



ManEater

WHY SHOULD GUYS GET TO HAVE ALL THE FUN?

ALEYA MICHELLE

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Man Eater

Jemma's Story

By
Aleya Michelle

MANEATER

Aleya Michelle

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Miss your Love, voice, quirkiness and daily chats.

Happy Mother's Day xo

Prologue

What a girl wants

“Yes, ohhhhh, yes.”

“Harder, harder!” I scream full force in my best fake orgasm voice.

This guy is fucking terrible. Like seriously, he’s lucky I’m even wet enough for him to slide inside, but I don’t have much trouble in the wetness department.

Usually if a romp was this bad, I’d just end it and say see you later, but he is such a sweetheart, and he ticks most of the other boxes, so ...

I feel like I have an obligation to fake this.

I’m biting my tongue. I’d love to say, “Um, hello, is it in yet?”

It’s not really his fault he has a minuscule package. Maybe it’s hereditary, or maybe he didn’t eat enough chicken with the hormones and all.

But that ain’t all that’s lacking ...

He has no fucking idea how to thrust properly. Come on; it’s not rocket science. You find a rhythm and stick to it.

I bet he’s got no beat on the dance floor, either. Or hand-eye coordination with sports.

From his moans, he’s enjoying it; it’s obviously all about the climax for himself. Glad, it feels good for someone ... I do aim to please. *God, I sound like a hooker.*

“I’m so close, sweet buns,” he shouts in a breathless voice, and I stifle a giggle.

Holy mother in hell, he just called me sweet buns—fucking sweet buns.

Jesus, man, a girl does not find that complimentary—or sexy, for that matter. Sweet buns are croissants or a doughnut, not something you say during sex.

“Yes, yes, yes,” I moan, accentuating each word for his benefit, and I can’t help but half chuckle at the same time.

He half-heartedly thrusts a few more times. At least, I assume that’s what he’s doing; his hips are moving, but I’m sure not feeling it.

Just when I thought I’d seen and heard it all ...

The dark-haired male on top of me screeches like a wild fucking animal. His ferocious moan is loud and intense. His now sweaty chest convulses and shakes, followed by a mewling grunt that I’m sure I’ve heard in the animal kingdom.

I can’t help but feel relieved.

All over, red rover. Thank fuck for that.

Congratulations, you are officially my worst lay ever!

The now spent man-child with the anatomy of a boy collapses on top of me. Sweat drips into my cleavage. His energy levels are shot from his release as he deflates further on top of me.

I totally freak as the claustrophobia kicks in.

Get. Off. Me.

I shove him hard, and he lands on the other side of his bed. I quickly sit up, moving backwards. *Gah, I’m really over this.*

I’m definitely not the cuddling type, and he is overstepping too many boundaries right now. I gotta get outta here.

No more tact needed. I’ve played my part.

I stand and find my bra, thong, and little black dress and slip them all on as quick as humanly possible, avoiding eye contact.

I can feel his eyes on me.

What is his name?

Samuel, Seth, Scott ...

“Can I use your bathroom?” I ask, not needing his name after all.

“Sure. It’s down the hallway, second door on the right,” he replies, and from the tone in his voice, I can tell he is smiling. Still reeling from his orgasm, no doubt.

I make a beeline to the bathroom, where I use the toilet and freshen up. Now, it’s time to go.

“Hey, I gotta get back to my roommate. She left her key at home, so see you later,” I call as I rush to the front door, grabbing my shoes on the way.

“Wait, Jemma,” I hear him call, but that freaking-out feeling kicks in again and I’m out the door. I hightail it down his garden path and around the corner.

Fuck, I don’t even know where I am ...

I hastily grab my phone and click on Google Maps. What would we do without Google?

Shit, I’m on the other side of town.

Just great.

I quickly dial my local taxi service that I have on speed dial.

“One person to North Sydney, please,” I tell the operator.

I keep walking to avoid having “bad lay” find me. The next street is called Phillip Street. I take a seat at the bus stop and give her details of my location.

“Yes, ready now,” I tell her.

Texting Roxy, the BFF, I shake my head at myself and another stupid situation I'm in.

Live and learn ... right?

Me:

Oh God, this guy was officially my worst lay ever.

Roxy:

You woke me up, bitch.

Sucked in, you can't get all the good sex.

Me:

Ha-ha, I'm waiting for a cab. See you soon.

I'll definitely be calling the Rock later. I was naked, sweaty, and moaning, and still no orgasm.

He will fix that; he always does.

He is exactly what a girl wants ...

Well, only if you are a bad girl like me.

Chapter 1

Fun and flirtatious

Five days since the worst lay experience, and Ryan, “the Rock,” which is his boxing name, is out of town. I’m not desperate enough to call any other guys yet. Thankfully, my purple BOB has been quite successful this week.

Sometimes, I wonder if I actually need a guy for pleasure. Then my mind wanders to the firm, steel-hard abs of the Rock, and I remember how it feels for his strong arms to pin me down while he thrusts deeper and harder with that hot cock of his ...

No battery-operated device can replace that man!

Roxy and I are chilling on the lounge, enjoying a few drinks. It’s amazing that even six years out of school we are still the best of friends and share a fabulous apartment. Thanks to both of us working, our place is well furnished. We have gorgeous modern furniture, and have painted two feature walls—one in teal and one purple. Roxy loves graphic design, hence her career choice, so we found some funky mirrors, clocks, and artwork that show our personalities and humour.

It’s only Thursday night, but after a couple of hours at home, we decide on a few more drinks at the pub. A guy from high school is on the live mic, and rumour has it he can actually play the guitar and sing well. *Unlike some of the other amateurs this joint has had ...*

That reminds me, I’ll have to ask Rox when her brother Jeremy and his band Electric Beat are going on their tour.

I catch a glimpse of Tia walking in the door, always a smile on her face.

“Hey, gorgeous,” Tia states as we embrace. She is looking professional in her work ensemble of pinstriped blouse, tight black skirt, and strappy heels.

“Like you can talk. You look like you are about to go all lawyer on my arse in the courtroom,” I respond.

Tia and Roxy hug then we find a free table. I’m wearing dark blue skinny jeans, wedges, and a black singlet top—nothing too dressy but still nice—and I decided on less make-up than usual, not expecting a big one.

Roxy is dressed in her denim skirt and a black tank top. Dressy flip-flops were as extravagant as she would go as I had to beg her arse to come out tonight.

After five glasses of wine and a lot of great song choices—mainly Ed Sheeran—I’ve got a nice buzz going on. I sway and sing along. What is it about Ed’s song lyrics that just draw me in?

He must have had some amazing life experiences.

Out of the corner of my eye, I notice a good-looking guy sitting with a few mates. I have good radar when it comes to men and weeding out the ones worthy of my attention, except worst lay ever. God only knows how he got under my radar.

He is definitely cute, I confirm with a longer glance.
Haven’t seen him around here before, must be a newbie.

His light brown hair is very short, not quite a buzz cut but still short. It shows off his chiselled jaw and scruffy two-day growth. I am in tune with the male body and notice his chest is a little ripped, biceps bulging through his tee, but not too much or over the top.

He’s watching me with bright blue eyes, having obviously noticed my attention.

Busted.

He catches me checking him out and gives me a wink.

I like the brazen wink, but I'm playing the cool card tonight, so I look away and giggle.

"You couldn't be any more obvious, ho bag," Roxy announces, and it seems I'm busted in all areas.

Roxy has come a long way, considering last year Kade broke her heart. I'm still not sure what happened there. He struggled when his parents split up, and then he took off to Byron Bay.

"A girl can look," I reply, winking at my BFF. She rolls her eyes and smiles, knowing all too well that the saying "look, but don't touch" does not apply to me. I'm all about the touching, lots and lots of touching ...

I'm hot for guys, what can I say.

Nothing to be ashamed of; I'm a hot-blooded man-eater ...

"Who wants another round?" I shout enthusiastically and probably a little too loudly to the girls.

"One more then I'm off. One more day in the working week," Tia announces, frowning.

"God, I wish it was a Friday night. I'm in the mood to party."

"When are you not, Jem?" Roxy questions with a laugh, playfully jabbing me in the ribs.

"Come to the bar and be my wingwoman, Miss Thorne," I beg her. We have worked this play a hundred times.

Roxy smiles and nods. We link arms and head towards the bar; it's pretty packed for a Thursday.

I can't help but glance at Mr Blue Eyes and find his eyes already on me.

Interesting ...

Looks like BOB won't be needed tonight after all.

Before I actually jump in the sack with just anyone, I follow a few strict rules. I have four boxes that need ticking before we fuck.

1) He needs to be fit. I'm not talking bulging muscles, but he needs to take care of himself. I like them firm and fierce in the body department.

2) He needs to be good looking. I'll be the first to admit I definitely judge a book by its cover. If I'm not attracted to him when I look at him, it's not going to work. I'm not saying he must be model material, just nice and easy on the eye.

3) He needs to be able to kiss! I'm all about try before you buy. If he kisses badly, it's just too hard to take it further. Too much tongue is like you are choking and then there's the drowning in saliva; that is just gross.

Playing tonsil hockey is frustrating. Kissing isn't a race; too fast makes my head spin.

Oh, and fresh is best. Bad breath is a pet peeve; I can't deal with it. Deal breaker.

4) He needs to buy me a drink first.

If you are too tight to buy me a drink, I won't leave with you.

It says a lot about a guy's personality if he won't even offer to buy you a drink. He is a cheapskate, for one, but also selfish. If he can't buy me a drink, I just know sex is going to be one-sided and all about him.

If he doesn't think you are worth eight dollars, then he is a use-and-abuse type. I've learnt a lot about the male species. *Trust me ...*

If those boxes are all ticked, we can leave together. Of course, there are exceptions, always things that pop up, but then I pretty much get the hell out of there.

Like bad breath, excess body odour makes me gag; being jobless and bragging about it; living at home with Mummy and Daddy with no intention of ever leaving; extremely crushed clothing; having way too much body hair (it's like being with a gorilla), and of course, having no cash and asking constantly for money.

I can't do those things.

So, I guess it's more like ten rules.

"Well, well, looks like Miss Donovan is getting lucky again this evening," Roxy states, winking as we wait in line to order our drinks.

I bite my bottom lip. From the look on Roxy's face, the cute guy is on his way over to us.

I've done this a zillion times ...

The guy in front finishes his order, and I'm next in line. "Three moscatos please, Eddie," I order, doing my best to refrain from turning around. Keeping cool is the key.

"I'll pay for these drinks," I hear a deep, rugged voice say from behind me. His rough, manly hand passes the bartender a fifty-dollar note. *Impressive.*

I slowly turn to show my gratitude, and I'm face to face with those baby blues. Roxy squeezes my hand. *Obviously, the mystery man has impressed her, too.*

"Well, aren't you a gentleman, paying for our drinks," I say, trying to remain unaffected by his closeness and pretty eyes. "Maybe we should take advantage and order a few shots," I joke to Roxy, showing him my humorous side.

"Easy there, gorgeous, we have plenty of time for more drinks," he states, grinning. Well, if he isn't a cocky one.

The thing about the cocky guys is that you need to figure out if he is a cocky arsehole or just confident; they quite often get confused.

One way to weed out the difference is to try to show him up a little. The arseholes get defensive and rude, whereas the decent confident guys appreciate a confident woman who can give as good as she gets.

“Well, actually, this was our last drink. I’m feeling a little tired,” I say as I yawn into my hand sarcastically.

He laughs. “I’m sure I can do something to keep you awake,” he replies, capturing my attention and making me smile in return.

“Maybe,” I answer, not giving too much away but not rejecting him just yet either.

“Can I join you, ladies?” he asks as we turn to make our way back to our table.

“Sure.”

As we take our seats, I take a sip of the refreshing wine. I’m aware of his eyes on me, so I play just a little, licking my lips as I enjoy the cool, sweet taste.

Roxy laughs.

“I’m Dan,” the guy says as he continues to watch me.

“I’m Jemma, that’s Roxy and Tia,” I tell him. The guitar strums and the song changes to a Thirsty Merc song. A few people in the crowd make their own dance floor in front of the singer, obviously, fans of the original band.

I’ve got itchy feet; I really feel like dancing.

“So, Dan, are you much of a dancer?” I question, pretty sure he will chicken out, but he surprises me and stands.

“You are in luck. I do like to dance,” he confesses. “Although I can’t guarantee I dance well.” He chuckles.

“You ladies coming?” I ask the others as we head over to the newly made dance floor.

They follow, and we all let loose a little. Dancing is a favourite pastime of mine that I love; I could dance for hours

on end to any kind of music.

I sway and move my hips to the song. The others in the crowd are oblivious to us—it seems everyone is enjoying themselves and lost in the tunes.

Dan doesn't disappoint. He isn't the best dancer, but he isn't the worst. He moves his hips and arms in time with the music—he actually has rhythm—and doesn't have any embarrassing moves like the chicken wing arms flapping wildly, the robot, the swimming strokes, and a few others that are lot worse and I just try to forget.

Dan's gaze turns to mine, and he smiles. His smile is infectious, and I return the grin. He dances a little closer to me, and his hand touches mine. *Zap ... electricity.*

I'm mentally ticking boxes in my head. Box one, he has the body, box two, he is easy on the eye, box four, he bought the drink, so all that is left now is ... can the guy kiss?

It's like he reads my mind. He moves in closer again; our fingers touch, and he grabs my hand. I don't object as his other hand finds my waist; he tugs me, connecting our bodies. Part of me wants to dive in for the kiss, but sometimes feeling wanted is nice.

His pastel blue eyes lock with mine as he yanks my body flush against his, making me blush just a little. His lips eagerly find mine, and he softly kisses me, slowly at first, but as I kiss him back, I feel our hunger for more increase.

I slip my tongue into his mouth, and he moans in response. Knowing that he likes it encourages me to massage his tongue a little faster; my hands find his arms, and I rub my fingers along his firm triceps. This drives men crazy.

He follows my lead and massages my tongue with his and deepens the kiss, holding me tight, my tits straining against his firm, muscly chest.

The wind is pulled from my lungs. I come up for air and break the seal.

There it is ...

All four boxes ticked.

Now if I were looking for something long-term, I would slip him my number and go on a few dates. *But this is the twenty-first century. Why should I be expected to keep it in my pants when guys never do?*

Sex is fun; it's enjoyable. No relationship expectations or contracts, no one telling you what to wear or bossing you around. I enjoy my independence!

Well, sure, I get lonely. Sometimes my bed feels a little cold, but when I freak out and become claustrophobic after sex, it puts it all back into perspective.

In the words of Alice DeeJay, "Better off Alone." Why should I change a good thing?

In the kissing department, this guy gets a ten out of ten. It's rare I give such a high score; he should consider himself lucky.

"Wanna come back to mine?" he asks me between our touchy-feely kissing adventures.

"My roommate is away working."

"Sure," I reply casually even though I'm feeling antsy and hornier than a bitch in heat. *Keep cool, calm, and collected.*

"Just let me tell Roxy, and we can go," I add as he dives in for one last kiss.

I stride slowly over to her, and I can't hide my smile. I try, but when my bestie sees my face, her mouth widens.

"You dirty ho. Guess I won't be seeing you till tomorrow," she states, winking. I can always count on her for support and

understanding—of course, this includes the playful insults. Who is she to deny my fun and freedom?

“Be safe and smart,” she whispers in my ear. “Oh, and have fun.”

“Yes, Mother,” I say sarcastically as I hug her and Tia. I give them one last wave as I head over to get outta this joint with sexy blue eyes.

“Let’s go,” he states, leading the way down the stairwell.

He eagerly walks me out the front, and we wait in the taxi line. Only one person is in front of us, thank God. I’m feeling impatient. His hands roam under the back of my top, sending goosebumps down my spine and making me shudder in anticipation.

He leans in for a kiss; it’s filled with hunger and passion. He is just as desperate for this as I am. I need this release. *I need my itch scratched badly.*

I pull back for a breather. God, if my mother could see me now, all slutty in the car park of a club, she would have kittens. Well, sure, she knows I’m no angel, but too much PDA with a random I just met really doesn’t do much for my credibility—or hers, for that matter. *Whoops. Sorry, Mum.*

“Easy, boy, let’s wait for your place,” I whisper, trying to tone it down a notch and pull the reins in just a little.

He nods in agreement even though I can see him practically undressing me with his eyes. This man is either as insatiable as I am, or it’s been a while and he’s desperate.

Either way, it’s turning me on.

He wants me.

Not in a stalker kind of way, either.

It’s lust.

It’s hot.

I want exactly what he is offering.

I manage to keep him off me for the fifteen-minute car trip. I hop out as he pays the driver, and then his mouth is on mine, kissing me hard.

His rough hands are on my tits, grabbing a handful. I eagerly push into his body and lift my leg, rubbing his hard crotch.

I'm about ready to ditch his pants and mount him; the waiting is killing me!

"Unless you want your neighbours to see your bare ass, let's get upstairs," I order.

"You got it, hot stuff," he says with his rugged voice.

I smile at his comment.

Nothing like the ridiculous "sweet buns." And his voice is sexy as hell!

He hastily grabs my hand and drags me through the foyer of his apartment building and up two flights of stairs. I playfully slide my other hand into the back of his jeans, eager for more.

He hurriedly lets us in, and we walk into the darkness of his apartment. Without any more hesitation, he pulls me into his arms and kisses me ferociously.

Yes! I like this intensity.

"You said when we got to my place," he states cheekily as he backs me into the wall and kisses me hard.

Fuck. That is hot.

I moan and kiss him back just as vigorously. *All bets are off ...*

He lifts me to straddle his waist. I don't hold back as he squeezes me tight, now rubbing his hands inside the back of my jeans across my bare arse.

Flick. He playfully snaps my thong. I chuckle into our hungry kiss.

His lips form a smile then he sucks on my tongue, changing the mood to seductive and getting me wetter instantly.

He grips my arse as he walks me into what I assume is his room. I decide to break the kiss and be a little more playful, licking and nibbling on his earlobe.

“Mmm,” he moans in satisfaction.

He leans me onto the bed and playfully unbuttons my jeans and starts to pull them down.

“Heels too, genius,” I say playfully, knowing he won’t get the jeans past them.

“Only to get the jeans off and then they are going back on,” he orders.

I like his way of thinking ...

Though I can’t promise I won’t stab him in the back or neck when I change positions.

The room is pitch-black. He disappears for a second. A lamp flicks on, and he is back, admiring my purple leopard-print thong. He plays with the little silver heart.

“Nice touch,” he says, smirking as he flicks it then traces around the outside, finally stopping at my favourite spot.

It’s my J spot (Yeah, I know, G spot, but J for Jemma).

I’m not sure if I can handle the teasing. I fist his hair, running my nails along his scalp, and eagerly pull his face to mine, kissing him deeply as I arch my body up against his.

I don’t really do subtle.

“You read my mind. You sure you don’t wanna go slower, baby?” he questions, panting.

“Not this time.” He smiles, probably at the thought of round two.

With no more hesitation, his lips are on mine. He kisses me hungrily; we moan at the passion and intensity.

He traces kisses down my neck, soft nibbles along the way, then licking.

He reaches my breast and yanks down my top and bra, exposing my hard nipple. Wasting no more time, he flicks it with his tongue and sucks on it hard. I'm sure there will be a hickey, but it's so good.

He exposes my other nipple and rubs it with his thumb and forefinger, flicking and massaging. Wetness pools in my groin. I can't help but thrust upwards again.

"Aren't we eager?" he whispers.

"Take your pants off and I'll show you," I pretty much order him, sick of pussyfooting around.

"Fuck, that comment just made me even harder," he replies as he stands and takes off his jeans. The tent he's pitching in his boxers is quite impressive.

He pulls them down, exposing his thick, long, erect cock.

"Well, I'm impressed, big boy," I tell him, and he chuckles loudly.

"Lie down," I order him. I'm up on all fours already as he lies down, following my command. His breathing is laboured, and his cock twitches. Knowing the thought of getting head turns guys on is a total turn-on for me too.

Control ...

I waste no time gripping his cock; it's so warm, and throbbing from his excitement. He moans.

I gaze at his now dark blue eyes, which are watching me intensely. I keep my gaze fixed on his as I flick the tip of his cock with my tongue. He trembles.

Now for my party trick.

I take no prisoners.

I open my mouth wide and take the full length of his glorious cock into the back of my throat, totally catching him

off guard—as I like to because the shock value is a huge turn-on.

I deep throat him and suck all the way to the tip then repeat, over and over, as he moans so loudly I know it's good.

“Fuck, woman,” he shouts in pleasure as I continue my assault. I won't be finishing him off just yet; a girl's not a camel.

My turn.

I'm now in control.

“Saddle up, big boy,” I say, grinning, then I bite my bottom lip. It's something I do when I'm turned on. Kind of a pause before I attack, jump on what I want.

His eyes widen as he eagerly reaches over to his top drawer. He rips open the foil packet, and in ten seconds flat, he's rolled the rubber along his length.

I follow his lead and stand as I remove my thong and singlet top. He watches me unfasten the matching purple leopard-print push-up bra.

My tits bounce free. I'm pretty proud of my DDs.

His eyes widen as he leans forward for a feel, cupping them both.

I hastily push him back onto the bed as I'm ready for full throttle.

I hungrily climb on top. Feeling the tip of his cock at my dripping entrance, I push slowly. His hardness slides inside me; that initial feeling never gets old.

I moan as I take his length all the way.

His thickness is great, very impressive.

I move my hips, taking him deeper, then all the way out, then deeper in again.

He thrusts upwards as we find a nice rhythm.

Eagerly, he pulls me down hard and pushes inside deeper, just the way I like it. Hitting my spot.

“There,” I scream as he repeats the thrust, driving me insane. I ride him like a cowboy would ride a horse.

His thickness and length fit inside me like a hand in a glove; his hard rod glides in and out perfectly.

“My turn,” he states as he flips me onto the bed.

Most boys I’ve been with don’t know what they are doing; this guy is a man!

His tip finds my slickness and he thrusts deep inside, hitting the jackpot over and over and over. His rhythm and thrust is perfect; I’m so close to unravelling, and it will be a big one.

I hungrily pull his face to mine and kiss him hard, feeling so fucking hot and horny.

His hips thrust harder as he fucks me hard and fast.

“Yes,” I scream in pleasure as my orgasm hits me like lightning. I convulse and shatter into oblivion; my juices explode as I ride the wave of ecstasy.

He doesn’t stop; massaging my J spot, he adds to the intensity. I totally come apart again, faster and more intense.

He follows with his own hard orgasm. As he fucks me into oblivion, he moans and shakes, his last few thrusts intensifying.

His breath is hot on my neck as he kisses me softly.

I don’t freak, enjoying the closeness and our laboured breathing post orgasm.

“You are one hot woman, Jemma,” he states then kisses me one last time on the lips before he climbs off.

“Let’s get showered,” he suggests, and I nod, feeling sticky and sweaty yet totally fucking satisfied.

Chapter 2

Variety is the Spice of Life

My work is really the only constant in my life. It's the longest I've stayed in one place, to be honest. I usually get bored with routine or arsehole bosses.

