



Triple Shifter Trouble

MOUNTAIN
SHIFTERS
OF
COLORADO

LISA CULLEN

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Lisa's Insider Club

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DESCRIPTION

Becoming involved with Ashton, Boston, and Clayton started out as a game between three identical brothers.

A competition, of sorts, for my hand... to see which brother I fell in love with first.

But what the extremely hot triplet shifters didn't expect was me figuring out their little game.

I probably should have run the other way, but they were so **irresistible**... and I was **hooked** from the start.

Now, I'm playing the game too... only, they don't know it.

The problem is I'm losing my heart in the process... I'm falling for all three of them.

And that was never part of the plan.

Now there is a new challenge to face.

One that has me hoping they will all agree to... and that is if they will all three share me.

Because that was the only option for me.

Any others need not apply.

PROLOGUE: ASHTON

Ashton, Boston, and Clayton were nearly identical triplets. For the most part, no one could tell them apart. And they had grown up using that to their advantage, causing mischief as small boys did. But as they grew, their games became more competitive. And the differences between the three of them became more apparent.

They were highly competitive, and on Saturdays, when schedules lined up, they spent the better part of the morning and afternoon shooting hoops against each other. The losers bought the beer and the pizza or whatever takeout the winner wanted.

As it was, on this warm spring Saturday, the three brothers were in the middle of a particularly competitive game of basketball in the courtyard of their apartment complex. Although, normally, they were focused and intent on beating their brothers. But on this day, the first born, Ashton, was unsettled and couldn't keep his head in the game.

Though he couldn't quite put his finger on what was bothering him or even why he had realized part of what he was experiencing was a deep need for change.

If he could only pinpoint exactly what the change he needed was, he would be one step further than he was before now. And for the better. But he wasn't, and his normally competitive side had taken an unapproved leave of absence.

The basketball was passed to him with a single, high-pitched ping as it bounced against the blacktop. He reached

out his hands to catch the ball, launching himself closer to the large sphere. As he moved, the toe of his shoe scraped against the pavement of the court. And instead of catching the ball, he lost his footing and almost faceplanted the concrete. Instead of eating the pavement, the heels of his palms were set on fire as bits and pieces of the gravel embedded themselves into his skin. He also shaved a few layers of skin off his knee.

Boston ran to his brother's side as Ashton bit against the stinging pain rushing through his freshly scraped knee and palms. Anger flushed through his system. He was off his game. He hated losing. And today wasn't looking well for him.

"You okay, bro?" Boston asked as he reached out to help his brother off the ground.

"I'm good," Ashton muttered, lying on his back, squinting against the warm sun that shone into his eyes, filtering through a thin canopy of leaves dangling above the side of the court. He wasn't ready to stand yet.

Clayton chuckled. "Head in the game, Ashton. Not out of it."

"Ha-ha," Ashton said as he glared at his brother. "You're so funny."

Clayton held his arms out to his sides. "At least you finally admit it."

Ashton rolled his eyes then turned his attention to Boston still waiting for him to take the help up. With a sigh, Ashton reached out and took Boston's waiting hands and was launched upward, back onto his feet.

"Seriously," Boston started. "Are you okay?"

Ashton barely met his brother's gaze and nodded. He examined his injuries and busied himself with picking bits and pieces of dirt and tiny pebbles from the palms of his hands. "Yeah. Just have a lot on my mind."

"Look, if you're done playing," Clayton said, dribbling the ball. "We can say I won and continue on with our day."

Ashton groaned. “Aren’t you two tired of doing the same things over and over again? Don’t you want something new or different in your life, ever?”

Boston shrugged. “Like what?”

Ashton shook his head as Clayton dribbled the basketball even harder. It was almost as if each hit of the ball came with more and more volume, drawing him into the sound, and furthering his distraction. “I don’t know.”

Clayton chuckled and held the ball between his hip and forearm. “Very insightful.”

“You don’t have any room to talk, especially since you’re not coming up with any great ideas either,” Ashton snapped.

Clayton smiled bigger, letting Ashton know he had given his brother the satisfaction of pushing his buttons. “Yeah well, I’m not the one massively distracted today, you are.”

“Yeah,” Boston said. “He’s right, man. This isn’t like you. What gives?”

“I told you already,” Ashton said. “I don’t have a clue what’s wrong with me.”

Boston huffed then said as he peered over his shoulder at Clayton, “Maybe we should call it quits.”

Clayton shrugged as his lips pulled into another smile. He dribbled the ball between his legs, alternating between them with a small hop as the ball hit the ground. “I’ll accept a forfeit from the two of you any day. A win is a win.”

Ashton shook his head. Sometimes he wondered how they could be so different.

Boston, Clayton, and Ashton were identical triplets. Though they looked exactly the same, with some minor exceptions, their personalities couldn’t be any more different. Their appearance was all they had in common... well, they also had genetics in common, but that was beside the point. And it was at this moment that the differences between them stood out even more.

A few choice words stood on the tip of his tongue. Clayton could be so calloused and hyper-focused on himself. It was a fault of his. He couldn't help it though. For Clayton, competition was his nature. It was the air he breathed.

Ashton turned his back to his brother to keep from causing a scene and settled his attention and he settled his gaze on a woman carrying a large box. His heart skipped a beat and his animal damn near lurched forward. It was almost as if he was trying to run and pounce on her.

Weird, he thought.

There was something about the woman though. And he wanted to figure out what that was.

"I saw her first," Clayton said.

"No, you didn't," Ashton snapped.

"Hey, I think I've seen her before," Boston said, pulling Ashton's attention.

An urge to claim her came over Ashton as Boston flipped through something on his phone. Ashton watched the woman as she struggled to carry the large box. He wanted to rush to her to help her out. But he couldn't get his feet to move.

"Here she is," Boston said, pulling Ashton's attention again. Boston nodded and turned the phone around, revealing the smiling face of the exact same woman... on his dating app.

Ashton forced back the sudden need to growl.

"Let me take a look at that," Clayton said, snatching the phone from Boston's hand.

His eyes appraised every curve of her body and he pretended to wipe some drool from his mouth.

Boston snatched his phone back. "That's enough. No drooling on my phone."

"You know," Clayton said, "for a bigger girl, she's hot. And even better? She's a Rockies fan."

Ashton shook his head. He saw her first. But now, he was never going to get away with dating her now. Not with his

brothers after her.

Unless...

An idea occurred to him.

A competition of sorts. One for the honor to date the woman he already knew he was going to win. Because, to Ashton, there was no competition. He was going to win her over and kick the other two out of the game before it even started.

The three of them may not be able to have the same girl, but that didn't mean they couldn't have a competition with her as the ultimate prize.

Ashton's lips drew into a wide grin as he thought about the competition. It was exactly what the doctor ordered.

"What are you smiling about?" Clayton asked. His eyes narrowed on his brother.

"We can't all have her," Ashton said.

"Who says that?" Clayton interjected.

Ashton leveled his gaze on his brother. "Do you seriously want to share one woman between the three of us?"

"No," Boston said, answering the question for Clayton. "I hate sharing genetics with the two of you. The last thing I want or need is to share the same woman."

Ashton gestured toward Boston. "Nor do I."

"And?" Clayton asked.

"I propose a competition," Ashton said. And for the first time in a long time, he was excited. "The three of us pretend to be the same person. Whoever she falls in love with first, wins."

Boston frowned. Clayton chuckled and shook his head. He muttered something under his breath, but Ashton didn't quite catch it.

Boston said. "You do realize the sheer potential of that blowing up in our faces, right?"

“Only if she finds out,” Ashton said.

“We may be triplets, but we are different people,” Clayton said. “I hate to admit it, but Boston has a point. Tricking her isn’t going to be easy.”

Ashton frowned. “Well, I’m not sharing.”

“That’s presumptive,” Boston said. “She’s not yours.”

“Not yet,” Ashton said darkly.

“I saw her first,” Boston said. He had a bit of a whiney tone in his voice. Of the three of them, he was the most sensitive.

Clayton laughed. “Yeah, in a dating profile. How many messages have you sent her?”

Boston clamped his mouth shut. A low growl rumbled from within his throat.

“None,” Ashton said, judging by the expression on his brother’s face. “That’s how many. The expression says it all.”

Boston glared at Ashton.

“Doesn’t count,” Clayton said. “Points for trying though.”

“Maybe. But I was the one who saw her first in person,” Ashton said, pointing to the sidewalk the woman was heading down.

“We all three had laid eyes on her,” Clayton said. “And we all three want her. But we all can’t have her.”

“You can’t honestly suggest we take her choice away,” Boston said.

“What choice is there?” Ashton asked. “We’re identical. So long as she’s unaware, we are in the clear.”

“Not as identical as you would like for us to be,” Boston argued. “We have distinct differences.”

“Not as distinct as you would like to believe,” I said.

“I’m in,” Clayton said. “If only to watch this thing blow up in your face.”

Ashton nodded then settled his attention on Boston who shook his head.

“This is a bad idea,” he said. “But fine.”

Ashton clapped his hands together and started to take off toward the woman who was driving him mad with desire.

“Wait,” Boston said, “We have to work on the details.”

“We’ll do it later,” Ashton said. “I’m going to find out if she needs help.”

The box appeared way too big and heavy for a woman like her to be carrying by herself, after all.

MORGAN

I couldn't have picked a better day to move.

The weather was almost perfect. A warm with a gentle breeze surrounded me with the floral scent of all the freshly blooming flowers around me. And I already had an idea of the perfect way to end my first official day in my new place.

On my new balcony with a glass of Moscato and my favorite Italian takeout. And because my balcony faced the west side of town, I could watch the sunset over the valley. I loved the Colorado sunsets. Especially in the spring.

I didn't think there was anything better to do as a way to end my first official day in the new place. And I couldn't wait to do that.

But first, I had to carry a huge, bulky box to the new place and then go back for the last, smaller but heavier box that was still in my car. I was super grateful for the movers Milo had hired to handle all the heavy lifting. They had even set most of the furniture up. All I had to do was go through and unpack all of the things that still sat in boxes and make the place my own.

The box I had my arms wrapped around wasn't heavy. But it was awkward to carry. And after a little while, my fingers started to slip on the cardboard. It had some of my smaller, lighter things like my throw pillows and a few nick knacks and frames I wanted to keep hold of. Pretty much the items that meant a lot to me.

I trusted Milo and believed he would never steer me wrong, especially since he was in a relationship with my

friend, Olivia. But that didn't mean I trusted the moving company. I had heard too many horror stories for me to put blind faith in a bunch of strangers handling my things.

So, my more important, personal, and sentimental items were put in boxes and those boxes were placed securely in my car.

My fingers slipped around the box. I almost crushed the thing into me just so I didn't drop it. But this was the fifth time in a row I almost lost grip on the box, so I stopped, set the box on the sidewalk, and looked at my fingers before rubbing them along my jean-covered thighs.

I stared at the new building and tried to gauge how much farther I had to go when the sound of someone running quickly toward me, caught my attention. I turned to find a handsome, tall guy with dark hair. Thick muscle covered arms drew my attention. He stopped a couple of feet from me and pointed at the box. His amber eyes met mine as he asked, "Need some help with that?"

I looked at the box and settled my gaze back on him. "Nope. I have it covered. Thanks though."

He nodded. "Are you new around here? Like to the area?"

I cocked my head to the side. Hardly. And I didn't know why that mattered. Perhaps he was trying to be neighborly. "More like new to the building specifically. Why do you ask?"

He nodded and then shrugged. "Ah. I haven't seen you around here before. Was curious, is all."

I nodded and smiled. "I suppose that makes sense."

"Why the change, if you don't mind me asking?" His eyebrows drew closer together. A dark shadow flitted behind his amber eyes, darkening them a few shades for the briefest of moments. I figured there was a reason why he was asking, and I had a feeling he wasn't going to tell me what the reason was.

Not immediately.

And then there was part of me that wondered if he was trying to flirt with me or was being neighborly. Part of me hoped he was flirting. The other part of me hoped he wasn't. Why? I had no idea. Perhaps it was because he had a devilish charm in the way he smiled.

The guy was nosey but charming. He clearly was fitness focused with the sheer amount of firm, lean muscle that covered his frame. And when he flashed me his smile, I noticed he also had a single dimple on his right cheek. Dimples were my weakness. But he was still a stranger, and I didn't want him touching my things. I stood protectively in front of the box in case he got any ideas.

"My roommate is getting married, so I downsized."

He nodded. "That is understandable and makes a lot of sense."

I nodded and let out a soft sigh. "Yeah. Seriously though, thanks for the offer. I was just taking a small break. The box isn't even heavy. Just bulky."

"You are very welcome," he said and stepped around me and picked up the box, ignoring my protests. He smiled as he adjusted to the awkward design.

"Hey, what are you doing?" I protested.

"Where to?" he asked, continuing to ignore my insistence on not needing his help.

I huffed, forcing out a breath of frustration. But one look into his beautiful amber eyes and I melted. Giving in, I smiled and pointed in front of us. "That way."

"What a coincidence," he said. "I live in that building too."

"You do?" I asked as I led the way. "I had no idea."

"Yeah," he said. "You're going to love it. It's pretty quiet."

I nodded. "Good to know."

I kept the conversation casual. I figured the worst thing that could happen from allowing a complete and total stranger to carry a box to my place were things I would still be able to

handle. Giving him too much information was inviting more trouble than I needed. So, I reasoned by taking the help he was offering. Especially since he was insisting on it. And it was less work for me. Besides, if he tried anything, I would kick him in the balls or punch him in the throat.

Maybe both.

But there was something about him that reassured me that he was a genuinely good guy. There was a warmth to him and his persona. A comforting one. And I chalked it all up to him simply wanting to help me out a little. Normally I had a knack for determining whether a person had ill intentions or not. Most of the time, anyway. There were very few instances where I was wrong.

I let out a deep breath through my pursed lips as I stepped in front of him and led the way to my new place. Once we were through the front door, the guy set the box on the counter separating the kitchen from the rest of the apartment.

“Is right here okay?” he asked.

“Right there is fine,” I said.

He released the box then twisted to face me and clapped his hands together. “Got any more boxes to bring up?”

I quickly shook my head. “That was the last one. Besides, you had done enough as it is.”

It was a lie, but only a small one. The only other box still left in my car was a small one. It was much heavier than the one he had finished carrying for me, but I wasn't willing to let him help out any more than he had. Besides, I wasn't sure how I felt about him being in my apartment in the first place. I didn't know him. We had met only minutes before.

“I'm Ashton, by the way,” he said, holding out his hand for me to take.

I smiled and shook his hand. “I'm Morgan.”

“You have a very pretty name, Morgan,” he said.

I laughed sarcastically. “And you are quite the charmer, Ashton.”

“So, I’ve been told,” he said and pulled a pen out of the box he had carried and wrote something down on the flap.

“I’m in the apartment two doors down from here. This is my number if you need anything. And I do mean anything... Like A trip to the store, pretend boyfriend, a cup of sugar, help carrying in groceries, really anything... let me know.”

“Thanks, but I think I have everything covered from here,” I said and stepped to the door, holding it open for him to step out into the hall. When he did, he turned around and smiled again.

“Don’t throw my number away,” he said pointing to the box on the counter. “You never know when you may need it.”

Again, he flashed his gorgeous, charming smile with the dimple on his right cheek.

I shook my head. “I won’t.”

“It was nice to meet you,” he said.

The way he breathed the words and the seriousness in his gaze, I knew he spoke the truth. I cleared my throat and nodded. “Same to you.”

“Enjoy the rest of your day,” Ashton said.

“Thank you,” I said. “You do the same.”

He started down the hall, and I closed the door, leaning my back against it as I stared around my apartment. For now, that last box could wait. Meanwhile, I decided to start unpacking. But first, needed to move the box Ashton helped to carry in.

His number was scrawled onto the flap of the box. He had sloppy handwriting. I huffed and picked up the box, carrying it to the living room where it could stay for the time being. From there, I got started with unpacking the boxes in the kitchen.

I had a hot date with myself and my balcony later, and I wanted to get a decent chunk of the unpacking done before then. Hopefully without any further interruptions or distractions in the forms of men who were too cute for my own good.

ASHTON

I left Morgan to her unpacking and headed back to my place. I pulled a beer out of the fridge and leaned against my counter, running each second of our interaction through my mind. I was committing everything about her to memory. I wanted to remember this day for as long as possible.

Because I felt every cell in my body change. Every fiber of my being gravitated toward her. Even as I stood in my kitchen, staring at nothing, barely sipping my beer, I was pulled toward her.

I had heard of things happening like this. Just before finding a mate. But I had no idea it would be so wonderful and freeing. I felt like I was on a rollercoaster. Every inch of me wanted to go back to her and be in her warmth and her presence, but I also understood I had to play it cool.

Come off too eager and I would likely push her away. And I couldn't have that.

There was a tap at my door. I almost didn't hear it. I stared at the door and waited to see if the sound would happen again, just in case I imagined it at first.

Seconds later, the tap came just a little harder.

I smirked to myself, chalking the source of the sound as Morgan stopping by my place. She had to have felt the same things I did and wanted to be in my presence. Or she probably wanted to thank me again for helping her carry that box.

Sweet, beautiful, proud Morgan. She was real. And smelled beyond amazing.

“That didn’t take long at all,” I said to myself as I rubbed my hands together and started for my door.

I was so confident of who stood behind my door that I didn’t bother to peek through the peephole. Instead, I twisted the knob and pulled it open, stretching my lips into a wide smile.

But the second my eyes settled onto the faces of my two brothers, I frowned.

And then everything dawned on me. Morgan wouldn’t be standing on the other side of my door because I didn’t give her my apartment number. I gave her Clayton’s. If she showed up at all, it would be at his place. Not mine. At least, not anytime soon. And not until this whole game is over.

Because I was bound and determined to win. I refused to lose.

“What do you want?” I growled out.

“You left so rudely,” Clayton said and rolled his eyes. “And in the middle of an important discussion too.”

“We came to find out what happened,” Boston said, interjecting before Clayton’s sarcasm got him a punch in his face. “Judging by the smile you had on your face, you were expecting her and not us.”

“Which means you got started without us,” Clayton added.

I huffed and stood behind the door, allowing my brothers to file into my apartment and head toward the leather pullout sofa. It was situated in front of my large, flat screen TV complete with my gaming system. It was a bachelor’s wet dream of a system.

Surround sound, seventy-two-inch screen curved flat screen, and a comfortable leather recliner.

My little piece of paradise.

“Come on in,” I muttered.

While my brothers took a seat, I closed the door and then headed into the kitchen to grab a few bottles of brew from the fridge. When I approached the sofa, I passed each of my brothers a bottle and then took a seat in my matching recliner. The leather crinkled under my weight.

“Can we get on with this?” Clayton asked.

“Why?” I asked, feeling the sudden urge to drag this out longer. “Got a hot date waiting on you?”

He glared at me. It was hilarious. I chuckled then took a sip of my beer. “Fine. Let’s get started.”

“What have you already done?” Boston asked.

“Nothing really.” I shrugged and then took a sip of my beer.

“Bull shit,” Boston said. He dangled his bottle between his legs, dangling from the upper knuckle of his first two fingers. “We know you better than that, Ashton.”

“Don’t spill,” I warned him, pointing at the bottle. He didn’t often. But it had been known to happen from time to time, and I didn’t want to have my apartment smelling like a cheap bar. I liked to live a specific way, after all. And keeping my space clean and smelling good was part of that.

“I won’t,” Boston snapped. “Now out with it. What did you do?”

I huffed. “I helped her with a box. Are you happy? I also found out her name is Morgan. She’s in the apartment down the hall. Left a number and an apartment number. That was it.”

Clayton snorted. “Sure. We’ll go with that.”

I glared at him. “What is that supposed to mean? You know if you two just came here to bust my balls, you both can kick rocks right out my door.”

“It means,” Boston jumped in, “That we don’t think it’s fair of you to have a head start. Especially since we haven’t worked out all the details.”

I waved a hand between us. Who knew my brothers were so damned sensitive. “Fine. I’m sorry. Are you happy now?”

“No, but it’s a start,” Clayton muttered.

“Well, since I’ve already introduced myself, you both are going to have to pretend you are me.”

“Right,” Clayton said. “So where do we fit in with your plan?”

“Seems like we don’t,” Boston added then settled his glare on me.

I groaned. “I gave her my name, Clayton’s apartment number, and I also gave her Boston’s number.” I pointed to each of them as I said their name, while looking at the other.

“You lie,” Clayton said, dragging out the word.

I shrugged. “Sure. But you’ll find out soon enough. The first time she shows up at your door for a cup of sugar.”

“No, he’s right,” Boston said. “Otherwise, why would you expect her instead of us?”

“A lapse of memory,” I said flatly. “It was an honest mistake.”

“Sure,” both of my brothers said at the same time.

“Look, you can believe me, or you can choose not to. But like it or not, I met her first and so, in order for this to work, you will have to be me.”

“How generous of you,” Clayton muttered.

“Sarcasm, much?” I asked.

“This is a bad idea,” Boston said again. “We can’t even make it through five minutes of planning before there’s a breakdown.”

“Changing your mind again, brother?” I asked. I was trying to keep my frustration from eating at me, but it was harder than I gave it credit for. He was against this the most at first. Until he saw her. Once that happened, he was on board. Now that had suddenly changed.

Because we weren't getting along?

Boston. The saint.

Give me a fucking break.

I knocked back a large swig of my beer. Once I swallowed it down, I said, "Whatever. What's done is done. There's no going back."

"Moving on," Clayton said. "Let's cover the ground rules."

I chuckled. "First and foremost, we can't mate with her."

Boston, at the time I was speaking, was taking a swig of his beer and once I said mate, he started to choke.

Clayton and I stared at him.

"Sorry," he said. "But how do you suppose we not mate?"

I shook my head. "I don't really think I need to explain that to you, do I?"

His eyes darkened. "What if she wants to have sex?"

I ignored him.

"She can't be onto us," Clayton said, taking a page from my book. "Are we going off the idea that she's oblivious or just plain stupid?"

Look at that, I was wrong. I growled. "What differences in our appearances we do have are small and easily explained away."

Boston muttered into the mouth of his beer bottle, "So you think. But there is our answer. We're going to treat her like she's stupid."

"Or crazy," Clayton added.

I rolled my eyes. "Anyway, the first one she falls in love with wins."

"What exactly are we winning?" Clayton asked. "Bragging rights?"

"My thoughts exactly," Boston said. "Because, in the end, when this all comes out, it's likely the only thing we are going

to have.”

“Vanity points, for all I fucking care. And she’s not going to find out. So, he who wins gets to keep the girl.” I stood up and started pacing.

“All while pretending we’re you, huh?” Clayton asked. “You really haven’t thought this through, have you?”

I growled.

I wasn’t frustrated with my brothers. Not really. But I couldn’t tell them that. They both had brought up excellent points. Valid points. Things I failed to think about in the heat of the moment. All I saw was the unchecked challenge. This had to work.

It needed to.

Because my animal needed her and there was no way a girl like her would want to date three identical brothers.

“And if she finds out?” Boston asked.

I shook my head. “The gig is up, and no one wins.”

“But…” Clayton said, “if we are smart, she won’t find out. We have to work really hard to keep ourselves two steps ahead. But I’m thinking this just might work.”

Boston shook his head. “I still don’t like it, but this isn’t going to work without me, so fine. Whatever. I’m in. If only to see this blow up in your faces.”

I nodded. “Good.”

“But I do have a question,” Boston said, holding up a finger.

“Of course, you do,” Clayton muttered.

Ignoring our brother’s jab, he said, “What do we do if we bump into her in the hall? We live in the same building, on the same floor. We are going to bump into her at some point.”

“That’s why we will have to be smart and careful about this,” I said.

Clayton laughed. “We’re doomed. But I’m so in.”

“Fine,” I said and settled my gaze on Boston.

He huffed. “Fine.”

“Let the game begin,” I said with a wide smile stretching my lips. “And let the best man win.”

Of which, I fully intended to win.

MORGAN

A few days had passed since moving into my new place, and the last of the boxes had finally been unpacked.

That also meant I could finally be rid of all of them and start settling into my new space. Though I had worked on getting rid of them little by little, I still had a huge stack of them piled next to my door. Over the course of the past few days, I had taken several trips to the dumpster to get rid of the cardboard boxes. It was a tedious task and I figured I could tackle it as I went.

And every time I left the house, I grabbed a small stack of them.

But this time, I was ready to be done with it. So, I gathered up as many as I could carry at once and headed toward the community dumpsters. As I carried the now collapsed boxes, I thought about how odd it was I hadn't heard from Ashton since he insisted on helping me with carrying the one box up. I would have thought he would knock on my door almost daily with how insistent he was. At the very least, I half expected to bump into him on the way to the dumpsters... or even on the way out the door for my shift at work.

With how insistent he was, I figured I would have seen him at least once since then. But not seeing him wasn't a big deal. I was perfectly fine with doing things on my own. And it wasn't like I expected him to immediately be willing to help. But I wasn't planning to turn him down if he so happened to cross paths with me at any point.

Still, there was a part of me that was a tiny bit disappointed I hadn't seen him again. He was cute. My ovaries almost ached at the thought of him.

I kept reminding myself I needed to take my time and do things slowly. I wasn't, and shouldn't, be in a hurry. I also didn't need to jump at the first man to show me attention in such a long time. But it was so hard to hold myself back.

And it had been way too long since I had felt the touch of a man. Months, actually. Partly because every guy on my dating profile only wanted sex, and I needed something a bit deeper than just quick romp.

Still, Ashton was cute and met some of my requirements for the ideal guy.

Too bad... I could have used his help with all the boxes.

On the third and, thankfully, final trip to the dumpster, the box with the number on the flap caught my attention. It had fallen out of the stack like a cosmic reminder of what was written on it, and I had promised not to lose it.

I paused with throwing boxes into the giant, green dumpster as the digits and apartment number stared back at me. It occurred to me that the ball might have been placed in my court. After all, he had made the first move, and I had been waiting all this time for something that was probably never going to come. Maybe he was waiting on me to make the next move?

I tore off the flap and carried it back with me to my apartment. As I held the thing under my arm, I thought about what I would say to him when I called, but all I could think about was the dream I had had the first night following our initial meeting and how real it felt.

He had come into my apartment late at night. Darkness as thick as ink had filled my home. The only light came from the streetlights outside, bleeding through the slats covering the sliding glass window filling my far wall. He lurked among the shadows, hunched over, somewhat low to the ground. As he drew closer to me, I noticed he wasn't hunched over as I had

initially assumed but was somehow in the shape of a shadowy animal. A large black wolf with glowing silver eyes.

I marveled at the way his form floated over the floor, closer to me. It was almost as if he walked on the air, hovering just inches above the carpet. And each step he took didn't even make a sound.

But as he drew closer, his shape started to change, becoming his handsome self again. He didn't stop moving until he hovered enticingly over my sex. My pajamas were no longer on my body and folded neatly over the back of my couch situated just a foot in front of my bed.

His tongue slipped out of his mouth, stretching to an ungodly length, gliding out from between his lips as he lowered his head to barely an inch above my swollen mound. Heat washed over me in waves with every hot breath he blew on me.

I shuddered as the heat cooled along my skin.

Then, ever so slowly and gently, he slid his engorged tongue in between my delicate folds, brushing along my sensitive clit in one smooth motion.

A gasp rushed from my mouth as I braced for another lick.

His fingers dug into my hips as he continued to delight my senses with the way he brought me to the edge of an orgasm. The way he devoured my sex was as though it was the greatest delicacy he had ever tasted and simply wanted to savor every single second of the flavor I offered him.

A moan echoed from my lips as my sex throbbed against the movements of his mouth. I was on the cusp. I teetered delicately on the brink of an orgasm, when he pulled away from my sex.

He chuckled in response to my questioning gaze. His words came out deep and in a purr. "Not yet, my sweet."

He disappeared, and I woke from the dream, still teetering on the edge of my orgasm. So, I quickly pulled out my oral sex toy from my nightstand drawer and applied a liberal amount of lube I kept next to it.

Once I pushed the power button, I held the motorized flicking tongue against my sex and let it do all the work. My thighs started to quake within seconds and just as expected, my orgasm came in a rush. I quaked against the mechanical vibrations as I grunted and writhed, coming hard. I didn't turn the power off on the toy until the sensations had completely faded.

I tossed the toy to my side and stared up at the darkened ceiling of my studio apartment, catching my breath even though I was still left unsatisfied.

Sadly, such was how masturbation had been as of late. And I also realized my dildo wasn't going to do the trick either. I had tried that route before, and it was only more of the same. Though it was a release, it wasn't enough of one to ease the ache or keep the frustration at bay.

My body craved the real thing. My body ached for the touch of a man, and I was rapidly getting to the point where doing myself wasn't taking the edge off anymore.

I desperately needed to get laid.

After blowing a raspberry and cleaning myself and my toy up, I wrapped myself back in my covers and struggled with sleeping for the rest of the night.

Needless to say, I was exhausted most of the following day. It was a good thing I had the day off.

Ever since then, the dream was never far from my mind. It was so vivid. So real. So... weird. I had never been affected by a dream so deeply before. Not like this.

Once I had made it back to my apartment, I took a seat on the couch, set the cardboard flap on my coffee table, and stared at the number scrawled onto the surface.

I might still be teetering on desperation when it came to sex, but my deep desire still didn't mean I needed to fall for the first man who showed me interest either. I had standards. Albeit they were getting lower and lower as my hormones continued to rage unchecked.

"Focus, Morgan," I said to myself. "You can do this."

I needed a reason to call. More than just to say thank you days later. That would seem underhanded in a way. At least, it would if it happened to me. I needed a better reason. A better excuse.

A breeze from the opened sliding glass door to my right blew into my apartment, shuffling papers throughout. A scraping sound came from my kitchen, drawing my attention. I turned my sight onto the pair of tickets to the Rockies game on Friday. They were tacked to my fridge, held up by a magnetic bag clip.

I still didn't have anyone to go with. Everyone I was acquainted with had dates or was involved with someone who wouldn't care too much about me taking their partner to a game. I wasn't about to give up on the game either. So, giving away my tickets wasn't an option.

I would go alone before I did something so defeatist.

And though giving the option wasn't entirely off the table, I figured it would be a waste if I didn't at least make an attempt to ask.

What would I say though?

I instantly thought about how he rushed to my aid and helped me out when he really didn't need to. Though I suspected there was something behind all of his actions, it was still a nice gesture. A neighborly thing to do.

So, I was going to go with a token of gratitude.

Yeah. That was it.

Now I needed to work up the courage to pick up the phone and dial the number.

My heart was in my throat as I picked up my phone from the coffee table. My fingers shook as I reached for the cardboard flap still sitting next to my phone. I held my breath as I slowly typed in each number.

I double-checked and triple-checked the number before hitting the call button.

The line started to ring.

BOSTON

I had just climbed out of the shower and was still dripping wet when I heard my phone ringing from the living room.

With a towel wrapped around my waist, I approached the thing and stared at the number, contemplating whether or not to answer the call. I didn't recognize the digits flashing on the screen, but not knowing the number really didn't mean anything. Not when it came to my job anyway.

Though unknown to me numbers didn't call my phone all the time, it happened often enough for it not to be entirely unusual. I worked as a nurse at the local hospital, and we were at the time of year when all of us were on mandatory on-call status. Never mind I had made it home from my regular twelve-hour shift less than two hours ago. I really didn't want to pick up another shift.

With that being said, I occasionally received calls from numbers I didn't know. Usually from other nurses needing me to pick up their shift or asking for clarification on some sort of note in a patient's chart.

