

PLAYBOY
BILLIONAIRE
HEARTBREAKER

They embark on a cruise that
will change everything.

New York Times Bestselling author
TESS OLIVER

PLAYBOY BILLIONAIRE HEARTBREAKER

BILLIONAIRE BAD BOYS CLUB

TESS OLIVER

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CHAPTER 1

TOMMY

My phone rang as I stepped off the elevator. “Hey, Max.” I pressed my thumb on the security pad. The outer doors to the penthouse opened.

“You home yet, Hawke?” Max asked.

“I will be in about five long steps.”

Max laughed. “Ah yes, the old Maxster’s timing is perfect again. Wait, don’t open your front door yet.”

I stopped just short of punching in the code. “Had a shitty day, Max. Lost a big real estate deal to Flemmings. Not in the mood.”

“Well, then I’m about to help you turn this crappy day around. Tomorrow, my best buddy, Tommy Hawkson, aka Hawke, turns twenty-seven.”

“I already know this, Max.”

“Open the door now. I dropped off your birthday gift an hour ago.”

I tapped in the code, and the door opened. Two beautiful women with nearly identical faces and smoking hot bodies were standing in the center of my living room. One was dressed in a pink colored see-through teddie, and the other wore the same transparent lingerie in lavender.

“Boom!” Max said. “Happy birthday, bro. The twin beauties flouncing around in their tiny, colorful nighties call themselves Rose and Violet. It takes three months to get a date

night with one of them. For both, I had to do a lot of negotiating. “

The one in lavender, Violet, I assumed, held up a fuzzy pair of handcuffs.

“You’re a good fucking friend, Max. Holy shit, they brought a trunk of toys.”

“Yep, that was extra. Oh, and they come with special care instructions. Rose loves to be spanked and Violet likes it in the ass. You’re welcome.”

Rose sashayed over. Her ample tits pressed against the paper thin fabric of her teddie, and her clean shaved pussy winked at me through the tiny g-string bottoms. She slid the coat off my shoulders. She started unbuttoning my shirt as Violet worked on my pants.

“Don’t know what the hell I’m going to do to top this for your birthday,” I said. “Triplets maybe.”

Max laughed.

In seconds, Rose and Violet had me naked and my cock at full attention.

“Got to go. I’ve got some amazing fucking birthday gifts to unwrap. And thanks, buddy. I needed this today.” I hung up and pointed at the girl in pink. “I’ve heard that you were a very naughty girl. And my birthday is not until tomorrow, so today, I get to do the spanking.”

She smiled coyly at me, completely in contrast to the tiny nightie and the reality of what I was about to do to her. To both of them.

“Grab your toys, girls, and come this way.” I motioned for them to follow me to the bedroom. My massive bed was positioned in the center of the room. It was surrounded by a great view of the city. On the walls without windows, I’d had floor to ceiling mirrors mounted. I fired up my sound system for some mood music.

Some men were addicted to liquor or cocaine or fast cars. I loved all those things, but my true drug of choice was women.

Couldn't get enough of them. And I loved giving them what they liked, giving them whatever it was that made them scream 'fuck yeah'. The only thing I hadn't given out was my heart, and I doubted it would ever happen. Falling in love would just complicate things and fuck up my addiction to women. I just wasn't ready for rehab yet.

Violet very helpfully handcuffed her pink friend to the bedpost. I'd had it custom made, complete with special notches added for extra fun. I loved to make money, but I was all about the fun. Especially when it involved hot pussy.

Rose's plump round ass cheeks jutted out around the pencil thin panty string dividing them. Violet got down on her knees next to her partner and called me toward her with a curl of her long, white finger. I stood in front of her with my feet slightly apart, and being a professional who liked to get right down to business, she cupped my balls with her velvety soft hand. With her other hand, she took a firm hold of the base of my cock. Her plump lips went right to work milking my cock.

Her twin moaned softly as she stuck her ass out in a silent plea for me to spank her. I answered her plea with a stinging slap. She cried out in pleasure. With an expensive call girl, you never could tell for sure if it was an act. But this girl, in her rosy pink lingerie, that now matched her rosy pink ass, seemed to be getting off on the spanking.

Violet was highly skilled with her tongue and lips, and fuck, her throat was deep. She took in as much of me as she could, all the while stroking my balls with her free hand. Rose watched in the mirror as my hand drew back and spanked her again.

"Again," she begged. "You are making so wet." She spread her legs to prove it. I reached between her legs, and sure enough, she was slick with moisture.

"I'm certainly not going to deny you your erotic little punishment, sweetheart." My hand smacked her tender white flesh again, leaving it pink with a handprint.

I reached down and pulled Violet's mouth from my cock.

“Are you not pleased?” she asked, blinking up at me with disappointment.

“Oh yes, very pleased. Too pleased. Not ready to end this yet.” I reached down and traced my thumb around her mouth. “Now, I’ve heard rumors that someone in this room likes a little ass play. Or a lot. I can do either.”

Violet’s moist lips broke into a grin. She stood up and walked over to her trunk of tools. She pulled out a bottle of lubricant, a condom and a dildo. This was about to get fucking interesting. I was going to owe Max big time. I’d had a shitty day. This morning I’d lost an account to my arch enemy. This was a much better half of the day.

The exceptionally helpful Violet rolled on my condom. After the mighty fine blow job while simultaneously getting to deliver a nice spanking to a beautiful ass, my cock had grown hard as rock. It was waiting for more.

Violet lubed up the dildo and looked over at Rose, poor little Rose, still bound to the bedpost with her pink ass and her exceptionally wet pussy.

Violet handed me the bottle of lubricant. She knelt down behind Rose and spread her partner’s legs. Rose cried out as Violet pushed the vibrating dildo into her pussy. Then she winked at me over her shoulder as she put one hand on the ground to brace herself. She was on her hands and knees and waiting, politely, to be fucked in the ass. I complied. It was my damn birthday, after all.

The lubricant rolled down into the tight, puckered hole. My lavender present mewled erotically as I shoved my finger inside her to ready her for my cock. From behind, I had an amazing view of Rose’s swollen pussy as Violet fucked her with the vibrator. I held firmly to Violet’s hips and slowly pushed down, filling the tight little space with as much of my cock as she could accommodate.

I glanced into the mirror at the chain of fucking we had going on. I prided myself on lasting long and making sure everyone ended with satisfaction, but as my cock drove into her ass, I knew I wasn’t going to last long. Yep, it wasn’t going

to be easy to outdo this birthday present. That was for damn sure.

CHAPTER 2

DANI

Axel reached clumsily between us to stroke my clit, but I was past the point of pleasure. I just needed him to finish. Lately, our sex had disintegrated into moments of *meh* fucking, that ended with him being the only person satisfied. The higher his band's fame and Youtube views went, the more the world centered solely around him. In the past few months, a record contract and a slew of new fans had morphed the hot, smooth-voiced man, who I'd fallen for and even accepted an engagement ring from, into a self-centered egomaniac.

The old Axel, the before Youtube fame Axel, had never cared about his hair or his clothes. All he cared about was his music. Worn jeans and a faded t-shirt were part of his everyday uniform, and I loved him looking tattered and sexy. But these days, he couldn't pass a mirror, or even a highly polished stainless steel refrigerator, without checking his hair.

He pumped his cock to orgasm and then collapsed next to me as if he'd done a marvelous, bang—up job. “Sorry, babe,” he grunted. “I tried.”

No, you didn't, were the words floating in my head, but I didn't say them aloud. Mostly because I just didn't give a damn anymore. We were drifting apart. His success was changing not only his lifestyle, but it was changing who he was. I was having a hard time seeing a place for myself in Axel's heart now. And he was definitely losing his place in mine.

He reached over to his phone, an appendage that he was rarely without these days. With social media alight with Steel

Wire, the newest rising stars in the music world, his phone never stopped buzzing.

He read a text, leaned down to kiss me on the forehead and jumped out of bed. “Are you coming to the recording session?”

“I suppose. Since I’ll be leaving soon, I guess we should spend more time together.”

He walked into the bathroom and turned on the sink. “How long will you be gone?” he called over the sound of water. I’d only told him a hundred times that I’d be gone for two weeks. I didn’t answer.

I got up, walked into the bathroom and turned on the shower. A year ago he would have followed me in. Back then, we couldn’t keep our hands off each other, but now, I would probably make up some excuse for him to get out. Those days of sex whenever and wherever were over. For a long time, I’d convinced myself that it was just because we were so familiar with each other now. We’d grown like an old married couple who planned things instead of jumping into bed when the urge hit us. Now sex only happened if it worked into our schedules and we weren’t too tired. We were both working a lot. We were both always tired.

But then, one day, a grim reality hit. I’d been home for a few hours watching a sexy romantic comedy by myself. I was definitely not tired and definitely in the mood when Axel walked in to the house. Something clicked right then. As much as I’d wanted sex at that moment, I hadn’t really felt like making the effort to seduce him. It wasn’t just familiarity or being too tired from work, I was growing tired of Axel. I should have been thrilled to see his career take off. Instead, I longed for the quiet days when we’d had no money and we’d eat boxed macaroni and cheese in front of our fuzzy television set. But I wasn’t ready to give up on us yet. I’d put a lot of time and effort into the relationship, and I was never a quitter.

Axel popped his head into the shower. He didn’t even take the time to smile appreciatively down at my naked, soapy body, something he would have done just a few months ago. It

seemed he was growing away from me as well. “How long are you going to be, Dani?”

“You go on ahead. I’m on-call for an hour to answer patient questions, so I need to stay by my phone. I’ll drive over separately.”

In between taking calls about persistent coughs, high fevers and unexplained rashes, my mom cut in to give her usual two cents worth. Even though it was just a saying, it really was the true value of her advice. She knew I wasn’t terribly happy in my relationship anymore, but she was also all about financial security, something that Axel would finally have. She was thrilled with the idea of my cushy, glamorous life as a rock star’s wife. She’d even, more than once, suggested I give up my job as a nurse practitioner. I’d disappointed her by not going all the way and becoming a doctor where I could eventually live in Beverly Hills and perform tummy tucks on chubby, middle-aged women. She’d always envisioned herself benefitting from my possible future as a plastic surgeon.

“What’s this text about you going out of town for a few weeks?” she asked.

I hesitated, trying to come up with a good story. “Yeah, uh, a rich woman has hired me to go along as a nurse on her vacation. It will be nice to get away.” I couldn’t tell her that the rich woman was Maggie Hawkson, her ex-mother-in-law. Although, Maggie wasn’t really an ex. Mom’s husband, Kenneth Hawkson, had died of a stroke just two years into their marriage. It had been his second marriage and my mom’s third. She’d married again, for a fourth time, just a year later. Which was the main reason I placed the value of her relationship advice at just two pennies.

“But what about Axel?” she asked.

“What about him? He’s a big boy. He knows how to dress himself and everything. Although lately, much like a four-year-old, Axel’s taste has been questionable.”

“Don’t be such a smartass, Danica. I’m serious. He’s climbing to stardom fast, and if you don’t hold on, you’re going to lose him for good. Some cute little groupie or super model is going to get their claws in him and then it will be good-bye mansions and boats and big jewelry.”

“Yes, because all of those things have always been such a big priority for me. Shit, Mom, sometimes it’s like you don’t know me at all. To see your kid, just look in the mirror and then think completely opposite thoughts and desires. That’s me.”

I glanced down at the tiny diamond chip on my engagement ring, a ring Axel had bought when we were still scraping quarters together for laundry. He’d tried recently to replace it with a two-karat platinum ring, but I’d told him there was no damn way. I loved my little diamond chip. It reminded me of sleeping on a mattress in the middle of our shabby apartment, overlooking the parking lot and the garbage bin.

“Marrying into money is not such a terrible thing, Dani. I can think of worse.”

“Really? You’ve done it four times and I’ve never seen you truly satisfied with your life.”

She huffed dramatically. “That’s a terrible thing to say. I made sure you and your brother always lived in nice houses and had nice things.”

“The keyword there is *houses*, Mom. We lived in so many places and with so many different stepfathers and step siblings, we never felt like we belonged anywhere.”

“Well,” another loud huff followed. “I’m sorry I was such a lousy mother.”

Guilt. As expert as my mom was at landing rich men, which being exceptionally beautiful and charming, she did easily, she was even more skilled at making me feel guilty. “You were a great mom. You just weren’t a great wife.”

“That’s not fair. I would still be with Kenneth if he hadn’t died so suddenly.”

“Yeah, maybe,” I said with little conviction.

Husband number three, Kenneth Hawkson, had been a successful stockbroker whose idea of mixing it up was to wear navy blue socks instead of black for a day. He'd never had the energy, charm or enthusiasm for life to keep up with my mom. I'd spent my teens, my most formative years, flitting around his austere estate, trying to figure out how I even belonged in the place and trying even harder to avoid the ridiculing glare of my stepbrother, Kenneth Junior. And in between, I had to endure constant teasing from my stepbrother Tommy, who took pure pleasure in reminding me that I was too skinny and had 'no tits for a guy to grab onto'. He'd even come up with the nickname Twiggy after the 1960's model who was famous for being too thin.

By husband and new home and situation number three, my brother, Derek, was eighteen. He'd grown weary of switching hometowns and jumping through hoops to please the newest version of stepfather. Ignoring my pleas for him not to abandon me, he enlisted in the army. He'd had a military career ever since.

"Mom, I've got another call coming in. I'll come see you before I head out of town. Love you."

"All right." She sighed. "Love you too."

I was relieved to get her off the phone so easily. I looked forward to getting away. I was going as a nurse on a luxury yacht. Maggie Hawkson, my step grandmother, was the only person in the Hawkson family I had ever liked. She'd always made it clear that she didn't care for my mom, but we'd gotten along splendidly. She was an eccentric, continuously happy woman, who, contrary to the austere, conservative decor of the Hawkson mansion, always wore wildly colorful and flowing dresses. Her arms and neck were always weighted down with giant baubles of custom jewelry, even though I knew she owned the good stuff too. She'd always let me play dress up with her jewels and makeup.

Yep, Maggie was cool. I hadn't kept in touch with my stepbrothers, but Maggie, or Nana as everyone called her, and I still talked, mostly on the phone. She didn't care for email. Occasionally, I heard about my stepbrothers. It was, of course,

information that'd been filtered through their highly opinionated grandmother. According to Maggie— Kenneth was doing a fine job filling his grandfather's and father's shoes running the family business, but she was sure he needed to eat more fiber because he always looked constipated. And Tommy, who was her obvious favorite, was still the same rebellious, woman chaser, and she worried he might never find true love.

Maggie was a hardcore romantic and a bit of a rebel herself. She was the one who'd taken me to get a tiny band of stars tattooed on my wrist when I was sixteen. My mom of course blew a fuse. I was pretty sure making my mom mad was part of what had motivated Maggie to take me.

Between my mom's constant phone calls and my confusion about the direction my relationship with Axel was headed, two weeks out on the Caribbean with Maggie sounded divine.

CHAPTER 3

TOMMY

The intercom woke me from a deep sleep. There was a long leg draped across my chest, and Rose, the other half of my birthday gift, had her very delectable ass still pushed securely against me. My automatic blinds were programmed to open an inch at a time as the sun broke so I could slowly be bathed in sunshine. From the amount of light in the room, my guests and I had slept through the first three inches. Max had paid for two hours, but we'd gone straight into the night with our fun. They had seemed as reluctant to leave as I was to part with them.

I reached up to the intercom panel next to my bed. "Yeah?"

"Yeah?" Nana repeated. "Is that any way to address your grandmother? I'm coming up, and thought I'd give you a warning so you and whoever else you might have up there can get decent."

"Good thinking, Nana."

I woke Violet with a kiss on her dark pink nipple, because it just so happened to be winking up at me from my bed. Rose opened her eyes and blinked at me as if I was a complete stranger which, aside from spending half the night with my cock buried in her, I technically was.

"That's my grandmother, and she's coming up."

The word grandmother prodded them along much faster. I went to pull some money from my wallet, but Violet rubbed up against me and put her hand on my wrist. "Your friend paid us, and the rest is our birthday treat." She winked. "We'll be

sure to leave our hotline number. It's strictly for special clients."

"Special, huh? I like that." I kissed her cheek and went to my walk-in closet. I grabbed up a pair of jeans and shirt. The girls shimmied into shorts and t-shirts. I whistled. "You two look good all dressed up like that."

Violet laughed as she stuck the toys in her trunk. The familiar beep of the elevator sounded in the hallway.

"The handcuffs," I reminded them and went to the front door to let Nana inside.

Nana had added dark purple highlights to her shiny black hair. With bright red lipstick and glitter rimmed glasses, she looked nothing like a regular grandma. Thank god. Loved her to death because of it. A regular old grandma would also not walk straight over and introduce herself to the two high-dollar hookers walking out of her grandson's bedroom.

The giant white beads of her bracelet clunked together as she reached out her small, slightly wrinkled hand. "Good morning, I'm Maggie, Tommy's grandmother."

Violet's blue eyes rounded as she shot me a shocked look. Rose, who I'd already discovered was the more laid back, no nonsense twin, took my grandmother's hand. "I'm Rose and this is Violet."

"Very nice to meet you," Nana said. She pointed to the trunk. "Would you like us to call the concierge to help you with that?"

"Nana, they're fine." I walked to the door and opened it. Violet and Rose waved as they walked out and headed to the elevator.

I shut the door. Nana lifted her smoothly penciled in brow. "Good god, Tommy, two? And twins, no less."

"This coming from the woman who spent her early twenties as a big proponent of the peace and free love movement, and who conceived my father out in some field at Woodstock while Jimi Hendrix was pounding out Purple Haze on his guitar."

“That was different. We were making a statement.”

“Like what— life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness through a cloud of weed and free sex?”

“Shut up and let me hug my favorite grandson for his birthday.” Nana lifted her arms and wrapped them tightly around me. She always smelled of jasmine and vanilla. It was a fragrance that always made me homesick. My great grandfather, Nana’s dad, had been dirt poor while Nana was growing up. Then he’d purchased a giant piece of seemingly worthless land in Texas, with dreams to start a ranch. It’d yielded oil instead, and the Hawkson family fortune was made. But Nana had never really embraced the posh lifestyle of an oil baron’s daughter. In her twenties, she’d gone off on her own, hitchhiking around the country and hanging with a lot of other twenty-somethings who shunned the *establishment*. But once she’d learned she was pregnant with my dad, she headed back home. She said, as fun as it was, she knew the back of a V.W. van was no place to raise a kid.

Nana dropped her arms. “Tommy, get your grandmother some coffee.”

We walked into the kitchen. The pot had been set to brew at eight in the morning. It was ten, but it was still warm.

Nana hoisted herself up onto a stool. “Where did you meet the two rainbow girls?” she asked.

I poured us each a cup of coffee. “They were a birthday gift from Max. So don’t go getting your little matchmaker notebook out.”

