phone to her.

“Do you recognize him?” I asked.

She studied the photo and frowned. “I don’t know his name, but he looks kind of familiar? Like I’ve seen him a few times but haven’t directly interacted with him.”

I exchanged glances with Cody and Ethan. Her noticing him around wasn’t good. New York City was filled with millions of people, so it was hard to keep track of every single

person who was in contact with her. I kicked myself for not noticing him first, but then again, being a regular somewhere didn't mean he had ill intent. But trying to get up to her apartment with some bullshit story was.

“Okay, thanks,” I said, taking my phone back. “If someone knows where you live and might have ill intentions toward you, we should probably be around more.”

“I trust Shipley to do his job, but we can't take any risks. I think we should actually be here twenty-four seven,” Cody said. “Your bedroom is in the back, and all the guest rooms are between the front door and your room. Someone would have to come through us to get to you. And there wouldn't be a time where you'd be vulnerable, even with all the locks.”

Taylor swallowed, her eyes wide. “You're sure?”

“I agree with Cody. And I'm sure Harrison does, too,” Ethan said, his tone even more serious than usual. “We could brush it off as some random guy, but brushing off potential threats could lead to huge mistakes.”

I did agree. But I also knew that living with Taylor—when I knew how she felt when she came around my fingers and how she tasted—was going to be hell.

Then again, the idea of losing her was more difficult than keeping it in my pants.

“We'd only move in with your permission, of course,” I said, trying to keep my voice gentle to ease her nerves.

“I want all of you here,” she blurted. “As soon as possible. Please.”

“All right, then,” I said, looking at my partners. “We'll go pack our things in shifts, so you're never alone, and come back here.”

“Thank you.” Her shoulders relaxed, even as her eyes grew damp.

Moving in with her would not be easy, but it was going to make it easier to keep her safe. I had to keep that at the forefront of my thoughts.

CHAPTER 10

I didn't have much of an attachment to my apartment. It was utilitarian and convenient, like the housing I'd been in when I was in the Navy.

But seeing Taylor traipsing around her apartment in tight leggings, thin tank tops, and worst of all, no bra, made me want to retreat to my place and never leave.

It was her house. She had every right to live in it the way she wanted to, even if it made my dick hard as steel.

She wasn't trying to rile us up on purpose, was she? She and Harrison had hooked up once, and Harrison had actively been trying to avoid being alone with her. She must have picked up on that, because she kept several feet of distance between her and Harrison at all times. But the looks they gave each other were capable of heating up the room ten degrees.

We'd only been there for three days. And we were going to be there indefinitely, at least until we figured out that she was completely safe from the increasing threats.

Shit.

I stared up at the ceiling of the guest bedroom I was in, the light from the sunrise just barely filtering past the shades. Her entire apartment smelled like her, like lemons and something sweet. Maybe vanilla? This guest room was no different, which made existing in it even more difficult.

My cock tented the blankets. Usually, I took care of it without much thought and got on with my day. But I'd been trying to ignore it these past few days in the hopes that

thoughts of Taylor wouldn't creep into my fantasies. Who was I trying to fool, though? Thinking of her when I stroked myself was inevitable.

I kicked down the blankets and shoved my boxers down just far enough for my cock to spring free. Grasping the base of my cock made me suck a breath in through my nose. I was so sensitive already, a bead of moisture spilling off my tip and down the side.

Images of Taylor making lunch yesterday, wearing nothing but bike shorts and a crop top, popped into my head. The fabric had hugged her heart-shaped ass like the shorts had been made just for her. She kept bending over to grab different appliances from beneath the counter, giving me an even better view.

My hand moved up and down my shaft faster as my imagination took over. I imagined her bent over in front of me, but naked as I slid into her from behind. I never wanted to hurt her since she was a virgin, but in my fantasies, I took her rough and fast, her sweet moans filling the air.

I came all over my stomach embarrassingly fast, my chest heaving up and down as if I'd just gone for a run. Coming had taken the edge off, but it wasn't gone completely.

I took a shower, ending it with a blast of cold water, and dressed. Taylor, Harrison, and Cody were already in the kitchen, and she was making coffee.

"Good morning," she said with one of her sweet smiles. Guilt crept into my thoughts as I studied the flirty little dress she was wearing, but I pushed it aside.

"Morning." I pulled out my phone. "Your schedule today is pretty full, but you have the evening free. Are you ready?"

"I am, as soon as I get our travel mugs together." She turned her back to me and opened the cabinets. Despite the cold outside, the back of her dress was mostly open, scooped low like a ballerina's leotard. "Do you want any coffee? Oh, right, I forgot you don't drink it."

“I’ll just have a glass of water. I’ll get it myself.” My mouth was dry, anyway. I guzzled down a glass by the time she was ready to go.

Going through the motions of the day—scoping out and securing locations, taking her from place to place, waiting for her to finish whatever meetings she was in—helped me keep my mind off sex. But then we went home for the evening. The past three nights, she’d had events, so we weren’t all sitting around together. Now we were going to be inside together with nothing to do.

We all changed into something more comfortable and returned to her kitchen, her apartment’s central hub. Once again, she’d put on an outfit that made my mouth water—leggings and a snug t-shirt under. The way her nipples peeked through the fabric told me she wasn’t wearing a bra, either.

I needed *something* to do, or I was going to get an embarrassing erection like a teenager.

“Do you guys want dinner? There’s a new barbecue place that I heard is good,” Taylor said.

“Oof, I don’t trust barbecue up here.” Harrison laughed. “Sorry. It’s never the same as the stuff back home at my dad’s restaurant.”

“Your dad has a restaurant?” Taylor’s eyes brightened with curiosity.

“Yeah. It’s nothing fancy like the restaurants around here, but he gets lines going out into the parking lot. Especially since he has some fish and vegetarian options. They’re surprisingly popular.” Harrison’s voice was filled with pride and love, as it always was when he talked about his family. “I wish you could try it sometime.”

“I’d love to.” She dragged her fingers through her ponytail, her gaze flicking up and down Harrison. She looked like she wanted to have him for dinner. I cleared my throat.

“What about pizza?” I suggested.

“Pizza sounds good,” Cody added.

“Let’s do pizza, then.”

She pulled out her phone and ordered for us all. Now we had a half hour to wait until one of us had to go down and get it. Thirty long minutes of being in a room with her with nothing to do. I had to think of something to do *now*, or I’d break.

“Are you a card game person?” I asked her. “Maybe we could play something while we wait.”

Card games weren’t sexy at all. The perfect distraction.

“I’m not much of a card person, but I have Scrabble,” she said, a shy smile coming onto her face. “I’ll go get it.”

She disappeared into another room and returned with Scrabble. We sat in her living room, her sitting on the floor next to the coffee table. Harrison did the same, so Cody and I followed suit, even though all of us were too big to really get comfortable.

“Are you any good at Scrabble?” Cody asked, pulling wooden letters from the box and lining them up on his stand.

“You’ll have to see for yourself.” Taylor shot him a flirty glance, batting her lashes. Maybe accidentally, but the way Cody swallowed suggested that it affected him in that way.

She went first, putting down the word “toga,” and Cody went next, putting down an I and a D to create “aid” off of the A. We fell into a groove with the game, our focus solely on it until the pizza arrived. I volunteered to go get it.

It only took me three minutes, but by the time I returned, Taylor, Cody, and Harrison were laughing at something. I raised an eyebrow and put the pizzas on the kitchen counter, which was visible from their spot in the living room.

“What’s the joke?” I asked.

“Cody was just telling us about the time he got pantsed while surfing,” Harrison said, getting up. “It was relevant, I swear.”

“I put down the word ‘shark,’” Taylor said, as if that made his story make more sense. Harrison extended his hand for her,

and she took it, pulling herself up to her feet. “I didn’t know you grew up surfing at all.”

“I did all the time.” Cody was still smiling, but his eyes were more guarded. He didn’t elaborate on his past at all, which didn’t surprise me. It was split into two parts—before his fiancé’s death, and after. Harrison and I had only found out about her death after working with him for two years, so I doubted he’d go into it now.

We all got ourselves slices of pizza and sat around Taylor’s kitchen island, her preferred place to sit despite her enormous dining room one room over. As we dug in, the smile in Taylor’s eyes got pensive. Almost sad.

“My dad always wanted to try surfing, but he was always too busy to,” she said, delicately wiping grease off her fingers. “I think it would have been the kind of thing he’d try once and never do again, honestly. He was like that with scuba diving and skydiving. Then again, most people never even try that kind of thing.”

The sadness in her voice was familiar to me—filled with the grief of losing someone and a yearning to fulfill a dream that never came to be. My relationship with my father had been tense and cold, but I still had that feeling, too. All my life, I’d tried my hardest to be the kind of man he always told me I could be with effort. Hardworking. Sticking to the rules. Being a leader.

Would he have thought I was enough by now? He’d died seven years ago, but the question of whether he’d be impressed or approve of me still popped into my head, even now. The closest he’d gotten to being proud of me was when I got through all the training to become a SEAL, and I wasn’t even sure if it was pride. He’d just nodded in acknowledgment when I told him, and then he asked me follow-up questions about the work I was going to do.

My work weighed heavily on me for more reasons than not getting my dad’s approval.

Yet another reason for me to stay far from Taylor. The idea of touching her with these hands that had taken lives when

most of her life was devoted to creating beautiful things felt perverse.

“He sounds like an adventurous person,” Harrison said, pulling me from my dark memories.

“He was. Always very active, too.” Taylor’s brows furrowed, and her eyes dampened. “Which is why I still can’t wrap my head around the fact that he’s gone. He never really got sick, and he took good care of himself. His doctor had even given him a clean bill of health the month before. But maybe he missed something during his exam.”

We ate in silence. Her father’s death had been all over the news, but the cause was vague—a sudden illness. It sounded like that was the case, but something didn’t sit right with me. Her father had been one of the wealthiest men in the world. He’d had the best medical care possible. Of course, death was inevitable, and being wealthy didn’t shield you from that reality.

But someone that wealthy had to have enemies. If Taylor’s cousin thought she needed bodyguards to protect her, maybe her father had needed protection, too.

Maybe I was just being paranoid, but my gut feelings usually led me somewhere. I hoped this feeling was one of the times it didn’t lead to anything bad.

We'd only stayed with clients for two nights at most, so staying with Taylor for a full week was a new experience. Her place fit a billionaire heiress, with every comfort anyone could ever need. She was happy to share that with us, too, which was another new experience.

The lines were starting to blur between us. We still operated as her guards during the day, but once we were settled back at her place at night... Well, I had no idea what we were. Friends, definitely, with a heap of sexual tension thrown in.

It was getting to me. A lot. I'd never jerked off so much in my life. I wasn't sure if I wanted to strangle Ethan for being a cockblock or thank him for helping me stay on task. His secondary mission was making sure none of us touched Taylor, no matter how tempting she was. Every night was something as dry and non-sexual as possible on its face—a fuck-ton of Scrabble and working. I'd never been so productive.

I sighed, glancing at Taylor as she worked on her laptop. Her plump bottom lip was between her teeth, and she'd curled her legs up on the chair so she could rest her chin on her knee. At this point, I'd seen her in everything, from formal wear to pajamas, and she was beautiful in anything.

But I was particularly fond of this version of her. And most importantly, seeing this version of her made me want to shield her from everything dark in the world. That was another problem, though. Lust I could handle. Love? I wasn't sure.

I'd already loved someone with everything I had, and she was ripped away from me—my fiancé, Lila. I'd processed the accident to the point where I knew it wasn't my fault. Lila had slipped and fallen off her surfboard and hit her head on a rock, ending her life instantly. It could have happened to me. It could have happened to anyone.

But if I had done more to make sure the area was safe, could I have saved her? I felt like I could have. All the 'maybes' still haunted me.

She was the reason I had even cleaned my shit up and become a bodyguard. I didn't want anyone else to be in a situation where they could have been saved, but weren't. And getting into something with a client was bad enough, but getting into something with a woman whose existence exposed her to all kinds of risk was even worse.

But telling my heart that was impossible. It had a life of its own, and it was running straight toward Taylor. She was going to make me throw away all my common sense.

"Shit," Ethan murmured under his breath. "Remember that client we had four months ago? That up-and-coming singer?"

"Yeah." He was a nice kid and easy to work with.

"His manager wants me to come to a last-minute meeting about security on his upcoming tour," Ethan said, checking his watch. He closed his laptop. "Since you'll be here for the rest of the afternoon, I'll go ahead to that meeting."

"Okay." Taylor glanced up from her laptop. "Will you be home in time for dinner?"

"Yes, I will." Ethan tucked his laptop into his bag. "Text me if you need me."

We all said our goodbyes and went back to work. At least for a little bit. After a while, Taylor got up and stretched, exposing her smooth stomach. I wanted to nip the softness right beneath her bellybutton and keep kissing my way down.

"I need a break, I think," she said. "Do you guys want something to eat?"

“Sure, I need a break, too.” Harrison massaged the back of his neck. “What were you thinking about eating?”

“Don’t know. Maybe I’ll just throw something together.” She walked over to the kitchen, and both of us followed.

Taylor cooked pretty regularly, and surprisingly well, for someone who had to have had private chefs all her life.

“Let’s see...” She cocked one hip out. Those damn leggings of hers were yet another thing that was driving me crazy. And companies sent them to her by the truckload. “A smoothie or something? A smoothie bowl?”

“I don’t get smoothie bowls, as pretty as you make them,” Harrison said, coming up behind her. “Why not drink it?”

“It’s like... gazpacho with crunchy stuff on top.” She shrugged, looking over her shoulder at him and smiling. “It’s the experience.”

“Then let’s have that experience,” he said. I nearly laughed. Harrison was the least smoothie bowl guy ever. He was fucking smitten.

“Sounds good.” Taylor opened up her pantry, humming to herself as she absently shook her hips. Her pantry was perfectly organized—something she’d made a YouTube video about—but I wasn’t focusing on that. I couldn’t pull my eyes off her ass to save my life.

She pulled a few powders and supplements out of the pantry and put them on the counter. Then she went into the fridge and pulled out nut butter, almond milk, and fresh fruit.

“It’s going to be very pink.” She gave us a mischievous smile, the one that made me want to do anything she asked me to do. “But it’ll taste like berries.”

Harrison and I watched her throw everything into her blender, getting to the nut butter last. She drizzled some into the blender and put the spoon in her mouth. The way her eyes fluttered closed, humming with pleasure, sent a lick of heat down to my cock. Shit. I wanted her mouth around my cock while she made that sound.

She opened her eyes and looked between me and Harrison, genuine confusion, then understanding coming into her eyes. She licked her bottom lip, and Harrison let out a heavy breath.

“What?” she asked, all innocence. Fake innocence, which only made my cock harder.

“You know, Taylor,” I said, coming up to her. She turned her back to the counter, pressing her ass against it. “Doesn’t she know, Harrison?”

“She definitely does.” Harrison boxed her in on her left side, tucking a strand of her hair behind her ear. “And I think she likes showing off that gorgeous body of hers.”

Her cheeks flushed, and she bit her bottom lip again, her back subtly arching. “I just like the way you both look at me sometimes. Like you want to devour me.”

I put my hands on either side of her, our bodies pressed together.

“Are you a mind reader?” I asked.

I didn’t let her answer. I kissed her the way I’d wanted to for ages, hot and intense. She melted against me, her fingers coming to thread through my hair. Her enthusiasm made up for her slight clumsiness. I slid my hand down to grab her ass, squeezing.

“Let me get in on this,” Harrison said. I momentarily stepped back, allowing him to slip behind her. “There we go. We’ve got you covered.”

Taylor moaned against my mouth, tilting her head back.

“Yes, there,” she whispered. “Oh, god.”

I opened my eyes to see Harrison kissing the side of her neck, his hands roaming up and down her body. He cupped her breasts, ran his hands down her sides, cupped her mound. I was glad he was pleasuring her, but I wanted to touch her all over, too.

I needed more space to fully enjoy her.

“Let’s go to your bedroom, sweetheart,” I said, pulling her backward. “So we can do everything. Show you everything.”

“Okay.” Her eyes were already hazy with lust.

We rushed back to her bedroom, half-carrying her. Once we were inside, I took over again, kissing her thoroughly the way she needed. Harrison sat down on the bed, and I put her between his legs, her back to his front.

“You’re wearing way too many clothes,” I said, pulling her top up over her head.

“Way too many,” Harrison echoed.

I tugged down her leggings next, leaving her in just a thin excuse of a bra and a thong. Her nipples were rock hard through her bra, and I palmed each one. She sucked a breath in through her nose, arching herself into me as I tugged lightly on her nipples. Now that I was in bed with her, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do first. She wasn’t experienced, so I didn’t want to overwhelm her. But at the same time, I was already so hard that my control was hanging on by a thread.

Harrison’s hands slid down her sides to her thighs, pulling them open and putting her on display for me. The crotch of her panties was soaked through, barely hiding her smooth slit.

“Go ahead,” Harrison said. “She tastes fucking incredible.”

My cock throbbed in my pants as I slid onto my stomach. The scent of her arousal was like a drug, and the fact that Harrison was holding her open for me, keeping her in place, made my head spin. She was completely mine right now. Completely *ours*.

I pulled her thong to the side, teasing her swollen clit with my thumb. Her hips jerked, but Harrison held her tight.

“Can you stay still for him, Taylor?” he asked. “Like the good girl you are?”

“Y-yeah.” Taylor tried to stay still, but her thighs trembled as I continued to circle her clit.

I finally ran my tongue up her slit, making her gasp. She really was as good as Harrison had said. I dove into her more,

my whole face getting wet. Harrison held her still, even as she cried out and squirmed. I started pressing a finger inside her, and fuck, she was tight. We had to take it slow.

I savored her as I warmed her up, slipping in one finger, then two when she was more relaxed. Harrison sucked on the side of her neck, making her shiver and shake all over.

“I’m... I want to...” Taylor’s whole body jerked against Harrison’s tight grip on her thighs.

I crooked my fingers and pumped them faster, making her cry out and clamp down on them. She soaked my hand and face as she came, trembling in Harrison’s arms. I sat back and wiped my face.

“That was...” Taylor’s breasts jiggled with the force of her breaths. “That was incredible.”

“We’re just getting started.” I started unbuttoning my shirt. Harrison did the same, throwing his shirt, then his pants aside.

Taylor moved so her back was against the mountain of pillows, eyeing us as hungrily as we’d eyed her. Her eyes skimmed across my tattoos, which snaked across my chest and down my stomach. I’d always worn a suit or short sleeves around her, so she’d never seen them.

“I didn’t know you had these,” she said, reaching out to touch me. “They’re beautiful.”

“Thanks.” I’d spent way too much money I didn’t have on them back then. But I was glad I’d shelled out the cash now because I didn’t have shitty tattoos I regretted. I just hoped she didn’t ask what they meant.

But she had moved onto Harrison, who had smoothed his hand over her petite foot and started massaging it. She sank into the pillows, a smile spreading across her face. I kissed her lips again and down the side of her neck until I reached one of her full breasts. I cupped them both and buried my face into her soft cleavage, the lingering scent of her perfume filling my nose.

“I want to fuck you,” I said. My cock was straining against the fabric of my boxers to the point where it ached. “I don’t

know how you managed to stop, Harrison.”

He laughed. “I’ve been jacking off three times a day just to keep my head on straight.”

“Three times? A day?” Taylor’s eyes widened.

“Yeah.” He kissed the inside of her knee. “I can’t help how much I want you, baby.”

It sounded like both Harrison and I wanted to be inside her so badly that we were losing our minds. If Taylor was more experienced, and if we had lube, I would have warmed up her ass and taken her back there while Harrison fucked her pussy. But that was way too much, too fast, even if the idea made a bead of arousal form on the tip of my cock.

We’d get there, eventually. I wasn’t planning on letting her go after this.

“I want you both,” she said, pushing her fingers through my hair as I pressed my lips against her throat. “I want to make you feel good, too.”

I lifted my head so Harrison and I could exchange a glance. A quiet agreement between us happened instantly, like we’d done this kind of thing before.

“Do you want to suck my cock?” I asked, coming up to sit next to her. “While Harrison fucks your pussy?”

She nodded enthusiastically, a smile coming onto her face. Harrison grinned.

“Then get on your hands and knees,” I said. “We’ll take it slow.”

“I can handle it.” Taylor moved around until she was on her hands and knees in front of me. The desire in her eyes sent a shiver up my spine. Her tits were round, firm, and more ample than I would’ve guessed. I couldn’t wait to suck on them and swirl my tongue around her pert nipples.

“No, let’s take it slow, babe,” Harrison said, taking her hips in his hands. “We’ll have plenty of time to fuck you until you can’t walk straight.”

Her body from her hairline to her tits flushed, though her eyes were filled with lust and not embarrassment. I couldn't wait until we showed her more. She was going to be beyond perfect.

"Here," Harrison said, smoothing his hands up her back and around to her waist, squeezing it. His big hands looked like they were almost circling it. "Take his cock in your mouth, and I'll take you from behind."

I leaned back onto the pillows so I could easily see her face and body. She looked at my cock, almost in wonder, and took it around the base. Her small, hot hand sent rushes of anticipation up and down my shaft.

"How do I..." She bit her bottom lip. "How do you want me to do it?"

I gathered her hair in my hand, holding it loosely. "Open your mouth. Go slowly, so you don't gag."

She did as I said, and I guided her head down. The wet heat of her mouth around my sensitive tip nearly made my hips buck. I refused to make this first blowjob bad for her by jamming my dick into her mouth. I wanted her to love it just as much as I'd loved eating her pussy.

"Just like that," I said. "Just suck it, not too hard. No teeth. Put your tongue against the bottom, and use a little pressure. Then bob up and down."