But sometimes there is an exception to the rule, and God, I love my current job as a veterinary nurse. I've been with PAWS Veterinary Clinic for four years, and sure, there is room for growth or a higher position, but I have no time to study for a veterinary degree. Plus, it's more fun this way. *Less pressure!*

I basically get to hug and play with some of the cutest puppies and kittens between a few of the not-so-fun parts of the position. No two days are *ever* the same. We administer needles, give meds, perform surgeries, neuter, boarding, flea baths, and the newest program we offer is puppy school.

I'm trained in all areas and constantly volunteer to mix up my roster. Variety is the spice of life. *In all aspects of life ...*

Karly is a licensed vet and works with the owner, Tony. She is in her early thirties, engaged to be married, and she just had her dark brown hair styled into the cutest bob. It frames her face and suits her Lois Lane glasses.

Jasmine and Crystal are assistants like I am; both are single and like the party life. We get along like a house on fire. Jasmine has dark curly hair that she mainly pulls back into a bun. She is originally from New Zealand and has beautiful olive skin and green eyes.

Crystal is a bleached blonde; her hair is very short, spiky in parts, but layered to achieve the fashionable messy look.

Most days are a hoot. Of course, we tone it down when the boss is around or just have our conversations in another room to hide some of the crude comments and actions. I'm sure he's onto us, though.

If we do our work and respect the animals and customers, Tony seems to be fine with our eccentric behaviour and sarcasm.

Tony is nerdy, with dark hair and glasses, a bit on the tubby side, but when it comes to animals, he knows his shit. Even worked at the main veterinary hospital in Melbourne with twenty staff beneath him. His move to Sydney devastated them. He opted for the smaller practice and more time with his family; he and his wife have two young girls.

This is another reason we are always super busy. People travel with their pets for the best care, and that is what they get with Tony. He has a highly-regarded reputation.

He is also a very fair boss unlike the arseholes I've crossed in the past.

Mind you I'd rather work for The Bondi Vet, Dr. Chris Brown, with his blond hair and chiselled body, he is very easy on the eyes.

Yes, please, the image of him holding a Labrador puppy makes my ovaries explode.

"Jemma, can you please give Dash in cage three a flea bath?" Tony requests as I finish printing a vaccination certificate.

"Sure thing," I reply, cringing at the thought of a hundred little fleas jumping on my arms as I kill them with the toxic shampoo, but I love the thought of stopping the itch for the little guy.

I run the warm water and collect Dash, who I find out is the cutest Dalmatian, from his cage. Placing him into the

warm water, I lather the shampoo and start to scrub. I've seen much worse with fleas; this one is manageable.

I find myself thinking about Dan as I rinse and repeat the shampoo.

Of course, being the latest conquest in a line of many, he actually didn't disappoint. He kept his end of the one-night stand bargain and satisfied me in the bedroom, unlike bad lay and others before him.

As I reminisce about our encounter, his super-short brown hair and striking features, including those gorgeous blue irises, I keep racking my brain, trying to figure out who Dan reminds me of.

I think of him thrusting inside me and envisage his face; he was indeed very nice-looking.

Then it hits me.

He looks like Justin Timberlake in *Friends with Benefits*; that toned chest, stubble on his face. He's without a doubt a hottie. *Not to mention the humour. I love that movie.*

Dan kinda gave a guy-next-door impression, but then, of course, when we had sex, he became a hotter, dirtier version. Imagine having a neighbour like that ...

"Come here, little guy," I say to Dash as I dry him and place him on the plastic to comb out the dead fleas. *Little suckers ...*

It takes around ten minutes to comb them all out. I've spent over an hour on an extreme flea infestation before; it still haunts me.

"All done. I bet you feel so much better," I say in my cute animal voice. We all have that high-pitched voice when talking to babies and animals.

I gently place him into a new clean cage with fresh water and lock the door.

Then I discard the old bedding, and spray disinfectant while wiping it out, leaving it clean and fresh for the next occupant. I wash and scrub my hands using the antibacterial soap; hygiene is extremely important. My dermatitis is a bitch from all the handwashing.

It's ten thirty, so I head into the kitchen for my morning tea break. The good thing about the reception door is that it has a bell, so we're notified when customers enter. From memory, I know we don't have anyone booked in until eleven.

I habitually check my phone for messages, emails, and social media.

I find a text from Dan. I don't usually give out my number on a one-night stand, and I'm still not sure why I did it. Must have been a feeling.

Kind of ironic as just seeing his name makes me smile.

Dan: Hey, Jemma.

I'll be away this week for work but would love to meet up when I get back.

I'm the queen of no commitment, but I can't help but feel a little rejected.

Is he really going away for work?

I must admit I've used that line before when I wasn't interested in a guy.

I don't really know him; maybe he has a girlfriend.

There could be plenty of other issues.

Maybe my screaming the other night was a bit much, but hey, at least I didn't have to fake it with him. *He was good. Very good.*

Or maybe he is telling you the fucking truth, Jemma, my subconscious shouts at me.

He did text you after all; that should be telling you something!

I'm not too good at believing people. I think of the male species as liars until they prove differently.

Oh, well. Plenty more bikes to ride and try before I buy. I make the rules and never do the same guy twice ... unless he's *hot*.

It's mostly always a one-night stand.

Thanks for the sex, Dan, looks like you aren't the man.

I decide not to waste my time on texting him back because no good can come from it. Plus, I'm an independent, secure woman. I don't need a man in my life ... *Or do I?*

After my shift, I drive my sporty hatchback home. I absolutely love driving a manual, changing the gears and feeling in control. To think, I almost couldn't conquer the clutch when I first learnt to drive. Especially on a damn hill; rolling backwards into another car was always a massive fear of mine.

Roxy has already told me she is getting me an Eastern Creek Raceway voucher for my birthday so I can speed around the racetrack. That gets my groin throbbing; it's a huge turn-on.

Fast cars. Something is hot about fast cars and the throttle of the engine. I'm sure I have a little too much testosterone; maybe it's from being around so many males.

But I do love my girl stuff too.

Something is beautiful and sexual about dressing up in a gorgeous dress, fixing your make-up, putting on your best jewellery and sexy heels to make you feel special and hot.

I know guys appreciate it too; it's a turn-on for them. They don't want the frumpy tracksuits, greasy hair, yellow unbrushed teeth, and bed socks. Well, maybe after a few years, but in my eyes, a little effort goes a long way.

You know I wasn't always a dirty one-night stand ho ...

I had a serious boyfriend once, a lifetime ago, back when I was fourteen. His name was Joshua Stevens. He was my first love; we held hands, kissed, and eventually, he popped my cherry. We had a lot of other firsts together; we spent a full eighteen months as the perfect couple. At least, that's what I thought ...

He was a complete gentleman. He would carry my bag, share his lunch, take me out for dinner—well, if McDonald's counts. When you're young, it's sweet.

For our one-year anniversary, his mum dropped us at a fancy restaurant where we had our first candlelit dinner. Josh had saved for three months to pay for our meals, his mother later told me.

He was very romantic; he would pick me flowers then, as he worked more shifts at the car wash, buy me bouquets and jewellery.

Like I said, things were perfect.

Perfectly flawed.

It would seem that Josh was also your typical horny teenage boy. We were having sex like every second day, and he seemed content with me, no complaints.

I knew his parents were on the verge of splitting up, so I'm guessing his head was all messed up; we never really spoke about it.

But there were no excuses for what he did.

We were at our friend Lisa's party, all having a couple of drinks—underage, of course, at fifteen.

Josh was wasted. I kept telling him he'd had enough; I couldn't understand why he was getting so messy and drinking so much.

“You aren't my wife, Jemma, so stop telling me what to do,” he yelled at me. “I'm never fucking getting married.”

Those harsh words will be forever lodged in my mind.

I couldn't even answer; I was gobsmacked. I felt like I didn't know this side of Josh. I couldn't look at him, so I stormed off.

After thirty minutes of being angry, I went back to check on him. I loved him, and I was concerned he might pass out or worse.

I shouldn't have bothered caring about him.

It nearly killed me when I found him in a spare room fucking the school slut, Suzie Arnold.

Her smirk made my stomach turn; I'm sure she did it on purpose to rip my heart out.

"You asshole," I screamed at him.

I was less wild back then. Now, I would have gone psycho ninja on them both, making sure they paid for what they did.

But fifteen-year-old Jemma was still pretty innocent—or young and dumb.

I cried and ran out of the party, all the way home, where my mum comforted me.

"Shhh, honey, it's okay. One day, you will find the right boy," she told me, but I swore to myself I wouldn't let anyone in again; the excruciating pain in my heart would be too much to bear a second time.

I found it hard to trust guys in general after that and never let anyone get too close. I walked away when it got too serious.

I got what I needed from the guys, and they got what they wanted. So, I figured I didn't need to cross the line of trusting someone with my heart.

Funny thing is, Joshua Stevens is now an overweight father of four who lives in the same suburb we grew up in, drives a shitty car, is going bald, and from his Facebook profile, he looks like he delivers newspapers.

So glad I got rid of that when I did.

Sometimes the pain we feel when something bad happens can really be a blessing in disguise later on in life.

Live and learn. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

Chapter 3

All the single ladies...

Roxy and I have booked belly dancing classes. We totally nailed it the time we took the pole dancing classes; it sounded like a fun way to get fit and have some laughs, though we seem to laugh when we're together no matter what.

Tonight, is lesson one. We turn up to the belly dancing school in North Sydney; Roxy is a little nervous, but I'm eager to let loose. I've always wondered how good I would be shaking my hips. I'm a natural with my hip thrusts in the bedroom. *Oh, and with pole dancing.* I have no problems with another type of pole, either.

Roxy is dressed in a casual singlet and flowing skirt while I'm wearing a halter-neck and short ruffled skirt.

Our teacher's name is Madame Elvina, which is very fitting. She looks glamorous in her purple Bollywood gypsy skirt and black silk and gold-beaded bra with dangly bits. *This chick works out!*

What a mixed bag of women we have here. There are eight girls in our class from all walks of life—short, tall, skinny, not so skinny, younger, and older. I love to see people taking a chance. You only live once!

“Hey ladies, I'm Madame Elvina, and welcome to belly dance school,” announces the bubbly and Mediterranean hip-swinging teacher.

“Let's start off by getting to know each other. Everyone say their name and their occupation, then after the introductions are done, we will do some warm-up stretches

and a couple of jogs around the studio,” Madame Elvina says with enthusiasm.

After a few intros and a warm-up, we are into the first dance. It would seem I’m a fucking natural; perhaps, I’ve found my calling.

“Hip slide first, feet under your hips, and shift your weight from leg to leg. Once you’re in the rhythm, add your hips out further to the side, like this,” Madame Elvina tells us and demonstrates, looking stunning.

“Perfect, now let’s shake it faster to some music!” she screams as she adds music to help with the rhythm. I let loose and shake it, feeling free, vibrant, and happy. Who cares how I look!

After our first lesson, I can feel my muscles aching already, especially my abdominal muscles.

Afterwards at home we sit relaxing on our throne—or fashionista lounge, as Roxy calls it. I think of us more of queens, and we all need a throne.

We are both sipping a glass of red and chatting; seems we can’t stick to not drinking during the week, so I decide it’s time to update my Tinder profile. It’s so much easier with the app these days.

I keep my profile simple and to the point...

Fun and sporty 25-year-old with blonde hair and blue eyes, but don’t think I’m a dumb blonde, far from it ...

Not looking for anything serious, must be energetic and intelligent.

Please, if you are looking for a girl to boss around, it’s not me.

If you want a wife, it’s not me.

If you are looking for someone to pay your way, it ain’t me.

Only seriously fun, easy-going, decent guys contact me.

Roxy talked me into joining Tinder. I'm happily single and not actively looking for a relationship. I'm looking for someone to hang with, have fun with, and hold a decent conversation.

It that too much to ask?

I love that I am my own boss in life; I make my own rules, and I have freedom. I can have a girls' night whenever I want, I don't need a filter with what I say, I can spend whatever I want on whatever I want, I get to choose the décor for my home, and I get me time, peace, and quiet.

And the toilet seat stays down!

I do know that I'm a little stuck in my ways, for sure.

But in my eyes, relationships should be mutual. I don't want to change or conform for anyone, and honestly, I wouldn't ask or expect a guy to do that for me.

24/7 with the same person would give me the heebie-jeebies.

Bland and boring.

I'm saving that for being old and grey.

I'm gonna get my kicks while I'm still young enough to get them.

We have started a chart at work, a weekly RAOK system.

Random act of kindness.

It's all about making a difference and giving back to someone else, a total stranger.

We get to do something kind and unexpected to make someone's day a little brighter.

I duck into the grocery store on the way home to grab some ingredients for dinner, and I notice the elderly man in front of me has maybe six items and the total comes to sixteen dollars.

“Put his bill on this card,” I announce to the cashier, handing over the Visa so he can’t beat me to it and pay himself.

“No, it’s okay. I have the money,” the man argues, but I ignore him and payWave my card.

“All done, have a great week,” I say to him, smiling.

His smile is wide. “You are a very sweet young lady. Thank you, and God bless.” He squeezes my hand.

I love that I just made his day. It puts me in a great mood for the rest of the night. Last week, I put away the neighbour’s bins, and the week before that, I took a trolley to the return rack in the car park for a lady who was packing groceries into her car.

Small acts that can make another person feel special and take the pressure off them.

When I arrive home, it’s just me, so I busy myself cooking up a storm for my bestie.

On the menu tonight is pumpkin and feta salad with chicken breast and covered in bacon and light cheese.

“Honey, I’m home,” Roxy calls as she enters our apartment.

“Perfect timing, wifey, as dinner is served,” I announce as I plate up the divine-smelling meal.

“God, I love you, husband,” she replies, and we both giggle and devour our home-cooked delicious meal and wine.

Seriously, what would we do without each other?

Roxy is the yin to my yang.

Our friendship is titanium—strong and tough and untouchable.

The next morning is Saturday, and we have the charity run for the children's hospital. We registered a team to raise money for this amazing cause. I have spent a few hours each month volunteering at the children's hospital. I'm getting softer as I get older and not the hard, emotionless bitch I was earlier in life.

By 7:00 a.m., after two coffees, we are dressed and ready in our running gear and the shirts we had made.

The shirts are plain black with Girl Power in bright pink then I added an outline of silver glitter around each letter just for the extra effect.

"Damn, girl, these are perfect," Roxy tells me as I show her the finished product. She puts it on over her singlet. I do the same, and we smile at the coolness of the shirts.

"Can't wait to get pics," I declare, smiling.

We meet the others near the front of the line. They put on their shirts, all smiling at the result. "These look awesome, Jem. Great job!" Tia gives the thumbs up.

"Let's stretch. We don't want any injuries," I suggest, and we warm up our muscles.

None of us are runners, so we will jog and walk the seven kilometres in the name of charity. We have sponsors for every kilometre we walk.

We aren't the fittest of girls, but we will do okay. I'm not out to win; I just want to participate.

Roxy and I have programmed a few songs on our iPods for motivation and to keep us going if it gets hard or a little monotonous. It works well, and we start the first few kilometres jogging easily.

"Can we walk for a bit? Don't want to burn out too quickly," Roxy suggests, and I nod in agreement as we slow to a brisk walk.

By the end of the seven kilometres, we are knackered, sweating, and breathless.

“Woohoo, girl power!” we shout as we cross the finish line.

We finished somewhere in the middle, a pleasing result, and knowing that I raised \$304.00 makes it worth it. Sick kids, especially those with life-threatening illnesses, make my heart hurt. Anything I can do to help, I will.

Chapter 4

Dan

Spellbound

Goddamn, that chick Jemma ...

I was transfixed by her body, stunning looks, and that hot as hell feistiness.

I want to devour every inch of her every minute of every day.

Visions of her sucking my cock have me hard as hell, which is totally inappropriate while I'm on a two-hour flight. The seat belt is feeling extremely tight right about now.

I texted her to say I'd be out of town, but she never replied. I know she had fun the other night; I always make sure they come at least twice. Did she give me a fake number?

I swear I'll find her; I have to, though I get the impression she won't be "the relationship type." I will do my best to persuade her; my guess is orgasm after orgasm might help with influencing her to give me a shot.

That's what I find sexy about "out of the box" women. That blaze and intensity is what makes them unique, keeping me on my toes.

It's sexy and arousing as hell ...

Jemma is provocative, raunchy, and captivating. I've never met any other female who has had me so enthralled and bewitched.

I plan to text her again when I'm settled in my hotel room. Sexting while on public transport could end up quite embarrassing. From the other night, I get the impression lots of dirty talk and even dirtier messages will be the way to this girl's heart.

Chapter 5

What do I need a man for?

“Roxy, we have a live one,” I call as a big-arse spider crawls across our kitchen floor.

What the fuck are the bugs and spiders today living on? They are massive and hard to kill.

I hold down the nozzle and forcefully spray the bug spray; of course, the spider keeps moving, so I use more damn spray, and it still doesn't bloody stop.

Okay, here goes. I press down harder and the spray shoots out a white foam that now covers the eight-legged mutant. *Are they on steroids? No wonder Spider-Man is so strong.*

“Why does the spider look like it's been in a heavy snowstorm?” Roxy asked then laughed.

“Looks like somebody went overboard with the spray again.”

“Yep, I totally went overboard, I'll admit it, yet look at the bastard still crawling,” I declare, scrunching up my face in annoyance.

“It must have thick skin; the spray doesn't penetrate,” Roxy rationalises.

The fucker is still moving, like half running, so I spray it again. Not one for half measures, I refuse to stop until it dies.

“It's a goddamn mutant,” I state, watching it intensely for a clue that the spray is actually bloody working.

“Ha-ha, finally I got ya, you eight-legged freak,” I shout as one of his eight legs slips and pokes out frantically, followed

by a second and third.

“Surely, there must be a spray out there that can kill in less than seven minutes,” I say, feeling let down by Mortein. “I know the perfect concoction. Remember Justin Oates and his disgusting bad breath back in high school? Now, that shit would be lethal,” I say to Roxy, and we both crack up laughing.

“Next time, just get your shoe and squash it then I don’t have to breathe in the spray and listen to your endless ranting about arachnids,” she adds, mocking me.

I give her the evil eye.

“I’m actually surprised you are okay with killing spiders. They are an animal at the end of the day, aren’t they, Jem?” she questions, knowing my love of furry creatures.

“No way,” I declare, shaking my head. “Spiders and cockroaches are pests, and they all must die. The only nice spider in the world was Charlotte from *Charlotte’s Web*.”

Nothing better than hearing the popping sound of treading on a dirty, disgusting cockroach.

I’m an independent, single girl. Who needs a man to kill an insect?

After discarding the spider, cleaning the floor, scrubbing my hands, and eating some chocolate to calm and chill, I have an awesome idea.

“Come to Westfield with me, Rox?” I suddenly need some retail therapy.

Her face brightens, and she nods, smiling. “Yep! When have I ever refused a shopping spree?” she replies, poking out her tongue. She disappears into her room to change out of her track pants.

Ten minutes later, we are both ready to go.

We jump in my cruisey hatchback, and I zip through the traffic, which is actually not too bad for a Sunday. Parking at the mall, on the other hand, is terrible; we drive around and around. Eventually, we stalk a family and wait while they pack their minivan. I smile and thank them as they drive out—even if they did take their sweet-arse time.

“They totally need more car spots. Who in their right mind built this place with only limited parking? It’s just designed to piss us off then we end up buying more, needing the stress relief,” Roxy states, and I nod in agreeance.

“Well played, builders, well played,” I declare.

We walk up the stairwell and through the sliding doors to the shops. Without words, we both head into our favourite make-up store ever: Sephora. It’s an unspoken rule that we always go there first; hence, why I park on the second level.

“I desperately need a new make-up brush, and I’m thinking a different shade of eyeshadow,” I declare as we browse the hundreds of brushes then shades of eyeshadow.

I eventually opt for a shiny silver colour. Sure, I have silver, but this one is more of a shimmer my others are matte grey or charcoal.

“That colour will look perfect on you, Jem. Oh, and I think you should choose a different pink lipstick to go with it while we are here,” Roxy suggests, and I have to agree with her. Nothing better than the perfect pink lips with silver eyeshadow.

Now to find one I don’t already have.

After at least twenty minutes of searching the different well known brands, the assistant shows me a new brand that just released last week.

It’s like fate as I’m looking at the most stunning shade of pink lipstick.

Playful Pink is the name on the tube, and it’s just gorgeous. *A girl can never have enough lipstick.*

“I’m going to grab this black liquid eyeliner. I like how thick the pencil is, should give a thicker line. I swear mine just evaporates,” Roxy tells me, and I nod. Bloody make-up, it does evaporate. It makes me wonder how much actually enters our eyeballs and how good that can really be for our retinas.

“Witchery next?” I suggest as we pay for our purchases.

“Yep, great idea, slut guts,” Roxy answers in her sarcastic, playful manner.

“Oh, any chance you feel like grabbing a quick pedi afterwards?”

“I’ve been neglecting my feet, and this polish has been on my toes for way too long,” Roxy declares, and I have to agree; my toenail polish has pretty much all scraped off.

“This is why we are best friends; it’s like you live inside my mind,” I say sarcastically.

After Witchery, we go up one level to a nail salon I have used in the past.

With ten foot spas, they get us seated right away, and we soak our tired, neglected feet.

The nail ladies don’t speak much English, but they are good at their jobs. *Wonder if they secretly joke about toe sizes and foot odour?*

“Choose colour,” they say, handing us both a colour chart with hundreds of colour options.

Decisions, decisions.

I’m definitely going pink, though, to match my new lipstick.

“This colour, please,” I say, pointing at shade twenty-six.

“I’ll have shade eleven,” Roxy tells her nail technician and then shows me. It’s a glossy purple colour and totally suits her.

“I’m thinking this colour will be perfect with my jeans and black top. Did I tell you I have a date with that Dylan guy

Neeta knows?” she declares, and I smile. She deserves to be happy.

While we get our feet scrubbed and massaged and our nails trimmed, filed, and painted, we chat.

“Sounds good. Just remember, all men want in your pants. If they don’t, they are gay or might have an STD.” I joke with Roxy. She is pretty much on the same wavelength as I am with men. They use and abuse and are all good for one thing.

“What happened with that Dan guy?” she questions me, and I roll my eyes.

“Working interstate or something,” I reply, and she shrugs. We can all try to figure out other people’s minds, but at the end of the day, no one knows the truth but Dan. *Maybe he will contact me again ...*

“Sushi Train?” I suggest as we pay for our pedicures.

“Yep, I’m famished,” Roxy states, and we go back down to the bottom level and find the food court.

It’s getting on to closing time as we head to the car park after a great few hours shopping, getting pampered, and enjoying food together.

As we head down the staircase, I feel uneasy all of a sudden, like there’s someone behind me. I grab Roxy’s hand, still totally unsure if I’m imagining something or if in fact someone is behind me. But I’m a little scared to turn around.