And it was because of the chance it was someone from work, I answered the phone.

"Hello," I said. My generic greeting came out flat and gruff. If it was someone asking me to take their shift, I wanted them to understand how extremely unlikely it was for me to work a minute longer than I already had. I was tired, and I didn't want to work someone else's shift.

I needed sleep. A little rest. A few hours to myself at the bare minimum.

“Uh, hey, Ashton,” a woman’s voice said on the other end of the line. She sounded nervous as she stammered. “This is Morgan, your new neighbor.”

I opened my mouth to tell her she had the wrong number, but then her name registered, and I slammed my mouth shut before I said a single syllable and cleared my throat. Everything suddenly seemed so much clearer than before. And my heart raced at the thought of talking to her. Moreso at the sound of her voice.

Not to mention my utter shock and surprise at the fact Ashton wasn’t lying about giving my number to her.

“Oh, hey, Morgan,” I said, stumbling over my words a little and cleared my throat again. “Uh... how are you?”

I took a seat on my sofa and leaned back as she sucked in a breath to answer my question.

“I’m doing pretty well, thanks for asking,” she said.

I sat back, sinking into the sofa. God, her voice was like honey. So sweet. I wanted to close my eyes and lean into the sound of her voice, swim in the melody forever. So soothing and warm. Like a blanket.

“How are you?” she asked.

“I’m doing all right, myself,” I said, peeling my eyes open. The ceiling was plain and lackluster in comparison to her voice. The richest of colors wouldn’t compare. Besides, if I kept my eyes closed for too long, I would end up falling asleep on the call. That would have been rude. “I’m tired. Had a long night.”

“Well, it’s awesome that you are doing all right,” she said. “But it sucks about the tired part.”

I shrugged to myself. “Eh, it’s part of the gig. Did you finally finish moving in and settling into the new place?”

She chuckled softly over the phone. “For the most part. Actually, it’s about that I called. I wanted to say thanks again

for the help.”

“Think nothing of it,” I said, trying to keep the elation out of my voice. I didn’t want to sound too excited about talking to her. That might scare her away and ruin everything. Instead, I was trying to play this cool. “Helping out was the right thing to do.”

“Still, you didn’t have to, and I appreciate it,” she said.

I chuckled. “You’re welcome.”

“So…” she said, dragging out the word. “On that note, I was wondering if you had any plans this Friday.”

“That all depends,” I said, a playful tone teasing my voice. “What did you have in mind?”

“Well, I have two tickets for the Rockies game, and I was wondering if you might want to go with me as a token of gratitude for helping me.”

Jesus Christ, talk about one hell of a way to say thanks. It wasn’t like Ashton moved a couch or anything like that. He moved a box. As in one. And this was how she wanted to show her thanks? But I hated baseball. Clayton, however, not only loved baseball but was a huge fan of the Rockies.

“Give me a minute,” I said. “I want to check my schedule real quick.”

“Sure. No worries,” she said. There was a hitch of hope in her voice and I really hated the idea that I was going to pass on the first opportunity to take Morgan out.

I put the call on speaker and then sent Clayton a text.

“You have a date Friday,” I said.

“Oh yeah?” he replied almost instantly. “With who?”

“Morgan,” I replied. “Rockies game.”

“No shit?” he asked. “What time?”

To Morgan, I asked, “What time is the game?”

“It starts at seven, but I thought we would arrive a little early so we could grab a hot dog and beer from the

concessions.”

“You’re a beer lady?” I asked, trying to keep the surprise from my voice.

She chuckled. “Is there anything that goes better with a ball game?”

I would have to take her word on that one. Still, I figured Clayton would agree with her, so I said, “No. I can’t say that there is.”

She chuckled. “Awesome.”

“So, meet up at your place at six?” I asked.

“Sounds perfect,” she said. “And wear your gear, if you have any.”

“Wonderful,” I said. “Let me just check a couple more places to make sure there aren’t any conflicts.”

“No worries,” she said, sounding perky. “I’m not in a hurry.”

I chuckled. “That’s good to know.”

I texted Clayton, “Meet up at six at her place. The game starts at seven. Going early for hotdogs and beers.”

“Shit, yes!” he said.

That was confirmation enough for me.

“Sounds like a date to me,” I said to Morgan.

She gave a breathy, “Fantastic.”

“Thank you,” I said. “For the offer.”

“Truth be told, I had two tickets for a while and nobody else can go with me. I didn’t want the other ticket to go to waste and figured it was a great way to show my gratitude.”

“Well, it’s their loss and my gain,” I said. Really, it was Clayton’s. I still hated baseball, and there was nothing anyone could do to change my mind. Of the three of us, he was fan enough.

“And my gain as well,” she said. “Cause now I have a hot date.”

I chuckled and bit my fist. Flirting wasn't my strong suit. But I could fake it good enough. “Careful, I might have an inflated ego.”

She laughed. “Something tells me you don't really need help in that department.”

Oh, if she only knew who she was really speaking to. But considering her only experience was with Ashton, I had to agree. He had the largest ego out of the three of us. “Nope. Not at all. But I appreciate the compliment.”

“You are very welcome,” she said.

“So, now I have a question for you,” I said.

“Lay it on me,” she said.

Damn. Did she know what she was saying and how it was affecting me? Probably not. But damn if the things she said didn't make my dick hard.

I cleared my throat and adjusted how I was sitting. “What took you so long to call?”

“I don't know, honestly,” she said. “I just lost track of time.”

“Fair enough,” I said.

“You don't sound how I thought you would on the phone,” she said.

I quirked an eyebrow. “Is that so? How did you think I was going to sound?”

“I don't know, really,” she said. “It's hard to explain. Closer to the voice you have in person, I guess.”

“Was there anything else you wanted to talk about?” I asked. “I got home not too long ago and had worked a really long shift, so I would like to get some sleep.”

“Nope, I'm finished,” she said. “I hope you sleep well, and I'll see you on Friday.”

I kicked myself as a pang of jealousy rocked through my core. It wasn't going to be me she would see, but my identical brother, Clayton. Still, to keep up with pretenses, I said, "Can't wait."

And knowing Clayton, he really couldn't.

We hung up the phone and I noticed a waiting message from Clayton. "Shit, I don't think I can get the time off. Not this late"

"Can't you switch shifts with someone?" I asked.

"Maybe," he sent back minutes later.

I sighed and typed back. "Good luck. I'm going to bed."

I didn't bother to wait for a response. I was exhausted and turned off my volume so I could get a few hours of uninterrupted sleep. Besides, I was sure he would figure it out. He was far too competitive to let someone else knock him out of the game. And the date had to do with his favorite team? Plus, the woman we were all competing for?

There was no way in hell he was going to miss out on this opportunity.

One way or another, Clayton would make damn sure he showed up. I was certain.

MORGAN

I hung up the phone and jumped up from my seat. A squeal escaped from me as I did a little dance.

In my head, I screamed, “He said yes! He said yes! He said yes!”

I kept repeating those words over and over in my head. The feeling of elation continued to bubble through me. He could have said no. He could have told me he hated baseball and saved me the effort.

Hell, he could have told me to go jump off a bridge, though that really would have been one hell of an overreaction.

But, thankfully, he didn’t. He was just as sweet and kind as he was before.

And he said yes!

A boy—well, a man—Said YES. To me!

I had a date. On Friday. And though asking him to the game didn’t start off with the intention of it being a date, he had said it was a date!

This was a momentous occasion for me. And it was one I had to share and celebrate.

I pulled up my contacts on my phone and scrolled to Olivia’s. I tapped on the camera icon to video call her and waited for the line to connect. On the third chime, her beautiful, glowing face filled my phone screen.

“Hey, what’s up?” she asked with a smile.

“Eh, I’ve been busy. And it looks like you have too,” I said. Sitting on the table in front of her were stacks of fabric samples.

“Sort of,” she said. “Picking out linens. Do you think? Champagne and blush or pink and gold?”

She held up each option side by side. Both of them were close to each other. They were colors that worked well together, but as I stared at the options, given the discrepancy in my phone’s ability to detail color appropriately, I saw yet another option.

“Well, you could put the Champagne and the gold together,” I said.

She shook her head. “It makes it too monochromatic.”

She placed the two pieces of cloth together and I understood exactly how bad a whole room would be bathed in those two very similar colors and nodded. It would be too much. Eye sore didn’t even come close to describing the image in my mind.

“Yikes, you’re right. That wouldn’t look very pretty at all.”

“So…” she said dragging out the word, holding each one of her original options up in the camera’s view. “What do you think?”

“Champagne,” I said. “Definitely.”

“Yeah, I like that too,” she said, sounding almost distant. She dropped the samples somewhere outside of the camera’s view, shook her head, and then focused on me. “Anyway, how’s it going? Are you liking the new place?”

A smile stretched my lips as a soft sigh flowed between them. “Things are going rather well, truth be told. And yes, I love the place. It’s cozy and feels like home already.”

“That’s so awesome,” Olivia said with a smile. “I’m happy it’s working out for you.”

“Oh, there is more. So much more...” I said, dragging out the news for a few seconds longer.

Olivia’s eyes narrowed in on me as she brought her phone closer to her face. “Do share.”

With a giggle, I said, “I met someone.”

Her eyes widened. “Shut up. No, you didn’t.”

I nodded. “Yup! And we just so happen to have a date this Friday.”

Her blue eyes widened as she brought the phone closer to her face. “Tell me everything.”

I stepped out onto my patio and took a seat at the table where we had a large number of our girl talks. As soon as I took a seat, I propped my phone against the candle situated in the center of the table.

It was so natural to sit on the patio and have this talk with her. Since she moved in with her new fiancé, our Monday night hangouts were a thing of the past. And I missed them dearly. So, it seemed only right to share the big news, albeit over a video chat, on my patio... as close to old times as I was going to get.

A new hope blossomed in my chest.

With luck, things like this could be the new normal. After all, just because she’s moved out, planning a wedding, and preparing for a new baby, that didn’t mean our friendship had to stop. Nor did our rituals, right?

There was only one way to find out.

Once I was situated in my patio chair, I dug into my tale.

“So, his name is Ashton. He’s athletic and tall and cute...”

“Details, woman,” Olivia said.

I laughed. “He’s tall. Dark hair, gorgeous amber eyes.”

“I’m assuming, muscular since you mentioned him being athletic,” Olivia added. The background behind her shifted and moved and I realized she was moving to a more comfortable

spot too. Eventually, she sat on a plush, white sofa. It struck me as one that was as soft as a cloud.

I nodded. “Yes.”

“What else?” she asked.

“He has a dimple,” I said.

“A as in only one?” she asked. Her black eyebrows drew closer to themselves as though she was having a hard time conjuring the image I was describing to her.

I nodded slowly. “On his right cheek.”

“Sounds dreamy... almost like your perfect guy,” she said.

“Almost,” I breathed out.

“So, what are you guys going to do?” she asked. “For your date, I mean.”

“I’m taking him to the Rockies game,” I said.

She squealed. “No way! He loves baseball too? I can hear the wedding bells already.”

I laughed. “Those belong to you, honey. Besides, I’m not in a hurry. I’m content with how things are right now, and I don’t want to rush into something that might not be forever.”

“Nothing is guaranteed,” Olivia said.

“That is true,” I said. “And easy for someone like you to say.”

She playfully pretended to be offended. “Whatever do you mean? I have no idea what you are talking about. I’m just a poor girl living in a rich world, same as you!”

“Play coy all you want to Miss. But you’re practically the poster child for Cinderella, except you don’t have the wicked stepmom and sisters.”

She cocked her head to the side and thought about what I said. Eventually, she shrugged. “I guess I can see that. But eh, it’s not all glamorous.”

“Trouble in paradise?” I asked as a pinch entered my forehead.

She quickly shook her head. “No, no. Nothing like that. Things with Milo are amazing and he’s so doting... but he can be a bit overprotective.”

The camera moved to the image of a man dressed in an all-black business suit. He looked like a bear who would maul me as soon as he looked at me. Then his eyes drifted to the phone, and he nodded once.

“This is Gerald,” Olivia said. “Say hi, Gerald.”

He nodded once again. “Hello.”

His voice was deep and burly.

“Hello,” I said, waving.

The camera moved and settled on Olivia’s beautiful features. “Need I say more.”

“What does he think is going to happen?” I asked.

She shrugged. “I have no clue. But he sees it as a necessary precaution.”

“Wow,” I said. “Does Milo have a single brother?”

Olivia laughed. “Nope.”

“Damn,” I said and snapped my fingers.

“I thought you were excited about your date with Ashton?” she asked.

I shrugged. “I’m keeping my options open.”

We shared a laugh. It felt amazing. Normal. Almost like old times. And it all made me realize how much I missed having her around.

“I miss this,” she said.

“Funny, I was just thinking the same thing,” I said.

“We should meet up for lunch at least. Hang out for a couple of hours? Maybe even go shopping?” Her blue eyes brightened.

I nodded as a smile stretched my lips. “You had me at lunch and shopping.”

“Perfect,” she said. “Seriously though, I’m super excited for you and I truly hope things work out. You deserve to be happy and loved.”

I smiled as my heart fluttered. “Awe. Thank you. You’re so sweet.”

“It’s the truth,” she said. “I don’t know what I would have done without you. And you are so giving and caring. You sacrifice your own happiness for the good of others. I think it’s high time you get a return.”

“Thank you,” I said. “I’m ready for some happiness of my own. Not that helping others doesn’t bring me happiness.”

“I know,” she said. “Still, I figured it needed to be said. Hopefully, it will jog something free in the Universe and come to you.”

I shrugged. “I hope so.”

“It would be so much fun to start doing double dates, don’t you think?” she asked.

I nodded. “That sounds like a ton of fun.”

Gerald said something in the background. Pulling Olivia’s attention. She nodded then settled her gaze back on me. “I have to go. When can we meet up next week?”

“I’ll call you and let you know,” I said. “I’m not sure what my schedule looks like yet.”

“Well hurry up and let me know. Do it soon because I was serious about our lunch date,” she said. “I want to hear all about how the date goes too.”

I giggled. “I wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

“You better not,” she said.

We blew each other a kiss and then ended the call. I stared out over the courtyard from my seat on my patio and smiled to myself. The sun poked through some of the clouds that had filled the sky, instantly warming my skin.

I sighed.

Double dates, dinner gatherings... those were the things that I started finding myself daydreaming about. Even if only in my head, I wanted that for myself.

CLAYTON

As I wove in and out of traffic, I cursed Boston with every foul word I could think of. Considering who I was, there weren't many words I wasn't familiar with. Regardless, I fought against time to make it to my date.

With luck, and there was very little of that judging by how my day was going, I would have barely enough time to make it home, shower, and be dressed and ready for my so-called date with nothing but a few seconds left to spare.

The only thing that made this whole night easier was the idea of seeing Morgan, getting to know her a little better, and going to the ball game. And I didn't want to be a second late for it. And that meant, the pressure was on.

So, yeah. She was worth rushing home for. But not because of the bet. At least, that was what I told myself. In truth, the bet was a large part of the rush, but the whole idea of seeing the most beautiful woman I had ever laid my eyes on was most of my rush.

Never mind the time.

Still, there was a small part of me that didn't understand why Boston or Ashton couldn't go with the girl. I had a job. One where I had a set schedule. Sure, Boston worked twelve-hour shifts. That sucked for him. I, however, had a non-salary job where if I didn't show up to my regularly scheduled shift, I would be without a job and the money I needed to pay my bills.

Thank God for people like Bob. Bob was a loner. He lived alone. Didn't date anyone. Had no social life or friends from the sounds of it. He practically lived at the call center. At least, he spent a large majority of his time there.

He lived, breathed, ate, and slept in the call center life. It was his bread and butter, and I loved that about him.

If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be making it to the game or my date with Morgan. I would be forced to cancel at the last minute or risk Ashton going in my place. Boston hated sports and wouldn't go near baseball with a ten-foot pole.

I couldn't stand the thought of Ashton getting to her before I had the chance to wipe that smug expression from his face. Not that I was planning on breaking any rules, but I certainly wasn't planning on letting him win.

Not this time.

Never mind, she deserved so much better than me and my brothers. She was beautiful. So beautiful. And from the sounds of her, she was one of the best people this world had.

I pulled into my parking spot and killed the engine of my car. I stared up at the building and huffed. This thing... this whole charade was going to end exceptionally badly. And the worst part about all of it was, Morgan was the one who was going to be hurt the worst.

Because I and my brothers were too damned competitive. In every aspect of our life, it seemed. Normally no one got hurt. Well, mostly. But the emotional damage coming from this game... it spelled disaster.

Ashton would say all was fair in love and war. But the innocent was always the one to pay the price.

Maybe there was a way to salvage this whole thing and do it the right way?

There was only one way to find out and sitting behind the wheel in my car wasn't helping me to do that. With a heavy sigh, I climbed out and rushed upstairs, taking the back entrance to lessen the likelihood of bumping into the woman.

Once I was inside my apartment, I slammed the door closed, flipped the lock, and as I made my way to the bathroom, I pulled clothes off, creating a path of discarded items. I flipped the shower on and headed toward my closet to pull out my jersey and a pair of jeans.

After my shower, I tossed on my clothes and ran some mousse through my hair. I knew she would be waiting on me and didn't want to miss the first pitch, so I did a quick breath check, rinsed my mouth with my mouthwash, and then headed out the door.

Right when I was about to knock on her door, she stepped out and greeted me with a smile. "Hey! You're right on time."

I gaped at her as she moved.

She was dressed to the nines in Rockies gear. Including a baseball cap. And she was even more beautiful than I was able to recall. Memories didn't do justice to what she was really like in person. Her dark brown hair was pulled back, through the hole in the back of the cap. The purple color brought out the different shades of brown in her eyes. And her smile...

I had never seen anything so beautiful.

"Hi," I breathed out.

"Are you ready?" she asked, soft brown eyes twinkling in the light in the hallway.

I nodded and cleared my throat. "Yes. I am."

She did a double take and a small crease appeared between her eyebrows, but she stepped out of her apartment, closed the door, and turned the locks. When she faced me again, she was smiling even more beautifully. "Follow me."

"Don't mind if I do," I said.

She giggled under her breath. "I'm really glad you were able to show up. I know it was sort of last minute with my asking."

As we headed toward her car, I said, "I am happy you did. It's nice to see you all geared up for the game."

“You can’t be a fan and go without the essentials,” she said, gesturing to her getup. “It’s bad luck.”

I chuckled. “Yes, it is.”

We stepped outside as a breeze blew her scent into me. I breathed it in deeply. My animal stretched against me, damn near ripping through me to reach her. To be with her. To claim her so nobody else could have her.

She not only smelled amazing, but her scent struck me as a mate. Like home. Like someone I wasn’t going to be able to live without.

It was strange all of that came to me in the smallest, briefest sniff of her scent.

I might have made an agreement with my brothers, but no one mentioned how difficult it was going to be to uphold it.

“Don’t mate,” Ashton said.

Screw him. He couldn’t have possibly thought about what I was going to go through once I was this close to her. The things happening inside me were unexpected. They were also chemical and automatic.

Oh, how I wanted to punch both of my brothers in their smug faces. Because one thing had become abundantly clear to me, and that was the likely chance we had bitten off more than we could chew with this game of ours.

I didn’t want to know what the aftermath would look like. It was going to be bad. That much was for certain, and that was all I needed to know.

I fell into my thoughts as we climbed into her car and started heading toward the stadium. I had been so lost in my thoughts that I almost didn’t register Morgan trying to speak to me.

“Is everything okay?” she asked.

I blinked away my thoughts and settled my attention on her. “I’m sorry, what?”

She smiled. “Is everything okay? You seem bothered by something. Perhaps, lost in thought.”

I shook my head and tried to shrug off the apparent irritation I was under. “No. Sorry. I had a long day at work. And I hadn’t had a chance to decompress yet.”

“Oh, I can understand that one,” she said. “So, what is it that you do for work?”

“Customer Service, call center, mostly,” I said. “You?”

“I’m in administration,” she said. “Though I don’t deal with customers directly a good majority of the time, I do tend to deal with some unruly clients and fellow employees. It can wear on the nerves quite a bit.”

“Tell me about it,” I said, agreeing with her sentiment. “I apologize though. I wasn’t trying to give you the impression that I was checked out.”

She shrugged. “It’s okay. It’s Friday and it’s been a long week for me too.”

I nodded. “It’s more than a long week. I have a lot on my mind, too. I’m processing. It is still an inappropriate time to do so. But thank you for understanding. You have no idea how refreshing that is.”

“Oh, but I do,” she said as we pulled into a parking spot. “And process away. Mental health doesn’t wait for the right time. Processing has to happen when it happens. Far be it by me to judge.”

I smiled and looked out the window. This woman was too amazing and wonderful to be real. It was a crying shame we hadn’t met under different circumstances.

“Are you ready to head inside and fill up on horrible hotdogs and watered-down beer?” she asked.

I settled my gaze back on her. “Did you just insult the great American ritual?”

She laughed. “Absolutely not.”

I laughed. “I’m ready when you are.”

“Fantastic,” she said with a wide smile. “Let’s go.”

Well into the fourth inning, the jumbotron featured all the lovely couples throughout the area. They called it the Kiss Cam. It was a way to add a bit of humor to a tense game. And believe me when Rockies fans can be a lot tense.

The Cam landed on me and Morgan. I pointed up at the screen. “What do you think?”

She followed where I pointed, smiled, and shrugged. “Sure, why not?”

I leaned in for the kiss and the second my lips brushed against her soft ones I realized I had made a serious mistake. Because one kiss wasn’t enough. One kiss could never be enough. That single kiss caused a stir in me. A hunger I had never known before.

I needed more.

I needed her.

MORGAN

I never thought, in a million years, that I would ever appear on the Jumbotron's Kiss Cam.

Not once.

But had I ever wished for it?

Absolutely.

So, when Ashton asked me to kiss him, I figured, why the hell not? The whole event didn't entirely match up with the image I had held dearly in my head, but it was as good as any. Besides, I was surprised he even wanted to kiss me in front of all these people after just having met me barely a week before.

When his lips brushed against mine, my nerves were set on fire.

I considered myself to be one of the Rockies' biggest fans, but when his lips brushed against mine the only thing I could think of was to kiss him some more. The game didn't even register. I chewed on my bottom lip, fighting against the urge until he twisted to face me.

"You want to get out of her and go somewhere more private?" His honey eyes met mine.

I sucked in a breath. They were beautiful, but I thought they were more amber before. The more I looked into them, the more I was convinced they were somehow different. But, then again, maybe the lighting in the stadium was to blame. I chalked the difference in color to that and nodded. "Yes, please."

He stood up, reaching for my hand and we headed out of the stadium less than ten minutes after appearing on the Kiss Cam.

Once we made it back to my car, he pushed me against the door and planted a deeper kiss on me. His hands encompassed the sides of my face and the tips of his fingers dug into the back of my head.

His tongue danced along mine and my body damn near erupted.

A wet flood washed between my legs as my arousal kicked up. My body was eager for the touch of a man, and I knew it had been a long time coming. But the response my body gave was over the top and hard to ignore.

A soft moan escaped me from between our interlocked lips and Ashton pulled back, eyes darkened. “We should probably go.”

I nodded, breathlessly.

He opened the passenger’s side door. “I’ll drive.”

He held out his hand for the keys and held the door open with the other. I smiled and pulled out the key, placing it into his hand seconds before climbing into the passenger seat. Once I was all situated and buckled in, Ashton climbed in behind the wheel and slid the key into the ignition.

With the twist of his wrist, my car’s engine roared to life. I stared at him as the car moved. I wanted to know what was going through his head. What it was about him that had me willing to throw myself at his feet, and what was it about him that was so different from the version of him I met a week before?

He seemed different.

Then again, that probably could be said of me as well.

And it was such a brief encounter, I truly didn’t have much to go off of or even a leg to stand on when it came to his character. I wasn’t exactly paying attention that damn closely.

Before I realized it, he turned off the engine and leaned in closer, giving me another deep, long kiss.

“We should go inside,” he whispered, deep and low, sending chills along my skin.

I nodded, breathless.

Minutes later, we were in my apartment. We barely made it through the door before we were ripping clothes off each other. I wasn't even sure the door had been closed and locked securely by the time my bare ass sat on the bed.

Ashton brushed my hair over my shoulder, tickling me with the movement. He stood back and stared at my naked body, appraising every inch and curve of my frame while I did the same to him, appreciating the valleys of his muscles and the girth of his massive erection.

“You're so beautiful,” I muttered.

He chuckled. “Shouldn't I be the one saying that to you?”

I shrugged. “I beat you to it.”

He held onto his smile, and I thought for sure he had a dimple on his right cheek. It was the first thing I had noticed about him when we first met. But it wasn't there anymore. I didn't know much about dimples, but I was pretty sure they didn't come and go.

Regardless, I chalked it up to me not paying that much attention to everything in the first place and pushed the thoughts aside.

Ashton closed the gap between us, pushing me back onto the mattress as he devoured my mouth with his seductive kissing.

I expected him to ravish me as quickly as he could. We were so anxious to get back to my place that it seemed like every second took an eternity. All the while, we were driving ourselves crazy with the anticipation of what was promised to be not only a delicious release but a moment of pure satisfaction.

And yet, Ashton didn't rush.

From the second my back hit my mattress, he slowed and moved with a more determined purpose.

His lips left mine to plant kisses on my chin, along my jawline, down the side of my neck, and along my collarbone, only to move to the other side following the same path in reverse until he found my lips again.

The kiss stole my breath away.

Warmth flooded through my body, and I felt as though I was floating on a cloud. I was weightless, surrounded by the heat of our shared passion.

Ashton's mouth pulled away from mine and hovered near my ear. His hot breath forced a chill through me as he whispered, "What would you like for me to do to you?"

A gush erupted between my legs. I bit my lip as he pulled away enough to meet my waiting gaze.

"Well?" he asked.

I thought about the dream. I was curious if the real thing would live up to my expectations. My lips pulled into a wide curve as I said, "Eat me."

He chuckled darkly. "My dear, I thought you would never ask."

"I guess it's a good thing I didn't ask," I said.

He chuckled a little more. "Fair enough."

I stared as he licked his lips, setting his gaze on my large, round breasts. He placed a peck on each before taking in a nipple. He sucked and nibbled on the tip, forcing my arousal to increase. Minutes later, he moved to the other to do more of the same.

Once my nipples were exceptionally hard, he proceeded to slide down my body, planting kisses in a path that led to my voluptuous mound. He breathed in deeply and almost growled possessively.

"You have such a delectable scent," he murmured.

"I hope the taste is just the same," I said.

He settled his darkened gaze on mine. “Only one way to find out.”

He buried his face into my warmth, sliding his tongue between my delicate folds until he found my sensitive clit. He flicked it with the tip of his tongue. My legs quaked and I sucked in a shuddering breath.

“Perfect,” he murmured and wrapped his arms around my legs as he dug in.

Though my dream wasn't quite lining up with the real thing, I was happy to discover that the real thing was so much more satisfying.

The way he moved his tongue along my sex, dipping into my entrance and sucking on my clit, was spectacular. I had never experienced a method quite like Ashton's, and I had to say he was definitely in the number one spot.

Pressure built between my hips as my orgasm started to build. I knew it wasn't going to be long before I exploded into his mouth, and I couldn't wait to flood his face with my fluids.

And just when I was about to burst...

Ashton pulled away.

I glared at him. “What are you doing?”

He chuckled. “You didn't think I was going to make it that easy on you, did you?”

I narrowed my gaze. “You are a cruel, cruel man.”

He laughed. And as he spoke, he slowly climbed up my body. “Maybe. But I am also a patient one. One who likes to take his time, and prolong the pleasure for as long as possible. And when you are on the edge of losing control, when you have had enough and can't take it any longer... then and only then is when I will show mercy.

I groaned. But truth be told, I loved the idea. And it showed too. Because my smile had yet to leave my face.

“Yes, but you also are in love with the idea,” he said.

I shrugged and dragged my nails along the muscles covering his arms. “I might and might not.”

His chuckle forced goosebumps to prickle along my skin. “Trust me, you’ll be screaming before I’m done with you.”

“Shut up and show me,” I said, emboldened by my desire.

He smiled at me, and a chuckle bounced in his throat. He pecked my nose just before lowering himself back to my sex where he proceeded to lick every inch of my sex and sucked every ounce of my fluids.

He slid a finger inside me. Seconds later, he inserted another. He slowly pushed them deeper inside me as he continued to lick and nibble my clit. The sharpness of his teeth delighted my senses and created a whirlpool of sensations, rotating through me.

I moaned and sighed and wiggled beneath him. The ache inside me wanted to be released. I could almost taste the orgasm building inside me. So sweet. So tantalizing.

My body tensed.

My orgasm was about to start.

Ashton pulled his fingers from me and sat up at the very last second. Right before my climax flooded through my system.

The pressure inside me subsided slightly and I gripped a handful of comforter in my hands.

“Stop, stopping!” I growled out.

Ashton cocked his head to the side. “You actually want this, don’t you?”

I nodded. “Yes. I really, really want this.”

“How badly?” he asked with a curious tone in his words.

“More than I have words to describe,” I said.

He chuckled. “Interesting.”

“Give it to me,” I said.

“Beg for it,” he said.

I leveled my gaze on his. “No.”

He leaned in closer, sticking his tongue out as he lowered himself to my sex again. One lick and my legs nearly clamped his head between them. He chuckled as he pushed them to either side of him. “I think your body disagrees.”

“My body is confused,” I said.

“Is it now?” he asked, teasingly.

I nodded. “Yep.”

He licked me again and I sucked in a breath.

Admittedly, my resolve was weakening. What resolve I had to start with anyway. I didn’t have much to start with.

“Beg for me,” he cooed.

“Never,” I said as I started to writhe beneath him.

One more lick and I gasped. “Please! Please! Please!”

“That’s my girl,” he said and went to town on my needy pussy.

His tongue danced along my clit as his fingers pushed inside me. And within seconds, I came hard. Harder than I ever had in my life. I wiggled beneath him as I clung to the comforters, curling into myself as wave upon wave of pleasure rocketed through me.

It was the longest orgasm I had ever had in my entire life. And as it started to fade, Ashton lifted himself up, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and smiled at me. “That was beautiful.”

“You’re telling me,” I panted out.

“Round two,” he said and pressed the tip of his erection at my entrance. He braced himself over me, resting on his upper body on his forearms as his eyes held mine.

For a few seconds, he had gotten caught up in my eyes. And I knew that because it was the same for me. Having found whatever he was searching for, he huffed and said, “You’re very beautiful, Morgan. Inside and out.”

“Thank you,” I said with a smile.

He shook his head. “No. Thank you.”

He planted a kiss on my mouth, filling me with a little of what I had given him as his dick slid inside me, filling me entirely. Pressure and pain filled my center as he pushed himself all the way inside me, fully seating himself in what room I had to fit him in.

I widened my legs, allowing him access to every inch of my sex.

He adjusted himself slightly and then started to move, slowly, sweetly, passionately. There was so much feeling and effort put into it that this was exactly what I had always thought of as making love.

I wrapped my arms around him and held him close. His fingers became wrapped around strands of my hair. He tightened his fist, forcing my head back and kissed me.

Another orgasm started to build, and part of me wondered if he was going to tease me with it again. But instead, he was focused on giving me as much pleasure as I could stand. And when I had another orgasm, I thought my soul was about to leave my body.

Not long after that, Ashton’s movements picked up a notch in pace and soon after became jerky as his body tensed. Hot liquid spilled inside me as he grunted above me, trying to keep up with the movements.