“Tommy, I’m not some feeble old fool. I knew they were hookers.”

I picked up her hand and kissed it. “I never think of you as old or feeble, Nana.”

She poured creamer into her cup. Her big glass rings glittered under the recessed lighting in the kitchen. “Besides, I don’t use a matchmaker notebook. That’s too old fashioned and not nearly secretive enough. I have to be stealthy with my two grandsons. Neither of whom have found soul mates yet.”

She sighed. “I blame your father for that. He had way too many different women in his life.”

“Don’t think you can put the blame on Dad. Kenny just hasn’t found any woman who can tolerate his supremely obnoxious personality, and I haven’t been looking.”

She rested her arm on the counter, and her jewelry clunked loudly on the granite. “I worry about Kenny.” She leaned forward as if there was someone around who could overhear her. “I had Louie, the chef, sneak some bran into Kenny’s meals. But he still always has that pinch-faced look like he’s carrying a load he just can’t drop.”

I laughed. “Nana, Kenny has had that look since the day he was born. A little bran isn’t going to nudge him into suddenly being charismatic.”

She reached over and placed her hand on my arm. “Not like my youngest grandson, who, I might add, took completely after me.” She looked around my place. “And he made his money all on his own.” She reached up to my face for the perfunctory Nana cheek pinch.

I sipped my coffee and looked at her over the brim of my cup. The sparkle in her eyes told me the woman was up to something. “What exactly did you mean when you said you had matchmaker secrets?”

“Hmm, did I say that?” She looked away, which meant she was hiding something.

“Yes, I believe you did.”

Her array of oversized bracelets vibrated as she waved her hand in dismissal. “You should never listen to the ramblings of an old, feeble hippie. Between the mushrooms and the LSD, I’m surprised any rational thoughts ever come out of my head.”

I stared at her. “Nana?”

She sipped more coffee. “Really, Tommy. You’re imagining things.” She put the coffee mug down harder than needed. “Anyhow, I came to tell you about your birthday gift.” She pointed to the door. “And I’m sorry to disappoint you, but

it's nothing like Max's unique but tawdry gesture of friendship. As you know, I had the yacht pulled out of mothballs for my trip to the Caribbean."

"Mothballs? The Sea Queen just went through a half million dollar renovation. I hope they did more than take out some smelly mothballs."

She smiled. "It's truly beautiful. But, alas, I've had some things come up, and I'll have to delay my trip."

"Things came up?" I repeated.

She brushed my question off again. Nana was expert at only answering questions she felt like responding to. "Anyhow, I've got a crew lined up for the two week excursion. It's too late to cancel their contracts, so I have to pay them anyhow. You should go. Take some friends and go have a ball on Nana's dime."

"I've got work, Nana."

"Everyone needs a vacation. Two weeks in the Caribbean Sea, Tommy. Otherwise, I'll offer it to your brother. But he and his uptight, loafer wearing friends aren't the right passengers for the Sea Queen's maiden voyage after her major plastic surgery." She reached over and patted my arm. "You look tired, sweetheart. You should take a vacation."

"Now, how am I supposed to say no when you look at me with those big brown eyes, Nana? I'll go. It'll be nice to get away. Work's been sort of grinding me down lately."

"Terrific."

CHAPTER 4

DANI

The best thing about Axel's newfound fame was that he and his band, a loud, semi-rank smelling foursome with an aversion to picking up empty beer cans and pizza boxes, were making enough money to find a studio to work, compose and practice in.

I packed for the job on the Caribbean and then headed over to the studio to eat takeout food, share some good news about a job offer and listen to their newest song. Axel and I had both been so busy, we'd hardly seen each other in the past week. I'd found that I was all right with that. It gave both of us some much needed space. It had also given me time to reflect. The hitch in our relationship was all me. I was sure of it. I'd been completely crazy about Axel, the scruffy looking guitarist in the garage band. But there was something inherently less romantic about a band in a recording studio than a band standing between old boxes marked Christmas decorations and baby clothes. It was just the new circumstances that had me thrown off. I was sure my heart would come around again. Eventually, I'd find Axel just as appealing standing up on a big stage with dramatic lighting as I had seeing him beneath the single dusty light bulb in his mom's garage.

I walked into their new studio. In an earlier life, it had been a big warehouse for storing paper goods. The guys were draped around on an eclectic collection of furniture, eating Chinese food from white boxes. Two girls had joined them. One was the drummer's girlfriend, a woman I'd never warmed up to. I didn't know the other one, but she was certainly

gorgeous. She was dressed in a skirt and a t-shirt that were both several sizes too small.

She was just handing Axel a soda as I stepped into view. He cut his enthusiastic smile for her short and jumped up from the chair, almost as if I'd caught him doing something more than taking a soda from her hand.

"Hey, baby, come on in and get some chow." Axel walked over and kissed me quickly on the forehead.

I sat down on one of the beach chairs that was propped up next to a coffee table made of ceramic tile. Blake, the drummer, handed me a box of food and a pair of chopsticks. The gorgeous girl in the tiny clothes sat just inches away from Axel.

I reached my hand across to her. "Hi, I'm Dani." I decided not to tell her my connection. I was curious to see if Axel had told her anything about his engagement.

"Oh right, I've heard all about you," she said with a nice smile.

That, unfortunately didn't tell me much.

"Love that little band of stars on your wrist," she said pointing to her own wrist. That was when I noticed that she, too, had a tattoo on the side of her arm. The name of the band, Steel Wire, was handwritten in black ink. I was hoping I'd misread it.

I glanced at Axel, but he had turned a ridiculous amount of attention to his chow mein. He was avoiding eye contact. Never a good sign.

I looked back at the woman with my fiancé's band name tattooed on her arm and wondered if I should just be relieved that it wasn't on her inner thigh or across the top of her very large breasts.

"And you are—?" I asked.

She laughed. "Oops, I'm Britney. I'm the new band assistant."

I looked at Axel and then around at the band members. Everyone had extremely interesting boxes of chow mein.

Axel finally put his balls back on and looked up at me. “We needed an assistant to do things like food runs.” He lifted his box of food as proof. “That way we don’t take time out of our practice.”

I blinked at him. He knew me well enough to understand that I was calling him ‘stupid ass’ without one word leaving my mouth.

I smiled pleasantly at Britney and mimicked her mention of my tattoo by pointing to my arm in the place where she had the band name. “Interesting tattoo.”

She lifted her arm and looked at it as if she’d forgotten it was there. “Isn’t that cool? I got it a couple months ago when I became Steel Wire’s number one fan. Started a blog and everything.”

“Wow, a blog and everything. Fun.” I lifted my shoulders to assure her I was just as giddy as her about it all. “Axel, could I see you alone for just a second?” I asked.

He put his food down. “Sure thing, baby,” he said coolly as if there was nothing shitty going on.

We walked to the small alcove at the end of the giant room. “So, are you fucking your new assistant?” Obviously, I wasn’t in the mood to tiptoe.

He put on a good show of looking aghast at my question. “No, baby. Why would I do that when my fiancé is the most beautiful woman in the world?”

“Spare me the bullshit, Axel. Just tell me the truth.”

He put his arms around me and brought me close. “It’s the truth. She scouted us out. She needed work, and we figured she’d come in handy. The band has got a lot of stuff going on, and it’ll be nice to have her to do some of our errands and shit. You’re going to have to get used to pretty girls hanging around. We’re a band, and a band always has groupies.”

“O.K. your little pep talk isn’t making me feel any better.”

He kissed me. “Just relax.”

I nodded. “By the way, remember that job I was trying to get at the Angel’s Heart Hospital? I got it.”

Big laughter rolled over from the center room. Axel gave me a quick, congratulatory hug. “That’s great, baby.” With that, he walked back to where everyone was sitting. Apparently, he didn’t want to miss any of the fun. And, apparently, big events in my life weren’t high on his interest list.

CHAPTER 5

DANI

Captain Yardley was the first person to greet me as I dragged my rolling luggage up the gangplank. Nana had hired a small crew for the two weeks, including a housekeeper, two deckhands, a chef, a chef's assistant and me, her one woman medical team. Not that she needed much care for her health. Even after a stunning amount of experimentation with psychedelic drugs in her twenties, a time period that she loved to tell stories about, stories I loved to hear, Maggie was in great shape for a seventy-year-old woman.

The deckhand, Robert, a tall lanky guy who had to duck under all the galley doorways, showed me to my miniature infirmary. It was well supplied with bandages, antiseptics and pain medication. My room was right past the infirmary, a very cozy bedroom with its own bathroom and glittering shower stall and tub. There were three portholes on the wall behind the bed, and I had a nice but small view of the ocean. I'd told Maggie that she had to treat me like a member of the crew and give me a room near the infirmary. I didn't want the others to chastise me for special treatment. Still, there would be plenty of off time for me to relax and enjoy myself. After all, I was technically family.

Robert knocked on the half open infirmary door. "Come on in, Robbie. You don't need to knock. This place is for everyone."

He opened up and nodded politely. "The passengers are boarding, and there was already an ankle twisting incident on the way up the gangplank."

“Oh dear, is Mrs. Hawkson in a lot of pain?” I went to the refrigerator and pulled out an ice pack. I glanced around. “Is there a wheelchair somewhere?”

“I’ll check for you, Miss Richards.”

“Please, call me Dani. I’ll go see to Mrs. Hawkson. Please bring the wheelchair if you find one.”

“Yes, Miss—Dani, but just to let you know, Mrs. Hawkson is not onboard for this trip.”

I gathered up a few other things. “Of course she is.” I sidled past him to head up to the deck.

“No, she cancelled. It’s her grandson that will be on board. It’s one of his friends who twisted her ankle.”

I stopped and looked at him. “Her grandson? But why wouldn’t Maggie have told me the plans had changed?”

Robert, of course, wouldn’t have an answer to that question, and I felt silly for bothering him with it.

“Very well, I’ll go up and see what I can do for Mr. Hawkson’s friend.” I headed to the stairs with my supplies. Total disappointment. I’d be staying below deck more than I thought. Spending time in close quarters with Maggie’s snobbish, dull grandson, Kenneth, had just put a shadow over this whole trip. I’d left Axel feeling on very shaky ground about our engagement. I was sure there was no way their number one fan, Britney, was hanging around just to fetch mocha lattes. The whole thing had left me in a dark mood, but I’d had this wonderful trip to look forward to. I had been extremely excited to see Maggie again. This changed everything. And Kenneth, who had always hated how Mom and I had intruded on their lives, would be extra sure to make me feel like paid help. This whole trip had just turned south fast.

I walked up onto the deck. A woman with long auburn hair and showgirl caliber legs was standing staring down, with some boredom, at a woman sitting on the deck. A man with dark brown hair was bent down over the woman on the deck. The injured woman had curly blonde hair that looked a bit too

styled for being out on a boat. Both women looked as if they'd stepped right off the runway in France. Definitely not the type of women I'd picture hanging out with Kenneth. No, in fact, they were more the type of women I'd see on the arm of—

“Twiggy?” A deep voice came from behind.

I spun around. “Tommy.”

He didn't try to hide the fact that he was looking me over. “Holy shit, Twiggy, you aren't that little stick of gum anymore.” His gaze lingered on my breasts. I'd gone through the first years of high school looking like a bean pole. Then, almost as if the boob fairy had come and touched me with her wand, my breasts had swelled up to a respectable C cup, and the curve in my hips followed.

I decided tit for tat. If he could brazenly check me out, I could do the same. And it was easy to do. Tommy had always been a complete and utter heartbreaker with his thick black hair and green eyes, but he'd filled out. He was no longer the teenage boy who I'd occasionally stolen glances at around the cereal box, or whose name I'd once absentmindedly doodled inside a heart on my school notebook, a doodle I'd spent an entire lunch period trying to scratch out with a black pen. Undeniably, I'd always had a crush on my older stepbrother, but that was all it had been. That was all it could be. He was, after all, my stepbrother. And now, from what I'd heard from Maggie, he was a complete and utter playboy who bounced from beautiful woman to beautiful woman without a care in the world. The kind of guy who was best to avoid.

“Hawke, are you going to bring that ice over here, or what?” a familiar voice called from behind. I turned back around. Max, Tommy's best friend, lifted his sunglasses to get a better look at me. “Twiggy? Damn, you're all grown up.”

“Yep, that adulthood thing seems to have happened to all of us.”

The girl on the ground complained about being ignored and rightly so. I walked over and crouched down to check out the ankle. A broken shoe, with what I would term as an extreme heel, was sitting next to her injured foot.

“Crystal, I told you not to wear those.” The other woman’s unhelpful comment rained down on my head as I examined the ankle for broken bones.

“Oh shut up, Olivia,” Crystal said in a wavering voice.

“Girls, girls,” Max said. “No fighting unless there is a vat of mud to go with it.”

The auburn haired woman, Olivia, I assumed, rolled her eyes at Max’s crass comment.

Max still had that same roguish, slightly annoying grin that he’d had as a teenager. Growing up, Max had always been at Tommy’s side, a sort of comical sidekick. They had been inseparable, and it seemed that hadn’t changed. Max had always insisted he stayed close to Tommy to provide comfort to the endless line of broken-hearted hotties that Tommy left behind. I used to kid him that he deserved sainthood for relieving the misery of so many. The three of us had spent a lot of time together laughing and making fun of each other. It wasn’t until after Mom and I had moved out that I’d realized we’d all had a nice connection.

I turned Crystal’s foot gently. “Does it hurt when I do that?”

She winced as if it pained her. “Only a little.” She glanced at my clothing. I’d worn a blue sleeveless shirt and khaki shorts onto the boat. The heat and humidity called for light clothing. “Who are you? You’re not dressed like a doctor.”

“Crystal, Olivia,” Tommy chimed in finally. “This is Dani, my stepsister. She’s also a nurse.”

“A nurse practitioner,” I corrected him.

He nodded to apologize for his mistake. The gleam in his green eyes brought back some of those old memories of us hanging out in front of the television throwing popcorn kernels at each other. And then there was the constant teasing, which came mostly from his end.

Crystal was still staring at me. “I thought your name was Twiggy?” Suddenly, I was more her focus than the pain in her ankle.

Max laughed. “We used to call her that because she was so damn skinny.” He raised a brow at my breasts. “I like what you’ve done with yourself, Twiggy.”

“I haven’t done anything, Max.”

“You mean those beauties are real?” he asked.

“Shit, Max, you filled out like a man, but you still have the brain of a sixteen-year-old.” I peered up at Tommy, and for a second, my breath caught as if I was looking at a complete stranger, a beautiful, breathtaking stranger. “Can you two guys lift her and get her to her room? She needs to keep the foot elevated and under ice for a day.” I turned back to the patient. “A few aspirin and you should be fine.”

Crystal looked at me as if she didn’t quite trust the casually dressed stranger with the big boobs that had been the center of conversation. “I hardly think a few aspirin will help.” Pasting on a pretty, helpless female face, she looked up at Tommy. “Sweetie, do you think you could help me into my bikini? At least then I can sit out on the deck and get some sun while my ankle heals.”

Tommy nodded. “I think I can manage that.”

Tommy and Max lifted Crystal. Olivia snapped her fingers for Robert to grab all their bags.

I cast a secret eye roll Robert’s direction.

Finger snapping, an annoying habit of the wealthy, entitled class. This was going to be a long two weeks.

CHAPTER 6

TOMMY

Crystal was stretched out on the chaise lounge in the center of the top deck with a table of fruity drinks and snacks within arm's reach. She was milking the twisted ankle so she could be waited on and fawned over. It was one of the reasons that in our on-again, off-again relationship, the off-again side was always winning. If Crystal wasn't the center of attention, she did something to make sure the spotlight was back on her. Even though I doubted she'd intentionally hurt herself, this injury had definitely put her in the queen's chair, exactly where she liked to be.

Olivia had already grown tired of her friend's drama. She and Max had pulled their chairs into the shade to read magazines and sip margaritas.

I was having a harder time than I'd expected cutting myself off from work. I'd sat myself across from Crystal on the newly upholstered bench running along the bow. The contract I was reading was dull as shit, and my mind kept drifting to the idea that Dani was onboard with us. I knew that Nana had kept in touch with her, but I hadn't seen or talked to Dani for a good seven years. She'd changed. And for the better, which was saying a lot because even as a bony hipped fifteen-year-old, she'd lit up any room she walked into. I had always really liked her, even though, I had only showed it by teasing her mercilessly and making fun of everything she did. It was typical defensive behavior for a sixteen-year-old boy with a major crush on a girl he could never have.

Then, as if my thoughts had summoned her, Dani walked out on deck. Her blonde hair was swept up in a ponytail, just like she always used to wear. I could still remember standing behind that long, silky neck as I taught her how to throw a dart, and the entire time, I'd been unable to focus on the dart lesson. All I'd been able to think about was kissing her neck. That same thought seemed pretty logical right now as she stooped over to check the swelling on Crystal's ankle.

Crystal stared up at her over the rim of her sunglasses. "So, a nurse practitioner, huh? Why would anyone choose that? Is it good money? Or maybe you just wanted to meet a hunky doctor."

Dani put the ice pack back on the ankle with a little more force than needed. "I couldn't afford all the years of medical school, but I wanted to help people."

Max laughed. "Helping people. It figures that one didn't cross Crystal's mind. I still remember when Tommy was skateboarding down his steep driveway, and he had to bail off of it. Left a lot of skin on the asphalt, but he was more worried about the tongue lashing he'd get from his dad for riding down the driveway in the first place."

Dani looked over at me. I remembered the day vividly and from the expression on her face, she hadn't forgotten either. I smiled at her. "And Dani cleaned all my scrapes and cuts in secret so that my dad wouldn't find out."

Max laughed. "Poor guy was walking around so stiffly trying not to let on that he was in horrible pain, and then his dad patted him on the shoulder about something." Max dropped back against the chair still laughing. "Tommy nearly jumped out of his skin."

I shook my head. "Glad you found it so funny."

"I should probably get some more ice for this," Dani said and turned to leave.

"I've got some here in this bucket." I stood and picked up the ice bucket. I walked toward her, and as the gap between us closed, a sudden charge of energy swirled in the air. Or at

least, I'd felt it. It was the same exchange of energy I'd felt one morning back when Dani was still living with us. It had been a weird encounter that I still hadn't forgotten because it had been so profound. Dani had stumbled out of the bathroom in a hurry and late for school, as usual. She had only been wearing a towel as she bumped right into me. She'd stared at me as if I'd grown horns, and her face burned red with a blush. As she dashed around me to her room, it felt as if some unexplained electrical charges had snapped apart. I'd pushed it out of my head as just being a completely awkward moment.

I held out the bucket. As Dani took hold of it, my fingers seemed to move toward hers, all on their own, as if my brain wasn't controlling them. My hand grazed hers. Actually, it wasn't a graze at all. It was a touch. It was a full-on caress. For a moment in time, no one else was on deck with us. Just me and Dani, the cute, skinny stepsister who had morphed into a heart-stopping beauty.