Roxy glances over at me, and we both freeze. My suspicions are right; a guy is walking behind us. *Crap... he really shouldn’t be as close as he is.*

He looks like he is in his early twenties and is wearing an Adidas tracksuit with the hood up, looking extremely suspicious.

“Run,” I say quietly to Roxy, still unsure if he is a bad guy. Shit, he could be walking to his car too, but I’m not taking any

chances.

We start to run, and his footsteps chase after us. Holy shit.

He is now super close to me, and I feel my bag being yanked from my arm. *Fuck that, he's not getting my Ralph Lauren handbag, purse, and phone.*

“Let go!” I scream as I turn and pull hard on my leather handbag.

“Security, security,” Roxy screams, trying to hopefully get us some help or even just to scare the freak off.

“Just give me the goddamn bag, bitch,” he shouts, still pulling on my bag.

I refuse to give him my belongings. Adrenaline surging, I kick him hard in his knee then his groin, and as he moans, I give a forceful shove, and he relents, letting go of my bag.

He doesn't stop, though; he takes a few steps towards me, and I throw punches repeatedly at his face.

Roxy follows my lead, kicking his other leg, and as he falls to the ground, her nails are on his cheek. We turn and sprint towards my car, not looking back until we are inside with the car locked.

With perfect timing, two security guards come running up from the first level and catch the guy as he tries to sprint away. They hold his hands behind his back and push him into the wall.

We are both shaken and breathless. “Fucking hell,” I say as Roxy grabs my hand and squeezes it. What a scary situation.

“We kicked his arse,” Roxy declares, adding humour to the not-so-nice situation, and we both laugh. I would love to see us kicking and punching him on a video replay.

“Yep, we sure did. We make a perfect fighting team. Don't mess with Thorne and Donovan,” I state, and we sit for the next ten minutes catching our breath, knowing that we will

need to answer a few questions. I totally want that guy charged!

A police car arrives fifteen minutes later, and two officers make their way over to the car. "Let's hop out and talk to them," I suggest, and Roxy nods.

"You girls all right? Bit shaken?" the first officer questions. He has a full beard but kind, brown eyes that calm me a little.

"Yep, definitely shaken," I reply truthfully.

"Can you run me through what happened?" he asks as he takes out his notepad.

"Yep. We were heading to our car. I thought someone was behind us, and when we turned around, that man was following us." I point at the crazy psycho who is now handcuffed. "We freaked out and started to run to the car. When he started to chase us, I knew something wasn't right, and then the bastard grabbed my bag."

"The security guards said you fought him off?" the second officer, who is much younger with glasses, asks us.

"Yep, we tried; we both kicked him in the knees, punched him, and Roxy scratched his face until he finally let go of my bag."

"Girls, you were very brave, but we always recommend letting the thieves have your valuables to avoid being hurt. You are very lucky he let go," the bearded officer states.

"You both should know right now he is extremely high on the drug ice. He also had a knife in his back pocket," he adds, and we freeze in shock.

"Holy shit, he could have stabbed us. What was I thinking, fighting back?" I say, feeling even more shaken knowing we could have easily had knife wounds.

"I want him charged with attempted robbery," Roxy declares, and I nod as she puts her arm around me.

What a fucking way to spoil the perfect afternoon of shopping and pedicures.

“Yes, he will be charged, the evidence is on the video surveillance tape. I need you ladies to come to the police station and fill out some details, and I can file the paperwork that will be mailed to you,” he states to us, and I’m so grateful for that camera.

We spend thirty minutes filling out frustrating documents. Then forty-five minutes later, we are driving home, exhausted and relieved it’s over.

“I need a hot shower after that,” Roxy states, and I nod, hoping that will help this knot in my stomach.

As I park my car and head into our apartment, I find myself looking over my shoulder, waiting for something, feeling paranoid. Finally inside, I lock the door and feel safer.

Roxy has first shower as I call my mum and fill her in on what happened.

“Oh Jemma, that’s terrible! You okay, honey?” she asks, sounding concerned. She’s not the most caring person on the planet, but it’s nice to hear her ask if I’m all right. “Do you want me to come over?”

“No, I’m okay, Mum. I’m about to have a shower, and Roxy and I are going to spend the night watching romantic comedies on Netflix. We need something to cheer us up.” I assure her we will be okay; I just hope my words are truthful.

“Okay, sweetheart. I’m actually off to my yoga class so that worked out well,” she adds in typical mum fashion.

“Thanks, Mum. I’ll be fine.”

“I love you, Jemma,” she declares sweetly, making me smile a much-needed smile.

“Love you too, Mum,” I reply and hang up the phone, now eager for the shower.

I don't admit it to my mum, but even her non-maternal type hug would be pretty damn good right about now.

Even better, a strong man hug.

Somehow, I can't imagine the Rock giving me a comforting hug.

Then I think back to the morning after I met Dan, when I was lying in his arms. He even gave me a squeeze. That felt safe and secure; I never thought I needed a guy in my life, but sometimes, just sometimes a man in my life actually sounds perfect.

Just sometimes...

After my long, hot shower, ironically enough, my phone beeps.

It's a number I recognise but didn't save.

Hi Jemma.

It's Dan, I'm away with work but wanted to say hi.

Wow, he is trying again. I'm impressed by his determination. I guess a quick hi won't hurt.

Me:

Hi Dan.

Hope your work trip isn't too boring.

Dan:

It is pretty boring, but my night is better now I'm chatting with you.

I smile from his sweet words that somehow chatting with me has improved his boring night. This is such a welcome distraction.

Me:

One thing I'm definitely not is boring.

Dan:

Oh, I know that. I'm still remembering your "nonboring" bedroom antics from last weekend. Lol

I giggle at his reply. Oh yes, my bedroom antics, the deep throating gets them every time. Time to make this conversation much more interesting.

Me:

Oh yes, I remember the moans coming from you. I also remember just how good your cock felt inside me.

He started it with the bedroom antics. I don't do subtle. I'm sure from the use of the word cock, he's now hard as a rock.

Dan:

Damn, woman. At least get me hard when I'm in the same state and can pay you a visit.

Me:

I'm sure you can take care of yourself. I would however be happy to help. But unlucky with you out of town. Maybe another time...

Dan:

No maybe about it. I'm back next week, and you are coming over!

Me:

We'll see.

Dan:

I've gotta go, Jemma. You will hear from me again very soon, gorgeous lady.

Me:

Bye, Dan.

Don't work too HARD...

Ha-ha, I crack myself up. That's a pun if I've ever heard one; he would be hard right now, probably in the shower taking care of it as we speak, so let's hope his phone is waterproof...

The whole "come over next week" thing, as long as it's purely physically, sounds like a plan.

Chapter 6

Rockin' with the Rock

I thought after the fun texting with Dan, my mind would stop racing, but no, I've been sleeping so badly the past couple of days. I keep seeing that scary man's face, but last night, I dreamt he actually had a hold of me; I was screaming and shaking. What a bad nightmare; he had me pinned to the ground, it was awful. I woke up covered in sweat and crying.

I didn't tell Roxy or anyone else about it. I just wanted to forget it ever happened.

I just wanted life to go back to normal. I could deal with normal.

For the next few days, I manage to keep busy. Work is hectic, but it's such a welcome busyness, as it's keeping my mind occupied. By Thursday, the lack of sleep is catching up with me. *Coffee number three is going down extremely well.*

"We have two surgeries today, ladies. Jack the bulldog is getting neutered and Molly the black Persian is having an abscess on her leg drained," Tony announces at lunch as we fill out our morning charts and prepare for what is ahead.

"Wash up, ladies. The first surgery is at 1:00 p.m. I need Jemma and Crystal," Tony orders, and we both nod, finishing our coffees and sandwiches. I quickly use the bathroom then notice it's 12:40, so I scrub my hands, find surgery aprons for myself and Crystal, and set up the sterilised equipment for Tony to perform the neutering.

At 12:50, Crystal and Tony come into the room to scrub up and prepare.

“Nice work as always, Jemma,” he declares, noticing we are all ready to go.

“I’ll go and grab Jack if you like?” I question, eager to get underway.

“Yep, go get the little fella,” Tony replies.

After checking the cages, I find Jack the very cute chubby bulldog in cage number six. He is sound asleep, totally oblivious to the fact that he will soon be lacking in the balls department.

“Hey there, buddy, you are a tubby guy. Are you ready for your snip-snip?” I question him, not really expecting a response, but I love talking to these little animals. His droopy eyes open, but his body doesn’t move. Lazy little fella.

I cradle him in my arms and give him a big cuddle; he responds by licking my face.

God, animals are gorgeous, not arseholes like people; they don’t hurt you or complicate things, and they love unconditionally.

The first surgery goes well; Jack should be awake in around thirty minutes.

We have a thirty-minute break before we prep Molly the black Persian for her abscess draining. My guess is she has been in a fight. We see it a lot with cats; when another feline scratches them, it gets infected and forms an abscess. This one is very inflamed and full of puss. Finally, Tony gets the last bit out and covers the hole with betadine bacterial wash. The relief for Molly will be evident when she wakes.

That’s another reason I love my job. Taking away the pain from these little guys is so important; getting them well and healed is such a relief, and it warms my heart.

The rest of the afternoon flies. Karly is on the afternoon shift and we only have two more clients.

Once we clean up and lock up, it's still light outside, one thing I love about summer. Winter is depressing when you leave work and it's dark.

Tony always comes back later after surgeries to check on the animals of course, to make sure there are no complications; the perk of living five minutes down the road. Sometimes, he brings one of his girls; they love the interactions with each animal.

I arrive home to an empty house and head for the shower. Animal fur has a way of getting into my sinuses, so I like to get it all off and relax. I'm still thinking about my busy day and the two surgeries; no unwelcome thoughts have surfaced, thank God.

I'm in a towel when I hear my phone beep. I check the message and am surprised when I see the name.

The Rock:

I'm back, come on over.

I can't help but smile; his messages always make me smile and usually make me wet just at the thought of what usually comes next ...

Jemma:

You can't just click your fingers, and I'll come running, you know.

The Rock:

All I saw in that message was fingers and come. You know you want it.

Jemma:

You know me well. Maybe tomorrow.

I literally have to force myself to type those words and hold myself back from driving to his place right this second. I am horny as hell, and knowing just how good he is in every area ... God, I'm dying.

The Rock:

I'm busy tomorrow.

Jemma:

Maybe next week.

The Rock:

Get your sexy arse over here now, woman!

Jemma:

LOL. Well, if you insist ...

Be there in twenty.

Yes! Checkmate.

Make them beg for it.

God, I need this distraction right now ...

Known for his cockiness, he answers the door in his training shorts and nothing else.

That fucking V is taunting me. His chiselled chest and abs are seriously cut and flawless. Perfection is staring me in the face.

“You took your time,” he declares, eyeing me up and down with just as much lust in his eyes as I have in mine.

The tiny skirt and low top I threw on don't leave much to the imagination.

“What's the rush?” I ask sarcastically, waiting for the lustful pouncing that always happens when we are in close proximity. Some people just have that heat, the sizzle that makes the air instantly humid. I can feel my hair frizzing as the temperature rises.

“Get your arse naked and on the bed. I'll show you what the rush is, woman,” he orders, smirking. My panties soak instantly.

I smile at his request, and do what I'm told for once, throwing my bag on his table and making my way into his room. *It's a place I know quite well ...*

He has a typical bachelor pad: massive flat-screen TV, leather recliner lounge, state of the art sound system, and his kitchen is all stainless steel, like something from a model home. He doesn't hide the fact that he makes plenty of cash from his boxing tournaments; pity about his arrogance, as he is quite the catch in most other areas.

I hear the door slam behind me, and I can feel his alpha male body stalking me, almost touching me. I feel his hot breath on my neck as he lifts my hair and kisses me. I lift my arms and wrap them around his neck, knowing that our encounter will be hard and rough, just the way it always is with us, a welcome rush that we both crave.

His hand is rough and callused as he firmly fondles my breast then tweaks my already hard nipple. Multitasking, he bites my earlobe. I run my nails through his hair and along his scalp as I pull his body closer into mine.

"You want me to fuck you from behind, Jemma?" he asks me, and his deep voice is so sexy and already has me squirming.

"Yes," I manage to reply as I raise my arms. He obeys my unspoken command, lifting my top above my head. Within seconds, my hot pink and black bra is unfastened and thrown across the room. Both hands instantly cup my tits; he squeezes hard, flicking both nipples. He nudges his hard cock against my arse, showing me just how ready he is. I instinctively push back, just as eager.

"I know you are just as horny as I am. We are a good pair in the bedroom, Jem," he declares, his breathing laboured.

I start to shimmy out of my skirt, pushing it to the ground and showing him my matching thong. Instantly, his hands are on my arse, rubbing my cheeks. Then *smack!* He slaps my arse hard, causing me to jump, but I enjoy the roughness. He

pushes against me, and I feel his harness between my arse cheeks as his hand slides inside my pants.

“Fuck, you are soaking, dripping, and so ready. It is so hot,” he moans, biting my earlobe again and licking my neck as he pushes two fingers deep inside me.

“Yes,” I moan as he moves them around then out and back inside.

“Playtime is over,” he declares as he yanks down his pants. I feel his hot, throbbing cock on my arse in record time.

“Fuck, yes,” I say as I lean back into him.

“Forward,” he orders, and I put my hands flat on the bed, exposing my wet pussy, which is pulsing, ready for him to enter.

I hear him rip open a condom and roll it on.

The tip of his heated cock is pushing into my slick folds in no time. I stretch open for his thickness; he presses inside slowly, until he completely fills me.

I brace myself, knowing it won't stay slow and gentle.

He suddenly pulls out, leaving me wanting more, then without warning, he slams inside, gliding in with ease as my wetness drips down my legs. He adjusts my hips as he thrusts again, deeper and harder, not relenting for a minute as he gets a rhythm. His hands massage my tits as he angles me and slams again, now hitting the J spot; that feeling is instantly rewarding and hot.

“That's the spot,” I manage to moan as he repeatedly thrusts inside harder at full throttle, now massaging my clit with his magic thumb. I swear he has a clit wand on his thumb; it instantly works up my orgasm, building it higher and higher. He bites my earlobe, knowing each button to push to bring me undone.

His assault is so pleasurable; massaging, thrusting, biting.

“Fuck, yes, yes,” I scream as I gyrate on his cock, feeling my orgasm hit full force, so hard and amazing. My juices trickle down my thighs as my release hits a pinnacle; I squirt and convulse as I ride the wave of ecstasy. He thrusts harder, throwing me forward.

I feel another release building as he continues rubbing and thrusting. He pumps inside as his own release skyrockets, gripping my hips as his cock throbs and contracts. He grunts loudly, slamming inside so hard it amplifies my pleasure as I come again, a toe-curling, spine-tingling orgasm. He finishes with his own release, plunging hard with his full length as he comes hard and fast.

“Fuck, yes,” he screams in pleasure.

Then he slaps my arse; I’m sure as a cheeky way to say it’s his for now. I don’t expect anything less from him.

He pulls his cock out then uses a towel he had on hand to clean us both up. We both collapse on the bed, reeling from our desire-driven romp; I need a minute to get my legs to stop wobbling. *If I were a smoker, I’d need a cigarette after that ...*

“You won’t be walking for the next ten minutes,” he jokes as he holds my knees still.

“I’ll be outta here in five,” I reply; I don’t stay any longer than I need to, and he knows it.

“You know, we could make this more permanent, Jem,” he says, totally catching me by surprise. My hands feel clammy as my freak-out commences.

“Ha-ha, very funny. You couldn’t keep your dick in your pants if your life depended on it,” I declare honestly, telling him more or less that I don’t trust him.

“All I need is someone to keep me on my toes. You do a great fucking job of that,” he replies, and I’m still gobsmacked we are having this conversation.

I stand and start to find my clothes, pretty much avoiding any more of this awkward conversation; it will never end well.

God, of all the guys I've been with, he is the biggest manwhore, without a doubt. Maybe we would be a good pair, but I can't bring myself to find out.

I'm dressed, and as I grab my bag, I turn to find him still naked, hands folded under his head, just watching me intensely.

"Gotta go," I say, smiling. Leaving him with his own thoughts, I walk out the door and hurry to my car.

Well, sure, I've got feelings for the guy; it's been six months of amazing, hot, no-strings-attached, naughty, scratch-the-itch-type sex.

The Rock is not the guy I envisage taking home to meet my parents and having kids with.

No matter how fucking hot he is or how talented he is in the bedroom, I just couldn't trust the guy. I feel shallow for admitting it.

I squash the idea before I really even give it a second thought. *No chance ...*

Chapter 7

Devil in disguise – social media

Two words: judgmental arseholes!

I put up a meme on Facebook about being happily single and having fun with no responsibilities.

It's *my* Facebook page. I post for me, not for attention; it's not for anyone else.

And fucking BOOM ... I get two comments from jealous bitches. *They are like flies to shit ...*

Who the fuck are they to judge me? I'm guessing their own lives must be perfect and successful, and they are on top of their game.

Very rarely is this the case. Most likely, when someone puts another person down, they are passing judgment and criticising to make themselves feel better.

Being a jerk can make you feel better, somehow.

They hide away in their fake profiles; their online photos show they are happy with lots of laughter and good times, and all of it is fucking lies!

Do they think if they comment on other people's statuses, if they criticise and belittle, their own fucking life doesn't look half as bad?

Well, no, that's not true.

Get over yourself.

Focus on your issues and problems, and leave me the fuck alone.

Hate.

There's another word.

I feel anger and hate towards you.

But I also feel sorry for you.

You must be lacking in self-confidence and really dislike yourself. Is your life so boring that you need to involve yourself in mine?

I know ... don't bite back.

Trolls are just trolls.

Haters gonna hate.

But seriously, I can't help but comment back, as one thing I've learnt is that anger lingers, it causes pain and nothing heals.

I'm giving these bitches a taste of their own medicine.

Sheree's comment:

Oh, God, Jemma, are you still single, desperate, and dateless? I can't believe it!

My reply:

Thanks for that comment, Sheree. I can change my relationship status at any time, shame you can't change your vile personality...

Now, I remember why I haven't spoken to you in ten years.

Holly's comment:

Wow, nothing has changed. I see you are still the slutty Jemma I remember from high school.

My reply:

Oh God, Holly, it seems you are still the rude, obnoxious loudmouth I remember too.

Now to block them both—after they read this, of course.

Karma is a bitch, and sometimes, it's just too slow waiting for it to come around full circle; I'm not the most patient of people.

A girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do ...

Chapter 8

Size does matter...

Work is quiet today, and the totally inappropriate discussion about cock size has made it so much more interesting.

In the words of the humorous and wise comedian Chris Rock, “There are only three things women need in life: food, water, and compliments.”

“Do you think Chris Rock believes that statement?” I question as I shake my head in disbelief; maybe it’s meant tongue in cheek.

And sex ...

“We need sex and chocolate too,” I state truthfully.

Well, I sure need sex. I’m sure I’m a little more hot-blooded than the average girl. I can manage without it daily, but I think seven days is a hard limit, though.

I’ve had a drought for fourteen days before ... lots of toy action, but I’m a stickler for the real thing. Give me a cock and a tongue any day.

Crystal finally comments. “Oh God, yes, sex and chocolate. Don’t forget wine.” She smiles widely as the conversation continues and becomes more engrossing by the minute.

“Maybe I’m just shallow, but size matters to me. They gotta reach the spot. Thickness and length make a difference.” I add my two cents and realise I’m making the convo dirtier, which shouldn’t surprise me.

Size is my weakness; a good firm cock. I want a guy who's packed and stacked in his pants.

"I don't like 'em huge; so long as he knows what he's doing, that's all I want," Crystal declares as we sip our tea like grandmas in the kitchen. We don't talk loud, especially when our conversations turn dirty, as they seem to seventy percent of the time.

"Too big is painful," she adds, cringing at the thought.

"Yes, you don't want to be split in two," Jasmine declares, now laughing and holding her crotch at the thought of being split.

"I haven't found one too big yet," I admit, and the other two laugh. *Did I just say I have a big, loose pussy? Interpretations are everything.*

"Oh God, we are gonna call you Lucy from now on," Crystal jokes at my expense.

I shake my head, smiling. "I didn't mean it like that, just that if you are wet enough, the size fits like a glove. I like to be completely filled," I tell them, and realise I'm an oversharer, but at least I'm honest.

"But I'm totally with you on the 'know what they are doing' bandwagon. If they can get the rhythm perfect, everything else is history," I admit, and the others nod.

"What's the smallest you have seen?" I ask them both, curious as to what experiences they have had.

Crystal holds up her pinkie, and we laugh hysterically.

"It was tiny. I should have stopped it, but I couldn't," she admits, and I nod, thinking about bad lay. He was little and clueless.

"Yes, God, isn't it disappointing when you can barely feel it," Jasmine comments, letting out a sigh.

"I mean, girls aren't perfect, some tits are barely a handful, but it's different when it's meant to serve a sexual purpose;

men are turned on no matter what,” I declare, knowing it’s true; it takes a lot less for a guy to become horny than it does for a female. *Maybe it’s the testosterone.*

“It’s so goddamn true! They are turned on from just sitting next to us, like a dog in heat,” she states, and makes a humping action, causing more laughter.

“We are gonna get busted, girlfriends. Let’s finish this conversation another day and get back to it,” Jasmine declares, winking at me. This is totally a “to be continued” moment.

I couldn’t agree more; I would turn beetroot red if Tony heard me talking about cocks and sex; he’s like an older father figure.

After work, I change quickly into my gym clothes. I decided earlier in the day that a walk would be perfect. Sometimes working indoors has its downsides; fresh air is something I crave.

The last of the afternoon sun is still burning down; the vitamin D is so invigorating. I increase my speed to get my heart rate up and my adrenaline pumping.

Headphones are in and the iPod is shuffling through my eclectic music.

Exercise is good for the soul; it stimulates endorphins, similar to sex. I know which one I’d rather.

Walking is less messy, more solitary, and less complicated.

I take a few deep breaths as I think about the comment the Rock made about making things more permanent. What is happening lately? He is the last person I expected to make that comment, like ever. He’s one of the biggest players I know.

Correction. He is the biggest player I know.

A brisk walk just isn’t cutting it, so I start running, slowly.

I’m feeling a little conflicted, I guess. I’m not getting any younger. What if by the time I want to settle down, there’s no

one decent left? *Oh God, I'm going to end up an old maid who's alone, desperate, and dateless.*

Now, I'm sprinting. I will run these crazy-arse thoughts out of my mind.

I do not want to settle down with a sex god who has literally had more than two hundred partners. He and I have never really had a lengthy conversation.

He is a boxer; imagine the hospital trips, concussions, brain injuries.

My mind is clear.

If more ever happened with him, I'd be playing with fire, so no thanks.

I'll be avoiding him for a while.

Chapter 9

A welcome distraction

Dan:

Hey Jemma,

Work extended my trip, but I'm finally back.

You free for dinner Friday night?

Well, I wasn't expecting a message for dinner, considering the dirty texts. Maybe the whole away with work thing was legit. Who am I to judge? But seriously, is this going to get messy? I mean, is this a date?

Let's call it a catch-up. I guess dinner could be cool then a shag. He was definitely hot.