Once his body was still, we worked on catching our breath. Not even a few minutes later, his dick, still inside me, started to harden again. His mouth brushed the skin just beneath my ear and I was ready to go again.

We didn’t stop until just before dawn, and we fell asleep wrapped in each other’s arms.

ASHTON

“**W**here the hell is he?” I asked Boston.

I was referring to Clayton who was late for breakfast. I pulled on my phone and scrolled to his contact. I clicked send.

Boston shrugged. “Who knows.”

The line kept ringing and I let out an angry sigh. “He’s not answering again.”

“As weird as it may be, perhaps he’s sleeping in?” Boston suggested.

I leveled my gaze on my identical brother. “Clayton? Sleeping in? What universe does that ever happen?”

He shrugged. “Apparently this one. He did have that date with Morgan. Maybe they really hit it off.”

A strange simmer ignited in my stomach. One that started to burn hotter as I glared at my brother. My voice came out dark and low as I said, “What?”

It wasn’t a question.

Boston shook his head as he sat across the table from me. Lucky for him, he kept his voice calm and even. “You knew about this. I told you she had tickets to the game, and I told Clayton about it since he was the fan.”

I gaped. I failed to make the connection that he was referring to Morgan. My Morgan. She belonged to me.

I couldn't believe I actually thought he had talked about someone else... I clamped my mouth shut and growled. The connections my brain was making to the persistent absence of my other identical brother were unsettling.

He was up late. He was sleeping in. He was out with Morgan. He was up all night long with Morgan.

There was only so much a man could do with a woman that would take all night long.

But he agreed not to mate with her.

Though I reminded myself Clayton had given me his word. Boston, too... a strange panic filled my center. I had never felt anything like it. My heart raced as though it was trying to beat right out of my chest and my breaths came quickly. My hands shook and the only thing I was able to think of was the gut-wrenching fact I had lost Morgan ... the only woman to capture my attention so fiercely.

"Ashton?" Boston's voice barely registered.

I blinked, trying hard to calm the storm raging through my nervous system.

"Hey, man," Boston said. His words sounded almost blurred and muted.

I couldn't think. I could barely breathe. I tried desperately to snap myself out of the sudden onslaught of feeling like my world was about to break down and shatter around me.

Then it occurred to me there was only one thing that would make this strange unpleasantness go away and that was confronting my brother. I didn't know what I was going to do if I found out he had mated with her.

I hated to think anything remotely close to what I would do if that should happen. It was better if I didn't. But that didn't mean I wasn't aching to know if I had already lost Morgan before I had a chance with her.

"Ashton," Boston said, snapping his fingers in front of my face.

I blinked and then stared into his eyes. Strange how I found the worry in them. I almost read his thoughts, his consideration into the fact I might have lost what was left of my sanity. I might need to be committed. And if I lost Morgan... that might have to be what happens to me.

“I don’t like that look,” he said.

“I have to go,” I replied and started to step around him.

“No, you don’t,” Boston said, grabbing me by my arm and pulling me back. “Think about this rationally.”

I shook him free of my arm and then stormed out of my apartment. Boston’s footsteps followed behind me as I stormed down the hall to Clayton’s apartment.

“Nothing good is going to come from this,” Boston muttered.

“I don’t care,” I muttered and pounded on Clayton’s door.

“Knock softer,” Boston said.

I barely glanced at him. “No.”

“What if she comes out?” he asked.

“We’ll deal with that later,” I said and banged on the door again.

I barely picked out Clayton’s voice muttering something from behind the door. It came out too muffled to determine what words he had said. But I had caught his attention and soon enough I would uncover exactly what happened and just how fucked I was.

I banged on his door for the third time. Each pound of my fist echoed through the hall. Boston hissed.

“For the love of...” he muttered and pinched the bridge of his nose. “You know what? Whatever. This whole bomb was bound to explode in all of our faces eventually. Why not do it today?”

I glared at him as the locks were disengaged on the other side of the door. Seconds later, the door barely opened a crack. I pushed it open the rest of the way, forcing Clayton to stumble

out of the way. I ignored his angry protest and continued inside his place. I raked my gaze over every inch of space as Boston stepped inside and said something to the effect of an apology to Clayton.

“I tried to stop him,” Boston said as I dipped into the bathroom.

“What the fuck is this about?” Clayton asked.

I approached him and sniffed. He was bathed in her scent. But from what I could tell, that was where her scent ended. With him. My brother.

I growled, gripping his shirt in my fists and forcing him back against the wall of his apartment. “Tell me you didn’t mate with her.”

“Let me go,” he demanded.

“No. Not until you tell me you didn’t mate with her,” I said, staring into my brother’s eyes. He stared back as a fire started to burn behind them.

“Back the fuck off, Ashton,” he said and pushed back.

“Did you mate with her?” I asked, enunciating each word with forced diction.

“That is none of your fucking business,” he said, pushing me backward.

I released him and took a few steps back. I heard all I needed to. Between his refusal to talk about it and the scent he was practically bathed in, I had my answer.

Boston cleared his throat. “He forgot about your date and turned crazy. I tried to stop him.”

Clayton lifted his hand to stop him. “It’s okay. I don’t hold this against you.”

His fiery gaze settled on me. “But you, you can get the fuck out.”

“Not until you tell me,” I said and shook my head, letting the rest fall silent. There was no way repeating myself for the umpteenth time would result in suddenly getting an answer.

His behavior had answered enough for him. And it was struggling with keeping my temper simmering and not ripping my brother to pieces.

“Does it matter?” Clayton asked. “She is still unaware of this thing between the three of us. Far as she is concerned, she had a date with you.”

I growled and closed the gap between him and me. He squared his shoulders against me as I stopped with the toes of our shoes touching. “Did you sleep with her?”

“None of your fucking business,” he said.

Something inside me wouldn't let me drop it and leave it alone.

Worse still, Clayton stared me down. It was almost like looking in a mirror. He wasn't going to tell me. So, I had to make him fess up.

“I can smell her on you,” I said, nearly growling out the words.

“Great,” he said. “Congrats. Your nose works.”

“Clayton, so help me?” I warned.

“You guys need to stop fighting,” Boston interjected. “Ashton, you need to back down.”

“Fine,” Clayton said completely ignoring our brother. “I had sex with her. Are you happy? Is that what you wanted to hear? Do you feel better now that you dragged the answer out of me?”

“You weren't supposed to mate with her!” I growled out as rage burned through me.

“I never said I mated with her, idiot,” he snapped.

“It was too much of a risk!” I shouted.

Clayton, the asshole shrugged. “You should have taken her on the first date if you were so damned concerned about mating.”

I saw red.

Before I realized what I had done, I had clenched my hand into a tight fist and slammed it into his face. Clayton stumbled and tried to regain his footing after catching himself on the kitchen counter. From there, he turned around, huffed, and tackled me to the floor.

We had taken turns punching each other and rolling the other to their back. After several minutes, Boston managed to separate us. I was too angry. All I could think about was tearing Clayton apart to pay attention to what Boston was doing. But he managed to push between us and broke us up.

“That is enough from you two,” he snapped, panting for breath.

It was the first time I actually looked at him since the fight began and he was red in the face as though he was just as much a part of the scuffle as the rest of us.

Clayton took a couple of seconds to catch his breath before he pointed at me and said, “You need to get your fucking priorities straight. This whole game of yours is going to destroy everything if you are not careful.”

I glared at him. “Thanks for the fucking warning.”

I stormed out of my brother’s apartment and then left the entire building. I needed air. I needed to walk. Hell, I needed to run... burn off some of this pent-up aggression. So, the second my feet hit the sidewalk, I headed in the direction of the mountains. Once I was out of range of human eyes, I shifted and took off.

MORGAN

After a long week of working random shifts, I was looking forward to my lunch date with my friend, Olivia. We used to have weekly get-togethers when we were roommates. Now she was engaged to a wealthy man and pregnant, so we didn't get much time together. But I was willing to take every second I could have with her because I missed her something fierce.

I also missed having her around for girl talk.

With excitement bubbling inside me, I arrived at the restaurant located in downtown Denver, smack dab in the middle of a grid of one-way streets and a severe lack of parking. I pulled up to the valet and climbed out of my vehicle, leaving the engine running per the instructions on the signs posted on either side of the small, covered driveway. A gentleman dressed in a maroon jacket and black pants came out of the restaurant's front door and approached a small podium stationed at the curb on the left, just a few feet from the entrance of the building.

He nodded in greeting as I walked around the front of my car. When I approached him, he handed me a ticket.

"Enjoy your meal," he said and rushed to the driver's side of my car.

"Thank you," I said, even though he was already climbing inside my car, and headed inside.

I met Olivia right inside the door. Her waiting smile filled my gaze and I rushed into her waiting arms.

“Look at you!” I squealed as I wrapped my arms around her swollen torso. “You are absolutely glowing!”

She chuckled. “Thanks. You look damn good, yourself.”

I shrugged. “Well, I feel like a massive trainwreck.”

“Hardly.” She frowned at me. A second later, she smiled, slipping her arm through mine and said, “Let’s go grab our seats, then you can tell me all about it.”

I nodded. “Sounds like a plan. By the way, speaking of food, this does not seem like what I would call a local burger joint.”

She smiled coyly. “It is a gourmet burger place.”

After a few minutes, we found our table and took a seat. Once we were settled, she sighed with a soft frown.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“All right, confession time. This was all Milo’s idea. It’s one of his investment businesses and he insisted on me bringing you here. I hope you don’t mind. I’m not trying to rub anything in your face.”

I waved her away. “Are you fucking kidding me? I’m lucky and grateful I still get to see you. I don’t care where we go. Especially if Milo is paying for it.”

She laughed. “Seriously?”

I nodded. “Yeah. Of course. Any time with you is better than no time at all.”

“Oh, thank God.” She sighed.

“Look,” I said, reaching across the table to cover her hand with mine. “I’m your friend. Whether rich, poor, or anything in between. You lucked out nailing a hot guy with a lot of money, I can’t fault you for that. In fact, I’m proud. You deserve every ounce of fortune.”

“Really?” she asked, smiling wider. Her blue eyes turned shiny as they teared up.

“How’s the baby doing?” I asked, changing the subject, and taking my hand back.

She leaned back in her chair and ran her fingers over her round, plump belly. “Kicking the ever-loving shit out of me.”

We continued to share in small talk until a waitress brought our orders to us. I ordered something called “Black and Blue Burger.” It came piled high with hand-cut fries and the burger was thick. I wasn’t sure I was going to be able to put my mouth around it. But I did and juice from the meat dribbled down my chin.

For a burger joint, the food was beyond amazing. High class or not.

A large strawberry shake was set in front of my plate as a dessert. My eyes widened and I moaned with anticipation. It looked better than any shake I had seen before. Like one of the fancy-shmancy, decorative ones used for magazines to make people like me exceptionally jealous.

Needless to say, there wasn’t much talking about anything but the food until we were too full to eat another bite.

I leaned back and groaned. There was no food left on my plate and over half the shake left. But I couldn’t put another bite inside me. Though I hated the idea of something so rich and decadent going to waste.

“So, what did you think of the food?” Olivia asked.

I met my friend’s gaze. “Well, in case you couldn’t tell, I couldn’t let a crumb go to waste.”

Olivia chuckled. “Great stuff.”

I nodded. “I think I’m going to go home and take a food-coma nap until the end of the week.”

She nodded. “Same. Provided the little monster well let me.”

I nodded. “Someday I will know what that feels like.”

“You will,” she said with a wink.

I chuckled and shook my head. Milo invested in this business. Though I wasn't quite sure what that meant, I was sure it took skill to find places like this and help them climb up in ranks.

"How does Milo find these places?" I asked as curiosity was getting the better of me.

Olivia shrugged. "I really don't know. But what I am curious about is that date you promised to tell me how it went."

I nodded. "It went pretty well, actually."

Olivia leveled her gaze at me. "Morgan. Come on. I have to have the details."

I laughed. "Maybe I don't have any details to share."

"Liar," she said, smiling. "Come on. This stuff is too juicy to keep to yourself."

"Well..." I said with a shrug. "Some of the details I'm going to keep to myself."

"Okay, well, that's fine. But I still want to know how things went," she said, holding me with her sapphire gaze.

I smiled, purposefully dragging things out a little bit longer.

Olivia threw a fry at me. "Spill it!"

I laughed. "Okay! Okay."

Olivia leaned in closer, a shit-eating grin on her face.

I sucked in a breath and said, "It was better than I expected it to be. We went to the game, and ended up on the jumbotron's kiss cam thing, we kissed, and that ignited something inside us. We left the game early, headed to my place, and proceeded to have some of the best sex in my entire life."

Olivia's widened gaze stared at me. Once I finished speaking, several seconds passed before she blinked and said, "That's it?"

I shrugged. “That’s all she wrote.”

“Okay, but I asked for details,” she said. “That wasn’t very detailed.”

“As I said, I was going to keep some of it to myself,” I said with a wink.

She groaned. “God, you are killing me. But I’m happy for you.”

I shrugged. “I’m not sure what there is to be happy about but thank you.”

“What do you mean?” she asked. A small crease appeared between her eyebrows.

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “Well... and granted we both have jobs and chaotic schedules from time to time... but I haven’t heard anything from him since that night.”

“Seriously?” she asked, voice flat.

I nodded. “In fact, when I woke up that morning, he was already gone. I figured he went to his place. Decided to give it a few days, but when he never called or even stopped by, I figured it was nothing more than a one-night stand.”

She snorted. “Clearly, you thought it was more than that.”

I shook my head, though I did feel the truth in her words. “It’s whatever. I’m sure he has a perfectly reasonable excuse for not reaching out.”

“Maybe you should call him and find out?” she suggested.

“God, no,” I said. “I don’t want to come off as desperate and it wasn’t like I was expecting a relationship from him.”

“Uh-huh,” she muttered.

My phone rang. I barely glanced at the screen and groaned.

“What’s up?” Olivia asked. “Who’s calling you?”

“My job,” I muttered.

“That’s a bad thing?” she asked.

“Normally, no. But I’ve been working almost non-stop for the past week,” I said. “I desperately need a break.”

I considered letting the call go to voicemail, but that didn’t work out so well for me the last time I got called in. So, with a sigh, I answered the call. Minutes later, the call was over, and I huffed.

“You have to go?” Olivia asked.

I nodded. “Unfortunately.”

She smiled. “Don’t worry about it. Go take care of what you need to do.”

“We’ll do the shopping next time,” I promised.

“I’m so going to hold you to that,” she said. “Besides, I’m kind of tired anyway. I think I’m probably going to go home and take a nap.”

“Sleep well,” I said as I stood from my seat.

Olivia did the same, meeting me. We hugged. When we pulled apart, she smiled. “Take care. Let me know if anything else comes of Romeo.”

I laughed. “Sure thing.”

As I left the restaurant, I found myself wondering what Ashton was up to, as I had over the course of the days that had passed since our romp between the sheets. Did he see us as a one-night stand?

Now that I was thinking about it, I wasn’t sure what to believe about that possibility. The connection was too strong between us. Especially for it all to be only a cheap fling.

By the time I climbed back into my car, I had put the whole thing behind me. It needed to wait for another day. I had to put my head in the game... wrap my mind around working yet another shift.

This job had better appreciate the severe neglect of my social life for them.

BOSTON

For the umpteenth time, I tried to call Ashton. But he wasn't answering his phone. He had taken off right after his little brawl with Clayton and neither he nor I had heard from our identical brother since. It had been quite some time.

Maybe he was avoiding us to have some space. I hoped he was using the time wisely and clearing his head.

Or at the very least, he was coming to terms with the consequences of his game.

Regardless, he couldn't avoid me forever. Our Clayton, for that matter.

After seeing Ashton's reaction toward Clayton after learning he had slept with Morgan, I wasn't sure about the game anymore. Not that I needed another reason to be against it. And that was really all this whole thing was. A game. Because we were playing with an innocent woman's emotions. We were using her for our own selfish reasons. We were being purposefully deceptive and such things went against everything inside me.

There was a hidden agenda in my brother's motives, and it was something I believed the three of us needed to figure out whatever it was before someone else got hurt. Before another date was had.

Neither Clayton nor I was aware of just how seriously Ashton was going to take things. To him, this wasn't a game or a competition between three identical, highly competitive

brothers. What Clayton did, Ashton saw as a personal slight against him.

And I couldn't understand why.

Ideally, I would take my brother's absence and lack of involvement as a way in. My chance to take Morgan out and spend some time with her. But the problem was, I didn't have the first clue as to what I was doing. Not only that, but Ashton wasn't going to stay distant forever and the last thing I needed was a run-in with him following my date with Morgan. But the idea of her slipping through my fingers before I even had a chance to be with her wasn't something I was willing to live with.

I had to do something. I needed to take a step forward or permanently take a step out.

I had to jump on the ball with this or I was going to miss out.

The problem was, I wasn't sure about what to do. And with the rate things were going, I was coming in last.

I didn't have the courage or the charm my two identical brothers had. But that didn't mean I was going to allow myself to sleep on a woman like Morgan. I was fully aware this might have been my one and only chance to be with her. To let the opportunity pass me by was something I knew I would regret for the rest of my life.

Everything I had done up to this point had only been an elaborate act. It was something I had gotten good at doing while growing up with Ashton and Clayton. I was shy despite a lifetime of showing otherwise. That was all a show. A means to keep up with my brothers.

It wasn't who I was as a person. Or who I wanted to be.

Granted, I was rather outgoing with my patients, but I had to be. Charm was a part of the job description.

And a huge part of my hesitation was because I seriously hated tricking Morgan the way we were. But this was my only chance to be with her. And I needed to take this chance before it was too late.

Phone buzzed. It was a text message.

I pulled up my phone and stared at the number I didn't recognize. Then I clicked on it to pull up the message.

"Hey, I broke my phone. This is my new one."

"So, you got a whole new number?" I asked back. "Who is this?"

"Ashton. Duh."

The second I settled my gaze on his name a flood of relief flowed through me. At least my brother was safe. Somehow, I had already figured as much, but it was nice to have confirmation. Especially from the man himself.

"What took you so long to reach out?" I asked.

"That is a long story, but I need you to do a favor for me," he quickly replied back.

"What?" I asked.

"Get Morgan to agree on a date with me," he said.

I groaned. I might have lost my one and only chance to be with the woman. I certainly wasn't going to try after he had her. The game was up.

"Please," Ashton said.

I huffed and shook my head. "No."

"What? Why?" He asked in two texts.

"Do we seriously need to rehash what happened between you and Clayton?" I asked then stood to grab a beer. This conversation, through text or not, was going to take a while. I figured I might as well multi-task and drink a beer while flipping through the channels to find a movie to watch.

Preferably comedy.

I needed to laugh. Almost desperately.

"What does having you asking Morgan on a date for me have to do with that?" he asked after several minutes.

I sighed then turned my gaze to the ceiling and shook my head. My brother, although the firstborn, wasn't very smart. Common sense wasn't a strong suit either.

My phone started buzzing in my hand. I snapped my attention to it. The same number was calling me. I groaned. He wasn't going to drop this. It was time for me to pull off the proverbial band-aid.

"Impatient much?" I asked in greeting.

"I want an answer to my question," he said, voice clipped.

I huffed. "The whole thing was and still is a bad idea. Next time, it might be more than Clayton who is hurt. I'm not okay with this. I want out before you come after me."

"Did you sleep with her too?" he asked.

"Would it actually matter if I did?" I asked. "It's all the same to you. So why should I continue to play the middleman?"

"You can't forfeit," Ashton growled out.

"Too damn bad. Find someone else to play your game with. I'm out," I said and ended the call.

After setting my phone on the coffee table next to me, I leaned back and took a swig of my beer.

My phone buzzed.

I ignored it. Ashton didn't like losing. He also hated being wrong and hung up on.

"Should have thought this one through brother," I muttered and clicked on the TV.

But I couldn't even put myself into a show for more than five or ten minutes without my brother blowing up my phone with either a text or a call. Finally, I had enough and gripped my phone in my fist. I hit the answer button and then growled out, "What the fuck do you want?"

"You can't quit," Ashton said.

I groaned.

“Here me out before you become pissy with me,” he quickly added.

I glared at my phone. The gall. I said, “You had better make this good.”

“What happened with Clayton...” he started. “It was wrong of me to have behaved that way. I have no idea what came over me or why. This competition might have been a bad idea, but I can’t let go. Not without trying first.”

“Nice try. Not convinced,” I said and hung up.

All of that was for nothing. Because less than five minutes later, there was a knock at my door.

“So, help me, Ash, if you are standing on the other side of my door,” I hollered.

“Just open up,” he said.

I shook my head. My eyes grazed over my beer. I should have bought another six.

He knocked again.

“Yeah, yeah...” I muttered loud enough for him to hear me. “I’m coming.”

I headed to the door and opened it enough to give him the point he should come in and headed into my kitchen for another beer. Once I stepped out of my kitchen, I handed him the beer and then took my seat on the couch.

“So, Mr. Persistent,” I started. “Why is this so important to you?”

He narrowed his eyes at me. “She might be the one. And, again, I have no idea what came over me. I have thought about how to make it up to Clayton.”

“My advice is to give him space and time,” I said and rolled my eyes.

“Are you going to be an asshole the whole time I’m here?” He stared at me with his amber-colored brown eyes.

I shrugged. “That depends, are you going to beat me up in the middle of my foyer?”

He nodded, clapping his hands together. “I deserved that.”

“Yes, you did,” I said. “And you are lucky things aren’t worse than they are.”

“I know,” he said, running his fingers through the short hair on the top of his head. “Believe me, I understand how badly I fucked up.”

I nodded, staring at him in disbelief.

“Look, I overreacted, and I realize this. I need to make this up to Clayton, and I will. But first, I need to find out if she’s the one.”

I glared at him. “You think you would already have the answer to that with how you reacted.”

“Yes. I get it. Are you done berating me?” he asked with a tone.

I shrugged. “I don’t know yet.”

“Please, do this for me,” he said.

“You’re not going to leave until I do, are you?” I asked, voice flat.

He leaned back in his seat and took a sip of his beer. “Nope.”

I growled. “I am so going to regret this.”

With my phone in hand, I scrolled through my contacts until I found Morgan’s number and clicked the tiny phone icon to call her.

Ashton leaned forward and whispered, “Put it on speaker.”

I growled and did as he requested. But if he wasn’t careful, I was going to lay him out on my floor.

MORGAN

Half asleep and lounging on the couch after a long shift at work, my phone started ringing. I barely pulled my eyes open to glance at the Caller ID. Truth be told, it didn't matter. If it wasn't important, I was going to hang up. My fingers wrapped around the case, and I slid my thumb along the bottom of the screen to answer the call.

"Hello," I said and promptly yawned.

"Hey Morgan," a male voice said. "It's, uh, Ashton."

I smiled, still keeping my eyes closed, and said, "Hey."

"Did I wake you?" he asked. He sounded like he was in a tunnel. I assumed he had me on speaker.

I shook my head though he couldn't see it and said, "Nope. I was just relaxing on my couch. What are you up to?"

"Ah," he said. "You sound incredibly tired."

"I am," I said. "It's been a long week at work."

"I completely understand that," he said. "Do you want me to let you go so you can rest?"

I instantly sat up and stretched while quickly saying, "Nope. I'm happy to chat with you."

"Are you sure," he asked. "I know women love their beauty sleep... of course, you don't need help with that."

I chuckled and stared at my coffee table. I had a bag of multigrain chips sitting open on the surface. I frowned as my

stomach flipped. I hoped I wasn't coming down with something. "You're real smooth," I said. "And yes, I am sure."

"So, you said you had a long week at work?" he asked.

"Yeah. Overtime. Tons of it," I said. Though I wasn't entirely thrilled about the hours, the pay only made it slightly better. Too bad most of it was going to be taken in taxes.

"Yeah, but the paycheck though," he said.

"I guess so," I said with a shrug. If I was going to stay coherent, I was going to need some coffee. So, I stood up and headed into my kitchen, and started to pull out the things I needed. I placed the call on speaker and sat it on the counter while I worked.

"I take it that you disagree with that?" Ashton asked.

"Not exactly. I mean, the extra money would be nice, but most of it is going to end up being taken in taxes."

"Such is an unfortunate curse we all pay for," he said.

"Isn't that the truth," I muttered as I scooped some coffee grounds into a fresh filter. "And I don't like working myself into the ground like this. I have had burnout before and it's not pleasant. Nor do I care to live through it again."

"Yeah, burnout is not something to mess around with," he said. "If it's severe enough, it could lead to major health issues."

A touch of humor had filled his voice, and I wondered what that was about. I considered the tone was simply because he was happy to be speaking with me, but I had suspected there was more going on. And with the smile in his voice, I started thinking about the dimple on his cheek the first night we met, and how he didn't have it during our date.

"Hey, I have a question," I started.

"Okay, lay it on me," he said, voice flowing smoothly into the air.

"Can dimples come and go?" I asked.

A small span of silence settled between us. I thought I had heard whispering, but I wasn't entirely positive either. I glared at the phone wondering if I had lost the call.

"Interesting question," he said just a second before I interjected. "I suppose it depends."

"On what?" I asked as I filled the pot with water.

"How deep it is naturally, how full the face is... things like that. Why?" he asked.

I shrugged as I started to pour the water into the back of the coffee maker. "Well, the first day we met, I noticed you had a dimple on your right cheek. And then at the game, it wasn't there. And I was curious if those things typically come and go because it would be a better explanation than I had imagined the dimple in the first place."

"Oh yeah," he chuckled nervously. "Mine comes and goes all the time."

I frowned. What he said sounded off. Like it was a lie. It still didn't seem like something that would come and go. I would have to look that up later.

"Speaking of our date," he started. "I meant to call at least a half-dozen times before now, but I have had quite a week as well. I finally had some downtime and wanted to make sure I got you called so you didn't think I wasn't interested in you. Or ghosted or anything like that."

I smiled. Big. My heart also did an excited flip.

His words had to have been the most genuine thing he had ever said to me.

"Calling to checkup on me huh?" I asked with a hint of humor in my voice.

"You could say that," he said. I detected the smile in his voice.

I giggled. "Awe. Thank you. I'm happy you said that. And I'm doing all right. I'm just tired."

He cleared his throat. The coffee pot started to percolate, and I leaned against the counter as I waited for him to speak.

When he didn't, I let out a soft sigh and said, "You seem to have something on your mind, Ashton."

"Oh, yeah... sort of. I'm okay though. As I said, it was a long week for me too," he said, excusing his behavior away.

"Well, if you change your mind, I've been told I am great at listening and providing advice."

He chuckled. "That is very nice to hear. I like it. I like it a lot."

I smiled. "Sweet."

Silence settled between us again for several seconds. Long enough to allow me to sink into my thoughts again.

Ever since meeting him, I've noticed some small differences in our interactions. Almost as though I was interacting with different people with the same face. They weren't huge differences. Moreso small things that stood out to me. Things that, in hindsight, I wondered if I wasn't imagining. He admitted his dimple comes and goes. So... maybe the differences had perfectly logical reasons?

"You still there?" he asked.

"Mm-hmm," I said. "I got lost in my thoughts as I am waiting for my coffee to brew."

"Man, coffee sounds amazing right about now, but I have to get some sleep soon," he said.

I nodded. "I do too. But I'm not affected by coffee as much as most people are. So, I should be able to sleep perfectly fine after one cup."

"Interesting," he said.

I laughed. "I'm glad you think so."

"So, what do you think?" he asked.

Tension filled the center of my forehead. "About what?"

"Seeing each other soon," he said with a chuckle.

“Oh, that sounds wonderful,” I said. I must have been so lost in my thoughts he had asked me on a date, and I just completely ignored the question. Shame on me.

“Awesome.” He chuckled. “I want to take you out this time.”

“Yeah?” I asked, smiling wider.

“Absolutely,” he said.

“Where are we going to go? When are we going to go, what are we going to do, and how long are we going to be gone?”

He laughed. “I promise, I will have perfectly reasonable answers to your questions, but first I have to ask you some things.”

“Oh really?” I asked as I moved to the cabinet above my coffee maker and pulled out a mug before turning and pulling out the creamer from the fridge.

“Yes,” he said. “Starting with, what is your idea of a perfect date?”

“I don’t think anyone has asked me that before,” I said.

“First time for everything, right?” he asked.

“I guess,” I said. “I don’t really think about it much in terms of perfection but the effort behind it all. So... Let’s see... my perfect date is completely unobtainable.”

“Ah, come on! You can’t do me like that!” He laughed.

He had a nice, contagious laugh. I could imagine his eyes crinkling at the corners as his lips stretched over his teeth.

My heart skipped a beat. I forced myself to blink the image away before I got too carried off by it.

I thought about the perfect date and how it was pretty similar to most romance movies that I used to watch when I was growing up.

“Probably the cheesiest thing ever, but...” I paused for a moment.

“Keep going,” he urged. I could almost hear him chomping at the bit.

“Patience,” I said, continuing to tease him with waiting. “I’m trying to find the right words to describe it.”

He chuckled. “Okay.”

“It would probably be a candlelit dinner in a private, secluded corner of a restaurant with a collection of string instruments playing softly in the background. There would be slow dancing, food, wine, and ideally even a romantic walk through a park as the sun sets over the horizon. And when it was all over, end things with a deep, passionate kiss.”

“Wow,” he said.

“Is it that bad?” I asked, feeling a little self-conscious.

“No,” he quickly said. “It’s amazing.”

I let out a breath I hadn’t realized I had been holding. “Oh. Good.”

“I’m going to plan the perfect date for us,” he said. “But I need you to let me know when you are going to have some time off.”

“Okay,” I said and yawned again.

“Drink your coffee, get some rest, and have sweet dreams,” Ashton said.

“Thank you,” I said. “Talk with you later.”

We ended the call and I stared at the cup of coffee wondering if I was fooling myself into thinking it would keep me awake. My best bet was to probably rest as much as I could. So, I put the cup in the microwave and headed to my bed.

My eyes closed and within minutes, I was out.

CLAYTON

The telecommunications company I worked for was holding a contest. And if it wasn't already easy to tell by now, I lived off competition. It was my bread and butter. As far as I was concerned, my two brothers were the same. Though I was convinced there were times when Boston couldn't care less. But Ashton? He was one hundred percent cut from the same cloth as I was.

Despite the three of us being nearly identical in every single way, the three of us were very different in many ways. Apparently, that ran true especially for Boston. He was the soft and squishy one of the three of us. Of the three of us, he was the weakest link, the one most likely to run his mouth.

That wasn't to say he would. Boston was smart. He could have gone further in his schooling to become a doctor. But he decided to stick with nursing. Why? I had no clue.

But I digressed.

So, it should go without saying that the second I heard about the contest, it was game on. I buckled down and dug into my job. But the calls had started coming in slowly, and the span of silence in between calls gave me too much time to think. Too much time to let my mind wonder. And it was during a few of those moments I had fallen into my thoughts about Morgan. I hadn't seen her since our night together. And really, that had less to do with her than it did with my brother who decided to not-so-kindly explain to me sleeping with Morgan was out of the question.

Oops.

The fine print should have been spelled out a lot clearer. He said we couldn't mate. Not that we couldn't have sex. And if he had been in my position, guaranteed he would have done the same thing.

Morgan was a delight too hard to resist.

I still didn't regret what I had done. And I refused to. Regardless of what Ashton expected us to agree to, mating with someone wasn't exactly a thing we had in our control. It happened when it happened.

Ashton was fully aware of this.

Did I think finding a mate would ever happen to me?

No. Of course not. Mating was never even in my plans.

But it happened.

Ashton would have to get over that.