My fingers pulled reluctantly away, but even after holding an ice bucket, the heat of her hand stayed with me.

My grandmother and her secret matchmaking schemes—she'd set this whole damn thing up.

CHAPTER 7

DANI

The loud knock woke me from a deep sleep. I opened my eyes into an unfamiliar darkness and quickly remembered that I wasn't in my room at home. I was on Maggie Hawkson's luxury yacht, only Maggie was safely tucked on land and I was out on the Caribbean Sea with her playboy grandson, Tommy, and his snooty friends. The end of my bed lifted and sank with the waves. A second urgent knock also reminded me that I was the one person medical team for the spoiled passengers on the three hundred foot Sea Queen.

"Coming!" I called. I lowered my feet to the floor, but the deck dropped out with a change in current. I pitched forward and caught myself on the dresser. Lightning glowed through the three portholes making my wall look like the grill on a car with three headlights. I reached for the light switch. I was wearing only a cotton t-shirt. I grabbed my shorts and pulled them on.

Another knock and Robert's voice followed. "Miss— uh, Dani, we are in need of medical assistance," he called through the knock on the door.

I rushed through to the outer room, the small infirmary I'd been put in charge of. I flicked on the light. The glass cabinets, stainless steel exam table and refrigerator door gleamed back at me.

I grabbed the first aid box and swung open the door. The deck sank quickly like the floor of an elevator and then rose up just as suddenly. I braced my free hand on the door jamb for support.

Robert had yanked on his shirt so fast, it was inside out. He ducked his head down to avoid crowning himself on the top of the doorway. “We’re in a storm,” he said.

“Yes, I gathered that. Who’s in trouble?” I asked.

“It’s Crystal,” a deep voice answered. Tommy stepped onto the landing with his damsel, once again, in his arms. She was wearing a frilly nightgown. Tommy had taken the time to just pull on his shorts. For a second, I felt a pang of envy thinking that it would be awfully damn nice to be the woman in those fantastic arms. When the hell did his arms get so massive? I shook the silliness from my head and blamed it on the intense rocking of the ship. I returned my focus to the patient. I was, after all, onboard to help sick people, and Crystal definitely looked sick. Her beautiful golden skin had taken on a greenish pallor that almost matched my khaki shorts.

“Bring her in here.”

Tommy turned sideways to get her through the small doorway. Crystal looked limp in his arms. She moaned in pain as he lowered her onto the patient bed. I walked to her side and placed a hand on her forehead. She was cold and clammy.

“Did she hit her head or fall?” I asked.

“No,” Tommy said. “She just woke up looking like this.”

I stared down at the woman and had to hold back a grin. “Crystal, do you feel nauseous?”

She moaned in response. Tommy’s pretty, little girlfriend absolutely had a flare for drama. Just one day after sitting like an invalid on the deck lounges, acting as if she might never walk again, she’d been up and dancing on the same twisted ankle by nightfall.

“Crystal, I’m going to give you something for the nausea. This is just seasickness.”

Her long, pink fingernails reached up and grabbed my shirt. She managed to pinch some skin with it. “Bullshit. I’m dying. Now get me to a fucking hospital.” She still gripped my

shirt as she pulled herself halfway to sitting. Then she turned her head and puked all over my shirt.

I stared down at the mess. “I guess you had a lot of those strawberry margaritas.” As a nurse practitioner, I’d learned to have an iron stomach, but with the crazy storm surge tossing the yacht around, I was already feeling a bit off myself. I swallowed back the bitter taste in my throat.

Crystal flopped back down like a ragdoll and sighed. “Now I feel better.”

“Fuck, Crystal,” Tommy said angrily. There had been a few seconds of concern on his part, but now he was clearly annoyed. “You could have asked for a bowl or trash can.”

Crystal lifted a limp arm and waved her long nails at me. “She’s just wearing some trashy old t-shirt.”

Tommy opened his mouth to say something, but I shook my head at him. “I’ve dealt with worse.” I sidled past him. His arm brushed mine and, again, I imagined briefly what it would be like to be in those arms. What the hell was wrong with me? Tommy was my stepbrother. He was Nana’s grandson. I was obviously just delirious from the unsteady deck beneath our feet.

I reached into the medicine cabinet, pulled out the motion sickness pills and returned to my patient. Crystal had her arm draped dramatically across her forehead to block out the light. “It’s probably a little late for these, but they might help you sleep,” I said. “Tommy, could you fill a glass with water?”

Crystal held up her hand. “Give me five or six.”

“Sorry,” I said. “I’ll give you two. That will be plenty. When Tommy gets you back to the room, put a cold, wet towel on your head. That should help.”

Crystal lifted her arms, letting Tommy know she once again needed to be carried.

“There’s a wheelchair in the hallway,” Tommy said.

Crystal was not pleased. Robert rolled the wheelchair into the room. Tommy lifted and lowered Crystal, rather

unceremoniously, into the chair. They walked out.

The smell of vomit was not helping my own state of equilibrium. I quickly yanked off the t-shirt and decided to throw it straight into the bio waste receptacle. Just as I closed the lid, there was a light knock on the infirmary door. It pushed open.

“Just wanted to thank you—” Tommy said, but his thank you ended abruptly.

I crossed my arms across my naked breasts, but my thin forearms were really no match for my breasts. I reached over to the counter, grabbed several paper towels and held them in front of me.

Tommy glanced away politely for a second and then looked at me again. It took all his will, it seemed, to keep his focus on my face. “Sorry about all that,” he said, motioning back behind him. “She’s sort of—”

“A yuck?”

He laughed. “I forgot you used to call my girlfriends, or at least the ones you didn’t approve of, yucks.” He seemed to be giving it some thought. “You’re right. Crystal’s a yuck. Nana sort of gave me short notice about this trip, so I went down the list—”

I put up my hand. “So don’t want to hear about my stepbrother’s list. But if *she* was on the list, then I know why you haven’t found anyone yet.”

He raised a smooth brow. “You’ve been spending too much time talking to Nana.”

“I love talking to her. But trust me, we have many, more interesting topics than your love life.”

He stepped inside the infirmary. Suddenly the tiny room seemed even smaller. “Uh, did you leave your frail flower out in the hallway, or did you just give her a quick shove with the hopes that she would end up at the door to your cabin?”

“I had Robert push her to the room because I wanted to stop in and thank you.” He moved closer, and I could feel the

heat from his body. His chest and arms were incredible, and the ink from his tattoos vibrated with every movement of his muscles. This wasn't Tommy the teenager anymore. This was a man, a man who was making me feel extra sensitive to the fact that I was standing in front of him with paper towels to shield my naked boobs.

"I'm sort of cold," I said. "And I need to shower. Don't think I'll ever be able to look at a strawberry margarita again."

He smiled. "Funny and sweet. Still the same, Twiggy. I mean, aside from the obvious—" He waved his hand in front of my breasts. "Not many women can rock the paper towel look like that."

"Yeah, you know how great my fashion sense has always been."

He nodded. "I do remember a very odd pair of striped pants that you liked to pair with that tiny pink midriff top you were always wearing." He stopped as my eyes widened.

"You remember my pink midriff?" I had no idea why it meant something to me but it did. I'd always considered myself just to be a small passing blemish in the unbelievably lavish lives of the Hawkson brothers, an annoying, forced upon them sibling, who they saw only as another person living in their twenty thousand foot mansion. Kenneth had definitely made it clear that that was how he felt about me. Tommy had always made a bit more effort to make me feel part of the family, but even then, I still always felt completely out of place.

"Yeah, Twiggy, I remember a lot of things— like how you always hummed Christmas songs when you were working on your homework, even in May, and how you liked to spray cheez whiz on your Spaghetti O's. And how you loved to watch those chainsaw movies where people were getting cut up, even though you always held the couch pillow up in front of your face when you were watching them."

Unexpectedly, my throat tightened as he spoke, and he seemed to catch my mood change. "What's wrong?"

My eyes actually burned as if I might cry, but I stopped myself. “Nothing. I guess I just always felt like I was this annoying little pest that you had to put up with. I know your brother tried so hard to ignore me, he nearly walked through me like I was just a vapor or ghost.”

“My brother has always prided himself on being the world’s biggest asshole. Why do you think I went out on my own instead of following him into the family business? I would have lived on the streets rather than work as one of Kenneth’s minions.”

“But you’re not on the street, are you?” I noted.

A humble smile crossed his face. He had an extraordinarily handsome face. He always had.

“Your grandmother is really proud of you, starting from scratch and doing so well. Commercial real estate, right?”

“I don’t think I can credit myself with the words ‘from scratch’. The name Hawkson can really come in handy in the business world. Even commercial real estate.” He laughed, but it was kind of a sad, rough sound. “Sounds dull as shit, doesn’t it? Sometimes I think I should have gone into the military like your brother or learned how to fly so I could be a pilot.”

“You did always have an affinity for danger,” I said. “But now, I guess women are your extreme sport.” I regretted the words as soon as I said them.

He shook his head and looked slightly hurt. It was like we were back sitting in the media room, watching MTV together after school and chucking insults and barbs across the couch cushions. Only this time I’d tossed a real stinger.

“I’m sorry, Tommy. It’s late and I’m wearing Crsytal’s barf residue and feeling a little seasick myself.”

He raked his hair back with his fingers. His arm muscle bulked with the movement. It sent an unexpected shiver through me. He noticed but he misjudged the cause of my tremble.

“You’re cold. It’s rude of me to keep you standing here in your— your paper outfit. I’ll let you go. Thanks again for

helping Crystal. If I'm lucky, she'll be fast asleep by the time I get up there."

"Wait." I held the paper towels against me with one hand as I reached into the cabinet with the free one. My fingers touched his palm as I handed him a few more pills. It was just the simple act of putting pills on his hand, but when my fingers made contact with him another shiver went through me. Just like I'd briefly wondered what it would be like to be in his arms, I had a fleeting thought about what it would be like to have his hands on me. *Stop, Dani*. This is Tommy. This is the guy who used to pull your hair when he walked by in the hallway or kitchen just to annoy you. This is the guy who would purposely chug down the last of the milk straight from the carton as he watched you pour cereal into a bowl. This is the guy who used to come into your room and hang out and toss your stuffed animals around like volleyballs whenever he was pissed at his dad or brother... And there it was, the epiphany, that strange moment when something hits you over the head that you didn't see coming. Tommy and me had been far more connected than I'd let myself believe. I was just a flighty teen with so much going on and so much instability in my life, it hadn't even occurred to me that Tommy and I had grown close in those few years. Whenever Tommy was in trouble or pissed or upset, he'd plod into my room and flop back onto my bed. He never wanted to talk about his problems, but in a weird way I was his confidante, his go to person.

"Well, good night, Twig—I mean Dani."

"Good night. And I'll keep my fingers crossed that you don't wake up in the same stuff that just ruined my t-shirt."

"Damn. Maybe I'll sleep up on deck." He gazed at me, and for a second, I caught that rebellious but charming twinkling eye of the teenage Tommy. He closed the door, and I went in to take a shower.

CHAPTER 8

TOMMY

After a night of angry seas and cold fog, the sky over the calm water glowed clear and blue. Everyone, it seemed, had had a bad night. Even Max had told me to fuck off when I knocked on his door. It would be just fine if Crystal stayed in the cabin the rest of the day, and even the rest of the trip, for that matter. I'd regretted inviting her along almost as soon as she stepped onto the gangplank in her high heels. And that regret had grown as the day progressed. The night before, when a little seasickness had turned into a traumatic event, I'd decided the less time spent with her, the better. This time *off-again* was really going to mean off.

I finished reading my emails and put down my phone.

Dani walked out on deck holding a plate of fruit. She was wearing a tissue thin swimsuit cover-up. It was transparent enough to make the pink bikini underneath that much more intriguing. I'd gone to bed with that vision of her standing half naked, wrapped in paper towels, in my head and had woken up with a stiff cock. She was Twiggy, the bratty, albeit, very cute, stepsister. Having my cock stand at attention at the mere thought of her was messing with my head. But then, I reminded myself, it was not really all that scandalous. Dani and I were both adults now, and we weren't relatives in the biological sense. Watching her as she sashayed toward me in an itchy bitsy bikini, my dick once again agreed with my reasoning.

Dani pointed to the empty lounge next to me.

“Go ahead. It’s just me and the seagulls, although they took off once I finished my breakfast muffin.”

Dani kicked off her sandals. “They are a mercenary bunch, those gulls.” She untied the tiny ribbons that held together the sheer panels of the cover-up. She lowered the light material from her shoulders but stopped and waved her hand. “Look that way. You’re making me feel self-conscious.”

I laughed. “May I remind you that you were standing in front of me draped in two paper towels just last night.”

“That was different. I was a professional in the throes of combat. And, besides, those paper towels were far less revealing than this bikini, a purchase that I am now seriously rethinking.”

I looked toward the water for just a second but then turned back to her before she had a chance to sit. “Nice. Curves really work on you. And I’m glad you didn’t rethink the bikini.”

She threw the gossamer thin cover-up at me. Practiced cad that I was, I pressed it to my face. “Hmm, nice fragrance. Perfume?”

“Yes, it Eau de Coppertone.” She pulled her suntan lotion out of her straw bag.

I held up the garment. “A piece of cellophane wrap would be just as effective as this cover-up.” I placed it on her bag. “Not that I’m complaining.”

“Speaking of complaining, how’s your little cabin mate? Did she make it through the night?”

“I assume she’s still alive. I slept out on the deck lounge. I saw what she did to your shirt and that was all the warning I needed.”

I pulled the sunglasses off my head and over my eyes so I could take full advantage of watching Dani put suntan lotion on her legs. I leaned my head back but kept my eyes pointed her direction. She filled her palm with lotion and spread it along her shins and up along her creamy thighs. The vision of paper towel wrapped breasts was now being replaced with the image of Dani’s long, slender thighs wrapped around me as I

jammed my cock into her. I grabbed the hat I'd worn outside and put it on my lap to conceal the raging erection her little lotion application had caused.

But I forgot that the woman next to me was not just some lightheaded beauty sitting there. This was Dani, smart, intuitive and altogether way too savvy for her own good.

“That erection would have been far less noticeable if you hadn't used your hat to point it out like a damn X on a pirate's treasure map. Guess you're thinking about that helpless, little lollipop you left in your bed, huh?”

Without turning my head, I stared at her through my black shades as she innocently continued to slather lotion on. She was still the same, completely clueless about the effect she had on the opposite sex. Even as a lanky, flat teen, she would walk through the mall and I'd see every male's head turn. But Dani would flounce innocently past them not noticing the stir she'd caused. “Nope not thinking about the *lollipop*, and that name sounds way too good for her. At the moment, Crystal's like one of those itches that you just can't reach to scratch.”

Dani tried, but failed, to suppress a smile. She yanked the ponytail out of her hair. It fell around her glossy shoulders like gold silk. She pulled her sunglasses out of her bag and leaned back against the lounge. I took a few seconds to gaze at her profile and the tiny nose that turned up just at the tip to give her that impish quality I'd always loved.

She reached up to adjust her glasses, and I noticed a tiny sparkle on her finger. I thought back through some conversations I'd had with Nana, which could have been about anything from the pathetic state of things in the country to a new recipe she'd found for her favorite dessert, hash brownies. But I definitely recalled her mention of Dani's engagement. It was a topic that I'd brushed off but not because it didn't interest me. It had. I remember thinking that some lucky guy, who probably didn't deserve her, was going to walk beautiful, fun Dani down the aisle.

“Nana mentioned you were engaged,” I blurted clumsily, since it seemed sort of out of the blue, even though I'd been

thinking about it. “A musician, right?”

She turned her face without lifting her head from the lounge. “Yep, landed myself a damn rock star. He’s lead guitarist and singer for a band called Steel Wire.”

My head popped up. “Really? They’re getting pretty famous, aren’t they? I like their stuff.” For some reason, as I was complimenting their music, I was writing myself a mental note to erase them from my playlist. I’d seen the lead singer, and he looked like an asshole. Definitely not good enough for Dani.

“Yeah, they’re moving up in the music world,” she said unenthusiastically. She fished into her bag and pulled out a crossword puzzle book.

“You don’t sound too happy about it.”

“Nope, I’m just over the *fucking moon* about it.” She pulled out a pencil and stuck it behind her ear as she searched through the puzzle book. As much as she’d changed physically, everything about her was the same— cute, quirky, hard to look away from.

“Well, if you’re over the fucking moon, then I don’t need to pursue the topic any further. I mean the *fucking moon* sounds more definite than just the plain old moon.”

Her soft lips jutted out in an angry pout. How’d she make a pout look so fucking hot? Holy shit, I was having one erotic thought after another about my stepsister.

“Well, you’re tough, Dani. You’ll be able to tolerate all those groupies hanging around with that unbreakable confidence.”

She tossed the book on her lap and stuck her feet on the ground, straddling the lounge as she sat up and looked over me. “See, that’s the kind of male ego bullshit I can’t stand. Why is that acceptable? Why should I just have to accept the fact that girls will be handing Axel permanent markers to sign their fucking boobs and belly buttons? I guess that’s just some inane, unwritten male rock star law—” She lifted her finger as

if she was pointing to and reading a big sign. “Me rock star, me get to fuck all women, whenever me want to.”

“I’m guessing that that particular law was written for the rock stars who are also cavemen.”

She sat back with a huff. “You’re all Neanderthals, let’s face it.”

I looked over at her. She fidgeted with her puzzle book, well aware that I was staring at her. “Frankly, rock star or not, I’ve seen that dude, Axel, singing and being interviewed on Youtube. He’s not good enough for you, Twiggy. You need someone who makes you the center of the fucking universe. That’s what any guy who’s lucky enough to land you should do.”

She didn’t answer, but the tiny twitch on her lip told me the topic had really upset her. I decided to drop it.

The sliding door opened, and Crystal walked out with Olivia and Max. I was pissed that my alone time with Dani was over. She sat up.

“You don’t have to go,” I told her. “Nana would have expected you to be enjoying yourself like the rest of the guests.”

“I was knocking and pounding on the nurse’s station door,” Crystal said with her hands on her hips as she skewered Dani with a glare. “No one answered.”

“No, that’s because I’m out here,” Dani said sharply. “What is it you need?” She got up from the lounge and stuffed her things in her bag.

“I need something for this godawful headache. I think it was those damn pills you gave me last night.”

“Those pills were what helped you sleep off the seasickness. But, next time, you could just ‘weather the storm’, both figuratively and literally,” Dani said.

It was obvious Crystal didn’t have a fucking clue what Dani was talking about.

Dani walked toward them. Crystal and Olivia sneered at her bikini, but Max had a decidedly different reaction. He whistled loud enough to scare off a few pigeons from the railing. “Twiggy in a bikini, and I must say, pink is your color.”