But I like to keep it interesting, so I'll make him sweat a few hours before I text him back.

Treat 'em mean, keep 'em keen.

Three hours later, I reply. *Yep, I'm that person.*

Jemma:

Hey,

Sure, dinner sounds cool.

Good old iPhones. I can see that he has read my message and is typing back already; it makes me smile. He is keen ... but maybe too keen.

Dan:

Awesome!

I can pick you up around 7pm. I was thinking I'll book for 7:30.

Any suggestions on a nice place to eat?

I rack my brain, thinking of places to go for dinner.

Maybe casual like the Outback Steakhouse, or somewhere a little fancier, like Blue Water Thai at Milson's Point.

Me:

Blue Water Thai has great food, it's in Milson's Point, if that suits?

Dan:

Sounds perfect. Text me your address, please.

No sex though, it's just dinner.

I giggle at his reply. God, is he serious? *No sex. What does that mean, he wants more ...?*

I'll fix that.

Jemma:

Well I'm not coming then ...

Ha-ha

Dan:

I'm the one who will have trouble refusing your hotness.

Jemma:

True, so why refuse then.

Dan:

Good question. You are keeping me on my toes already.

Jemma:

That's just what I do ...

Dan:

I like it.

Jemma:

See you Friday.

Dan:

I'm looking forward to it.

Jemma:

Oh, and my address is:

14 Dwyer Street, North Sydney

Apartment 6

I'm left smiling again after our texting. There are no crazy alarm bells going off with him; hopefully, what you see is what you get.

Chapter 10

Brazilian vs the hairy mound

In all seriousness, my hoo-ha is getting way overgrown. Thank God, I've got my waxing appointment tomorrow; in case Dan's no-sex rule gets thrown out the window, preparation is key. I need a few days to desensitise as even after years that shit still hurts like a motherfucker.

But gotta love the smoothness and being hair free.

Tia is all about the hairy mound; her words "guys love it," are such a cop-out. I don't believe guys like wiry, curly pubes hanging and covering the very part they want to get inside.

Especially when they give oral; no one wants to gag on pubes ...

I don't go the full Brazilian; I leave a nice little runway.
It's my pride and joy.

My waxer, Skye, knows exactly the way I want it, and she does it perfectly. I trim it up between. Trust me when I say the guys appreciate it.

I'm always complimented.

"Damn, woman, that is sexy."

"I love a woman who stays well-groomed."

I've never had a comment, "you should let your hair grow," or "it's too bare down there."

Reminds me of the Play School song "There's a bear in there."

Sometimes, I have the brain of a fifteen-year-old ...

A couple of days later, I'm all healed and ready to go.

The thought has already crossed my mind that if Dan says no, I'm heading to Rock's. No point in wasting a good waxing.

After work Friday, I grab a quick shower. I was smart enough to wash my hair last night, so all I need is to give it a straighten with my trusty GHD and get dressed.

I'm opting for casual yet sexy.

How do you dress to say, "hey, I'm happy to have fun, but don't get the wrong idea about this being our first date with more to come"? *Too trivial.*

Man, this whole dating shit is complicated. That's why I want no strings; it's easier.

"How do I look?" I ask Roxy as I parade around our apartment.

I've gone for a knee-length denim dress with a built-in belt—V-cut, of course, but not massive on the cleavage like my other outfit options. There's a time and a place.

I wear my trusty favourite silver hoop earrings and apply minimal make-up, though my trademark dark eyes still make an appearance.

"Wow, Jem, you look different," she replies, smiling and looking puzzled.

"What, 'cause I'm dressed a little sophisticated?" I question her response.

"Well, yeah, minimal cleavage and legs aren't on show. Who are you and what have you done with my best friend?" she jokes, and I laugh. I can see how it may be surprising.

"God, Rox, I just have no idea. I don't want to give him the wrong idea about a relationship, but it's dinner, not clubbing. Should I change into something shorter or jeans?" I question, feeling even more goddamn confused.

I slouch my shoulders and sit on our lounge, feeling conflicted. I adjust my shoes, keeping myself distracted; my strappy wedge heels aren't as high as usual, as I can't actually remember if he is taller than I am. That first night is a little blurry.

God, clothes are hard sometimes ...

“No; seriously, Jem, you look gorgeous. You always make the right clothes choices. I'm just used to the shorter version on you. Right now, you look fabulous,” she declares and embraces me.

“Thanks, girlfriend. This is why I don't do the dating thing,” I tell her, shaking my head and snapping myself out of whatever is going on inside my brain.

“I'm going to meet him outside to get some fresh air and all that jazz,” I tell her as I check my watch and see it's already 6:55 p.m.

“Okay, have a great time. No sex, remember!” she jokes. I filled her in on his text message; it still makes me laugh. Roxy pokes her tongue out.

I follow suit and cheekily stick my tongue out in return; it really is a funny request from a male.

As I walk out the front, the warm night air is welcoming, though a breeze would be nice; the humidity has been stifling.

I'm surprised to find Dan already here and parked. His car is very nice—black and pretty sexy. I think it's a new Commodore, a sporty version. A hot car is something I always appreciate.

“Hey,” I say as he hops out and makes his way towards me.

“Hey yourself,” he replies, kissing my cheek.

“You look stunning,” he adds, smiling, making me grin in return.

“Why, thank you. You scrub up all right yourself.” I wink playfully at him.

“Let’s get going. I’m hoping parking won’t be too crazy in Milson’s Point,” he states. He has a point; sometimes it can be a royal pain in the butt.

The inside of his car is just as flashy as the outside—all-leather seats, fancy GPS system with Bluetooth, and state-of-the-art sound system, but not the over-the-top bass you can hear miles away.

“Is this a 2017 Commodore?” I ask him. I’m usually pretty cluey with cars.

“Yep, it’s the SS model. You know your cars, Jemma. I’m impressed,” he replies, smirking.

God, men think we are clueless sometimes. “It’s the 2017 state-of-the-art 6.2 litre V8, and I added the sports armour and racing stripes for that extra-chic sporty look,” he informs me, and I’m impressed. Not only that he knows his stuff, but when he drives off, the engines does all kinds of things to my sensitive lady bits.

“It’s a hot car, Dan,” I proclaim, looking over at him as he changes the gears with precision.

“I have to agree with you. Much like the lady riding in it tonight.” He compliments me, and I can’t help but grin.

The fifteen-minute car trip flies, the car effortlessly gliding in and out of traffic, and we are super lucky to find a perfect car spot. When Dan reverses with ease, it’s a huge turn-on. I love an alpha male who knows what he is doing with cars—and of course, in the bedroom.

Dan is pretty cool throughout dinner; he seems a little nervous at first, but a couple of jokes totally break the ice.

“You choose entrée?” the Thai waitress asks us.

“I’ll have the tom kha kai soup, please,” I tell her, knowing it was great from last time.

Dan decides to have the same, and tells the lady, “Make that two, please.” He winks at me, trusting my opinion that the food is going to be at least edible.

“Do you want to order our main meals, Jem? I totally trust your judgment; you are here with me, after all, so that says something about your taste,” Dan states sarcastically, making me smile and shake my head.

“Well, actually, I have the perfect combination for us. I’m happy that you trust my judgment,” I reply, nodding. I’m sure he will enjoy the choices.

When the waitress returns, I excitedly order the rest of our food. “Can we please share the pad khao Thai fried rice, the spicy beef salad, and chicken with cashew nuts with pad Thai fried noodles,” I order, sounding all professional as I feel Dan’s eyes on me.

When I look up, he is grinning widely and staring at me. He has hunger in his eyes, and not for the Thai food we are about to consume.

“Very good, thank you,” the short dark-haired waitress responds and heads into the kitchen.

“Well, I’m intrigued to try the food you have ordered, and even more interested in watching you devour it. Those lips of yours look quite inviting,” he declares, and now I’m grinning again. He is saying all the right things without being a jerk or over the top.

“Entrée tom kha kai for you both,” the waitress announces, placing two soup bowls in front of us, then a bottle of what I assume is soy sauce.

“Can we get a bottle of your best white wine too,” Dan requests. The lady smiles and nods, disappearing once again.

I dig into the soup. It’s just as delicious as I remember.

It's mildly spicy with crushed shallots, stalks of lemongrass, and tender strips of chicken. On the top are fresh lime leaves. It's creamy and mouth-watering.

I watch Dan as he takes his first mouthful. "This soup is really good," he tells me, digging in and devouring the rest.

I follow suit and finish my bowl. When the wine arrives, I wash the soup down with the refreshing beverage. The crisp taste is divine and not too dry like some white wines.

"So, Dan, I guess I've never even asked you where you work?" I question. I hate the awkward silence that sometimes develops.

Honestly, there is only so much small talk you can do that doesn't involve work. *I vaguely remember telling him on our hook-up that I regretted drinking so much, as the veterinary clinic is always busy.*

"It's quite boring, actually, but I work in our family business, Westbrook Software Developers," Dan tells me. "I'm the executive in charge of the development, testing, and maintenance of computer software programs," he adds.

"Yep, sounds a little boring but important," I respond truthfully. I've never been one to judge another person on their employment. *Well, that's not entirely true.*

"I'm also training at a local bar, a few shifts a week; something outside the box for a bit of extra cash," he adds, and that's a little more interesting.

"Now, that is more in my vicinity," I say, smirking, thinking of him making cocktails and wearing a snazzy bartender outfit. *He can make me a drink any day.*

I am pleased that Dan is moaning as he eats the rest of our dinner; he loves my meal choices. Fussy eaters are frustrating, but this food really is nice and tender and bursting with flavour.

Dinner is a success; the food, like last time, is heavenly and delicious.

I can't help feeling a little conflicted.

I thoroughly enjoy dinner, conversation, and Dan's company. I guess it's all new territory; usually, my rules and checklist are just what I need to get them in my bed. This guy is stimulating my mind more than the normal one-night stands, and his humour is refreshing.

My one rule that's not meant to be broken—no strings—is playing havoc on my mind.

It has been a while since a guy has taken me to dinner; it's new and different.

I find myself flicking my hair then licking my lips as the thought of leaving gets me a little hot and worked up.

Just like other nights, I'm using my body to get what I want. I mean, come on, I waxed *and* dressed up, so sex is on the dessert menu. He should count his lucky stars; I reject men regularly. No strings, just sex is a blessing for guys.

It's a guy's wet dream.

It's just what I do.

"How 'bout we get outta here," I suggest, not feeling like any dessert on the menu.

"I've actually got an early morning tomorrow. I'll have to drop you home and call it a night, Jemma," Dan replies, and I roll my eyes, knowing it's his no-sex rule.

I play along; two can play at this game.

"Okay. I've actually got an early morning with my trainer, too; these babies won't tone themselves," I say lifting my dress to show my thighs—of course with an added flash.

Dan smirks, knowing the game I'm playing.

"I've seen more than your thighs before, Jemma. I know the rest is worth the wait," he declares playfully, and I smile.
Worth the wait ...

What does he mean? Like waiting until we are exclusive? God, just give me sex already.

I stand, showing him I'm ready to leave, and he follows my lead out to his car. I'm getting frustrated and am close to giving up and walking away. *Complications suck.*

I let out a sigh as he opens my door and I slide in. I hear him exhale a deep breath too, and I know I have the same effect on him.

I let my dress ride up along his leather seats. Playing a little dirty, I spread my legs as I feel his eyes on me. I take a moment to adjust my push-up bra, tucking my babies in neatly, but pulling my dress down a little farther at the front, showing them off.

“Goddammit, Jemma, you are making it so hard, woman,” Dan proclaims, and I know my dirty little plan is working its magic.

“Let me feel,” I demand, knowing that's not what he meant, but I lean across and grope his crotch anyway. “Yep, it's hard,” I state. I keep massaging as he chuckles and shakes his head at my brazen move.

I'm grateful the car park is pretty empty, as I'm about 85 percent certain from his hardness that we are going to have car sex.

“I really like you. I want this to be more than just sex,” he spits out between moans.

“No more talking, sex is all we need,” I tell him as I climb across and straddle him. *Fuck the games, I want action.*

His lips crash onto mine, his hunger so evident and fucking hot as he kisses me hard. His tongue assaults mine, and his hands are all over my back, pulling me onto his cock.

I rock on his hardness as he cups my breasts. He wastes no time exposing my bra and left nipple as his lips leave mine to suck on my swollen bud.

“I have a surprise for you,” I whisper as I guide his hand up my inner thigh, showing him that I have no underwear on and a bonus of smooth, soft nakedness.

“Oh man, that is fucking hot. I need to be inside there,” he moans as he finds my wetness and slips a finger inside. We both moan at the thought of more.

I nod as I eagerly undo the belt of his jeans then his top button and zipper. I waste no more time, pulling down his jeans and briefs. His erect cock springs free and stands upright.

“Someone is eager,” I state, smirking. He leans in and kisses me as I slide my hand up his steel rod. I adjust my knees while he helps me pull up my dress, showing him my nice neat pussy and the slim strip of hair that is left. It’s like an arrow pointing at the hot spot.

“Oh wait, you said no sex. We should stop,” I declare, biting my lip and gaging his reaction.

“Fuck that; I’ve somehow changed my mind,” he replies, smiling widely as he reaches into his wallet and passes me a foil packet.

I need no other words. I roll the condom on then adjust my slick, wet folds over the tip of his warm cock. Nice and thick, it fills me the way I like it. I open a little wider as I push down; his shaft slides inside farther.

“Mmm,” I moan as he fills me all the way.

“Damn, woman,” he whispers as my wet pussy completely swallows him.

I lift and adjust as he slides out then I push to direct him back inside. I continue this rhythm, in and out, slowly at first, then as we are both looking into each other’s eyes with the same amount of lust, I slam down onto his length, over and over. I gasp as I’m completely filled and whimper as his thumb finds my clit.

My J spot is hit inside over and over as I guide his cock to please us both.

I arch my back as he holds my hips and thrusts upwards; his hands dig in as my clit pulses and my wetness pools. My release electrifies me, and I ride the wave of my orgasm, drenched as I explode and gyrate, taken into bliss. With one last hard thrust, Dan follows my release; he pounds into me as he quivers with his own gratification.

We are both well fucked, sweaty, and messy.

“There are tissues in the glove box,” he tells me, chuckling as I climb off and attempt clean-up in aisle two.

“The aftermath is never as pretty as the escapade,” I joke, but I’m half-serious.

“Well, it looks like you won this time, lady,” he says playfully.

“You sound so certain that there will be a next time,” I reply, my eyes wide.

“Of course, there will be a next time. I haven’t even started with you yet, Jemma,” he states as I look over at him. He is grinning widely but has rendered me speechless.

“If you can do no strings, I can do a next time,” I state cautiously. It’s new territory for me. I don’t want to give him the wrong idea, but I don’t want to kick a good thing before I have a bit more fun with it.

“I’ll try no strings for now, but I want more with you, Jem. I’m planning to show you just how you deserve to be treated, princess,” he tells me then kisses me softly.

Again, I can’t find words, so I sit in silence as he cleans up then drives me home.

The fresh air blowing in his car window is welcome on my still flushed face. We park outside; he opens my door and walks me up to my apartment.

“Tonight, was exceptional,” he tells me then kisses me sweetly. He doesn’t rush; it’s just slow and sensual, holding me tightly as he plays with my lips, nibbling, and caressing my back with his hands. *The guy can kiss; it’s a little concerning just how well.*

“Good night, Jemma. I’ll call you,” he states.

“Thanks, Dan. I had a great time,” I add, smiling. Then I give him a wink, reminding him no strings.

I walk inside, still reeling from dinner, the hot sex, and well, everything about the night from start to finish. I start to question myself ...

This guy has already shown me he is different. How long can I hold off on the no-commitment thing?

I need to stick to my guns; this whole feeling vulnerable is not something I like. It’s uneasy.

Could he be the exception to my rule?

Can he prove himself a worthy contender and treat me like a princess, like he said?

Who the fuck knows?

So, for now, I like the less complicated avenue.

Chapter 11

Dan

She's a Wild One

She's done it to me again—hook, line, and sinker. I want her bad, for more than just sex, for more than just one night ...

Fuck, when she rode my cock, it was heaven. She's meant to be on top of me, and under me, but I also believe she's meant to be my girl.

I don't want to share her; I want her to be *mine*.

She keeps saying no strings, and she's happily single. I'll make her see what I can offer for more than just an orgasm or two.

I don't think she's ever been treated well. I'll show her romance, shower her with gifts, and prove to her that I am more than the others.

I am a hot-blooded alpha male, but I was also brought up to respect women. Sex is important but so is conversation, nurturing, and safety.

Jemma fears the unknown.

Whatever I need to do, I will do it.

She talked a lot about her BFF Roxy; maybe she can give me some advice.

All I know is that I won't give up. A woman like Jemma is one in a million; I have a once in a lifetime shot with this amazing woman.

Come hell or high water, I will make her want me.

For more than just sex.

I've noticed it's her weapon with me, though; she is using sex as power over me. Who would have thought a woman would love taking over the control and male role?

It's totally hot and conflicting all at the same time.

Chapter 12

Once a party girl, always a party girl...

The next night is Jasmine's birthday, so we go clubbing.

We meet Crystal from work, Jasmine's cousin Michelle, and two other school friends of hers. We're all eager for a few drinks and fun night out to celebrate.

I'm still a party girl, but in saying that, I have totally settled from what I was like two years ago. I mean three pills in one night was average back then. Bit wild and crazy.

Even twelve months ago, I would pop two—never doing things by halves.

Now that I'm getting older—and possibly more mature since I'm holding down a steady job—I honestly find the thought of still being out of it or coming down scary.

My job is similar to being a doctor or a nurse. I have animals to look after; there can be high risks involved—blood pressure can drop and so can oxygen levels. I need to be coherent, and the effects from a Saturday night can still be around on Monday.

So, these days I have a fortnightly rule.

Party drugs on weekends only, only one night. Unlimited drinks, but I like to think I'm no longer that messy chick I was in my early twenties. I have more decency. *Most nights.*

I also have a full detox during the week, although mind you, the Thursday night I met Dan I totally broke that rule. *Rules were meant to be broken, except my no strings one ...*

One thing I love about clubbing ... well actually, there's more than one thing I love.

But my favourite part is dressing up. Tonight's outfit is a short black skirt, black knee-high boots, and a coral-coloured singlet top with maximum cleavage.

My hair is up in a messy bun, and my make-up is dark and sultry. I like to dress up for myself. To make myself feel sexy and beautiful. It's not about the men or trying to compete with other women; it's for my confidence.

Well, sure, my style is a little seductive, but I guess that's what makes me *me* ...

I'm not your pencil skirt or suit-wearing type. I love skinny jeans and miniskirts, but I sure do love a good gym day in leggings or tights. *I'm a mixed bag.*

It's all about feeling feminine in a skirt or dress, and well, damn, I have nice legs, so why the hell shouldn't I show them off?

I skilfully apply a red lipstick that matches my dark outfit and top.

Who wants to look the same every time they go out? Not me.

I get bored with the same hairstyle, make-up colours, and lipstick, so I mix it up all the time. Heels, boots, flats, all of the above, jewellery and body art—nothing is too much. Well, sure, less is more, but just sometimes more can be perfect.

I'm totally not looking to pick up tonight. I'm well sexed up; between Dan and the Rock, I'm a happy woman. *God, I'm a little greedy, actually having both those hot guys.*

It's not like they're both mine, though; neither one is, and I like it that way.

I am pretty certain the Rock would have other girls over on a regular basis. I remember one slut in particular, Suzie or Stacey or something.

I remember him saying she kept stalking him. Don't they realise how pathetic it makes them look? Do they have no shame?

Jasmine, Roxy, Tia, and I are having a ball. The others are ordering more drinks at the bar as we dance. The music is sensational; it echoes loudly as the bass vibrates through the speakers. Over the next hour, we devour numerous drinks and continue to move our bodies to the awesome tunes. The best part is that my abs are hurting from the laughter. We end up giggling hysterically when Jasmine imitates jazz hands from our favourite movie, *Bring it On*. Others on the dance floor must think we are a little nuts.

"Four Malibu and pineapple juices, please," I order at the bar with Tia by my side. The bartender fills the order, and as I turn to head back to the others, I sense him before I see him. God, I wonder if his ears were burning with my earlier thoughts.

His shirt is as tight as buggery, showing off every toned inch of his biceps and ripped torso; he is so robust and rugged I can't help but stare. His is grinning widely; he is as cocky as hell and seriously shows it. I know why all the chicks in here are looking his way.

Sexually, we're like magnets to each other. Without him actually touching me, I feel clammy in his presence; it's the wicked thoughts of previous encounters. *What those hands are capable of, oh, and that tongue ...*

"What the fuck, Ryan?" I hear a high-pitched female voice scream, snapping me out of my naughty thoughts. *What, he can't even talk to another girl without getting in trouble?*

Oh God, here we go.

I look at Tia, and she rolls her eyes, knowing all too well what is unfolding in front of us.

I let out a deep breath and roll my eyes in frustration at the Rock as he frowns, looking a little pissed at whoever is calling out to him in that tone.

It's blonde Barbie. She seriously looks like a walking plastic surgery ad—all bimbo, no brains.

Oh, joy she is coming towards us.

She must be the stalker he has talked about, Suzie or Stacey or something slutty.

“Back off, Stacey, we aren't exclusive,” he tells her quite loudly, and her face drops.

Ha-ha, that's strike one, whore ...

I giggle to myself and just stand there watching the show. I don't feel jealous—why should I? No strings.

“See ya, Jem,” he announces, winking at me as he walks past us over to the bar.

She turns to look at me and shoots daggers. If looks could kill ...

I just laugh and turn my attention back to my girls. *Men!*

“You know how to pick them, Jem,” Tia declares, and I shake my head, laughing.

“That is the exact reason I stay single; it's less complicated,” I shout over the music.

I spend the next hours dancing my butt off; it's euphoric and gives me such a rush. Nothing better as I sway my hips and enjoy being young and free.

“Damn, girlfriend, home at three, was a ffffantastic night.” I slur my words as Roxy and I stumble into the apartment.

“You are soooo funny, Jemma-wemma,” Roxy replies, and we snicker and then eventually roar with laughter.

Eventually, we both pass out in my bed, a regular occurrence.

When the sun's unwelcome rays wake me, I have a raging headache. It takes some Nurofen, water, and a quick shower to feel a little more human.

I wake Roxy to do the same then we put on our PJs and sleep the day away.

Early dinner of a nice greasy burger from the chicken shop around the corner and hot chips, and we are right as rain.

“That burger was sensational,” I declare, skolling a bottle of water. The dehydration of a hangover is ridiculous.

“Yep, it was perfect,” Roxy agrees as we collapse on the lounge for more sloth-like relaxing.

Dan texts me three days after our dinner. I try to refrain from smiling when I see his name, but honestly, it was a nice surprise.

I enjoy his humorous banter, amongst other things.

Dan:

I can't seem to get the other night off my mind.

Me:

That's because the food was so good.

Dan:

After the food, dessert was better.

Me:

Oh yeah, that part was nice.