Someone tapped on my shoulder. I twisted to my right and settled my gaze on my pod mate, Xander. His dark eyes narrowed to mine. He was a wolf shifter as well. No pack. He was wild and free. As it was supposed to be.

But that didn't mean we announced our animals to the world either.

Xander pointed to his ears, signaling me.

I removed my headset enough to hear what he had to say. "Yeah?"

"You all right man?" he asked.

I shrugged and shook my head. "Yeah, I guess so. Why?"

"You haven't taken a single call," he said.

I glanced at my screen and then back to him. "I have taken calls. Just not very many."

"Dude... we are in a contest," he said as though I wasn't already aware. "I thought that meant something to you."

“I can’t control the calls that come in,” I said. And I really couldn’t. It wasn’t like I had some magical wand hidden under my desk that I could pull out every time calls weren’t coming through.

He shook his head. “Look at the queue, man.”

Xander shook his head and disappeared behind his little divider wall, and I stared at the screen with a raised eyebrow. He was right, technically, there were several calls waiting in the queue.

I clicked on the first one and took care of the customer. But it wasn’t long before no more calls were waiting, and I found myself sitting among the constant chatter of the call center, daydreaming about Morgan again.

I missed her. Terribly. And had it not been for Ashton, I would have already reached out to her.

About half an hour before lunch, I realized I needed to figure out a way to make her aware of who I really was. And I certainly wasn’t convinced I would be able to keep my distance. Not anymore.

I also wasn’t sure how long I could keep the truth from Ashton. He knew I had sex with her. But not that I had mated with her. God no. If he had found out about that, he probably wouldn’t have stopped with his beating until I was nothing more than bloody pulp on the floor.

Besides that, I didn’t deserve her. None of us did. She deserved better. Especially after what we have done. But damn it all if she didn’t renew some glimmer of hope within me. She gave me a reason to be better than I used to be. Better than I was.

She made me want to be a better man.

Once lunchtime hit, I headed toward a flower shop that was nearby and purchased several different bouquets. I wasn’t sure what her favorite flower was, and I didn’t want to go through the hassle of working through Boston to figure it out, so I bought what I thought she would like and enjoy.

With the flowers, I included a card. And signed it. But not my name. Not even Ashton's name. But it was the first step in letting her know who I truly was and how much in love I had fallen in love with her.

I realized I wasn't ready to share with her what was going on under her nose at the very last minute.

But I couldn't go without letting her know she was at least thought of. So, I paid for the flowers and paid for delivery and headed back to work without eating. Though I figured the lack of food would end up being an issue, it had turned out to be nowhere close to that.

It didn't bother me to skip a meal or two every now and then. Besides, I figured Morgan would be on my mind but not occupying every moment and inch of my mind.

I should have called her. I should have told her that things between us were good. I probably should have done something sooner, but work had kept me busy. At least, up until now. It appeared that the more time I spent away from her, the more she occupied my mind. And I didn't mind a single bit.

"Dude," Xander snapped in a whisper.

I had barely heard him and turned my attention to him once more. I shrugged.

He shook his head. "I have no idea what has gotten into you today, but you need to seriously snap out of it, man."

I huffed as I blinked away my thoughts and barely cast another glance toward my pod mate. "Sorry."

"We're freaking losing," he muttered. "We never lose."

He was right. We didn't lose. My mind's need to focus on Morgan needed to be put off for a while longer. Once the day was over, the contest would be over, and I could be free to spend every waking moment thinking about Morgan if that was what my mind decided to do.

But until then, I had a job to do.

I nodded and shook my head to clear the fog from my brain and cleared my throat as I clicked on the next call

waiting to be answered.

Though I did my best to finish out the rest of my shift with focus and to put my team ahead in the contest, Morgan was never far from my mind.

Suffice it to say, we didn't win. And I didn't give a damn.

My team was pissed with me, but I shrugged it off. They didn't understand. If they knew, they would get it. But I wasn't about to share my personal life with them. They mattered little to me once I left the building. Their opinion of me didn't matter.

MORGAN

Exhaustion had nothing on me.

What I experienced was something deeper and altogether just... I was drained, for lack of a better word.

I sat in my car for what seemed like forever, tempted to blend into the seat. The idea of moving wasn't appealing and though a Moscato and a long bubble bath were calling my name, the idea of moving was beyond me. Even when I considered maybe curling up on the couch with a book too. Nothing was enough to make me climb out.

Not only that, but I lacked the energy to move.

I had no idea what was going on at work, but I also didn't think I would be able to keep up at this pace for much longer.

My eyes wanted to close. But my car wasn't the place to take a nap. And though I liked to believe I lived in a decent area, that didn't mean that violent crimes didn't or wouldn't happen, and I didn't want to become a statistic.

So, I dug deep inside my body to pull on the last remaining remnants of what energy I had left and climbed out of my car. I took things one step at a time. Imagining the way the warm water was going to feel on my tired, drained, aching body.

At some point, I went to autopilot. And when I arrived at my door, I stared at it, wondering if I got confused and ended up on the wrong floor. The number on the door was right. But the flowers that stood at the base of the door didn't make sense. There were dozens of them. All in beautiful soft colors.

They had to have been left at my door by mistake.

Luckily, the flowers came with a card sitting inside them. The least I could do is bring them in and look at the card. Hopefully, I would be able to figure out who they were really intended for and deliver them.

No harm. No foul.

With a shrug, I unlocked the door, stepped over them, and headed inside to put down my purse and keys before returning to the gorgeous bouquets. I carefully brought them inside, setting them on the long counter that acted as a divider from the kitchen and main room of my apartment.

I breathed in deep the wonderful, sweet perfume and sighed wistfully as I pulled on the card. Whoever these were truly meant for... she's one lucky woman.

I slipped the card out of the envelope and flipped it open.

My eyes fell to my name, and I stared at it, not breathing.

After several seconds, I resumed breathing and blinked away the shock and confusion, and stared at the beautiful collection in front of me.

"These are for me?" I asked myself.

I continued to stare at the flowers, not understanding how I deserved something so beautiful or what I had done to receive them. The tips of my fingers gently brushed the surface of a few of the petals, simply to figure out if they were actually as soft as they appeared to be. A wide grin stretched my lips as I discovered they were.

"Who could have possibly sent these to me?" I asked myself and pulled my gaze from the flowers to settle them back on the card.

It read:

Dear Morgan,

I hope these bring a smile to your face and remind you that I'm always thinking of you.

Sincerely,

Your Not-so-secret Secret Admirer

I frowned as I flipped the card over to see if there were any identifying clues as to who in the hell spent a small fortune on a bunch of flowers just to leave them somewhat anonymously at my door.

Was it a joke?

I was confused and felt a little toyed with. Because I had an idea who sent them... I wasn't sure why he wouldn't come out and name himself directly.

Though I was exhausted from my almost endless work week, I was overcome with confusion and needed to figure out the flowers. So, I video-called Olivia. My rock. My one person who is grounded in reality enough to help keep me sane.

And there was still a part of me who missed her like crazy and was still accustomed to having her around all the time. Besides, she was great at figuring stuff out, and I could really use her brain power.

The line rang a couple of times and then the camera clicked on with Olivia's smiling face staring back at me as she leaned into the corner of her plush sofa. "It's about time you call me."

I chuckled. "Yeah sorry."

Her dark eyebrows drew closer together. "What's wrong? Are you okay?"

I nodded. "I've had one hell of a week at work."

"Oh goodness," she said. "They've been working you that hard?"

I nodded. "I honestly don't know what's going on. They've done a lot of layoffs and they are changing systems, and it's... exhausting. But I didn't call to talk to you about that."

"Oh?" she asked, eyebrows raising in high arches on her forehead. "What do I owe the pleasure of this call then?"

I chuckled. "I have to show it to you."

"Okay," she said.

I clicked the two arrows in the shape of a circle to flip the view of the camera, so she was able to view the huge collection of flowers for herself.

“Oh my,” she said. “Those are gorgeous! I take it things are going well with Romeo, eh?”

I sighed and flipped the camera back around. “Not exactly.”

“How come?” she asked.

I shrugged. “I mean, he did promise to take me out, but I have to tell him when my next time off is, and if this last week was anything to go by...”

“You won’t be having a day off for a while,” Olivia finished.

“And it’s not right to expect him to wait on me,” I said. “Never mind I’m not sure I even want another date with him.”

“How come?” she asked.

I sighed. “It’s a long story.”

She nodded and chewed on her bottom lip.

“Besides, I’m not positive the flowers are from him,” I said.

She stared at me with confusion. “What? Who else would they be from?”

I sucked in a deep breath. “That’s the thing though, I have no clue. It makes sense that they would come from Ashton, but it doesn’t make sense that he would sign the card anonymously.”

“Read it to me,” she said.

I did.

When I finished reading the short message written on the inside of the card, she stared at me in confusion. “What does that even mean?”

I shrugged. “I know, right? I have a sinking suspicion there is a lot more going on with him than meets the eye. I have

noticed other things too.”

“Things like what?” she asked.

I headed to my couch and pulled my knees close to me. “Things like his eye color. That changed. And the dimple thing.”

“What dimple thing?” Olivia asked and took a sip from a mug.

I squeezed my eyes closed and tried to recall every detail of our initial encounter. “Well, when I first met him, he had a dimple on his right cheek. Only one.”

“Uh huh...” she said, blue eyes focused on me.

“And then at the game, he didn’t have one.”

“Is that when his eyes changed too?” she asked.

I nodded. “The first time we met, his eyes were amber. Then the second, they were more honey colored.”

“Interesting,” she said. “I wonder if it was the lighting in the stadium?”

I nodded. “It might have been, but I could have sworn they were different in the hall too.”

“Seriously?” she asked.

“Yeah,” I said and became lost in thought for a moment. My brain was covered in the fuzz of exhaustion. I couldn’t think clearly or straight, and I was getting mixed up with the details. But I had to figure this out.

Because if it was one thing I wasn’t, it was crazy.

“I mean,” Olivia started. “Amber and honey are pretty close in color.”

“Right,” I said. “And I understand that. Which is why by itself, wasn’t a big deal.”

“The dimple thing is weird,” she said.

I nodded. “Agreed. But when I talked to him about it, he made it seem like it was normal for it to come and go.”

Olivia's face contorted. "I don't think that is how that works."

"I thought so too," I said, feeling validated.

"I'm with you on thinking something else going on," she said and leaned forward. "You should definitely keep your eyes wide open on your next date and see what you can pick out. My guess is the differences are going to start adding up to more than simple coincidences."

"Agreed," I said. "And thank you so much for not thinking I was crazy."

"Of course not," she said. "I know you better than that."

I chuckled. "Yeah but I'm also excruciatingly exhausted. So, things might have been getting mixed up."

"Nah. I think you have a better handle on things than you're giving yourself credit for." Olivia smiled.

"Thanks," I said, smiling back.

"Now go get some rest," she said.

I laughed. "Don't tell me twice."

I stood up and headed to the kitchen as my stomach started to growl. "Well, after I eat something."

"You need to take care of yourself!" Olivia said. "Eat, sleep, repeat. And for God's sake, learn to tell your job no."

I leveled my gaze on her after putting in a microwave dinner. "Yes, ma'am."

She laughed. "I love you."

"Awe. I love you too, babe!" I said and pulled out a mini bottle of Moscato.

We ended the call right as the microwaved dinged, signaling my dinner being ready. I carried it and my Moscato to the couch and barely got through my whole meal before passing out.

ASHTON

Earlier in the morning, I received a text from Boston letting me in on what was said when Morgan had messaged and told him she was taking the next two days off.

“Good deal,” I texted back to him. “Tell her I will reach out with a time in a bit.”

Though I tried to play everything cool, I was instantly excited.

“Okay,” he said. “I really hate playing the middleman.”

I didn’t care. He agreed to participate. “Too bad.”

He might not like it, but playing the middleman was necessary. Or maybe he was simply bitter he wasn’t next, or the first. Regardless, it didn’t matter. I ignored his next reply and went to work on planning the perfect date.

Hours later, and with a few texts to Boston to help keep Morgan in the loop, not to mention all of the strings I had to pull, I managed to secure us a table at one of Denver’s most elaborate, expensive restaurants that didn’t require a pending reservation. And believe me, it took a lot more than I had expected.

Thankfully, I had some high-profile clients that I worked with and had owed me a few favors.

The place featured all the romantic necessities Morgan had listed as her perfect date. A private table sitting on a secluded veranda that was set for the two of us and covered by smooth,

rich linens. White tealight candles sat inside small glass jars, surrounded by red flower petals. Soft, instrumental music floated through the air, creating a warm atmosphere.

Topped with the waterside view of the man-made pond, decorated with lavish landscaping meant to appear as a whole different world in the middle of a huge, bustling metropolis, it was as perfect as things were going to be. Especially for the last minute.

As the sun started its descent behind the mountain peaks of the Rockies, I stood corrected. Twinkling lights that dangled from the trees had kicked on, giving everything around me a magical, surreal glow.

Soon, a few of the restaurant's workers came out and placed floating lanterns onto the water.

Things couldn't have been more perfect.

Women ate this shit up.

And judging by Olivia's perfect date, which Boston shared with me, she was going to be no different, and by the end of the night, I was going to have her eating out of the palm of my hand.

Needless to say, this whole evening was worth every penny. And it was costly. More than I would have liked to spend, but Morgan was worth it. And if I had to go broke to win the contest and her heart, then I would gladly do so.

I also had some outdoing to be done, no thanks to Clayton. It would figure he would break the rules to try and tip the game in his favor.

I sat at our table, waiting for her to show up. And when she did, I was dumbfounded. She stole my breath away.

She wore a long, black dress that shimmered in the light as she moved. Just like the surrounding world around her, she was magical and perfect in every way.

She belonged in a place like this. And lavished with gifts and expensive dinners.

I gulped as she drew closer.

Her hair was pulled back into a French bun. Small strands of bangs fell to the side of her face, framing her features perfectly. She smiled warmly in greeting, and I stood from the table, nearly stumbling over my feet.

She stifled a chuckle, and I smiled sheepishly.

“You look amazing,” I said, breathlessly.

She blushed. “Thank you. You look incredibly handsome yourself.”

I nodded and then gestured toward her seat. “Allow me.”

She nodded.

I skipped to the seat and pulled on the back, giving her enough room to slide herself between it and the table. As she went to sit, I slid the chair firmly underneath her.

“Thank you,” she said, peering at me from over her shoulder.

I nodded. “You are very welcome.”

I took my seat and cleared my throat as my eyes met hers. They were like chocolate. Smooth, rich, and creamy. But also, so much depth and wonder. I could spend forever within them. I smiled. What a thought.

“What?” she asked. Her cheeks flushed again. The way she pulled her eyes away was like an arrow through the heart. A split second later, her eyes found mine again. There was something about her that ignited my soul.

I shook my head. “Nothing. You just look so amazing.”

“Thank you,” she said.

The waiter appeared seconds later and poured us the red I had ordered when I first arrived and got settled. With a nod, he excused himself long enough to bring us the tray of appetizers.

“What’s this?” Morgan asked.

“I took the liberty of ordering appetizers,” I said. Truthfully, the order was a collection of aphrodisiacs mixed in with some plain old basic stuff. “I hope you don’t mind.”

She raked her gaze over the arrangement as the waiter sat each one on the table between us and smiled. “Not at all, they all seem so delicious.”

I nodded. “Perfect. Let’s dig in. Shall we?”

She nodded. “Everything looks so wonderful. It’s hard to decide where to start.”

I picked up a piece of sliced baguet and speared some of the spinach and artichoke dip onto the surface before taking a huge bite.

The flavors burst along my tongue. Decadent, rich, flavorful. The bread was soft and spongy. Not at all how I imagined it to be.

Oh yeah... so worth the money.

I glanced at Morgan whose eyes rolled into the back of her head as she chewed a bite of whatever she had plopped into her mouth.

My mouth fell open as I stared at her enjoyment. It was almost sexual, the way she experienced the flavors that danced along her tongue.

I didn’t want her to catch me staring again. Regretfully, I forced myself to look away and clear my throat. “So, how have you been?”

She chuckled around her bite of food and nodded. Once she swallowed everything down, she said, “That’s the question you’re going to go with?”

I shrugged. “You’re very distracting. Can’t keep my thoughts straight.”

She pointed at me, brown eyes glittering in the light of the candles sitting on the table. “Good answer.”

She took an additional few seconds to chew her bite down before swallowing it. She then sucked in a breath and said, “I’ve been okay. Not great, but okay. I can’t even begin to describe how much I needed these two days off.”

“Oh yeah?” I asked.

She nodded. “Work has yet to slow down. Had they had things their way, I would be working right now instead of here with you.”

I smiled. “Well, I’m certainly glad you decided to take some time to yourself, and I’m flattered you wanted to share some of that time with me.”

She blushed again. “You are welcome.”

I nodded and took another bite of my mini-baguet.

“What about you?” She asked, setting me on fire with her gaze again. “How have you been? Still getting worked to death?”

To be frank, I had zero ideas as to what she was talking about. Boston managed to keep that from me. The asshole. I almost wondered if they were trying to sabotage this whole thing. I hated being deceitful. Moreso than I already was. But I had to figure out a way through this conversation before she started to suspect something.

I shrugged, bobbing my head back and forth in a non-committal gesture. “Yes and no.”

“Well, at least we were able to have this time off together,” she said. “Sorry about it being the last minute. I hope I didn’t mess anything up for you.”

“Nah,” I said waiving my hand through the air between us. “I’m happy we were able to get this worked out.”

“I see you took what I said about the perfect date to heart,” she said, raking her gaze around. “Even added a few of my unmentioned details.”

“Which ones are those?” I asked, curiously.

She shifted her gaze to me. “You tell me.”

I cocked my head to the side. “How am I supposed to figure that out?”

She chuckled. “Read my mind, duh.”

I laughed. “You’re giving me way too much credit.”

For the third or fourth time since she arrived, she kept staring at my cheek. It was starting to make me worried. At first, I wasn't sure she was doing that but I was almost positive now. That wasn't a good thing. I had a dimple in my right cheek. Just the one. My brothers didn't. It was one of the incredibly few differences between us.

"Is everything okay?" I asked.

"Everything is more than okay," she said. "It's almost perfect."

I smiled wider. She stared at my cheek.

My heart palpitated. She could already have been on to us.

"Why do you ask?" she asked.

I shrugged, and then stared at a spot on the table. "You know, I am not sure."

She laughed.

If she suspected anything though, she didn't do anything else to lead to that. The rest of our dinner had gone well, and when we were finished, we shared an uber back to our apartment building.

MORGAN

I freaking knew it!

The dimple was back. And no, I didn't believe the excuse I was given that it would come and go. They only come and go with weight gain and loss and seeing as how this man is relatively the same size as the man I brought with me to the ball game, the excuse doesn't work.

He really was different.

And the eye color was different than last time too. They were Amber again. Distinct reddish brown that glowed within the light of the candles burning on the table. They were hard to look away from. So beautiful and enchanting. Much like the whole evening, if I was being honest with myself.

What were the odds that twins would be after me, I wondered to myself. Was it some sort of sick game for them? Or was it that they weren't sure I would be willing to date brothers and because they were nearly identical, perhaps they thought I wouldn't notice a difference?

As much as I realized I should be angry, I wasn't. Truth be told, I was more curious about it than anything. Most of all, I wanted to see this through. To the bitter end if that was where things were heading.

And as much as I hated to admit it, I was flattered. Two men vying for me. Identical or not.

Well, it was high time I did a little experiment of my own.

Once we were finished with dinner, the check was delivered. I reached for it. He clapped his hand over the top of it and glared at me. I smiled sheepishly back at him.

“My date, my treat,” he said.

I fluttered my eyes. “Thank you.”

He chuckled and shook his head. The dimple had not once made a disappearing act. “Once this is taken care of, would you want to share an Uber back? Since we’re heading to the same place?”

I smiled wider. “I would love it. So long as we can split the fare.”

He shook his head. “I insist on covering everything tonight.”

I stared at him in awe. How could such a handsome man be so into me? Me, of all people. Him and his brother. Because I was certain there was more than just one of him. And I planned to have more evidence of that later on too. I was never admired or flirted with like this. Never. Especially by men who I admit were far out of my league in terms of looks.

Once the check was taken care of, we headed out front to wait for the Uber. Within five minutes, the driver pulled up to the curb and we climbed into the back of the sedan.

While the driver wove through traffic, taking us back to our apartment complex, Ashton—if that was even really his name—couldn’t keep his hands off of me. And I didn’t mind one bit. The chemistry between us was undeniable, and if I didn’t say so myself, I could have sworn there were literal sparks between us.

The way he kissed me was different than the one who had kissed me before, but it was almost too similar as well. It confused me. I was so sure he wasn’t the same person. But the way his mouth claimed mine was too familiar. Hunger and urgency filled his kisses along with a powerful heat of passion that caused a flood to open between my legs.

I wanted him.

My body craved him.

Damn it all, I deserved a release too.

I sincerely hoped when he walked me to my door it wasn't the end of the night. Because I wanted to go all the way. Especially with the way his fingertips dug into my skin.

What seemed like minutes into the drive, the car stopped moving and the driver cleared his throat. "We have arrived at your destination."

I blushed as I pulled from Ashton. Cold air filled the space between us as I readjusted myself in the seat and then opened the door. I slid out of the back seat while he took care of the fare and tip. Once we were on the sidewalk, he escorted me to my door. I leaned against it as I pulled my keys from my purse.

"Come in for a little?" I asked.

He smiled. "I hoped you would ask."

I giggled and unlocked my door. Ashton stepped in after me. Once we were in, he closed the door and I headed to the kitchen to make some coffee.

"Do you have anything to play music on?" Ashton asked.

"Just my phone," I said.

He ticked his tongue a few times as he shook his head. "I need to do something about that."

"Why?" I asked as I set the coffee to brew and then joined him in the middle of my living room.

"How else are we supposed to slow dance to romantic songs if we don't have the music to dance to?" he asked, closing the gap between us.

I smiled. "We could use our imagination."

Much to my amazement, started to hum a tune as his hands slipped along my waist, coming to a stop at the small of my back. I dangled my arms around his neck and gazed into his dazzling eyes as he continued to hum a slow, smooth rhythm to a song I believed he was making up as he went.

Slowly, we moved from side to side. I followed his lead as we continued to move in slow circles throughout my apartment.

When his song ended, he smiled. “What did you think?”

I chuckled. “Bravo.”

He sighed and playfully teased, “Yes. I just wrote it from the top of my head. I deserve a Grammy.”

I laughed. “You’re a natural Beethoven.”

“I’m flattered.” He smiled big. The dimple in his right cheek deepened a bit.

I met his waiting gaze and became lost in his eyes. He searched mine for something I could only guess and then, briefly, they fell to my lips before meeting my eyes again. With the corners edging upward, I lifted up on my toes and planted a kiss on his mouth.

He deepened the kiss, sliding his tongue along mine, filling me with heat and desire. His arms squeezed me into him, and the pressure was comfortable despite the tips of his fingers pressing into my skin and creating sharp pressure.

I breathed in deep the smell of his spicy cologne and my knees nearly gave out on me. It was a good thing he was holding me so tightly, and I considered that a small miracle considering I could have had us toppling to the ground.

But Ashton was strong and barely leaned forward.

Luckily my knees recovered barely a few seconds after almost giving out completely.

But the heat of the passion between us was only getting started.

Once I was firmly standing upright on my feet, I pulled away from him and smiled. “Do you mind helping me out of this thing?”

His eyes darkened as he gulped and nodded once.

I turned around and held my hair out of the way while his strong, steady fingers gripped the zipper and pulled it down

toward my ample ass. The dress loosened its grip on my body, and I turned around, meeting Ashton's heavy gaze.

Without pulling my eyes away from his, I slipped the dress off my shoulders and let it fall to the floor, revealing a complete set of black, lace underwear.

Ashton's lips parted as his eyes took in every inch of me. Once he met my gaze again, he slammed his body into mine, kissing me with feverish need as he angled my body toward the bed and forced me backward until the back of my legs rested against the mattress. With gentle force, he pushed me back onto the mattress.

I stared up at him as he slowly took off his clothes.

Ripples upon ripples of muscle covered his body and flexed and moved with each motion. His eyes darkened as he unbuttoned his pants, sliding out of them before they were fully unzipped. His erection pressed against his underwear, drawing my gaze.

I bit my lip in anticipation. His girth was massive. Much bigger than the last time. Which caused a mental tally mark to be placed in the different Ashton category.

Slowly, he removed his underwear, freeing his erection from the confines of the soft cotton fabric. He hovered over me, placing a deep, long kiss on my mouth while the tip of his hardened dick teased my sex through the lace.

Heat flushed through me. Another burst of wetness added to my nearly soaked panties.

Ashton pulled from my mouth to plant kisses along my chest as his fingers pulled on the straps of my bra, tugging the material down my arm enough to free my breasts. He plopped a nipple into his mouth, swirling his tongue around the delicate flesh, causing my toes to curl and a sweet pressure to build between my hips. Seconds later, he teased the other nipple in much of the same way before moving down my body toward my sex.

But instead of washing me with his mouth he used his fingers to rip the fabric from my sex and cupped it with his

entire hand. He clenched his hand over my sex forcing an almost orgasmic gasp from my lips.

He mused to himself as he slid a finger between my folds, brushing along my swollen, sensitive clit. As his skin grazed along my organ, my thighs twitched, and I sucked in a shuddering breath.

His finger dipped into my wetness before sliding back upward, along my clit.

I moaned softly as he continued to tease my clit.

I craved his mouth on me. I craved his dick inside me... I wanted every part of him.

“Fuck me now!” I shouted.

Ashton settled his shock-filled gaze on me.

I shrugged in response.

He said, “Well, all right then.”

Once he situated himself firmly between my legs, hovering directly above me, he pressed the tip of his erection into my entrance. Forcing his engorged self all the way inside me. I sucked in a breath as he filled me until he couldn't possibly stretch me anymore.

A sharp sting bled into my sex, and I realized he tore me. But the burning fire that entered me slowly faded into sweet, delicious pleasure. And as the pain faded, Ashton had fully seated himself inside me and began grinding his hips against mine, brushing his bone against my clit, building pressure between my hips.

This man was most assuredly different from the man I had sex with a few weeks ago. His sex filled me differently. He was fuller and his movements were different from the last time as well.

The other Ashton, the first (or was it second) one took his time and made my pleasure his top priority. This one, seemed to crave my release so badly he lost sight of mutual pleasure.

Not only that, but I wasn't sure what was going on in this one's mind. He seemed overly focused on the deed and not too concerned with filling the silence with chatter. Flirting or otherwise.

He seemed much more forceful with his movements as well. Almost like he couldn't get enough or had to have sex at a certain roughness.

I lifted my legs, wrapping them around his waist. He slid deeper inside me, and another bite of sharp pain entered me. I hissed.

Ashton pulled away from me and stopped moving. "Are you okay?"

It was the first thing he said to me since we began having sex. The first sign of concern for me and my pleasure.

I nodded. "Don't stop."

His mouth crashed into mine. I wrapped my arms around his shoulders and held onto him as he moved inside me. My orgasm started to build. With his breath in my ears, and the motion of his movements, I fell into his rhythm and my climax edged closer.

I arched my back, forcing the orgasm over the edge. And once it hit, I cried out my pleasure into the open space of my small apartment. The sound bounced off the walls and echoed back to me on an almost endless cycle.

Because the orgasm lasted much longer than I anticipated.

As my climax started to fade, I questioned the differences I noticed, wondering if maybe it was possible that he really was the same person as before. But there were some details that were almost impossible to ignore. Things that didn't quite add up and were beyond coincidence or lighting.

I pushed those thoughts to the side while Ashton pulled himself out of me. He coaxed me to my knees and raked his fingers down my bare back as my ass faced him. With a pinch and a bite on my rounded cheek, he inserted himself, slamming into me hard.

I clung to the blanket and sheet covering my mattress as I squeezed my eyes closed and clenched my teeth against the pain of his forceful thrusts.

Yet again, the pain bled into pleasure, and I continued to grip fistfuls of my blanket as another orgasm quickly rocked through me.

Ashton stiffened behind me. His weight pressed against my back as his movements stuttered. Seconds later, he grunted as hot liquid spilled inside me. His jerking motions ceased, and he collapsed onto the bed, panting for breath.

I did the same, feeling aroused all over again. But I gave the man the decency of five minutes to catch his breath, and as those ticked by, I rolled on top of him and bit my lip.

“What are you doing?” he murmured with half-closed eyes.

I wiggled on top of him. “I’m not done yet.”

I lowered myself to his budding erection, stuck out my tongue, and licked the tip, tasting him and me mixed together. We were an amazing combination.

He shuddered in response and that encouraged me to continue. I wrapped my lips around the swollen head of his shaft, already starting to harden. I gripped the shaft in one hand and cupped his balls with the other. And as he became rock hard, I slid my tongue down his shaft, lightly grazing my teeth along his sensitive skin before bobbing my head up and down on the tip.

He groaned, thighs shaking.

Just when I started to get a good rhythm, he pushed me off of him.

I stared at him in confusion.

He said, “I don’t want to come inside your mouth.”

I smiled and nodded. “Okay.”

He laid back and I crawled above him, straddling the tip of his dick, toying it with my entrance. As I braced myself on his

chest, I slowly lowered myself onto him. He slid inside me, and as his eyes closed, his fingers clutched my hips, digging into my skin.

Slowly, I started to rock along his hips, working them in circles and back and forth. Ashton pushed himself into me, aiding me in the ride. Once my orgasm drew closer, my arms grew weak and I collapsed on top of him.

He didn't seem to mind because he took over, sliding his dick in and out of me. Hitting my G-spot. Within seconds, I buried my face into the crook of his neck, crying out my pleasure as I rocked against him, rubbing my clit along his lower torso, egging the orgasm to continue.

He grunted as his movements slowly came to another stop. I rolled to my side where he curled into me, sticking his dick between my legs, moving it in and out, teasing me with another round of pleasure.

And we continued consuming our passions.

Long, long into the night.

BOSTON

I was halfway through my shift when I heard a familiar voice. The sound of it made my pulse race. I was flipping through a patient chart, trying to find results from a test I had been waiting for when her voice graced my ears like a heavenly song.

Believing my ears to be tricking me, I lifted my gaze to her beautiful face. She stood over twenty feet away from me. She hadn't noticed me gawking at her. At least, not yet. She was speaking with someone in reception and was holding a large towel over her hand, and I wondered what she did to wind up at the hospital I worked at.

Then the little game my brother roped me and Clayton into dawned on me, and I was suddenly worried about being exposed.

She couldn't see me because she was convinced that I and my two identical brothers were all the same person. It would be extremely difficult to explain being here, dressed in scrubs when she was under the impression I worked a totally different job.

"Shit," I muttered under my breath and dodged behind the wall just before Morgan could see me and blow this whole thing out of the water.

Of course, I wanted to know why she was walking into the emergency room. The idea of her being hurt or sick didn't sit well with me, but there was too much at stake. Being exposed

to her wasn't the best thing. I could only imagine what Ashton would think. So, I ducked out of view.

Becca, my coworker and friend, stared at me like I had grown a second head.

"What's that about?" she asked. Her dark brown eyes stared at me, made darker by the line of black that surrounded them.

I glanced at her. "What?"

She gestured toward me. "That."

I shrugged. "You'll have to be more specific than just pointing at me and saying 'that.'"

She twisted to face me, leaning against the counter separating the nurse's station from the rest of the facility. "Do I have to spell it out?"

I glared at her. "Don't worry about it, all right?"

"No. Not all right," she said. "What gives?"