Her movements were slightly uncoordinated at first. But then she got into it, getting used to moving her hand, too. I moaned, letting my head fall back onto the pillows. Just knowing that my cock was the first one she'd ever sucked made the pleasure rip through me deep down to my bones.

"Good?" she asked, lifting her head.

"Perfect," I said with a hoarse voice, and I meant it. "Keep going. Explore it."

She licked up the sides and pumped her hand up and down the shaft. Her other hand wandered over my thighs, skimming across them and leaving chills behind. I let out a grunt when

she cupped my balls, which were already tight and heavy, as if she'd been edging me for hours.

"I'm going to take it slow," Harrison said to her. "Relax."

Taylor slowed down on pleasuring me and closed her eyes. The little breath she sucked in when Harrison pushed forward, filling her for the first time. Harrison took his time until he was fully seated inside of her, his hands tightly gripping her.

"You good?" Harrison asked.

"Very. It's... a lot." She licked the underside of my tip again, making me grip the sheets. "But I can handle it."

"Good girl." Harrison started moving, rocking her body forward.

Taylor sucked me down again, going with the back and forth of her body as Harrison fucked her. The rhythm was hypnotic, dragging me deeper and deeper. Pleasure took over everything, every sense. My climax was creeping up higher and higher, as hard as I wanted to stay away. I wanted this to keep going, to feel the vibrations from her moans on my cock.

Taylor paused for a second, and she mewled with pleasure.

"Are you close?" Harrison asked her.

"Yes. Please don't stop. Keep doing... that. Please, keep doing that," she responded, before once again wrapping her lips around my erection.

Harrison pushed Taylor over the edge, and she moved her mouth more quickly as the vibrations from her moans from her orgasm pulsed against my dick. I couldn't take it. I couldn't hold on.

I blurted out a warning moments before I lost control, in case she didn't want me to come in her mouth. But she didn't stop; she sucked down every last drop.

I sagged against the pillows, watching Harrison finish inside of her. We collapsed into a heap of limbs, our breathing heavy. It took a while for my brain to come back into focus, but when it did, I smiled.

How had that gone as smoothly as it had? And when could we do it again?

CHAPTER 12

Harrison had said something about eventually fucking me until I couldn't walk straight. After the other day where he and Cody shared me over and over again, I understood the feeling well. Harrison had officially taken my virginity, and after I gave Cody a blowjob, we cuddled for a bit. Our hands wandered, and Cody ended up having sex with me, too. We'd only stopped because Ethan texted to tell us he was on the way back.

My cheeks flushed as I pressed my thighs together. Had I really done that? I wasn't ashamed by any stretch of the imagination. I had waited to lose my virginity for so long, but the wait was worth it.

But I'd gone from zero to about a thousand in one night. Cody had even put his tongue and fingers *back there*. I hadn't even thought about anyone touching me there before, but now I couldn't wait to try more.

I wished I had more friends to talk to about this. I knew a lot of people, but none of them really *knew* me that well and how much this meant to me. I was about to explode just thinking about it. It was taking over basically all of my mental space. What did it mean for us in the future?

How was I supposed to sit through this lunch with my cousin, Troy, and have a normal conversation with all of this on my mind?

I had to tell him. Not all the details, of course, but the vague ones. He was the one who had initially hired them as

my security detail. I was the one paying them. He didn't have a say in whether they stayed or not.

Thankfully, lunch was going to be at my place, just because it was more secure than taking me out somewhere and having to guard that location. I didn't want to talk about this in public.

A knock on the door pulled me from my spot in the kitchen, past where Ethan was working in a room closer to the front of my apartment. He got to his feet and intercepted, opening the door for me.

"Hey!" I said to Troy. We texted regularly, but it had been a long time since we'd hung out in person.

"Hey!" he said as he pulled me into a hug. His eyes flicked to Ethan, who was still standing. "Is it cool if I come in?"

"Of course." Ethan stepped back, giving us space. "Miss Bailey, I'll be up here at the front to give you both privacy."

"Thanks," I said, my cheeks flushing. He was the only one who still called me Miss Bailey. For whatever reason, it sent a warm rush through me every time.

I led us back to the kitchen, where I'd ordered in some salads and cookies.

"How's it been?" Troy asked, sitting at the kitchen island.

"Pretty good." I pulled the salads out of the bag and put his meal in front of him. "Things have gone back to normal, more or less."

"Even including..." He lowered his voice and nodded toward the front room. "Them around?"

"You don't have to whisper. They didn't bug the place, and he's far away enough that he can't hear us talking." I grabbed some forks and handed him one. "It's been taking some getting used to. But I think I've got it under control."

My face started flushing, and Troy noticed immediately, his eyebrow quirking up.

“What do you mean by ‘under control’?” He cut his salad into proper pieces instead of just stabbing the huge leaves like I was about to. “Weird phrasing, no?”

“Well... The situation kind of...” I scooted closer to him, even though I’d just told him that Ethan couldn’t hear us. “Things escalated with two of them. Not Ethan, but with Harrison and Cody.”

“What?” He let his hand fall to the counter. His wide-eyed look wasn’t judgmental, but I still blushed even further. “What do you mean by escalated?”

“Like we...” I made a vague, slightly sexual gesture, and his eyes nearly popped out of his head. “Both of them. At the same time.”

Regret about telling him crept into my subconscious, though saying it aloud lifted a weight off my shoulders. Saying it out loud made it more real. I still had no idea what we actually were relationship-wise. I got the feeling that neither of them wanted to just hook up with me and leave. How awkward would that have been? But at the same time, how was I going to date two men who technically worked for me?

“Wow.” Troy went back to eating his salad. I waited for him to chew and swallow. “That’s a complete shock, if I’m being honest. I get the appeal for sure, but you’ve had a ton of male attention before. None of those guys stuck, but these two did? Why?”

I pushed my salad around, looking for a candied pecan. My feelings for them were clear inside my heart, but speaking them out loud was a whole different story. I’d liked Harrison right away with his warmth and smile. And the way he kissed, like I was the only woman in the world, made me weak-kneed, even sitting down.

Cody had been harder for me to get used to, but I liked his intensity. It was a lot when it was focused on me, but his kindness and dry sense of humor made me warm to him quickly. And he was very, very good with his hands.

But I'd met a lot of men, and many of them had been interested in me. Men with a lot of the same qualities as what they had. None of them had held my attention or made me feel as comfortable as Harrison and Cody did. So often, I felt like men were into me because of my family name. They either wanted my money or my status, and sometimes, I didn't figure it out until I'd gone out on a date with them.

They were special—all three of them were, though I wasn't sure how Ethan felt about me.

"I think it's because they're genuine," I said. "I don't feel like they're trying to get closer to my inheritance or anything. They like me for me and actually *listen*. They don't assume I'm some airhead."

Troy nodded, holding the tines of his fork between his lips. "I get that. A lot of those assholes you went to college with were the worst. But they're your bodyguards, Tay."

"I know." I sighed, putting my fork down and reaching for one of the huge white chocolate and macadamia nut cookies I'd ordered. "But I pay them, so—"

"So that's why it's kind of a problem." His eyes softened. "You're paying them. You're their boss. And they're supposed to keep you safe from all those weirdos and creeps out there."

"They do. They're really good at it." I'd never felt safer, especially after they'd moved in here. Even with the creepy DMs and letters that they'd told me I'd gotten. The messages mentioned that man's attempt to deliver a "package" to me, so they assumed he was the one sending them. So far, they hadn't been able to trace him, either through the letters or messages.

But I was confident that they would. Until then, they were going to keep me safe.

"I know they're good. That's why they were recommended to me," Troy said. "But love and lust complicate things. You don't want them to get too distracted to do their jobs."

I popped part of my cookie into my mouth. Would being with me distract them from saving me? I wasn't sure. But I did

know that I wanted to keep the relationship going, no matter how it ultimately panned out or what Troy thought.

I was more than capable of deciding who I wanted to be with, especially when it came to such intense feelings like this. I was going to trust my instincts, wherever they took me. I didn't need to rush—I just needed to let things go.

Shopping wasn't my favorite activity by any means, but shopping with Taylor was a different story. I'd begun to enjoy even the most mundane things with her, from going to coffee shops to picking up some ice cream from the shop around the corner. Her upbeat attitude was contagious, not that I showed how much she affected me.

I wasn't a lovesick teenager. I was just a man in his thirties who had an unhealthy attraction to the woman he was being paid to guard. Great.

"I'm ready to head out," Taylor said to me, smiling. "Sorry in advance for all the waffling back and forth I'm going to do."

"It's fine, Miss Bailey." I gestured for her to go ahead of me. Cody and Harrison were waiting downstairs in the car to whisk her off to some shops down in Soho. "You have the right to shop however you'd like to."

She walked ahead of me, her glossy dark ponytail swishing back and forth. Thankfully, her coat covered her up. She had the habit of wearing pants and leggings that made it hard to focus on anything but her ass. My heart skipped a few beats. Was this shopping trip going to be like the swimsuit incident that had led Harrison to break down and go down on her? Filled with temptation and mental games to keep my cock out of the forefront of my head?

I took a deep breath and let it out of my nose, focusing on the back of her head. I hoped it would not be that tempting. I had no idea how Harrison was surviving living with her. Cody,

too. Unless they hadn't kept their hands to themselves. I'd left them all alone, but I hadn't come home to anything untoward.

I got in the backseat after Taylor, and Cody drove us to the shops. He and Harrison dropped us off on a side street that wasn't overwhelmed with tourists and idled. I followed Taylor closely into the first boutique, which we'd contacted before we came to ensure it was secure. It was a tiny shop with very few clothes that were absurdly expensive.

"Good morning," the man working at the shop said with a smile. "Can we help you with anything in particular?"

"Not really, but thank you." Taylor smiled. "Just looking around."

"Please let us know if you'd like any assistance." The man hung back, shooting me a nervous glance.

Good. People being visibly intimidated by me made my job much easier—they weren't going to try anything that could bother Taylor. This shop was secure, with one entrance in the front and an employee entrance in the back, so I was able to relax a little bit, too.

I watched Taylor wander around the tiny shop, running her fingers over the hangers. We still weren't chatty the way she was with Harrison and Cody, but she was clearly much more comfortable with me. She didn't look back over her shoulder at me every other minute, as if I was the one who wanted to abduct her.

"Ooh," she said under her breath. She held up a complicated-looking dress with beading all over it. "I love this. What do you think?"

"What do I think?" I repeated, my cheeks heating up. "I... don't know. It's a dress, right?"

"A top." She straightened it out and held it to her body, then snorted. "Wait, a dress. A very short one."

A short and skimpy one. "I'm not the best person to ask. I wear the same thing every day."

She put it back. "I bet it makes things easier, though."

“It does.” I followed her around a rack of glittery tops. “I’ve always worn uniforms.”

“Military?” She stopped with a hanger in her hand, looking back at me with curiosity. Had I not told her about my past at all? We hadn’t spoken much, period, at least one on one. We all chatted as we played games in the evenings or watched a movie together, but I rarely offered information about myself.

“Yeah, the Navy. The SEALs. And I went to a military academy for high school.” I tucked my hands into my pockets, scanning the crowds passing by outside. “Uniforms are very convenient. Orderly.”

“You never tired of wearing the same thing?” she asked, picking up a leather jacket. She studied it before peeling off her own coat to try it on. I took her coat for her. “I had to wear a uniform for high school, and I kind of hated it. I did as much as I could to accessorize while staying in uniform.”

“No, I never did.” I tried to think of ‘accessorizing’ my uniforms and nearly laughed. “I was never the fashionable type.”

“What’s your favorite thing to wear when you’re not working, then?” Her tone was equal parts flirtatious and genuinely curious. The flirtatious half of it made blood rush toward my cock, while the curious part made that inconvenient flutter appear in my stomach.

“Just t-shirts. Sweatpants. Jeans. The stuff you’ve seen.” I shrugged. “I work most of the time, anyway, so it’s not like I need to think about it.”

“Hm.” She nodded, cocking her head to the side. I liked the way her brown eyes brightened as she studied me, taking in my words carefully and understanding them. “Sometimes I wonder about that. About how much you all work.”

“We’re compensated very fairly.”

“But it’s not everything.” She slid the leather jacket on and wandered over to a mirror to check how it looked. “What about time with your family? Or friends?”

The idea of willingly spending time with my family was laughable.

“My mother has always been distant, and my father passed away. I was an only child growing up. I’m used to my solitude.” I explained.

“I’m sorry,” Taylor said, turning from the mirror to look me directly in the eyes to show her sincerity.

“Don’t be. I’ve created my own family. My only real friends are Cody and Harrison.”

“Do you miss him? Your dad?” She wasn’t going to let this go, and for some reason, I wanted her to know more about me.

“I don’t. We were never close, and nothing I did was ever good enough for him. I wish he would have lived longer, so maybe we could have healed the relationship. But I don’t miss him. He wasn’t a good father,” I told her.

“I’m sorry you don’t have fond memories of him. The memories of my father are all I have to hold on to. I miss him so much.” Her eyes filled with tears, but she turned back toward the mirror in a futile effort to hide her feelings.

I walked toward her and took her hand in an effort to comfort her. I wanted to take away all the pain that plagued her.

She squeezed my hand, and then lifted it to her mouth to kiss my palm. It was such an intimate gesture—one that I didn’t expect. The warmth of her lips against my skin made my breath stop. I had to remind myself to inhale and exhale for the next few breaths.

“Thank you,” she whispered, and I moved my palm to her cheek, brushing away a tear with my thumb.

She gave her head a quick shake and smiled before using her hands to smooth down the leather jacket she had tried on.

I looked at her reflection as she gazed at herself in the mirror. It wasn’t her style—hers was very light and feminine—but it still looked good on her. Everything did. “It looks nice. The jacket.”

“Thank you. I think I’ll get it.” She pulled the jacket off, and I handed her coat back to her.

She went to the front and paid. While the man working there carefully packed up her new jacket, she turned back to me.

“So, you, Cody, and Harrison are close?” She smiled. “That’s adorable.”

I nearly laughed. “Adorable? I don’t think that’s the right word.”

“No, it totally is.” She grinned. “Best friends, working together.”

Something passed through her eyes that I didn’t have a name for, but her smile returned. She thanked the clerk, and we walked toward the exit. I checked in with Harrison and Cody before walking Taylor to the next shop over. This shop was much bigger, the music loud and pulsing. All the clothes were absurdly bright and feminine, much more of what I thought of when I saw her.

“When did the three of you meet?” she asked, pulling multiple items off a rack and folding them over her arm.

“Five or so years ago, I think.” The years had all gone by in a blur after I left the SEALs. “We were trained together, and the company we work for determined that our personalities worked well with each other.”

“Huh. Interesting.” Her face lit up, and she picked up a pink dress, adding it to the pile growing on her arm. “You three are all very different.”

“I know. But that’s what makes us work.” I shrugged, extending my arm to take the load off. She placed the clothes over it. “Three pieces supporting each other. Filling in the gaps that we have within ourselves.”

“I love that.”

That mysterious look came into her eyes again, but it was immediately followed by a look of happiness. She beamed up at me, that big, genuine smile that she never used to give me

lighting up her face. I rarely smiled, but I couldn't help but let the corners of my mouth quirk up.

Maybe she hadn't disliked me for a while. Maybe we just needed some time to understand each other.

Harrison, Cody, and I had been together on a lot of assignments, but none of them were quite like this. Like someone was filling a spot between the three of us that we hadn't realized was there—her.

Not touching Taylor the way I wanted to was a pain. Even a hand on her shoulder felt like I was telegraphing everything that we'd done and how we felt about each other. Or at least how I assumed we felt about each other. But Taylor wasn't the kind of person to fake anything, so my assumptions were probably spot on.

We hadn't had the chance to talk about that night yet, though it had been living in my head since then. Taylor on her hands and knees. Her hot, wet mouth. The bliss on her face as she came. Sandwiching her between Harrison and me afterward.

We really needed to, but her schedule was packed, and Ethan was always around. It wasn't that Harrison and I were keeping what had happened from Ethan. It was just that we didn't know how to define it because it wasn't just sex.

I sighed, looking out of the window of the car and running my hand through my hair. It was getting long, but I didn't have the time to get a decent cut. Taylor seemed to like it, anyway, which made me put off heading to the barber even more.

Harrison glanced at me in the rearview mirror, and I shrugged. I was sure he was tired of holding in our secret, too. And tired of not being able to have a repeat night when Taylor was right there, a door over.

We stopped in front of the Bailey Corporation offices. Taylor had to meet with Neil about her finances again, to my annoyance. Neil rubbed all of us the wrong way, but we hadn't come up with a firm reason why. It was just a gut feeling, and

after doing this for several years, my gut feeling about people was usually on point.

I was Taylor's main guard today, so I followed her inside. She said her hellos to everyone as we went up to the conference room where she'd met with Neil before. Neil was inside, looking at his phone and frowning. His expression brightened when Taylor came in, his eyes flicking over her body just long enough for me to feel irritated.

If I was in the mood to give him the benefit of the doubt, I would have assumed he was looking at her outfit. But I wasn't in that mood.

"Hello, hello," Neil said. "It's so good to see you."

"Good to see you, too." She hugged him.

Neil looked at me, an indiscernible look in his eyes. I took a step closer to sit, and he stepped back, almost reflexively.

"I'd like to speak to Taylor about some very sensitive matters," he said, his tone dripping with condescension. As if I didn't deal with people who handled very sensitive business all the time. "Would you mind giving us privacy for just a minute or two? I know your protocol, but surely we can bend the rules a tiny bit."

I locked eyes with Taylor, who lifted one shoulder in a shrug.

"It won't take that long," she said.

"Okay. I'll be right outside." I started toward the door, and Neil was right behind me, as if he couldn't wait for me to get out.

I stepped just outside of the door. It clicked shut, but the circulation of the air conditioner made it pop open just enough for me to hear inside.

"Is everything okay?" Taylor asked.

"With your finances? Absolutely," Neil said, his voice low. "But I'm concerned about your bodyguards."

My eyebrows shot up.

“What about them?” Taylor’s voice was filled with confusion. “They’re doing an amazing job, and I really like them.”

“I don’t like the way they interact with you,” he said. My heart admittedly picked up speed, even though I wasn’t intimidated by Neil at all. Did he sense something? “They’re very, very possessive. Like they’re taking their job too seriously. To your detriment, I mean.”

I couldn’t keep the shock and confusion off my face. What was this man on?

“I mean, isn’t it a good thing that they take their job seriously and that they care about me?” Taylor asked. “They’re bodyguards. Troy hired them himself, and you know his judgment is sound. The firm has a spotless reputation.”

“I know, honey,” Neil said. I clenched my fist at the pet name. “I just care. I want the best for you. Your father asked me to keep you safe, too, you know, and I’ve worked with a lot of people. I have good instincts.”

Taylor didn’t reply. What was going through her head? She had her naïve moments, but she cared about us. Neil wasn’t going to influence her, was he?

“Well, I like them a lot,” she said. My shoulders relaxed. “They make me feel safe, and they take care of all the details when I go to big events. I’d like them to stay.”

“That’s your choice.” He was obviously disappointed. “Now, let’s talk about your stock options.”

“I’ll go get Cody.”

I took a step farther from the door so that my snooping wasn’t as obvious. She opened it and waved me inside, her expression dimmer than usual.

“Hey, we’re done.” Taylor opened the door more, and I stepped inside.

Neil tidied up some papers in front of him and looked at me, visibly swallowing. I had to walk past him to get to my seat. His posture tensed as I walked by, like he was afraid I

was going to put him in a chokehold. Good. I wanted him to feel terrified of me. Of all of us.

Neil wasn't going to make me back down from protecting our girl. If anything, I wanted to double down. Creeps like him were in her life. She needed us more than ever.

Planning and setting up Troy's birthday party had taken a lot of work security-wise, but it was worth it. The party was the kind that I loved going to: filled with people having a great time with good music. The party planner had done a great job of transforming a regular club into something with a lush, tropical theme that somehow worked despite the cold outside.

We'd scoped out this club and chosen it because it was difficult to get inside and only had two blind spots where anyone could get up to something devious—a corner near the bathroom, and a door that led to the storage room. Not that we were letting just anyone waltz in. The guest list was strict. Ethan was at the door, not even allowing last-minute plus-ones, and Cody and I were keeping an eye on Taylor.

I couldn't take my eyes off of her, anyway. She was wearing a silky cocktail dress, the silvery purple rippling like water whenever she danced. The back dipped all the way down to the top of her ass, showing off the dimples on her lower back. I wanted to kiss those spots again and run my tongue up the indentation of her spine.

She and Troy had been attached at the hip for a while, a stream of people coming by to say happy birthday to Troy. I loved watching her interact with people like this, completely carefree and absently bobbing to the pulsing bass ripping through the club. I looked at a spot above her head before my eyes were drawn to her hips again. The way they moved was making my cock throb.

“I’m gonna go dance!” Taylor shouted to us over the music.

“We’ll be right here,” Cody said, following her so we were close, but not on the dance floor.

Taylor locked hands with a friend, a woman who was slightly older than her and friends with Troy, and went out onto the dance floor. She put her free hand up when the song faded into another one, beaming at us. My heart flipped in my chest, and I smiled back.

I’d been to countless parties with clients, but I’d never wanted to be off the clock before. I loved dancing, especially with beautiful women, and Taylor was a good dancer.

At least watching her was easy. She moved with the music, her skin gleaming with a thin sheen of sweat as the dance floor got packed. Her glittery makeup made her shine in the flashing lights. I wanted to put my hands on her hips from behind, press my lips against the side of her neck, and let her feel my hardness against her ass the entire night. And then I’d take her over and over again when we got back to her place.

“You good?” Cody asked.