Dani ignored his comment. She seemed to still be upset by our earlier conversation, and horrible asshole that I was, I was taking some comfort in thinking that maybe her engagement wasn't going so great. Why that gave me comfort, I didn't know. I should have been happy that she'd found someone who would provide her with an awesome life. But thinking of her with that guy just wasn't sitting right with me. It was probably just because the guy seemed like a douche. I mean, it couldn't have been anything else, no matter what tricks Nana was trying to pull.

CHAPTER 9

DANI

I finished logging the first aid for the day. It was almost shocking how many entries there were considering we'd only been out to sea for three days. Aside from a deep one inch cut on the deckhand's palm and a second degree burn on the forearm of the cook's assistant, most of the entries were for Crystal. She was certainly a delicate and somewhat clumsy little thing. One thing was obvious, Tommy was wishing that he'd perused his list of potential yacht companions a little longer.

There was a knock at the infirmary door. I walked through to the door, expecting to see a distraught Crystal on the other side with a curling iron burn or stubbed toe because those were still on the list of possible injuries she hadn't incurred yet. But Max's smiling and rather sunburned face met me.

"Max, you need to put on sun block." I stepped closer to get a better look at his nose. "You've got a little blister forming. I'll get you some salve."

"Later, Twiggy. They lowered the diving board. I can't get Olivia or Crystal to go swimming. That's when it occurred to me— Twiggy. She's always up for anything. Shit, you were the only girl I knew who used jump off the rocks at the river. Let's go. The water is clear as glass."

"Where's Tommy?"

"He's doing some work in his cabin. Come on, Dani. I don't want to go in alone. What if there's a shark?"

I laughed. “I see. So, I’m invited in case you need first aid for a shark bite.” I glanced back into the room. “Not sure if my bandage supply will be enough for a shark bite.”

“Actually, I just wanted you out there to fight the damn thing off.”

“I’m not making promises about that, but I think I will join you. The water does look tempting. I’ll be right out.”

Crystal was safely tucked on a lounge for the time being. I considered pulling all the cotton from the infirmary to pack around her, but she’d probably have some major allergic reaction to it. Max was sitting at the edge of the diving board, a springy piece of fiberglass that, with the push of a button, juttled out over the turquoise water.

“Is that the plank the crew has to walk if we shirk our duties?” I asked.

Max looked back at me and smiled. “It’s about time. I was waiting for you.”

“Damn, Max, were you always such a chicken shit?”

“Pretty much.” He stood at the tip of the board. His shoulders were the same blistering red as his nose.

“When you get out, I’m slathering you in sun block, Mr. Lobster. I don’t need you collapsing from third degree burns.” I glanced back toward the women. They seemed to be sleeping beneath their sunglasses. “We’ll leave the collapsing to Crystal,” I said in a lower voice.

Max laughed. “Good one, Twiggy.” He turned around and cannon balled into the water. He surfaced and flipped his hair back. “It’s pretty warm. Come on in.”

I walked out to the end of the board. I gazed at the water and then made a show of squinting out past him. “What was that?” I asked, putting just enough alarm in my voice to make Max start swimming for the ladder.

“Psych!” I yelled and jumped out over him. I popped up next to him.

He was just recovering from my practical joke. “Still the comedian. Tommy always used to say if she weren’t so damn cute, she’d be really annoying.”

I moved my arms to tread water. “There’s no way Tommy ever said that about me. Well, maybe the annoying part.”

“You’re right, I didn’t say it,” a deep voice drifted down from deck. Tommy had his forearms resting against the railing as he gazed down at us. “I said ‘the really annoying thing about Dani is that she’s so damn cute, it’s hard not to like her’.”

I stared up at him, and there was a long, intense moment when it was just the two of us gazing at each other. There was no one else. Just Tommy and me, looking at each other, trying to figure out what the hell was happening between us.

“Are you done working? Come on in. Dani has promised to fight off any sharks,” Max said.

I turned to Max. “That’s what you think? If I see a dorsal fin, I’ll be swimming right past you to that ladder.”

I tried not to pay attention to what Tommy was doing on deck, but my gaze was always drawn to him when he was nearby. He walked over and talked to Olivia and Crystal for a few minutes. Then he stripped down to his swim trunks. He walked to the end of the diving board and dove in. He disappeared under the surface, camouflaged at first by the splash. But when the water cleared, I saw him swimming underwater and straight toward me. I screamed and splashed water at him, ignoring the silly logic of trying to splash someone who was already underwater. I was sure he would grab me, but instead, he popped up directly in front of me, looking just as spectacular wet as he did dry. I was shocked at how disappointed I was that he hadn’t grabbed me.

Our gazes locked again. Like magnets. His dark lashes were clumped together in long spikes, and something about it reminded me of the teenage Tommy, heartbreakingly handsome, ridiculously confident and still not quite hardened to the world. It was happening more often, these odd moments where suddenly, we were alone, as if no one else was on the

boat except the two of us, two people with a short history that had been more significant than either of us had realized.

Max swam over and splashed both of us out of the short trance we'd found ourselves in. "Why don't you two stop making googly eyes at each other like two teenagers in heat."

"What the fuck are you talking about?" Tommy asked. He floated onto his back. His hard muscular body coasted up and down with the mild current.

"Oh, come on," Max said, "you can cut the sexual tension between you with a fucking hacksaw."

"What the hell do you know about sexual tension, Max? You spend so much time with your hand on your cock, it never has time to build up tension," Tommy said.

I was sufficiently embarrassed. "Well, I must have just entered a time machine because suddenly I'm back with eighteen-year-old Max and Tommy. I think this recreational swim has come to its natural end." I swam back toward the boat.

"Look what you did, Tommy. You embarrassed Twiggy, and now she's leaving. And insulting your buddy, Max, like that when he bought you twins for your birthday."

"Wait. What?" I pushed my feet down to stop my progress toward the boat. I turned around. Tommy, still drifting on his back, lifted his head from the water. Tommy Hawkson rarely looked embarrassed, but I was pretty sure I was seeing it now.

"Max, why the hell do you have to bring that up right now?" Tommy asked.

"Too late. It's been brought up." I swam closer. "Do tell about this interesting twin gift, Max. Sounds like an unusual gift." I was teasing, of course, and deep down, I wasn't completely sure I even wanted to hear. Or maybe deep down, it interested me. Nana was never prudish or conservative when she spoke, and she'd sprinkled Tommy's wild sex life into the conversation more than once. Most of the time, I'd reacted like the teenage version of Dani, with an 'ooh, spare me the details, Nana'. But the adult Dani wanted to hear.

Tommy's eyes flickered green with anger. "You were right, Twiggy. We must have fallen through a time portal because the nosy, snoopy sixteen-year-old Dani just joined us in the water."

"O.K. that's just stupid. Nosy and snoopy are the same thing." I looked over at Max. "And now that you have his swimsuit in a bunch, I'm even more curious."

Max opened his mouth to speak but then took a cautionary glance at Tommy. He flinched in fear and pushed back in the water a few feet. "Nah, I don't want to get pounded out here in the Caribbean. Then there would be blood and sharks and a whole mess and someone ending up without a limb. Let's just say, I bought Tommy a party of three for his birthday." He blurted the words fast and swam like a real shark was chasing him back to the boat.

I smiled over at Tommy. "And here I thought Nana was over exaggerating."

"I need to have a serious talk with my grandmother." He swam closer. I pushed my hands through the water to move back. But he followed.

There were only a few inches of blue Caribbean water between us.

"It's all right, Tommy. After the parade of girls you brought home when you were a teen, I'm not exactly shocked by the idea that the parade hasn't ended." I'd pushed one button too many. I wasn't sure why I hadn't shut down my silly yammering yet. It seemed to have something to do with the nervous flutters that kept swarming me every time I got near Tommy.

"Can't stop a parade until the finale shows up." There was a dark green glint in his eye as he spoke, but I wasn't entirely sure what the hell he was talking about. "Speaking of Nana, seems awfully coincidental that she cancelled and gave me the two weeks and that she hired you as the medical staff member." He was angry that I'd teased him. I could hear it in his voice.

“I’m not following.”

“Really?” Then, without warning, he reached over, and beneath the clear water, his fingertips trailed down the skin of my belly, stopping just before dragging down the top of my bikini bottoms. It was the lightest touch, but I drew in a shuddering breath. It was the most sensuous thing I’d had happen in a long time.

He grinned, obviously sensing just how skilled he was and how much I’d felt that light caress. “Guess my years of practice and the never-ending parade of women have taught me a few tricks.”

I swam back away from his touch. “Shit, still the same cocky asshole you always were, Tommy.”

“Yep, sorry to disappoint you and Nana, but I’m not changing anytime soon.” With that, he swam toward the boat.

“Wait,” I called to him. “What are you talking about?” I swam after him. Talking and swimming in a choppy ocean was not easy, but my dander was up. “You don’t actually think that I planned this with Nana?”

He reached up to the ladder and pulled himself up a rung. I was treading water beneath him. I was so hot with anger, I half expected steam to be rising off the watery surface.

He stopped his climb and looked down at me. “Just saying, Twiggy, it’s an awfully big coincidence that you and me ended up on this boat together.”

I laughed harshly. “You haven’t changed a bit, you arrogant boob. What the hell makes you think I wanted to be stuck on this floating hotel with the likes of you?” A new laughing sound rolled up from my chest. Could have been the drop in body temperature from sitting in water or just the rage I was feeling at his suggestion, but the laugh sounded slightly hysterical.

“We haven’t seen each other in years and, boom, suddenly you’re on my family’s yacht playing doctor.”

Tears stung my eyes. I was ashamed that I was crying, but I was beyond pissed. “I’m not playing. I have a fucking

degree. But you're right. You caught me. I've been pining for you this whole damn time, Tommy. That's why I'm engaged to a rock star, and he's fucking nuts about me."

"And are you *fucking nuts* about him?" he asked.

I hesitated. I hated that I hesitated. "Yes, I love Axel."

"Groupies and all?"

Tears mingled with the salt water on my face, and for the first time, he seemed to have noticed how badly his words had stung me. His face smoothed to a look of sympathy. "I'm sorry, Dani."

"Tommy!" a familiar whiny voice rained down from the deck. "I cut my finger on a wine glass. I need that nurse person to come up."

Tommy rolled his eyes.

I grabbed the bottom of the ladder. "I just realized how perfect my word choice was. It is a parade, and there seems to be no shortage of clowns. Now move up the ladder so this *nurse person* can help her ridiculous patient."

CHAPTER 10

TOMMY

I'd basically avoided everyone for the rest of the day. I had business to take care of, and it gave me a good excuse for some alone time. But I couldn't focus on paperwork. I was having a major mind debate about Dani. I had no real idea why the hell I'd accused her of setting this up. Maybe I just wanted it to be true. Maybe I had just been hoping that she'd still been thinking about me all this time. Or maybe it had been a means of defense. My idiot friend had brought up the twins in front of her, and it bothered me. Not that it mattered, since my extremely helpful grandmother seemed to have been filling Dani in on the tawdry details of my life. I hated that Dani knew.

It was late afternoon. We were anchored off Barbados for the day, and Robert had taken Max and the women to shore in the single motor power boat for some shopping. They hadn't returned yet.

I headed to the refrigerator for a beer. I leaned in to grab a cold one, and as I straightened Dani walked in. We both blinked at each other like animals caught in headlights.

I was the first to find my tongue. "Dani, I didn't mean it. I know you didn't plan any of this, and I'm happy for you. I'm glad you found someone to spend your life with."

She nodded. It was rare for Dani not to speak. She walked past me to the refrigerator and reached in for a beer. And that was when it happened. I watched as she leaned into the fridge, still the long, sinewy beauty she'd always been and still that girl who I'd always thought had more life and spirit than any

other person in the world. Still that girl, who, frankly, had always kept me up at night. She closed the refrigerator and walked past me.

I lunged for her, grabbed her arm and spun her to face me. The beer can dropped to the floor and rolled away. “I’m a fucking liar. I’m not glad you found someone. I’m jealous as fucking hell of the asshole.” I pulled her to me, and my mouth came down hard over hers.

Dani was stiff at first but then her body softened in my arms. She reached up and curled her hand around my neck to hold my mouth over hers. My tongue slid over her lips and across her tongue, but it wasn’t enough. I needed more. I slid my hands beneath her shirt and smoothed my palms over her skin. She mewled softly against my mouth.

I lifted my mouth reluctantly from hers. She stared up at me with glossy blue eyes, a pink blush now coloring her cheeks and lips.

“Hell, Dani, I just realized I’ve been thinking about this kiss for seven years.”

The brief interlude from the kiss seemed to have snapped her back to reality. She stiffened and pushed her hands against my chest. I released her.

“No, no this can’t be. We can’t kiss.”

“Uh, think that ship sailed already.”

She shook her head. “Stop teasing, Tommy. Stop. I’m engaged and you’re—”

“I’m what? Your stepbrother.”

Her shoulders dropped in disappointment. “Shit, that hadn’t even crossed my mind. I must really be warped. No, I can’t. This is wrong. You are wrong. You break hearts and—” she waved her hand around as if people were standing in the room with us. “You know, the whole damn parade thing. I don’t want to be part of a parade. And Axel, he’s at home waiting—” She spun around and flew out of the room.

I walked out on deck to clear my head. I had no idea what had just happened. It seemed that all these years, I'd been fucking every girl I met, avoiding anything serious, because the one girl I'd only ever wanted was out of reach. It was entirely possible that I was blaming Nana for trying to throw us together only because I wanted it to be so. I wanted Nana's permission to have something I'd always wanted. Something I now craved more than any lucrative real estate deal, any fast car or high-dollar hooker. I wanted Dani, all of her, heart ... and soul ... and quirky, dry wit. With all the girls I'd been with, I'd never met anyone like her. She could make me laugh and question my own character flaws, of which I seemed to have many. And now I'd laid myself bare to her. For some stupid reason, which was probably due to my character flaw of being self-centered, I'd convinced myself that Dani had felt the same way. Stupid, stupid me.

CHAPTER 11

DANI

My crappy, cheap cell phone was, of course, useless out on the water, and I knew Axel would never take the time to email me. We'd had no contact since I left. Up until now, I sadly hadn't felt much like calling him. But Tommy's kiss had my head and heart in a hurricane of turmoil. My thoughts were darting all over the damn place, and I wanted them to stop. A quick conversation with Axel and the chaos in my mind would end. I'd be reminded that I loved the man who had given me the ring.

The ship to shore phone was in the pilot house. Since we were still anchored and waiting for the party to get back from shore, the captain was polite enough to step out and take his dinner early so I could make my call in private.

Axel's cell phone rang twice, and I was sure it would go to voicemail. But he picked up. "Hey, baby!" There was a clamor of voices and laughter in the background, and I could barely hear him.

"Hey, Axel, I had a second, so I thought I'd call and see how you were doing."

"Yeah, good, baby. I'm good," he had to yell over the noise. "What's up?"

"I just missed you and—" A girl's voice came through the phone. "Come on, Axel, let's dance".

"Who was that? And where are you?"

"The guys and I are at a club, hanging out. You know, unwinding before our studio session tomorrow. Listen, baby,

it's just too loud in here. Why don't you call me another time."

"Yeah, fine. See you soon," I said quietly and hung up. I stood there in the pilot house for a long time staring out at the bright blue sea as it stretched on forever. Axel had always wanted this stardom, and he was embracing it with his whole heart, a heart that suddenly had no more room for me, his fiancé.

My mood was dark as I plodded back toward the infirmary. It had been a good six hours since Crystal, my perpetual patient, had last injured herself, and it seemed she was overdue. I was certain she'd return from shopping with a paper cut or fatigue. I'd just sit and wait for their return.

But as I reached the door to the infirmary, I stopped. The entire scene in the galley kitchen dashed around my head for the hundredth time. At first, I'd shrugged off the kiss as a bizarre moment in time. I'd, after all, been the only pair of female lips onboard the Sea Queen at the time. And from the snippets of information Nana had been feeding me, it was fairly evident, even to someone without a psych degree, that Tommy had a strong affinity, possibly even an addiction, to sex. As I fled from the kitchen, I'd convinced myself that his declaration of being jealous of Axel had just been pure bull. Why the hell would he care at all what was happening in my life? And yet, my feet turned, and I headed down the narrow corridor that would take me to the master suite. Damn him for stirring up things that didn't need stirring. I was already mixing shit in my life up on my own, without his help.

I knocked sharply on the dark mahogany door. Footsteps came across the bedroom floor, and the door swung open. He had no shirt, and his shorts were slung low on his slim hips. I hadn't noticed the tattoo design that started right next to concave muscle near his hip. It disappeared beneath the loose waistband of his shorts. As much money as he was worth, he had this dangerous quality about him that made him look as if he was more suited to a dark, sketchy biker bar at the end of some rough town. That might just have been the thing I'd always found so damn attractive about him.

I stepped into the room and snapped the door shut behind me. “You’ve never liked me. You used to tell me I was just an annoying, skinny little splinter, like the kind that gets caught under your thumbnail. Your exact words. Well, almost exact. Not completely sure because it’s been seven fucking years.” I continued on my rant and gave him a little shove for good measure. Unfortunately, it was like pushing on a brick wall. “Don’t tell me you’d been waiting for that kiss, because you’ve had seven fucking years to come find me and kiss me.” I stared at him. He seemed to be waiting to see if I was finished. Which I was.

“I called you an annoying, little splinter because it was my way of masking my real feelings. I’d been growing up in a stately mansion that was just one step above a fucking mausoleum, dull, cold and hard, like its facade. Then you walked through that front door with your loud sandals that slapped the marble floors with a spunk that I fucking loved. It was like music, hearing those sandals, and your laugh, and those stupid ass jokes you liked to tell. You were the best thing to walk into my life, but at the same time, you were considered a sibling. I was a teenager with a hard-on that never subsided, and suddenly, I had a new stepsister who would wear these tiny little midriff tops and who would innocently lean against me during a scary movie with absolutely no clue of the effect she was having on me.”

I blinked up at him, my heart breaking with each word. When he stopped, we stood in silence, a heated silence. “You liked my sandals?” I asked in a wavering voice.

“Still think about those funny, noisy sandals every damn day.” He pulled me into his arms and kissed me in a way that truly made me believe that he’d been thinking about it for years. His mouth was still on mine when he lifted me up into his arms and turned toward the bed. He stopped and gazed at me through black lashes. “Is this all right, Dani? Because if I start, I’m not going to be able to stop. There’s no fucking way I’ll be able to stop.”

I pressed my hand against his face and kissed his mouth. “I don’t want you to stop, Tommy.”

CHAPTER 12

DANI

It was all a little surreal. I hovered between being slightly terrified and completely thrilled. Tommy gazed down at me as he lowered me onto his bed. Everything about him was familiar, and yet, in this capacity, a man about to take me naked and willing in his arms, he was a complete stranger, a stranger that had awakened a longing I'd never felt before.