Dan:

It was sensational. But honestly, just having you in my company for the night was all I needed.

I'm thinking we have dinner again or movies?

Wow, he is definitely a charmer. I can't manage a serious reply, though.

Me:

Let's just skip to dessert.

Dan:

Come to the movies with me and I'll buy you dessert after.

Me:

Sounds kinky.

Dan:

Only you could turn that into something sexual.

Me:

Haven't you figured me out yet?

Dan:

You, Jemma, are the hardest one yet to figure out. Care to give me any clues to your Bermuda triangle?

Me:

No clues. No strings, either. Just fun.

Dan:

I can do fun; can't we have a few strings? Start small and add more as we go? Can you meet me halfway?

I really don't want to get into it, but I'm intrigued.

Me:

What do you mean by a few strings?

Dan:

Well, for one, I'm only seeing you. Is that the same with you?

Crap.

Here we go ...

I don't know what to write; do I lie or tell him the truth?

This is none of his business, actually.

Dan:

Okay, so by you going quiet, I'm guessing you are seeing someone else?

Me:

I'm not seeing anyone, not even you.

Like I keep saying, no strings.

Means no relationship, no questions, only fun.

Dan:

Okay.

Me:

Maybe movies aren't such a good idea.

Dan:

Don't you want a little more than just sex sometimes, Jemma?

I know it all seems to freak you out.

Am I not good enough? Maybe the other guy is a better suit?

Me:

You are definitely good enough.

More than enough ... I guess it's me.

Right now, I'm not capable of more. I don't know any different, and honestly, I'm happy this way.

Dan:

Okay.

Me:

I'm picking you up this time for the movies. No arguing, it's the twenty-first century. I have a car, and I can drive.

Dan:

Yes, ma'am.

Me:

Finally, you are learning that agreeing with me is your best option.

Dan:

For now, Jemma.

For now ...

Chapter 13

Scars

We all have scars. Some are visible on the outside—on your skin from a cut or wound, an accident, or stitches. A disfigurement or blemish.

Other scars are only on the inside.

From being hurt, possibly bullied, belittled, used, or abused.

Some people are better at hiding their scars than others. Like me, for example. My tough exterior is a wall to keep the soft interior guarded and safe.

You wouldn't even know half the people who hold their scars close to their hearts; they conceal away the truth and hide their pain.

I have emotional scarring from a past relationship. Even all these years later, it was the only relationship I've ever had. It fucking hurt me deeply, so I've put up a barrier to stop my heart from getting hurt again.

The thing with scars is that they are a forever reminder of something that happened.

You can let your scars rule you ... or you can do your best to learn from your mistakes and use your scars as a lesson. You control your own destiny; your scars don't have to define you.

Easier said than done.

Wednesday night with a glass of wine—breaking the detox rule—I find myself going through old photos.

I have one left of me and the ex-boyfriend; the others I burnt the day he cheated. We were such a good-looking couple. Damn.

Seeing his face brings back the pain and anguish. God knows why I kept this one. I place it facedown and keep digging for others.

High school photos are hilarious since so much has changed. I laugh at the outdated clothes styles, and oh God, the hair was terrible.

But then like an unwelcome flood, the photos bring back so many memories—heartbreak, agony, feeling unworthy, and unwanted.

Like any other teenage girl, I hated high school.

I felt out of place. Where did I fit in? I wasn't gorgeous, skinny, smart, or athletic.

I was average.

The smart groups hung together, the cool kids smoked out the back, and the sporty kids played sports.

I never really had a clique or group that I was part of. I loved music, as I still do, so I would sit with my headphones in and become lost in the power of music.

Not belonging can be hurtful.

You sometimes don't realise you are being bullied, but when you are isolated and excluded, picked last for teams, laughed at for giving the wrong answer, teased for liking a boy, embarrassed by tripping over in the quadrangle ... it's all a form of bullying.

Then the peer pressure to smoke, kiss a boy, wag classes, steal clothes that you can't afford to fit in with the richer kids, cheat on tests.

It's endless.

It's so confusing, and it all hurts.

When your school counsellor hits on you, it confuses you a hell of a lot more. Seems all guys want is in a girl's pants.

Awkward.

When you find out that the guy you love with all your heart, your first everything, cheats on you, it's earth shattering.

But you pick up the pieces.

The next guy I crushed on kissed me and then deserted me and moved on to another girl in my year. More hurt, more feelings of inadequacy.

Well, at least he dumped her pretty quick too; made me feel a little better.

That was the start of my and Roxy's beautiful friendship. She was the other girl.

When we both realised it was his loss, not ours, and that we actually had a lot in common, we became inseparable.

We got into all kinds of mischief together. But I swear, from the moment she started at our school, my life changed. She helped me realise none of it will matter later in life.

High school is six years, adulthood is around sixty.

When the school counsellor gets fired for hitting on his students ... well, karma does go full circle sometimes.

Once you get into a rhythm, it becomes easier, but honestly, six years is a long time to see the same faces; it weeds out the weak, who leave. Friendships change numerous times.

Except my and Roxy's, ours stayed strong.

Teenagers are totally misunderstood. We are still treated like children but expected to act like adults. I was over the moon to finally graduate and leave.

I'll never forget how Roxy and I had each other's backs and always supported each other.

We both wrote the boys' names and numbers on the toilet walls who hurt us, cheated on us, or treated us like crap. Call for a good time ...

I heard that he had twenty calls in one night, and his parents took his phone away; that made us smile. *You can have all the girls you like, manwhore ...*

We both were grounded for two weeks after the principal called our parents when we were busted smoking on school grounds. Neither of us took up the habit; it was just cool so we tried it.

Being a teenage girl is so much harder than being a teenage boy.

Girls are bitches. They start rumours, criticise, and judge. We have to deal with insane hormones, periods, and cramps. Moods and pimples, wearing make-up, doing our hair.

Boys are mean to you because they like you, but who is ever going to like someone who is mean to you?

I guess it's the alpha male. We all like a little Christian Grey telling us what to do but not too extreme.

They make lists about who is the prettiest, ugliest, and best kisser.

When you get older, you just want to go back in time and slap yourself.

None of it matters; just do your time and get on with the start of adulthood.

It's so frustrating.

I guess it's all about growing up, maturing, and learning from your mistakes ...

I love that I can look back and see how far I have come. I am Jemma Donovan, twenty-five years old with an awesome apartment, great car, career that I love, and I can honestly say that I love my life.

I've moved forward and excelled from that confused high school girl to a mature woman with my whole life ahead of me.

Chapter 14

Walk of Shame...

We've all done it, right?

That “just fucked” look. Make-up smudged, hair a mess—well, only if you got under him. On top is best for keeping the hair styled.

Counting on my fingers and toes the amount of one-nighters I've had.

So, the walk of shame is a regular occurrence. Sneaking out of a shared house is always a little embarrassing. I just take it on the chin and walk out with confidence.

God, I think back to some of the one-night stands ...

The “is it in yet” guy

So small you can't feel it and literally wonder if his cock is inside you.

“Taught me a few things” guy

New positions, angles, and that thrust ... Daayaam he knew how to use it, and it felt sensational. I kept his number and hooked up a few times until he moved interstate.

The “talk dirty to me” guy

Telling a girl to yell obscenities at you during sex is not hot and dirty. It's creepy and confronting. Calling you daddy is not ever acceptable.

Sometimes, I feel that I should write a “what not to do” handbook. Some guys have no fucking shame; they obviously

grew up without a sister or mother figure and say the most inappropriate and fucked up things. Have some R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

Telling me after sex “it’s time to leave, honey” will get you sack whacked.

I know it was a one-night stand; trust me, I had every intention of bailing, you rude, arrogant asshole.

What’s the go with pushing down our heads when we are giving you a blow job? Pet peeve of mine. You do this, I will bite, and it won’t be pleasurable. We don’t want to choke and gag on your cock. Deep throating is a bonus for you, not a something you are entitled to.

Telling me to “suck it” will most likely end without me doing it. I’m not a dog that has to obey you. I do it because I enjoy being in charge; it’s a good feeling, pleasuring someone, but not if you think you have a God-given right to it.

Replying to another girl’s text or phone call. Disrespectful and rude. Guys, seriously.

Lying on Tinder or an online dating site. Like hello, if you say you are gorgeous and six-foot and you turn up fat, short, and covered in acne, I’m not sticking around for the main course.

It’s more than a white lie; it’s deceitful and not cool. I could continue for hours and hours.

I guess my point is I’ve seen a lot in my twenty-five years. God, I’ll be thirty in another five. How many more years can I do the one-nighters and the walk of shame until I start looking like a ridiculous Mrs Robinson cougar? *Could it be time to hang up the heels?*

I wake late Saturday morning after a much-needed sleep in, and I notice a nice little message from this guy I know....

Dan:

Meet me at this address in one hour?

**My parents are out of town, they have a pool and spa.
112 Orielly street, Neutral Bay.**

Me:

That's an offer I can't refuse.

See you there.

Dan:

Yes, I will know that feeling when I see you in swimmers, I'm sure ...

I don't reply, but he must know that I won't be playing fair, so I choose my black extra-revealing and skimpy bikini. I actually don't own many non-skimpy pairs, to be honest.

I'm already feeling hot from the sun burning through my windows. I can't wait to cool down and, of course, relaxing in a spa sounds divine.

I find the address easily; it's only a twenty-five-minute drive. I wonder how long they have lived out this way.

"Damn," I say aloud as I park in Orielly street. Double electric gates open to the mansion numbered 112.

"His parents are fucking loaded," I state to myself as I drive into the big-arse driveway leading to a wondrous brick building. I'm in awe of the gardens, pebble creek driveway, and stunning colonial brownstone brickwork. Its roof is half-timber, and looks unique and expensive. I must take photos later for Roxy; she loves design and architecture.

As I park and climb out, grabbing my beach bag, Dan meets me at the car door. He has black board shorts on and a pale blue T-shirt; he is looking mighty fine.

"Well, don't you look hot," he says huskily, making me smirk. I couldn't have chosen a shorter beach dress, and it's white, so pretty see-through in all the right places.

"You don't look too bad yourself, mister," I announce as he leans over and kisses me.

He takes me through the side gate into the most stunning pool area I've ever seen. It's massive and has beautiful manicured gardens with palm trees, pebbles, and three separate water features. The spa is like a pool by itself; it would have to seat at least ten people.

"I might have had a few parties here in the past, so the folks don't give me the keys for inside, but I'm pretty happy out here. You?" he remarks, and I giggle at the thought of the parties. That's something I would do.

"This is perfect," I reply, throwing my bag on a fancy beach chair. I strip off my dress and flip-flops then I make a grand entrance into the inviting pool with a big splash, aiming at Dan.

"You cheeky thing," he shouts as I come up for air.

Within a minute, his shirt is off, and he's jumped in to join me. I playfully swim away from him, but he follows me, stalking like a shark. This guy keeps me on my toes.

He's a pretty fast swimmer, so he gains on me and holds me captive against the side of the pool. "Where do you think you are going?" he asks me, still playing.

"I gotta play the damsel in distress and try to escape; that's my plan," I joke, making him grin widely. If only he knew half the stuff I say I actually mean; I do play a lot of games, and sometimes the line between what is real and what is pretend becomes blurred for me.

"Here, let me save you from the evil villain," he declares and kisses me hard, catching me by surprise—a very welcome surprise as his body is flush to mine and his tongue enters my mouth, deepening the kiss.

I follow his lead and wrap my arms around his neck. He pulls my body closer as I straddle him. The water hasn't shrunk his hardness, that's for sure.

The passion between us is sizzling; he kisses my ear then bites mischievously. "Mmm," I moan at the tingling feeling it creates in my groin. I've always been hot for ear biting. I run

my nails through his hair then dig them along his scalp. He shivers as it turns him on. His roaming hands grab my breasts then pull the string bikini top free, exposing them. He walks backwards and dunks us both into the water; the cool sensation on my nipples causes them to go hard instantly. I throw my head back. Then we are back at the wall as he sucks on my erect buds, hard, then licks and teases. I giggle. My hands roam his firm chest. I flick his nipple playfully then swirl my finger around, playing at his game; his lips are on mine again, and I can tell it's going to get hard and fast.

I cheekily grab his arse as he thrusts against my body.

“How 'bout we both lose the pants?” I suggest through our panting.

He nods as he releases me and pulls down his shorts; his cock bounces in the water. I follow suit and strip off my skimpy bikini bottoms, eager to get into the action.

“Condom?” I ask him, and he nods. He quickly swims to the stairs, and runs to his towel, where he has a few foil packets. I get a nice view of his bare arse then his jiggling cock as he jogs back.

“More than once today, hey?” I question; damn, I'm game if he is.

He just shrugs and laughs as he jumps back into the pool.

He wastes no time as his lips dive onto mine then he cups my breasts, so eager for more. My hands find his length, and I slide my wet hands from top to bottom. He moans as I tighten my grip. His finger finds my wetness and makes its way inside while his other hand finds my clit. I wiggle from the sensations of his flicks and circles.

“You're good with your hands, Dan,” I announce as he continues his assault. I gyrate on the two fingers inside.

I kiss him deeply as I feel my release building then like fireworks my orgasm hits. I shake and explode as he keeps up the amazing onslaught through wave after wave.

“Ready?” he asks as I open my eyes to see him rolling on the rubber.

“Fuck, yes,” I reply as I feel his warm tip at my tingling pussy. He slowly pushes, and it’s still so delicate as he fills me completely. I bite his ear; it feels amazing.

“You are like an addiction, Jemma. I can’t get enough of you,” he whispers as he thrusts inside me. I wrap my legs around his waist, taking him deeper. *I’m starting to feel the same way.*

I meet him at every thrust, pushing against him, taking him deeper, hitting my spot and bringing him to the brink. He plunges inside me again, this time more forcefully; I bounce and swivel with the momentum.

“Yes,” he moans. I keep the intensity as he rams his cock into me over and over. I am taken again into oblivion, riding my tide of pleasure.

We are both breathless and smiling when we finish. He kisses me sweetly. I’m yet to have the freak-out or claustrophobic feeling with him.

Nothing like some pool action to cool you down yet heat you up at the same time.

I clean up at the outdoor shower and slip back into my bikini; Dan does the same, and we sit enjoying the sun in the deck chairs.

“I brought us some cheese, biscuits, and strawberries,” he announces, catching me by surprise.

“Well, you know the way to my heart, sex and food,” I joke to him, but it’s kinda true—oh, and chocolate and wine as we discussed at work.

“I also have beer or water. Not too many choices at my bachelor pad,” he adds, and I totally believe that.

“You are in luck; I do like an ice-cold beer in summer,” I reply as he pops two beers.

“Cheers.”

We clink bottles and enjoy the rest of the afternoon.

The spa was definitely relaxing, so much in fact I could have fallen asleep, but then we became overheated and dived back into the pool.

This is why ice in the bedroom is such a turn-on: the hot and cold excites the senses.

The spa with the warmth, bubbles massaging, and manipulating our bodies; the heat making us sweat.

Then the amazing cool crystal-blue pool water, refreshing, invigorating, and welcoming. I make the move this time feeling turned-on and still a little tingly from last time.

“Looks like we’ll be needing another condom,” I whisper and giggle. He is out and back in record time, and we become entangled and bring each other to ecstasy for a second time.

“Thanks for meeting me.” Dan smiles as we both dry off and get dressed.

“I couldn’t refuse the chance to swim and cool down,” I say playfully.

“No other reason you wanted to come?” he teases.

“Can’t think of any off the top of my head.” Is he trying to get me to say I like his company? *Well, I do ...* “You kind of seduced me, you know? I was sure sex was against your rules, but thought I couldn’t turn you down,” I say cheekily, and we both laugh, knowing we have an attraction that is hard to deny.

When I’m dressed, I notice a simple pink rose sitting on the outdoor setting that wasn’t there before ...

Dan catches me staring.

“That’s for you. Just a little something to show you that you’re special,” he declares.

Wow.

I do feel special. I can't think of the last time anyone gave me flowers.

I pick it up and smell the gorgeous aroma. It is strong and stunning.

“Thank you. That was totally unnecessary but very sweet.”

I haven't actually had this happen before.

One flower, it's sweet.

I'm still not his.

Chapter 15

The perfect man doesn't exist

Definition of perfect: Having all the required or desirable elements, qualities, or characteristics; as good as it is possible to be.

Free from faults and defects? Ha-ha, that is impossible. We are all flawed, defected in one way or another, and we can always improve each day.

Goddamn, nothing can ever be perfect.

Who wants perfect anyway? Wouldn't it become boring and predictable? I think that's why I don't settle down.

I like to mix it up in all areas of life. I don't cook the same dull meals each week, I walk a different route each time I go power walking, and I constantly donate clothes and buy new stuff or swap with friends.

For example, the two guys in my life right now are both pretty impressive in separate areas.

The Rock is pretty near perfect physically. I mean that body is so edible all ladies drool when they see it, no exceptions. He is also extremely well-endowed.

His imperfections and flaws are deal breakers for me; he is arrogant, extremely cocky, thinks all women should be his slaves, and downright rude.

Dan has a great personality and sense of humour; his body is great and toned; he's nice-looking, and well, we get along like a house on fire.

One of his flaws that worries me is that he thinks he can change me. He keeps trying to add strings to what we have, and I'm just not sure if I can do it. I have a multitude of reasons: like enjoying my freedom, being the boss of my own life, having no one to answer to. There are also a few good ones to add strings, but my wall is pretty solid. It would take a sledgehammer to break it.

I also wonder whether Dan would be too sweet and a pushover down the track; I need a good backbone to work with.

I have chosen to be single for many reasons. There have been a few good options, but I guess the big one that stands out is that honestly there just isn't anyone I've liked enough to partner with.

Another thing that pisses me off is that I am painfully aware of how badly my family wants me to settle down. The "still single" comments are getting old. Sure, I have a lot of friends in relationships, and good for them. I'm happy for them, and I'm not entirely against the idea of finding "the one," I just don't need someone to make me whole or complete.

Of course, the past makes it hard to trust. Who wants to be slapped in the face again with heartbreak and pain? *Fuck that.*

I love myself, and I have plenty of self-acceptance as a single person. Why would I want to complicate my life?

Adulting is hard ...

When Roxy chats to me about her love life, it's a welcome distraction.

"God, Jemma, I'm so confused about this Dylan guy. I mean he seems nice, but there are a couple of little things that I'm not sure about."

"Like what?" I question.

“Well, he’s pretty full-on, lots of messages, asking where I am all the time,” she replies, biting her lip, looking a little worried.

I frown, but then again, I’m a little biased on relationships.

“Also, he gets angry at the thought of any guys I have as friends. I just feel a little smothered, Jem,” she adds, and her face looks a little scared and freaked out

“Fuck that, Rox, you don’t need someone like that,” I tell her. She is my best friend, and I will be honest with her. *She deserves much better.*

“Yeah, it’s overwhelming and making me claustrophobic. I’m going to talk to him.”

“Good idea. Don’t ever let a guy make you uncomfortable, my beautiful friend. You kick his arse to the kerb if he is not making you happy,” I declare.

“Love you, bitch.”

“Love you more, slut.”

Dan:

Hey sexy lady.

Me:

Hey yourself sexy man.

Dan:

What you up to?

Me:

Been chatting to Roxy, she is having guy problems.

Dan:

I think it’s time I met this Roxy that I hear so much about.

Me:

She's a harsh critic. You might not pass her initiation.

I joke, but seriously, we stick together ...

Dan:

I'm ready for whatever she throws my way.

Just so I'm more prepared, are we talking about drinking blood or cutting off rats' heads?

Me:

You are a weirdo, Daniel.

Is that what's on your birth certificate?

Dan:

Yep.

Yours?

Me:

Jemma Kate Donovan.

Dan:

That's cute.

Daniel James Westbrook.

Me:

Oh, does anyone call you DJ?

Dan:

Not if they want me to answer.

Me:

DJ Westy oh God that's perfect.

Ha-ha DJ Westy is in the house.

Dan:

Um, no, it's not perfect ... LOL.

JemKat Dono, that's pretty funny too.

Me:

It's pretty funny. Roxy calls me JemKat sometimes.

Dan:

I'm sure we will get along like a house on fire.

Me:

One day, you guys will meet:)

Dan:

Bye, Jemma, I have a shift at the bar tonight.

I am a little scared of him meeting Rox; it's another string I wanted to avoid. What if he thinks "oh, I'm in with the bestie, so that must mean Jemma is keen"?

God, just chill and wait. If fate wants us to be together, we will be.

He doesn't have to worry about her, though. She'll love him.

Roxy isn't as bad as I am with her boyfriends.

I'm a tough judge of character.

I believe people come with layers; it's not until a few of them are removed that you see what is underneath. In different scenarios, there are a lot of emotions and personality traits that people hide away.

A prime example of people having multiple layers is none other than the woman who gave birth to me, Eliza Donovan.

She is the owner of Double Bay's Beauty by the Bay, the best in not only facials and beauty treatments but, of course, Botox, dermal fillers, and cosmetic tattooing.

She has fifteen ladies under her and runs an extremely successful company. *It's kind of sad when her own daughter doesn't use her mother's beauty salon, but business takes priority over family.* Deputy Mayor of the Double Bay fundraising committee with a face full of make-up, dressed to

the nines, fake smile for the other five ladies. They bitch, they moan, a few are divorced, but they all live in the rich suburbs with ocean views, too much money, drinking white wine, talking Botox and beauty treatments.

I frequently see the professional side of her, dressed in business suits with her game face on. Honestly, the woman seriously has like ten different faces.

My non-favourite is when she tells me to call her Eliza, not Mum, as it makes her look and feel old. *Well, hello, you are my mother ...*

I can't remember a time when she was just Mum. It used to upset me. She was never maternal; that is why I'm an only child.

Sure, I was spoilt but never a spoilt brat. I have worked hard for all that I own. I was never one to let Mummy and Daddy purchase my car, apartment, furniture. Well, sure, a few stunning handbags, pairs of shoes, Mimco wallets, and my prized Tiffany jewellery, but they were all either Christmas or birthday gifts; nothing was given just because they can afford it. I told them when I moved out that I'm standing on my own two feet, and to my credit, I fucking nailed it.

Dinners at Roxy's parents', Denise and Phil, had become a tradition; they were like my adopted parents—much more loving and warm than my own. I love my mum and dad, but I guess they never really slotted their daughter into their lives. They just continued, and I started my own life. Some people will never change.

I guess they make me want to be the bigger person. The thought of getting married and having kids of my own does appeal to me, eventually, not for a while! I see the poor kids when I volunteer at the hospital, and it's heartbreaking, I just know I will give my children the love, nurturing, and parenting that I never had. Thinking about it, having a little mini me down the track sounds amazing. Sure, I'm not ready right now, but it is something that I do want to happen in my life.

Maybe if Thor comes along with his hammer, he can knock down my concrete wall. Damn, now I'm thinking about sexy Chris Hemsworth as Thor ...

Chapter 16

This week's topic at work...