“In some ways, yeah,” I said, leaning over so I didn’t have to shout in his face. “But I want to be out there with her.”

“Same. And I don’t even like to dance.” Cody tucked his hands into his pockets. “I want time alone with her again.”

“I do, too, but when? How?” I asked. “We still need to talk to her about what it meant. And then we need to tell Ethan.”

Cody sighed. “I know. He’s not going to be thrilled.”

“When is he ever thrilled?” I snorted, my eyes following Taylor as she danced with Troy. “But he has the same feelings for her as we do. He has to understand on some level. And honestly, falling for her is making me be even more vigilant. I would never forgive myself if something happened to her.”

“We could frame it like that. About the job. He’ll always respond to something related to the job.”

I let that idea marinate in my mind. It felt like the right plan. Now we had to talk to Taylor about it first.

The thin strap of her dress fell down on her shoulder, revealing the top swell of her breast. As if she felt us looking, she made eye contact with us, biting her bottom lip and giving us a faux-innocent, wide-eyed look.

This was torture.

“We’ve created a little monster, haven’t we?” Cody said.

“We have.”

She’d had our attention before, but now she reined us in even more. She was dancing with her friends, but at the same time, she was dancing just for us. The winding of her hips, the way she ran her hands down her body, teasing all the spots where I wanted to touch her...

She was pure sex, dangling just out of arm’s reach.

The pressure from the nights since we’d first fucked her two weeks ago came down on me all at once. Every single thing about her was making my blood warm from desire. How had I had the good fortune to meet a woman like this, who was so sweet and so damn hot, too?

I was starting to regret not having a place to hide away with her for a second. It was reckless as fuck, but being turned on did things to the part of my brain responsible for common sense. I had just told Cody that my attraction to her made me more vigilant, but maybe that wasn’t the case. Maybe my feelings for her were dangerous. What options did I even have to be alone with her?

The song shifted into something different, and the crowd’s energy changed. The DJ probably wanted to give people a chance to refresh their drinks. Taylor came back over, limping slightly.

“Are you all right?” I asked, putting my arm out so she could balance.

“Yeah. It’s just these heels.” She wrinkled her nose. “I love them, but they’re pinching my toes and rubbing against my

heel. I packed some flats and some band-aids in my bag. It's in the back room."

"We'll take you there." Cody took the empty glass from her hands. She never had more than one or two drinks, and tonight was no exception. Everyone else was several drinks deep, oblivious to anything that wasn't directly in front of them.

Taylor hobbled toward the back room, which we had a key to for security purposes. I wanted to pick her up, but that would have called too much attention to us.

Finally, we reached the back room. Calling it a "room" was generous. It was more like a closet, with a shelf with boxes of booze and supplies on two of the walls, and a big loveseat on another. Taylor flopped onto the loveseat and started taking her heels off.

"Yikes, these were definitely a mistake." She wiggled her toes, which had angry red marks across them, and massaged her heel.

Cody shut the door behind us, even though it was cramped with all three of us in the space. The heat of our bodies made the scent of Taylor's perfume more potent and addictive.

She grabbed her purse and started to rifle through it. Once she found what she was looking for, she brought the fabric of her dress up to get better access to her legs. Her long, smooth legs.

Cody and I watched, transfixed, as she tended to her blisters and massaged her own feet. The movements brought her dress's hem higher. And higher. Until the crotch of her tiny pink thong was visible. My mouth watered. I hadn't spent nearly enough time with my face between her legs.

"Taylor," I said, my voice gravelly.

"Yes?" She blinked, giving us that fake innocent look all over again.

"We can see your panties, baby." I stood in front of her while Cody stood by the door. The quiet *click* of the door lock was audible even over the muted sound of the music outside.

“I know. I want you to see them.” Taylor let the fabric pool around her hips and parted her thighs. “I saw you watching me dance. Didn’t we need this alone time?”

“Fucking hell, Taylor,” Cody said, pulling at his hair with both hands. “We did. We definitely did.”

I palmed my hard cock through my pants, tuning out the sound of people laughing as they passed by the locked door. I needed this, or I wasn’t going to be able to focus.

“Then what are we waiting for?” she asked.

What were we waiting for? I leaned over her and took her mouth, pushing the straps of her dress off her shoulders. The fabric slipped down to hang precariously off her breasts. I made room for Cody, who kneeled and pushed her dress down the rest of the way. Taylor moaned into my mouth as Cody sucked her nipple.

Our kiss was frantic, like someone was going to burst into the door clearly labeled as off-limits and catch us. But the idea of almost being caught made it all the better. I never thought I was the kind of guy to get off on that, but Taylor was bringing out a whole new side of me.

I broke the kiss so I could free my cock from its fabric prison. Taylor reached for it right away, making me suck in a breath so hard that it ached in my lungs. The feel of her small hand on my cock was even better than I remembered, especially now that she knew my body more. Cody had unzipped his pants, too, and Taylor had him in hand, working us both at the same time.

She leaned over and licked underneath the head of my cock before doing the same to Cody. As glad as I was that she was getting off on getting Cody off, too, I selfishly wanted her mouth to myself.

“Let Cody sit down,” I said. “And you can ride his cock while you suck me.”

Taylor got up, her dress falling to the floor, and let Cody take her spot. He rested his hands on her hips and guided her forward to straddle his lap.

“You’re so fucking wet,” Cody said as he pulled her thong to the side. Taylor shivered as he slid a finger inside of her. “I can’t wait to feel you on my cock.”

Taylor took him by the base of his length and gently slid onto him. She winced for a second, but she went back to smiling when she was fully seated.

“So good,” she said, resting her hands on Cody’s shoulders.

I watched her roll her hips, getting used to being on top, and stroked myself. Finally, she reached for me, and I stepped forward. We’d shared her in similar ways to this on our first night together, one of us inside of her while she sucked one of us off, but this was different. The desperation of her bouncing on Cody’s cock, Cody thrusting up into her, my hips moving of their own accord, all while the party was continuing without us. We were in a frenzy that none of us wanted to end.

“Come for me, Taylor,” Cody said, playing with her clit. “I love the way you squeeze around me. I’m gonna come inside your pussy so fucking hard.”

“Please,” she panted. Between her mouth on my cock and her approaching orgasm, she was falling apart in the most beautiful way. “I want you to come inside me.”

“Holy shit,” I groaned. I wanted to let go inside of her, too. Soon. Someday. But for now, I was more than satisfied to watch her get pleased by Cody.

Cody thrust up into her hard, so hard that I knew she’d be sore after. But the way she was shuddering with pleasure told me she didn’t mind at all. She craved our cocks.

“Gonna lose it,” I grunted.

Instead of backing off, Taylor took me deep into her throat. The vibration on my tip against the roof of her mouth was so intense that the edges of my vision turned dark as I came. I braced myself on the wall so I didn’t collapse, the tightness in my balls easing as I shot down her throat again and again.

She and Cody had slowed down while I came, so they started up when I withdrew from her mouth. Cody thrust up

hard again, his finger on her clit circling faster and faster. Taylor let her head fall back, a loud moan escaping her mouth. I stepped behind her and clamped a hand over it. The party was loud, but they might have heard her if someone was standing right near the door.

“Keep quiet for us,” I said, tilting her head back more so she could look up at me.

We kept eye contact as Cody grunted, chasing his own release. Taylor’s eyes fluttered shut, and she shook as her orgasm overtook her, my hand the only thing keeping her from crying out. Cody rested his forehead against her chest as his thrusts lost their rhythm. He went slack moments later, breathing hard.

I let her go, and she slumped forward onto Cody. He ran his hands up and down her back until they both gathered themselves.

“I should clean up,” she said, getting off Cody with a wobble.

“Here, we got you.” I found a box filled with napkins and helped her clean up. Cody helped her back into her dress, and I put her flats out in front of her so she could step into them.

“Thanks, guys,” she said with a smile. “I’m glad we got that out of our system. At least for now.”

“Yeah, for now.” I ran my fingers through her hair so it was back in its place. “There’ll be more, though, yeah?”

“Of course.” She looked horrified that I’d even hinted at an alternative. “I want this to be something more than just sex, though.”

Hearing her say it out loud made my heart expand in my chest to the point where I couldn’t speak.

“We do, too,” Cody said. “All three of us.”

She beamed, taking each of our hands.

“But what are we calling this?” she asked, the smile fading a bit. “And what about Ethan? I’m not sure if he has feelings for me, but I have feelings for him, too.”

A tiny knot of worry inside of my chest loosened. All of us together, with her as the final piece, was exactly what I'd hoped for.

“Does it need a label right now if we know how we feel about each other?” I asked. “We'll just see how it evolves. And regarding Ethan...”

I looked at Cody.

“We want whatever makes you happiest,” Cody said, running his thumb along her cheek.

“All of you make me happy.” She squeezed our hands.

“Good.” I kissed her temple, which made that incredible grin of hers widen again. It really was all I wanted—her being happy. I didn't want to hold her back in any way. “I think I have a plan. It might be easier to get Ethan on board than you think.”

CHAPTER 16

Something was up with Taylor. Not in a bad way, thankfully, but her shift in mood was still giving me pause.

She wasn't nervous about being home alone with me today. After her shopping trip, she'd noticeably loosened up, smiling and teasing me in that way that lifted the darkness that sometimes built up inside of me. I felt looser, too, the feelings for her that I'd tried to shove away taking up residence in the front of my thoughts. That mental fence holding them back was gone, burned to ash.

I was around her constantly, and she often told us what was going on in her world. From what I knew, nothing in her work was bothering her—the creeps that contacted her were promptly blocked, and we hadn't had any attempts from intruders.

Even though the threats surrounding her calmed down, I wasn't ready to tone down our security measures. My top priority was to make sure she was safe. But selfishly, I couldn't imagine moving out and not seeing her every day.

So if she wasn't stressed, what was going on?

I studied her as she worked on her computer across the table from me, her huge headphones on. A cute little furrow appeared between her brows as she nibbled on the paper straw in her iced coffee. Maybe it was just stress. But maybe not—she was happy. The party last night had gone well, and Troy was thrilled with the event. She wasn't hungover, either, as many of the party's guests probably were.

I must have been staring at her, because she looked up at me and pulled her headphones off.

“Everything okay?” she asked.

“Yes.” I cleared my throat, my face growing hot. “I was just wondering how you were.”

“I’m good.” She perked up. “Kind of hungry, though. Do you want to order in?”

“Sure.”

She grabbed her phone and came over to me. Instead of standing a normal distance away from me, she put a hand on my shoulder and leaned over me to show me her phone. Her long, dark hair swept across my shoulder. It smelled like vanilla, and I wanted to press my face into it and inhale.

“Tacos?” she asked, tucking her hair behind her ear.

“Whatever you want.” My mouth was so dry that the idea of eating was impossible. “I’m fine with anything.”

“Hm, okay.” She leaned her elbows onto the table as she looked through her phone. The position put her cleavage on display. Her laptop had come up high enough to hide it before, but now she was inches from me. The skin of her neck was so smooth and tempting. I wanted to rake my teeth down it. “Then it’s tacos. I’ll get you that chicken burrito you like.”

She went back to her desk, and I breathed out a sigh of relief. I was going to lose it if she got close to me like that again. I wished Harrison and Cody were here to act as a buffer. Harrison had somehow resisted her, even after having a taste. Was he still faring well?

She went back to work, typing away with her headphones around her neck. I forced myself to focus on what I was working on, a security plan for a former client who wanted to protect his newest property. He was a big, boisterous man in his fifties who had the habit of making awful jokes. The perfect antidote to my cravings for Taylor.

Eventually, the doorman, Shipley, called me to let me know that the food was downstairs. I went to get it for us, my

stomach growling. I checked my phone on the way down. Cody and Harrison were going to be out for another few hours, so my misery was going to have to continue until then. Having Taylor so close, but so far. I'd been the one keeping all of us from her—I couldn't be the one to crack.

I returned to the apartment and found Taylor at the table. She'd changed into tiny shorts along with her tank top. I looked up at the ceiling for a moment to gather myself.

“Thank goodness. The food came right on time.” She got up, her shorts riding high on her shapely thighs. I looked at a space past her head again. “I'm so hungry.”

I put the food down and pulled out her container of tacos. The place was far from authentic, but I'd liked the burrito the last time I had it.

“Let me get us drinks.” She peered inside her taco container. “Do you want a seltzer or something?”

“I'll get it for us. Sit, please.” I went to the kitchen, just to give myself space.

I came back with two cans of her favorite seltzer. The way she was curled up in her seat made it look like she wasn't wearing pants at all; an idea that made even more blood rush to my cock. I slid the cans across the table and quickly sat down across from her to hide the situation going on in my pants. Fuck.

I grabbed my burrito and started tearing off the foil, just to have something to do with my hands. She grabbed a blue corn chip and nibbled the corner, not taking her eyes off me. Her dark brown doe-like eyes were unnerving, like she was peeling past all my layers to the pulsing lust at my center.

“Is everything okay?” I asked, my voice rough. I cleared it. “You're watching me closely.”

“I just like to look at you,” she admitted with a delicate shrug. “Ever since we had our shopping trip, things have been great between us, yeah?”

“Yes, they have been.” I put my burrito down, my hands suddenly feeling too clammy to eat. What was she getting at?

“So...” She got up and came to my side of the table, perching on it. My heart started pounding. “I think we should talk about something that’s been on my mind. This thing between us.”

This bold streak of hers was new, at least when it came to talking to me. And it wasn’t helping me resist her.

“Okay,” I said, keeping my voice steady despite the steadily growing erection in my pants.

The boldness I’d just been admiring slipped, and for a moment, I saw the nervous young woman I’d seen when we first met. But she recovered, standing up again and pushing me back against my chair. She swung a leg over my lap so she was straddling me. I sucked in a breath when her core brushed against my bulge. My hands came to rest on her hips, almost automatically. I resisted the urge to give them a squeeze, as soft as they felt.

Our faces were inches from each other. If I leaned forward just an inch, my lips would have met hers.

“Will you kiss me, Ethan?” she asked, her voice breathy.

“I want to. Badly. But...” I gripped my chair. “There’s a lot that’s telling me we shouldn’t. The fact that I’m your bodyguard. I’m older than you. I told Harrison to step back, so I’d be a hypocrite if I gave into my feelings.”

“You’re acting like you’re three hundred years old.” She half-rolled her eyes. “You’re ten years older than me, which isn’t completely unheard of. And yes, you’re my bodyguard, but wouldn’t you go even further to protect someone you cared about? I would.”

Her points were valid, to my frustration. I thought I was devoted to my job before, but now that I’d formed feelings for her, I was even more invested. Seeing her hurt would have killed me.

“But what about Harrison?” I asked again. “And Cody? They both have feelings for you. I don’t want to betray my friends.”

“We discussed it,” she said. “They aren’t jealous, and they want to share.”

“Wait.” I frowned. “Cody, too?”

“Yes. And Harrison. All of us together,” she said, smoothing a hand down my chest. “We aren’t labeling it yet, but our feelings are there. And they want me to be with you, too, because it would make me happy. Don’t you want to be happy?”

I did. I hadn’t realized it until now, but I’d been going through life feeling just okay. Not awful, but I focused on my work all the time and hadn’t even been interested in someone in ages. The latter was for good reason—I wasn’t interested in getting my heart broken after the one woman I’d ever loved dumped me for withholding my feelings.

But Taylor was different in so many ways. Not enough for me to dive in without any fear at all, but enough to take the first step.

“I want to be happy,” I finally said.

“Then kiss me.”

I slid my hand around the back of her neck and pulled her to me. Our first kiss was perfect, sweet and soft. But then she ground her core against me, and sweet flew out the window. I dug my fingers into her hair and delved my tongue into her mouth, taking control. My control was fraying and inches from snapping.

Her soft moan broke it.

I pushed back and carried her across her apartment to the closest comfortable surface: her couch. I tossed the back cushions to the floor to give us more space. My body covered her much smaller one, her softness a contrast to my hard muscles. I ran my hands up her body, hips to waist to breasts. I couldn’t get enough of how she felt. Her skin was so soft, so warm.

And her breasts. I pulled her tank top off, then her bra, and just stared for a moment. They were perfect, full, with dusky pink nipples that were hardening more and more by the

second. I cupped them, pressing them together and running my thumb along her nipples. She sucked in a breath, squirming under me. I was on top of her, keeping her still but not squishing her.

“Ethan, please. More.” She arched her back, and I obliged her.

I ran my tongue across both of her nipples, nipping one, then the other. Her hips bucked up against me, her nails digging into my thighs. I sucked and worshipped each nipple again and again, like she'd hypnotized me without saying a word.

“Please. Down,” she said. She pushed my shoulders down. She wasn't strong whatsoever, but what waited for me was so good that I had to do what she asked.

I kissed my way down her stomach, then along the waistband of her shorts. It had been so damn long since I'd been with a woman, but I'd waited this long. I couldn't deny myself any longer. Make the feelings coursing through me even stronger.

I skipped over the spot where she really wanted me and kissed the inside of her knee. Inch by inch, I tasted her skin, pinning the leg I wasn't kissing to the side. The scent of her arousal taunted me as I kept teasing her, teasing myself in the process.

Finally, I gave into my need and pulled her tiny shorts and panties down. Her slit was clean-shaven, my mouth watering. I ran my hand over her mound and slid my fingers between her lips, opening her to me. She eagerly spread her legs and rested one leg on the back of the couch.

Seeing her spread out underneath me was a rush, everything I'd ever dreamed of within finger's reach. I dragged my finger down her clit and between her folds, circling her entrance. Finally, I pushed inside of her. She was so tight that my cock started to throb. She was going to feel so good around me that just the thought was going to unravel me.

I ran my tongue up and down her lips, then finally sucked her clit into my mouth. She mewled, her hips winding to press her pussy to my face. I held her hips down and devoured her like I'd been starving for years. Maybe I had.

No, I definitely had been starving. How had I lived without the taste of her on my tongue? Without hearing her sweet whines and feeling her softness against my rough fingers?

"Ethan," she whispered. "I'm so close."

I pumped my fingers inside of her, flicking her clit with my tongue. Her hips twitched, then bucked, then nearly tossed me off of her. Her back arched as she came, crying out so loudly that her voice echoed around the room.

"That was..." Her breasts shook with how hard she was panting. "I want more."

"I'm happy to give you whatever you want." I got off of her and stripped.

The room was so big that getting naked in it made me feel like I was giving a show to everyone beyond the window. And for once, I would not shy away. I tossed my shirt to the side, then my pants and boxers. Taylor sat up and looked at me, pure awe in her eyes as she studied my naked form.

I braced my hands on the back of the couch and kissed her again, blocking her in. She was under my control. Under my protection.

"Lie down," I said, moving her before she could react.

"Can I suck your cock?" she asked, letting me part her legs despite her request.

"Someday, Taylor. But if you put your mouth on me, I'm going to explode." I stroked myself a few times, pushing her legs back toward her chest. "I want to fuck you more than I want anything."

"I want that, too."

I scooted her down, then slid inside of her. She sucked in a breath, opening her legs wider to accept me. Her tightness was unbelievable. I'd never felt anyone like her. Tight and wet,

hugging my cock perfectly. I wanted to pound into her, but I took my time. She was like the finest meal—not to be rushed. I lazily thrust into her, her hips circling to meet my movements.

She pulled me down into a kiss, so we were chest to chest. I felt her pounding heart against mine as I sped up, burying my face in her neck. The vanilla scent of her hair and sweetness of her skin enveloped me. I kissed her neck, nipping her collarbone and cupping a breast.

She wrapped her legs around me and dragged her nails down my back. The way she was angled created friction against her clit, making her moan and clench around me. I grunted, trying to rein in my control.

But why was I holding back? I always denied myself. Toed the line. Stuck to the rules, even when it hurt.

But I didn't need to do that anymore, not with her.

I pushed into her, hard and fast, making her cry out every time my hips smacked against her. I lost myself inside her, feeling her pussy start to rhythmically squeeze around me. She climaxed again, sending me over the edge. I spilled inside of her, the strength of it like a punch to the chest. I shook over her, bracing myself on my hands as my energy drained from me.

I pulled out of her, my chest still heaving. She was beautiful underneath me, her body flushed and her eyes bright. She smiled, and I smiled back at her, the expression coming easier than it ever had.

“Everyone, please be seated with your seatbelts fastened,” the pilot of the private jet that Taylor had chartered said. “We’re about to take off.”

I got into my plush leather seat next to the window, next to Taylor. We were on our way to a trip to the Bahamas, courtesy of one of the fashion brands that Taylor worked with. From what I gathered, the brand was going to shower the influencers with gifts, ask them about what their followers might like in the future, and take a lot of photos.

I was just excited to be near the water again. I missed the beach, even though it held a lot of painful memories for me. It held just as many good ones, though. Learning how to surf as a kid. Hanging out with friends. Those long days with perfect waves, ending with a bonfire on the beach.

Plus, it meant seeing Taylor in a bikini all the time.

Now that she and Ethan had finally had sex, I hoped the doors had finally opened for Taylor to be with me and Harrison more.

Our plan to get Ethan on board had worked perfectly—Taylor using her assets to seduce him. No one responded to straightforward communication quite like he did. And she was difficult to resist.

But we had the question of what it all was going to be, especially since she’d had sex with Ethan, too. We were going to just see how things went, but I still had so many questions. At least we had more space to figure out how a relationship

between all of us could work. We didn't have to go sneaking around.

"Ugh, I hate taking off," Taylor said, gripping the armrests.

"Want to hold my hand?" I asked.

"If you don't mind me squeezing the hell out of it." She smiled sheepishly, threading her fingers in mine.

"I don't think you could ever squeeze my hand hard enough to hurt me, Taylor," I said, pressing my palm against hers.