I shook my head. I adored Becca. She was a great person to work with and she understood "Guy Speak" more than most women. I would have to chalk that up to her being a lesbian. One of those "butch" types. With the exception of all the makeup she wore, she dressed and acted like one of the guys. So, it should have gone without being said that she could see right through me and settled her gaze on the only person to have walked through the door.

She nodded. "She's pretty. What's her name? What is it about her that has you ducking for cover?"

"Becca," I said, voice thick with a warning, "mind your own business."

She shrugged. "I would but, you know I can't pass up a good, juicy story."

I shook my head and stared down the hall. Becca wasn't going to drop this and leave it alone. At least, not until she had enough details to appease her nosey nature. I supposed that was the second characteristic that set her apart.

I found a door about halfway down the hall. It was the Janitor's Closet. It wasn't the most inconspicuous spot to choose but it would ensure no one would walk in on us and/or overhear things that weren't theirs to listen to. Not to mention it lessened the likelihood of running into Morgan.

With a huff, I settled my gaze on Becca's, grabbed her by the wrist, and dragged her down the hall.

"Hey, I'm capable of following just fine," she said.

"Shush," I snipped.

She scoffed, but it didn't matter. In less than a minute, I pulled her into the Janitor's closet with me.

"A broom closet..." she said, looking around and then nodding to herself. "I've been in more romantic places than this, but I suppose it will do."

I leveled my gaze at her. "Never mind you're batting for the same team?"

She shrugged and then raked her gaze along my body. "Never too late to change my mind."

I shook my head, annoyed. "Are you going to be an ass or are you going to listen?"

She tapped her finger on her chin. "Depends."

"Do you want me to tell you what's up or not?" I snapped.

She chuckled and shook her head. "You really need to get laid, my friend."

"Do you or not?" I asked again.

She sighed and settled her dark eyes on me. "Yes."

Then he clapped her hands together and rubbed them greedily as I sucked in a deep breath and thought of where to start. Things were such a mess when it came to Ashton and his antics. Really, the beginning could have been at any point for him.

But for me...?

“My brothers and I have this tradition on Saturdays,” I started.

“Yes, I know that... next,” she said.

I growled.

“Sorry, I’m anxious,” she muttered and pretended to zip her lips and threw away the key.

I sighed. “It just so happened that a few weekends ago, Ashton saw this chick.”

Her eyes widened. “Oh, you have got to be kidding me.”

“You don’t even know where this is going yet,” I said. “Hold the judgment for later.”

She held her hands up in surrender. “If Ashton is involved, it can’t be good.”

True. But still...

“Anyway, longish story shorter than it should be is: We are all trying to date the same girl, only she doesn’t know we are triplets.”

Becca stiffened and stared at me blankly. She didn’t even so much as breathe. I sucked in a lungful of air to calm my rattled nerves because how Becca stared at me unsettled me. I wasn’t sure if she was going to burst out in laughter or beat me to a pulp for daring to double-cross a woman like that.

Luckily for me, she went with the first option. Her façade started to crack as her eyes brightened and her mouth curved upward. She burst out in a deep laugh. Her hand gripped my shoulder to steady herself as she bowled over, wrapping her other arm around her gut.

I stood there, staring at the door, hoping and begging for any higher power that might have been listening to me to not let us get caught in the closet together and cause a scene that might end up exposing me after all.

When she finally stopped laughing, she wiped her face clean from a few tears that had fallen in her fit of laughing at

my humility and sighed. “Oh man, I really needed that. Thank you.”

“I’m so glad you’re amused,” I muttered.

“Yeah, well, your first mistake was listening to Ashton’s harebrained ideas,” she said.

“We all want her though,” I said.

She shrugged. “You could have done the male-masculinity thing and competed against each other for her. But I can see how Ashton would have shot that down.”

“You know him better than I thought,” I said.

“Eh, as you said, the complete opposite of you,” she said. “Which begs the question, why did you go along with it?”

I shrugged. “I guess I thought if I didn’t, I wouldn’t have a chance with her.”

She shook her head. “I have to tell you, my friend, I do not envy you one bit.”

“Thanks,” I said.

“And,” she added, holding up a finger, “you deserve everything coming to you for this. You and your two brainless brothers.”

I glared at her. “Thanks. And I know this.”

She clapped me on my shoulder. “Hey, what are friends for if not to point out the obvious?”

I stared at her and crossed my arms over my chest. “Now that you know, the least you could do is be helpful.”

She shook her head. “What? Like provide advice?”

“Yeah,” I said. “That would be wonderful.”

“Tell her the truth,” she said. “And soon.”

“I can’t. My brother damn near killed Clayton in the middle of his own damn living room just for having sex with her.”

“What?” she asked, voice falling flat.

I huffed. “Ashton, tried to kill Clayton in Clayton’s living room.”

“Yeah, yeah,” she said, waving a hand between the two of us. “I got that part. The part I don’t get is the why.”

I shrugged. “Lapse of sanity.”

“Did he really have much of that to start with though?” she asked.

I chuckled. “I’ve wondered that myself a number of times over the course of our lifetime.”

Her beeper chirped. As she grabbed it to look at it, she said, “Eh, I still say you need to end this before she gets hurt.”

I nodded.

“I got to go. Patient needs me,” she said.

“Don’t tell anyone about this,” I said as she walked out of the closet.

She smiled at me from over her shoulder and flashed me a wink before disappearing from view.

I groaned. Something told me I was going to regret telling her anything about that.

MORGAN

My finger hurt.
Badly.

As I sat in the exam room of the closest emergency room, I thought about how everything happened and supposed that was what I got for using a paper cutter and daydreaming at the same time. I would be lucky if my finger could be salvaged. Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't stop daydreaming at the same time.

But nevertheless, I was cutting out flyers for a business-wide event and got stuck in my head about my predicament with Ashton. I was sure more than ever I was dealing with two different men. That meant, he was a twin. There had to be some reason behind them choosing me to be their toy.

There was a reason for sure. I just wasn't anywhere close to figuring it out or even how to go about figuring it out.

My finger got too close to the end of the board. I pulled on the blade-covered handle. The sound the paper normally made sounded a bit weird in the middle. Then I saw all the blood, and then my finger, sliced completely open with a large slice collected on the pile of paper strips.

"Oh, my God!" I said and immediately collected the part of my finger and grabbed a package of paper towels, wrapping my finger in thin paper.

I had run to my boss' office and held up my hand wrapped in paper towels soaked red from the sheer amount of blood

that was getting everywhere. Luckily for me, there was another woman in the paper room, willing to help clean the mess up so I could go get my hand looked at.

“Go,” she insisted. “I’ve got this covered.”

I nodded.

Hell, I wasn’t even sure how I was going to get to a hospital. I certainly wasn’t going by ambulance. But one problem at a time. First boss.

I barged into his office. He was an older, bald man with a no-nonsense expression constantly plastered to his face. He met my gaze and then his light blue eyes fell on my wrapped hand.

“How the hell did you do that to yourself?” he asked, standing from his desk. “Don’t get blood all over my office.”

“I won’t,” I said. “It was a careless accident.”

“Well, I suppose you are going to want to file a workman’s comp case,” he said and searched the surface of his desk.

“Nope. I just want to go get this taken care of,” I said.

He settled his light blue eyes on me again. “No?”

I shook my head. “Not only have I seen those work out negatively for the employee in the past, but what happened was my fault. Not the company.”

He sighed and then nodded. “Are you willing to sign a statement attesting to that fact?”

I hardened my glare on the man. “Yes. Can I go now?”

He nodded. “Let me know if you need anything.”

Just before I was out of earshot, he added, “And I expect you back for your shift tomorrow.”

I shrugged off the anger I felt with his words and got out of there like a bat out of hell. It was when I was halfway to the hospital that the nerves in my finger woke up from the shock and started screaming at me.

And now I waited in a chilly room, while the sounds around me fade into nothing behind the closed door, clinging to my finger as my pulse bleeds through it, burning like fire and acid. I was also starting to feel a little lightheaded.

Just when I was about to wonder how long I would be sitting in a sterile room, waiting for my finger to be addressed. A nurse walked in.

She smiled at me, meeting my gaze with her almost black-as-night eyes. She took a seat on the rolling stool that doctors use and got close. “So, you cut your finger?”

I nodded and sheepishly admitted, “I did.”

She nodded. “Let’s take a look.”

She stood long enough to put gloves on then sat back on the stool and began pulling back layers of blood-soaked paper towels to reveal the damage done to my poor finger. She hissed.

“You definitely did a number on yourself,” she said.

“Can it be saved?” I asked.

She sucked in a breath as she poked and prodded the wound and piece of my finger that got cut off. “I am not sure. But the doctor will be in to check, and he will make the final call.”

I nodded, really hoping my finger could be saved.

“Believe me, this isn’t the worst thing I’ve done to myself,” I said.

She nodded. “I understand.”

She stood and headed back for the cabinets stationed above the sink and pulled out gauze and cleaning solution. Once she had collected everything she was going to need, she added solution to the gauze and took a seat again in front of me.

“We are going to first clean the area up so the doctor can see things better. It’s not going to be comfortable,” she warned.

I nodded.

As she worked, she examined the wound deeper. “You are lucky the cut isn’t deeper.”

I nodded. “It doesn’t feel that way, but thanks.”

She nodded. “So, was it a guy?”

“Huh?” I asked.

She met my gaze briefly and smiled. “The reason for your cut. Was it because of a guy?”

“Sort of...” I said, dragging out the last word.

She smiled again.

“I was lost in thought trying to figure out an issue I was having and was cutting papers for my job.”

“And you lost sight of what you were doing and carelessly got in the way of the blade?” she finished.

I nodded with a frown. “Men.”

I nodded. “Yeah.”

Once the nurse finished cleaning the wound, she stood and removed her gloves. She leaned back against the corner of the counter and crossed her arms over her chest. She seemed lost in thought which had my anxieties running wild.

“Is everything okay?” I asked.

She chewed on her lip and nodded. “Uh-huh... well, sort of.”

“Okay...” I stared at her, waiting for her to continue.

She finally met my gaze a few minutes later and said, “I’ll be back. The doctor will be in shortly to look at that cut. He’ll likely order stitches, but I want to make sure first.”

I nodded. To me, that was a strange thing to be lost in thought over. I didn’t want to look at my finger. I was too worried it would start hurting again. It was bad enough that it felt like my finger was wasting away with whatever fiery hell I had rubbed all over it.

She left the room.

After about an hour, and one doctor's check, later, she returned.

"Miss me?" she asked and chuckled.

I smiled. "Oh yes."

"Good. Let's get that finger stitched up," she said as she pulled out more materials from the cabinet. She set everything on a steel tray on wheels, covered with a thin sheet of medical-grade paper. She wheeled everything toward me and took another seat.

I watched as she went to work, first numbing my finger. Then she took a curved, thin needle with a string attached to it, and then started sewing the piece of my finger that had gotten cut off back onto my finger.

Once she made it a quarter of the way through, she sat up and stretched her neck. Then she settled her gaze on me.

I smiled gently.

"I have to tell you something, but I don't want you to be upset," she said.

"What is it?" I asked, my voice filled with concern. I instantly thought my finger was going to turn black and fall off.

"It's about the guy you are seeing," she said.

I sucked in a breath. "Oh no."

Was I a homewrecker? Was that the reason for the differences?

No. That couldn't be it.

"What?" she asked.

"Is he cheating on someone with me?" I asked.

Her eyes widened. "Oh no. Nothing like that. But I do know more about what is going on than you might think."

I stared at her, confused. "Oh?"

She sucked in a deep breath and let it out in a rush. "Ashton isn't who you think he is. At least, not entirely."

“I knew it,” I said, staring at her wide-eyed. Then it occurred to me I was talking to a perfect stranger and how she knew more about what was going on in my life baffled me. “But how did you know?”

“I work with one of his identical brothers,” she said with a shrug then went back to work on my finger.

“One?” I asked. “As in more than one identical brother?”

She nodded. “Yes, there are three of them running around. One of them works here and was doing everything he could to stay out of sight.”

I chuckled sarcastically while slowly shaking my head. “Unbelievable.”

“You really aren’t surprised by this, are you?” she asked.

I shook my head. “I had my suspicions.”

“Well, now you know. They are all trying to play this sick, twisted game to see who gets to date you because they’re stupid and all three saw you and they somehow believe if they see you first you are automatically theirs.”

I nodded. “Why are you telling me all of this?”

She shrugged. “Because we women have to stick together.”

I smiled. “Well, thank you. Everything you told me adds up and makes so much more sense now.”

“Good. I’m happy to help,” she said.

The nurse wrapped up my finger and a little while later, I was released to go home. Once I made it to my apartment, I pulled out a small bottle of wine and cracked it open as I made my way to the patio. The second I took my seat, I called Olivia to fill her in.

CLAYTON

I stepped through the door of the local sports bar. Normally it wasn't my type of scene. It was just a little hole in the wall, a mom-and-pop type of place to hang out. Everything was outdated, from the decor to the huge, box-style TV screens that sat in the corners of the joint. But they had the best wings in town. Not to mention the pool tables tended to be cooperative. All in all, it had become a spot for me and my brothers to hang out. Plus, it gave Ashton another outlet to be his competitive self.

We had been coming here for years. It held a special place in Ashton's heart. Why? I had no clue. I never cared enough to ask. Besides, it wasn't a horrible place. I really didn't mind going. It just wasn't the type of place I would pick for myself. That's all.

I found Boston and Ashton sitting at the bar, hovering over a bottle of beer. So, I joined them there. As I took a seat, I said, "No table today?"

"We were waiting on you," Ashton said.

At least he didn't sound angry anymore.

Boston snorted. "You're late, by the way."

"Blame my job," I said.

"Start requesting this time off," Ashton clapped back.

I huffed and shook my head. "You know I can't do that."

"Different job?" Boston offered.

I glared at him. "I'm sorry I'm late."

"Was that so hard?" Ashton asked, holding the mouth of the bottle to his lips. He smiled.

I shook my head. "Yeah. Sure."

I motioned to the bartender to bring me a bottle. A few minutes later, the bottle sat in front of me, and I picked it up to take my first swig. It had been a long week, and I was looking forward to a few beers and a couple of rounds of pool.

"Deep discussion?" I asked as silence settled between the three of us. The whole bar was bustling with the sound of country music and clanking balls and chatter from the other patrons. But none of that penetrated the utterly uncomfortable lack of conversation between us.

Boston cleared his throat. "Good song."

I rolled my eyes. "It's an old one."

Ashton nodded and took a sip from his bottle.

I shook my head. "So, what were you talking about when I sat down?"

"What do you think?" Ashton said as though it should be obvious to me.

I shrugged. "How the hell am I supposed to know?"

"Morgan," Boston answered. "We were talking about Morgan."

"What about her?" I asked.

"Have you heard from her, or seen her, or anything?" Ashton asked.

I stared at him. "Do you really want me to answer that?"

He huffed. "Look, I already apologized for that, what more do you want?"

I shrugged. "I don't know. But you're right. You have."

"Then let's move on from that," he said.

I shrugged. “Fine by me. And to answer your question I haven’t heard anything from her. Why?”

“Because she’s not returning calls,” Boston said.

“When did this start happening?” I asked as a pinch formed in the center of my forehead. I wanted to stare at Ashton. He was the last to go on a date with her.

The song changed and the crowd within the space cheered. The small dance floor that took up the corner of the building became filled with half-drunk patrons line dancing to the beat of the song.

I frowned.

Boston said, “I saw her at the ER a few days ago. I ducked out of the way, but I had later called to check on her and see if she was okay.”

“You didn’t check her record?” I asked.

“And get fired?” he retorted. “No thanks.”

“Only if you get caught,” I muttered.

He leveled his gaze on me.

I huffed. “How long has this been going on?”

Boston shrugged. Both he and I settled our gazes on Ashton, who not so conveniently for him, sat between us. Ashton met each of our gazes before focusing on his beer. After several more seconds, he shrugged.

Boston and I continued to stare at him disbelievingly.

Still, Ashton continued to ignore us.

“What did you do?” I asked, calling him out.

Ashton growled. “If I were you, I would hold off on the accusations.”

“You were the last one who went out with her,” I said.

“Yeah, well Boston was the last one to see her,” he snapped. “Maybe you should be asking him what happened instead of me.”

I glanced at Boston. He shrugged. “I didn’t even talk to her then.”

Ashton shook his head. “Hold on.”

We both look at him.

“When I went out on a date with her, she seemed to be picking out the little differences between us.” Ashton gestured between him and me. “It might be in my head, but as far as I can recall things had ended well between us. There is nothing that stood out that would have resulted in her avoiding us.”

“Which means you had sex with her,” Boston muttered.

“Yes, I did,” he said and took a swig.

I huffed. Ashton having sex with her wasn’t a surprise to me. I figured as much was going to happen. “What differences do you think she was noticing?”

Ashton sucked in a deep breath. “She kept staring at my dimple.”

“That makes sense,” Boston said. “She had asked me once if they can come and go.”

Ashton settled his gaze on him. “And what did you tell her?”

“That they could. But I think she’s smart enough to figure out that they don’t come and go that quickly.”

Crap. This was already starting to fall apart. That wasn’t good. The idea of losing her didn’t sit well with me.

“Shit,” Boston said and slumped in his seat. “Fucking Becca.”

I arched an eyebrow. “Come again?”

Ashton and I stared at him once more.

Boston sighed. “I might have told Becca what was going on. She promised not to say anything, but she ended up treating Morgan. I’m guessing Becca let everything slip.”

I growled. “You ran your mouth? Go fucking figure.”

“She wasn’t going to let it go,” Boston said in his defense. “She was standing next to me when I ducked out of the way.”

“Well,” Ashton said. “It seems like the cat is out of the bag.”

“Now what do we do?” I asked.

Boston said, “I say we give her some time to process things. I’ll try to reach out to her again in a couple of days.”

“And then what?” I asked.

He shrugged. “We’ll all show up and come clean if we need to. But I think I still have a chance to make things work between us.”

Ashton and I exchanged a glance. We were silently checking in with one another, feeling out our opinions of the options made available to us. I shrugged.

“Fine,” Ashton said. “You have one week.”

“Great,” Boston muttered.

I shook my head and fiddled with the beer in my hands. I didn’t know what I was going to do with myself if I lost Morgan. There had to be a way to make her see. Though I was good about giving her space, I wasn’t sure about the week. I was already going stir-crazy. I hadn’t had the chance to see her since our date and I was missing her something fierce.

At least she got the flowers and the chocolate.

MORGAN

Olivia was furious when I told her about the nurse and the game that was being played unbeknownst to me. At least, up until that point. She was angrier than I was.

“Why aren’t you mad? You should be mad,” she said.

I shrugged. “I guess it’s hard to be mad at something I had assumed was going on from the start. I simply didn’t know all the details and how deep the game went.”

“Still, it is wrong what they are doing,” she muttered.

At the end of our call, she highly advised me to go out on other dates and give other men a try. As much as I didn’t like the idea, I knew it was a smart way to play everything out. After all, how was I going to figure out whether or not what I had with the men was real or not if I didn’t see if I had the same chemistry and spark with other men? Men who wouldn’t play games with me or my body.

As much as I hated to give up on the men, even temporarily, I understood Olivia was only looking out for my best. So, I gave in and once I had hung up, pulled up the dating app and started searching through it all.

I settled on one guy. We immediately started talking. I had received a number of calls and messages from the other guys, but Olivia told me to ignore them. Put them completely on the back burner of my mind and let them simmer win what they had done. My mind needed to focus on new things and new opportunities. Not the men.

Long story short? I was getting ready for my date with him. I chose a dressy shirt with some sparkle in Emerald green. Then I dressed it up with some black tights and strappy sandals. I pulled my dark brown hair back into a messy bun, letting strands of it fall loose around my face to frame my features.

With a thin coat of makeup and shimmering gloss to cover my lips, I was done. Well, once I spritzed myself with some perfume first.

I wasn't optimistic about this date. Everything about it felt forced. But I had promised Olivia to give it a shot, and that was what I was going to do.

However, when I got to the restaurant, I recognized him immediately. I stared at him in confusion as I approached the table. I didn't know what I was supposed to expect. He looked exactly like he did in his profile. He met my gaze and stood, greeting me with an awkward hug. He pulled out my chair for me and gestured for me to take a seat. I did so.

"I feel like I've been catfished," I said. "But you look exactly like your profile."

"I know. I'm sorry," he said. "I get that a lot. I guess the MO nowadays is to fake the images on the profile and hope something ends up sticking. But that's just not me."

I shook my head. "No, no. Don't be sorry. This is refreshing. I like that I'm not surprised for once."

"You look exactly like your profile picture," he said.

I nodded. "Yeah, I go with the whole school of thought of honesty being the best policy."

He smiled. It was handsome enough. "I like that."

"Thanks," I said with a smile as I opened the menu. It was a different restaurant I hadn't had the pleasure of dining at before and I wanted to get an idea of what they had on the menu.

"I hope you don't mind, but I took the liberty of ordering for us," he said.

I smiled. “Not at all.”

Then the appetizers were sat on our table, and it was everything I could think of under the aphrodisiacs list. I frowned and arched an eyebrow at the setup.

“Is there something wrong?” the date asked.

I met his waiting blue-eyed gaze. “Huh?”

He pinched a mini slice of bread in his fingers and used it to point to the large plate of appetizers in the center of the table. “Is there something you don’t like on here?”

I sat up straighter and picked up a slice of bread. “Nope. It all looks delicious.”

And that was the truth. I just didn’t think things were going to go further than dinner tonight. Sex with him was the furthest thing from my mind.

He nodded. “We can change it out if you would like.”

I shook my head and picked up a slice of bread before dipping it into some caviar. “Nope. I’m good.”

I might have to use all the toys I have at my disposal before the end of the night, but I really was good with the food sitting in front of me. I also didn’t want to be rude and hated giving off the wrong impression. So, I buckled down and prepared for what might follow after dinner.

For certain, it wasn’t him.

And it was about halfway through the meal when I started to question why I agreed to go out on a date with him. He droned on and on about some random details with his job. His pride and joy, but he had lost me minutes into his very high-level explanation. Not that I cared. Still, the guy was boring.

He lacked imagination and personality. What humor he had was drier than the Sahara in the middle of the summer.

Good grief.

As he droned on, our food was delivered. Lasagna. Delicious but a far cry from the creative choices he had picked for the appetizers.

And then the guy would only shut up long enough for him to take a drink or a bite of his food. Of course, I randomly nodded and pretended I was paying attention to what he was saying. There was no way I could understand a word he said though. He might as well have been speaking Greek.

He struck me as the type that was stuck on himself because he never stopped talking long enough to ask me about myself. Only him, as though he was a gift from the universe and I needed to count my blessings I was the lucky girl who got to have an evening with him. Even the appetizers spelled doom when considering all he was looking at was an easy lay.

Well, that wasn't me. Despite what history looked like with the triplets.

I counted the minutes until he called for the check. Then he smiled at me. "Wanna share a cab back to my place?"

"Oh," I said. "I would but I have an early morning. Plans with my sister."

I don't have a sister.

"Bummer," he said as his eyes darkened. "I was really enjoying our conversation."

"What conversation?" I asked out loud before I could stop the words from leaving my mouth.

He chuckled at me. "You are so lucky I asked you out on a date."

"Am I?" I asked.

Before he had the audacity to berate me further in public, I grabbed my stuff, turned, and headed for the door.

I had barely missed the red flags with him, but there was no way in hell I was sharing anything else with him ever again. Especially one more second of my time. I should have gotten up in the middle of the meal and ducked out. But I was too nice of a person.

And as I drove home, I thought about how much the triplets were different. Sure, they were assholes for this whole game thing, but there was something genuine about them.

Something real and tonight had made me miss them incredibly.

I considered calling once I was home, but I was tired and had enough testosterone for one evening. Besides, they could simmer just a little bit longer. And so long as they weren't aware I was aware of everything, I had control over what happened next.

ASHTON

I had been following her. Ever since finding out she had all but ghosted us. I understood full and well how I looked sticking to the shadows, hovering close by, spying on her. But there was no way to help myself.

I had become restless.

Without Morgan, I was lost. My days were so much darker without her. And my nights were much, much colder. She was the thing I was missing in my life. She had to be. Because every thought somehow led to her. Every dream was over her smiling brown eyes and smooth, creamy skin.

If I allowed myself to dive deep enough into my memories, I could almost taste her again.

Deep within me was an undeniable need to be close to her. Even if she wasn't able to see me. Even if she didn't know I was around.

There was also a deep sense of urgency to protect her. Almost like a sixth sense. The need was a part of me. Ever since the day we met, I had this calling inside me to protect her. It wasn't something I was able to ignore any longer.

I had to have her in my presence, and at the very least, within sight. I had to make sure she was safe.

I was standing on my patio, a few doors down from her place. Her car was in the parking lot. It was Friday night, and if she really had moved on from me and my brothers, my guess was she was going to have plans for tonight.

Sure enough, within a few minutes of me standing on my patio, she walked out of the building and climbed into her car.

I had put a tracker on her vehicle late one night, while everyone was sleeping. It allowed me to keep tabs on her. Getting to know her whereabouts.

But tonight, I was going to use it to follow her. Be close by. Why? I had no clue. It was an unsettling thing. The need to be around her and protect her. So, instead of fighting it, I went along with it.

After giving her a few minutes to get on the road, I followed behind and wound up at an affordable Italian restaurant. Instantly, I was filled with the desire to fight off whoever she had gone there to visit, but I knew revealing myself would only make matters worse.

So, I climbed out of my car and positioned myself in a place where I would be able to watch her and remain out of her sight. I ended up sitting on the back of an iron bench, perched on the back of the bench, and twisted to face the side of the restaurant, which gave a view of a small park.

Morgan took a seat and kept her back toward me, which suited me just fine. I would hate for her gaze to wander out the windows and find me staring at her.

It didn't take long for me to notice the guy she was having dinner with. He was bad news. I smelled as much on him already and I wasn't even close enough to know for sure. Whoever this guy thought he was, he had another thing coming if he honestly believed he would lay a finger on my woman.

I would sooner cut them off than let another man touch her.

They started with a conversation. The guy's eyes danced over her features, smiling like a predator does when he eyes his prey. And within minutes of her taking a seat, food was placed in front of her. Probably the wrong kinds of food. He was trying too hard. That much was obvious.

He had nothing on me or my brothers.

He was blond. Plain. Probably blue eyes. He was thin too. Probably didn't have much in the way of fitness or muscle.

I snorted to myself as I thought, "I could break him like a twig."

My phone buzzed. I pulled it from my pocket and checked the notification. It was Clayton, wondering what I was up to.

"Nothing," I replied.

"Well, nothing," he said, "you left the apartment like a man on a mission."

"So?" I asked.

Minutes later, my phone rang. It was Clayton. I growled and answered. "What?"

"Seriously, what is going on?" he asked.

"She's on a date," I said, giving up the information I knew full and well he wanted.

"With whom?" he asked.

"Now how in the hell can you believe I would be able to answer that question? He looks like a snob. Is that good enough?" I shouldn't have answered. But if I didn't, Clayton wouldn't give up. My only choice was to save myself some added aggravation and answer.

Never mind the regret of doing so.

And thinking about it, I probably could have turned off my phone.

"Yeah, sure. That's enough for me," Clayton said. "So how do things look like it's going?"

I shrugged and stared in the direction of where she sat. "Poorly."

"Well, that has to be a positive sign, right?" Clayton asked.

"If you say so," I muttered. "Is there a reason why you called, or did you want to be annoying for no reason?"

"Ouch," he said. "I called to find out how things were going. I figured you were following her."

“How?” I asked.

“How do you think?” he asked back.

I groaned. “She looks bored if that’s what you are asking.”

“That’s a great thing,” Clayton said. “Hopefully the guy bombs and she comes crawling back to us.”

“Emphasis on the crawling?” I asked.

“You know it,” Clayton said then cleared his throat. “I’ll let you go. Just keep me up to date.”

“Right,” I said and ended the call.

Morgan stuffed her face while the guy barely took bites of his own food. His mouth kept moving and the more he spoke the more she seemed disinterested.

I thought about walking in there. Interrupting and pretending there was an issue I needed help with or just acting like an old friend. But I stayed put because I still didn’t know how much she knew, or if she was aware of anything at all.

Not only that, but I had promised my brothers I would wait until she responded. I hoped she would soon though. Because my tolerance for waiting was rapidly running thin, and I wasn’t sure how much longer I could wait.

MORGAN

I wasted no time getting into the shower after walking through the door. The more time that passed without washing off the air of that man, the more I felt dirty and coated by his repulsiveness.

I couldn't wait to be free of every ounce of his presence.

As the hot water splashed along my naked body, I closed my eyes and leaned into the sensation. I imagined the image of the man I had the dinner date with washing down the drain. His dirty, nastiness being removed from my body, leaving me anew and completely free of him.

"Such rotten luck," I said with a sigh then turned to wet my hair.

My luck with men hadn't been necessarily bad, but it hadn't been all that good either. What with the triplets pretending to be one man and the one I had a date with not knowing how to be one, I was off to a not-so-great start. Things weren't looking all that well for me. At least, not in the romance department.

I shrugged. "Moving on."

I picked up the bottle of shampoo and squirted some of the liquid into the palm of my hand. Instantly, the sweet aroma of spices and fragrance filled my nose. Working the shampoo through my hair, my fingers created a thick lather, and once I had sufficiently covered every last strand, I turned my back to the water and rinsed the soap from my head.

There was something about the way the warmth of the water made the scent of the shampoo continue to dance through the air. I imagined myself on a tropical island paradise at sunset, strolling along the beach as the waves of a warm ocean rushed toward my feet. I was the only one around for a time. Approaching me from the darkened horizon was a man. As he drew closer, his features matched that of Ashton. The one with the dimple.

I wasn't sure who he was, but I had only known him and his brothers by this one name. And as he approached, his white button-up shirt, left open, blew in the soft, gentle breeze. The scent of coconut wafted into my nose from the trees that sat right off the sandy beach.

Once Ashton and I closed the gap between us, we greeted each other with a warm smile. Then his hands wrapped around my waist, his mouth brushed along mine, and before long, we were tangled in each other.

My cries of pleasure echoed around me as the water from the showerhead rushed into my ears, reminding me of a waterfall. I clung to the shower surround with my free hand as my fingers with my other hand went to town on my clit, dipping inside my entrance before returning to smear the sweet wetness along my sensitive mound.

Once my climax ended, and my fantasy faded away, I was still left wanting. So, I took my shower head (which was in the shape of a wand), and shoved it inside me, moving it up and down as the water massaged the inside of my organ. My fingers did the trick on the outside and I nestled myself into the corner of my tub as I fucked myself silly.

Another orgasm came, and instead of leaving the water to pound the inside of my sex, I pulled it out and let it powerfully wash my clit, sending my orgasm ever higher.

My insides ached as the waves of pleasure crashed over me.

But for once in as long as I was able to remember, the whole thing had done the trick. I could go to bed and not be left disappointed and unfulfilled. That wasn't to say the

showerhead could come anywhere close to the real thing. However, for the time being, I was satisfied enough to sleep.

Following my shower, I headed to the kitchen to make some tea. As I went to work, I listened to the voicemails I had saved on my phone. They were from the same man who claimed to be Ashton, but I knew the truth.

And each message had the same worried lilt in the voice.

I huffed. “What are you doing to yourself, Morgan?”

If Olivia had it her way, the messages would have been deleted the second they hit my inbox, much less be given the opportunity to be played. But there was just something about them I couldn’t get over. And I just couldn’t see any way to ignore them for much longer. Especially since it seemed as though every cell in my body missed them and craved them.