“Is it true what they say about black men?” Jasmine asks while on our morning tea break at the veterinary clinic. She is flicking through *Cosmopolitan*, so I’m guessing she just read an article. *Either that or her brain comes up with some pretty random shit on its own.*

I play coy, like I didn’t hear her, and busy myself making another coffee. I want to keep zipped on the topic; the whole oversharing thing makes me sound like a two-dollar hooker half the time.

“I had a one-night stand with a black guy, and it was a nice size,” Crystal tells us, smirking.

“Come on, Jemma, I know that face. What are you hiding?” Jasmine queries me. God, I’m like an open book.

“Okay, okay. Once I went black, and it’s true, I found it hard to go back to anything else,” I state, shrugging. I tried to avoid this discussion.

“Tell me more, tell me more,” Jasmine orders, smiling widely and looking intrigued by my confession.

I shake my head. “Damn, it was hard to move on ... that anaconda of his was a beautiful specimen.”

I broke my own rule; I went back numerous times, but I did say it’s okay if they were hot. Or well-endowed in this case.

Jasmine and Crystal are both giggling.

“He pleased me for hours. I literally couldn’t walk afterwards, but it was so worth it. He moved back to Africa and took his anaconda with him,” I lament, still remembering the day he told me he was leaving.

Oh, God, I had withdrawals from that beautiful specimen.

But it’s all a life lesson. He didn’t talk much; it was purely physical but perfect timing for us both. We scratched each other’s itches, and we had fun.

“You girls will appreciate this one. I totally had lockjaw a couple of times, but besides that, it was fun,” I add, and the laughter becomes hysterical.

“Wait for the punchline,” I state as I know from when I told Roxy that it’s totally hilarious.

“His name was Desta, and the Swahili meaning was ‘pleasure is coming.’”

“No fucking way,” Jasmine replies in a low voice to avoid Tony hearing, though I’m sure he has heard the laughter.

“I know, right? It’s hilarious. Like seriously, pleasure is coming. Oh, it came baby, we hit a quartet and quintuple ... is that even a word? Let me tell you, five orgasms in a two-hour period is mind blowing, awe inspiring, and sensational,” I declare, and they look at me in amazement.

“You, Miss Donovan, get to have all the fun!” Jasmine replies with her hand on her hip.

“First and last time a guy has done that,” I add, knowing it was either a fluke or he was a freak of nature.

Three out of the five were from sex. The J spot was Desta’s favourite thing, he used to tell me.

We are still Facebook friends.

Seeing him shirtless brings back memories; I honestly don’t know how he fits that thing in his pants. It could have its own postcode.

The last I saw, Desta was dating a woman named Paloma. I stalked her pics, and I can't help but wonder if that petite abdomen of hers can handle Desta's package. Well, sure, lube it up ...

She might be looser than she looks.

I'm such a dweeb, thinking about this stuff.

The week flies by. Roxy and I have another belly dancing class; the other nights I go walking after work. Something is playing on my mind, and I'm neither confirming nor denying anything. All I know is that I'm feeling frustrated with certain feelings and not in the bedroom.

It's Thursday night, and I'm picking Dan up for the movies, and considering we had the swimming catch-up between, this movie has been a long time coming. We're seeing *The Fate of the Furious*. I am totally itching to see this movie. Vin Diesel, The Rock (not *my* Rock, the other one), and Jason Statham in the same movie? Bring on the action and cars. *Oh, and the hotness won't be all bad.*

Dan's apartment is pretty flash on the outside. I can kind of remember the inside from the night we hooked up; it was clean and tidy and very much plain in black and white. *But that's manly; I appreciate that.*

"Come inside, I'm just putting on my shoes," he announces as he opens the door, looking handsome as always. I take a seat on the lounge while he bounds off to another room.

I remember Dan saying he worked for the family business, so my guess is that he gets paid extremely well, based on the modern apartment, leather lounge, and artwork on the walls.

"Wow, this is nice," I state, totally impressed. No wonder he wanted me to come up.

"Yeah, I do love this place," he tells me as he sits and puts on his Converse.

“Nice shoes.” He looks at mine and realises what I mean. Our shoes could be twins—except, of course, his are the male style and mine the female. But both are black Converse. I went for the casual look with jeans and hoodie, channelling my Victoria Beckham soccer-mum style. My hair is out and a little wild today. I sprayed a little de-frizz, and I’m letting it be wavy.

“Ha-ha, what awesome taste you have,” he jokes.

I stand as he grabs his keys and wallet then he grabs my waist, pulling me in for a kiss. I get goosebumps along my skin.

“You should always be welcomed with a kiss, Jemma,” he declares.

“Is that right, DJ?” I question, knowing he won’t be happy with the nickname.

“Yes, Jemma Kate, you are a beautiful woman, and you deserve to be treated like one,” he replies, ignoring the nickname and complimenting me yet again.

What is it about his compliments that aren’t tacky like the ones I’ve had in the past?

“Flattery will get you far, Mr Westbrook,” I reply, smirking as we leave the apartment.

Even though I insist I’m paying, Dan shouts popcorn and a drink.

We sit in the row fourth from the back, both agreeing the middle has the best view.

Like always, conversation is easy and sitting with him is relaxing. The movie is filled with humour, and damn, the cars are hot. He reaches over and squeezes my hand. I smile at him as he tries to hold it, but I remove it from his grasp. *No strings, remember. Well, sure, it’s only a form of physical contact, but it’s intimate, which could lead to feelings, and that leads to strings.*

He shakes his head, but I can see he is smiling; it's like a battle of wills. I've been this way for the last ten years, so good luck trying to change me.

When the movie ends, I stand, stretching. "Like seriously, that was the best out of the lot," I announce honestly. It had humour, plenty of action, and eye candy too.

"Yep, I totally agree. How many cars do you think were injured during filming?" he jokes, and I nod; there were hundreds of cars.

"I guess a lot of it is computer generated imagery these days," I say. I just can't imagine them destroying beautiful vehicles.

He nods while he finishes his drink. I watch him sucking at the straw, knowing all too well what those lips are capable of.

Damn, it must be all the testosterone of the cars and guys; and of course, the guy I'm with is pretty damn fine too.

"Why Jem, you are looking a little flushed. Are you okay?" he teases with a gleam in his eye.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," I snarkily reply and start to walk out of the cinema. He grabs my arm and pulls me into his body.

"I know that look; you're horny," he whispers, and it just got around ten degrees hotter. Then the cheeky bastard lets me go and takes the lead as we leave the cinema to find my snazzy little hatchback.

I refuse to show him I'm affected by his comment or presence, so I drive silently back to his place.

"Thanks for tonight," I state as I park but keep the motor running.

"You're welcome. Thanks for driving," he replies as he leans in to kiss my cheek. His lips linger then he places soft kisses along my jaw and down my neck, making me shiver.

“I kind of have this no-sex rule I have to follow,” I whisper, toying with him.

“Who said anything about sex?” the brazen man asks as he flicks his tongue in his mouth, showing me just what he has planned for me.

I’m so hot you could fry an egg on me, and I just can’t refuse any longer, so I pounce on him and kiss him hard, passionately and hungrily. He kisses me with all the same emotions and needs.

“Come upstairs,” he whispers, and I nod as we both exit the car in record speed. “Maybe I should rephrase,” he adds as he grabs my hand. “Get your arse upstairs, and I’ll make you come.”

I can’t stop the moan that escapes my mouth.

We jog up to his apartment, and he unlocks his door.

“Pants off,” he orders and points at the lounge.

“I’m not one to argue,” I reply, and he laughs.

“You are always one to argue.”

“Not tonight, but I do have a request for you. You take yours off too,” I order.

“Okay,” he replies. We both unbutton our jeans, watching each other with lust in our eyes. I strip out of my jeans, showing him my cobalt-blue thong. His eyes widen as I pull it down, exposing my nice runway.

I watch him take off his jeans and briefs, showing he is so hard for me. It’s such a turn-on.

“Lie down,” he orders, so I make myself comfortable on his leather lounge. He kneels between my legs.

“Wait,” I tell him as he looks into my eyes. Now I’m going to get a little dirty; playful Jemma is horny but aims to please.

“Do you want me to suck your cock while you lick my pussy?” I ask him, and I can’t hide the smirk; those words

sound hot. I'm already wet at the thought.

"Fuck, yes," he replies. He first places a few soft feathery kisses on my stomach then he repositions himself, giving me access to his hard, warm cock.

His mouth is on my wetness in seconds. "I'm so wet for you, Dan," I tell him, and then I seductively take his cock into my mouth, getting it nice and wet for me to suck and pleasure.

His tongue is deep inside me as he gets a rhythm swirling, each lick feeling amazing. He nibbles at my fold, just enough for pleasure, then inserts a finger inside, thrusting it deeply as I moan into his hardness. I follow his lead and add my hand, squeezing his balls, massaging them as I take his length, then repeat, just the way I know he likes it. I playfully lick the tip, then take his length again into my mouth, deep throating him.

"Damn," he moans as he enters a second finger inside me; his tongue finds my clit and flicks, swirls, and assaults, making me gyrate and buck from the sensation. I rub my fingers along his length as I massage and suck, harder and faster. My orgasm hits like lightning as I keep sucking, he keeps licking, and my juices explode as ecstasy takes me on an amazing ride, wave after wave.

"I'm going to come," he announces, and I'm so hot and horny and tingling that I don't stop but increase my speed, bringing him to his own release. His warm liquid squirts down my throat, and I take every drop as he thrusts and spurts.

"Every fucking time, Jemma," he declares as he collapses on the floor next to me.

"You scratch my back, I scratch yours," I tell him, smiling widely.

Oral sex, nothing much better. Sometimes you don't need penetration.

Chapter 17

Drama Llama

Have you met the drama llama?

Well, I hate him. One animal I care not to associate with.

I have my work, my friends, my family, my little sex bubble, and I love it that way. What more do I need? But I don't go posting about it all on Facebook.

Vague booking about him or her, bitching about your life that is so terrible? Change it. Hate your job? Then quit.

Don't be a negative asshole who hates the world and then tries to drag others down to their level.

I know a few of these people and I unfriend them quicker than I can click my fingers. I have a few on my blocked list too.

I don't like conflict, but hey, if it comes knocking, I'll give it my two cents and kick its arse to the kerb. Don't give a shit who it is.

Many bitches have been in my face over a guy. They can have him. Like I said, I don't keep them around.

So, when it's brought to my attention by Tia who has a mutual friend of Stacey's, who I now know as Stacey Lewis, has put up a Facebook post totally aimed at me, I see red. *Who the hell does she think she is?*

Status - Stacey Lewis

To the slut from the nightclub who thinks she can steal my man.

He's mine ...

I don't share ...

Okay, so my first reaction is to laugh loudly. Steal her man? Trust me, he's already told me he wanted more, so I could have him if I wanted, but I don't.

I totally don't want her sloppy seconds, so the whole sharing business grosses me the fuck out but also reminds me of high school. It's not like a packet of chips you can share, you freak; he is a guy, a human being, not a Ken doll you pass around.

Calling me a slut, well, that was the last straw, and the most ridiculous part of her status. She doesn't know me from a bar of soap, but because her so-called man couldn't take his eyes off me at the club, I'm the slut.

Well, I've got news for her—this is not going to end well.

Like I said, I avoid confrontations, but I'll happily put a blonde bimbo, judgmental hussy in her place if I have to.

And somebody needs to put this bitch in her place!

I crack my knuckles, thinking of what I can write; I don't want to look cheap and petty but I'm not one to let sleeping dogs lie, it's my personality.

But come on, it's not rocket science. If you aren't exclusive with a guy, you have no right to dictate who they talk to. Don't get your knickers in a knot, don't get all demanding and stalkerish; it's pathetic. You look like a five-year-old chucking a tantrum because you couldn't have the blue pencil.

My reply:

I think it's time you grew up and got over yourself, Stacey. Being a stalker is pathetic!

Nobody wants your man; you can have him, if he even wants you ...

Plus, you will probably find half the city has already been there and done that!

If a guy doesn't want to be exclusive with you, have a good hard look in the mirror.

It's not him, it's you ...

He's obviously not that into you.

He will announce it to the world if you are the one for him.

Being fake and plastic isn't exactly girlfriend material.

Why would anyone want to take you home to meet Mummy and Daddy when you look like something from the Jerry Springer Show?

'Cash me outside ho.'

Boom!

That's how it's done.

I am laughing so hard as I hit reply. Damn, I'm good. I take a screenshot and send it to Roxy.

In all seriousness, I'm still gobsmacked by her thinking she owns Rock. Some guys just aren't boyfriend material. Rock can't keep it in his pants. He likes to have variety in his life; that's his choice, so why should he have to change for a girl?

Well, sure, maybe one day "the one" will come along and make him want to change, but I very much doubt it.

Let's see if it's tit for tat and what her pathetic retaliation will be; I'll be ready and waiting.

This chick is the most obnoxious person I've ever met.

She is ticking me off severely and pushing all my buttons.

One more unexpected altercation, and I'll put the bitch flat on her back.

Good luck trying to tame him. Not to mention, attempting to change someone is not the best move. They end up resenting you.

Chapter 18

S.N.A.G - sensitive new-age guy

The new guy who has started at work is a snag. It's funny as we have never had a veterinary assistant who was male. It's not usually what happens, but we have welcomed him with open arms.

I swear I thought he was gay, but it turns out he is definitely not gay; he has been hitting on me something fierce.

He is just too sensitive new-age guy for me, and I'm totally not interested. And it's not even because of a certain guy whose name starts with D; it's just a no-go zone.

He wears collared shirts in pastel colours, for fuck's sake. His pants are khaki; he accessorises with boat shoes and the matching belt. It's all too matchy-matchy.

I kinda feel like saying, "Hello, you won't be getting any pussy the way you are dressing. We want testosterone; we want an alpha male."

I heard him talking about a few different brands he has purchased. What the hell? He knows too much about clothes and shoes.

His name is Owen, and he just doesn't have enough testosterone for me. I want a guy to be masculine, rugged, rough.

Alpha male all the way.

Caveman even ... well, no, not disrespectful, just all man!

I like it rough, a little on the bade side.

But hey, Owen is great to work with. He knows his stuff, and I've told him I'm taken just to get him to back off. That way we can work together and forget the bullshit.

Our next client brings in a diamond python. It's a beauty. We are such a diverse veterinary clinic thanks to Tony and his high-level education.

"This is Monty," the lady announces as she hands the snake to Tony.

"How old roughly do you think he is?" Tony questions.

"Around two; we have had him since he was three months old," the woman's young son replies as Monty slithers through Tony's hands.

"Do you have any concerns?" he questions as it's not every day you bring a snake to the vet—unless there is an issue.

"He ate a rat two days ago, and it feels like it's stuck here," the boy tells us, pointing at the rigid bump halfway down the snake's body.

"You are a good-looking boy," I declare as I rub along his scales. His colouring is common to diamonds, mainly black background with a mixture of cream and yellow spots along his body.

Tony squeezes gently around the bump that's visible, careful not to hurt or annoy Monty. Even though he's not venomous, he could give a nice sized bite if he became aggressive.

"It feels perfectly normal to me. Sometimes, their stomachs are slower at digesting. He looks happy enough and isn't moving around slowly, so I'd say another day or two and it will be gone," Tony tells them, and the boy smiles, happy that there is nothing wrong with his mate.

"Thank God," the mother states. "Tom has been worried sick."

“I’m glad you brought him in; it’s always better to be safe. Sometimes pythons can develop cancers, so I’d rather check the lump to be sure.”

“You surprised me, Jemma,” Owen tells me as we wash up after Monty leaves.

“Why? Because I’m a female who isn’t scared of snakes?” I’m a little pissed at his sexist comment.

“Because you are a great vet assistant, not afraid to get your hands dirty,” he states, rectifying my overreaction to his comment.

“Well, I just love animals, even the scaled or slimy type. I swear, one day I’m heading to the sloth sanctuary in Costa Rica; it’s on my bucket list 100 percent,” I tell him, and smile as I daydream about the sweet creatures with racoon-like bands on their eyes.

Cutest animal on the planet!

Maybe I could open the first sloth sanctuary here in Australia, my new career goal.

Chapter 19

Hook-ups vs relationships

It's been ten years, and I've always been no strings.

The whole strings thing makes me think of Pinocchio, the puppet on strings, controlled by Geppetto.

I don't want someone thinking they can control me. I don't want to be someone's puppet.

I've seen it happen before. Boyfriends think they have a right over their partners—they tell them what to wear, what they can do, or friends they are allowed to have.

Fuck that, no one can control even one part of my life. I am me, and my life is my own.

I get a text message from Rock.

The Rock:

I'm hard thinking about you, get over here.

The whole shit with Stacey is just annoying as hell. I want to avoid the drama; she sure isn't worth it, and I don't actually think he is anymore either.

Well, sure, the sex is the hottest I've had, by far ... but something now feels like it's missing. I can't bring myself to go over there.

It's always just been hot sex. I've always been happy with that; it's been what I've needed, and nothing more.

But today, I feel dirty at the thought of going over there, of sex just being a physical connection with no mental attraction.

It's weird; I've never worried about it before, but I feel like maybe I would be cheating on Dan ... but we're not together, so how can I cheat?

He's inside my head. Even when he's not with me, he is inside my fucking head!

While Rock is always hard and rough, I sometimes crave the soft and sensual.

What the hell is happening to me?

Nothing.

Denial is my friend.

If I don't admit it, then it's not true; not acknowledging means not happening.

I am happily single.

I am not falling for Dan.

I do not want to tie myself down.

Nope, nope, *nope*.

When Owen shows up in a little white Laser as I'm taking out the rubbish, I can't hide my laugh. I don't mean to be a bitch, it just slips out naturally.

"Are you laughing at my wheels?" he questions me, half-serious.

"No, I tripped over the gutter and was laughing at myself," I lie. I don't want to hurt the poor guy's feelings; it's not his fault if his chromosome is more XX than it is XY.

He heads inside, oblivious to my thoughts.

Yes, ladies, it matters what they drive; yes, guys, it matters what you drive!

A guy driving a little yellow hatchback is not cute. Guys driving a pink car is not cute.

A Jeep, ute, V8, or V6 is hot.

I must admit I'm not even into guys wearing pink shirts; it's just too feminine for me. I laugh at the thought of Ryan "the Rock" Hale wearing a pink shirt while knocking out an opponent in a boxing tournament.

Nope, it doesn't work.

I guess it was drummed into my brain from an early age: girl colours are pink and purple, and dolls are for girls. It didn't help not having a brother; I had nothing to compare to.

But girls can wear blue and green, girls can play with trucks, bikes, and balls.

Maybe a little sexist and homophobic, but that's the era my parents drilled into my mind. These days, anything goes; fashion trends change, and so many styles come full circle. I'm a little old-fashioned when it comes to how I like my men.

Eliza taught me to dress sophisticated and feminine and to never leave the house without your make-up and hair done. Sure, it's a little vain, but I like to look good, and in my eyes, I think a bit of foundation and eye make-up has me looking my best, and that's what it's all about. I feel happy in my own skin, and make-up just enhances that feeling. I honestly believe this has contributed to my extrovert personality—you look good, you feel good. I'm confident enough to talk to the opposite sex and basically use my best attributes to get what I want.

Chapter 20

Day at the beach

The sky is a brilliant blue as we arrive at the beach for a day of fun in the sun.

It's a stunning picturesque day; the sun is shining, rays invigorating my skin, the waves are crashing, and the sand is warm beneath my toes.

Seagulls squawk as they fly above the rock pools, making me smile as I spread out my towel, ready for sunbaking.

“What time are your friends coming?” Dan asks as he lays his towel next to mine.

“Around twelve, so thirty minutes or so,” I reply as I lie down and shimmy out of my strapless blue and pink floral dress.

I glance in Dan's direction, hoping he has noticed my strapless hot pink bikini. It shows off my curves in all the right places.

“Damn, do you purposely choose the hottest swimmers?” he asks.

“I just choose what I like, and it just happens my body suits the sexy swimwear,” I tell him, poking out my tongue.

I lie back and close my eyes as his fingertips circle my bare stomach; suddenly, the temp is increasing. *He doesn't play fair.*

I look around the beach; we're pretty secluded. Wattamolla Beach is half freshwater lagoon, shaded by loads of trees from the Royal National Park.

“You and your hands are all talk, care to elaborate?” I state, lifting my glasses to make eye contact.

“Here?” he questions, smiling widely.

“In the water?”

“No, right here.”

I can't stand it, I want him inside me ...

I stand and wrap my towel around my waist then slip down my bikini bottoms; the couple of swimmers out in the water are oblivious.

I lower myself to straddle the smiling, sexy guy eyeing me off, and I loosen the towel, still keeping covered. He follows my lead and pulls down his board shorts to expose his hard, hot cock that makes me want to sit on it.

“I don't have a condom,” he whispers as we are both panting with anticipation.

“I'm on the pill,” I whisper. “Are you clean?” I ask him.

“Yep,” he replies, and it's all I need as I spread my legs. His full-length slides easily between my soaking wet folds. I forget everything else except for the amazing feeling inside me; I know it will be quick, and it's a good thing, or we will end up with an audience.

I kiss his lips as I lift and lower back down onto his firm rod. I risk a glance into the water where the swimmers are still frolicking; no one else is around, so I get into a rhythm as he thrusts upwards, meeting my movement. We are both consumed with each other; the thrill of the outdoors and the sun enhancing the mood.

When he pants then moans, coming hard, I climb off, not concerned with myself, and quickly slip on my bottoms, then drag him out into the inviting blue water, where we cool down.

“I think that is the hottest thing I've ever done,” he announces as we swim, and I laugh out loud.

“Yeah, that was hot,” I agree, and put my head under, as I’m sure my cheeks are nicely tinged with a “just fucked” blush.

I lie on my towel when we hop out of the water.

“This is the fucking life,” I announce.

“I could live at the beach,” he replies.

Hmm.

Another imaginary box ticked. This one implying that when I’m ready to settle down, we have similar views on properties.

“If that were my house”—pointing at a 2.2-million-dollar beach house—“I’d be here every afternoon and weekend,” I state. God, that would be living the dream.

I see Tia’s car pull up, and I feel a little nervous. God, the girls have seen me with heaps of guys, so why should today be any different?

“We’re here,” Roxy announces as they throw their towels and beach bags onto the sand.

“You must be Dan,” Tia says. “I’m Tia, nice to meet you.”

“Great to meet you, too. I’ve heard lots about you.” He turns. “You must be the infamous Roxy. It’s great to finally put a face to the name,” he announces to my BFF, who is eyeing him off and totally checking him out from head to toe. I have no doubt she likes what she sees.

“I know the feeling; it’s like I already know you,” she replies as they shake hands. “What a magical day,” Roxy says as she lays out her towel next to Tia.

Dan is in for a treat; he will soon have three gorgeous bodies to perve at.

But I’m wrong.

His eyes never leave my body. When he talks to the girls, he looks at their faces. It’s like they are in tracksuits. He

doesn't even acknowledge their gorgeous curves.

I'm so relaxed and happy to be with these three people for the day.

Of course, the sun is a mood enhancer and boosts levels of serotonin, the happy hormone. That's why I'm happy; it's nothing to do with the amazing beach sex, or witty, charismatic guy who only has eyes for me ...