"Really?" She squeezed my hand as hard as she could. My hand was so much bigger than hers, so much sturdier. "What are your hands even made of?"

"Robot parts." I lifted our joined hands and kissed the back of hers. "The normal stuff."

She snorted, playfully smacking me. Harrison sat down across from us, his big, muscular body filling up the seat, and Ethan sat next to him in the window seat. The plane started its taxi to the runway, and Taylor squeezed my hand even harder, leaning over into my seat.

"You'll be all right," I murmured to her.

"The bumps always feel bigger on little planes like this," she said, her voice thin and shaky.

I couldn't do a damn thing about whether the plane ride was bumpy on the way up, but she made me want to try to fix it.

"We'll be up in the air before you know it." I ran my thumb over the back of her hand. "Rest your head on my shoulder."

Taylor did me one better and lifted the arm rest, snuggling up against my side as much as she could. I held her as the plane took off, savoring her warmth and the way her position hiked up the bottom of her sundress. Eventually, we reached cruising altitude, and she slowly let go of my hand.

“Would any of you like champagne?” the flight attendant asked.

“I’ll take a glass,” Taylor said.

“I’m fine,” I said. Harrison and Ethan refused the drinks, too—we never drank while on duty.

Taylor curled up in her seat, the tension in her body fading. Harrison stood and sat down on one of the couches that didn’t have a seatbelt, stretching his arm out across the back. Ethan had fallen asleep, his head against the side of the plane.

“So, what are we going to do when we get there?” Harrison asked.

“For the first night? Probably nothing besides looking out at the water and ordering food in,” Taylor said. “Then the next days, I have a bunch of events. Hopefully, we’ll have some time to ourselves, too.”

As much as I wanted her in bed with us, I was also looking forward to the idea of just hanging out. Maybe cuddling or looking out onto the water. It had been so long since I’d had any time with anyone like that. Taylor hadn’t, either, from what I could tell. Being able to introduce her to new things, whether it was romantic or sexual, was pulling me deeper and deeper into this relationship. Whatever it was.

We spent the rest of the flight chatting, reading, and eventually watching a ridiculous comedy that had Harrison laughing so hard that he woke up Ethan. By the time we landed, the sun was beginning to set, the view stunning from the plane window. I couldn’t wait to watch the sun dip below the horizon from the balcony of the hotel room.

Flying private meant that we skipped a bunch of the bullshit and long lines we usually had to deal with when we landed in commercial airports. Before I knew it, we were on our way to the resort. Of course, we’d scoped it out beforehand, talking with their head of security. Taylor’s room was going to be in a perfect location, far away from the entrances and high enough to deter anyone who wanted to climb up to get into her room.

The resort was brand new, the kind of place that was marketed toward people just like Taylor—wealthy and photogenic. An attendant swooped in the moment our limo pulled up, dressed in a white shirt with the resort’s logo embroidered on it and deep blue shorts. Ethan stopped the attendant from crowding Taylor.

“Hello, Miss Bailey,” the attendant said. “We’re so glad you’re here.”

“I’m glad to be here, too.” Taylor smiled.

“I’ll let our reception desk know that you’ve arrived, and I’ll escort you back to your suite.” The attendant nodded his head and went inside.

I scanned the premises as we walked through the open-air lobby, which was minimalist without seeming sterile. The attendant guided us up to our suite, which was decorated in the same style. It had one big bedroom for Taylor, and three rooms for me, Harrison, and Ethan, all off the central living room. Beyond that living room was the balcony, with a perfect, unhindered view of the ocean.

I wasn’t planning on sleeping in my bed. Luckily, the king-sized bed in Taylor’s room had a good amount of space.

“Oh, wow, I love this,” Taylor said, looking around the suite. “And there’s a gift basket, too!”

She sat in the living room area and opened the enormous gift basket. It was stuffed with high-end jewelry, clothes, makeup, skincare, everything she might have wanted. Taylor’s eyes widened when she reached the bottom, but she didn’t pull anything else out. She just returned some of the items she didn’t want to use right away into the box.

“There’s more champagne and wine over here. Some snacks, too,” Harrison said, pointing out another basket filled with food next to the minibar. They were really going all out for the influencers on this trip.

“Perfect.” Taylor hopped up and looked through that basket. “Do you want something to drink while we watch the

sunset? Maybe a snack before we order dinner? Oh, they even have mocktails for you guys if you don't want alcohol."

"Sure, why not?" I said. "Go take a seat, and we'll bring it out to you."

She smiled and did as I said. Harrison, Ethan, and I gathered all the snacks and drinks, pouring her a glass of rosé, her favorite. The balcony was set up for moments just like this, with a couch, lounge chairs, and a table. I handed her the wine and held out the tray of chocolates. She beamed as she plucked one off the tray and popped it into her mouth. Her satisfied *mmm* sent a bolt of heat down my cock, but I suppressed the urge to react.

I savored times like this—watching the sun set—as much as I savored our intimate moments.

We sat down next to her, me on one side, and Harrison on the other. Ethan took the big chair on the other side of Harrison. The sunset was at its peak, the sky streaked with color. Taylor's expression was pure contentment, which triggered something deep inside of me. Like finally, everything in my world was perfect because she was happy.

The sun dipped below the horizon, and Taylor stretched out her legs and arms.

"That was so beautiful," she said, looking at all of us. "Thanks for watching it with me."

"I'm glad we did," Harrison said, tucking her hair behind her ear. "I'm glad we're doing stuff like this. Relationship stuff."

"Yeah." She looked between the three of us, her eyes lingering on Ethan. "Speaking of that, should we talk about us?"

Ethan shifted in his seat, but his expression didn't betray his emotions.

"I don't know what it'll look like," Harrison said. "But I know I want it more than anything."

“I do, too.” I held her hand. “The physical part is great, but I want it to be more than sex. I want it all—everything a relationship entails.”

Taylor’s eyes were bright and warm, even though she squeezed my hand hard, like she had when we were taking off.

“I think it could be just like this. All of us being your boyfriends.” Harrison’s smile broadened. “It’s not unheard of. And when it comes to us working for you, I don’t think we’ll get any shit for it. We’re more or less independent at this point.”

“I like that idea.” Taylor angled her body more toward Ethan. “What do you think, Ethan? Do you want to be in this relationship?”

Ethan drummed his fingers on his leg, staring off into the distance. The lines between his brows deepened. All of us waited patiently for him to sort himself out, but the longer he was silent, the more on edge Taylor appeared to be.

“I don’t know,” he finally said. “The more I think about it, the more wary I am about diving in. I’ve never been with a client before, much less one I’m actively guarding. And while I do care even more about you, Taylor, I don’t know if that would actually make me better at my job.”

Taylor’s expression fell. The subtle undercurrent in Ethan’s tone, like he wasn’t entirely sure of himself, caught my attention. His eyes flicked to mine, like he knew I was reading him better than he wanted to let on.

“So what’s going to happen, then?” Taylor asked. “I thought we had a connection.”

“We do.” Ethan’s eyes blazed with intense sincerity. “I don’t want you to think that we don’t. But I’m not sure if I can be in a serious relationship with you right now.”

“Then what are you going to do?” Harrison asked, his tone verging on annoyed. Was he sniffing out Ethan’s bullshit the way I was? “Hang around on the fringes, wishing you could be with her?”

Ethan’s mouth pressed into a line. “We’ll just have to see.”

“Yeah, we’ll see,” I said, trying not to smirk.

Ethan wasn’t going to last more than a few days like this. He’d already felt what a relationship with Taylor would be like, and he wasn’t going to give that up when he saw us with her. We just had to wait it out.

Telling Taylor that I wasn't going to be in a relationship with her alongside Harrison and Cody was so much easier said than done.

Neither Cody nor Harrison were affectionate with her when we accompanied her to the various events around the island, but when we got back to the room at night, it was a different story. They cuddled up together on the couch to watch TV, kissed her, goofed around with her.

The jealousy inside me raged—not of my best friends themselves, but of the positions they were in. I wanted to let go and dive into being with her fully, just like they were. To be a part of the club they'd given me an open invitation to, so to speak.

But something was holding me back, a barrier I couldn't climb over.

I woke up in my bedroom the next morning to a clap of thunder and rain lashing against the windows. The normal bright, warm sunshine I'd gotten accustomed to for the past two days was hidden behind dark gray clouds. I rolled over and checked the time. It was early, early enough for Taylor to still be asleep. All the events that the brand held were usually later in the morning.

I got out of bed, did my morning stretches, and threw on a t-shirt and shorts. When I went into the living room to get a glass of water, I found Cody at the coffee maker, staring bleary-eyed at the pot as it filled.

“Morning,” he grunted.

“Morning.” I nodded toward the storm outside. “Weather’s pretty bad today.”

“It’s supposed to be like that all day. Weird for this time of year.” He rubbed his eye and poured himself a cup of coffee.

“Are they moving today’s events inside?”

“Not sure. I haven’t heard from the head of security yet.” He dumped cream into his cup and took a sip. The placebo effect of the first sip made his eyes open more. “But we might be stuck inside all day.”

“I wouldn’t mind it in this weather.” I chugged a glass of water. “Is Taylor awake?”

“No, she and Harrison are still in bed.” Cody must have noticed the pang of longing appear on my face before I could hide it, because he smirked. “You could be with us, you know. It’d be a tight squeeze in that bed, but Taylor would be thrilled.”

“I know. But the job.” I filled up my water glass again, just to do something with my hands.

“The job that all three of us have. The job that requires protecting someone we care about even more than our regular clients.” Cody lifted his mug to his lips. “That job.”

A muscle in my forehead twitched. “Yes, that one.”

Taylor’s laughter streamed through the door, accompanied by Harrison’s low chuckle. The pair came out into the living room moments later. Taylor was in a thin, silky nightgown, her hair up in a bun. Seeing all of that skin when I’d basically resigned myself to not touching her was pure torture.

“Morning!” Taylor said.

“Everything’s been moved inside today,” Harrison said, holding up his phone. “But it’s optional, since they were supposed to have some snorkeling lessons and other outdoor stuff.”

“I kind of want to stay in the room all day, honestly. Maybe I’ll go out to eat dinner with people eventually, but

nothing any time soon.” Taylor walked over to Cody, who handed her a mug of coffee. “The weather is gross.”

“Then we’ll stay in,” Cody said, resting a hand on her lower back.

“We can think of stuff to do.” Taylor’s tone was laced with innuendo. Or maybe my brain had just imagined it because I couldn’t tear my eyes away from the shadow of her nipples through the fabric. “Let’s order breakfast.”

Taylor called in for room service before settling on the couch, stretching her legs out in front of her. She had to be teasing us on purpose. There was a seductress deep inside of her.

But I ignored my feelings, as hard as they wanted to punch through the surface.

I ignored them when she moaned around her spoon as she ate her tropical smoothie bowl. I ignored them when she bent over to pick up a dropped napkin, nearly flashing me. I even managed to ignore them when she nearly had a full-on nip slip, though that was an accident.

I’d been through pure hell as a SEAL, but nothing had tortured me quite like this. From what we had all discussed, I probably could have had sex with her without causing an issue between her and the others. But I wanted so much more. Sleeping with her was only going to make me fall even harder.

“Let’s watch a movie or something,” Taylor said, stretching her arms into the air. “It feels like a horror movie kind of day.”

We went over to the couch and sat down together. This time, Taylor was right next to me, Cody on her opposite side. Harrison stretched out in the reclining chair.

We let her pick the movie, as always—her taste was surprisingly in line with ours. Today was a psychological horror film, one that had me on edge within the first five minutes.

Taylor drew her knees up to her chest, the fabric of her nightgown pooling in her lap. I kept my eyes on the screen,

even as she burrowed closer to me, the scent of her vanilla and shampoo close enough for me to smell it on every inhale.

Every time she shifted, my cock stirred. I wasn't sure what was going to get to me first: the tension from the movie, or the lust pulsing through my veins.

“Hold on. I want a drink.” She pressed pause and got up, tugging down her nightgown. “Do you guys want anything?”

We told her we were fine for now. I let out a breath I'd been holding for a while now once she was out of my line of sight. My grip on the pillow hiding my semi-hard cock was so tight that my hand was damp.

Eventually, she returned with some sparkling water in a glass and sat down next to me, her legs half in my lap. As she got into position, some water sloshed out of her glass and onto her chest.

“Oops.” She held the fabric away from her before letting it fall back into place. It clung to the top swell of her breasts. My eyes were locked on the expanse of her sun-kissed skin, dipping down into that wet fabric. The memory of my mouth on her breasts, leaving red marks as I went, came rushing back to the surface of my thoughts.

What was I doing, denying myself of her when she wanted me? When I wanted her? I was going to fall for her harder after this, but I didn't care. That was what I wanted deep down. Denying it wasn't making that desire go away.

My resolve crumbled and blew away in the wind. So much for holding out. I didn't even last a week.

“Taylor,” I said, my voice gruff.

“Hm?”

I pulled her into a kiss instead of speaking. She gasped before melting into my touch, making her way over into my lap. I cupped her heart-shaped ass as she straddled me, squeezing her softness and dragging her core along my thinly covered bulge. I wasn't sure how long we were making out like that, but eventually, someone cleared his throat.

“Mind if we join in?” Harrison asked.

I’d never had group sex before, but the idea of overwhelming Taylor with pleasure made my cock harden even more. All three of us, giving her everything we had.

“Let’s go to the bedroom to get more space,” I said, standing up. Taylor’s legs went around me as I carried her to her room.

I put her down on the bed gently and stepped back. With the three of us towering over her, her doe eyes wide, I felt like an apex predator about to chase down his prey. But she wanted the chase. Her hands skimmed up her smooth, shapely thighs to the hem of her gown, pulling it up and over her head. No bra. Her full breasts bounced free, her nipples pointing straight at us.

I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do first. At the moment I hesitated, Cody dove in, tugging her panties down and dipping his fingers between her thighs. He buried his face in her neck, sucking and nipping. Taylor locked eyes with me and put her hand out. I took it, kissing up her delicate wrist toward her breasts.

Cody made space for me by moving down between her legs, leaving open-mouthed kisses down her torso. Harrison joined us on the bed, having removed his clothes. Her hand went to his cock and stroked it with practiced movements.

She writhed underneath us as I played with her breasts, Cody’s mouth on her pussy. I tasted the body oil from the bathroom on her skin. The image of her rubbing herself down was so potent that I had to reach down and give my cock a squeeze to get some relief.

“What do you want all of us to do to you, sweetheart?” Harrison asked, putting his hand over hers to stop her from stroking him. “Where do you want us to be?”

“You want us to play with you back here?” Cody asked, his fingers trailing down. From the way she jolted, I could tell he had touched her back entrance.

“Yes. Back there. I want you in my ass.” She sat up, and I sat back. “Can one of you bring the gift basket? There’s some stuff in there that might be helpful.”

I went to grab it, looking inside. All I saw were bottles of skin lotion and body wash, but I handed it to her, anyway. Maybe she wanted to use one as lube?

She dug through the basket and came out with a package with a slender, modern-looking dildo and a small bottle of lube.

“I wanted to show you guys this when I first saw it in the gift basket, but I wanted it to be a surprise.” She grinned, opening up the package. “I didn’t know that they did work with sex toy brands. I wouldn’t have guessed it.”

I was thankful for the collaboration, too. All the sex I’d had in the past was fairly vanilla, so adding a toy to the mix was a welcome change to this already unique situation.

“Here, let’s move around,” Harrison said. “We have to get you warmed up.”

“I’m very warmed up,” Taylor said.

Cody grinned. “Not enough to take one of us back there. Sit on Harrison’s face, baby. And suck Ethan’s cock.”

“Sit on his face?” The innocent Taylor that I’d known before returned before she understood. “Oh!”

“Fuck yes.” Harrison lay back, and she scrambled forward, straddling his face. He didn’t waste any time pulling her down, so his mouth was on her pussy.

I got into the right position, kneeling in front of her, and she went right to work. I threaded my fingers into her hair to keep her steady as she writhed on Harrison.

“I’m going to use my fingers first, okay?” Cody said. “Relax.”

All of us stilled for a moment while he lubed up her asshole and pushed a finger inside. She grimaced for a second before relaxing into it.

We fell into a rhythm, Cody fucking her ass with his fingers, then the dildo, Harrison eating her pussy, and her sucking me off. I had the best view, looking down at her enthusiastically worshiping my cock, her hourglass shape on display.

“I’m close,” she said, only taking her mouth off my cock for a second before diving back on. I was close myself, but I held myself back with everything I had. I didn’t want to come just yet.

“Come for us,” I said, gripping her hair tighter.

As if my command set her off, she shuddered, moaning around my cock without breaking her rhythm. I gasped, holding onto the headboard so I didn’t thrust all the way down her throat the way I wanted to.

She came down from her high, flopping forward and wrapping an arm around my hips.

“I’d love for you to sit on my face forever, but I need to breathe, sweetheart,” Harrison said from between her legs.

“Oh, no, I’m sorry.” She struggled to lift herself off, so I helped her. She rolled onto her back next to Harrison, her body flushed from her orgasm. “That was so intense.”

“We’re just getting started.” Cody undressed fully, his blue eyes alive with lust. “I saw your ass clench around that toy, and I need to feel that on my cock.”

“I want what Ethan was having.” Harrison sat up on his elbows, then got to his knees.

“Will both of you be inside of me? Are you sure it will work?” Taylor asked Cody and me.

“If that’s what you want, then yes, that’s exactly what we will do. And as long as it feels good, we will make it work.” I ran my thumb along her swollen bottom lip.

“I’m ready,” she said.

I lay down on my back, and she straddled me as if we’d done this hundreds of times before. Without hesitating, she

slid onto me to the hilt, making me moan so loudly that I surprised myself.

“Easy there, princess,” Cody said, his rough hand smoothing down her soft skin. “You’re gonna kill us if you go too fast. And it’s going to be a really tight fit, so relax. Breathe.”

She stilled as Cody got behind her. Her pussy tightened as Cody inched into her ass, going slowly so it didn’t hurt too much. But it was still a lot for her, if her tense expression was any indication.

Finally, he was fully inside of her ass. I thrust up, just to see how she’d react. Her sweet moan was more than enough permission to keep going.

I found a steady rhythm, driving my cock in and out of her in little thrusts, and Cody matched it. His thrusts were gentle at first, until she relaxed more. Our movements inside of her made her whimper and shiver, even as she sucked Harrison’s cock to the side of us.

“More,” she said. “Harder.”

“You sure?” I asked between pants.

“Give her what she wants,” Cody said, thrusting into her ass so hard that she nearly came off my cock.

He had a point. I wanted to give her everything she needed, even if it meant driving myself insane. This was the first of many times we’d all be together, but I didn’t want to disappoint her in any way.

I matched Cody’s pace, rutting into her from below. Harrison held her up so she could keep pleasuring him with her mouth, even as we rocked the bed.

“Fuck, I’m gonna lose it,” Harrison said. “*Fuck.*”

He groaned, his deep voice reverberating through the room. Taylor’s mouth was wet on him, taking everything he was giving her with determination. Harrison fell back, the bed bouncing with the contact.

Taylor dragged Harrison toward her in a hot, intense kiss while Cody and I fucked her senseless. We were just a mass of pleasure, the sound of our grunts and moans and sighs barely covered by the storm raging outside.

“You’re so beautiful,” Harrison said to her. I felt the same way, but I’d lost my ability to speak in coherent sentences. “Taking cock like you were built for us. You love it, don’t you?”

“Y-yes.” She dug her nails into my chest hard enough that I was going to have welts. I didn’t give a shit. I wanted her to mark me, just as much as I wanted to mark her.

I had been trying so hard not to come yet, but I was losing the battle fast. I dug my fingers into Taylor’s hips, trembling before I gave in and let go inside of her. She shook above me, her clenching pussy milking me dry as she came, too.

“Holy shit,” Cody said, resting his forehead on her back as he let out a lustful cry as he came inside of her.

All of our bodies sagged together, like coming had flicked off the circuit breaker powering us. Slowly, we unwound our bodies and laid Taylor between us all, her tucked against my side.

I thought I’d felt euphoric after fucking her alone, but that didn’t compare to this. Having all three of us give her pleasure felt like it was meant to be, like we’d finally found all the missing parts to make one whole.

My ass and pussy were sore, my lips were swollen from kissing, and my skin was probably red from all the places where their stubble had rubbed against me.

I'd never felt better.

I pressed my cheek against Ethan's chest, inhaling his spicy, masculine scent. Harrison was behind me, and Cody was down near my feet, massaging my legs. The storm hadn't calmed whatsoever, which made this all even cozier.

"Thank you," I said to them. "I've never experienced anything close to that."

Harrison chuckled. "I don't think any of us have."

"I definitely haven't," Cody said. He pressed his thumb into a spot just under the ball of my foot that released tension I didn't know I had. "I'm glad I didn't, though, until now. It wouldn't have been as good with anyone else."

I agreed. All the men I'd even had a vague interest in before didn't compare to them. I ran my hand down Ethan's flat abs, his chest hair scratching against my hand. All of them were so gorgeous and so perfect, guiding me through the new world of sex without making me nervous at all.

"You all seem pretty experienced for being so new at— What would you call this? A foursome?" I grinned, lifting my head.

"It felt intuitive," Cody said. "And you make it fucking easy."

My cheeks heated, even though I was pleased. I loved all of their praise.

But I couldn't help but wonder what their sex lives were like before me. I didn't care that they'd slept with other women in the past—they were older than me and were ridiculously hot. Still, I was curious and wasn't sure how to broach the topic.

“Am I the first virgin you've ever been with?” I asked.

“No,” Harrison said.

“You are for me.” Cody smoothed his hand over my calf.