I was hopeless.

Sure, if I had an ounce of self-respect, I probably should be mad at the men for playing such dirty games. Especially with me. And that wasn’t even taking into consideration how stupid they must have thought I was to believe they would be able to pull the whole charade off without me catching on.

Maybe they thought I was desperate enough to not notice.

Regardless of their motives behind the whole thing, I still found something charming and romantic about the whole thing. Three men chose me. Me. Of all the women in the city, they picked me.

And it wasn’t like a sick, twisted game of love her then leave her. It was to see who could keep me.

Admittedly, their methods were lame and half-baked at best. But at the end of the day, I was flattered. I wanted to take it easy on them. But not too easy.

Now that I was aware of the game, I was going to play ball right along with them. There was no way in hell I was going to make this easy on them. They still had done me dirty, after all.

With my tea in hand, I headed off to bed and curled up in my covers. While sipping on my tea, I wondered about the

third one. Had I met him? Or did he remain elusive?

Before long, my thoughts had become a tangled mess, wrapped in exhaustion and a deep need for some shuteye. So, I turned off the lights and settled into my comforter.

And right as I started to fall asleep, a damning thought came over me... was I just a game to the triplets, or was there more to me for them than that?

BOSTON

“It’s been days,” Ashton said as he paced the length of my couch. He had interrupted my very important TV time, of which I got very little, to complain to me about Morgan’s lack of contact.

“So?” I asked, voice sounding flat and unamused. I would have added a yawn, but my dear brother would have paid no attention to it.

“So, how are we supposed to make this whole thing work if she leaves in the middle?” he asked.

I shrugged. “You make it sound like you had all of this figured out. Like she was too dumb to catch on. We warned you this whole thing was a bad idea. I think Clayton said he was going to stick around solely to watch it blow up in your face.”

“You’re not helping,” he said with a tone of annoyance.

I rolled my eyes. “And you are? If you’re not careful, you’re going to wear a path through my floor.”

“You wish,” he muttered.

“Not really, but do continue,” I said, keeping up with the sarcasm. “I wasn’t in the middle of anything when you barged through my door unannounced.”

“You’ve got to do something,” he said. “You have to ask her out.”

I stiffened and then stared at him as though he grew a second head. “Come again?”

“You heard me. Ask her out,” he repeated.

“For what purpose?” I asked, staring at him still. I waited for the one thing that would make this whole scenario make sense. We had agreed a few days ago that we would all wait things out for a bit and give Morgan some time to come to terms with everything. Not to mention we were going to let her make the next move.

Me asking her out on a date wasn't doing that.

My brother, God love him, was losing his mind.

“What purpose do you think?” Ashton asked.

I shrugged. “You tell me. You're the one pacing my living room floor like a madman.”

He glared at me as though the answer should have been obvious to me. He also kept pacing. He didn't seem intent on providing any further explanation.

I shook my head. He was losing more and more of his mind every second, I was sure of it.

After several seconds of silence, he said. “Call her up and ask her out on a date.”

“No. We agreed to wait for a reason. I think if we called her up now, it would wind up ending poorly for all of us. We should wait for her to come to us,” I said then settled my attention on the ceiling of my apartment.

“You don't know that for sure,” he argued.

I shook my head and sat forward, resting my elbows on my knees. “Okay. Maybe not. But I will tell you what I do know. And that's she's on to us. How much of what she knows, I haven't a clue. Becca has been tightlipped about it all. But I am certain she has told her more than enough.”

“But you don't know,” he said.

“Again,” I said. “We agreed to let her come to us. If she is fully aware of everything, we need to let her come to us. She's

bound to have questions and us rearing our ugly heads before she's ready isn't going to help us."

"You don't know that for sure," he repeated.

I groaned. "Look, none of us wants this to end poorly. We need to be patient and not rush into things half-cocked constantly."

He glared at me.

I shrugged. "It's the truth."

He nodded... still pacing. In fact, he might have picked up in speed.

I huffed. Ashton really was going to carve a hole into my carpet and then refuse to pay for the repair. I also understood him enough that I could tell when he wasn't going to give up on something he had set his mind to. This meant that if I wanted to get back to my videos, then I needed to placate him.

"Fine!" I said, throwing my hands into the air. "All right I will do it. So long as it gets you out of my face for the rest of the day at least."

Ashton plastered on his charming smile and clapped his hands together. "That's my boy!"

I glared at him with a raised eyebrow as I reached for my phone resting on the end table next to my couch.

With another huff, I scrolled through my contacts until I reached her number. I shook my head. "If this ends badly, it's on you."

My brother nodded. "Yeah, yeah, just get her called already."

I groaned and hit send, switching the call to the speaker. "Have you thought about what might happen if she doesn't answer?"

He placed a finger over his mouth, eyebrows drawing together.

I shook my head.

On the third ring, a click came over the line. I sucked in a breath believing to have reached her voice mail. But then I heard the sweet sound of her voice say, “Hello?”

“Uh, hey, Morgan,” I said and cleared my throat. “How are you?”

“Eh... I’ve been better,” she said. “How about yourself?”

I shrugged and stared at my brother. He rotated his fingers in a circle, signifying I should keep the conversation moving. I shook my head and added, “I’ve been all right. I’ve been having a hard time getting ahold of you. I hope your job hasn’t been working you too much.”

“Oh, no. Nothing like that,” she said. “Sorry I haven’t returned your call. I’ve just been busy here lately with personal things.”

“I can understand that,” I said. “And it’s okay, really.”

“Good,” she said. “I’m glad you think so.”

Her voice was so pleasant and smooth. Like warm honey. I could listen to her talk all day long and never get tired of the sound. She was my favorite song. My heart’s ballad. She would forever hold the number one spot in my mind.

“So, what’s going on?” she asked.

“Nothing much,” I said. “I was actually wondering if you were doing anything later. There’s a new movie out and I thought you and I could go see it together.”

“Um...” she said and then silenced clicked over the line.

Ashton, the ever-impatient one, started to bounce where he stood. I considered the lack of pacing and improvement, but the bouncing was just as annoying.

“Are you still there?” I asked, heart racing in my chest though I was trying everything I could to hide it.

“Uh, yeah. Sorry,” she said. “Sure. What time?”

I glanced at Ashton. He shrugged. I shook my head. His lack of involvement was totally unhelpful. “How about a

couple of hours? Gives us enough time to take care of whatever we need to and I can meet you at your apartment?"

"Sure," she said. "See you in a couple of hours."

The call ended and I sat back in my seat. "Now it's your turn."

"Yes. This is good," he said, rubbing his hands together. "You can find out what she knows too."

I glared at him. "Is that so?"

He shrugged. "Never know until you find out. And that's hanging over our heads right now."

"Very clever, fortune cookie," I said. "But I'm going to be the one who gets the brunt of her anger if I push her into revealing what she knows."

"If she knows anything," Ashton said.

"I think we can all agree she already knows something. We're just not sure how much she's been told," I said.

He waved me away. "Whatever. Point is, all hope is not lost. Not yet. You better not screw this up for us."

I gritted my teeth and watched him back up toward my door. "You can leave now."

"I'm already out the door," he said and stepped out into the hall.

With a click of the handle, he was gone and I was finally in peace and quiet. But my mind wouldn't settle. She might have agreed to the date, but I had a feeling everything was going to come out before the end of the night, and I wasn't so positive I would be able to shake off her concerns and suspicions.

Not that I wanted to.

And perhaps it would be for the best. End the damn game. None of us deserved to win.

MORGAN

I had no idea what had possessed me to hesitate on agreeing to the movie date with well... I honestly didn't know what to call him. Certainly not Ashton. He couldn't be the same person. Not after what I was told by the nurse.

I got dressed in just a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. I barely did anything to my hair or makeup. If I was going to go out to the movies, I wanted to be comfortable, but I also wasn't about to go all out for a few men who couldn't be honest with me.

And yet... I was still woefully attracted to the three of them.

Of course, I was fully aware of how hopeless of a cause I was. I mean, who else in the world would have three men come after her as a game to see who could win her over?

The problem was, how in the hell was I supposed to know who was who?

Were they just going to go by Ashton for the rest of their lives, leading some weird, twisted double-life? What did they think would happen if they ever got caught? Say, for example, if things got serious and I brought lunch to them at work?

Whoever headed up the deal really failed to think things through. Besides, how could he assume I wouldn't be willing to date the three of them openly? It might have been weird at first, but we probably would have worked past that.

Ugh.

I was losing myself in all the details of what was going on. I didn't know what to feel about the whole thing anymore.

A tap on my door drew me from my thoughts and I settled my gaze on it. With a sigh, I ran my fingers over my jeans and opened the door.

My breath stilled.

Cognac colored eyes stared into mine. The golden hew was made brighter by the sunlight shining into my apartment.

He gulped. "Hey."

I smiled, forgetting all about my troubles. "Hey yourself."

He was a breath of fresh air. Just being in his presence, I had forgotten all about that stupid game. I was caught up in his eyes. He was most assuredly different from the other two. This must have been the third one. And I was blown away.

"You look amazing," he said.

I chuckled and shook my head. "Liar."

He laughed lightly. "Seriously."

I stepped into the hall and locked my door. "Thank you. You look pretty good yourself."

Within what seemed like a blink of an eye, we were at the movie theatre. My date already had the tickets, and we were grabbing our seats with popcorn and drinks. Hell, I barely paid attention to the movie I didn't know the title much less what it was about. I was too preoccupied with who this man was. He wasn't Ashton. I was certain of that.

In my thoughts and in trying to figure things out, I had come to the conclusion Ashton really was the first one. The one with the dimple. The one without a dimple, who I took with me to the ball game, wasn't Ashton either.

I was enthralled. Honestly, I almost decided not to go on a date with these men again. Not after what I had been told. But my curiosity about them wouldn't let me keep my distance.

And how the questions riddled my mind.

Who was this man with the devastating, cognac eyes?

Which one was he? The first, second, or third born?

What did he do for a living? Was he the nurse?

He seemed so thoughtful, reserved, quiet, and caring. I wondered what made him agree to the game that had me at the center of it all.

Most of all, I wondered what it was about me that had three identical brothers competing over me. What did I offer them?

Was I simply an easy target? Or was there something deeper going on?

With respect to my dear friend, Olivia, I realized I should be mad. Hell, I should be furious. But I just couldn't help feeling flattered instead. Somehow, I recognized the innocence behind their motives. They weren't trying to be vindictive or hurtful.

Besides, what woman wouldn't want to be worshiped by more than one man?

It wasn't until the movie was over and we were back at our building, walking up to my door that I realized there was a certain purposefulness behind his quiet demeanor. He was pensive in that deeply cosmic, intelligent way.

We stopped in front of my door, and I sighed. With a closed-lip smile, I stared up at him. "Thank you for the movie."

He nodded. "Thank you for coming with me."

"Did you want to come in?" I asked, hoping he would say yes. Not that I was expecting anything. "Maybe drink a beer with me?"

"I don't know if that is a good idea," he said, staring deep into my eyes. There was a war going on behind them. One I wasn't sure if he was winning or losing.

I nodded and smiled, stepping closer. "Thanks again."

Before he could say a word, I lifted onto my toes and pressed my lips against his soft, warm ones. His hand rested on my waist. I planted my feet flat on the floor, holding his gaze. A shadow crossed in front of his eyes before they dropped to my mouth.

“Maybe just for a bit,” he said.

“Are you sure?” I asked, my lips pulling into a smile.

He nodded.

I pulled away to unlock and open my door. Once we were inside, I turned around to face him. He instantly wrapped me in his arms and pressed his mouth against mine in one of the deepest, most passionate kisses I had ever had in my entire life.

When he pulled his mouth away, he rested his forehead on mine. “I shouldn’t do this.”

“Why?” I asked confused.

He shook his head. “I can’t say.”

I smiled. He was true and loyal to his brothers. That was a good sign. I wrapped my arms around him and said, “We don’t have to do anything at all if you don’t want to.”

He shook his head. “No. I want to. You don’t understand how badly I want to...”

“Oh,” I said, becoming confused. “Then what is stopping you?”

“I can’t...” he said.

I nodded. “Then don’t.”

He held me closer. “I can’t let you go.”

I sucked in a sharp breath as my heart started to pound in my chest. “Then don’t.”

His mouth crashed into mine. He kissed me with fierce urgency. It was hard to keep up with him. The heat and passion that burned through every single touch was enough to turn me

to ashes, but I somehow managed to maintain the same level of energy he was putting out.

His fingers tugged on my shirt, and I pulled off his t-shirt as well. We took turns rushing to get our clothes off and then pressed our naked bodies together as soon as we were fully undressed. His skin was smooth and hot. His body was covered in tight, hardened muscles that squeezed me into him. Almost as if he was trying to make me become a part of him.

Maybe I was.

I was pushed back until my back pressed against the cold wall and I hissed with the shock to my system. But it didn't slow him down. He continued to press himself into me. The feel of his erection poking into my belly. Wet heat pooled between my legs as I clung to him, wrapping my arms around his shoulders as he devoured every inch of skin that covered my face and neck.

Then he reached down, digging his fingers into my thick thighs. He hoisted me up. My skin rubbed painfully against the wall. I ignored the burn in my back and focused on the sensation of the tip of his erection pressing into my entrance.”

“Tell me to stop,” he said, staring me into my eyes.

“What if I don't want to?” I asked.

“It may be too late,” he said as I sank over him. He filled me, stretching me and tearing me as he pushed himself fully inside me. I wrapped my legs around his waist, clinging to him as I was pressed into the wall.

He groaned. “Oh, dear God, you feel amazing.”

My eyes rolled into the back of my head as my toes curled with the sensations, he put me under.

“Likewise,” I said.

It was all I could say. I was too enamored with my nerves firing off quicker than the Fourth of July. He pulled me from the wall with a growl and bounced me on his dick, slowly carrying me to my bed. Still inside me, he laid me on my mattress and pushed into me, impaling me with his length.

I grunted with each tap.

He quickly pulled out of me and wrapped my legs around his shoulders, planting his mouth into my sex. There was no warning. No pomp or circumstance. He simply faceplanted my vagina and went to town, delightfully lapping up my juices, brushing his tongue over my sensitive mound, licking and sucking me into oblivion.

Pressure built between my hips, and I wiggled underneath him, grinding my hips against his mouth. The tips of his fingers dug into my skin, and he moaned delightfully as I twerked. The pressure started to bleed into pleasure and within seconds, my climax hit.

I clutched the blanket to me as I wiggled beneath the way this man moved his mouth against my sex, coaxing my orgasm to come stronger and last longer.

My thighs quaked against him as I struggled to keep them from clamping down on the man's head.

My screams filled the air of my apartment, though I tried desperately to smother them with my blanket. And just when my orgasm started to fade, Ashton's brother lifted up and slammed his dick inside me, jackhammering into me with immense force.

As he moved, he wiped off his mouth with the back of his hand. Then he gripped my breasts in both hands and squeezed them as he continued to move. Already, another climax started to bud inside me. My sex ached for more, and I hoped he didn't run out of steam.

There was something about him I couldn't get enough of. One taste was all it took, and I was hooked.

A crease of concentration appeared between his eyebrows, and I knew he was getting close to his own climax. And just before he filled me with his release, he pulled out and sighed. His gaze fell on me. "Roll over onto your knees."

I did and crawled to the middle of my bed. I looked back at him as he bit his lip, staring at my round back side, facing him as naked as the day I was born. His hands slid along the

roundness, his skin smooth against my rear. He squeezed my ass cheeks as he settled himself between my legs. His erection teased my crack.

“Have you ever done it this way before?” he asked.

“Are you asking if I have ever done anal?” I asked back.

“Yes,” he said.

“No,” I said.

“Then I will go gently,” he said.

“I don’t know if I’m...” I said then his dick continued to toy with my crack and a whole new level of arousal filled me.

I ached for him.

I sighed, closing my eyes and giving in to the sensations washing over me.

“Lube?” he asked.

I pointed to my drawer.

His weight shifted on the mattress and the sound of the wood grinding as the drawer of my nightstand was pulled open filled the silence.

He reached in, squirted some liquid into his hands, and tossed the bottle to the draw before dripping it slowly along my ass crack.

I was impressed he took his time, toying with my arousal, relaxing me, and opening me up to what was to come. He used his thumb to massage my anus, rubbing the lube along my puckered hole.

My anus quivered.

“There you go,” he said, voice deep and low. “That’s my girl.”

I shuddered as the tip of his thumb entered my anus. At the same time, the tip of his erection slipped inside me.

I moaned.

The sensations filled me with intense pleasure. I was so close again. Thankfully, he allowed me the honor of experiencing my orgasm as he dipped his thumb into my asshole once more. I dipped a hand underneath me to keep the orgasm going as I cried out my pleasure into the mattress, muffling the sounds and saving me from angry neighbors.

Then he slipped himself out and played with my ass with his dick again.

I groaned. "Give it to me."

He chuckled darkly. "If that is what you wish."

Slowly the tip of his penis pushed inside my anus. I opened myself, relaxing into him as he slid himself inside me. Once he was fully seated, he adjusted his position and started to move inside me.

I was blown away.

The sensations were unlike anything I had expected. I had heard stories. Some good. Some bad. But I never would have thought they would feel as satisfying as it was.

He reached around me, sliding his fingers along my sex, dipping them in and pulling them out to rub my clit with my wetness while he nibbled on my back, sending chills through my body and increasing my pleasure.

He grunted against me. I knew he was getting close. And for some reason, I wanted to see his face when he did.

"I want to be on top for your release," I said.

He stopped. "Are you sure?"

I nodded. "Yes."

He pulled out of me, removing his hands and leaving me with the sensation of a swollen anus.

He then lay on the bed and rubbed his length a few times with his hands. "Might need more lube."

I shook my head. "I'm plenty wet for this."

I straddled him, bracing myself against the tip of his erection. I slowly lowered myself over his dick and let out a shuddering sigh. Bracing myself on his chest, I rocked my hips back and forth. Once I had a good motion going, I rotated my hips ever so often and when I lifted up, I made sure to clench my organ so that he received pleasure as well.

He rested his hands on my hips and watched as my ample breasts bounced above him. His erection stiffened and he sat up, plopping a breast in his mouth. As I worked my hips against him, he squeezed me into him tighter.

I sucked in a breath as another orgasm started to build.

A sudden floating sensation came over me and then my back was on the bed. He took control, pushing into me hard. Bruising the inside of my sex. The pain gave way to pleasure and as I cried out into the room, he stiffened above me. Grunting through his orgasm. Hot liquid spilled into me, and I clung to him as my orgasm continued, only settling as his settled.

It was magical, surreal, and mind-blowing.

He collapsed to the bed and worked to catch his breath as I curled into him.

“Stay,” I said.

“Do you think that is wise?” he asked.

I shrugged. “Do you have somewhere else you would rather be?”

He squeezed me into him. “No.”

I relaxed into his embrace and listened to his racing heart as it slowed. He was warm, and comfortable, and I seemed to fit into the crook of his arm perfectly. It was almost as if we were made for each other.

My eyes closed and I faded away to a pleasant dream. Lulled by his rhythmic beating and the drumming of his heart.

CLAYTON

I sat in my car at the overlook, taking in the view of the metropolis below. Being this high up gave me perspective. One I desperately needed. But the view did little to ease my mind or the ache in my chest.

My mind was heavy with thoughts of Morgan.

Things weren't supposed to be like this.

I wasn't supposed to fall in love.

And I did.

Now, I was the fool.

The sky started to lighten with the beginning of a new day. The lights below the city started to flicker out. As I sat in my car, I couldn't focus on the view. Only the sounds that had filled my night.

Morgan spent hours crying out her pleasure. I had overheard her from down the hall. I didn't have to guess who it was that she was sleeping with. I was aware of her date with Boston. Ashton wouldn't shut up about it and kept blowing up my phone.

At first, I was worried about what my dear brother would do, especially considering his reaction to me having sex with the woman. But nothing came of it. Either Ashton was sleeping like a baby, which was unlikely, or he was doing the same damn thing I was doing. And I also knew better than to believe my brother had only wanted nothing but sex from

Morgan. But that also didn't mean I didn't know there was a hidden motive.

He had something up his sleeve, I was certain of it.

I supposed I was destined not to have any rest.

Besides, it wasn't like I wasn't already losing sleep. I had been. Ever since I learned Morgan was made aware of what the three of us were doing. That was the first time I felt her absence. I physically experienced her distance. She completely checked out and decided to date other men too.

I rubbed my face with my hands.

I was exhausted. The only cure for what I was going through was Morgan. But seeing as how I seemed to be the only person of my three brothers who actually respected her space, it was going to be a while before I would have relief.

That's why I came all the way out to the overlook. Numerous trails lead deeper into the Rockies from the lookout. It had always been a popular spot for some hiking along with other, more adult, extracurricular activities. I had taken some time off and figured the next best thing to my predicament was a run in my wolf form. He needed a chance to stretch his legs anyway, and it had been too long since I last shifted.

And yet, I couldn't bring myself to leave my car.

Damn it all.

I was never supposed to mate with Morgan. But that's how it ended up being.

So, taking some time away from my mundane life might have been my only chance to sleep. I needed rest in a bad way. I needed a reset.

I made the decision to leave immediately during one of the many throes of ecstasy Morgan was crying out. I texted my brothers letting them know I was leaving and not to worry about me. I added that I would be back in a few days.

From there, I turned off my phone and left it plugged in on the kitchen counter. I wasn't going to need it. Especially in my

wolf form. Besides, unplugging was the best thing for a nice, long run.

The next thing I did was pack a few things and headed out the door before everyone was awake and long after Morgan's moans had stopped. The moment when I was less likely to bump into my brother or Morgan in the hall for what would surely be an awkward interaction.

If I didn't put my ass into gear and start on my way, people were going to start showing up and I wouldn't be able to shift until much, much later. I didn't want to walk around all day long in my human form. I needed to run and get away from humans.

So, I forced myself out of my car. I locked it, dangling my keys from a ball chain around my neck. Then I took off down one of the trails I normally would take. It was a difficult path. One only the most physically fit and strong could handle. Once I was deep in the forest, away from human eyes, I shifted into my wolf.

I stretched out my form, forgetting how amazing it was to be on all fours. I shook out my firm and sniffed the air.

Dear God, the air was clean. I picked out scents I had almost forgotten about. Everything had a better, stronger scent in my wolf form.

Maybe, if things didn't pan out the way I hoped they would, I might be able to figure out a way to stay in my wolf form. At least a lot longer than a couple of days.

Without wasting another second, I took off. My feet kicked up the dirt and grass behind me. The cold, mountain air filled my lungs with the scent of small prey nearby.

My animal's natural instincts kicked into view, and I headed toward food. I got low to the ground and followed the trail to a rabbit den.

I looked around to make sure there weren't any traps or hunters around. Not seeing anything that would cause me to have a particularly unpleasant time, I proceeded forward. The scent was strongest near the den, but the game was too young.

I couldn't cause a family—even one of the animal kingdom—that much pain and suffering.

I snorted out the scent that caused my mouth to water and proceeded deeper into the forest.

Closer to midmorning, I finally came across a small, abandoned cave, big enough for just me. It would suit me just fine.

Though I was still a little hungry, I curled into a ball and for the first time in as long as I could remember, I slept like a newborn pup.

MORGAN

For Pete's sake. I couldn't sleep to save my soul.

The man I had a date with was the third and last one involved in their little contest. I couldn't get out of my mind how he had seemed to have something to say but kept avoiding talking about it.

It didn't make sense to me.

And whenever I closed my eyes, I saw all three of them. Side by side.

Don't even get me started on the weird dreams.

Besides, I had been too restless for the past few days, trying to make sense of everything that had happened, sleep was elusive. And with nothing else better to do, and my last-ditch effort to get tired enough to get at least a good, solid four hours of precious z's, I grabbed my can of mace and stepped out of the door for a little midnight walk.

Though I didn't live in the greatest part of the city, it wasn't the worst, and I knew it well enough that I was comfortable with taking a quick couple of laps around the apartment block.

As soon as the cool air hit my face, I breathed in deep the scent of rain carried on the air. Barely a cloud in sight, but I could smell the incoming storms. I shoved my hands into the pocket of my light jacket and headed down the sidewalk to the street side.

Things were quiet for this part of the city. I hadn't expected the area to be so calm. I smiled to myself, feeling more confident in my decision to take a walk.

On my second lap, I noticed a man sitting on the hood of his car, facing the street. He noticed me and I nodded in silent greeting before walking off.

On my third lap, he spoke to me.

"Pretty girls shouldn't be walking alone this late at night," he said.

I smiled, nodded, and continued on my way.

On the next lap, he was leaning against the tree. I glanced at him and picked up my pace. He still managed to catch up to me.

"Where are you going so quickly at this late hour, pretty girl?" he asked.

"None of your business," I said. "Please, leave me alone."

"Now is that any way to speak to a guy concerned for the well-being of a woman too pretty to be out on her own this late at night?" he asked.

I tried to ignore him and kept walking. My hand clutched the mace tighter.

"Don't be like that," he said.

His hand brushed against my arm. I twisted out of the way. "Don't touch me."

My heart pounded in my chest and I felt lost and numb. I could barely think straight. I thought about pulling out the mace, but then I didn't want to use it unless I absolutely had no other choice.

"Don't be that way," he said, still keeping up with that sickeningly sweet voice crazy men use because they think it works on women. "I'm just trying to be a friend."

I stopped walking, pulled out the mace, and held it up to him. He took a step back, laughing under his breath while holding his hands up in surrender. "I said, leave me alone."

“Careful with that,” he said. “You could blind a man unnecessarily with that.”

“Wouldn’t be unnecessary if he would listen and stop bothering me. Now, leave me alone,” I said.

I turned around and jogged to get ahead. I peeked over my shoulder only to find him closing in on me.

I was on the other side of the apartment complex. There was no other way to my place except to continue forward or to run past him and hope he didn’t try to trip me or grab me or something.

But then I saw a familiar figure running up to me. As he drew closer, my heart nearly leaped for joy.

“There you are!” he said. “I thought you were going to wait for me.”

“Hey,” I said, playing up. “Sorry.”

“Who’s the guy?” Ashton asked.

I shrugged. “Someone who isn’t taking no for an answer.”

He settled his gaze on the man behind me. “Hey, buddy, get lost.”

“Or what?” the stranger asked.

Ashton smiled. “We don’t want any trouble.”

“You asked for trouble the second you showed up,” he said.

I turned around and barely caught the glint of a metal blade in the streetlight before Ashton pulled me to him and then turned around. His arms were tight, and warm, and he smelled good too. He kissed the top of my head and turned around to face him.

“You don’t want to start trouble with me,” Ashton said. “Okay? Just trust me on this one and walk away while you still have a chance to.”

“Or you’ll what?” the guy asked. “Why don’t you just go run off on your merry little way and butt out of something

between the lady and me.”

“Let’s just go,” I said.

Ashton held up his hand. “She doesn’t belong to you.”

“Not yet, but she will,” he said.

Ashton growled.

I shifted my weight uneasily from one foot to the other. Things were going from bad to worse. And I didn’t like that Ashton was caught in the middle of it. Literally. My lungs started to flutter. My hands started to tingle.

I didn’t know what to expect, but I knew whatever happened next wasn’t going to be good at all.

Then the man charged Ashton, knife pointed at his chest.

Ashton turned around and pushed me back. The world tilted in my vision as my feet lost their grip on the ground. I sucked in a breath of air as I threw my hands out behind me to catch myself when I landed. The cold concrete bit into my palms. I squeezed my eyes closed as my ass landed on the hard sidewalk. Once I righted myself, I set my attention on Ashton to make sure he was okay and gasped.

He was curled in on himself, and I assumed the worst. The strange man stood there staring at Ashton with confusion and horror.

Ashton twisted and I caught a glimpse of what the man had and sucked in a breath of shock and fear.

I didn’t know what to think as I watched the man I had sex with and had become fascinated with turn from a human to a large wolf in a matter of seconds.

Once the four-legged creature sat stood facing the man he let out a growl. That seemed to jolt the stranger out of whatever shock he was in. He turned around and ran down the sidewalk, feet pounding the cement in rapid succession.

Meanwhile, Ashton gave chase and I sat with my eyes staring in disbelief as he disappeared down the street. I was too shocked to scream. But I wasn’t too far gone to not realize

I needed to get my ass up off the ground and hightail it home before anything else happened for the night.

The very second I was inside the safety of my apartment, I locked the door, bolt-locked it, and slid the chain across before heading to my sliding glass door to make sure it was as secure as it could be. Then I took myself to my bathroom, locked that door, and sank into my tub, staring at the door, hoping and praying nothing came through.

Minutes passed by like hours as I worked to reconcile everything, I thought I knew about my world.

What happened couldn't have happened.

I reasoned it had to have been my brain processing through some traumatic event I couldn't recall because my brain was protecting my body.

I also might have been in a great deal of shock myself.

After about half an hour, I heard a knock on my front door. I strained to catch the sound again. Sure enough, it happened.

Was it the cops? Did they come to take my statement? Did something utterly horrible happen to Ashton or that man?

I wasn't sure, and I sure as hell wasn't willing to not find out. I had to know. I had to make sure I wasn't crazy.

So, carefully, I crawled out of the tub and inched my way slowly across my apartment floor to my door. I avoided answering because I knew if it was the cops, they would announce themselves.

At least, I thought they would.

The knocking didn't happen again. Another thing I attributed to my wonton imagination. I shut off all the lights in my apartment and crawled into my bed, curling up under the covers as I bawled my eyes out.

I was going crazy. I was losing my mind.

And I desperately wanted to reach out and talk to my friend, Olivia. She had been such a wonderful shoulder and

listening ear for me as of late, and she was the first person I thought of to speak with regarding what just happened.

But how could she believe me if I was having a hard time believing things myself?

ASHTON

Woof. I fucked everything up this time. In the worse way too. Because not only did I shift in front of humans, which was a huge no-no... the SOTF (Shifter Outlier Task Force) didn't look so kindly on such infractions. They are the police of shifters. And one of the biggest laws that govern shifter kind is to never shift in front of humans. The only exception to the rule was extenuating circumstances, mates, and that was about it.

And it was extremely hard to prove extenuating circumstances.

Almost impossible.

And I didn't realize what I had done until it was too late.

There was no turning back now.

I pushed the worrisome thoughts from my mind as I chased the stranger down the street. He needed to be taught a lesson. Especially his type. He didn't belong in the neighborhood and what he was doing hanging around didn't matter. He was bothering my Morgan. He threatened her, and so he needed to be dealt with.

Once I had sufficiently chased him off, I ran back only to find that Morgan was gone. She probably ran back to her place and locked herself in.

She didn't know I was a shifter. And I wasn't gentle in showing her either. I wasn't thinking when I shifted. I was running on pure instinct. Protecting what was mine. She didn't

deserve to have my animal thrown in her face like that. If I was lucky, she wouldn't be thrown into shock.

She had zero clues about my wolf... or that of my brothers for that matter. But it was too late to take everything back. And time machines didn't exist.

Guess the wolf was out of the bag now. But at what cost? I wasn't sure.

She had run away.

I probably should give her some time to come to terms with everything. But doing that was a dangerous gamble. She had just gone through something traumatic and shocking. Life-altering even. So giving her time wasn't something I could afford to do, and if I wasn't careful, she would be gone forever.

So, no. I couldn't let her go. Not without trying to provide an explanation for everything. She was a reasonable person. I was convinced, given enough time and enough chance to explain things, she would see that I wasn't a monster. That I was trying to protect her.