"You guys want some lunch?" Roxy questions. "I've packed enough for everyone; there's ham and salad, or chicken and mayonnaise sandwiches," she announces.

I smile at Dan. "What would you like? She does make a mean sandwich," I declare, winking at my bestie.

"Thanks, Roxy, the ham and salad sounds great," he tells her, and she hands him a sandwich wrapped tightly in cling wrap.

She passes me one too, knowing I would also choose the ham and salad.

"I spoke to Dylan about the issues we were having. He wasn't a happy camper," Roxy adds, clarifying the dramas with him being clingy and overbearing.

"Tough titties, he will get over it," I reply and blow her a kiss as she smiles. I know this conversation will continue later.

I watch Dan unwrap the sandwich and take a bite. I hope he likes pickles; that's an extra that Rox adds for flavour.

"This is amazing. What's the secret sauce?" he asks.

"Pickles," she tells him, smiling. I still remember her mother making them when we were in high school.

We devour another sandwich each and drink bottles of water then Dan and I lie back as Tia and Roxy go for a swim. I'm sure they are subtly giving us privacy.

"Tell me about your tattoos, Jemma. Do they all have a meaning?" Dan asks, looking first at the heart on my bikini line.

“This one is just decoration, but the lotus flower tattoo on my shoulder here”—I point as I turn and show him—“it symbolises purity of the body, speech, and mind. I loved it when I saw it then, of course, when I found out the meaning I had to have it.”

“That describes you to a T, doesn’t it?” he declares.

“Pretty much, and the one on my ankle here is a rose for beauty and strength. Do you have any?”

“Not yet,” he replies, leaving me intrigued.

“Not yet, huh? So, what would you get if you got one?” I ask.

“I’ll show you one day,” he replies, and as he gazes into my eyes, I feel something new between us. I’m not sure what it is or what it means, but we have a moment. He smiles at me, and it warms my heart—my ice-cold heart that has had a cement wall guarding it for so long.

It’s possibly starting to melt just a tiny bit.

Chapter 21

What in the world...

I arrive to work on Monday still reeling from a great weekend with good friends and sunshine. As usual, I put my bag in my locker and lunch and drink in the fridge.

“Morning, Jemma,” Tony greets me, startling me a little. He usually starts at ten Monday, so I wasn’t expecting him so early.

“You are in early today, Tony. How was your weekend?” I question him cheerily.

“Good weekend, thank you. Can we have a quick chat in my office?” Now, he has my attention. One thing about working here is just how casual and informal it is, so this doesn’t sound good.

“Yep, sure. Is everything okay?” I ask, concerned. I follow him into his office and take a seat, knowing whatever it is, it’s not going to be pleasant.

“Jemma, we have received a letter from an angry client,” he states, and I frown. A letter from an angry client? What the hell does that even mean?

“I need you to know that I’m on your side and believe none of it, but I have to at least acknowledge their accusations,” he adds, and now my heartbeat has increased and I’m feeling a little nauseous.

“What the hell are they accusing me of?” I question, a little angry. This makes absolutely no sense.

“Neglect and inflicting injury,” he answers, looking pained. I can see in his face it’s hard for him; we have worked together for four years.

“The lady said her dog was here for three days. You were the main carer, and her dog came home with a grazed stomach and cut on her face,” he states.

“That’s bullshit. I am nothing but gentle with each animal. Maybe she scratched herself on the cage, but I’m sure I would have noticed,” I reply, frantic. “Tell me the dog’s name and the owner,” I ask, needing more details. Could this have really happened on my watch?

“I’m not allowed for privacy and legal reasons, Jemma.”

“What?” Legal reasons? What the hell?

“They have apparently made a formal complaint with the police,” he states and takes a deep breath.

“You will be receiving a telephone call tomorrow to ask your side of the story.”

“Oh, my God!” This can’t be happening; this is bad. The police. I’m on report. My hands go to my face in shock.

“We have to put you on leave, effective immediately,” Tony adds, looking pale. “Believe me when I say I don’t believe it. I’m on your side, Jemma, and will fight this. You have worked here for four years, and you are honest, hardworking, and an animal lover,” he states, and I’m so glad he believes it’s not something I’m capable of.

Why would a customer do this to me?

Never in four years has a client ever said a bad word about me or my work ethic.

I don’t know if I’m more pissed off or upset.

Totally shocked.

I can’t face anyone right now, so I collect my stuff and take off, straight home, where I cry into my pillow for the next hour.

My job is so important to me. I love working with the animals, and I love everything about it. I just can't fucking believe this is happening.

I ignore my phone and everything else for the rest of the day. I'm in some sort of zombie state until Roxy comes home.

"Oh Jemma, Jasmine messaged me. I just can't fucking believe it," she says as she embraces me, pulling me in for a tight hug.

The tears fall again at the thought of losing my job, these terrible accusations, and for Tony and how this will affect his practice.

"It will all work out. I know it will," she tells me, being supportive like the best friend she always is.

"God, I hope you are right, Rox," I declare, and I have everything crossed that this will be over sooner rather than later, and of course, that the outcome will be in my favour.

I sleep until lunchtime the next day. Every time I opened my eyes, I felt nauseous at the thought of the terrible accusations, and then I felt like bursting into tears again, so sleep was the easiest option.

After some trusty toast with butter and vegemite and a much-needed coffee, I hastily decide I need to get to the bottom of these accusations. I'm not just going to sit back and watch my career getting ripped out from under me. No fucking way.

I text Jasmine, hoping she is willing to help me without getting herself into trouble.

Me:

Jas, can you do some digging for me while Tony is in surgeries today?

Jas:

I'm already on it, just give me ten mins.

Me:

Thanks, love you xo

It's the longest ten minutes of my life.

Jas:

Okay so I found the complaint letter and I'm sending you a pic of the name and details.

Mrs Christine Lewis

103 Hines Court

Potts Point

To PAWS Vet Clinic,

I wish to make a complaint about one of your staff members, Jemma Donovan.

My white Maltese terrier Yogi was in your care for three days recovering from a virus, and when I took her home she had lacerations on her stomach and a cut on her mouth.

I believe these were inflicted by your staff member, and I have filed a police report.

I don't remember her; the name doesn't sound familiar or ring any bells. After working there for four years, I know most of our customers and their animals.

A white Maltese named Yogi. I know of five white Maltese terriers, and that is none of them. *Something doesn't add up.*

Me:

Thanks, Jas.

Do you know that client or her dog Yogi?

Jas:

Nope, never heard of either one. Seems strange that we wouldn't remember. I am usually good with owners and their pets.

Me:

Yeah me too.

Jas:

I will do a search in the computer later and get back to you xo

Me:

You are amazing xo

I keep busy scrubbing the bathroom, including shower and toilet. I'm pissed off at the world and annoyed at this Mrs Lewis. Couldn't she have approached me first, or Tony? Going straight to the police is over the top and nasty.

When my phone beeps, the bathroom is sparkling clean. I dispose of my gloves, hoping for some further answers.

Jas:

There is no one in our system with her name. I can't believe Tony wouldn't search for her first; he's way too trusting with people.

Me:

Shit. Who the hell is this person then, and why do they have a vendetta against me.

I plan to find out exactly what the hell is going on. I type in the name Christine Lewis in Google. It takes me to a few people, but no one is local. I try "Christine Lewis Potts Point," and bingo, it takes me directly to her Facebook page. She is an older blond lady; I don't recognise her one bit.

But fuck.

One of her friends I would recognise anywhere.

That slut Stacey.

Oh, my God ... Christine is Stacey's mother!

Motherfucker!

This is an extremely low blow.

Stacey has used her mother to make a fake complaint to cause trouble for me.

I can't believe I never realised they were related.

I can't see her retracting her statement.

This is a nightmare!

I need to talk to Rock; he's the only one who can help me with this fucked-up drama.

Me:

We need to talk.

Your girlfriend is causing trouble for me at work.

She has crossed the line.

The Rock:

Shit.

She is not my girlfriend.

But she is trouble.

Me:

I don't need her drama in my life.

The Rock:

I will sort it.

God, I hope he can damn well sort it; she has crossed the line, messing with my job. Posting a stupid status on Facebook is one thing, but lying to the police about a false accusation ... she is more of a nutcase than I originally thought.

I'm relaxing in the bath, taking deep breaths and praying to God that Rock can stop the chaos Stacey has created in my life. It can't get much worse for me than losing my job for something I didn't do; honestly, the accusation is hurtful enough.

When I had a puppy growing up, I couldn't even smack him on the nose when he peed on the carpet. I'm against cruelty to animals in any shape or form.

I don't buy make-up tested on animals, or real fur coats, or crocodile skin for that matter; it's totally inhumane.

I use my loofah and body scrub until my skin is glowing. My new pineapple-scented candle smells divine as I try expelling the negatives and focusing on the positives in my life right now.

When my phone beeps, I'm of two minds about checking it; the message could go either way with good or bad news. *Why is it that when you do your best to avoid drama, it ends up finding you anyway?*

I risk looking. It's a welcome distraction in the form of a handsome young man.

Dan:

Hey gorgeous.

Me:

Hey yourself.

Dan:

How's your week been?

Me:

I'm just relaxing in the bath, having a not so crash-hot week ...

Dan:

You had me at 'I'm in the bath.' I'm now pitching a tent from visualising you naked.

Me:

LOL. I needed that laugh, thank you.

Dan:

Why are you having a bad week?

Me:

I've been put on suspension from work. I can't believe it.

Dan:

Wtf.

What happened?

Me:

It's a long story.

Basically, an ex's gf is causing trouble for me and spreading lies.

Dan:

That sucks.

I'm sure your boss knows the truth.

Me:

Yep, he's awesome.

Just stupid protocol.

Dan:

Can I take you to lunch while you are off? Might take your mind off things.

Me:

Yes, please.

Dan:

Tomorrow? I can swindle two hours. I know a cool little café. I can pick you up at 12?

Me:

Sounds perfect.

See you then xo

Dan:

As always, I look forward to seeing you.

I smile and soak in the bath for the next ten minutes, suddenly grateful to have Dan in my life when I need the extra support. Maybe this is what it means to have someone special that you can rely on, not just fun in the bedroom.

But I'm all about the fun in the bedroom!

I'm dressed casually in a floral maxi dress with denim vest when I'm greeted outside my apartment. Dan is looking professional in his work clothes of black suit pants and a light grey collared shirt; it's a fine sight.

There is definitely something hot about a man in a suit.

"You are looking stunning as always, Jemma," he announces, kissing me and opening the car door, always a gentleman.

"I like this professional look on you, Dan," I reply, winking at him seductively.

I chat about the weather, his work, and anything to avoid talking about my work. Dan obviously catches on that I'd rather not discuss it, so he follows suit.

"This place makes a mean BLT toasted sandwich, and the chicken parmigiana is tasty too," he tells me, giving me a few options that make my mouth water.

"Actually, both of those sound divine," I tell him, and I'm leaning more towards the parmi, though I wanna check out the menu too.

We have to drive around the block a few times to get a car spot. I hope Dan isn't late back to work, but then I guess that's

one perk of working for the family; they are probably more lenient.

The café is super busy. “Reservation for Westbrook,” Dan tells the waitress, who shows us to a small table outside. There are actually quite a few clouds in the sky; let’s hope the rain holds off until we are undercover.

“Can I get you some drinks?” she asks as we take our seats.

“What would you like, Jemma?” Dan asks.

“Lemon, lime, and bitters, please,” I tell the waitress, and Dan nods.

“I’ll have the same too, please.”

I flip through the menu. It actually has a wide variety; I can’t believe I haven’t been here before.

“I’m thinking your suggestion of the chicken parmigiana sounds fab,” I announce to him.

“You won’t be disappointed. I’m actually going to try the chicken burger today. I feel like mixing it up a little,” he states, and that makes me smile; that’s my motto.

“Variety is the spice of life,” I add, and we both laugh, knowing all too well I don’t mean the food choices.

The rest of lunch is easy. Conversation flows, the food is delicious, and the rain holds off.

“I’d better get back to the office. A new client is coming in at three for a meeting, and I need to prepare,” he tells me, sounding professional.

When Dan drops me off, he leans in to kiss me sweetly; it’s soft and gentle. Our lips explore each other’s without adding tongue as we will both get too excited.

“Thank you for lunch, Dan. It was exactly what I needed,” I declare honestly.

“Thank you for your company, Jemma.”

I head inside and the realisation hits me. That was the first time we were together without having sex. *Wow. That is huge for me.*

Maybe sex isn't the only thing keeping me around this time.

Chapter 22

Dan

Going after what I want...

I am on cloud nine after having lunch with Jemma. This woman is doing insane things to me and not just with her body. We get along like a house on fire, the conversation flows well, and her humour is much like my own.

I'm growing impatient, though. Why won't she take a risk on us being more and break her no strings rule?

The next day after work, I make a decision that's going to make or break what we have together, but I think she is worth taking the chance.

Dan:

I have a proposition for you, Miss Donovan. Can I come over?

Me:

I like the sound of that.

Dan:

Don't get too excited ...

Me:

Too late ...

“So, I know you don't want any strings, and you know how desperately I'm trying to change your mind, right?” I declare, a little nervous talking about this.

Jemma nods, looking like she's unsure of what to say.

“How about you give me a chance at proving my worth with a weekend away?” I proposition her with an offer that she hopefully can’t refuse. “Surely, I get a good shot at trying to persuade you? Dinner and movies aren’t enough to show you just how serious I am about you, Jemma.” I state my point, ready to put in more effort to fight for what I want.

“You drive a hard bargain, mister,” she replies, smirking. That gorgeous smile with those luscious lips are an amazing sight that I will never get sick of seeing. “Okay,” she adds, catching me by surprise.

“Really?” I question, delighted that she said yes.

“Yep, I give you permission to whisk me away for a dirty weekend,” she jokes, and I shake my head. There is no doubt it will be that too, but my main aim is to show her how special she is, what I am capable of, and how deep my feelings run.

All without scaring her off.

“Is next weekend okay for you?” I ask. I’m sick of waiting; I’m becoming impatient, and every day it’s getting harder to deny my feelings.

“You are in luck; my schedule is free,” she states playfully.

“Fantastic, I will ring and make the booking tonight.” I pull her close for a hug, kiss her softly, and she kisses me back.

God, I hope we can make this work.

My plans so far for the weekend are booking a deluxe room at the Crowne Plaza in the Hunter Valley and hiring a red convertible sports car to drive Jemma in style.

I’m also thinking a wine-tasting tour, massage, and romantic dinner.

Chapter 23

An offer I can't refuse ...

“I've agreed to go away with Dan for the weekend,” I tell Roxy as we enjoy a block of Cadbury chocolate together. One of our guilty pleasures.

“Oh wow, that's a big step for you, Jemma. How are you feeling about it?” she asks, knowing all too well I don't do relationships.

“He said he wants a chance to persuade me to change my no-strings rule,” I tell her, and she smirks.

“He sounds invested in you, Jem. I saw the way he looked at you on the beach,” she states, and I know exactly what she means. I can't deny he has feelings for me. I guess the catch is that I can't guarantee those feelings won't change or that he won't break my heart once I let down my guard.

“Honestly, I enjoy his company, we get along well, and the sex is hot, so it just felt right to agree. Do you think I'm crazy?” I question her. I have spent ten years proving to myself, her, and everyone else that I don't need or want a man in my life, and now I'm second-guessing that decision.

“No way. You are finally giving someone a chance. Being vulnerable opens you up to being hurt, Jem, but it can also open your heart for the best feeling in the world ... love,” she declares, and I know she means her and Kade's love.

“It scares the shit outta me, but what you and Kade had is inspiring, Roxy. It gives me hope that maybe I am capable of loving someone and letting them love me back.”

“Holy shit, who are you and what have you done with my stone-cold BFF?” she playfully asks me, and I crack up laughing.

“I know, right? It’s a little fucking deep, but if I never try, I’ll never know,” I declare, breaking off another row of the best chocolate in the world.

“It’s better to have loved and lost, my dear Jemma, than never to have loved at all. That Tennyson was a smart man,” she tells me, and I remember that quote. It is my new motto. I’m all about taking chances in life, so why not take a chance with something new?

God knows what is taking so long with the complaint at work.

Being at home for the next few days has inspired me to clean out our linen cupboard, pantry, and bathroom cupboards; not the most exciting of jobs, but they all need doing. I donate towels and linen that we no longer need and throw out a hell of a lot of out-of-date soups, cake mixes, and a few impulse beauty buys that I never used.

After two years in that cupboard, it’s time for the bin!

By Thursday, I start packing for my weekend away. I am excited to see what Dan has planned, and honestly to spend time with him. Being in his company is always memorable, usually in more ways than one.

I start with packing the important stuff ... sexy lingerie!

Friday and Saturday nights need matching sets, so I opt for a sexy black lace push-up with lace thong, and a bright purple set that I love.

Pyjamas are satin camisole singlet and matching shorts—extremely short ones—and a turquoise-coloured slip with a built-in underwire bra.

I’m guessing we will be going out for dinner, so I pull out three dresses, trying to narrow down my choices. I think the

short red dress will be too slutty, so now I'm down to two. A knee-length tight grey dress with v neck, or a tiger-print shorter dress.

I take a snapshot of both and send the pic to Roxy for advice.

Me:

Help needed, biatch. Which dress do I pack for dinner?

Roxy:

Go with the grey, that dress always looks amazing on you 😊

Me:

You, my dear, are always helpful Xoxo

Roxy:

That is why I am your best friend!

Jeans are always a must, so I throw in my dark blue tight jeans, a few options of casual tops, long sleeved and short, and a trusted cardigan. Next up, my pale blue jean shorts for Saturday, and a playsuit to wear home Sunday.

Then, like always, I freak out that I won't have enough, so I add in my black jeans, a halter-neck top, and nude heels; a girl can never have too many choices.

The next day, I wake up eager to get away. I haven't heard from Tony or anything more about the work drama, and I don't know if that is good or bad, but a change of scenery is exactly what I need.

I spend extra time washing my hair, and exfoliate and shave until I'm silky smooth.

The next forty minutes are dedicated to drying my hair then straightening it after applying my trusty Moroccan oil; it's a godsend for flyaway frizzy hair like mine.

I've decided to wear a black jumpsuit with short sleeves; it's easy to dress it up or down with a necklace and larger

hoops. Plus, sitting in the car, I need something that won't crush. I still don't know where he is taking me, but he said it's a two-hour drive.

It's three in the afternoon when my phone rings. Thinking it will be Dan to confirm picking me up at four, I grab it, but it says Work. *Shit.*

So much for not hearing anything. I don't need bad news right before we go away.

I take a deep breath.

"Hello?"

"Hi Jemma, it's Tony. I'm so sorry I haven't been in contact before now," he tells me, sounding sincere.

"No need to apologise. It's all good, Tony. I realise this situation isn't ideal for anyone," I tell him truthfully; the last thing any employer wants is a police issue.

"Well, Jemma, I finally have some good news to tell you," he declares, and those words are like music to my ears.

"Oh, please tell me," I say, eager to hear something positive.

"The complaint has been dropped, and it turns out that they never actually lodged the police report, Jemma. It's all over, sweetheart," he tells me, and I literally jump with excitement.

"Oh, God, that is fantastic. I've been sick with worry, Tony, I love my job," I declare, and if he was in the room I would have tackled him with a bear hug by now.

"I never doubted you for a second, Jemma. You have been a pleasure to work with for four years, and I know the animals have benefited having you as their nurse," he tells me, and the tears roll down my face; happy tears.

"Thank God it's over," I say to him, smiling.

"Now, go and enjoy your weekend. See you Monday morning."

“Yes, I’ve never looked forward to a Monday so much in my life,” I tell him, and we both laugh. “Thanks, Tony,” I say as I end the conversation and hang up then jump on the spot. I’m so goddamn over the moon that this fucked-up drama is over.

I don’t know how or why it’s all over, but all that matters is it’s over!

Me:

The police report was never filed to begin with, and I can go back to work. Omg I’m so friggin’ relieved!

Bring on the weekend!

Roxy:

Thank God! I had faith, love you xx

This news couldn’t have come at a better time. I zip up my overnight bag and place it by the door then I touch up my make-up and wait not so patiently for Dan to pick me up.

I decide to send the same text to Jasmine and Tia, who are all over the moon for me.

Finally, things are starting to look up.

At 4:10, I send Dan a quick text.

Me:

Did you get lost on your way over?

No reply.

Knowing him, he is following the rules, doing the right thing and not texting while driving.

I wait impatiently, but at 4:45 I start to worry. *Has something happened?*

Did he change his mind?

Maybe he realised that he doesn’t want strings between us after all.

See, now I have that feeling all over again.

I call his number; it rings out and goes to voicemail.

“Hi, this is Dan, leave me a message.”

What the hell has happened? Where the hell is he?

I call Roxy. I don’t know what else to do.

“Hey, are you on your way?” she asks me.

“No, Rox, he never turned up. Do you think something could have happened to him? Maybe he changed his mind and isn’t interested after all,” I declare, not sure how to feel.

“Jemma, of course, he is interested. Did you call him?”

“Yep, no answer. It’s so goddamn frustrating. I’m thinking of driving over to his place,” I state, feeling confused.

“Keep calling him. I’m sure he’s just held up in traffic, or maybe he had a family emergency,” Roxy answers logically. I’m sure it is one of those things.

After pacing for another ten minutes, and five more unanswered phone calls, I can’t sit here any longer. I run out to my car and jump inside. I’m driving over to his place to get some answers.

The traffic is ridiculous, and I’m sweating, stressed, not knowing what the fuck has happened, where he is, and what is going on. I try his phone again on my Bluetooth; straight to voicemail this time without even ringing.

Up ahead, I see a four-car pile-up, which is obviously the cause for the traffic.

As I get closer, I see the first car that was hit by the three behind. It’s a Commodore. Holy shit, it’s Dan’s black Commodore; I know his number plate.

Fuck me!

I stop my car in the middle of the road, oblivious to everything else. There are cars everywhere as I scream his name. I jump out and run over to his car; he is unconscious inside, with paramedics and specialists working to free him.

“Dan!” I scream as tears run down my face. *Oh God, please don't let him be dead, nooooo.*

“Miss, you will have to move away,” police officers declare as they keep me from getting closer.

I drop to my knees in shock as the tears fall.

How could this be happening? I must be jinxed or something.

My phone rings from inside my car, bringing me back to reality. Thank God my window was down so I could hear it.

I hastily run and grab it. “Hello,” I answer shakily.

“Jemma, did he turn up? Did you go over there? Are you crying?”

“Oh God, Roxy, he's been in a car crash. Can you come here? I'm on the Pacific highway near the North Sydney exit,” I manage to say before the tears fall again. I'm feeling grateful for the female police officer who comforts me.

“What? Oh shit, Jemma, I'm on my way,” Roxy announces, and she hangs up.

Fifteen minutes later, Roxy's arms are embracing me as we watch Dan get cut out of his car. His injuries have been stabilised, and the paramedics wheel him onto the ambulance. He is still unconscious, which is the part that scares me most.