I felt awkward and clumsy like the skinny, lanky teen I'd been seven years ago, a time that seemed so long in the past now. We'd both changed and grown up, and yet, in many ways, we were still the same.

My lips were tender from his urgent flurry of kisses. I rested my head back on the pillow. He ran his thumb over my swollen bottom lip. "I guess after waiting seven years for a kiss, I got a little carried away." He began unbuttoning my blouse. As his long lashes dropped down to follow his gaze as it drifted over my body, he stirred up so many emotions. I thought about him as a handsome, charismatic teenager, falling asleep on the couch with his motocross magazine on his chest.

"Do you still ride?" The question, of course, was in sharp contrast to the current situation, but a case of nerves had come over me.

A quiet laugh hummed from his throat. "I try to get out to the track occasionally, but work just always gets in my way." He'd opened every button, but he hadn't parted the two panels. My question and obvious case of nerves gave him some pause.

“Dani, I want this. I want you.” His next laugh had a touch of nervousness too, which put me more at ease. I didn’t need the super-confident Tommy right now. I needed the humble, down to earth guy, who would occasionally show his emotions to me. “It could just be, you know, some fun on a vacation. You’re in a relationship, and I’m not looking for anything more than—”

“A fuck?”

He smiled faintly.

“Still the same, Tommy.”

“Guilty as charged.”

My mind shifted back to the shitty phone call with Axel. He was quite obviously having *fun* without me. I’d been questioning so much about our relationship. It felt as if he and his guys were having the times of their lives. At the same time, for me, the good times were slipping away.

It was Tommy, and it came with no strings. Two of my closest friends had gone the whole ‘no strings’ route and both had bragged that they were having the best sex of their lives. Everything about Tommy had me feeling as if I was alive again. Just having him gaze down at my fully clothed body made warm moisture pool between my legs.

I peered up at him, and it looked as if he was about to lose his nerve. Then I parted the sides of my shirt. “I don’t just want sex, Tommy. You promised fun, and that’s what I want. No strings, vacation fun. Nana talks about your sexual exploits almost like a parent would brag about their kid getting a college degree. So don’t disappoint.”

A smile kicked up on the side of his mouth. “I always pegged you for a wild one, Twiggy. And you just gave me an idea. But first, a preview of the fun.” He curled his finger around the top of my bra and pulled it down to expose my breast. My nipple tightened as he rubbed it with his thumb. “Give me the next twenty-four hours. And one rule— the word ‘no’ is not allowed. So, now’s the time to back out if you want. Or you can stay. Do you trust me, Dani?”

“Not a lick. But let’s do this. Only one question— what about your accident prone friend? I have to be on-call for her.”

“Nope. I’m giving you a day off tomorrow, so unless there’s a major injury or illness, everyone is on their own. They have a shopping excursion planned. I’ll give Crystal my credit card. That’ll keep her busy and happy and out of the infirmary.”

He stood and walked to his closet and pulled out a tie.

I propped up on my elbow. “Are you planning to put on a suit and tie for this occasion? Cuz, I’m not all that into formal dress.”

“Nope. The tie is for you.” He walked over. “Stand up, baby. The fun is just about to begin.”

I hesitated, but only for a second. I’d started this, and as nervous as I was, I was ready. I put my feet on the ground and stood in front of him. The warmth from his hard body surrounded me. He lifted my chin with his fingers and stared down at my lips as if they were edible. He kissed me and finished the kiss by trailing his tongue across my tender bottom lip. He leaned close enough that his warm breath tickled my skin. “Remember ... the word ‘no’ does not exist.”

“That’s sort of a double negative,” I said lamely. My nerves hadn’t subsided yet. At the same time, I’d never felt so damn excited.

Tommy dropped the tie over his shoulder and pushed the shirt off my shoulders. It fell to the floor. His hands smoothed down my belly to the button on my shorts. That light, short stroke of his fingers sent a tremble through me. He held back a smile knowing damn well that he’d caused it. My shorts pooled at my feet. I pushed off my sandals and stepped out of the shorts. I was standing in front of him in just my panties and bra.

His expression turned serious now. “Damn, baby, this body — I don’t think I’ve stopped having an erection since the first second I saw you on this boat.” His eyes darkened as he took in every inch of me with his hungry gaze. His dirty words and

the intense way he was looking at me made my pussy tingle wildly, as if he'd already touched me there. A warm blush covered my skin, and I wanted him to touch me. He was practically bringing me to an orgasm just gazing at me.

“Turn around.” It was a subtle command, but my body trembled at the notion of him taking control. And, as someone who always had to be strong and in control on the job and in life, for that matter, it felt good to relinquish that responsibility.

Tommy stepped just close enough behind me that I could feel the fabric of his shirt whisper across my naked back. He reached around with the necktie and used it to blindfold me. I opened my mouth to say something, but he stopped me with a hand on my shoulder.

“Remember my one rule, baby.” His voice was low and seductive in my ear. I hadn't expected it, but hearing him call me baby was stirring up another level of emotion that I felt deep in my chest.

I was standing in his room with my eyes covered and wearing only my bra and panties. He slid the strap of my bra down off my shoulder exposing my breast. He reached around and cupped it with his hand.

“I'm going to be dreaming about this lacy bra. It stays on, for now.” With his free hand, he pushed my panties down. Suddenly, I felt deliciously vulnerable, nearly naked and blindfolded in front of him.

“Aren't you going to undress?” I asked.

“Not now. I'm going to spend some time exploring the naked goddess standing in front of me.” His mouth pressed against my shoulder. I pulled in a breath as his kisses continued down the center of my back to the bare cheek of my ass. His tongue drew erotic circles on my ass. Then his arms reached around and his hands smoothed over my belly to my pussy. He pushed a finger through the folds to the slick moisture pooling between my legs.

He growled with satisfaction. “This sweet nectar has my cock aching for a taste. You’re like a fucking elixir, baby, and I’m going to lap up this honey until you come hard against my mouth.”

A tiny sound, a sound of desire I’d never heard before, rolled up from my throat. His fingers massaged my clit and teased more liquid from my pussy.

“Fuck, that’s it. I have to put my mouth on you.” His tone had grown sharp and urgent. He pulled my hand toward the bed, so that I could feel the mattress in front of me. “Hands and knees, baby, now.”

I felt along and climbed up on the bed. As I did, he moved so quietly, in my necktie induced darkness, I had no idea where he was. I knelt there for a few tense second on my hands and knees, my pussy completely exposed and the only sound coming from my beating pulse and the sounds of the ocean outside the cabin window.

Then his deep voice rolled up and over my naked ass and back. “Fucking beautiful. I should take a picture.”

“Don’t you dare.” I sat back on my knees.

“What’s the rule, baby?”

I paused. “No’ is not allowed. I didn’t say ‘no’. I said ‘don’t you dare’.”

“Same damn thing. Still, it would be too distracting having a picture of your beautiful pussy on my phone. I’d never get anything done.” Unexpectedly, a stinging slap hit my ass. I gasped. “That’s for telling me ‘don’t you dare’. Cuz, trust me, darlin’, when it comes to fucking, I dare. There is nothing off limits as long as the outcome is you screaming out my name.” He spanked me again. I bit my lip at the stinging and, yet, not unpleasant sensation his strong hand left behind.

I felt the mattress move beneath my knees, and I sensed he was positioning himself behind me. His hands gripped my knees, and he spread them wider. I was so exposed. I had no idea what to expect, and I couldn’t have been more turned on.

His mouth returned to the bare cheeks of my ass. He bit the flesh lightly as his fingers returned to my pussy. The tender bites turned into long strokes with his tongue. When his mouth moved closer to the tight puckered hole between my ass cheeks, I tensed and pulled away from him. He reached up and took firm hold of my hips and wrenched my ass back toward him so it jutted up high and exposed every intimate part of me.

“Pulling away is also the same as ‘no’. So pulling away is not allowed.” He spanked me again.

“Don’t know if I deserved that. You didn’t make yourself clear.”

“No?” He spanked me again. “Is that clear?”

“Yes. That’s clear.” I thought I’d hid the waver in my voice.

The stinging slaps were replaced by tender kisses that felt cool and soothing on my stinging flesh. The contrast made me nearly collapse onto the mattress. He was a fucking magician. He’d turned a semi-painful spanking into a comforting sweet caress with his talented mouth. His tongue swept into the crack of my ass again, and this time I didn’t pull away. I found myself instinctively pushing toward the pressure of his tongue.

“That’s it, baby. You’ve never explored ass play before?”

“No.” My voice sounded distant, almost delirious.

“An ass virgin, very fucking nice. Tonight is for you, baby.”

His fingers reached under to cup my pussy and push it even higher. His thumb flicked over my clit as his fingers, first two, then three, slid into my wet pussy. I released a groan of pleasure as his fingers filled me. Then with the moisture he gathered on his finger, he moved up to my anus. His mouth pressed firmly against my wet, swollen pussy and his tongue filled me. His finger pushed into my ass, and I tightened against the pressure.

He was persistent, continuing to push in his finger. Slowly, as I relaxed, I found myself pushing against his invasion. He filled every intimate space, and all I could think was I wanted

even more. I rocked against his assault as his tongue dove into me and his finger pushed deeper inside. Then, as if all the pressure building from his hands, tongue and mouth had come together for one final mind-blowing act, my body reached that edge of delirium.

“Come for me, baby. Do you fucking hear me? I need you to come.”

His strong demanding tone kicked me over the cliff, and I splintered into a million shuddering pieces as my pussy clenched around his tongue and hand. I could no longer support myself on shaky arms. He sensed it and grabbed hold of me before I collapsed to the bed.

Tommy pulled me into his arms and sat up against the headboard. Still blindfolded and still reeling from the orgasm, I curled myself against his chest and allowed myself the luxury of being held in his strong arms. He was so solid, so real, so purely masculine that every inch of my skin was covered in gooseflesh just thinking about the power of the man holding me.

Tommy reached up and took off the necktie. I squinted into the bright room. My head was still light, as if it might just float off and away from my body. “Aren’t you going to undress?” I asked, feeling just a tiny bit greedy.

“Not tonight. Tomorrow. Remember, you gave me the day, and I’m going to take every second of it. Besides, I heard the others come in a few minutes ago.”

I nearly fell off his lap. “Oh shit, Crystal—”

“Relax, I locked the door. I think they went straight into the dining room, so you can make a clean getaway. Well, not exactly clean. Your lingering scent and the memory of your sweet pussy coming against my mouth are going to leave me wanting you all fucking night.”

I felt a warm blush cover my skin.

“And so is that blush.” He kissed my forehead.

CHAPTER 13

TOMMY

Again, I'd had to sleep out on the deck lounge. I needed the cool ocean breeze to keep me from going stark raving mad thinking about having Dani. A cold shower and three shots of whiskey hadn't done the trick. As a teen, I'd had to take a lot of cold showers and do a lot of jacking off after my new stepsister moved in. I'd known then that she had me by the balls, but I hadn't acted on it. My dad would have nailed my ass to the wall, and I would have deserved it. When Dani and her mother moved out, my beautiful stepsister took a little piece of me with her. The whole fucking house seemed a little darker after she rolled her beat up luggage and camouflage duffle bag out the front door. I'd told myself then that it was a good thing. I couldn't stop thinking about her. I'd wanted her badly, and it was better that she'd put distance between us. But all those same feelings had been lit on fire again. And this time, nothing was going to douse the flames except having Dani. All of her. Every damn delectable inch.

Crystal, Olivia and Max, who had taken a shine to Olivia, had plans for Antigua. I wasn't completely sure why Max had started to fall for Olivia. She was nothing like his usual type. Olivia was always a bit stone cold for my taste. Of course, next to Crystal, she looked really rational and likable. Maybe my buddy Max was starting to think about a more serious relationship. That was still far down on my list of priorities, no matter how hard Nana tried to push it to the top. I still wondered how much of this had been her idea. It sure seemed to have my grandmother's fingerprints all over it. She had

always loved Dani. And with good reason. She was easy to love.

I'd gone through my list of motives for doing this, for starting something with Dani, and I'd come to the conclusion that they were purely selfish. I wanted her. That was all. Having her come in my arms, scream my name out in a fit of ecstasy, collapse against me hot and overwhelmed from being fucked, that was all I could think about. I was sure after our day together, I'd be free of the seven year itch I'd had for my stepsister. She had her rock star to go home to, and I had my life of making money and fucking every beautiful woman I met. We'd walk down the gangplank of the Sea Queen, say goodbye and return to our lives.

But my pride and my need to satisfy her assured me it had to be mind-blowing. My male ego insisted that she leave here thinking about me every time she got hot between the legs. Hell, after today, I was hoping she'd be thinking about me whenever she was in *his* bed. That would give me at least some peace of mind about wanting the one girl who could never permanently be mine.

I made my excuses for not joining the group on Antigua and waved at them as they lowered the outboard motorboat into the water. I hadn't seen Dani since she'd left my bedroom. She had refused to join us in the dining room, preferring to eat alone in her cabin. In the morning, she put together a small first aid kit for the group to take to Antigua. She hadn't come to breakfast. I worried that she'd changed her mind. I would be devastated, but I would accept it. I didn't want her to go along with my scheme unless she really wanted it.

I walked to the infirmary and knocked. It took her more than a few knocks to answer. She opened the door. Her silky, gold hair was swept up into a loose knot at the back of her head. She was wearing a t-shirt and shorts and a sad smile.

"I'm sorry, Tommy. I'm not so sure about this."

I nodded telling myself to just walk the fuck away. But my body was fighting my head. I stepped into the infirmary and grabbed her into a kiss. She stiffened, but only for a second.

As soon as my tongue dragged across her bottom lip, still swollen from my kisses, she moaned against my mouth and softened in my arms. She felt so frail and vulnerable in my arms, it was all I could do not to crush her against me. I'd never felt so possessive about any woman as I had right then as I kissed Dani.

It took all my will to pull my mouth from hers. She peered up at me with a dreamy expression.

“You want this as much as me, Dani.”

She swayed against me, as if she could no longer fight her own reasoning. She was mine. I had to make her mine at least for this one day and then she'd be out of my system. Or, at least, that was what I hoped for.

“Come on, baby, one day. I promise you, you won't regret it. No one will know.”

Her blue eyes were glazed. “How do you make the word ‘baby’ sound so damn erotic?”

I smiled. “Yeah, you think?” I took a chance that she would pull away from my hand. She didn't. I slid it down her shorts and pressed my fingers against her pussy. “Baby,” I whispered against her ear. “Show me how much you want me to call you *baby*.” As I muttered low in her ear, moisture dripped from her pussy, covering my fingers. She clutched my shirt to keep from sinking to her knees. “One day, *baby*, that's all I ask. I'll make last night look like a silly warm up.” I stroked my finger along her taut, swollen clit, the sweet nub I'd massaged last night with my tongue and finger.

She sucked in a sharp breath and moved against the pressure of my hand. “You want this as badly as me, *baby*.” Her pussy filled with slick, hot wetness as I stroked her, teasing her mercilessly by pushing my fingers close enough to slide inside of her but without actually penetrating her.

Her fingers tightened on my shirt, and her beautiful face was pink with desire.

“Just say yes.”

She swayed against me as if she had no strength to stand on her own. “Yes.” The word floated out so quietly, I was almost not sure I’d heard it. Then she said it again. “Yes, Tommy, one day. I want this one day.”

I plunged my fingers inside of her, and she cried out. “God yes, Tommy.” She clung to me as if I was life itself, and she writhed against my hand.

“That’s it, baby. God, you’re fucking wet. Your pussy is the sweetest fucking thing ever.” I plunged three full fingers inside her, and she squeezed her thighs around my arm to hold me there. Her clit rubbed against my wrist. She used her hold on me to brace herself against my hand.

“Fuck yeah,” she said on a whisper, and her pussy contracted around my hand as she came.

Just as she had the night before, she collapsed from the feel of it. I caught her in my arms before she sank to the floor. She was the strongest, smartest, most confident girl I knew, yet I could turn her into putty with just a stroke of my fingers. Something about that notion, that idea that she could be mine to do with as I pleased behind closed doors, made my cock so hard it hurt. It was taking every ounce of my self-control not to bend her over the stainless steel examination table and fuck her wildly for the next hour. But I had plans.

She recovered, and I held her at an arm’s distance. “You need to get your bathing suit and—” I stopped. “No wait. I’ll get your clothes.” I slid past her into her cabin. She followed behind, still looking dazed from the orgasm. Her plump lips were slightly parted in question.

She watched in stunned silence as I rummaged like a madman through her clothes. And I was definitely standing on the edge of insanity. I wanted her that badly. If she decided now not to go with me, then they’d have to shoot me in the head to relieve my misery because having Dani was the only cure for what ailed me now.

I yanked out a bikini and looked at it. “Nope.” I shoved it back. “No swimsuit,” I said more as a mental note to myself, but she stepped closer.

“We’re not going swimming?” she asked.

“I didn’t say that.” I pulled out a soft, cottony sundress and handed it to her. “Put this on.” I opened the top drawer of her dresser.

“That’s my underwear drawer,” she protested.

I pulled out a pair of lacy black panties. “It sure as hell is.” I dropped the panties. “Won’t need those either.” I reached in and pulled out a thin, white sleeveless shirt, the wife beater undershirt guys wore. I held it up and raised a brow at her.

She shrugged. “Men’s underwear makes great sleepwear on a hot summer night.”

I balled it up and tossed it to her. “Bring it along.” I turned and looked at her. She was holding the sundress and the balled up shirt. “What are you waiting for?”

“I’m just waiting for you to go so I can change.”

I sighed with some frustration, crossed my arms and leaned against the dresser. “Baby, you just let me finger fuck you in the middle of the damn infirmary. Don’t go playing little miss modesty with me. In fact, you’re leaving every ounce of that modesty behind today.”

She blushed again.

“You keep blushing for me like that, Twiggy, and we’re not going to make it to our mystery destination because I’m going to take you right out there on that stainless steel table. Now put on the dress.” I was acting the cocksure asshole and I knew it, but I couldn’t stop myself. My cock was hard as rock. My head was racing with images of what I would do to Dani, and I wanted her to be completely mine for this one day.

I stood and watched as she lifted off her t-shirt and pushed her shorts to the ground. “You sure can be bossy when you want to be.”

“You haven’t seen bossy yet. This is just getting started, darlin’.”

She pulled in a quick breath at the word darlin’. “Holy shit, how do you come up with these nicknames that yank the

breath right out of me? Guess it's a good thing you always called me Twiggy when we were teens, otherwise there might have been some trouble."

"Well, fucking hell, do you mean if I'd just called you baby or darlin' back then you'd have—" I shook my head. "Never mind. Glad I didn't use those words. My dad would have had me strung me up by the wrists and flogged me."

She held up the dress and was about to pull it over her head.

"Wait." I walked up and unlatched the hook on her bra and pushed it off her shoulders. She stared up at me with a stunned expression.

"Put the dress on. The day is wasting away."