I looked at Ethan, waiting for his answer. He hadn't spoken much since we'd finished, but maybe he was just tired.

“I think you are. Does it matter?” Ethan finally said.

“No. Just kind of curious,” I said. “Maybe a little nosy.”

Harrison laughed and ran his hand up my stomach, kissing the back of my shoulder.

“They're all in the past.” He nipped my earlobe.

“I know.” I pressed my back to his front. “I know a lot about you guys, but there's always more I'm curious about, you know?”

“I get that,” Cody said, resting my foot on his lap. “What are you interested in knowing?”

I mulled it over. I knew Harrison the best, since he was the most open. He loved his big family, whom he was close to, and played in the NFL until he had an injury. Losing his career had gutted him at first, but he really loved working in personal security now, especially now that he was guarding me.

Cody, I knew less about, but mostly because I hadn't directly asked. He knew how to surf and had grown up near the ocean. He had a great sense of humor and loved working out.

Ethan was the biggest enigma, although he had told me a little bit about his father and mother. He'd been in the military, and he'd known the others for some years. He didn't drink

coffee, and he was dedicated to his work. I knew that he was sweet and kind underneath that tough exterior, but his past was still mysterious.

“I don’t know, honestly,” I said. “Whatever you’re comfortable telling me. Harrison’s the only one who’s really told me anything.”

I didn’t want to press, but I wanted to hear from Ethan first. Cody stepped in, though.

“You know where I grew up,” Cody said. “And that I grew up near the beach. But I wasn’t the best person growing up, Taylor. I was into petty crimes—mostly dumb teenager shit. But after I lost someone important to me, I turned myself around and got into this job. Now it’s my life.”

“Who did you lose?” I asked.

“I don’t want to talk about that right now and ruin this moment, but I promise I will tell you one day.”

I understood not wanting to be vulnerable, so I’d try to ask him again sometime when we were alone.

“I don’t mind who you were in the past,” I said. “I just know who you are now, and you’re a good man.”

Cody’s cheeks colored, and he busied himself by massaging my other foot.

The wind whistled outside, making Ethan’s silence even more palpable. He wasn’t obligated to tell me his whole life story, but we were basically together now. I thought taking the plunge with me was going to make him open up, but I was wrong.

I pushed the hurt inside of me down and stretched to cover my disappointed face. How were we supposed to be in a relationship if he didn’t tell me where he’d come from? Or at least hint at it? I hoped he’d loosen up.

CHAPTER 20

Returning to New York's cold weather after being in the Bahamas was a harsh adjustment, but necessary. Taylor had to get back for some meetings and events with brands here, and we had to get back to normal. The bubble of perfect tropical weather and incredible sex had to be popped.

Not that being back in New York was terrible by any stretch of the imagination. Now that we were all together, our life felt even more seamless. We switched between watching Taylor and keeping her safe when we were out in public, then being her boyfriends when we were all at home. Taylor's bed had become all of our beds, even though it was a bit too small for all four of us.

We started to understand each other and how we all worked in one relationship, too. The balance of our personalities kept Taylor happy, whether she wanted to feel protected or giggly or adored.

I checked the time on the car's dashboard. Taylor was in her Pilates class, and it was almost over. Cody was standing outside the door to escort her from there to the car, since we'd parked down the block. Construction blocked the parking spaces directly in front of the studio, with only quick drop-offs allowed. The partially blocked-off sidewalk funneled foot traffic into a narrow corridor, making it look much more crowded. Once Taylor was out of class, I was going to get out and help clear the way for her to get here.

Ethan was going through his email on his phone, his brows furrowed. He was much less grumpy since we'd started this relationship with Taylor, but he still had his moments.

“Everything all right?” I asked him, looking down the block.

“Yeah. I was just looking into a few things. Nothing that urgent.”

So he was probably figuring out something completely world-changing. He wasn't going to tell us until he had all the details down.

We both got a text at the same time, telling us that Taylor was finished with her class and was coming out with some friends. I stepped out of the car into the flow of people squeezing through the narrow sidewalk. I fell into the flow of foot traffic and spotted Taylor as she stepped out with a bunch of friends. Usually, she chatted with one or two people when she came out of her workout classes, but today, she was talking with a whole group, at least five.

They obstructed my view, to my annoyance. Some of her friends were much taller than her. But Cody had her covered on the other side, which eased my worries.

A man in an orange construction vest stepped out in front of me and put his arms out.

“Hold up,” he said. “Need to get some machinery through.”

The whole flow of foot traffic stopped, some people behind me grumbling. We waited for another construction worker to push some machine across the sidewalk, almost painfully slowly. I was tall enough to see above it. Taylor was still speaking with her friends, Cody approaching from her other side.

I wasn't sure how things abruptly changed as quickly as they did. One minute, Cody was on one side of her, and so were her friends. The next, someone had surged out of the foot traffic toward Taylor and grabbed her. Her friends screamed, just as Taylor did, and leaped away. My stomach dropped to my feet as I shoved past the construction workers, jumping over part of the machine and nearly tripping.

“Taylor!” I shouted.

The sound of her screaming was more than enough to stop everyone on the sidewalk, even the most jaded of New Yorkers. I shoved them aside like they were nothing and spotted who had taken her. It was a young, lanky man, whose eyes were wide and frantic. He was saying something to Taylor rapidly, his lips moving like he couldn't get the words out fast enough.

It was the same man who had tried to deliver that package to her. The one who had sent so many creepy letters and DMs that we had to stop telling Taylor about every single one, so we didn't scare her. He'd been almost impossible to track, and now, he was here.

My heart pounded in my ears so loudly that it drowned out the sound of the city. My greatest nightmare was starting to unfurl right before my eyes. Of all the times for her to be less accessible.

Cody appeared on the other side through the crowd and grabbed the attacker. The two struggled, stumbling off the sidewalk and heading toward traffic. I couldn't pay attention to them, though. I had to get to Taylor.

"Everyone get back!" I shouted, grabbing Taylor and pulling her aside. She was trembling so badly that she stumbled over her feet. I picked her up and ran toward the car with Ethan.

"Cody!" Taylor reached out toward him over my shoulder, as if she could do anything. "Help him! They're going to get hit by a car! Stop!"

I stole a glance backward, my chest tightening. Traffic was still zipping by as Cody tried to apprehend the man who'd attacked Taylor. A car passed dangerously close to them, but the attacker didn't seem to care. He was in a frenzy, still trying to get to Taylor. A car got so close that Cody had to leap back to avoid getting hit. The attacker managed to leap in the opposite direction.

Before Cody could cross traffic to get him, the attacker stumbled to the other side of the road and took off, ducking

into a car down the block. The car pulled off before we could get a picture of the plates.

Cody stepped back onto the sidewalk, a defeated look on his face. His shoulders sagged, and he dug his fingers into his hair, tugging at the roots in frustration. Taylor sobbed against me, still shaking. I tried my best to rub her back and soothe her, even though I wasn't much more stable than she was on the outside.

The man had gotten away, and we didn't have a single hint as to where he'd gone.

“I didn’t get a good look at him,” one of the witnesses said to me. “One second, he was in a car, then the next, he was trying to drag Taylor away like a sack of potatoes.”

“You’re absolutely sure?” I asked, my voice harsh, even though I needed to calm down. Intimidating the fuck out of people we were questioning wasn’t helping the situation whatsoever. “You can’t remember anything about how he managed to grab Taylor?”

Right in front of me, too. It had happened so fast that my head was still spinning, and my heart had hardly slowed down.

This man, lunging at her. The crowd of people between Taylor and me. The helpless feeling I’d had as I’d wrestled this fucking mad man into the streets and nearly gotten us both killed in traffic. I remembered his hair, which was dark, frizzy, and pulled back into a messy ponytail, and his harsh breath. Brown eyes, a surprisingly petite nose for a man of his age and height. That face was emblazoned in my memory. Now I just needed to find out where the fuck he’d gone, assuming anyone who’d seen it happen had more information I didn’t have.

“No.” The girl, who was tall and blonde, looked between me and the police officer who had arrived at the scene minutes after it had happened. “I’m really sorry. Is Taylor okay?”

“She’s being taken care of.” I swallowed, trying to hide my frustration. I didn’t want this woman to think that I was mad at her. It wasn’t her fault that all of that had happened so fast. I was just so furious with myself. “Thank you for your help.”

“Is it okay if I text Taylor?” the blonde asked, holding up her phone.

“I think she’d like that,” I said.

“You’re free to go, hon,” the middle-aged cop said, as she smoothed back her ponytail. Once the blonde was out of earshot, the cop sighed. “I talked to the businesses around here. None of them have cameras that were on that area of the street.”

“What about the other cameras?”

“We’re checking. If you give me your card, I’ll contact you,” she said. I handed my card over. “Thanks. We’ll keep you posted.”

I returned to the car, which was idling in an open area that was easy to watch. Seeing Taylor was almost painful. Seeing her pale, tear-streaked face in the backseat brought up that helpless feeling I’d vowed I’d never feel again. A woman I was quickly falling in love with had been in danger, and I hadn’t been able to stop it.

I’d felt the same way when my fiancé lay dead in my arms after hitting her head. Taylor had lived, of course, but the feeling of dread and pure fear was the same.

We drove Taylor home and planned to stay there for the rest of the evening. At least I knew that she was safe there.

“I’m going to take a shower,” she said. “I’ll be back in a bit.”

She disappeared into her bathroom, leaving us in the living room. I sat down and raked my hands over my face, exhaustion setting into my bones. For once, Harrison was silent. Ethan was his usual quiet self. I didn’t know what to say, so the room stayed quiet.

My thoughts raced in the same circle, like the world’s worst race. I hated myself for not being close enough, for giving Taylor a tiny bit of space. I’d been reckless, just as I had been with the surfing accident. I should have taken more care.

We'd guarded people in New York City before, and I understood just how dangerous it was, but today had shown that in extremely stark terms. It wasn't like our tiny beach town that I could have scoped out before taking Lila out to surf. This was a city with so many variables that I didn't have the ability to control. I'd let my guard down when it should have been higher than ever.

"I can't do this," I finally blurted.

"What do you mean?" Harrison asked. "What is 'this'?"

"Being with Taylor romantically. I nearly let her get hurt today. It was just like before—"

"She's not like your former fiancé at all," Ethan said. "That was a freak accident. This was a targeted attack against someone who has a lot of potential enemies. It's entirely different."

"Yeah, so it's worse." I let out a humorless laugh. "A lot fucking worse because I was tasked to protect her. It wasn't just a fluke."

"It's part of the job, man," Harrison said. "We can't beat ourselves up about mistakes; we just have to react to them."

"It's different with her. So different." I raked my fingers through my hair for the fiftieth time that afternoon. "I just know that I don't think I can do both anymore."

My partners were silent.

"Weren't you the one who said it would help us to do a better job once we were with her?" Ethan asked.

"I was wrong. I'm not afraid to admit that." I shrugged. "I need to get my things. I don't live too far from here, so I can get here in the morning."

Harrison's mouth opened, then closed. "You're really doing this. You're really going to break up with her and leave."

"I am. It's the right thing for me to do."

I went to where my bags were and started throwing my stuff inside. My apartment was in Hell's Kitchen, so it wasn't too far from here on the Upper West Side. It was going to be fine, as much as it hurt both of us. I came out of my room with my bag on my shoulder, right as Taylor stepped into the hall.

"Cody?" Taylor asked. She'd washed the makeup off her face and was wearing a huge t-shirt and leggings. "Where are you going?"

"Here, come sit with me," I said, taking her hand. "I need to talk to you."

"What are you going to tell me?" she asked. "Is everything okay?"

I stopped in the hall. Seeing her big, brown eyes already damp blew the wind right out of my sails. I put my bag down.

"I can't do this," I said in one breath. "Today showed me that I can't be with you and be your bodyguard. So I need to go."

"What?" Taylor grabbed my hand. "You can't just— What do you mean? You guys saved me. That man didn't take me. This wasn't your fault."

"It was, in some ways." I gently pulled her hands off of me. "I've already made my decision, Taylor. I'll always be here for you as a bodyguard, but as a boyfriend, I just can't."

She stared at me, her eyes filling with even more tears.

"You can't be serious," she stammered.

"I am." The longer this went on, the more it hurt, and the more I wanted to stay. "I need to go. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Cody, *please*," she called after me. But she didn't follow me out the door.

I had to force myself not to look back at her as I left.

* * *

Since Taylor stayed at home for the next two days, I kept my distance. I was grateful for it. I didn't want to deal with the struggle of being near her when I couldn't be with her.

Plus, it worked out in other ways. My cousin, Brooke, had just been unceremoniously dumped after losing her job and didn't have anywhere to go. I had to force her to fly here to stay with me, so she didn't have to go back to her awful mother's place. I gave her my bedroom, and I took the couch.

My couch wasn't comfortable, but it didn't matter. My sleep had been shit for the past two days for reasons unrelated to comfort. I sat there on my laptop, diving deep into the man who'd attacked Taylor to pass the time.

We'd gotten some information from other security cameras. He was about five-foot-ten, and his car was seen going toward the tunnel to Brooklyn. We were still getting information from as many cameras as possible, so I was hopeful that we'd find something.

"You're still up?" Brooke asked, her voice sleepy. Her dark brown hair was up in a messy bun, her eyes bleary.

"Yeah. Why are you awake?" I asked.

"Can't sleep. Figured I'd get some tea or something." She wandered over to my kitchen, which was attached to my living room. "You're working this late? It's three in the morning."

"Yeah. Just something from a case that's bothering me a lot." I sat back on the couch and sighed, running both of my hands over my face.

"I'm sorry." She pulled down a mug. "Want some chamomile tea? I bought some. Might help."

"Sure, I guess."

She made the tea and came over to sit next to me. I thanked her, and we sipped our tea in silence.

"This fucking sucks," she said. "This situation, I mean. Not the tea."

I grunted in acknowledgement. She hadn't noticed my bad mood, not that I wanted to tell her. She didn't need any more

bullshit in her life. She was the kind of person who was always willing to put her own needs aside if someone else was in pain, and I didn't want to take away from her getting herself back on her feet.

“Love is stupid,” she added. “Can we pledge to throw love into the ocean? After strapping some concrete blocks to its feet?”

I snorted. “I guess. If it'll make you feel better.”

“It won't, but I need to do something.” She raised her mug to me. “To throwing love into the ocean with concrete strapped to its feet.”

Brooke's bitterness was relatable. How had I let myself get into this same situation again, dealing with a woman I'd inadvertently get hurt? If I'd kept my head on straight, I wouldn't have been sitting up late at night, unable to sleep because of a broken heart.

“Sure.” I tapped my mug against hers and took a sip. “I'll drink to that.”

Seeing Taylor wandering around her apartment, dead-eyed, was killing me. I didn't want her to hurt. We'd just had an incredible time in the Bahamas, celebrating this new relationship, and now it was broken.

I was fucking pissed at Cody, as much as I understood where he was coming from. Potentially seeing Taylor get hurt was part of the job, one that wasn't going to be easier if he wasn't officially in a relationship with her. He couldn't just turn off his feelings. But the idea of losing her was probably even more painful for him because of his past.

I walked through her apartment, looking for her. Usually, Taylor wasn't a night owl, but she wasn't in bed.

"Hey," I said softly to Taylor, who was sitting at her computer.

"Hi." She gave me a weak smile. "I can't sleep."

"Do you want to order cookies or something?" She'd turned us onto cookie delivery, something so indulgent that I hadn't ever thought to do it. Now we'd ordered them more times than I wanted to admit.

"Sure, yeah. With oat milk."

I put through our normal order and came up behind her, rubbing her shoulders. She leaned into my touch.

"Sorry," she mumbled.

"Why are you apologizing?" I asked. "You're upset. Makes sense to me."

“It does make sense.” Harrison appeared around the corner, his hands in the pockets of his sweatpants. “Cookies are on the way?”

“Yeah. Eating my sorrows.” She tried to laugh, but sounded horribly sad.

“I think you’re allowed to do that.” Harrison sat down next to her and massaged her hand. “But I think I know of a good way to take care of your sorrows until the delivery arrives.”

He leaned forward and kissed her. The tension in her brow melted away as she leaned into the kiss.

I ran my hands over her shoulders, continuing my massage as they kissed. My hands skimmed under the loose neckline of her t-shirt until I was cupping her tits. I pinched her nipples between my fingers, tugging on them until they were little peaks.

“Let’s go to the bedroom,” she said, her voice breathy.

We rushed there, Taylor holding each of our hands. Once we were inside, we laid her down, kissing her all over her body. After our first few times together, we started taking our time more, drawing out the touches and taking it slow. Tonight was about her and making her feel good again.

Besides, touching her soft, supple skin, exploring her breasts and ass and inner thighs, was more than enough to get me ready to go. Same with Harrison. We moved like we’d sorted out the choreography beforehand, with Taylor straddling Harrison and sliding down onto his cock and me sliding into her lubed ass.

We moved with slow, deliberate strokes, covering her with kisses everywhere we could. I reached around her and rubbed her clit, inhaling her sweet scent at the base of her neck. She squeezed around us, her breaths turning into moans.

Soon, she came hard, shaking so hard that she nearly came off of us. Now that she’d had her release, I chased my own, fucking her in the ass hard in time with Harrison in her pussy. My eyes fluttered closed as I came, muffling my moan against

the side of her neck. Harrison lasted a touch longer until he came with a rough groan.

We untangled ourselves, helping Taylor clean up before setting her between us. None of us spoke, but we did link hands.

“What do you think our future will be like?” Taylor asked after a long moment of silence.

I massaged her hand. I wasn't sure where we were going to go from here. We hadn't even had Cody around because Taylor wasn't leaving the apartment. What was it going to be like with him here, but not with us? It felt wrong, like a piece of a puzzle wasn't quite in its spot.

“I don't know,” I admitted.

“But we'll figure it out,” Harrison quickly added. “Let's just rest for now, okay?”

She heaved a sigh and rested her cheek on Harrison's chest.

Eventually, Taylor drifted to sleep, and I went downstairs to get the cookies when they arrived. Taylor was still passed out, even when I popped in to tell her about the cookies. Harrison stayed with her, but I was still too worked up to sleep.

I went to my laptop to check my email and eat a few chocolate chip cookies. I scanned through a few of them until I found an email that woke me up. It was from someone else who worked for our security firm, someone who was able to dig up the information I couldn't get.

I opened it and found the details on Taylor's father's autopsy report. All of the information had been broken down into plain language.

I swept cookie crumbs off my hands and dug into the information, hoping my gut feeling that something off had happened to her father wasn't right.

Cody returned a few days later, the energy around us awkward and tense. We tried not to let it affect Taylor, but she probably felt it, too. Then again, she and Cody had their own conflict. The longing way that Cody looked at her made me both furious at him and sad for them both.

It was almost like we were back to the very first days we were together, where all of us were suppressing our attraction to her. I didn't want to flaunt our relationship while he was just getting used to being her bodyguard again.

The first few days were just pure awkward, but by the third, Cody's attitude shifted. He wasn't upbeat or anything—not that he ever was—but he had a fire in his eyes that had gone out when he'd left Taylor.

“What's going on?” I asked him after we took Taylor up to a meeting. We waited for her in the lobby.

“It's about her stalker,” Cody said, unlocking his phone. “You know how we finally got that lead on him from all of those cameras? I dug into him.”

“Dug into him?” Ethan raised an eyebrow.

“Yes.” Cody shot him a look before going back to his phone. “I had some assistance looking into him more closely than I could have done on my own.”

In other words, he'd probably asked someone to hack the guy. We'd gotten his name—William Moore—and his last known location and age. He lived in Brooklyn and was twenty-eight. But besides that, we didn't have much. He had a

minimal internet presence, at least under his own name, and no criminal record. That was more than enough for a very motivated hacker, though.

“He’s not a stalker. Or at least, he doesn’t fit the profile of one,” Cody said. “He’s too well adjusted.”

“The man who tried to drag Taylor into a car in the middle of the fucking day is ‘too well adjusted?’” I raised an eyebrow.

“Besides that? Yes.” He handed me his phone. “He’s got a girlfriend, or at least a woman he’s talking to. I thought about reaching out to her to ask where he was, but I didn’t. He also has had the same job for the past four or five years and isn’t the kind of guy to jump from job to job because of his lack of social skills. He’s only active on Facebook and isn’t saying anything off the wall there.”

I looked at the email that he’d pulled up and read it. Cody was right. On paper, William was pretty normal. We didn’t have any new photos of him, but the most recent ones we had of the months preceding this showed him with the car he’d escaped from, hanging out with the same woman. They were clearly dating.

And they hadn’t found any evidence of him actually stalking her because they didn’t connect him to any particular social media platforms besides a boring Facebook profile. That didn’t mean that he was actually offline.

But the fact that he had obviously been dating someone didn’t line up with what we normally saw when it came to a stranger stalking someone. Usually, there was a single-minded obsession with that person, and they didn’t go through all the effort to hide that.

I frowned, handing him the phone back.

“That’s weird,” I said. “Do you think he’s just different?”

“What would the odds of that be?” Ethan asked. “We should look into him further. The attack happened out of nowhere, so maybe there’s a reason why.”

“Yeah, let’s look into it,” I said. “Ask your contact to get us more if they can.”

“Will do.” Cody tapped away on his phone.

His hunches usually had merit, so I hoped this one was similar. I wanted to find out more about the guy who’d tried to take Taylor, just so she felt safe again. When she felt safe, she was happy. And her being happy was the most important thing to me.

We had to get to the bottom of this now that we had a lead.

My meetings with Neil were always ridiculously dry. I understood everything he was saying for the most part, but he decided to go through everything in excruciating detail, like I'd never taken a financial management course in my life.