“Let's go. We will follow the ambulance to North Shore Hospital,” Roxy tells me, holding my hand. Thank God, the other police officer moved my car to a side street, or I'm sure there would have been more crashes.

“Oh Roxy, I was finally admitting my feelings for him, and now what if it's too late?” I question, and the tears fall like a monsoon.

“He will be okay, Jem. There is no way in the world he would give up so easily; he is falling in love with you,” she announces, and I smile. I smile at the thought of him falling in love with me because it doesn't freak me out. I don't want to

run in the opposite direction. Right now, I want to run into his arms; I want to tell him I'm sorry for making him work so hard and that I'm willing to try all the strings with him.

When we arrive at Royal North Shore, there is an older couple in the waiting room, and I know it's his parents. Dan is the spitting image of his dad. His mother is beautiful; she has long chestnut hair, and her outfit is classic and sophisticated.

"Mr and Mrs Westbrook?" I say, and wonder if they have any idea who I am.

"Jemma?" they reply, and I'm surprised they know my name. Dan must have mentioned me.

"Oh Jemma," Mrs Westbrook says, and hugs me tight as the tears drip down her face.

I hug her back and comfort her; it must be so hard seeing your son in pain and not be able to fix it.

"He was so excited to be going away with you for the weekend," she whispers to me, and I smile. He told his mum about me and our plans. *Roxy was right; he really is invested in me.*

"I just couldn't believe it when he didn't show up," I say to her.

"It's okay, Jemma. You guys can rebook for another weekend," she declares and winks at me.

We sit in the waiting room for the next hour, and when a doctor comes in, we all stand, eager for some information.

"Mr and Mrs Westbrook, Daniel has three broken ribs, a punctured lung, and a broken arm. He is stable, but we have a drain in his lung and we need to monitor him closely over the next twenty-four hours," the doctor tells us, and I breathe a sigh of relief.

I was imagining the words vegetable, brain damage, or paraplegic. These injuries can be rectified, thank God.

“I’m so relieved,” I say, feeling a little better, and Roxy hugs me.

“Thank you, Doctor,” Mr Westbrook replies, shaking his hand. “Can we see him?” he asks.

“Yes, just one at a time, please. Mrs Westbrook, you can go first,” the doctor tells her, and she nods and follows him to Dan’s room.

A little while later, she returns, looking a little shaken, but gives me a soft smile.

“Your turn, Jemma. He is asking for you.” I’m so eager to see him.

“Great, thank you.”

I make my way down the corridor and into his room. He is lying very still with wires everywhere. He has nose prongs in for his lungs, a drain for the fluid, and of course, an IV.

“Oh, Dan,” I say as I make my way over to him. He has his eyes open, and he manages a smile. Cheeky thing.

“Sorry I wrecked our plans,” he says softly.

“Oh, God, don’t say that. I’m so glad you are okay. I was so worried, mister,” I admit and lean over to kiss his lips.

I lie with my head next to his on the pillow and gently place my hand on his chest, feeling the beating of his heart; the rhythm is soothing.

He stays in the hospital for the next week for his lung to be drained and for a course of antibiotics to prevent infection. His arm is in a sling, but he is healing.

I visit him every day, sometimes twice a day. The thought of losing him has given me a huge wake-up call.

“You’re looking so much better,” I announce on day five. “Thank God!”

“It’s because I get to see your pretty face every day,” he replies.

“Well, I kinda think you’re stuck with me now, mister,” I say playfully, but also to let him know that I’m not going anywhere.

“Being stuck with you is a dream come true, Miss Donovan.”

I smile widely. My heart swells, and I just know.

I have finally decided to say, what the hell! Life is too short for what-if’s.

When a life-threatening accident shows you just how much a person means to you, you realise that seeing them hurt or injured is heartbreaking to watch.

For once in my life, I’m going to let down my guard and my wall and see what happens.

How do I know how it will end?

Will I get my heart smashed?

I really, really like him and want to spend more time with him. It’s a no-brainer, really.

I’ve fought it for months, and now it’s like a lightning bolt.

“Can you take me home tomorrow, Jem?” he asks me, and I feel special that he chose me over his parents, his brother, or other mates.

“Of course,” I respond, smiling as I kiss him on his forehead.

The next day, I arrive all ready to take him home.

After a talk with the doctor, he is given the all-clear to leave.

“In three days, I want you to go to your GP for a check-up,” he’s told.

“Bye Dan, good luck with your recovery,” a cute little blond nurse calls out as she walks past. I give him the evil eye, and he just shrugs then smirks.

“She didn’t give you any sponge baths now, did she?” I question him a little jealous.

“Ha-ha. No, my nurse was around sixty with missing teeth,” he replies and that makes me feel much better, but I wonder if it’s the truth.

As we walk slowly through the corridors, he looks at me and I smile. I got him a little gift, and I can’t wait any longer to give it to him.

“Here’s a little something from me,” I tell him, and he looks intrigued.

I hand him a cute little otter stuffed toy; on his chest, he has the words “Otterly Yours.”

He looks a little puzzled.

“Did you know that the otter is my spirit animal?” I ask him, and he shakes his head, smirking. *I must sound a little nuts, but hopefully he gets the hint.*

When we reach the car, his eyes are on mine.

“Do you know how worried I was about you?” I state honestly.

“Is worrying allowed in your no-strings rule?” he asks sarcastically.

“I was thinking of ditching the no-strings rule once and for all,” I say to him, and his smile is large and beaming.

“Really?” he questions.

“Yep. The thought of almost losing you, Dan, opened my eyes. I really like having you in my life. You mean a lot to me,” I admit, and I’m so proud of myself for saying those words.

“God, woman, you never cease to amaze me,” he states, squeezing my hand.

Chapter 24

Dan

Hunter Valley

Three weeks later, I take Jemma on the weekend trip to the Hunter Valley. My recovery has been great; only a small amount of pain on my left side, all fluid gone, and my ribs are healing nicely.

Jemma drives, as it still hurts me, but I'm a little annoyed that she gets to have all the fun with the red convertible I hired.

I have a red rose waiting when she comes to pick me up.

"A rose for my favourite lady," I declare, handing her the delicious-smelling flower.

"I'm so excited to stay at the Crowne Plaza, Dan. I've heard sensational things," she tells me, and I nod. I hope the reality lives up to her expectations.

We load our bags into the convertible and head out of the city. It drives like a dream, and with the roof down, our hair is blowing in the wind. I feel euphoric and energised of what is to come.

A little over two hours later, we have arrived.

The Crowne Plaza is gorgeous, with its scenic golf course and breathtaking vineyard views.

The room is sensational, extremely modern, with a stunning view of the golf course and skyline. The sunset is lighting up the sky.

The spa bath looks so inviting, too.

I am pleased to see the champagne and chocolates I ordered on arrival sitting on our bed with a red envelope that has **Jemma** written on the front.

I posted this letter last week, so it would be here waiting.

“That is your handwriting? You have thought of everything. You’re the one who never ceases to amaze me, Dan,” she tells me, and kisses me sweetly.

“You can open the envelope on Sunday,” I declare, and she rolls her eyes. I know she is impatient, and I like testing her just a little.

“I’ve booked the best wine-tasting tour in the Hunter Valley for tomorrow, Jem,” I inform her. The thought of her a little tipsy gets me hard already. “But first, change into something lighter. We both have a one-hour massage booked, starting in ten minutes,” I announce, smiling like a Cheshire cat. A massage and her company is like heaven.

The massage is wonderful. The masseuse was informed about my injuries, so she avoids those areas. It’s so relaxing.

“Mmm,” Jemma moans, and I smirk. I plan to make her moan a lot more over the next two days.

We head back to our room, relaxed and smiling, hand in hand. This is a much-needed blissful escape for the two of us.

“Swimmers are optional. I’m getting the spa ready,” I announce.

“I forgot my swimmers, so I guess there is your answer,” she playfully responds, and I’m instantly hard.

A spa with the beautiful Jemma, naked and ready ...

I strip off my shorts and shirt and eagerly climb into the spa, waiting for her.

She wanders into the bathroom in nothing but a towel and her hair tied up. She could look sexy in a brown sack, always stunning.

When she drops the towel, I watch her edible body climb into the spa. I'm so hungry for her.

I make my way over to where she is like a magnet to her. My hands playfully explore up her back and then rub along her arms, sending chills across her skin. She shudders.

I'm all about pleasing her this weekend—and always—as I place soft kisses on her nape then up to her earlobe. I lick and kiss, knowing it drives her wild.

Jemma thrusts her body into me. Her hands are in my hair roughly as she wraps her arms around my neck. Our lips connect sensually.

“Damn, Jemma, you are so beautiful, so goddamn sexy, and always full of surprises,” I admit to her truthfully; she is like no one else in the world.

I rub my hand down her left breast and bring her nipple to attention, and then I do the same with the other side. Both nipples are hard as I seductively cup them.

“Your breasts are perfect,” I tell her, squeezing them both as I kiss along her cleavage. My dick hardens against her then I surprise her with my mouth around her nipple. I suck it hard then flick it with my tongue.

“I am so wet right now, Dan,” she whispers to me. My cock throbs as I think about her.

“Can you feel how hard you make me, woman?” I ask her as her hand disappears into the water to feel my throbbing, hard cock.

She is gazing into my eyes as my hands wander over her naked, wet body in the bubbling spa. I find her pussy, teasing at the entrance, flicking her clit.

“Oh, God,” she moans as my finger enters her wetness; a second finger slides in, catching her by surprise.

My mouth is hungrily on hers again, my tongue flicking hers as my fingers massage inside, over and over in a perfect rhythm.

Jemma cups my cock, squeezing and massaging it to perfection; the pressure is quickly building.

“I need to be inside you, Jemma. I can’t wait any longer. Do you want my hard cock in you?”

“Yes, I want you inside me, Dan. Now!” she demands, sounding breathless.

“I’m harder than I have ever been before. You do crazy things to me, Jemma,” I reply as she follows my lead and climbs on top of me.

“I can’t wait any longer. I want to feel just how hard you are. You make me so wet, knowing you are that turned on for me,” she tells me with hunger burning in her eyes.

Jemma spreads her legs. I push my cock upwards, and she pushes down as it slides inside, slowly at first, but she is so wet it slides in with ease. My next thrust is hard and deep; I gradually pull out before I thrust harder. I continue to thrust into her as she rocks her hips over and over, bouncing on top of me like she was born to ride my dick.

God, she feels fucking incredible.

It’s not long until I feel a release coming. I massage her nub to help her orgasm move along faster, flicking and swirling my fingers.

“Yes, baby, yes!” she screams, and I feel her orgasm rip through her like a lightning bolt as she gyrates, exploding into a hundred pieces.

I thrust with more force and momentum, again and again as I hit my own wave of pleasure and my orgasm takes me into the depths of euphoric satisfaction.

“Yes!” I shout as I come deep inside her, emptying myself.

We are both reeling from our releases as we collapse in each other’s arms, feeling amazing and on top of the world.

“We have dinner plans, Miss Donovan. Let’s get showered and ready,” I tell her. Her cheeks are a nice shade of pink from

our rendezvous.

“Your weekend is pretty great so far, Mr Westbrook,” she replies, and we climb out then into the cool shower to refresh.

Chapter 25

Feeling Amazing

I excitedly dress in my tight grey dress, adding a long black necklace with diamantes and large black hoop earrings, and then darker make-up before we head downstairs to dinner.

Hand in hand, we catch the lift to the second floor. The restaurant is stunning; the table is set with fancy candelabras for centrepieces, and the atmosphere is setting the perfect mood for romance.

“Would you like a bottle of our house red?” the waitress asks as we are seated.

“Sounds perfect,” Dan replies, and I smile. Looks like it might get a little messy tonight—me and red have that kind of relationship.

The menu has a wide variety of meals and huge price tags to go with them.

We choose a mixture of breads, including bruschetta and garlic bread, crumbed garlic prawns, and rock oysters. For his main meal, Dan chooses the scotch fillet with mushroom sauce with creamy mash and veggies.

“I’ll have the chicken souvlaki, please,” I tell the waitress.

Now for the dessert ... layered chocolate mousse and hazelnut meringue cake.

“Seriously, I could have orgasmed just from the taste of tonight’s food,” I declare, meaning every word. Best restaurant I’ve eaten at, hands down.

“Looks like we’ll be driving two hours to eat every weekend,” Dan says, agreeing with my statement.

“Special request for the beautiful lady,” the violinist announces to us, serenading me with Ed Sheeran’s “Shape of You.”

My smile is beaming as my heart is warmed with everything this wonderful man keeps giving me; he is paying attention, spoiling me, and showing me what I’ve been missing.

“You are amazing,” I whisper as we hold hands and listen to this beautiful song.

Walking hand in hand, we take a brief stroll around the stunning gardens outside the hotel. The night air is crisp and refreshing, our stomachs are full from dinner, and our hearts are full from each other’s company.

Afterwards, we head back to our room. I change into my night slip, and we collapse into each other’s arms. We fall asleep next to each other, sharing a bed and so much more than that.

When I wake up and see Dan’s face, it’s a welcome sight; it suddenly feels very normal to have this amazing man sharing my bed and now my life with me.

The next morning, I sneak out of bed and decide I can’t wait until tomorrow to open the red envelope that Dan had delivered. I don’t see the point in waiting another day, so I open it, needing to know what is inside.

Jemma

I hope you had a beautiful weekend.

You are amazing and sensational

I feel lucky and privileged to have you in my life.

Cheers to many more chances to prove my feelings.

A single tear rolls down my cheek; a happy tear from his words and from the way he makes me feel, the way he makes me feel better about myself.

I creep back into bed. Dan is still asleep. He wakes as I cuddle into him.

“Good morning,” he whispers, and I smile. I hold the red envelope so he can see I’ve opened it.

“You couldn’t wait one more day?” he questions, smirking at me. I shake my head.

“Yes, I’ve had a beautiful weekend,” I tell him. “You make me happy, Daniel James Westbrook,” I announce as I lean in for a soft, passionate kiss. “I’ve never had these feelings before. The whole strings and relationship thing is totally new to me, so can you just be patient with me? I can’t guarantee I’m not going to make mistakes along the way,” I confess, feeling like a weight has lifted. “I’m going to fuck up, Dan, but I’m only human. I’m learning. I know that I’ll be selfish and stubborn, but I’ll also be loving and caring. I’m tough, but inside, I’m gooey. You might see me cry, see me at my worst in the mornings, but well, that’s just me. Have I turned you off wanting to be with me yet?” I question, joking.

“That is impossible.”

Chapter 26

Dan

How deep is your love?

Being with Jemma is like being on the scariest roller coaster in the world; it's up, it's down, it's the biggest rush of adrenaline, and then it's like being in a tornado.

I wouldn't change any of it. I've decided that's it's time I said the L-word. I'm in love with her, and I can't deny it any longer. I'm freaking out about her reaction, but she has come a long way from the woman who didn't do relationships.

Tonight, is the night ...

I have Chinese food and a bottle of wine, and I'm heading to her place for dinner and a movie.

"Hi, there," she says, opening the door and kissing me softly.

"Hi, yourself," I reply, removing my jacket. The rain is bucketing down outside; it's perfect weather to be inside.

"I have dinner and wine," I announce, and she smiles.

"You are a good man, Mr Westbrook," she replies.

"You are a good woman," I tell her as she busies herself getting plates and sorting out the different meals I chose for us.

We enjoy the food and small talk, and when I pour our second glass of wine, I declare a toast. "A toast to us, Jemma. My princess, my vixen, and the woman I love."

I risk looking in her direction. She looks a little pale as she gulps down her glass of wine. Oh no ... that is not a good sign.

“God, Jemma, please don’t freak out. I need you to know how much I love you! I love everything about you! Neither of us are perfect. Together we have issues, we have a past, but we have each other.”

She takes another large drink. I can see her taking deep breaths, but I need to finish this.

“Honestly, Jemma, you scare the hell outta me! That’s how I know you are the one. You have that spark in your eye. Well, sure, you’re moody, high maintenance, independent, and stubborn as hell, but I love all those things because they make you, you. These pieces define you. You make my jagged puzzle complete.”

Jemma

I can't breathe. Did he say he loved me? No, no, no.

He spoiled it. Why have you spoiled it?

What does he know about love, anyway?

He thinks he loves me.

What could he possibly love about me?

“Dan, why are you wrecking it? Everything has been so good, you didn’t need to bring love into it. I did the strings and a relationship, for God’s sake, but love is intense, it’s forever, it’s concrete,” I almost shout at him, feeling frustrated.

“I wanted to be honest with you. I want you to know how deep my feelings run. Our relationship can be stronger.”

“It didn’t need any icing on top. We were simple, still having fun. Now you are making it serious, and it’s a whole new level of commitment,” I state, and I feel I might hyperventilate. It’s hot in my apartment. I need to get outside,

get air. "I need some air," I say frantically, without thinking about the rain. I storm out, and it's pouring torrentially, but the sound is welcome. Nothing but the rain in my ears, the refreshing drops hitting my face.

I couldn't care less about my hair or make-up. The tears stream down my face, and I'm not a crier, not really, not ever.

My tears and the streaming drops of rain are meshed together as I cry more; the rain increases, and I'm matching the drops to tears. *It's monsoonal.*

But oh, God, a much-needed release. Who would have thought crying could be almost as beneficial as an orgasm?

I never realised.

Now, I know.

I can't admit it to Dan, but I'm in love with him too. For the first time in my life, I'm head over heels in love, and it both feels amazing and painful. This is what I've been avoiding all these years.

Avoiding the heartache and possibility of failure.

I keep running, and the tears keep falling. I am grateful for the rain, as my blotchy face will, I'm sure, resemble that of a panda, and maybe a fight club victim.

I reach the sand of the beach, rip my shoes off, and continue running.

Running for the release, adrenaline, and the distraction. I sprint faster as my heartbeat increases like it might explode out of my chest. *This is why people run?*

I'm puffing; my chest is rising and falling heavily, and I'm sucking in each breath. My knees start to feel like jelly, and I realise I'm going to have to stop or risk falling and doing some serious damage.

I stop and collapse onto the sand, physically and mentally spent and drained. I am now covered in sand, the rain aiding it to stick grossly to my body.

Fuck, I hate wet sand.

This is enough to make me burst into laughter.

If Roxy could see me now, she would piss herself laughing at the mess her best friend has become. *Fucking men, emotions, and growing up.*

It would seem I am finally becoming an adult—with all the baggage, responsibilities, and morals that come with it.

I met Dan when I thought I didn't need a man in my life.

I still don't need a man in my life, but maybe, just maybe, I'm actually ready for one. Instead of feeling weighed down or controlled, what I feel is that I can be myself around him, and he loves every part of me. He is supportive and caring, and I know enough about the world to realise every day is a gift, and we never know what the hell is around the corner.

One thing that stands out for me is love. I have fallen in love, and I feel amazing. Sure, it's scary and unknown, but why the hell am I going to throw that away just because I'm scared.

Damned if you do, and damned if you don't.

I don't want to regret throwing this chance away; horror movies are scary, car crashes are scary, and death is scary. Taking a chance is daunting, but it's sure as hell worth the risk. If I can have even a few more days, weeks, or months feeling euphoric, then I will take it. I hate to say it, but I could get hit by a bus tomorrow, then I would be twenty-five, never been in love, in a serious relationship, or really lived. I've decided not to be that person.

I'm Jemma Donovan, and I am in love. I will finally change my Facebook status to in a relationship and show the world, well, at least my friends, that I'm giving it a shot. What is the worst that can happen? Heartbreak?

I know it hurts like a bitch. But the heart is an organ, and it's designed to heal. Shit, people get cancer, suffer through

months of chemo and radiation, and I've been scared of a little heartbreak.

Time to grow up and shape up. I guess maturity might finally be kicking in.

Chapter 27

Dan

What's that saying?

People fall in love in mysterious ways ...

Well, isn't that the fucking truth.

After months of pursuing Jemma and almost giving up, my perseverance finally paid off. I like to think she always knew I was the one.

She fought her feelings.

I think back to the night when I met Jemma, the amazing love of my life, the beautiful blonde with balls of steel, feisty as hell. I can't believe how my luck has changed.

Never in a million years did I think I would be in her league.

As it turned out, the two of us have always been in a league of our own. A league together, unique and kindred spirits who totally and utterly fit each other's moulds to perfection.

I love you, Jemma, now and forever. As long as you are in my life, my woman, I'm the happiest man on the planet.

Sharing you is not something I ever want. I want all of you —your mind, body, and soul.

Jemma

“Okay, it’s time for brutal honesty. Yes, Dan, I’ve totally fallen in love with you. You are the most unexpected person, at the most unexpected time.”

“I never knew I missed having you in my life until now I can’t imagine living without you.”

“Giving someone a chance was never something I was willing to do until you came along.”

“You wanted me when I was at my worst, and when I gave up on finding someone special, you proved me wrong,” I declare with all my heart. I couldn’t be more vulnerable if I tried.

“I feel safe in your arms. I want to be the one to make your bad days better, the one to make you smile and bring out the sunshine in the rain. I want to have you by my side every morning and make you breakfast in bed,” I confess.

“Do you want to know how I knew I loved you?” I question him, and he nods.

“You were the last thing on my mind before sleep, and the first thing I thought of when I woke. My heart told me,” I tell him, and he kisses me deeply. The connection is real and raw and nothing I have ever had before in my entire life.

This is bliss.

Epilogue

Six months later, we enjoy a beautiful dinner at the Waterfront Seafood Restaurant, and I'm showing off a huge, sparkling diamond.

Dan proposed, and I said yes.

The charismatic and romantic man who he is put the ring in my champagne, just like in the movies. I didn't run or freak out. I cried, laughed, and then accepted as he got down on one knee and asked the million-dollar question. Six months ago, I freaked out when he told me he loved me, but now I'm one hundred percent devoted to this amazing man, wearing his ring is something I will do with pride.

"My gorgeous and sensational, Jemma, I love you so much. I want you in my life forever. Will you please do me the honour of becoming my wife?" he asks me, wiping the sweat from his brow. Poor guy, I guess I can be a little high maintenance and unpredictable. Maybe he thinks I will say no.

I have been preparing myself for this next step. Why shouldn't I have? It's been an amazing six months, and I couldn't imagine my life with anyone else, so it's logical.

I tell Roxy as I am over the moon.

We decided on a twelve-month engagement, not too long and not too short.

Roxy is now back with Kade, and their love is awe-inspiring. I see the way they look at each other, the sparks when they touch; it's a fairy tale come true.

I know they won't be getting engaged too far behind us; they lost each other once, so now being back in each other's

arms, they won't want to let go in a hurry.

I no longer chew men up and spit them out. I have settled for one man; he is the perfect package, a little jagged like me, a touch wacky, but at the end of the day, we are both head over heels happy in each other's arms.

Love comes in all shapes and forms. It's magical, rewarding, and challenging. I couldn't have picked a better guy to challenge me, pleasure me, and engulf me with his amazing love than he does. He is a dream come true, and I can honestly say I look forward to being in his arms forever.

The End