She pulled the dress over her head. It was a pale blue dress with a hem that landed high up on her thighs. I walked behind her and zipped it up. The bodice was snug around her waist. I turned her around. Her spectacular breasts nearly spilled over the top of the dress. I reached up and undid two small buttons and parted the fabric to expose her beautiful, deep cleavage.

"Feels a little strange being braless." She held out her arms. "Am I acceptable now, master?"

"Almost. And I'm liking that word 'master'."

She squealed as I reached under the dress and ripped the panties in half. I tossed them aside.

"You expect me to go out in public with no underwear or bra? What if a wind kicks up my dress?"

"I certainly fucking hope so. But you won't need to worry about people. We're going to an uninhabited island."

"How do you know it's uninhabited?"

"Because my scheming grandmother owns it. She was planning to turn it into her own marijuana plantation but then nixed that idea when she realized it was too risky. Now it's just sitting there out in the middle of the sea with no one around except critters."

I grabbed her bag and headed out.

“Those were my favorite panties,” she called to me.

“Then you shouldn’t have worn them in front of me,” I called back.

CHAPTER 14

DANI

The sea was the color of sapphires, and the sky above matched. I sat across from Tommy and faced him in the six person inflatable boat. He seemed to know exactly where we were going as he rotated the motor and pointed the bow toward wide open water. We'd taken an ice chest of food and drinks, and I'd brought along a first aid kit, just in case. Other than that, our only provisions were two large blankets and some sun block. I was feeling as close to naked as I could be without actually being nude. My extremely demanding master had at least allowed me to put on my sneakers. The only article of clothing he deemed necessary for our excursion.

I hated to admit it, but as wanton as I was feeling, sitting on a small boat in just a cotton shift and with the man across from me giving me commands that I couldn't question, I was feeling extremely excited. Tommy had awakened some latent feelings of passion and lust that I'd been missing for a long time.

Tommy locked in the motor and leaned back against the inflated rubber side of the boat. He lifted his dark sunglasses. His eyes glinted in the sunlight as he looked at me long and hard and hungrily.

"This isn't acceptable," he pointed at my hands as they gripped the hem of my dress to keep it from flying up. "Let go of the dress."

I stared back at him with a touch of defiance, and he lifted his finger. "Uh, what is the rule?" he asked.

“I don’t know because it kept expanding. First I couldn’t say ‘no’ and then there was a ban on ‘don’t you dare’ and then pulling away was—” I cut my list short when he stood abruptly, causing the boat to rock back and forth. I released my dress and gripped the sides of the bench to keep from being pitched out.

As predicted, the skirt of my dress fluttered up. The cool breeze brushed across my naked pussy. The boat steadied, and I instinctively pushed the dress back down.

He scowled at me.

“Sorry. After years of propriety and not being a complete and utter slut, it’s a habit of mine to not let my dress fly up and over my damn head. Especially when I’m not wearing panties, which, because I’m not the aforementioned slut, I’m usually wearing.”

He tried to keep character with a stern expression, but I could see a smile fighting to break through. He wanted to play, and I decided to join him. I jutted my chin forward defiantly and pushed the dress back down to cover myself. I gasped as he stood back up fast enough to dip the back of the boat down. We took on a little water.

Without a word, he grabbed up one of the lines that was used to tie off the boat.

He came over and leaned down. “Today, darlin’, you are a slut. An extremely beautiful, completely unabashed slut.” He knelt behind the bench I was on and pulled my hands behind my back.

“But, Tommy—”

He ignored me and tied my hands together. Then he pressed his mouth against my ear. “Open your thighs for me.”

My heart was racing with the delicious terror of being bound. Frissons of delight wracked my body at hearing his sharp demand. He walked back to his bench and sat down, gazing at me as if he would devour me right there on the unsteady boat. And I would not have denied him. He was

making me so wet with need, I was nearly in tears with wanting him.

I opened my legs willingly, giving him a full view. He groaned in appreciation. The sexual tension between us was like nitro glycerin, one small move and it seemed we'd be ripping the boat apart to get to each other.

The breeze cooled the sticky moisture between my legs. A strand of hair blew across my face, and without thinking, I moved my hand to brush it away. But the rope ground against my wrist. I was his captive today, a very willing captive.

A small island loomed in the distance. It looked like a crest of land, covered in lush foliage and lined with sparkling white sand.

The boat flew over the rippling current and we reached the shore of the island. Tommy turned off the motor, hopped into the water and dragged the boat to the beach. My hands were still bound as he lifted me and dropped me over his shoulder. My dress kicked up and my naked ass could feel the heat of the sun as it beamed down on us.

He lowered me to my feet and returned to the boat for our things. I stood there feeling completely helpless with my hands bound and my dress flipping up to expose my naked body beneath. I glanced around. It reminded me of a movie scene, a lush tropical deserted island where pirates or dinosaurs might jump out of the trees at any minute.

Tommy returned to the beach carrying our stuff, but his face had changed. The stern, authoritarian expression he had mustered for this 'fun' had vanished, and there was an urgent look of need on his face.

He threw down the stuff and stomped toward me in a way that made me stumble back at first. But the second his hands grabbed me, I swayed toward him. He held me, bound as I was, against him as he kissed my mouth. His hands yanked the dress up, and my naked body shivered in the breeze. His mouth trailed down my neck as he reached behind and unzipped my dress. He pushed it down to expose my naked breasts. His mouth continued along its erotic trail to my

nipples. A tiny sound rolled from my lips as his teeth took hold of my nipple, biting it just hard enough to make my pussy even wetter.

Then he reached back and yanked off his shirt. His chest and arm muscles bulged with tension as he undid his shorts. I swayed on my feet, dizzy with need. I worried that I might fall face first with no hands to stop me.

Tommy pushed his shorts down and his thick, glistening cock sprang free. The sight of it made my head spin more, and he caught me before I fell backward.

His cock pressed against me and he pushed his mouth against mine. "I'm sorry, darlin', I thought I could prolong this, but I have to have you now. Right fucking now. I'm in agony. Fuck this rope, I need your hands on me, baby." He reached around and untied my wrists.

My hands still tingled as I reached forward and wrapped one hand around his cock as the other took a firm hold of his rock hard ass. I smoothed my palm over his naked ass and slid my hand down to cup his balls. He pushed toward me, grinding the tip of his cock, now wet with cum against my stomach. As my hand moved forward and back on his long, turgid shaft, he tightened his grip on me.

"God, baby," he growled in my ear, "your hands are nearly as sweet as your pussy. But my cock wants badly to be inside of you."

This statement coaxed a pleading sound from my lips. It was a whisper soft sound nearly drowned out by the rhythmic pounding of the waves on the shore, but he heard it.

He took roughly hold of my arms as his cock became more urgent and hard in my hand. "You like that, darlin? You want me inside of you?"

"I do, yes, I do." I stared down at his beautiful cock. "I want all of it inside of me."

He grabbed my wrist, and reluctantly, I released him. He kissed the knuckles on the back of my hand and turned away from me. He picked up one of the blankets, and with some

frustration in battling the wind and his desire to get it done fast, he finally got it stretched out over the hot, white sand. He leaned down and pulled a condom from his shorts. I was relieved to see that my stepbrother, the playboy, was not being reckless with his life.

Tommy pulled me toward the blanket and lowered me down onto it. He rolled on the condom with one hand while pushing my dress up high above my waist with the other. There was no one for miles, not a boat on the horizon or a pair of footsteps in the sand, other than our own. But I felt completely and wickedly exposed with my legs spread wide and the tropical moisture mingling with the creamy wetness between my legs.

Tommy leaned over me and kissed me tenderly at first, contrasting perfectly with the intense look of agony on his face and the rigidness of his body, a body that was ready to spring fiercely into action. I ran my hands over his massive arms. They were so tense and hard, it nearly scared me. He could crush me. He could do whatever he liked, and I couldn't fight him off. But I wouldn't fight him off because I wanted him just as badly.

He lifted his mouth from mine and pushed my thighs wider with his knees. One hand slid under my ass and immediately he jammed his finger in to my anus to lift my pussy higher. He stared down at the space between us, watching as my pussy swallowed his impossibly long cock. I dug my fingernails into his arm as he jammed farther inside of me, finding an intimate spot that had never been touched. I cried out as he pushed his finger farther into my ass, causing my hips to buck against him and his cock to drive in deeper. Then suddenly, we weren't just connected physically. I was completely overwhelmed at the thought of Tommy having complete control of my body, and I never wanted him to stop. I wanted to be his and just his.

Tears filled my eyes with the thought that it could never be, *we* could never be.

I hadn't wanted him to see the tears. He didn't need to know how I felt. It was just a day of 'fun' for him, a day of fun that would eventually leave my heart a tattered, broken mess.

“Dani,” he called my name, and it ripped me from the haze. “Should I stop?” he asked the question, but it seemed an answer of yes would have killed him. He made that all too clear in his expression.

I reached up and curled my hand around his neck and brought his mouth close to mine. “Never. Don’t ever stop, Tommy.”

He slammed his cock into me, and impaled my ass deeper with his finger to push my hips up. My pussy met each thrust. With the sensual setting and the wild abandon of being out in the open, stark naked and fucking like crazy, I climaxed after just a few minutes. As my pussy trembled and clamped down around him, Tommy growled in ecstasy as he came.

CHAPTER 15

TOMMY

We'd fallen fast asleep wrapped in the blanket, Dani tucked securely against me. She stirred, and it instantly brought my cock to attention. She made a cute sound in her sleep that only intensified my erection.

Her long lashes fluttered open, and her blue eyes peered up at me.

"Hey," I said. It was all I could stutter out as I realized I'd been choked up with the idea of having her as my own. I'd thought one wild afternoon of fucking would have dampened my craving for her, but it hadn't. The opposite had happened. I wanted her again, and I wanted her forever. But that was never going to be. For now, I still had the rest of the afternoon, and I wasn't going to waste one fucking second of it.

"Hey," she said softly. Her lithe body stretched like a cat in my arms, causing my cock and every muscle in my body to tighten even more. "Is it time to go back already?" There was disappointment in her tone, and it made me smile. She wanted to stay, and I had no intention of letting her go yet.

"No, we can linger here for awhile longer."

She snuggled against me. "Good. I feel like we're the last two people on the planet, and everything unpleasant and ugly in the world has been sucked away into the abyss. Just you, me, this picturesque island. And with no jobs or long commutes, there would be a lot of free time for sex."

"Sounds good to me. There's even a little hut on the island that Nana had fashioned after one of her favorite television

shows ‘Gilligan’s Island’.”

“No way, really?” She sat up and made a futile attempt at smoothing down her wild, tangled hair.

“Really. Not completely sure if it’s still standing, but we can go explore.”

“Fun. Your grandma is something else.” She looked out at the water. “Remember when she used to lecture us if we were fighting over the remote—”

“Oh yeah, it was her version of the ‘walked ten miles to school in the snow’ sob story, only it was about the television.”

Dani laughed and wiggled her bottom in the sand to ready herself for her Nana impersonation. “When I was young there were only five channels, and the person who chose the program was the person who was willing to get up to change the darn channel.” She smiled down at me.

“Pretty good,” I said. “I think Nana would like it.” I got up and offered her my hand. “There’s a watering hole in the center of the island that gets filled with rainwater. Want to go for a swim?”

She glanced down at her wrinkled and half undone sundress. “But I don’t have a suit.”

“Precisely.”

She took my hand and we gathered up our things. The island was small. You could cross the width of it in a thirty minute, brisk walk. The top of Nana’s Gilligan hut poked up above some plants. The thatching had dried to a crisp, and it looked as white as the surrounding sand, but the structure was still sound. True to the television show, there was a large hammock and a bamboo table and chairs next to it. My grandmother had even bought a set of coconut shell cups to go with it. There was a bed too. Nana had said the hammock was too uncomfortable. She’d always spent a lot of time cruising around the Caribbean with us on our summer vacations, but Kenneth and I had both grown too old for family trips. We’d

had our own stuff to do, and now, I felt sort of guilty that we'd stopped going with her.

Dani had gotten some sun during our adventures on the sand. Some of her hair strands sparkled like white gold. Her face was glowing with color, making her blue eyes stand out even more.

She gripped her unzipped dress with the unbuttoned bodice against her.

I walked over and pushed her chin up so I could take advantage of her beautiful mouth while I undressed her. She responded to my kiss by dropping her head back and parting her lips more. I pushed the dress to the floor.

She pushed off her shoes and for a brief second went to cross her arms over her naked body. My admonishing look stopped her.

“Yes, master, forgive me,” she said and dropped her arms to her sides.

“That’s better.” I went to the ice chest and pulled out two waters and two apples. We munched the fruit as we walked stark naked to the small, rainwater pond.” Nana had conveniently had a stone path laid to lead us to the pond without having to use a machete to reach it. The trees and plants vibrated with birds and other wildlife. It really did feel like we were the last two people on earth.

I parted some of the vines that had grown between the two palms marking the entrance to the pond. Rainwater swelled up its banks as it sparkled navy blue in the shade of the trees.

“My gosh, it’s like a little slice of heaven.” Dani walked forward and stuck her toe in the water. “Ooh, a little cold, but I think it will work.” I took the time to watch her wade into the water. Her smooth white ass was still a touch pink from my hand and the spanking the night before.

I waded in behind her. As soon as she pushed off the bottom to float, I grabbed her back into my arms and held her against me. She spun around in my arms and drifted onto my

lap. That same pink bottom was now teasing my cock with every movement of her body.

I held her with one arm. She rested her head back and stared up at the tree canopy as I spun around with her. Her nipples hardened as the cool water washed over her breasts. I leaned my face down and suckled them, gently at first, before teasing them into tight buds.

She sighed dreamily and then floated away from my arms as she pushed her feet down.

A smile curled up her lips as she moved closer. Beneath the glassy surface, her hand reached over, and she wrapped her fingers around my cock. "I think my master needs a little pleasure out here in the good ole watering hole."

My eyes drifted shut as her hand moved over my cock. Her free hand reached under to stroke my balls. She leaned forward and kissed my throat and chest and shoulders as she milked my cock with her small hand.

"Fuck, baby, nothing sweeter than being pleased out in the ole watering hole." My voice grew low and gritty as she coaxed me closer to coming with just her hand and her tender kisses. "Shit, Twiggy, what have you done to me? I can't stop this. I don't want this to end."

She kissed me on the mouth as she continued with her hand job. Just having her lips against me brought me that much closer to finishing. I reached for her, but she stopped me. "Nope, it's my turn." One hand gingerly stroked my sac while the other worked my cock, her thumb flicking across the tip as she persuaded my cock to come. And I was fucking close. I shut my eyes and my legs floated up. My hard cock pointed up to the sky, and without me asking, her mouth came down over it.

"Oh, fuck yeah. That mouth. That sweet fucking mouth."

Her hand moved along my shaft as her lips and tongue made love to me. She rubbed her warm, wet mouth over the tip and then pushed me deeper into her mouth. Her free hand reached under and pressed against my ass to keep me braced

against her lips and tongue. A few seconds later, I felt the cum rising in my cock. My body convulsed with an orgasm as my seed filled her mouth.

I floated there for a few minutes to catch my breath and slow my heartbeat. My face was still pointing to the sky when an ice cold drop of water landed on my forehead. I opened my eyes. A dark mass of clouds was inching its way across the sky.

I pushed my feet down. Dani had followed my lead and had floated up next to me, her amazing tits peering up at the stormy sky like perfect mounds.

I looked around. The trees and shrubs were swaying as if a giant, invisible animal was storming through the foliage. But it was no animal. It was gusts of wind heralding the imminent arrival of a tropical storm. Storms out here were usually short but violent.

I took hold of Dani's hand, and she lifted her head from the water. She opened her eyes and seemed to notice how much the daylight had faded. She looked up at the sky. "Oh wow, those look like—"

"Storm clouds," I finished for her. "We need to get to the hut. From the amount of wind kicking up, it looks like it's going to be a good one."

We waded out of the water, and I pulled her along to the hut. It had been warm when we walked to the pond, but with the sun behind the dark clouds, the temperature had dropped drastically. Dani was shivering by the time we got to the hut.

I pulled her into my arms and rubbed her arms and shoulders vigorously to warm her. We sat down on the bed and I wrapped the blanket around us. The first streak of lightning lit up the hut. A loud crack of thunder followed, and Dani cuddled closer to me.

I kissed her forehead. "You don't need to worry. I've got you, baby. And I'm never fucking letting you go."

CHAPTER 16

DANI

I held tightly to Tommy, my warm, hard anchor, as we sat on the bed in each other's arms waiting for the sudden tropical storm to move through. Each gust of wind pelted the walls of hut with bullets of rain. The hut had been designed to look as if it had been made only of straw, for that primitive tropical look, but the contractor had still used traditional materials of wood and dry wall beneath the tufted outer surface and thatched roof. Still, the small structure was being battered badly by what seemed to be an alarmingly strong tropical storm.

A violent rush of wind pushed against the two small windows and front door, shaking the house and me to our cores. Tommy felt the tension in my body and caressed my back. I'd pulled on my sundress, insisting to Tommy, who'd looked on with dismay as I covered my naked body, that if the house blew down, I didn't want to be waiting for the rescue ship in nothing but my birthday suit. The whole Tarzan and Jane thing could only go so far for romance.

"You don't need to worry, Dani, this little hut has seen a lot of these storms, and it's still standing. It's at the highest elevation on the island, so flooding isn't a problem. Besides, I kind of like this whole idea of hunkering down in here with the hottest woman in the world."

I smiled up at him. "That's not saying much because I'm the only woman in your world at this moment."

He dropped his head back against the wall. "Still the same Twiggy, the girl who hates to hear a compliment."

“How would you know? The nicest thing you ever said to me back when we were growing up was ‘get out of my way you annoying, little stick figure’. And I remember it because as your seemingly unwanted stepsister, I was always thrilled to get any attention from you, even if it was mean attention.”

“Trust me, that was my sixteen-year-old version of a compliment. And you had my attention a lot. You just didn’t notice it because you were busy flitting around the house in your midriff tops and humming your holiday tunes and—”

“And trying hard to figure out again how to belong in another strange household.”

“See, I never would have guessed that. You always looked completely comfortable and confident. Loved that about you.”

His words pressed against my chest. I’d had no idea that Tommy had been noticing little things about me, and even more surprising, he seemed to remember them all. That thought tightened my throat, especially since he was holding me so protectively at the moment.

I sighed in the comfort of his arms. “Well, I like a compliment just as much as the next girl. When it’s genuine. Every woman likes to hear a little praise ... when it’s not just a line to get in her panties.”

Tommy reached down and pushed the dress hem up to expose my pussy to the cool, moist air in the tiny room. “See, my compliment was genuine because I have no panties to get through.”

“Don’t remind me. I’m feeling a little vulnerable because of it. If the coast guard comes by to rescue us in this wind, I’ll be flashing them big time.”