I appreciated it, I guess. He cared about my father, and by extension, me. My dad hadn't chosen him as my financial advisor just for fun.

But that didn't mean I looked forward to these meetings.

"Hello, sweetheart," Neil said as I walked into the conference room where we always met. He gave me a hug, holding on slightly longer than I was comfortable with. But he was old—not as old as my dad was, but old enough that he wouldn't be fully aware of hug etiquette. Like the weird uncle in sitcoms.

"Hi, Neil." I smiled. "How are you?"

"I'm great." He squeezed my shoulders. "You look lovely today."

"Thank you." My cheeks flushed. I hadn't been in the mood to wear anything particularly cute. Just jeans and a pink cashmere sweater.

"Let's get started." Neil glanced at Ethan, who was tasked with being my main guard today.

All three of them were intimidating, but Ethan was particularly so, and Neil was obviously affected. He never quite looked any of them in the eye, and he hated the fact that

they were always with me. I thought back to what he'd said last time, about the guards not being a good idea. I still thought they were, even though Cody had dumped me. I didn't feel any less safe after the incident, either. I definitely wasn't going to tell Neil about that.

"All right." Neil pushed a stack of papers toward me. "Here's what's going on with your stock options. I invested in a few of the things we discussed before, and you're on track to get a return on those investments."

I looked over the charts. He had wanted to invest in some new industries beyond the safe, steady ones that I was already into. I didn't like to take a lot of risks with it, as my dad had always said to keep it on the cautious side, but investing a small amount wasn't going to break me.

Neil droned on about a few more financial topics until we reached one of the last pages he'd put together.

"Now." Neil cleared his throat and folded his fingers together, giving me a concerned look. "I do have to tell you that I'm concerned about some of your spending on superfluous items. Some charter jets, property, your bodyguards, things like that."

"Oh?" I spent pretty freely, if I was being honest. I didn't really budget because the money was always there, and I wasn't the most outrageous spender out there. "What do you mean?"

"It's just a matter of spending over time," he said. "For instance, the hundreds of thousands on the charter jet could build up into something detrimental over time. The bodyguards are a very big expense per month, too. And your property purchases have been good investments, but if you keep buying in a market like this, you could get into trouble. See what I mean?"

I bit my bottom lip. Dad had always told me that property was a good investment, so I bought buildings from time to time and had them updated to rent out to people. I'd bought a few, but they hadn't been all that expensive in the big scheme

of things. But Neil had his pulse on it all. Maybe I'd been too reckless. I trusted him.

“Okay. I'll ease up on some of it.” I wasn't even going to humor the idea of getting rid of my bodyguards.

“Good. I want you to continue on to further the Bailey name and give to charity, so cutting back on some spending will definitely help.” He smiled, the skin around his eyes tight from the fillers and Botox he got. “Now, let's talk about charity, now that we're on the topic. The Bailey Foundation is doing very well.”

“I'm glad to hear it!” My father had founded it around the time I was born to help children who had gaps in their education get back on track. “What else can we do this quarter to help?”

Neil guided me through all the options and how the planning of the big Bailey Foundation gala was coming up. My worries about my spending faded into the background of my thoughts. Neil was always going to help. I didn't have to worry about it.

My days had been more and more routine lately. I worked at one of my favorite cafés in the morning, had lunch with a friend or a business contact, and had a meeting or two in the afternoon. Some days I went to work out before dinner, wherever I was having it. Then in the evening, I finally got to relax with Ethan and Harrison.

Cody was still staying at his apartment, arriving before I even woke up. I missed having him in the same bed as me, but seeing him first thing in the morning helped ease how much I missed him. He missed me, too. He couldn't hide that. But when was he going to come around and understand that we could still work? I wasn't going to be able to convince him of it unless something changed. I just didn't know what that change would be.

"Ready for lunch?" Harrison asked, resting one of his big hands on my upper back as he guided me from the café to the big, black SUV where Cody and Ethan were waiting.

"Yeah, I'm so hungry." I was going to a new Thai fusion place with another influencer friend, Karri, so we could discuss some possible collaborations in the future.

"Traffic is pretty bad, so you might want to tell your friend that we'll be running late." Harrison opened the door for me, and I got inside.

I pulled up my texts to my friend and let her know as Cody pulled away. Once I texted her, I checked my DMs. Most of the messages were pleasant, but I had my usual influx of creepy and mean people, which made my stomach turn. I did

feel safe with the guys, but the fact that the man who had tried to snatch me off the street was still out there was terrifying. The guys were doing everything they could to find him, but they hadn't yet.

I scrolled through my filter to see if I could find anything that could help. Nothing relevant was there. The guys who harassed and followed me usually didn't broadcast who they were or even use a profile picture at all. The only thing that might have been helpful were the messages from different accounts telling me that they wanted to marry me. But honestly, sometimes those messages were from genuine fans who just really liked me, so I had no idea.

Traffic really was awful, mostly because some part of a sidewalk had collapsed two blocks over, so all the traffic had to be diverted to another street that was also under construction. I sighed and texted Karri again. She was already there, and her schedule was packed. I didn't want to leave her waiting.

"We're super close," I said, craning my neck as if I could see beyond the traffic. "Could I get out and walk the last two blocks?"

"Sure," Harrison said.

He got out and held the door open for me, since traffic wasn't moving, anyway. He stuck closely behind me, weaving through the dense crowds on the sidewalk. My heart pounded loudly enough for me to feel it. It was too reminiscent of the last incident we'd had. But Harrison was right behind me. I would be okay.

I made it to the lunch spot and spotted Karri, waving hello. She wasn't annoyed that I was late, thankfully. A lot of influencer acquaintances I had weren't good people once you turned the camera off, but Karri was.

Harrison settled a short distance away to give us space while we ordered. We got iced tea to start. The minute it landed on the table, we both whipped out our phones and laughed.

“Are we really that predictable?” Karri asked.

“It looks so pretty. Can you blame us?” The way the light was streaming in through the window onto the white table was the perfect contrast to the colorful pink drink.

Each of us took some photos on our phones. I put a photo of it, tagged with the location, into my queue to be posted later, after I left, and put my phone back in my purse. Karri and I actually drank our tea and chatted, catching up on how things were going in our lives and careers. The quick lunch turned into a longer one once we got the ball rolling on a few video ideas that we could do together. She even pushed back her next meeting to accommodate our time together.

“This has been so great,” Karri said two hours later, looking over the notes she’d made on her tablet. “I think our followers will really like this stuff, especially the fundraiser campaign.”

“I’m excited.” I checked the time. I was missing Pilates, but I didn’t mind. My body was sore from last night, anyway, when Ethan and Harrison had put me into some truly unique positions in bed. They’d felt great at the time, but maintaining my balance while being pounded into by two enormous men had its downsides.

My face heated up. Hopefully, Karri couldn’t tell. I hadn’t been open about my relationship with Ethan and Harrison, so I didn’t even have the words to explain what was happening. Troy was still the only one who knew, and he didn’t need the details.

“I’ve got to get going, love.” Karri gathered her things. “But I’ll text you tomorrow once I have everything sorted out, okay?”

“Sounds good!” I gathered my things, too, and gave her an air kiss on the cheek.

She left first, and I hung back, Harrison behind me.

“Ready to go?” he asked.

“Yeah. Sorry that ran late.” I checked my calendar. “At least I can move some stuff around later.”

He opened the door for me. The traffic and construction were still awful, making the packed sidewalk even tighter. It had started drizzling as well, which wasn't helping. I spotted Cody way down at the end of the block, standing outside of the car.

Harrison stuck as close as he could behind me. But Manhattanites were aggressive walkers, and some people got between us. I tried to slow down to get Harrison to catch up, but a group of young Wall Street types had wedged between us.

I glanced back to see if I could slow down to get next to him, but instead of locking eyes with him, I found a familiar set of eyes. One I wanted to forget about.

The guy who'd tried to snatch me before. Those eyes were burned into my memory.

I gasped, lunging to the side to avoid the man, but he was too close. He grabbed me by the shoulder and pushed, like he was trying to get me on the ground. My thoughts raced into an incomprehensible panic. Why was he doing this now, out in public? Was he going to try to hurt me this time? Or snatch me away?

I screamed, the sound piercing the area even above the sound of drilling. The crowd, ignited into panic because of mine, rushed around me, trying to get away. The man's hands were still on me, grabbing at my hair as I tried to pull away.

Harrison appeared in front of me, shoving the man off and gathering me up in his arms.

"He's going to get away!" I shouted.

"You need to get to safety. Cody's got him," Harrison said, holding me close. I felt his heart pounding from where he was holding me against his chest.

I looked back. Sure enough, Cody had the man on his knees, on the ground. Ethan had gotten out of the SUV and was on the phone, keeping an eye on the situation. The crowds around us had parted, staring in awe. I stared back, my heart up in my throat and pounding like crazy.

The rush of the NYPD came in from nowhere, handcuffing the man who Cody had pinned to the ground. I didn't breathe until I saw them put the attacker into the back of a squad car.

"Miss, are you all right?" a police officer said to me. I was still in Harrison's arms. Based on how hard he was holding onto me, he wasn't going to let me go.

"I'm fine," I said, resting a hand on Harrison's chest. "I'm safe."

Taylor canceled the rest of her plans for the day, so the police had time to question her about what had happened. Harrison, Ethan, and I answered questions, too. My adrenaline was the only thing holding my memory together. It had all happened so fucking fast.

Taylor walking through the crowd with some douchebags, blatantly ignoring the fact that they'd separated her and Harrison. Harrison trying to shove past the assholes to get to her. That creep emerging from the crowd and grabbing Taylor.

I hadn't thought twice. The moment Harrison had her out of the way, I was on the guy, pinning him to the ground. He wasn't going to get away again. It took every ounce of my energy not to beat the fuck out of him the way he deserved.

Apparently, Taylor had accidentally posted an Instagram story broadcasting her location instead of putting it in her queue for later, which was how he knew where she was. I was so grateful that we'd been that close to her, so nothing bad happened.

The guy was in custody and was going to stay there while we sorted everything out. It was going to be okay.

"I'm so tired," Taylor said, as she tried to wiggle her boots off next to the door.

"Understandable," I said, holding out my arm so she could balance. Just that slight touch through my sleeve was electric. I hadn't touched her in ages. "Why don't you go take a shower to unwind?"

“Okay. I just need a quick one.” She got her boots off and walked back to the bathroom.

“Nice save back there,” Ethan said with a nod.

“Thanks,” I murmured, peeling off my jacket. The heels of my hands were scraped up, and I hadn’t had the chance to bandage them yet. “At least we know the piece of shit is in custody, so we don’t have to worry about him anymore. Did anyone tell you when they’d have more information on him?”

“No, he had to get processed first,” Harrison said.

The police department was busy, so that might have taken anywhere from an hour to a handful of days. We discussed the conversations we’d had with law enforcement about the incident, making sure we were all aware of what was going on. I was confident that we’d done enough to help them with the case.

“I’m going to go bandage this up.” I held up my scraped-up hand.

Taylor’s apartment had a number of bathrooms, but the only one with the first aid kit was the one that she was in. Thankfully, the room was split into two sections, one with the shower and a separate door with the toilet, and another with her enormous sink and mirror. I dug through the drawers until I found the kit and started cleaning my wound again.

The water turned off while I was in the middle of cleaning it. I tried to hustle to get it finished and get out before Taylor emerged, but I couldn’t do it fast enough.

“Oh!” Taylor’s eyes widened.

Her wet hair was slicked back away from her face, and her towel was wrapped around her body. The towel wasn’t tiny, but it showed more than enough skin to get every nerve in my body to wake up.

“Sorry, I was just...” I held up my bandaged hand.

“Oh.” Her eyes softened. “Did you get hurt anywhere else?”

I shook my head, sucking in a breath when she took my hand. “I’m fine.”

She didn’t let go of me, though. Her towel stayed up, but it slid down an inch or two. She was so close, close enough for me to tear off that towel and kiss her the way I wanted to. Just to feel her and know deep in my gut that she was here and okay.

“Thank you for saving me,” she said, lacing her fingers in mine. “For stopping the guy.”

“It’s my job.”

“You did it well, then.” She pressed a kiss to my fingertips, sending bolts of sensations up and down my arm. “My stalker’s gone. Do you know how safe that makes me feel?”

“Very safe, I’m guessing.”

“Yeah.” She tilted her head to the side and looked up at me, her brown eyes catching the light from above the sink. She was so achingly beautiful like this. Just pure Taylor.

I wasn’t sure what made me snap—the scent of her freshly washed skin, her eyes, the towel that was slipping down millimeter by millimeter. But I lost my composure and kissed her the way I’d been dying to since the last day I had.

She was immediately receptive, throwing her arms around my shoulders and pressing her body to mine. I didn’t care that she was still damp and getting my clothes wet. I just wanted to feel her all over.

She tore the towel off and threw it to the side, then got to work on the buttons of my shirt. Her skin was flushed, maybe from arousal, or maybe from the shower. My hands skimmed around to her ass, squeezing the soft globes. I’d missed her ass. I’d missed fucking it. I missed all of this.

Once she had my shirt off, I picked her up and sat her on the sink counter, parting her thighs and stepping between them. Our kisses intensified, with me nipping her lip and tugging her hair, sinking everything into it. My hand made its way between her legs, finding her already soaked for me.

“Oh, Cody, yes,” she said, letting her head fall back as I dipped two fingers inside of her. “I missed you.”

She hadn't just missed my fingers. She'd missed all of me, just like I'd missed her.

I put aside the swell of feelings that sentiment ignited inside of me and kept fingering her, rubbing that spot that made her squirm. Her hands fumbled past mine to reach into my pants, taking my cock out and stroking it. My hips jerked, thrusting into her small hand. I'd only dealt with my own rough one, so the softness of hers was a welcome change. She knew my body well and touched me in just the right way to make me lose my breath.

And I knew her body, too. She was already close, but I didn't want her to come on my fingers. I pulled away.

“I was almost about to come,” she said. Her pout was even more delicious from how kiss-swollen her lips were.

“I know. And I want you to come on my cock, baby,” I said, pulling her off the sink and turning her around.

The mirror was slightly foggy, so I grabbed a hand towel and cleared it so we could see ourselves. She was so tiny in front of me, but still, she was a perfect fit.

I pulled her hips back and angled myself inside of her. I'd been on top when we fucked countless times, but something about seeing her eyes widen, then flutter closed when I sank into her from behind, was even hotter. I wrapped my hand around her hair and pulled, making her back arch.

We locked eyes in the mirror as I pounded into her mercilessly, taking out all the pent-up sexual need inside of me on her. Neither of us were being quiet about it. My hips slapped against her ass over and over again, and her cries were so loud that the others had to have heard her, even from the other side of the apartment. My other hand went around her to rub her clit. I didn't tease her or take my time.

“Come on my cock right now, Taylor,” I said, looking at her in the mirror. “I need to feel you.”

Taylor's mouth opened in a silent cry as I worked her faster and faster. Finally, she broke, bowing her head and shaking all over. Seeing her fall to pieces while my body overshadowed her from behind made me crack, spilling inside of her with so much force that I got dizzy.

I braced my hands on the counter on either side of her body, catching my breath. I pulled out of her and pulled my boxers back up, leaving my shirt open.

She turned around, resting her hands on my chest and looking up at me with warmth in her gaze.

"I missed that," she said, running her hand along her stubbly cheek. "Since my stalker is behind bars, do you want to come back to me?"

I looked down, closing my eyes. Now that I'd come, my head started to clear. I'd wanted to do that, but we weren't just two people fucking. We had more on the line here. Some of our reality had changed, but at its core, it hadn't. Taylor was in a position where she was at risk, and I didn't want to lose someone I loved again because I couldn't protect her. The idea was unfathomable. I wanted her, but I wanted my distance, too.

"I want to, but it's still not a good idea," I said. "That guy was just one of many people who could want to hurt you."

She blinked, gently pushing me back to put a half foot of space between us.

"So you don't want to get back together," she said, her voice flat.

"I could if it was just physical."

She laughed humorlessly. The sharp contrast between that laugh and her usual exuberant one was a knife to the chest.

"No," she said. "I can't just do that. I need all of you. It doesn't feel right to almost be with you without having our emotional connection."

Before I could protest, she grabbed her towel off the floor and disappeared into her bedroom without another word.

Seeing the stormy look on Taylor's face after we heard her and Cody fucking didn't bode well. But I didn't want to pry or get into a conversation that went dark places, so I gave her space. She'd had a stressful day, anyway.

Instead, I let Harrison comfort her—and chew out Cody for whatever he'd done to her—while I continued to pour over her father's autopsy report. I'd had to contact a few people to get more details about certain aspects of it—discrepancies, mostly—but I had most of it digested. And it wasn't good.

I waited for a few days, so I was fully sure of my findings. Her mood had been down, and I didn't want her to feel even worse. Finally, she seemed to be in a more neutral mood, so I sat down with her after dinner. Harrison and Cody were out picking up a few things from the corner store for her.

There wasn't an easy way to tell her any of this. I just had to lay out the facts.

“Hey,” she said with a half-smile. “What's up?”

“I just wanted to talk to you about something important.” She tensed immediately, and I put my hand up. “It's about your father.”

“My dad?” Her frown deepened, and she pushed her hair behind her ears. “What do you mean?”

I pulled up the report on my tablet, then handed her an annotated copy. My notes were organized and straight to the point.

“His death. You mentioned that he received a clean bill of health not long before he passed.” I put the tablet in front of her. “I was sent his autopsy report, and it looks like his illness wasn’t an illness. He was likely poisoned, or his medical treatment was sabotaged.”

Taylor stared down at the report, slowly pulling her hands back into her lap.

“What do you mean? How do you know?” she asked.

“Several of his biomarkers were off in ways that don’t happen naturally,” I said. “Essentially, he might have been slightly sick, but someone or something pushed him over the edge. Whoever did it, assuming my assessment is correct, was highly skilled.”

Taylor’s mouth opened, then closed, then opened again. She looked at me, horror in her eyes.

“Why did you look into this?” she asked.

My brows furrowed. “What do you mean?”

“I mean, what made you put this together and just put it in front of me without much warning?”

The edge in her tone gave me pause, but I pushed forward. “I had some suspicions, and I investigated them. I thought you’d want to know.”

“I do, but...” A tear spilled over her cheek. Shit. “I feel like you just threw this down in front of me in such a cold way. It literally feels like you dumped ice water over my head out of nowhere.”

“Taylor...” I wasn’t sure what to say. How else was I supposed to tell her? I’d come in straight. No use in softening the edges of something that was impossible to soften. Right?

“Thank you for telling me.” She started crying. “But I just wish you’d considered my feelings more. You could have warned me or told me in a softer way or something. My whole life has been upended, and this is upending it even more.”

I looked down at the table, guilt creeping up on me.

“I thought telling you in a straightforward way would be best,” I said. “I don’t hedge anything. You should know this about me now.”

The moment the words were out of my mouth, I knew I’d made a mistake. Points of color appeared on her cheeks, more out of anger than the tears streaming down her face.

“I do know this about you. And I know that you’re still holding back with me,” she said, her voice gaining strength. “You’re more than willing to give me everything when it comes to the physical, but I need to see your softer side.”

Irritation fought its way to the top of my consciousness. “I thought our relationship worked despite that. Do you not have Harrison to take care of those needs? The softer ones?”

She ran her hands down her face, exasperated. “You two aren’t vending machines for my needs. I don’t go to the Harrison machine to get cuddles and affection, then to you when I want to feel protected. I have to feel like you’re open with me to have this work. Have I not given you reason to trust me?”

She hadn’t given me any reason not to trust her. But she wasn’t the problem. I was.

“I trust you,” I said. “But...”

“But?”

“I don’t know.” I pulled my tablet back to myself.

“Then talk to me,” she said. “What makes it hard to open up?”

I swallowed. I tried to convert the tightness in my chest and dryness of my mouth into actual coherent words. But it wasn’t working.

“It’s complicated,” was the only answer I had.

“In what way? I need to understand.” Her frustration was obviously growing. “You trust me. You’re attracted to me. You care about me. What else could we possibly need to be fully open with each other?”

I blew out a breath through my nose. “There’s so much more than that, Taylor. Letting each other in isn’t as easy as opening a door.”

“I’ve let you in, though.” She cocked her head to the side. “I’ll tell you anything about myself. Even the worst parts.”

My heart cracked. Not all the way through, but just enough for it to hurt.

I started to say I didn’t know, but that wasn’t true. “I know. And I know I haven’t let you in as much as you deserve. I don’t know how, though. I don’t know how to open up to you.”

“I thought we were different.” She looked away from me. “Am I not enough for you to learn and try to be more open?”

The crack in my heart got deeper. I should have felt like taking on the challenge of revealing my deepest self. She wasn’t like any other woman I’d known. And being with her alongside my two closest friends should have been more than enough to change me.

But all I felt was the weight of her disappointment, just as I’d disappointed most people in my life. My father. My exes, both serious and casual. Who was I kidding, thinking that I’d magically become the kind of man who could be in a relationship with a woman like her? The kind of man who was able to give her everything she deserved?

“Taylor, I can’t do this. I can’t be the man that you need me to be.”

Taylor’s mouth popped open in shock again. “What do you mean?”

“Exactly what I said. I can’t be open and soft like Harrison. I’m just not like that, as much as I care about you,” I said. “So maybe it’s best that we go back to how things were.”

She cried through her incredulous laughter. “You mean go back to things being awkward and tense? With you just being my bodyguard?”

I ran my hand over my hair. It was too short to pull at it in frustration. “I don’t mean that. But I do mean the latter. That I’ll just be your bodyguard because I can’t be open.”

“Even though you trust me?”

“Even though I trust you.” I swallowed, looking past her head. “I’m sorry, Miss Bailey.”