First, she had to listen.

Then she could take all the time she needed. I would be there for her when she was ready... if she would ever be ready to face me again.

I swallowed my pride and stopped in front of her door. I lifted my closed hand to knock on the door. Three taps later, I strained to listen to the movement on the other side of her door. She was being careful and excruciatingly silent. Almost as though she didn't want to alert me to her moving closer.

But I had stellar hearing. Thanks to my wolf.

Still, she doesn't answer.

I sucked in a breath and leaned my forehead against the cold surface of the door and said, "Morgan, please... give me a chance to explain."

Several long seconds later, still nothing.

I shook my head. I did this to myself. I did this to her. This whole fucked up situation was my fault because I acted before thinking things through.

“Look, I know you are there. You don’t have to say anything, just please listen. I’m sorry about what happened. I should have warned you. I should have told you. But I couldn’t and I acted purely on instinct to protect you.

“I realize I can’t take anything back and I understand that what you had just witnessed is a lot to take in and process. But I want you to understand that I am not going anywhere. I will be here when you are ready to answer any questions you have.

“I’m not a monster. I promise you. Though I’m sure you are thinking you are living in a waking nightmare right now.”

I sucked in a deep breath. “I’m sorry you had to find out the way you did. I hope you will find it in you to forgive me someday. Please don’t hold this against my brothers.”

She moved closer to the door. I could almost feel her on the other side, leaning against it in much the same way as I was. That was a great sign.

Still, I felt the need to keep my explanation short and vague. She knew what I was talking about and that was all that mattered. And I knew better than to think no one else was listening. Our neighbors liked to keep to themselves, but that didn’t mean they weren’t a bunch of nosey busybodies.

“That’s all I wanted to say,” I said, keeping my voice low. “Please no more late-night walks.”

With a deep breath, I sighed and waited. I still stood against the door, hoping and praying my short explanation was enough to get her to open up and let me in. But after several minutes, she shuffled away from the door. I frowned. My heart sank. With my head held low, I shoved my hands into my pocket and headed down the hall to my apartment.

Once I was inside, I grabbed a beer. There was no way I was going to be able to sleep. Not now that Morgan knew and felt so far away. All I wanted to do was make everything right. Hold her in my arms and kiss away her fears.

I messed up. I knew that much. I just hoped we could all bounce back from this.

MORGAN

I sat on my bed and stared at the sun as it crept over the city. My body was wearing down despite the fact my mind had yet to slow.

For several days now, I hadn't left my place. I had been too terrified to leave. I couldn't bring myself to so much as go to work. And ever since the night Ashton turned into a wolf to save me from that man, I spent the long hours of the night, sitting in the dark, jumping at every sound, shadow, and movement.

But usually, shortly after the sun rose, I was able to fall asleep. I hoped this time would be no different.

I was left to nothing but my damning thoughts, wondering if the things I had gone through were some figment of my imagination. And the more time that passed by, the more I was able to convince myself what I saw really wasn't what had actually happened. Something else took place. What exactly had transpired? I wasn't positive. But it was the only thing that made sense. Something else happening had to be the case.

I considered a psych eval as well. Because anyone who imagines the man they were dating turning into a wolf when some random stranger holds you both at knife-point should be institutionalized.

Because who did things like that?

Apparently, I did.

Nothing had been right since that night. And I had yet to stop jumping at shadows. Never mind the constant stupor I was in.

Something had to give in and change everything.

What made things worse was fighting off the desire to go to the only apartment I was aware of and begging whoever really lived there to save me from myself. But that was even more insane than imagining Ashton shifting into a wolf.

Of all the things I was sure of, somehow turning into a wolf didn't so much as come close to making the list.

Of the things I knew for certain, they were triplets. They had slightly different colored eyes. All three had a contest to see who could win me. I've slept with all three of them, and each one had stolen a piece of my heart.

Each one of them was charming, intelligent, fierce, and strong.

But not wolfy.

They were who I wanted to be near but the idea of them somehow turning into a wolf seemed impossible and only helped me to continue the war within myself.

Do I go?

Or do I stay?

Do I continue to live out the rest of my existence in this apartment, locked away from the rest of society and civilization?

There was too much up in the air for me to make a solid decision. So much information I wasn't sure of. Too much of the unknown remained questionable.

Again, this all probably could have a very reasonable medical excuse. I somehow lost my mind.

I didn't have the slightest desire to keep going down the road of the possible things that might have happened if I had imagined everything as a means to protect my brain and body from what really happened.

Look, I understood where I needed to draw the line, but the thing was, I couldn't. No matter what I did... no matter how I tried to reason with myself, the outcome was always the same.

I couldn't let the men go.

All I want is them. All of them. Even the parts that might be terrifying.

Why?

Great question.

Because I loved who I was with them. It was freeing being with them. I felt light and happy, and I didn't want our time together to end. Plus, they are who my heart calls out for. Besides, they made me feel seen, heard, and loved. I connected with them in ways I never thought were possible. Plus, the sex was top-notch. Better than.

This was more than just a game. It was so much more than a competition. This was a war of hearts. One destined for an all-or-nothing outcome. One which might damn me in the end. Because no matter what I did or how I spun the logical side of things, at the end of every day and nightmare, it was them.

With every cell in my body.

And what was more devastating was not knowing how to move forward without them.

BOSTON

When I first got the text, I was worried. Then I realized what everything was about. That's when everything changed for me.

Every once in a while, Ashton wakes up in a particular, self-sabotaging mood. One where he blames himself for everything that has ever gone wrong in our lives. Past, present, and future. It was all him. All his fault. And it was an exhausting period of time trying to pull him out.

As I had mentioned, I got a text from him. It was an address I wasn't familiar with and was followed up with "911."

Normally, I would have messaged Clayton and let him know what was up. There had been a number of times when I had to have help pulling Ashton out of his self-inflicted hell. And mainly because I didn't want to get pulled down with him.

I nodded to myself and rushed out of my door. Once I arrived at the address, I was confused. I double-checked the address and sure enough, this was the place. It was a small, hole-in-the-wall bar. The kind he normally wouldn't have been caught dead in. The kind that spelled trouble, and I huffed as I took in the place.

"What the hell are you doing, Ash?" I asked out loud.

I wasn't able to determine how bad of shape he was in, but if I had to go off the appearance of the location he had just brought me to, I was going to need a lot more help than just

Clayton. But seeing as how he was the only other one who understood our brother's random, infrequent moods, he was the only one who could help.

I forwarded the message to Clayton knowing I was going to need his help and assuming Ashton hadn't bothered to reach out to him.

"I'm on my way," Clayton responded.

I stared at the place and considered waiting for Clayton but it could be a while before he arrived and certainly no telling how bad off Ashton already was. Ash needed me.

The place looked as though it was a slump. Dirty deeds happened in places like these. The kind that winds up in the hospital with a dose or two of Narcan.

This wasn't the place for my brother to be. Not in his current state. And how he knew of the place only had me more concerned.

Waiting wasn't an option. I had to go inside.

I summoned all of my strength and will and peeled myself out of my car before heading inside a smoke-filled bar with loud country music blaring over the speakers and distinct snapping sounds of pool balls being slapped together.

The air smelled horrible. It was sticky and bitter and clung to the back of my throat. Never mind the scent of bodily fluids being mixed in. The place was a nightmare, and my brother had decided to surround himself with filth and decay.

Wonderful.

Clayton and I had our work cut out for us. This was probably going to be brutal.

Still, I found my brother sitting at the bar, burying himself in a bottle of beer, already drinking himself silly. Two empty shot glasses set in front of him. His hair was a mess and stuck out in random directions from the top of his head. His clothes were wrinkled.

This was Ashton at his lowest point, and I didn't like what I saw. He was in worse shape than I expected. I sighed as I

prepared myself for what was to come.

I took a seat. Almost immediately, a beer was set on the counter in front of me. I glanced at the bartender, an older man with a bald head and long, grey beard. He nodded. I did the same in return before turning and facing my brother. He wouldn't look at me. He barely even acknowledged the fact that I was sitting next to him.

“What happened?” I asked.

He frowned and focused on a spot on the bar. His head held low, hand barely gripping the bottle. He shook his head and downed what was left in his bottle, which he sat roughly back on the top of the bar before snapping his fingers and pointing at his spot.

I arched an eyebrow.

“You're not going to answer my question?” I asked.

He glanced at me briefly. “Shouldn't it be obvious?”

I shrugged. “Is it ever?”

Ashton sarcastically chuckled. “Right. Well, there is only one thing missing in our lives. I'm sure you will catch up eventually.”

I nodded. “Mm-hmm.”

“Drink your beer,” he said. “You're going to need it.”

“Am I?” I asked. “Why is that?”

“You'll figure it out,” he said.

“Oh good. Here, I thought I was going to actually get answers instead of a guessing game.”

Ashton snorted. Another beer and two shots were sat in front of him. He slid one of the shots my way. “Drink up little brother.”

I glared at him. “You're only older by ten minutes.”

“Still older.” He smiled at me drunkenly.

I shook my head, letting out another sigh. “Sure.”

I took a sip of my beer and wondered how much longer we would wait before Clayton showed up.

Turned out, less than five minutes. I had almost finished the bottle of beer when Clayton slid in on the other side of Ashton. And just as it was with me, a bottle of beer was set in front of him. Clayton muttered a quick thanks and then nodded at me before gesturing to Ashton. It was our way of communicating.

I shrugged and shook my head.

Clayton sighed heavily.

I nodded.

“So, what’s the occasion?” Clayton asked. “Depression and liberations?”

I glared at my youngest identical brother. “Really?”

He smiled and shrugged. “What’s up, Ash? What’s eating you today?”

“I’m drowning myself,” Ashton said. “Isn’t that evident?”

Clayton frowned before settling his gaze on me. I nodded. “We can see that you are drowning yourself.”

“The question is why,” Clayton finished.

“Because,” Ashton said. “I fucked up beyond repair now. There is no denying the fact I’m bad luck. So, why not drown my misery with alcohol?”

“Because that’s rather damaging to your liver which you need to live,” I said.

Ashton snorted. “Thanks, nurse.”

He spoke nurse as though it was some sort of slight. I shrugged it off. He wasn’t always in the most logical of mindsets when he got this low.

“Well,” Clayton said as he clapped Ashton on the back, “Might as well spell it out for us, bro. We’re not mind readers.”

“Damn,” Ashton said. “Wouldn’t that have been something?”

He seemed rather pensive. As though he truly considered how great it would have been to be able to read his mind. But that would have been taking things easy on him, and something told me there was a solid reason behind his self-imposed punishment. Something neither I nor Clayton were going to like.

Damn.

This sort of thing doesn’t happen very often, but when it did, it was bad. This most definitely was the worst. He needed to figure this shit out. And here, I thought he had finally found what he was looking for.

Damn. Damn. Damn.

For the next half an hour or so, Clayton and I did the best we could to talk him off the ledge of his drunken stupor and self-sabotage. But it wasn’t doing us any good. He kept dancing around the topic, dropping cryptic hints as though he was giving us more than enough to put the pieces together.

He wasn’t. And I was getting frustrated.

“Ashton, look,” I said. “This is getting old. I’m tired of the guessing game. Spit the shit out or drown yourself in your own pity. We’re both here to help, but you’re being a real dick about it.”

He snorted. “The truth finally comes out.”

“He’s not wrong,” Clayton said, exchanging a glance with me. “But he’s not right either.”

“Awe, thanks,” Ashton said, sarcastically.

Finally, a few more beers in, I’m ready to go home no closer to figuring out what the hell was going on with Ashton than I was when I first arrived.

But that’s when he finally started speaking.

“She’s gone,” Ashton said. “And it’s because of me.”

“Who is gone?” Clayton asked.

I leaned in closer, watching him closely, straining to hear his words over the blasted music.

“Morgan.”

His one word drove an arrow through my heart.

“What do you mean, she’s gone?” I asked.

Granted, Morgan was MIA and radio silent for the past week or so. But I figured that was because she had gotten busy at work again. It wasn’t the first time she was quiet. I was convinced it wouldn’t be the last.

Clayton leaned forward, both of us crowding our brother.

“I messed everything up,” he said, slurring his words. “I shifted in front of her when some guy wouldn’t leave her alone.”

“You what?” Clayton and I asked at the same time. Both with equal tones of disbelief.

Ashton lowered his head to the bar.

“Start from the beginning,” I said.

“I think that’s where you need to start so we have an idea of what led up to this,” Clayton agreed.

Ashton sat up, knocked back another shot, then took a deep breath. On the exhale, he seemed clearer.

“A little over a week ago, I noticed Morgan leaving her apartment late at night. Worried something might happen to her, I kept an eye out for her. She was walking laps around the apartment complex.

“Not much was happening, and I thought about going in... but that’s when I saw him.”

“Who?” I interjected.

Ashton shrugged. “I have no clue. He was talking to Morgan. She told him to leave him alone and he wouldn’t back off.”

“Fuck me,” Clayton said.

I nodded. “Go on.”

“I ran up to her, pretending to be her boyfriend, and was running late on our shared walk time.” Ashton shrugged. “She instantly played into it. I told the guy to back off and he challenged me with a knife.”

“Jesus,” Clayton muttered.

I squeezed my eyes closed.

He had confirmed the one thing I had suspected. He mated with her. That meant all three of us had. He acted on pure instinct. But that didn't excuse his behaviors. Because he not only took her from him, he stole her away from Clayton and me too.

“I shifted,” Ashton continued. “Chased him down the street. When I got back, Morgan was gone. She had locked herself in her apartment. I tried to explain things to her, but she refused to let me in. She hasn't left there in days.”

I clenched my hands together.

“Morgan is gone because I made her terrified of us,” he added.

My lungs started to burn. My neck felt hot. My hands clenched into tight fists. My vision was almost filled with red.

Now her absence meant a whole totally different thing. One that no one could come back from.

I wanted to lay my brother out on the floor, but I figured that was what he wanted. That's why we were called out to a bar we didn't know.

“Fight me,” Ashton said.

I stood up from the bar, teeth clenched. “Fight yourself. I'm done.”

He could torture himself for all I cared. I wasn't going to do it anymore.

I nodded at Clayton. Then turned and walked out. The second I was home, I locked myself inside and toyed with reaching out to Morgan. There had to be a way to make it out of this without losing my mate.

MORGAN

I sat drinking wine on my front porch, waiting for an appropriate time to call and talk to Olivia. Once the moment arrived, I video-called her. This was going to take more than simply listening to what I had to say. Her reaction would give me the answers I needed. And I needed to figure out if I was crazy.

I just had to.

Olivia would tell it to me straight.

I had faith in that much.

I took a swig from my bottle and set my phone up so I could do the video call. Once I pulled up her name, I hit send and waited for her to answer.

When she did, the bright white of her kitchen filled the background. She smiled at me, still glowing with the new life growing inside her. “Hey, you. I was wondering when I would have the chance to talk to you again. Feels like forever.”

“I know. I’m sorry,” I said.

“Oof...” she said, concern filling her features. “You don’t look so well.”

I shook my head. “Well, maybe it’s because I’m not.”

“What’s going on?” she asked.

“Are you alone?” I asked. “Because what I’m about to tell you may sound crazy and I don’t want anyone else to hear it.”

She looked around. “Yeah. I’m alone.”

She took a sip from her coffee as I took a sip from my bottle of wine.

“It’s a little early for drinking,” she said.

“It’s my nighttime,” I said.

“Since when?” she asked, not believing me.

“Since about a week ago,” I said.

“What happened? New job? New shift? Is this why you haven’t called recently?” she asked in rapid succession.

I leveled my gaze on her image on my phone. “Which one do you want me to answer first?”

“All of them,” she said, eyes wide with seriousness.

I chuckled and shook my head. “I’ll try my best.”

A gentle breeze blew the scent of rain into me. I closed my eyes and breathed it in deep. There was always something soothing about rain for me. And I was grateful that I had at least the smell to count on for this conversation. On the exhale, I opened my eyes and then took one last swig from the wine before setting the bottle on the table.

“Take your time,” she said, voice patient and kind. She had a line of worry creasing her forehead.

I nodded and leaned forward. Keeping my voice low, I said, “So... do you ever wonder if monsters are real?”

“Why are you whispering?” she asked.

I looked around. “Because I don’t want anyone to hear.”

“Why are you worried about that?” she asked.

I shook my head. “Just because.”

“Okay,” she said with a soft chuckle. “Continue.”

“Do you believe monsters are real?” I asked again.

She shrugged. “I guess that would depend on your definition, why?”

I shook my head and started second-guessing myself again. Olivia was my friend. I trusted her. We shared things with each other. But there was always a limit to the things people could tolerate and I was so worried she would find me crazy.

I didn't want to be crazy.

"Morgan," Olivia said.

I settled my attention on her. "Huh?"

"You can tell me, I promise." Her bright blue eyes twinkled with kindness.

I let out a deep breath. "I think the men I had been dating were monsters."

"The ones who were playing a game with you, unbeknownst to you?" She asked. "Totally agree."

"I'm being serious," I said.

"So am I," she added.

I shook my head. "No. You don't understand. I don't mean monster in the figurative sense. I mean it literally."

"How so?" she asked, expression turning confused again.

"Okay," I said with a sigh. "Hold your judgment until the end of my tale."

"Okay..." she said, dragging out the word.

"I went for a walk late at night when I couldn't sleep. I had taken several laps around the block when I noticed a man sitting on the hood of a car in the parking lot. I passed by him, and he said something about me being pretty..." I shook my head. "Anyway, he kept trying to talk to me each time I passed him."

"Uh-huh..." she said.

"He started to follow me," I said.

Olivia's eyes widened. "Oh, my God. Are you okay?"

"Well, yes. Clearly. But still, I'm not at the end of my story yet," I said.

“Sure, and good,” she said. With a nod from her, I continued.

“Then Ashton came running up to me,” I said.

She shook her head. “You mean the boy whom you assume is Ashton.”

“Whatever,” I said, getting flustered. “I thought you were going to hold off comments until I was done?”

She smiled. “I said I would hold off Judgment. I never agreed to comments.”

I shrugged. “He pretended like I had taken off on a walk without him and wrapped his arm around me. He then addressed the guy who was following me and he pulled out a knife on us.”

“What!” she snapped.

I waved her concern away and continued. I was too far into the story to stop now. “Ashton faced me, kissed me on my forehead, and pushed me back a few steps. I stumbled and fell. By the time I looked forward again, Ashton was... different.”

Olivia cocked her head to the side. “Different, how?”

I muttered. “Hewasworlf.”

“What?” she asked, eyebrows drawn together.

I sighed. “He was a wolf. A huge wolf.”

Her worry disappeared. “Oh.”

I blinked at her. “What do you mean, oh?”

“Nothing, continue.” She smiled.

I shook my head and rubbed my eyes as I fought off a yawn. “I can’t seem to make up my mind about what happened. I feel as if I imagined everything or I am stuck inside a strange nightmare.”

“Well, my friend,” she said. “I have good news and bad news. Which do you want first?”

“Um...” I dragged out the word, “just tell me. I’m not in the mental state nor do I have the compacity to make a

decision right now.”

“You’re not crazy. Shifters exist. They live alongside humans because the world is crowded, and they are people too.”

“Wait. What?” I asked. Discreetly, under the table, I pinched myself just to make sure I wasn’t dreaming. It hurt. I wasn’t dreaming.

“There is a whole world of mysteries we humans aren’t privileged enough to be let in on,” she added. “And for good reason.”

“Oh.” I continued to stare at her. “Was that the good news or the bad news?”

“That was the good news,” she said. “The bad news is those men have likely mated with you. I don’t like it. And mating is a complicated thing. Especially for wolves.”

I waved away her explanation to ask her a pertinent question. “What a minute. How do you know all of this?”

She shrugged. “Because Milo is a shifter.”

“He’s a wolf too?” I asked, shocked.

“No,” she said through a laugh. “He’s a dragon.”

I sat back and stared at her. “I have no idea what to do with that information.”

She shrugged. “You will in time.”

I shook my head. “My head feels like it’s about to explode.”

“You weren’t told in the best of ways,” she said. “I wasn’t either, but it felt right. In the end, how you are feeling about things is all that matters.”

I nodded. “This is a lot to take in.”

“Yes. Very much so,” Olivia said. “But you are one of the special ones.”

I snorted. “I don’t feel all that special right now. I’ve spent every night since then, too terrified to sleep. I haven’t worked.

I've barely eaten."

She nodded. "And you probably considered checking yourself into the nearest psychiatric facility too, right?"

"Yes," I said.

"I understand the feeling," she said. "So much so."

I chuckled under my breath. "I would say so. You're marrying a dragon."

"Yes. In every definition of the word," she said.

"So, if they are so common, how come nobody seems to be aware of their existence?" I asked.

She shrugged. "Shifters change into animals. I mean, come on, that's a pretty terrifying thing. And not to mention extremely different from the normal. And humans, in general, don't like different."

"Apparently not all humans," I said.

She pointed at me. "You are correct."

"But... how?" I asked.

She shook her head. "That, my dear friend, you will have to take up with them. Some secrets are not mine to share, and the ins and outs of shifting are still a little clouded for me. And I'm pretty sure it's different for each shifter."

I nodded. "So... I'm not insane?"

"Nope," she said.

"Ashton really shifted in front of me?" I asked.

"Well, the name of him is still debatable in my book. But, yes. From the sounds of it, he did so to protect you," she added.

I slowly started to nod and smile. "That's good."

"I'm glad you're taking it so well," she said. "Most of us don't at first."

"Oh, I would not go as far as to say I'm taking what happened well. I'm still struggling to wrap my mind around

everything. I don't know what to do about all of that and I'm still not sure how to feel about it all. I'm just glad I hadn't lost my mind yet."

She smiled. "I'm glad you came to me with this."

"Thank you," I said. "I'm glad too."

Banging pounded on my door. I snapped my attention in the direction my door stood. My heart skipped a beat and then started to race.

"What the hell is that?" Olivia asked.

"Someone is banging on my door, I think," I said.

"You should go figure that out," she said.

"Probably," I agreed as the banging happened again. "Yup, it's my door."

"Take your time to figure things out. I'll be around here and there if you have any questions. I'll answer what I can," Olivia, my godsend, said.

I nodded. "Thank you again. I really appreciate you not laughing at me."

"You are incredibly welcome, my friend," she said.

We ended the call and I stood from the table, grabbed my wine bottle, and took another swig before setting my sights on my door. The banging happened again. Whoever it was, they needed something urgent. At least, it better be urgent. Otherwise, I was going to bed.

CLAYTON

I had no idea what had gotten into me. I was in a drunken stupor.

It wasn't long after Boston left me and Ashton at the bar when I started to get pulled into Ashton's self-pity. The second I felt that drag, I shook my head and stood from the bar.

"I'm sorry, but you deserve to have your ass handed to you," I said. "It's just not going to be me or Boston who does it."

Ashton nodded. "Screw you then."

He was baiting me. I realized that, shook my head, and walked away only to wind up in my apartment, drinking alone.

Out of sheer necessity, I called Boston and put him on the speaker. On the third loud, high-pitched ring, he answered.

"Yeah?" his voice cracked. Either he had been crying, which was sort of likely... or he was sleeping when I called.

If it was the crying, I wouldn't blame him. I felt like crying myself. The only woman I had ever loved was ripped from me thanks to Ashton. Stupid, conceited, bastard. He never thought about anyone but himself. That much was evident when he made the stupid bet.

"Hey," I said. It came out sounding nasally.

"How bad is he?" Boston asked. He sounded like he really didn't care but was asking out of being polite. Boston was nothing if not polite. He was the unsung hero of the trio.

I almost laughed at that thought.

As I said, I was drunk.

“Not bad enough,” I said. “If you really want to know the honest truth, I don’t feel like there is a bad enough for him.”

“Maybe,” Boston said. Though he wasn’t technically agreeing with me, he didn’t disagree either. Still... he felt the same. I knew that much for certain. Even if he didn’t come right out and say as much.

“I mean,” I started, letting my anger and despair take control, “who in the hell does he think he is?”

Boston huffed. “I’m sure his heart was in the right place.”

“Don’t defend him,” I snapped. “Don’t you dare defend him. He doesn’t deserve an ounce of your forgiveness either. He took her away from us! Don’t you realize we are royally fucked?”

“What’s the point of getting bent out of shape about it?” Boston asked. “It’s not going to change anything.”

“What?” I asked.

“The best thing we can do is accept our fate,” he said.

I shook my head. “No. I cannot. I will not. You know what happens to wolves who lose their mate.”

“Yes,” Boston said sadly. “I do.”

We knew the story well. Our mother got sick. She died. Our father took off in the middle of the night, twisted by his grief. We never saw him again. Our aunt raised us in the last two years of our adolescence.

I believed that was why Ashton blamed himself so much and got into his little funks.

“We can’t let that happen to us,” I said, emboldened.

“What are you going to do?” Boston asked in a challenge. “Walk over there and make her take us back?”

The second his words hit my ears, the gears within my brain started moving and my very drunken mind was

formulating a plan.

“As a matter of a fact...” I said, leaving the rest of my thought unsaid.

“Don’t,” Boston said. “Clayton, don’t. You could make things worse than they are.”

I shook my head. “I have to try.”

Boston was in the middle of arguing his point when I hung up the phone. It was early in the morning. Barely an appropriate time to be banging on someone’s door. But I had to move.

I stepped out of my door and headed down the hall. Boston’s door opened. He whisper-yelled, “Clayton, don’t!”

I turned around and lifted up both hands, flipping him the bird. “Watch me.”

I reached Morgan’s door and then banged on it.

“Clayton, stop!” Boston whisper-yelled again.

I ignored him and banged on the door again. The sound echoed through the hall. I shrugged to myself. Who cared who got bothered in the process? I refused to stop fighting. I wasn’t going to give up. Not now. Not ever.

After several times of banging on her door—hell, I never thought to keep track of how long—she opened the door, but just barely.

I pushed the door open, forcing myself inside. She cursed and protested, but I didn’t listen to her as she was forced back to avoid being hurt by the door. The second I was fully inside her apartment, I turned around and slammed the door shut. Right in Boston’s shocked face. I engaged her locks before turning around and facing her.

The second my eyes settled on her pale, frightened expression, I closed the gap between us and squeezed her into my body.

“You’re drunk,” she said.

I nodded against her head. “Yes.”

She pushed me from her and then held her wine to her mouth.

“I can see I’m not the only one,” I said. Somehow, I was sobering up more and more simply by being in her presence.

She shrugs. “Not drunk enough.”

I reached out and gently took her hand. “Please, sit. I have to talk to you.”

She hesitated. Eying me with suspicion. I could almost see the questioning in her eyes. The damning phrase all shifters hate hearing but know full and well that is what most humans think of us...

Monster.

I gulped. “Please.”

She slowly nodded then slipped her fingers along mine. I led her to the couch, letting out a soft sigh of relief. She took a seat and I nodded once before starting to pace in front of her. She had a calming effect on me. One that I bathed myself in. While standing in front of her, I felt better than I ever had. The same thing happened the one and only night we had spent together.

“I know you have questions,” I said and glanced at her.

She nodded.

“I also realize I’m probably the last person you want to see right now,” I said.

“Not really,” she said.

I snapped my attention to her. “Really?”

She shrugged. “I don’t even know who you are. You’re certainly not Ashton.”

“You’re right,” I said. “I’m not.”

She leaned back and relaxed. “Who are you then?”

“My name is Clayton,” I said, gesturing to myself. “And my brother, Ashton, was the one who decided—”

“I know what happened,” she said. “Did the three of you honestly not believe I wasn’t smart enough to figure it out?”

“Actually, no. Boston and I joined in for different reasons,” I said. “Ashton was the mastermind behind it. I love competition. And I wanted to see my brother crash and burn for his dimwitted ideas.”

She nodded. “I see.”

“We’re assholes, but we’re not monsters, and what happened the other night, should never have happened,” I said.

She nodded and stared at the floor. She crossed her legs, and then her arms over her chest. “But it did.”

“Yes,” I said. “On behalf of my brother, I’m sorry.”

She shook her head. “You shouldn’t be apologizing for him.”

I shrugged. “Yeah. You’re right, but this is the best we can do for right now. And I need for you to hear me because what I have to say may be a lot to take in.”

She nodded at me, setting her dark brown eyes on mine.

“We’re shifters. We were born this way. Just like you were born who you are. We had no choice. We are governed by a division of police called the Shifter Outlier Task Force. They are the ones who enforce the laws of our kind.

“Part of those laws is never shifting in front of a human. But there are exceptions to that rule. Very tight loopholes if you will,” I said.

Her eyebrows drew closer together. “What sort of loopholes?”

I nodded and started pacing again. “You see, when this whole game started, we put a stipulation in place. To not mate. Because if this ended badly, and anyone of us had mated, we would be in a whole new level of hell none of us wants to experience.”

She sat forward, keeping her arms crossed over her chest. She seemed to mull over everything I had just explained to her

while chewing on her bottom lip. “Mate means what? Sex?”

I shook my head. “No. It would be so much more simpler if that was the case.”

“Oh, then what is it?” she asked, meeting my gaze.

I stood panting for breath as my heart pounded in my chest. “Wolves mate for life, Morgan. It’s like finding our other half, our soulmate. There is only one shot for us. And you had become that shot.”

“Oh,” her eyes widened. She sat back and stared off to the side of us. Softly she said again, “Oh.”

I nodded.

She sat forward and took a long pull from her wine, setting the empty bottle back on the coffee table in front of her couch. “What does mating have to do with the loopholes?”

I clapped my hands. “We can only shift in front of a human if they are our mate and in dire circumstances. Both of which happened that night. Both of which would be extremely hard to prove if you weren’t aware of the situation.”

She rubbed her temples. “Okay. I see.”

I collapsed on the floor in front of her, hitting the floor with my knees. A slight burning sensation entered them as I placed my hands on Morgan’s lap. She stared at me, startled by my sudden movement.

My throat was starting to go dry and I considered swallowing a handful of sand to feel better than what was going on in my body.

I sucked in a breath, wishing for some water. On the exhale, I said, “Please, please, Morgan. Forgive us and our stupidity. Forgive my brother’s stupid mistake. Give us a chance to show you who we really are. Give us a chance to make up for the things we have done. Please don’t condemn us to hell.”

I buried my face into her lap as hot tears spilled down my cheeks.

After several seconds, Morgan shifted. I stiffened and held my breath. Then the tips of her fingers brushed gently along the top of my head. I squeezed my eyes closed and wrapped my arms around her waist.

“I have questions,” she said softly.

I nodded. “I have answers.”

MORGAN

I wasn't sure what to do when he got down on his knees in front of me. When I realized he was crying, my heart melted. That was when I knew, beyond any shadow of a doubt, the whole thing was more than a game to him.

The other two, I had yet to figure out.

But Clayton? I was won over.

"I will forgive you," I said. "But the other two will have to come to me. I'm not going to let you do all the graveling for them."

He squeezed me tighter into him. "I fucking love you, Morgan. I didn't know I could fall in love, and I had with you. You complete me in ways I never thought were possible."

I smiled as my heart fluttered lightly in my chest. That might have been the wine though.

"Thank you for forgiving me. I won't let you down. I promise I will spend every day of the rest of my life making things up to you," he said. He set his honey eyes on me.

I smiled down at him and used my hands to wipe away his tears. "Thank you for coming here and showing me how much I mean to you."

He nodded.

I yawned.

His expression fell to one of concern. "You haven't slept?"

I shrugged. "It's been a very long week."

He stood from the floor and held out his hands to me. I slide my fingers over his palms and he pulled me up from the couch and then over to the bed. He pulled down the blankets and adjusted the sheet and pillow.