“It’ll be a rescue they’ll never forget.” Tommy ran his fingers up the inside of my thigh, and again, my pussy grew wet at his touch. He wasn’t able to keep his hands off of me, and it thrilled the hell out of me. I was going to miss his hands once we got back to the boat, once we had to stop pretending and return to reality.

Again, his hand coaxed my pussy into an intense need to be fucked, and fucked hard. Being far less modest and not at all worried about waiting in the nude for the rescue party, Tommy had never dressed after our skinny dip in the pond. His cock was already pushing urgently against my hip. His shorts were across the floor.

“I’ll go get the condom,” I said, my voice already hoarse with anticipation.

“Take off that dress and crawl over there.” His tone, too, had dropped back to that sensual, commanding man who had tied my hands in the boat. We were back to heated desire. We couldn’t seem to quench that constant need for each other. I got up on my knees and pulled the dress off over my head. I dropped it on the floor. Tommy gazed at me in that way that made it feel as if he was touching me. Even though his hands were not on me, it felt as if they were smoothing over my breasts and curling into my pussy.

“Much better.” He leaned back against the wall, his suntanned skin contrasting with the white plaster and showing off the incredible silhouette of his shoulders and arms. God, he was beautiful to look at. And with his cock standing at full attention waiting to be buried in my pussy, I could think of nothing else. The raging storm outside, the shaky engagement back home, the fact that I wouldn’t see Tommy after the trip, all fell away. It was just me with my aching, wet pussy, and the breathtaking man, with his massive cock, sitting in front of me.

I put my foot down on the floor to retrieve a condom.

“No,” he said darkly, “like I said, I want you to crawl over to my shorts.”

The jute rug on the floor was not the most comfortable for kneeling on, but the thrill I got from his brusque command and the idea of him staring at me completely exposed, urged me to do his bidding. I got down on my hands and knees, and with the slow, lithe movements of a cat, I crossed the floor. I reached his shorts and peered back at him over my shoulder.

His eyes were dark and heavy lidded as he stared hungrily at me. I pulled out the condom and held it up to show him mission accomplished. Then, with the same slow movements, I crawled back toward the bed, my naked breasts swaying like round pendulums with each step of my hand. He watched them as if hypnotized by their movement.

I was halfway back when a roaring clap of thunder shook the hut. I screamed and scurried back to the bed and hopped into his arms.

“I had that one all planned,” he said as he curled his arms around me.

“Really? I know you’re a successful businessman, but you don’t actually think you can control thunder?”

He peered down at me. The word control had pushed him back to his play role. “Baby, you’d be surprised at what I can control.” He lifted me off his lap and sat me across from him on the bed. “Get up on your knees, darlin’.”

I rose up on my knees. He stared up at me. My nipples hardened as I waited anxiously for his next demand.

“Now, put your hand down between your legs and touch yourself.”

I hesitated. It was something I’d never done except in privacy. I blushed with the idea of having him watch.

“I’m waiting,” he said. “And make it good, baby. I want to watch your face as you bring yourself close to climax.”

I wasn’t completely sure I could do any such thing, but the expression on his face told me this was going to happen. I pressed my fingers into the folds and rubbed them over my clit. I was already moist with wanting him, so it was surprisingly easy to continue.

His Adam’s apple moved in his throat as he swallowed hard. His eyes were shiny with desire, and his cock glistened with the slick dew of sex. He was loving this. This was turning him on. His erotic reaction to me touching myself made me that much hotter.

My breaths quickened, and my skin heated with a sensual blush as I rubbed my fingers over my clit. I moved my hips to contract my muscles and bring myself closer to the edge. My eyes drifted shut, and I gasped slightly as his fingers reached up and pinched my taut nipples. I worked my fingers deeper. The soft, low sounds coming from my lips sounded almost unfamiliar. Having him watch this was one of the most erotic moments of my life.

“Oh, Tommy, I’m almost there. Tommy, help me please. I want you.”

He got off the bed. I watched breathlessly as he rolled the condom down over his cock, the cock that was about to impale me. My fingers coaxed even more juices from my pussy as he walked around and climbed onto the bed behind me. I dropped to my hands, but quickly returned the fingers of one hand to my pussy. I fondled my clit, and my pussy pulsed at the edge of a raging orgasm.

Tommy grabbed hold of my hips and plunged inside of me. He jammed himself in deep and tight. “Fuck yes, Tommy!” I screamed as I came in pulsating waves.

He gripped me tighter and pulled me against him as he plunged forward. At this angle, his cock reached depths it never had before. He was locked so intimately inside of me, it seemed we would never part. Fuck, how I wished for that to be true. Locked together forever in every possible way.

His movements became so urgent, the bed slammed against the wall. It wobbled unstably under my knees. All the while, the raging storm pounded the tiny hut.

“Fuuuck,” a low, guttural sound cracked from Tommy’s chest as he climaxed deep inside of me.

Steam seemed to rise off our hot bodies and into the storm cooled air of the room. Tommy withdrew and pulled me down on the bed with him.

Lightning lit up the hut, and a crack of thunder followed. “This is lasting longer than I expected,” Tommy said. “Shit, I just thought of something. The storm surge is probably high

enough to grab the inflatable boat off the sand. I had it tied down, but I better go check on it.” He got up and walked toward the tiny portable potty out behind the hut. He returned and pulled on his shorts.

I propped on my elbow. “You’re seriously going out there in this storm?”

“Well, I don’t have to, but we’ll have no way to get back to the yacht. It can’t come close. It’s too shallow.”

“Would it be so bad to just stay here?”

He smiled at the suggestion. “Nope. If I was going to be stranded somewhere, I would want it to be with you.” With that, he walked out.

CHAPTER 17

TOMMY

I shielded my face with my arm to keep the stinging spray of rain from hitting it. Palms and broken tree limbs littered the once clear path to the sand. Wind pounded me as I made my way to the beach. Between the blackened sky, the sheets of rain and the heavy mist that had now settled on the island, I couldn't see more than three feet in front of me.

My feet hit the wet sand, and I sank down. I'd been right. The storm surge had brought the tide up onto the shore. The inflatable raft bobbed up and down on the choppy current. I waded out to it, getting pelted now, not just by rain but by an angry sea.

I stepped into a deep crevice in the sand that took me down to my knees. Waves rushed over me, holding me down until I shot back up through the surface. I got to the raft. It slammed into me, but I held onto it to keep from going under again. I reached blindly around for the rope and the stake that I'd shoved into the ground to hold the boat on the beach, a beach that had now been swallowed by the ocean. Amazingly, the stake was still holding fast. But it wouldn't be for long.

I dove under and yanked hard to get the stake free. Then I dragged the boat to higher ground. The only access to this island was by raft or flat bottom motorboat. The shoreline was too shallow for anything more. We needed the inflatable boat to get off the island.

I dragged the boat past the water line. The wind lifted it up like a heavy balloon, and it smacked into me. I pushed it back down and moved faster toward the trees. I planned to tie it to

the biggest, sturdiest palm. It would get battered to hell, but it was made of tough enough rubber to endure the storm.

As I pulled the boat up toward the trees, the air above my head whistled. A strong gust swept through the trees. The boat sprang up and flew at me. The last thing I saw before darkness was the small outboard motor flying at my head.

CHAPTER 18

DANI

Tommy was taking way too long. It was a short walk to the beach. I sat on the bed for a long time with my arms around my knees, jumping at every loud noise and bolt of lightning. Then something, a feeling of dread, washed over me. Something had happened.

I got up and pulled on my dress and shoes. Rain and wind still assaulted the hut like a small hurricane. I shoved the door open. It got caught by a gust of wind and flew open, smacking the house and nearly breaking off its hinges.

My dress flew up around my legs, and I badly wished I'd had something more than a cotton shift. Even a pair of panties would have helped my confidence. The surrounding foliage had been ripped and torn so badly, I had no real idea which direction to go to find the trail that led to the beach.

I followed my instincts and trudged through some fallen palm fronds. It was nearly impossible to see with the sharp wind and rain smacking my face. A long branch from a bush slapped my face hard enough to bring tears to my eyes. I reached up and felt the warm trickle of blood on my fingers. My cheek had been cut.

I stood still for a second and tried to get my bearings. "Tommy!" I called, but my voice was drowned out by the wind. One more step and my foot got sucked into a deep puddle. I pulled my leg free, but my shoe came off.

I reached down to dig it out just as another brutal gust of wind rushed through the canopy. A snapping sound behind me

made me glance back. The sharp branch looked like a thin arm with claws as it arced down toward me. I moved out of its path, but as it sprang back, it went beneath my dress. It scraped painfully along my leg and hip as it jammed tightly under my dress. It had me. My dress was caught on the branch, and with the force of the bent branch holding me there, I couldn't move. It pulled the dress so hard against me, I couldn't even shimmy out of it. I was the tree's captive, and I wondered how long it would be before a bolt of lightning struck me.

"Tommy!" I screamed. "Tommy!" I knew my cries for help were useless. Nothing could be heard over the clamor of the storm.

Blood dripped from my cheek onto the fabric of my dress and then spread like red ink. The scrapes on my leg and hip felt warm with blood as well. But the cold rain, coupled with the relentless wind, was chilling me to the bone.

I pulled against the grasp the tree had on me, but the branch was rubbery and wouldn't break. The soaking wet fabric of my dress also had no give. If I hadn't been so damn cold and worried about Tommy, I could have had a good laugh at my rather comical predicament. Only I would manage to get caught by a fucking tree.

I was shivering almost uncontrollably now, and my chin trembled so fiercely, I had to make a conscious effort not to bite my tongue. I crossed my arms over myself. The storm didn't seem to be letting up. The sky was still a swirling, angry mass of charcoal gray.

I squinted in the direction of the beach. I couldn't see much through the flurry of storm battered trees and plants, but I caught a glimpse of something moving through the branches.

A cry of relief bubbled from my mouth as Tommy stepped through the trees.

"Tommy!" I screamed. "Over here!"

He heard me and turned the direction of my voice. That was when I saw the gash on his forehead. Blood dripped down

the side of his face as he stumbled toward me.

“Tommy, you’re hurt.”

“No, I’m fine. Just a little dazed. The boat motor smacked me in the head.” He circled behind me to see why I was standing so rigidly next to a tree. “Shit, *Twiggy*, you got caught by a *twig*.”

“Yeah, a really nasty, grabby one. Just don’t tell anyone. It’s really embarrassing.”

He snapped the branch off and pulled it out from under my dress. I turned to him. I could tell he was not himself. I reached up, and he winced as I lightly fingered the gash. “We need to get you to a doctor. You need stitches, and I’m sure you have a concussion.”

“Let’s just get back to the hut for now,” he said. “I’m tired of being pelted by this rain, and I’ve got one hell of a headache.”

Tommy was a little unsteady on his feet as we made the trek back to the hut. By the time we stumbled inside, Mother Nature had downgraded her tantrum to a mild fit. Rain still spit at the window panes, but the wind seemed to have found a new job. Instead of ripping apart the island, it had taken on the task of pushing the storm clouds out to the horizon.

More light seeped into the room. Tommy sat on the bed holding my white shirt, the one he’d packed for me, against the gash on his head. As hard as the wound was trying to clot, every movement of his facial muscles seemed to start the steady stream of blood again.

“You know, I had much better plans for this shirt than sopping up my blood.”

“Is that right? Can’t imagine how much fun a trashy wife beater shirt could be. But it sure did come in handy. It was the only piece of cloth that was still dry and clean.” I knelt down in front of him. His grin kicked up beneath the white shirt curtaining his face.

“You are a good nurse. My head is killing me, which means first aid should be applied directly to my cock. And

there's nothing like a good, nurturing blow job to make a patient feel better."

"Sorry, buddy, but I'm down here so I can get a better look at your pupils. I need to make sure they look normal. A blow like that to the head is never a good thing."

I lifted his eyelids. The pupils reacted to the light, and they were the same size. I checked his ears for blood seepage. "Everything looks normal."

He reached up and fingered the thin cut on my cheek. "In my haze, I hadn't noticed this."

"It's just a surface cut. Nothing compared to the one you're wearing."

"Hmm, questions to check for mental clearness," I said to myself, mentally going over my concussion checklist. "What are the names of the people on your yacht?" I asked.

"Let's see, there's Max, Olivia and Whiny Mc Poop Shoes."

I laughed. "I wonder if she made it through the day without medical care."

"Maybe Max and Olivia got sick of her and ditched her in Antigua." With his free hand he reached for the buttons on my dress. "Now, about that blow job."

"Tommy, no. As a medical professional, I'm going to insist you rest. Head wounds tend to bleed a lot." I lifted the shirt on his face. The ugly, gaping gash smiled back at me. "We need to get you some stitches. Looks like you're going to have a scar."

He scooted back, and I propped the pillow up behind him. "Women like scars, don't they?" he asked, sounding more groggy than I would have like to have heard. I needed to keep his mind going. I didn't want him to drift off to sleep.

I sat next to him on the small bed. "Yes, they do. Although, I think you'll need to revise your story to something more gallant like saving a woman from a chainsaw wielding maniac. Getting slammed in the head with a boat motor just doesn't

leave a heroic impression. Not that you need any more help with the ladies.”

“I like the chainsaw idea. I think that’ll do the trick.”

“Listen, Tommy, the storm is almost over. When should we get the boat back on the water? We can ride over to the main island to get you to a clinic for stitching.”

“We’ll have to wait a few hours for the storm surge to flatten. Otherwise, we might get tossed right out of the boat. There should still be a little daylight left by then.”

I rested back against the wall next to him.

“Hey, do you want to hear about my visions for this shirt other than blotting blood from my head?” His eyes drifted shut as he spoke.

“Sure do. Especially if it will keep you awake.”

“It’s pretty simple. You, this shirt stretched tight over your amazing tits and your sweet little pussy peering out beneath the hem.” He stopped. I waited a few seconds for him to continue.

“And—”

“And, that’s it. You just don’t need anything else when you’ve got Twiggy with her beautiful new tits and tempting pussy. Shit.” He took my hand and placed it over his shorts. His cock pressed urgently against my palm. “Look what you and your cheap little men’s undershirt have done to me.”

He leaned his head back and closed his eyes. “My head feels like a train slammed into it, and my nurse won’t even give me comfort.”

I sighed. “Fine, but it’s completely against my professional opinion. But I’m going easy on you, just in case.”

I turned to face him and opened the button on his shorts. I reached my hand in and withdrew his cock. It was hard and the tip was slick with moisture. His chest lifted and fell as I traced my thumb around it, smearing the cream over the fleshy tip. I leaned over his lap and my mouth slid down the long, thick

shaft. I took hold of the base with one hand as I lifted my mouth up and down over him.

“Fuck yeah, baby, your mouth feels so good.” He tangled the fingers of his free hand in my hair and helped me moved up and down over him, taking in a little more of him each time. “Best fucking nurse ever,” he groaned.

I lifted my mouth for a second. “Nurse practitioner to you, sir.”

“Whatever. I still can’t think of playing doctor with anyone but you.”

I moved my mouth faster, and my hand pumped him hard. His fingers tightened in my hair as his hot seed flowed into my mouth. His groans rained down on my head, and I took pleasure in knowing that he was enjoying this even with the pain he was in.

I straightened and wiped the cum from the side of my mouth. “And that is what I call therapy.”

“Fuck yeah. My head’s feeling better already.”

“Really?”

“Fuck no. But my cock is happy.”

CHAPTER 19

TOMMY

Six stitches and some good painkillers and I was feeling like I could start the entire island adventure again. Of course, that was mostly because I wanted to be alone with Dani instead of stuck on the yacht with all the other annoying people onboard.

I hadn't felt much like eating, but I was sure it was more because the day had come to an end than the stinging pain in my forehead. I had sat out on the deck to feel the fresh night air. I heard Dani inside giving instructions to Crystal to wake me every three hours. I could also hear Crystal's disgusted sigh.

I walked inside, and Dani looked at me. Things were decidedly different now. These were no longer just flirtatious glances across the room. A connection had grown strong between us, and the thought of severing it when we left the Sea Queen was hard to bear.

"How are you feeling?" Dani asked.

"Drugged and happy to be so."

Crystal turned around with a sneer. "I guess now that you're feeling better you can explain why the two of you were on some remote island alone?"

Max walked in right then. "Do you want me to draw you a picture, Crystal?" He stopped between us and shot each of us satisfied smirks. "About fucking time, you two. It's been a long time coming, but I'm sure, like a good wine, it was worth the wait."

Dani walked quickly from the room.

“Shut up, Max,” I said.

“Well, I’m not waking you every three hours,” Crystal sneered. “You can slip right into a fucking coma.”

“Yep, sounds good to me too,” I said.

Crystal stormed out of the room.

I looked at Max. “Don’t know about you, but I’m ready to head back home.”

He nodded. “Figured we’d be cutting the vacation short after your little tussle with a—” He looked at me. “Was it really the boat motor?”

“Yep.” I headed to the kitchen for some cold water to relieve the cotton mouth left behind by the painkillers. Max followed me. I grabbed a glass of water and took several long swallows. “But if anyone asks, I fought off a chainsaw killer.”

He laughed. “Yeah. All right.” Max reached into the bowl of nuts on the counter. “So— you and Twiggy.”

I nodded.

“I always knew you had a thing for her, but I wasn’t sure you’d ever act on it. What with her being family and all.”

“She’s only family on a marriage certificate,” I added quickly.

“Uh huh, so you’ve been rationalizing the whole thing. Must be serious.”

I shook my head and stared out the galley window. The clear night sky was a carpet of glittering stars. “She’s engaged. We just decided to have a day of fun.” I stared down at the glass of water in my hand. A day of fun, that was my justification for the whole thing. And right up to the moment when the boat motor had crowned me, it had been fucking perfect. But it hadn’t slaked my desire for Dani at all. The opposite, in fact. I couldn’t stop thinking about her. But she belonged to someone else, and I didn’t need to be tied to one woman. Life was easier without the commitment.

Robert walked in. “Mr. Hawkson, there’s a phone call for you in the pilot house. It’s Mrs. Hawkson.”

“I’m coming right now.” I walked into the pilot house and picked up the phone. “Hey, Nana.”

“How is the trip going? I haven’t heard from you.”

“It’s fine, Nana.” I had no intention of telling her about the head injury. It would only worry her. “But I think we might be heading back early. I’ve got some business back home.”

“Oh.” She paused. “How is Dani?”

“Dani’s good. You neglected to mention that she’d be onboard with us.”

“Did I?”

“What are you up to, Nana?”

“Me? Nothing. She is wonderful though, isn’t she? She’s bloomed into such a beauty.”

“An engaged beauty.”

She puffed some air into the phone. “Big deal. She’s not even terribly happy with the relationship.”

I stopped. My first intuition had been right. “My god, woman, you planned this whole damn thing in hopes of getting the two of us together.”

“No, not at all. Why? Has something happened?” she asked hopefully.