“Don’t call me Miss Bailey,” she said, her voice barely above a whisper.

“But that’s all you can be to me now. A client.” I pushed back from the table.

“I didn’t know you’d walk away from me this easily,” she said as I started to walk away.

“Nothing about this is easy.”

“But you’re not exactly fighting for me, are you? Or trying to change?” She got up.

“People can’t change overnight, if they can even change at all,” I said, going back to my room. I hadn’t slept in it in a long time, but I wasn’t going to be in Taylor’s bed anymore. “Especially me.”

The whiplash of this evening was giving me a headache. No, the whiplash of this entire week—from my stalker attacking me in broad daylight, to Cody wanting to only have the physical side of our relationship, to Ethan revealing what he thought about my dad’s death, then dumping me.

I wanted to stay in bed forever. Maybe the guys were right to be hesitant about jumping into something with me. Now we had to see each other all the time. I didn’t doubt that they’d continue to protect me with everything they had, but it was just awkward. Every little thing was a reminder of what we didn’t have anymore.

Harrison was spooned behind me. I was so glad to have him there through all of this, always ready to make me smile.

“Hey, I’m going to work out,” he murmured in my ear. “Do you want coffee before I go?”

“No, I’ll get it myself,” I said, yawning. “But thank you.”

He kissed my temple and hopped out of bed. He pulled on his workout shorts and shirt before heading to the room they’d started to use for their workouts. I put my face into my pillow again and sighed.

I still hadn’t looked at the packet of information that Ethan had dropped on me like a bomb. But every idle moment I had, I thought about it.

Ethan might have been detached and not emotionally available, but he was far from stupid. He’d had a hunch and investigated it. And it had made him believe that my dad had

been poisoned. He went about telling me in the bluntest way possible, but that didn't mean he was wrong by any means. He wasn't going to tell me anything he hadn't thoroughly investigated.

I rolled over to my nightstand and pulled out the papers with shaky hands. They were neat, with his tidy handwriting annotating some of the notes. I bit my lip and finally let myself read the pages.

The short explanation he'd given me made sense, but going deeper into the details and reading through his translation of the scientific data cemented the dark realization for me. It definitely looked suspicious.

I got up and went to my office. I had all of Dad's records, too, stored in a secured external hard drive. Maybe his medical records were in there somewhere.

I found the external hard drive in my office closet, then clicked the lock to the door closed so no one would disturb me. I plugged in the hard drive and waited.

Dad's files were meticulously organized, so it didn't take me long to figure out where he kept records from his doctor. He had a few years' worth of records. A lot of them were blood tests I couldn't fully decipher, besides the fact that they were in a healthy range for a man his age. The latest one was more of the same—he was healthy.

I printed out the one that had given him a clean bill of health just a month before his passing. His autopsy went into more detail, but there were enough similarities for me to compare the two documents. I didn't know what a lot of it meant, but the numbers were way different.

I fell down a Google rabbit hole about what this might have meant and didn't come away with much. The only thing I knew was that the idea of Dad being poisoned didn't sound so outrageous anymore.

I rested my elbows on my desk, then my face in my hands. What did all of this mean?

Dad was a good person. He was very charitable and always went out of his way to make sure that his employees were treated fairly. His social circle was big, and he had a strong moral compass in the face of a lot of snake-like people.

But he was a billionaire. People might have wanted him dead just because of that. Or maybe someone had wanted him dead because of a misunderstanding. I had no idea.

I had all of his files and records, though. He kept absolutely everything, like a digital packrat. Maybe the answer was in there. All I had to do was find it.

CHAPTER 29

Everything was falling apart. Not security-wise, of course. We secured every venue where Taylor went, and we were with her every moment she was outside. All of her packages were inspected, and no one had tried to get past the doorman downstairs, either. Plus, her stalker William was in jail.

But between all of us personally? It was a mess.

The tension was always there, both when Taylor was around and when she wasn't. Harrison was pissed at both of us for cutting ties, even though we'd had logical reasons to do so. The last thing we wanted to do was hurt Taylor on a whim. We kept our heads level, but at some point, we were going to break.

Today felt like that day.

Taylor had locked herself inside her home office for the second day in a row. She only did that when editing videos or reviewing an outside editor's work, but she rarely stayed there that long. That left all three of us out in the living room space, where Taylor usually worked.

Ethan was hard at work on his laptop, and Harrison was, too. I was trying to focus, but couldn't. None of us were saying anything, but the weight of those unsaid words was sitting over us. I had to say something.

"What's the deal?" I asked.

"What do you mean?" Ethan didn't even look up from his laptop.

“With Taylor and all of us,” I said. “Mostly you, Harrison.”

Harrison gave me a rare, annoyed glare out of the side of his eye. “What about me? The fact that I’m the only one who’s stood by her?”

“Stood by her?” I scoffed. “You’re going to put it like that?”

“How else would I put it?” Harrison asked. “You broke up with her because you suddenly decided you couldn’t be both her bodyguard and her boyfriend after suggesting that doing so would make you better at your job. Ethan dumped her because he’s afraid of being open.”

A muscle in Ethan’s jaw twitched. “What’s your point, Cody?”

“My point is that it’s even more complicated now that only one of us is dating her,” I said. “We either have to be all out, or all in, and me and Ethan are out.”

“Are you saying I should break up with Taylor because of the convenience for all of you?” Harrison asked, his eyes narrowing.

“Kind of, yeah,” I said.

“Hell no.” Harrison sat back in his chair and narrowed his brows. “If you don’t want to be with her, then that’s on you. I wanted it to work out between all of us, but I am not allowing you to ruin the best thing that has ever happened to me. If you both don’t want to be with her romantically, that’s fine. But professionally, we can make it work.”

“You’re being too optimistic,” I said. “How could this possibly get better?”

“We just have to talk to each other and try, like adults,” Harrison said. “It’s not that hard.”

“But it’s not easy, either.” I looked at Ethan, whose expression was completely neutral. “Do you agree with me, Ethan?”

“I’m not going to pick sides, because at the end of the day, I can’t force Harrison to do anything,” Ethan said. “But I will say that we should turn our focus to the business side of this and some of the information I’ve dug up. We work for Taylor. We can’t forget that.”

“What’d you find?” I asked, ignoring the weight of Harrison’s glare. He was never pissed off like this, ever, and I hated it. I wasn’t a fan of what he was doing, but he was still one of my best friends.

“It’s about Neil,” Ethan said, turning his laptop around. “Remember how he came up clean? I dug deeper because he rubs me the wrong way. He’s not as clean as we thought.”

“Then how did he get past our investigation?” I asked, getting closer. Harrison moved closer, too, resting his elbows on the table and leaning forward.

“Because he’s using shell corporations to do a lot of his business. A lot of people do that, but his have a few red flags. He’s moving too much money around at once.” Ethan leaned over and scrolled up the document he had open. “I’m trying to track down more information on what these businesses could be, but I have the feeling that it’s not above the board.”

“Do you think he’s trying to take advantage of Taylor’s money?” Harrison asked.

“I don’t know.” Ethan shrugged. “I’ll send both of you the information I have so we can put our heads together on it.”

“I wouldn’t put it past him to try to take advantage of her. He’s a creep,” Harrison said.

“He is. Every time he hugs Taylor for just a little too long, I get uneasy.” I ran my fingers through my hair. It had gotten long enough to pull back, but I didn’t have anything to tie it with.

“Sounds like some shit a boyfriend would say.” Harrison shrugged his massive shoulders.

“Or any guy who’s concerned about a woman he cares about,” I shot back. I tried to brush his words off, but he’d gotten under my skin.

I cared deeply about Taylor. Honestly, I was in love with her. But I still couldn't get past the fear of losing her. This arrangement was uncomfortable, but keeping our distance was the right thing to do. Harrison was going to understand that sooner or later, and it was going to hurt when he did.

CHAPTER 30

I woke up again to an empty bed. Taylor had been waking up earlier and earlier lately, heading into her office. I brought her coffee, and she barely said anything besides thank you before diving back into her work.

What was she up to?

Her sudden reclusiveness was making the tense shift in the atmosphere between us even worse. I wanted to know that she was okay. That we were okay. But she was starting to push me away more and more, except for when it came to us being in bed. Things there were still good.

I poured some oat milk into her coffee, trying to ignore the hollowness in my gut. It was fine. It was all fine.

Cody's ludicrous suggestion came back to me, as much as I tried to banish it from my head. He was right, at least so far. Everything was getting worse between all of us. More awkward, more tense. The more I tried to be affectionate with Taylor, the more Harrison and Cody were annoyed with me for pressing on and being "too optimistic."

Something in my gut was telling me that Cody was right.

I poured my own coffee and took both mugs to Taylor's office. I knocked, and the door opened. That had to be a good sign, right? She hadn't locked it.

"Morning," I said. "I saw you didn't make any coffee. You want some?"

She turned around, her eyes large behind her eyestrain reducing glasses. "Sure, thank you."

I put the mug down on her desk and kissed her temple, stealing a glance at her screen. She had all of her documents minimized, but the folder she was looking at was filled with thumbnails.

“Busy morning?” I asked.

“Yeah. Just working on a few things that Neil and the board sent me for the Bailey Foundation gala coming up.” She sipped her coffee and cupped her mug. The serious look in her eyes started to build up the knot of dread in my stomach. “I actually want to talk to you.”

“Sure, what’s up?” I sat down in the chair next to her desk. I used to sit here and talk with her as she edited videos, but I hadn’t been there in over a week.

“I think...” She paused, swallowing. Her eyes were glistening with tears. “I think we got pretty serious pretty fast. Now it’s all a mess between the four of us, and I’m really stressed out. I think we should end it, and go back to a professional relationship.”

My heart stuttered and fell as I tried to wrap my head around what she was saying to me or what was happening.

“You mean we should break up?” I finally managed to say.

She nodded, wiping at a stray tear. “Trust me, I don’t want to. But I think it’s for the best, don’t you think?”

It was absolutely not for the best. I loved her. I hadn’t said it first, since whenever I did in past relationships, things went sideways almost immediately. But this time, I hadn’t even had to say it for it to collapse.

Again, I’d put my heart out there quickly, and it only gave her more space to smash it with a mallet.

“I thought things were good. Or at least not this bad,” I said, rubbing my sweaty palms down the legs of my pants.

“They were good. But the strain is getting to be too much.” She played with the hem of her silk nightgown. “Having to see my two exes, who used to be in a relationship with me alongside you... Cody ended it with me because he couldn’t

deal with the possibility of me getting hurt. What if you decide the same thing—that you can't be my bodyguard and my boyfriend? Both Cody and Ethan have a fear of getting too close to me, and now I understand it, because it hurts so much when it ends. I don't want to continue to fall for you, and get closer to you, only for you to break up with me, too."

"I'd never break up with you because of that," I said. "I know that being your boyfriend is making me more protective of you. I'll always put your safety first."

"I know you will always put my safety first, but I just don't want to get hurt anymore." She played with the end of her ponytail, biting her bottom lip. "But it has to be this way, Harrison. I'm sorry."

My throat was so tight that I could hardly breathe, but I managed to get words out.

"So I'm just your bodyguard again," I said.

"Right."

"Okay." I ran my hands up and down my thighs again. "Just know that I'll protect you as much as I can, no matter what."

"I know you will. You're a good man, Harrison." She leaned over and placed a chaste kiss on my cheek. I resisted the urge to grab her and kiss her the way I wanted to.

I had to do something else before I left. As much as my heart hurt, I didn't want to leave her presence just yet.

"Speaking of protection." I stood up and grabbed my coffee. "We're looking into Neil more."

"Neil? Why?"

"We're not sure if you should trust him. He's exhibited some red flags." I cleared my throat so my voice didn't sound so raspy. "Just be careful, okay?"

"Sure, I'll be careful," she said.

I wasn't so convinced that she believed me. But it didn't matter. I was still going to do everything I could to make sure

she was safe, even if she didn't want to be with me anymore. It was going to hurt, but she was still worth it.

I'd been so sure that breaking up with Harrison was the right thing to do, but that didn't make it hurt any less. My big bed was so cold and empty. Our conversations were back to the most basic stuff, like what I was going to do that day and whether I wanted lunch.

I hated it. I'd probably made a mistake in breaking up with Harrison, but it was so complicated now. I didn't want to ruin Harrison's relationship with his two best friends if he stayed with me. I wouldn't be able to forgive myself if that happened. I was falling more in love with Harrison—and Ethan and Cody—every day. So, by distancing myself from Harrison, maybe it would hurt less than if I waited for him to break up with me.

The weather was finally warming up again as we approached summer, so I didn't have to wear my big jacket anymore. Instead, I'd chosen this dress and the leather jacket I'd bought the day I went shopping with Ethan. I was just meeting with Neil for lunch, but putting on a nice outfit always lifted my mood.

When I told the three of them that this lunch was now on my schedule, they'd hesitated. They still hadn't told me why they didn't trust Neil besides the fact that some of his business dealings were “sketchy,” and Neil hadn't done anything to make me not trust him. I was going to walk in like everything was normal.

Neil had gotten a private room in the back of a restaurant for lunch, since it was easier to secure without any of the guys standing watch a table away. Ethan walked me through the

front of the restaurant and opened the door to the back room for me.

“Hello, honey,” Neil said when I walked in. “How are you?”

“Good!” I let him hug me. Once again, I got the long hug, along with a slight back rub. “How are you?”

“Good.” He held onto my shoulders and looked me over. “You look lovely today.”

“Thank you.” A twinge of discomfort crept up my spine, but I suppressed it. The hugs were getting longer, and his leering glances were becoming more obvious. It almost felt like he was coming on to me.

“Excuse me, sir,” Neil said, looking at Ethan past my shoulder. “Since this room is so small, would you mind giving us privacy today? There’s no back entrance, so no one can get past you.”

Ethan paused, then said, “Sure.”

He stepped out and shut the door behind him.

“This restaurant’s sea bass is unbelievable,” Neil said, keeping his hand on my back as he guided me to a chair. He pulled it out for me, and I sat. “You have to try it.”

“That sounds good.” I glanced down at the menu that was at my spot anyway. It wasn’t a long menu, so I skimmed it in an instant. “I haven’t had it in a long time.”

“Then let’s make it happen.” He called for the server, who came to take our orders.

Once the server left, I sipped my sparkling water and took in the room. The room really was intimate and small. As was the table. If I shifted the wrong way, then Neil’s knees were going to touch mine.

We caught up on a few smaller things, like my investments and a few of the real estate projects he was handling for me. The whole time, his focus was 100 percent on me. Not that his attention usually wandered, but still. It was a lot, and it was

awkward when I wasn't talking. Was it because we were talking about me and not something else?

"I'm excited about the gala," I said to shift the subject. "From what the board is saying, it'll be a great turnout."

"Yes, I'm excited, too." He shifted, his knee pressing against mine. I moved it out of the way. "You've bought your dress?"

"Yes. I have to pick it up from the seamstress after this."

"I'm sure you'll look stunning." He smiled. "Your father would be so happy to see how well you're doing on your own."

I looked down at the napkin in an elaborate fold on the table in front of me. I still missed Dad every day.

"Thank you," I said. "I miss him."

"I miss him as well." Neil sipped his water, too, not taking his eyes off of me. "Are you lonely, though?"

"Lonely?" My brows furrowed. "What do you mean?"

"Your family is gone," he said, moving his knee back to touch mine. I moved mine yet again, a chill running up my spine.

"I still have Troy."

"Yes, Troy. But I mean, socially, outside of family. Are you lonely?"

I studied his too-smooth face, trying to discern what he was really asking. His knee brushed against mine deliberately, making the truth slam into me like a rock to the head.

He *was* coming onto me. He was pushing sixty, and he'd known me since I was young. All those weird hugs looked very different in retrospect.

A sour taste came up in the back of my throat. This wasn't happening. Had the guys noticed how creepy he was? I was so stupid for not seeing it sooner.

The server came with our sea bass, oblivious to my absolute horror and disgust. I wasn't sure Neil had caught onto my expression yet, and I didn't know how to hide it. I barely managed to not gag.

"Excuse me. I'm going to go wash my hands," I said, pushing back from the table quickly.

I rushed out of the room, nearly barreling over Ethan.

"Woah, you okay?" he asked, steadying me.

"Just need to pee."

I pulled myself out of his arms and rushed to the bathroom. Thankfully, it was a single room. I locked it and pulled my phone out of my pocket to call Troy.

"Hey, what's going on?" he asked when he answered on the first ring. From the noise in the background, he was probably at the office.

"Neil came onto me," I blurted.

"Woah, what? Hold on," he said. Moments later, a door clicked shut on his end of the line. "Neil did what now?"

"He came onto me." I tried to keep my voice down, but I was freaking out. "He didn't grope me or anything, but he kept touching his knee to mine and looking at me weird, and I feel so *gross* and stupid for not seeing it earlier. He asked me if I was lonely. What do I do?"

"Holy shit. Hold on, I'm trying to keep myself together." He took a few deep breaths. "First of all, you didn't do anything wrong. Second of all, the moment Neil steps into this office, I'll kick his ass. Third of all... I don't know. Can you just leave? Get some space to figure out what to do in your own time?"

"I can make up an excuse." I was hungry, though, and the sea bass looked good. But not good enough to choke it down and have a guy I viewed as an uncle come onto me. "That I'm sick or something and need to go home."

"Do that. I'm so sorry, Taylor."

“Thanks.” I let out a shuddery breath. “I’ll go do that.”

“Call me if anything else happens, okay?”

“I will.” I ended the call and ran cold water over my wrists to calm down. Then, I scrubbed my hands, even though they weren’t even dirty.

I could *not* tell Ethan, Harrison, and Cody about this. They already hated him, so they’d rip Neil limb from limb. I just needed to get out of here to bide my time and figure out how to handle him, especially with the gala coming up soon. I wasn’t going to let him ruin it or ruin me.

Taylor getting ready for a big gala was a full-day task. We took her to the spa in the morning, where she stayed for several hours. Then, a hairstylist and makeup artist came to her apartment and got her ready. Both took over an hour. After that, she put on her dress, which required a second set of hands.

The wait was worth it, even though seeing her was also a punch to the gut. She stepped down the hallway of her apartment, her pale pink ballgown trailing behind her. It hugged her body up top but flowed outward at the bottom. Seeing her updo, I understood why it took so long. It was elaborate and pulled back from her face, showing off all her natural beauty. She truly looked like a princess.

“You look beautiful,” I said, resisting the urge to reach out and touch her.

“Thank you.” Her cheeks flushed, even under her makeup.

“You do.” Harrison looked pained. He was still struggling with the breakup. All of us were, but he was by far the worst at hiding his feelings. “Ready to go? Cody’s pulled the car up.”

“Yeah, I’m ready.”

I didn’t want to let her out of my sight, but I had to. She was going to pre-event drinks at a senator’s brownstone. Because of space limitations, we couldn’t actually go to the event with her, but the senator’s security team was good. Taylor insisted that she’d be fine, and since we were her employees, we had to give in.

But we were going to be outside waiting, getting updates from their security. I had to be okay with that, at least for about an hour and a half.

We walked her downstairs, ensuring her dress wasn't caught in any doors, and helped her into the car. Cody's eyes nearly popped out of his head when he saw her, but he composed himself and gave her a simple compliment.

The drive to the senator's home wasn't long. The area was teeming with security, to my relief. Someone escorted her inside. Her bright smile warmed me from the inside and eased my worries.

Someone guiding traffic told us where to park, not far away from the house. Cody parked and sighed, pulling out his phone.

"At least we have time to get some shit done," he murmured to himself. "I got that friend of mine to look into Neil more, and he's just emailed me."

"Friend of yours, meaning a hacker?" Harrison raised an eyebrow.

"Maybe, maybe not." Cody shrugged. "And by that, I mean absolutely."

Even I snorted at that. I wasn't going to give him shit for doing so, especially when it came to Neil. Something had happened during Taylor's lunch with him. She had rushed to the bathroom looking pale and suddenly wanted to leave without finishing her meal. She'd gone home and locked herself away. Maybe she had just been sick like she claimed, but I didn't believe her excuse.

The smirk on Cody's face faded as he read through what his friend had sent him, making my stomach sink. Soon, a look of horror set in on his face.

"What? What is it?" Harrison asked.

"Is Neil at that event in there?"

"No, but he'll be at the gala," I said. "What'd you uncover?"

“Neil’s so deep in debt that I’m surprised he’s even buying a damn thing,” Cody said, showing us his phone.

I took it and held it so Harrison could see it, too. Cody’s friend had uncovered a goldmine. For someone who had been tasked with managing Taylor’s finances, he had fucked up his own. Not that anyone knew besides him. This hacker had gone deep beyond anything Neil would ever reveal.

“Shit.” I handed him the phone back.

“There’s more, too,” Cody said, opening another document. “Look at these payments. The bank account that it was routed to? It’s William Moore’s. The same address and everything.”

My blood started to boil. “So Neil and her stalker were connected?”

“That would make sense,” Harrison said. “If William was hired to harass her, he wouldn’t be on her social media, and he might have had a girlfriend.”

“He got paid more than enough to justify going to jail for a while.” Cody pushed some stray strands of hair out of his face, his eyes just as filled with rage as I felt. “Neil was using other people’s money to pay for all this bullshit. Robbing Peter to pay Paul.”

“But how can we prove all of this without admitting that we had him hacked?” I asked. I hated hackers for that reason—a lot of the information was helpful, but it couldn’t be taken to the cops.

“I don’t know. I didn’t expect all of this to go down the way it did.” Cody drummed his fingers on his thigh. “All we can do is warn Taylor and ask her to look into him, I guess.”

“She won’t. She still trusts him,” Harrison said.

“We can still ask. We can tell her that we have information, but not where it’s from.” I mentally walked through how that conversation would go, then winced. I wasn’t the best at telling her things. “You guys can get through to her better than I can.”

“Sounds like a good plan, then.”

We talked over our findings for another hour, until Taylor called us to pick her up. We drove around the block and helped her into the car again. Her cheeks were flushed, and she looked happier than she'd been in a long time. And we were about to ruin it all over again.

Cody pulled off toward the gala venue, keeping his eyes on the road. We'd decided that Harrison would tell her about Neil, since he was the gentlest of us three. But he wasn't talking yet.

“Can we tell you about something?” Harrison said when the event venue was within eyesight.

“Sure?” Taylor looked up from her phone.

“We got some information,” Harrison said. “On Neil.”

Taylor nodded for him to go on.

“We know we warned you about him before, but now we have some hard evidence that he isn't who he says he is. That his grip on finances isn't the best,” he said. He gauged Taylor's expression, which was surprisingly blank. He must have noticed something I didn't, because he held back on the part about her stalker.

“Okay. Well.” She shrugged. “I can't do much about that right now. But thank you for telling me.”

I deflated. Did she not believe us?

We pulled up to the gala venue, which was teeming with people. She was clearly ready to get out of the car, because she tried to get the door herself. I rushed out to help her, taking her hand. She didn't pull away, but she didn't hold on to me, either.

Frustration filled my veins. I wished I could read her better. Something else was going on, and she wasn't telling us, something that was keeping her silent.

As soon as we were in front of people, Taylor's attitude flipped back to her warm, social self that I had become accustomed to. I stuck close to her, keeping an eye out for Neil. The party was so packed that tonight was going to

require being constantly focused. I wasn't dating her, but I was even more dedicated to my job than ever.

I wandered around the gala, trying my hardest to hide the panic inside of me. The guys' warnings about Neil before had been just that—gut feelings. But now they had hard evidence somewhere, which I was inclined to believe even more after the creepy Neil incident.

But like I'd said in the car, I couldn't do anything about that now. I had to be the face of the Bailey family, and I couldn't be a complete wreck.

I flitted from group to group, mingling and thanking everyone for coming. I felt Ethan's presence nearby, and later, Harrison's and Cody's. None of them crowded me, thank god, even though I felt like they were going to go out and fight Neil if I mentioned anything was wrong. I was already on edge. But knowing they were nearby was enough to calm me down.

I sipped champagne and nibbled on snacks, studiously avoiding Neil when I saw him. It was a more difficult task than I planned. He seemed hellbent on getting to me.

He'd never go to the women's bathroom, so I decided to take a break in there.

I squeezed through the party until I found it and went inside. It was surprisingly empty. Usually, there was at least one person there, touching up her makeup. Someone was in the stall at the far end, but aside from that, I was alone.

I took my time, touching up my lipstick and checking my phone. Someone else came in not long after, a woman in a sleek red dress who I didn't recognize.

“I love your dress!” I said.

“Thanks. I love yours, too.” She looked me up and down, then dug through her purse. “But there’s something on the back. Can I get it for you?”

“Yes, thank you!” I turned, and she stepped around the voluminous back. “It’s so big that I’m surprised it’s not a mess.”

“It’s so lovely.” The woman put her hand on my exposed upper back, and I felt a sharp pinch on my neck. I sucked in a breath, clutching the edge of the sink. My vision blurred at the edges and went completely black.

* * *

I woke up with a pounding head and a dry mouth. Where was I? The room was in a hotel suite, a more budget-friendly one based on the furniture. The curtains were drawn closed, and I was alone.

I tried piecing together my most recent memories. The gala. Champagne. Going to the bathroom. That sharp pinprick.

I gasped and tried to stand, but my legs wobbled, and I fell down. Someone had drugged me. How had they gotten me out of the bathroom without being noticed? Was there another door or something?

“H-hello?” I called out. I wasn’t tied up. That was a good sign, wasn’t it? If they wanted to kill me, they would have tied me up, right?

I suppressed my tears and tried to keep my head on straight. Had my stalker been let out of jail or something? But he wouldn’t have gotten inside the gala...

“You’re awake,” Neil said, rounding the corner from the outer suite. “Finally.”

My limbs froze, but my insides did a huge somersault. What was going on?

“I know you’re probably shocked.” Neil offered his hand to me. “Let’s get you seated on the bed.”

“No.” I was still woozy, but I managed to fall back onto my butt and crawl away from him, even in my dress. “What am I doing here?”

“It’s okay.” He held his hands up and sat on the bed instead. “We can talk about it. It’s not what you think.”

“Not what I think. Drugging me and somehow getting me out of the gala.” I pressed my back to the wall and curled my knees to my chest. “Okay, sounds reasonable.”

“Those bodyguards of yours have influenced you,” Neil said. “You never used to be so sarcastic.”

That was too sarcastic for him?

“Anyway, I invited you here to propose something,” he continued. “Marriage.”

I blinked. “Marriage to who?”

“To me.”

“No,” I blurted, running my hand up the wall to the windowsill. It was sealed. “I’d never. That’s disgusting.”

“Disgusting?” A shadow passed over Neil’s eyes, making me shudder.

“You’ve known me since I was a child. I’m twenty-three, and you’re nearly sixty. And obviously, I wouldn’t be going into this marriage willingly,” I said, trying to keep the tremor out of my voice and failing. “Let me go.”

“I think you should reconsider.” He stood and walked over to me. He wasn’t a tall man, but being on the ground while he was standing over me made him feel huge. “We’d be a great alliance. And I’d love to have a beautiful woman on my arm.”

“Alliance in what? I don’t want anything you have to offer,” I said. “But I have a lot to offer you. Especially if your real finances are to be believed.”

The darkness in his eyes turned murderous. “Who told you that? Those irritating bodyguards of yours? I wish that man

had actually done his job and forced you to fire them.”

“What man?” I inched farther away.

“The one who attacked you,” he said with a sigh. “I assumed you’d balk if the guards failed at their jobs, but apparently, you are very attached to them. It was a pain in the ass to circumvent them. That back passage in the women’s bathroom was a godsend.”

My heart pounded in my ears. Neil had been behind that the whole time? He’d intentionally scared me half to death and made me fear going outside?

Who was this man? How had I misjudged him so long? How had *Dad* misjudged him so long?

“They saved me both times. They did their job well, and always do,” I said.

I was attached to them. I loved them. And I knew they still loved me. If I had disappeared from the venue, they were definitely on their way to find me. It was just a matter of when. I had no idea how long I’d been out or what measures Neil had taken to get me here.

“Fucking Troy,” he grumbled, pacing in front of me. “If he hadn’t hired them, we could have circumvented all of this. If I’d known you’d say no, I would have put you away the way I put away your father.”

My blood ran cold, and it felt like a lead weight was on my chest. I coughed, just to jumpstart my system into breathing again.

I couldn’t believe it.

The abnormalities of Dad’s post-mortem toxicology report hadn’t just been a fluke. It had been my worst nightmare.

“You didn’t,” I said, tears pricking my eyes. Neil didn’t respond. Those few tears immediately erupted into full-body sobs.

He’d taken my father from me. He should have been here at the gala, talking with friends and getting people to donate. But he was in the ground. And for what?

“I did.” He shrugged, as if he’d just flushed a goldfish down the toilet. “I came to him with a deal, and he turned it down. I assumed that he’d left something to me in his will, so I took care of him. As it turns out, he left it all to you.”

“Probably because he saw right through you.” I sniffed and wiped my eyes, my hands streaked with makeup. “You’re the worst kind of person. How could you? He trusted you!”

He wasn’t fazed by that at all. He just shrugged again.

“Marry me, and all of these problems will go away. You’ll be able to go freely, and we’ll marry in a nice ceremony. Your wealth will help me out, and then we’ll be able to build more. I guarantee that. I’d even give you a child if you wanted one.”

My shudder ripped through my whole body. The thought of him touching me literally made me want to throw up.

“Are you insane?” I let out a hysterical laugh among my tears. “You just admitted to murdering your best friend. My father. And you hired someone to try to kidnap me. I’m not going to marry you.”

He sighed, looking down at me with disappointment in his eyes. He had to be kidding, right? In what way did he think kidnapping me would make me want him?

“Well, I’d hoped you’d come willingly at lunch. I was planning on asking then. But now we’re here, and I’ll have to do some convincing,” he said. “I can make your life hell, Taylor. Easily. I was holding back before, but I don’t need to now.”

I didn’t want to find out what that meant. I backed away more, and he kept his distance, looking down at me with disdain.

He was telling me all of this stuff about his true intentions freely, stuff that could put him in jail. And that meant that he might not have wanted to keep me around to tell anyone about it. It was either that, or he was going to throw me out into the world with this horrible secret and do awful things to me if I said anything.

I had to stall him until my guys came to save me. The problem was that I didn't know how long that was going to take.

Taylor spent a lot of time in the bathroom, but usually not this long.

I checked my watch and sighed, watching more women go in and out. Was she okay?

“Excuse me,” I said to a woman who I’d seen going into the bathroom. “I’m looking for Taylor Bailey. Did you see her inside?”

“I don’t remember. I can go back in and ask,” the woman said. “What was she wearing?”

“A pale pink ballgown. Thanks, I appreciate it.”

I stepped back and waited, messaging Ethan and Harrison about the delay. A few moments later, the woman came back out.

“No, I didn’t see her. I checked under the stalls,” the woman said with a shrug. “Sorry, hon.”

My stomach flew up to my throat. “Is there anyone else in there? I’m one of her bodyguards. I need to search the premises.”

“Just one or two.”

By the time the women left, Harrison had arrived to keep the others out. Ethan and I went inside, pushing open all the empty stalls in a rush.

“There’s a door back here,” Ethan said from around the corner.

“Leading to where?” I asked, jogging over to him.

Ethan pushed it open. It was a supply room, but another door was there, too. We opened that one also, and it led to the back area, where the staff was going in and out. How the fuck had we missed this?

“Get Harrison,” I said. “Someone took her. We need to go find her.”

We hadn’t been waiting that long, which was the only upside to this situation. My heart was racing so hard and fast that I thought I was going to pass out. Someone had taken Taylor, and we had no fucking idea who had done it. I wanted to kick my own ass, but I didn’t have time for that.

“I don’t know what I’ll do if we lose her,” Harrison said.

“Don’t think about that.” Ethan jogged ahead of us. “We’ll tell her how we feel when we find her.”

We split up, asking everyone around us if they’d seen Taylor. I was coming up short, but I found Ethan talking to a young man. Well, “talking to” him by scaring the ever-living shit out of him.

“I swear, I’ll talk,” the kid said, pressing himself against the wall like Ethan was going to beat him up. “They paid me a thousand bucks to look the other way, and I have bills to pay.”

“Tell us.” I resisted the urge to slam him against the wall.

“They took her to some hotel near here. Some big-name brand place. That’s all I know. The girl was passed the fuck out.” The kid swallowed. “Is that enough info?”

“It’s good enough.” I pulled out my phone and started looking up hotels.

We split the ones in the nearest to where we were, assuming he hadn’t gone too far. I hoped we were right. After making a bunch of phone calls, we narrowed it down to a big hotel ten blocks away.

I hoped we were on the right track.

We tracked her phone, too, though in the city, it was never quite as accurate as it would have been in a less densely populated place. But it was close enough. We tracked her to

that big hotel five blocks away. Once we were closer, the signal was probably going to be more accurate.

I called the cops and told them that we would need back-up.

We drove, breaking as many traffic laws as possible. If she was hurt, we didn't want to have to carry her or rely on a cab to get her to a hospital.

"He has balls," Harrison said. "Bringing a girl in a ball gown into a hotel like this. We're right in the middle of the city."

"I don't think anyone's paying attention or giving a single fuck," I said, looking at the bored girl behind the front desk. "And someone might have thought she was drunk."

We went from floor to floor, trying to find the source of her phone signal. Finally, we found it on the fifth floor, a room at the end of the hall.

Ethan lifted his hand to pound on the door, but I stopped him to knock gently.

"Room service," I called in a terrible, fake British accent. No answer. "Room service for room 309?"

The door opened a tiny crack, and Neil's eye peered through. I didn't hesitate. I kicked the door down, and Neil fell back. I stepped over him, and Harrison pinned him to the floor.

I found Taylor in the corner, shaking and curled up in her pretty ball gown. All of her makeup was running over her cheeks, but she was still absolute perfection. I fell to my knees and pulled her into my arms.

"Are you all right, baby?" I asked, smoothing my hand up and down her back.

"Yeah," she said, letting out a shaky breath into my ear. "Mostly scared. A little bruised."

I found her wrist, which was banged up like someone had grabbed her and yanked her around. I was relieved to see her before, but now, I was fucking furious. He didn't deserve to even look at her, much less touch her.

“You hurt her?” I yelled at Neil, who was still pinned face down on the ground. Ethan was calling the police on him with one hand while tying him up with the other. “You piece of shit.”

“Don’t,” Harrison told me, holding me back when I lunged toward him. “The police will be here, and they’ll handle him. Let’s take care of our girl.”

“Just a second.” I jerked out of his arms. Ethan, sensing what I was about to do, let Neil lift his head. I had just enough space to punch Neil across the jaw, making the old man groan.

I turned to Taylor, who was clearly satisfied that Neil had been put in his place.

Just then, the door burst open, and six cops poured into the room with their guns drawn. Harrison handed him over to the police officers. The police left the room with Neil, and Harrison told the cops that we all needed a moment but would be out briefly to answer questions.

I cupped the back of her neck and held her close. I’d almost lost her again, but she was still here, warm in my arms. How had I ever let her go? The weeks when we hadn’t been together had been utter misery. What if Neil had seriously hurt her? Then we would have ended physically close together, but emotionally far apart.

I couldn’t let myself stay away from her anymore. Loss was always going to happen, but the idea of losing time with her because of my own fears was even worse. I wanted every minute of the rest of my life with her.

“I’m sorry,” I said, pulling back so I could look at her.

“It’s not your fault. How were you supposed to know that they were going to drug and kidnap me in a public place?” She wiped her face with the back of her hand.

“Not just about that,” I said. “About breaking up with you the way I did. I can’t live like this. I love you and want to be by your side for as long as you’ll have me.”

The way her face brightened could have gotten me through anything. I had to kiss her. It was impossible not to. And it was

the best kiss I'd ever had. Every bit of pent-up feelings I'd had for her came pouring out into it.

"Really?" she asked when we finally broke the kiss.

I grinned. "Really. I love you, Taylor. I want what we had before back. All four of us together." I looked over at Ethan, who was kneeling next to me. I'd never seen him look so raw and undone before, his eyes shining.

"I want you back, too," he said. "I don't want to live with regrets, and the moment I thought we'd lost you for good, I had so many of them. The biggest one was being too afraid to let you in, even though I'm so in love with you. I've never felt like this toward anyone."

Ethan's words brought tears to her eyes. She crawled over to him and kissed him, too, soft and sweet. From the way Ethan's eyes lit up like I'd never seen before, it was perfect for him.

Her smile grew even more as she searched for Harrison. He kneeled on my other side and cupped Taylor's face. Without another word, he leaned forward and kissed her. She made a little noise of pleasure in the back of her throat and melted into him.

When they broke apart, Taylor looked at us.

"So, this is it," she said. "All of us together."

"All of us together. No bullshit between us," I said, threading my fingers in hers.

"Sounds perfect to me," she said, squeezing my hand in return.

Epilogue

THREE MONTHS LATER

“That’s everything?” I asked Cody, who had a box in his arms.

“Yep, it’s the last one,” he said.

He was moving out of his place and into the one that we’d bought for all of us. I was there for moral support.

And to be honest, to ogle him, Harrison, and Ethan as they lifted things. I loved my guys when they were in suits, but seeing them in t-shirts, their biceps flexing and their shirts clinging to their muscular backs, was a whole new level of delicious.

“You’ve got everything, Brooke?” I asked.

“I do.” She smiled. I’d come to like her a lot over the past few months, and I was glad we’d gotten closer. She was the only family that Cody really spoke to, so being able to have her in our lives was a gift.

Cody invited her to hang out with us, since he’d basically stopped staying at his apartment once we got back together. But now Brooke had a new job as an assistant to some casino executives back in Las Vegas.

“I wish you could stay for the party,” I said. Our party planner was back at our place, setting up for tonight’s housewarming party. I’d also gotten a big surprise for all of us that I couldn’t wait to show them.

“I know, I do, too.” She pulled me into a hug. “But I start my new job next week, so I need to get settled.”

“You’ll do great.” I gave her an extra squeeze.

“Text us when you get to the airport, okay?” Cody said to her.

“Will do.”

We said our final goodbyes and saw her off. With Cody’s last few things packed into our SUV, all we had to do was leave the key.

“Ready to go?” I asked.

“More than ready. Let’s go home.”

He dropped his key off with his doorman and drove us back to our place. In the months since Neil was arrested, things had fallen into place. Neil had confessed everything—my dad’s murder, hiring the man to harass me, committing all kinds of fraud behind the scenes.

Now he was safely locked away, to my relief. And probably to his relief, too. When I told the guys that he’d tried to come onto me and get him to marry me, they went insane. If Neil was out, he probably would have gotten his ass kicked, especially since they weren’t my bodyguards anymore.

After talking it over, we decided that me paying them while also being their girlfriend didn’t feel right. Now they were independent security consultants, so we could work from anywhere together at any time.

Living with them was filling my life with joy again. I still missed my father every day, but I knew he’d be happy that I’d found love three times over. They’d kept me steady as I mourned all over again, ensuring I had all the support I needed, no matter who I went to. Ethan had been trying particularly hard, and I loved him for it.

When we got home, the party planner was assessing the space. The understated, sparkling decorations highlighted our already beautiful penthouse. It had more than enough room for all of us to work together from home and host our friends. Friends who were going to be there in an hour and a half, which was more than enough time for me to show them their surprise.

After I thanked the party planner, I subtly shooed her out and shut the door.

“What’s going on in your head?” Harrison asked, taking me by the waist. “You look like you’re up to no good.”

“I just have a surprise. Follow me.” I pushed past them and went toward our bedroom in the back. The views here were the best, with floor-to-ceiling windows that let in light at the best times of the day.

Like now. The light poured onto the surprise I’d gotten: an enormous, custom-made bed that fit all of us.

“Holy shit.” Cody gave me a kiss on the cheek and wrapped his arm around me. “This is for us?”

“Yep.” I leaned into him. “I figured you guys were tired of bumping into each other or smothering me.”

“This is perfect,” Harrison said, kissing me on the lips and leaping onto the bed face first. “And it’s sturdy as fuck.”

“We definitely need that.” Ethan kissed my forehead and went to press on the mattress.

“I asked them to make it extra sturdy.” My cheeks flushed. The sex hadn’t slowed down at all, to my delight. None of us could get enough. “And speaking of sturdy...”

“Yes, let’s test it,” Cody said, scooping me up and tossing me onto the bed.

I let out a squeal of surprise, letting the bottom of my dress fly up. I never bothered with panties on the days when we all worked from home because they were coming off sooner or later. But today, I was wearing some hot pink ones that all of them loved.

Harrison rolled on top of me first, taking my mouth and pulling at my dress. Cody was at my feet, stroking me and stoking the fire between my legs without even touching me. Ethan stayed back until Harrison created an opening. All of them loved my breasts, but Ethan was the biggest fan.

“This is perfect,” Ethan said, biting the underside of my right breast. “Thank you.”

I tried to reply, but Cody chose that moment to put his mouth between my legs. I cried out, my hips bucking. I loved this part—sinking into all the pleasure they were giving me and letting them take the wheel.

All three of them worked me expertly, bringing me right up to my orgasm but not letting me have it quite yet. I did my best to touch all of them in one way or another, but they never let themselves get any pleasure until I got mine.

“You think we should let her come?” Cody asked, lifting his head from where it was buried between my legs.

“Yeah. She’s been a good girl for us, hasn’t she?” Harrison nipped my bottom lip.

“She’s been incredible.” Ethan’s big hand kneaded one of my breasts. “I want to hear her scream.”

Cody pushed me over the edge with a flick of the tongue and a quirk of his fingers. I cried out so loudly that it echoed around the room, which they loved. They didn’t have any problems making me come so hard and so many times that I was hoarse by the end of it.

I melted into the cozy bed and tried to catch my breath as the guys shed their clothing. We never had a set plan for sex, and we liked to change it up frequently to try new things. I loved the new adventures and the ways they brought me ecstasy.

I slid onto Ethan’s cock, and Harrison took my ass. Cody fisted his hand into my hair and fucked my mouth. All in perfect harmony.

Except my stupid phone rang right in the middle of it.

“Don’t stop,” Cody said, thrusting into me.

I wasn’t going to. Nothing was going to stop me until all of my guys came.

It didn’t take long. Usually, when one came, the others did in rapid succession. Today was no different, though I came a second time at the end. The pleasure never got old, filling every nerve ending in my body with bliss.

“Let’s shower. The guests should be here soon,” I said once we untangled ourselves. I was still breathless.

“Cancel the party,” Harrison said with a laugh. “I never want to leave this bed.”

“We’ll have plenty of time in it,” I said, snuggling up to him. “And you can do whatever you want to me.”

“Fuck, Taylor,” Cody groaned. “You’re not making me want to party anywhere but here.”

“C’mon, let’s get ready.” Ethan sat up and stretched, his impressive back muscles rippling. “The sooner the party’s over, the sooner we can get back in bed.”

I laughed. “See, that’s the way to think about it.”

We got out of bed and went to our bathroom together, which had a shower that was big enough for all of us. As I freshened up, I looked at the three men around me. Each of them was different, but all of them fit me perfectly in their own way. I couldn’t wait to see how great our life was going to be.

* * *

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