I was silent, which for my grandmother, who knew me better than anyone, was enough.

“Nana, I don’t need you setting me up. I’ve told you I’m not looking for anything permanent right now. You’ll have to send your visions of great grandchildren Kenneth’s direction.”

She sighed in disappointment. “I’m going to my grave without ever knowing my great grandchildren, I just know it.”

“I’ve got to go, Nana. Sorry to disappoint you and your little, secretive matchmaking scheme.”

“All right. Come visit when you get back home. Oh, and Tommy—”

“Yes?”

“True love is hard to find, but you’ll know when it happens. And if you do find it, don’t let it go or you will never forgive yourself.”

“Yeah, Nana, all right. Love you.” I hung up and stared out at the black night. My grandmother always had the uncanny ability to look at my face and know exactly what I was thinking and feeling. Now she could even do it through the fucking phone.

I headed out of the pilot house and down to the infirmary. We’d only been back onboard for two hours, but already, I longed for the solitude of the island. There was only one person on the whole damn boat I wanted to see and that was Dani.

I could sense something was different the second I walked inside the infirmary. Dani busied herself putting back the supplies from the first aid kits. She seemed distant and her shoulders were stiff with tension. “Just talked to Nana,” I said.

“Oh?” She didn’t turn away from her task, and I was stuck talking to her back. “Did you tell her about your injury?”

“No, so don’t mention it if you talk to her. Stuff like that always makes her worry.” I leaned against the counter directly next to her. She continued to be too busy to give me her attention. I stared at her perfectly adorable profile. Her small white teeth had caught hold of her bottom lip as if she was concentrating. But the only thing she was really concentrating on was not looking at me.

“She set us up,” I finally said, after some back and forth in my mind. “Nana had one of her little matchmaking schemes in action just like I thought.”

“You mean the scheme you thought I had a part in?” She dropped the box of cotton and small white balls rolled onto the counter. “Shoot, those are ruined now.” She hastily picked them up. I took hold of her hand.

She stared down at the counter and seemed to be blinking back tears.

“Dani?”

She shook her head, and the tears flowed free. She threw the few cotton balls she had in her fist on the ground. “I’ve made some really stupid decisions in my life, but this last one was a fucking doozy.”

“So, spending the day with me was a stupid mistake?”

“Yes, because we didn’t just spend the day together.” She wiped at the tears on her cheeks. “Spending the day is a lunch out, a day at the mall, a damn bike ride in the park.” She could no longer keep up with the flow of tears.

I tried to pull her into my arms, but she pushed away and reached for the tissue box behind her. “What the hell was I thinking? Just a day of fun. Shit, I’m engaged.” She held up her ringed finger as if it was necessary to remind me.

“You’re overthinking this, baby.”

“No.” She pointed at me. “Don’t call me baby. You don’t get to call me baby, especially when you know damn well that it makes me turn to fucking mush inside. That storm, me getting stuck on the tree branch, those stitches in your head—that’s what they call bad karma.”

“No, that’s what they call getting stuck in a tropical storm.”

“Don’t try and reason me out of this, Tommy. For you, this was just another one of your many trysts. A good afternoon fuck and nothing more, but I’m not you. I’m not just some callous playboy, who has no feelings except the sensations coming from his erection.”

I stared at her, trying my hardest not to look hurt by her words, but my head was throbbing and I knew the whole damn day had been much more than a tryst. The second we got back onboard, I’d missed her.

“I’m sorry, Tommy. I’m not pissed at you. I’m angry at myself.”

“The truth is, Dani, I’m not as callous as you think.” I was going to just blurt it the fuck out there. I needed to let her know how much she meant to me. “I—”

My confession was cut off by a knock on the door. Robert poked his head inside and seemed, immediately, to regret having intruded. “Uh, excuse me, but there’s a phone call for Dani. It’s your fiancé.”

Dani hurried past me and out the door.

CHAPTER 20

DANI

“Hello.” I couldn’t keep the waver out of my voice. The scene in the infirmary with Tommy had left me shaken.

“Hey, babe.” Axel always called me babe, and it had never meant anything to me. He could have been calling me *pencil* or *tree*, and it would have had the same effect. “Guess what? We just signed on for a tour through Europe.”

I paused and tried to work up some enthusiasm for him. “That’s great. I’m sure it’ll be a lot of fun for you guys.”

“What do you mean? You’re coming too. The record company is paying your way.”

“I can’t, Axel. I told you, I’ve got a good job waiting for me when I get back. They’re anxious for me to start. It’s a position I really wanted.”

“There’ll be other job offers. You’re awesome at your job. Come on, babe, it’s Europe. You’ve always wanted to go to there.” He paused. “I miss you, Dani. When are you coming home?”

The entire weight of what I’d done hit me like a sack of bricks, and the tears flowed again. The last time I’d spoken with him, he’d been out partying and dancing and having a good time without me. It had pushed me into thinking it was my turn for fun too. But now, he was being attentive and loving. “I don’t know, Axel. We’ll have to talk about this when I get home.”

“Are you crying? Don’t fucking cry. There’ll be other jobs. It’ll be a blast.”

He was certain I was crying about the job and, naturally, he assumed that I was just going to skip the great job offer, my dream position, just so I could follow him as he followed his own dream. “We’re coming home early, Axel. I’m flying back on Monday. I’ll email you the flight info, so you can pick me up.”

“All right. Glad you’re coming back early, babe. We can plan out our trip.”

He hadn’t heard me when I’d told him I didn’t want to lose the job. He’d only heard his own excitement. And why the hell did the word babe sound so flat and meaningless when he said it?

I made my way back to the infirmary and the cabin. Dinner smelled good, but I wasn’t in the mood for food. In fact, a few shots of tequila sounded better than anything. And I knew exactly where the chef kept a stash of booze in the kitchen. Then I could avoid seeing anyone.

I pulled on my sweatshirt and hood as if it might act as a camouflage, a thought that made me smile, my first smile since we’d gotten back onboard the Sea Queen.

I heard Max’s deep voice and Olivia’s distinctively sharp tone in the dining room, but I didn’t hear Tommy or Crystal. Maybe he’d decided to let her ease his pain like I had on the island. That thought made my stomach twist into a cold knot. I couldn’t let my mind think about Tommy with other women. It would make me crazy, especially considering the parade and all. In the future, I would have to avoid the topic when I talked with Nana. In fact, I’d have to avoid the subject of Tommy altogether.

I grabbed the bottle of tequila and decided to forego the nuisance of a shot glass. I headed out the back kitchen door and walked up to the top deck. I plunked down on a lounge and pulled the bottle out from under my sweatshirt. I shot back a swig and then scrunched my entire face up as the burning, bitter liquid trickled down my throat. I wiped my mouth with the back of my hand and tried one more swig. The same face

scrunch followed as if it might help relieve the acrid taste in my throat.

“I’ve never seen anyone in so much pain from a few guzzles of tequila,” the deep voice floated across the deck, nearly causing me to drop the bottle.

Immediately, my hands trembled. Why the hell had just the sound of his voice made me tremble? I was going to be paying for my bad decision with my heart and soul for a long time. “A gentleman would have made his presence known before he secretly watched a lady drink tequila.”

He got up and walked over to the lounge. “You’ve made it more than clear that you don’t consider me a gentleman.”

I put the cap on the bottle. “And, considering I’m drinking straight from the bottle, it probably makes the ‘lady’ label a little lofty too.”

He sat down on the lounge next to me.

“How’s your head?” I asked.

“Still on my neck ... unfortunately.”

The tequila was already spreading through my veins and making my limbs feel warm and heavy. I turned to face him without lifting my head from the lounge. “I’m sorry I lost it in there. I guess I’m just not as strong as I thought.”

“That’s bullshit. You’re strong. I’m just a selfish idiot.” He took a long slow breath. “The truth is, Dani, I’ve been wanting you for a long time. Shit, since I was a horny seventeen-year-old watching you from behind the cereal box.”

I sat forward and laughed. “No fucking way. I was watching you around the corn flakes too.”

“You were?”

“Yep.” Suddenly, that tequila sounded tasty. I picked up the bottle and swigged some. Nope, still just as foul. Only now, the buzz it was giving me made it go down easier. I offered him some.

He took the bottle and drank some. Too late, I remembered that he'd been taking painkillers.

“Some medical professional I am. I just handed alcohol to someone who has painkillers in his bloodstream. You should be feeling that shot soon. And I might be giving you a piggy back ride to the cabin.”

“I'm going to sleep out here tonight. Crystal makes my head hurt even more.”

“Then I guess I'll stay out here and wake you every few hours.”

He smiled at me. “Said the girl with the tequila coursing through her body.”

“No, I'll wake. You'll see.”

We sat quietly for awhile listening to the soft churning of the motor and the water lapping against the hull.

“Dani, I wanted you to know, I never really considered it just a day of fun. It meant more to me than that.” His voice trailed off, and the sleep potion I'd given him by topping off painkillers with tequila, pulled him into a deep sleep.

I gazed over at him, his handsome face illuminated by the small lights running along the railing. He was just as heartbreaking as he had been sitting behind the cereal box.

CHAPTER 21

TOMMY

Sunlight was stabbing my head, but I felt better after a night of sleep. I glanced over at the lounge next to me. It was empty. Strangely, my chest felt heavy at not seeing Dani next to me. She'd stayed with me all night, and as promised, had roused me from my drug induced sleep several times. Each time was a blur, but I remembered distinctly, the sound of her soft voice as she leaned over to wake me.

Having her with me all night at my side seemed so damn right that not seeing her this morning when I woke made my mood darken. I'd started something, and I wanted to kick myself. I'd convinced myself that being with Dani would finally end the urges I'd had to kiss her, to hold her, to touch her. But now those urges had only intensified. All the years of fucking around without any commitments or responsibility to another person had always worked just fine for me. But now, I felt lonely, as if I'd been missing something all along. But the boat was heading back to port, and we'd all be climbing onto airplanes to head back to Los Angeles. Dani lived just miles from me, but we would, once again, lead completely separate lives.

I could hear Crystal's high pitched laugh come from the dining room. I got up to get some coffee and toast. My stomach wasn't going to need much more than that. It took me a second to gain my balance. I walked inside.

Max looked up from his breakfast. "Holy shit, Hawke, you look like shit. Have some breakfast. Chef made eggs Benedict."

I held up my hand to assure him that that was the last thing I needed. I walked through to the kitchen for a cup of coffee. I returned to the dining room, pulled out a chair and flopped down on it.

“Where’s Dani?” I directed the question toward Max.

Crystal was nibbling on a piece of bacon. She rolled her eyes and huffed. “Really? She’s the nurse. Where would she be? And since when are you interested in girls like her?”

I wasn’t even completely sure why I answered. “Girls like her? You mean smart and pretty as opposed to bitchy and selfish. I’m just wondering what the hell I ever saw in you.”

She threw the bacon down. “Asshole.”

“Yep.”

“Well, at least I managed to put three thousand dollars on your credit card in Antigua yesterday while you were balling that dull little slut.”

“Good for you. Consider it your goodbye gift.”

She got up from the table in such a hurry, the chair fell backward.

Max was grinning behind his piece of toast. Once she was out of the room, he put the toast down. “So, what’s going to happen?”

“What do you mean?”

“You know, with you and Twiggy?”

“Told you, she’s engaged. He’s the singer for that band Steel Wire. They’re going to be big.”

“Steel Wire? Yeah? Huh? Twiggy as the wife of a rock star.” He paused. “I’m not seeing it. Of course, the only guy I ever pictured her with was you.”

I looked up from the cup in my hand. “Really?”

“Shit yeah. Always thought you two would make a great couple, except for the whole weird sibling connection and all.”

“Told you, we’re not really siblings.”

He took a bite of toast and chewed it as he stared at me across the table. He swallowed and took a loud gulp of his orange juice. “Really? Then what the hell are you waiting for?”

I looked at him, my best friend, the guy who knew me better than my own brother. I pushed the chair out and headed to the infirmary. The door swung open before I could knock.

Robert was on the other side with a sizable bandage on his hand. He lifted it. “A little argument with the boiler in the engine room.”

“Yeah, I see. Well, I guess it’s convenient we have such a good doctor on board.” I patted him on the shoulder as he walked by me.

I stepped into the infirmary. It was empty. I could hear the sink running in the bathroom in Dani’s cabin. It turned off, and her footsteps sounded on the floor. “Robert? Did you forget some—” She stopped when she saw me. It took her a second to speak, and every word I’d had in my head on the way to the infirmary had vanished. “How are you feeling?” she asked.

I didn’t answer. I wasn’t there for small talk or to discuss my head. It was my heart that was feeling pain. I walked toward her, and she back up against the wall. I put my hands on each side of her, trapping her between my body and the wall.

“Don’t marry him.”

She peered up at me. It took all my self control not to kiss her.

“I don’t want you to marry him. Stay with me, Dani.”

“Tommy, you took a blow to the head. You’re not thinking straight.”

I smacked my palm against the wall. “No, I’m thinking straighter than I have in a long fucking time. I want you to stay with me, Dani. I love you.”

She grew quiet and dropped her gaze. “I’m engaged to be married.”

“You don’t want me then?”

Her eyes were glassy with tears as she looked up at me. “I didn’t say that—it’s just. Oh, fucking hell.” She ducked under my arm and dashed into her room and slammed the door shut.

And that was that. Karma, just like she’d said. I’d been an asshole for so long. Now I’d finally poured my heart out to the woman I loved, and all I got in return was a door slammed in my face.

CHAPTER 22

DANI

The airport was a flurry of chaos as usual. I'd been relieved to get off the plane and back on solid ground. I'd spent the remainder of the time onboard the Sea Queen locked in my cabin alternating between crying and wondering why I was in such despair. I was still engaged to the man who I'd been with and loved for a long time.

Tommy and his friends had come in on a different flight. I caught a glimpse of them standing over at the luggage carousel. My heart sped up just seeing him. It was just nerves from knowing that I'd cheated on Axel, something I'd have to confess eventually.

Axel was standing over in the luggage pick up area, so I had no choice but to walk past everyone. Max saw me first. "Later, Twiggy."

I waved and hoped to sneak by before Tommy looked around. Didn't happen that way. His gaze met with mine. That strange magnetic connection that made it seem as if we were alone in the middle of the busy airport struck me. My throat tightened, and I found myself fighting back tears.

I hurried past and met up with Axel. He kissed me. "Hey, babe, where's the luggage? I need to get going. We've got a gig tonight."

I glanced back toward the carousel and tried my hardest not to look Tommy's direction. He was watching me.

Axel turned away from me to answer his phone. That was when I saw it, a red mark on his neck. He spoke to someone

quickly and hung up.

I pointed to his neck. “Huh, look at that. A hicky. Don’t think I’ve seen one of those since high school.”

He laughed it off, and I wondered if right then would be a good time to blurt out my little indiscretion. But I didn’t have the energy. I watched as Tommy and his friends walked out with their luggage. A stretch limo pulled up to the curb to pick them up. Tommy glanced back through the windows. Once again, we locked gazes. He pulled away first. They piled into the limo.

“Did I tell you? We got the tickets,” Axel’s voice drew my attention away from the window.

“What tickets?”

“To Europe. We leave next Sunday.”

“Axel, I told you I have a new job. I want this job.”

He laughed. “It’s just a job, babe. You’ll get another one.”

“I’m not going.” I blinked up at him. My life was now going to be in the shadows of his music career.

“Fine,” he said angrily. “I’ll find someone else to go.”

I pulled the ring from my finger. “Yep. And you can give this to whoever goes with you.”

He stared down at the ring on his palm before looking up at me.

I kissed him. “Axel, this just isn’t going to work. You’ve got your career, and I’ve got mine.” I pressed my hand against his face. “I wish you all the best, Axel. Really.”

I raced out of the airport. The limo was still in the line of traffic. I ran up to it and knocked on the window. My heart was racing, and I was nervous as hell. What if Tommy had rethought everything? What if he’d changed his mind?”

The door opened. Tommy climbed out.

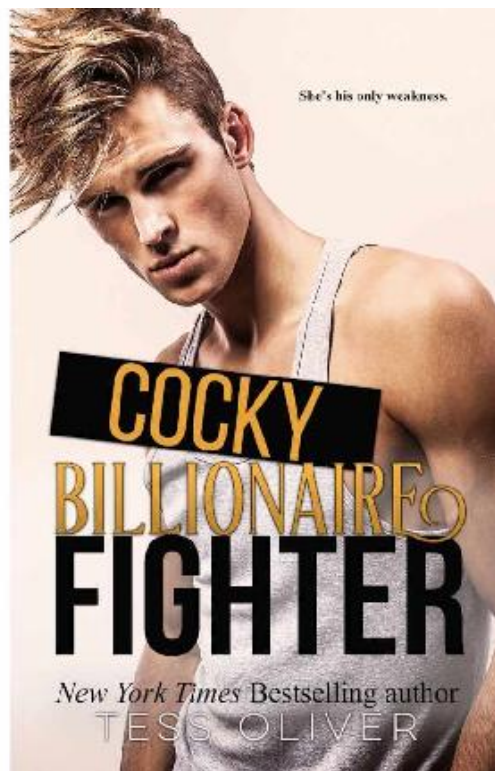
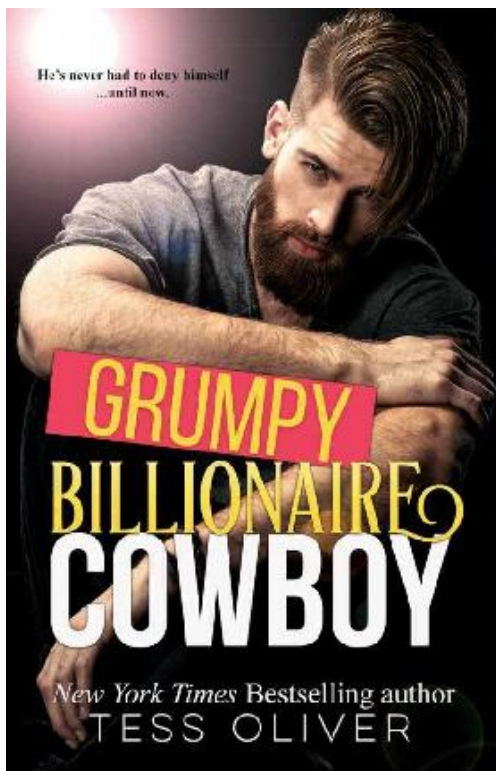
I crossed my arms around myself to stop the shaking. “So, I was thinking about cereal boxes and stuff.” I took a deep

breath. “And, it occurred to me that the only person I want to see when I peek around my corn flakes is you. I was kind of hoping you felt the same way. Doesn’t have to be corn flakes. Rice Krispies are fine.”

He smiled. I jumped into his arms. And, there in the center of traffic, I kissed the man who I’d loved since the first time he’d called me an annoying, little stick figure.

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