When he turned to face me, he said, "You sleep."

I smiled. "Only if you stay with me."

"Duh," he said and pointed to the mattress. "Now do whatever it is you need to do and get into this bed, woman."

I chuckled and carefully took off my clothes before climbing into the bed and scooting over to the other side. Clayton climbed in next to me and I curled into him.

Once we were adjusted, I smiled to myself. "It's nice to meet you officially, Clayton."

He chuckled and kissed the top of my head. "Got to sleep, weirdo."



LATER ON, that day, I sat in Boston's apartment. It struck me as funny. Ashton, Boston, Clayton. A was for Ashton, the firstborn. B for Boston, the second born. And finally, C for Clayton, the third born.

"But I am most certainly not the least," Clayton said, puffing out his chest.

"ABC," I said with a laugh.

"Well, our mother wasn't creative, but she did have a sense of humor," Boston said.

I nodded.

It took a bit of coaxing, but I had forgiven Boston as well. His friend was the nurse that had let me in on everything, confirming what I had already figured to be true. I just didn't once believe it had gone further than two identical brothers.

I lounged on the couch as we all hung out together, laughing and sharing stories. It was comfortable. Relaxing, too.

Then the air grew tense as Clayton became serious.

“What is it?” I asked.

“It just occurred to me,” he started.

“What?” I asked with a chuckle.

He settled his eyes on me. “You can’t be with both of us.”

I frowned. This time, my question came out flat. “What?”

Clayton shrugged. “Think about it...”

I switched my gaze to Boston. He frowned and stared at the floor, leaning against the wall next to his door with his hands in his pockets.

“How would it work?” he asked. “Ashton would likely be pushed over the edge.”

“Ashton also made his bed when he decided to come up with this game,” Boston added.

Clayton shrugged as he shook his head once. “I hate to ask, but you have to make a choice.”

I gaped at him. “Come again?”

Who in the hell said anything about making a decision?

“You know,” he said.

“No, I don’t,” I said. “A choice on what?”

“Not what,” Boston said. “Who. He wants you to decide which one of us you are going to be with.”

“Why do I have to pick?” I asked, suddenly epically confused.

Boston turned his attention to Clayton. He pulled his hands from his pockets and crossed his arms over his chest. “I would very much so like to know this as well.”

“Because,” he said.

“Careful,” Boston warned.

“Ashton has yet to even show up and speak for himself, but you are already willing to cast him out?” I asked.

I had no idea where this was coming from or what he was insinuating with making a choice. I just barely got a grip on everything that happened and was getting to know them as individuals. Jumping into a relationship... besides, I wasn't sure if I would be able to make a choice.

“I won't share,” Clayton said. “You are my mate.”

I scoffed.

“She's mine too,” Boston said. “Like it or not, she doesn't need to make a decision right now. And Ashton deserves the same chance she gave us. It's not up to you to negate that.”

I shook my head. We had just gone from pretending we're our brother to win her heart to hey let's fight over who actually gets her now.

I covered my face.

Clayton sucked down the last half of his beer then ran his fingers over his face. With a heavy sigh, he said, “You are right. Guess I was just getting nervous.”

I shook my head. “I can't imagine what it feels like to go through what the three of you had. I understand how that is troubling you. But if I made a choice, it would be all of you or none of you at all.”

Clayton stood straighter, his face brightened despite the speck of worry. “Really?”

I nodded with a smile. “Yes. I just wanted to wait to make my decision for sure until after I had a chance to hear from Ashton. Do you think he will be coming around soon?”

Boston removed himself from the wall. “I can see if he won't come over.”

He pulled out his phone and sent a text.

“If he doesn't respond within the next five minutes, I'm heading to his place,” Clayton said.

“You all three live in the same building and have similar tastes, names, appearances, the only differences I can tell are some distinguishing features and choice of careers,” I said, thinking out loud.

“You solved the mystery,” Boston said with a wink. His cognac eyes still made me a little weak in the knees.

I smiled.

Minutes later, there was a knock at the door. My heart skipped a beat. A flash of the wolf Ashton had turned into rushed through my mind. I sucked in a breath as my body stiffened. Boston turned and headed toward the door, pulling it open, revealing a not so hot looking Ashton leaning against the door.

“What’s so important?” he asked.

Boston stepped out of the way, allowing Ashton’s gaze to fall on me. The second he registered who I was, his eyes widened and he smiled.

“Don’t just stand there gawking at her,” Clayton said. “Come in already.”

Ashton stumbled in. His face was covered in a thick layer of stubble. His hair was disheveled, and his clothes were wrinkled. He managed to make his way across the floor to the leather couch and took a seat, leaving a cushion of space between us.

“Hey,” he said. The leather crinkled under his weight as he situated himself.

I smiled, looking deep into his amber-colored eyes. “Hey.”

“So... this is a new development,” he added, gesturing toward me, and switching his gaze to his brothers.

Boston took his place against the wall again and nodded. “Yup.”

“What happened?” he asked, resting his gaze on each of us for a brief moment.

I sucked in a breath, toying with a piece of thread that had come loose on my shirt. “Well, Clayton came to talk to me. And everything is a bit better than it was before. Of course, I think it helps to know that my friend is getting married to a dragon.”

They all settled their confused gazes on me.

“Dragon?” Boston asked. “So, you knew?”

I shook my head. “No, no. I had absolutely no idea. But I talked to my friend after taking a few days to come to terms with everything and she helped fill in the blanks on some of it.”

“What would you have done if she didn’t know about shifters?” Boston asked.

I shrugged. “I don’t know.”

“I’m glad you were able to get answers from someone you trusted,” Ashton said.

I smiled softly at him. “Thanks. I’m glad you showed up.”

“You are?” he asked, sounding surprised.

I nodded.

“Don’t you have anything to say to her?” Clayton asked.

“Something about how this whole thing started?” Boston added.

The both of them pointedly looked at their brother.

Ashton huffed. “I do. But I hoped to have been able to do it without an audience.”

Boston and Clayton instantly excused themselves to the porch. Once the sliding glass door was shut, Ashton twisted in his seat. He faced me, draping his arm over the space between us.

“I’m sorry,” he said, staring at the seat. “For everything. I wish I could take everything back. Turn back the clock and redo everything. Do things right instead of making everything a stupid competition.”

I nodded and watched as he rubbed his hand over his face.

“I’m so exhausted. I haven’t been able to sleep much since that night. Though I don’t regret what I did, I regret how it happened. You didn’t deserve to be thrown in like that.”

“You mean, with the wolves?” I asked.

He chuckled. “Literally and figuratively, huh?”

I nodded. “I guess so.”

“I know I don’t deserve forgiveness,” he said again. “So I won’t ask. But I would love it very much if you didn’t hold my actions against my brothers. Boston gets dragged into things because he’s given no choice. And Clayton can’t turn down a challenge if he tried.”

I nodded, listening.

“They knew things were going to end horribly. I refused to listen,” he added. “So, please, take it easy on them. This whole thing was my idea. My fault.”

“Oh, I know,” I said. I couldn’t stand the sight of him. The man who had become broken. But not beyond repair.

My heart bled for him. Broke a little too. Because he really was only trying to protect me. I freaked out. Everything I thought I knew in my world had turned out differently and it took me a minute to catch up.

“And I also forgive you,” I added. “Everybody deserves a second chance, right?”

He lifted his gaze to mine, and the light of hope ignited behind them. He slowly nodded.

I shrugged. “Besides, I’m sort of fond of all three of you and would very much so love to get to know each of you a lot better.”

He smiled and launched himself over the cushion to wrap his arms around me. “You have no idea how much what you said means to me.”

“I’m sure we will have plenty of time for you to explain it,” I said.

“Guys, come back now,” Ashton yelled.

Boston and Clayton entered the room, took one glimpse of the sight of us, and smiled.

“I take it things went over well?” Clayton asked.

I shrugged, smiling coyly.

“So you decided?” Boston asked.

“I might have,” I said.

“And?” Clayton asked, stepping closer. His eyes filled with worry.

“All or nothing, right?” I asked.

All three of them nodded.

I sighed. “Welp, guess I’m going to have to go with the all option then.”

Clayton rushed over to me and planted a huge kiss on my lips. “You are so not going to regret this.”

“I better not,” I said. “Because I’m pretty stubborn when I’m not happy.”

The rest of the day was spent together. The four of us. As it should have been. And for the first time in my life, I felt complete. Even though I was still unsteady in this new world of mine, I was confident that I would make it through with my three, identical, hot wolf shifter men guiding me.

EPILOGUE: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Five Years Later...

Gemma and Weylan, A Surprise Baby for the Wolf Shifter

Hello. It's me, Gemma. You followed me through my whirlwind ride of a love story with Weylan. I'm here to let you know how things are going.

Well, here goes!

I never believed in a happily ever after, but for us, it rings true. I have never been happier than I am with the way my life is. Weylan too.

He and his best friend, Guy, opened up their own business shortly after Hastiin started to walk. Now they build homes "off the grid" for other shifters who want to have a peaceful, untraceable life. He loves his work, and I can tell he found his purpose. And with Guy as his partner, the business has been booming.

Things for them are as close to perfect as they can get.

As for me? Well, I don't set up events so much anymore. Rather, other than birthday parties. I still love photography and have sold a few of my shots. Some have even been included in calendars. And being out in the mountains, I found my true calling.

Maybe someday, I will open my own gallery. Until then, I am happy with what I am already doing, which was being a stay-at-home mom full-time, and a nature photographer part-time.

Plus, baby number two is on the way, and there is so much to prepare for. We're hoping for a girl this time around.

I also love my play dates with Guy's wife and kids.

All in all, I truly adore my life now. I can't see my life getting any better. Things are just... well, perfect!

Oh! Tabitha.

She eventually found love. Real love. With a human no less. He was her therapist and had helped her through the immense trauma from her past. She came around after she had done quite a bit of healing. She wanted to make amends. To me particularly.

As shocking as it was, I was flattered and honored once the initial shock wore off.

She really isn't that bad of a person, especially once you get to know her. And I'm happy to report that she and her husband are expecting their first baby in the winter.

I can already tell she's going to be an exceptional mother.

But that's it! That's how things have been. Our lives are peaceful and rich in love and good times.

Thanks for being a part of our story.



Savannah, Jacob, Liam, and Noah, Her Forbidden Shifters

Savannah

I won't speak for the men. But as for myself? I am pretty satisfied with life and the way things are. Things keep moving forward, change is inevitable, right?

Things have been busy at the coven. Though I haven't been happier than I am now, the bar is constantly rising. Each month that passes, each year that goes by brings me a newer sense of fulfillment.

On top of my coven duties, I have become an advocate for the victims of the anonymous group. I help them with their ongoing recovery and do what I can to make sure they are able to get back on their feet and live as normal of a life as possible.

Some clients are worse off than others. My heart breaks for them every day.

They are the ones who become part of my family and the ones who I check on the most frequently.

Each day, I look forward to going home to my men. We had developed quite the routine. Liam retired from the force a couple of years back. He now spends a good chunk of time helping me with my advocacy. His main focus is finding safe homes for the victims.

Jacob still works for the SOTF. He's got his eye on Sergeant, and with luck, he will land the position in the next couple of months. I'm pulling for him. Though I miss being his partner, his job is what fulfills him, and I can see that every night when he walks through the door.

Noah, regrettably, is still getting used to the idea of sharing me. He's a dragon, though. Possessive is in their DNA. He does his best though. And thanks to him and his inheritance, he keeps himself busy by spearheading a new organization for shifters who had lost their animals in the attacks thanks to the anonymous group. It's called Avery's Promise. Named in honor of his sister who suffered the same fate.

Part of his hope is, with enough research, we can figure out what happens to the shifter when their animal dies. Do they become human? Or are they something else entirely? Also, he's footing for research into whether or not the animals can be revived or if they are gone forever.

Much is still unknown about that. And he won't rest until he gets his answers.

And speaking of Avery... she was able to find the biological father of the baby, thus making good on the promise

she made to the child's dying mother. Of course, the whole action came with a bit of a bonus.

She and the father had fallen in love. They are getting married soon. He's done her some good. She seems much happier nowadays.

There isn't much else to tell. Just living life, taking things one day at a time, fighting for justice, and all that jazz.

Thanks for being a part of our story.



Toni, Ezra, Rin, and Luke, Three Shifters to Break a Curse

Toni

Wow, has it been five years already? Crazy!

Well, as you probably already know, I had moved from the coven to the cabin. I now practice as a solitary witch. However, I miss the comfort of my coven sisters and family, but I also don't mind the solitude either. And if my sisters at the coven ever need me, I am there for them. Just as I know they will be here for me if I ever need them.

I take comfort in that most of all.

What's better is I even have a shop in town for all of my herbal soaps and remedies. Ezra helps out too. His favorite thing to do is making tea, which I feel is his true calling. The man is a natural. But I wouldn't have the shop without the garden the men had made for me. It is a lush, huge space that I spend hours and hours in. I like to call it my little slice of paradise. But really, it's almost heavenly.

The best part about my garden is Rin's help. He takes care of the plants and such when I'm in town, working at the shop. Really, I think he finds peace and fulfillment with it. But don't tell him I said that. He would likely deny it and put on his macho façade.

Just the serenity on his face when he's working with the plants is worth the garden's weight in gold.

Luke spends his time working with his hands. Guy, Ezra's cousin, apparently opened up a business with his best friend and they now spend their time building cabins like ours for shifters who want to live in peace and solitude.

He comes home every night tired as all get out, but he is satisfied.

This is our jive. Our journey. Our life together. I love every second of it and wouldn't change it for the world.

There is still not a day that goes by that I'm not in a way thankful for my little mistake. Without it, I wouldn't have met the men. And though the spell itself had gone horribly wrong, it still worked out for me in the end.

My three bear shifters.

We're living that happily ever after.

Maybe someday, I'll have a few kids.

Yeah... that would be the cherry on top, I think. Don't you?



Cadence and Guy, Snowed In With Her Bear Shifter

Cadence

It's almost hard to believe Guy and I first met five years ago. Guess what they say is true... Time really does fly when you're having fun.

And I am having the time of my life.

Seems like yesterday that fateful weekend happened between me and Guy. Fast forward five years and things look very different for us.

For starters, our twins. One boy and one girl. Their names are Luke and Ursa. Luke for obvious reasons. And Ursa as a namesake to Guy's mother. Though I wouldn't let the fact that they are twins fool you. Oh no. They may be twins, but trust and believe they are very different.

And they keep me super busy. Which is fine because I need something to fill my day. Especially with Guy gone during the day. But that didn't bother me. Guy was following his dream. He and his best friend, Weylan opened up a business a few years ago. Not too long after Guy and I made things official.

Well, what we consider to be official.

He builds houses. Cabins like what he built for Ezra. Only, he is in charge. Partner, really.

I am proud of him.

Of course, come the fall, the twins will be starting school and I won't have so much to fill my time. I've thought about taking my position at the old gas station again, but Guy doesn't like the idea of me working.

I have no idea what else I would do, but I still have some time to figure it out.

For now, I'm blissfully letting the time slip through my fingers, absorbing every second of time with my family I can get. Because someday, all I will have are memories. And I want to make sure they are the absolute best.

Would I say we are living happily ever after? Oh, you're damn right we are! There isn't a thing I would change. There isn't a single second of my life, past or present, that I regret.

For me, things are as perfect as possible.

I'm grateful you chose to go through my story with me. And I hope you are as satisfied with how everything ended as I am.

Good luck to you all.



Cassidy, Dallas, Malachi, and Steele, Thankful for Her Shifters

Cassidy,

As I sit, writing this, I'm reminiscing about all the things. The ups and downs. The painful in-betweens... the delightful, heated passion-filled nights.

All of it doesn't feel as though it happened five years ago. I'm shocked!

So much time has passed so quickly. So much has happened. And I need to catch you up!

For starters, I settled in rather quickly into my life in Manitou. I can't see myself living anywhere else. Nowhere would ever come as close to this place. For me, Manitou is and forever will be home.

I eventually opened up my own preschool for the pride. There was a need, and I had the means, and with the help of my men, we made it happen.

Even the club is thriving! Steele, of course, handles the accounting. He might be too proud to say it, but the whole place stays afloat because of him.

Dallas is the head of operations. Another suitable position. He's still adjusting to all the changes that keep happening, but I think he's also happy with it all. It's very fast-paced. Right up his alley.

And Malachi? He had started out as a fill-in for alpha. However, it quickly became apparent that he had gone from acting alpha to new alpha. The role is perfect for him. He needed something he could really sink his teeth into. I'm glad the pride stands behind him too.

As for Charlotte...

She was convicted of all charges. She's currently spending consecutive sentences in a special shifter prison deep in the Rockies. She'll likely be there for the rest of her life. Or, at least, until she's too old to cause any more problems. But something tells me age wouldn't stand in the way of what she puts her mind to.

Other than that, we are all living a pretty normal life. So, what if my men turn into mountain lions? I actually find it very comforting.

For right now, we don't have any plans to have kids. We have talked about it briefly a time or two, but we haven't found the right time for us.

And to be honest, I really wouldn't mind if we never had kids. I was satisfied with my students. They were enough for me.

That's really all there is to it. And I have to go. I have a student who is about to dump a container of red glitter on her peer's head...

Oh, great. That's a mess.

Talk soon!



Maxine, Ghalen, Spencer, and Quinn, Three Shifters for Christmas

Maxine

What can I say? It's been a long while. Seems like I blinked and here we are, five years later.

So, what have we been up to? Probably the same as we were where our story left off. Only, this time, I have a daughter. Isabella. Phineas named her. And he is as proud of a big brother as you would imagine.

He grew up too, by the way. He busted his rear to catch up in school and graduated with the rest of his peers. On time. I knew the kid could do it. He's currently in college, though he hasn't told me what he is majoring in. I guess we'll all be surprised when he has the degree in hand.

Phineas video calls home as often as he can so he can talk to his little sister.

Though I have the shop still, I no longer live above it. Instead, we all bought a house that sat on some land a little south of Manitou. It's the perfect place for Isabelle to grow and play, and the men can shift freely, spending as much time in their animal forms as they want.

Ghalen still bounces for the club. He's a lot happier under the new management though. Ever since that investor came through. He's also the head of security and has a handful of employees underneath him.

All in all, I believe he's happy. He always worries about Phineas though. And naturally so.

Spencer still works for the SOTF. He tries to work from home as often as he can, but for the most part, the commute isn't terrible. It's actually comparable to what he was having to do when he drove into Manitou. Far as I'm concerned, he is satisfied with life.

Quinn is loving his life and his job more and more each day. He takes me out into the middle of our land every chance he has to recreate our date night. His little moment when he knew I was his mate.

I love that.

Isabella is quite the handful, she misses her brother, but we try to keep her busy and having fun as much as we can. And though she's not quite the help Phineas was, she does try to help me at the shop. She's my special little lady. I can already tell she has the same gift I have.

I'm already helping her to hone it.

And the men are fiercely protective of her.

There isn't much else to say. We are living happily ever after, and there isn't a thing I would change about our lives.

Well, maybe try to slow it down a little. Just so I can have more time and make more memories.

Thanks for being a part of our story. I hope you find your own version of happily ever after. And if you already have it, congratulations.



Olivia and Milo, Her Billionaire Shifter Valentine

Olivia

Who knew that five years ago, I would be sitting here telling you about my happily ever after? I sure didn't. And I think I would have called whoever said otherwise crazy. Because I still find myself pinching myself, even after all this time, believing everything is just a very long, vivid dream.

Yet, here we are, five years after Milo took me on that weekend trip, and life continues to become better and better. Hard to believe, I get it. But trust me on this one. It does get better. By like, a lot. Guess that's why they call it happily ever after.

Seriously though, I can hardly believe it's been five years. Life really has a way of making time speed up.

I look at my little daughter in wonder and awe. I became a stay-at-home mom, and I love every second of it. Though I sometimes feel as though I'm about to go stir-crazy, Jewel makes everything worth it.

Every day that passes by, I'm just a little happier than the day before. I might burst someday. But until then, I'm living and loving my best life.

Milo too.

I never thought he could be so happy. He told me he now had purpose and direction. And it all came with me and our daughter. Especially our daughter.

She had come screaming into the world, making her demands like the little billionaire boss she is. And at her little preschool age, she already has so much personality and character. She just might change the world someday.

Maybe even rule it too.

As of right now, we have no other plans to have more kids. Maybe someday. But for now, we are very satisfied with where our lives are at currently.

As for any final parting words?

Thank you for allowing me to share my story. It means the world to me. Your support through the most challenging point

in my life is beyond amazing. I appreciate you and hope you are loving life as much as I am if not a little bit more.



Morgan, Ashton, Boston, and Clayton, Triple Shifter Trouble.

Morgan

Five years ago, I was thrust into a world I didn't know existed until Ashton shifted in front of me. I never expected my life to change so drastically. But it has, and I'm ever grateful.

My life changed in many, many ways. Quite unexpectedly too.

For starters, I never thought I would date three brothers, much less triplets. I don't hate it. In fact, I love it. Granted, I understand what I am doing isn't for everyone, but I strongly encourage you to consider the benefits. Of course, I won't go into all of those now. You pretty much got a solid preview during the story.

It took a little bit of time to get used to things. Who was who, and such. Especially since I had gotten used to calling all of them Ashton. But once I got everything down, things settled into a perfect rhythm.

Now, I wouldn't change a single thing in my life.

After our lease was up in the apartments, we all worked together to buy a house in the suburbs. It's a quiet neighborhood with great schools and low crime. I can go for a walk at night if I want to. Best part? The men can walk with me either in human form or wolf.

I get a kick out of people's reactions when they see me walking down the street with a wolf beside me. No leash because that would be rude.

The men get a kick out of it too.

The men still do what they love for work. And I started working from home as a tech supervisor for a local shifter-owned company looking to go wide with their services. It's a nice, solid gig.

As far as kids? Well, let's just say the men have a surprise waiting for them. I bought a package of buns and set one in the oven. There's a note on the handle. I'm curious to see how long it will take for them to make the connection.

I suspect Boston already knows. He made a comment about my lack of drinking alcohol at dinner. I played it off the best I could at the moment. But I know it wouldn't be long before the other two catch on.

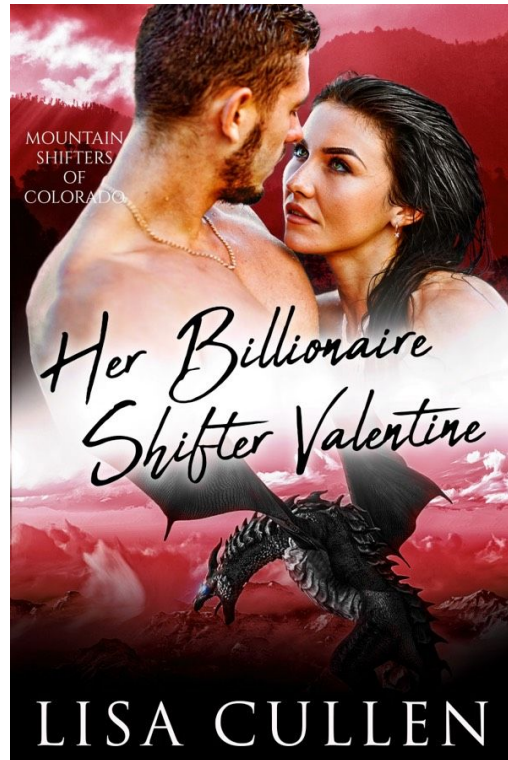
So, I figured, tonight, when they get home, they will know. And then our life is really going to get interesting.

And on that note, I better get ready for them to arrive. Thank you for allowing me to share my story with you. I hope you cherish it as much as I do and find your happily ever after if you haven't already!

Dear reader,

Thank you for reading Triple Shifter Trouble. **[You can checkout Olivia's story here.](#)**

And don't forget to **[binge read the entire series here.](#)**



I wasn't Milo Mason's type. I was the complete opposite.

I should have listened to them.

For two blissful days, I discovered just how much the real thing compared to my imagination, and it was better than I could have hoped for.

But as soon as the weekend was over, things returned to normal.

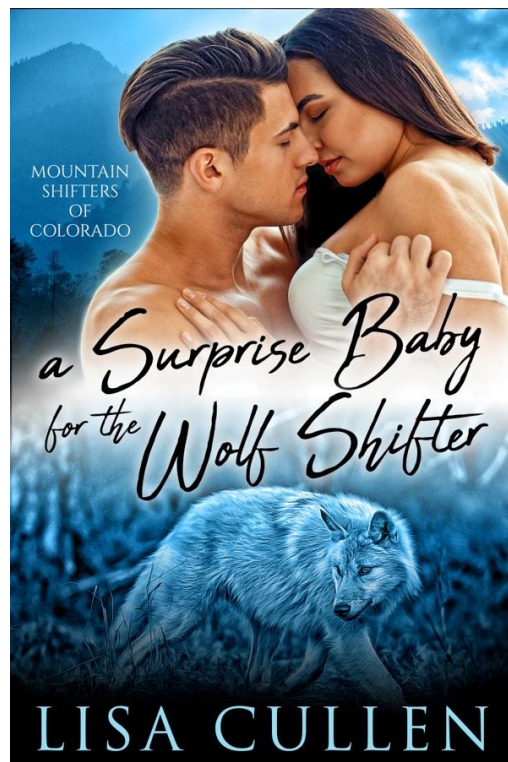
One month later, I have the surprise of a lifetime.

But Milo Mason isn't a family man. He's not even the relationship type.

I have to tell him before I start showing.

Grab here.

A SURPRISE BABY FOR THE WOLF SHIFTER (SAMPLE)



DESCRIPTION

It all started with a kiss...

One hot, blissful night with a sexy as hell guy I would never see again.

Six weeks later, I discover I'm pregnant.

A baby wasn't part of the deal.

Luckily, Weylan and I had a connection that night... one we both can't describe.

We told each other almost everything there was to know about ourselves, including where he lived.

Prompted by my best friend, Cassidy, I go to find him, so I can tell him about our little *surprise baby*.

And I get a surprise of my own.

Not just because of his crazy ex, but because *they are shifters*.

Weylan turns into a wolf, and his ex is a mountain lion who's eager to rip me to shreds simply because Weylan wants me.

This is more than I can take.

I surely have a big decision on my hands.

There's a baby I'm absolutely unprepared for.

PROLOGUE: GEMMA

It started with a kiss...

Well, sort of.

It actually started with a night out with Cassidy and an outdoor party celebrating St. Patrick's Day within the heart of Denver.

Gemma rushed to the public bathroom's mirror. She ripped off a piece of toilet paper from a nearby stall, wrapped it around her fingers, and lightly traced the outline of her lips. Once she was done, she stood back and looked at her finished look.

"Not bad," she said to herself before rushing out of the door to her waiting best friend.

There was something about this party that had Gemma buzzing with excitement.

"Where to now?" Cassidy asked. Her short blonde hair was done up in a faux side buzz. Rows of braids had black and green ribbon woven through her hair. It suited her. Much like many other things that would make Gemma crazy with jealousy if she stopped to think about them.

Her bright blue eyes were outlined in black, and a shamrock was painted on her cheek from her event with her students earlier in the day. She wrapped her black sweater jacket around her a little tighter as a breeze blew around them.

"Let's get out of the breeze, for starters," Gemma said and escorted her friend to the massive pavilion that stood center

stage of the park surrounding them. Gemma had always wanted to go to an event here, and it just so happened that she had stumbled across the event list when she was booking the location for a photoshoot.

Gemma smiled as the massive stone structure grew within her vision. It was a pillar of Greek architecture. And the fact that it was being used to celebrate an Irish holiday wasn't beyond her. But the pavilion was used for many, many things.

For this particular event, green and orange lights shone on the outside of the white marble. The colors of Ireland. Fitting for the holiday. Green flags filled the spaces between the pillars, decorated in silver glitter, catching the light and refracting it back toward the world.

And tonight, it was the location of her and Cassidy's girl's night out.

Gemma looked forward to her bi-weekly ritual with her best friend forever. But, in truth, it was growing stale. Normally, they would go for dinner at their favorite restaurant, followed by either a couple of rounds of pool, some dancing, or a combination of the two. However, Gemma decided to switch things up a bit. Throw in a little flavor.

Bam! St. Patrick's Day Celebration in the park!

"Who was it that put this on again?" Cassidy asked.

Gemma shrugged as she took in all the glory. "I didn't recognize the name. I think it was some frat of a college nearby. Don't quote me on that, though."

"There is no way all of these people are college kids," Cassidy said as she raked her gaze over the patrons.

Gemma shrugged. "I did say 'I think.' Maybe it's some sort of mixer."

"You have no idea what this party is about do you?" Cassidy asked as she stopped her friend and leveled her gaze on Gemma's. "Who are you and what have you done to my friend?"

"I have no idea what you are talking about," Gemma said.

“You don’t do half-cocked ideas,” Cassidy continued, pointing a finger at her friend’s chest. She playfully narrowed her eyes. “Really, who are you?”

“Relax, it’s me... I already told you what happened. But now that we are here, this is clearly something very, very different.” Gemma looked around and shook her head.

“All this for an experiment,” Cassy muttered under her breath. “This reminds me of some sort of secret society gathering with only so many tickets sold...”

“There were no tickets,” Gemma interrupted. “Relax. I have a plan.”

“And that is?” she asked, quirking an eyebrow.

“We check it out, get a feel for everything. If we don’t like what we see, we can go to dinner and pretend this mistake never happened,” Gemma said.

Her friend considered her words for several moments then nodded. “Deal.”

As they finished the walk to the pavilion, Cassidy added, “I feel like I have to let you know that I totally approve of spontaneous Gemma. She should come out more often.”

“Sorry, this was a once-in-a-decade event,” she said through a giggle.

“We shall see,” Cassidy said.

Not much longer, and they both had drinks in their hands, standing next to the bar, watching as people filed in under the pavilion. As Gemma watched the people, she realized Cassidy was right. This wasn’t an ordinary party.

This was most definitely different. Much more than what she was expecting.

While Cassidy was off to the girl’s room, a couple of guys approached her.

“Where did your friend go off to?” The tall and rugged one asked. He had kind eyes though, which Gemma appreciated.

“She’ll be back in a couple of minutes,” she said. “Why?”

“Not the sort of party girls like you should be attending alone,” he said. “I’m Guy.”

He held out his hand and Gemma stared at it.

“You said your name is Guy?” she asked.

He nodded. “My parents weren’t all that original.”

Gemma laughed. “I’m Gemma.”

“This is Weylan,” he said.

Weylan was a tad bit more standoffish. He seemed uncomfortable and on alert.

“Is he okay?” Gemma asked, cautiously staring at the incredibly handsome man.

“I’m fine. Just keeping an eye out for your friend,” he said.

“How noble of you. She can handle herself,” Gemma said.

His light brown eyes took her in and stole her breath. A small crease appeared between Weylan’s eyebrows. His lips parted, and all she could think about was the shape of his mouth and wondering how it would feel on hers.

And just like that, her nerves ignited in the most delicious burn she has ever felt in her life.

She smiled, unable to fight her lips. Weylan stepped closer.

“You have very pretty eyes,” he said.

She giggled. “Thank you. You do too.”

And they were the most beautiful brown eyes she’s ever seen. They were faceted with shades of yellow, green, and brown, interlaced and overlapping creating a dazzling web of color and beauty.

She had never seen eyes like his before.

“What did I miss?” Cassidy asked as she approached Gemma’s side.

Gemma managed to pull herself from Weylan’s enchanting gaze to address Cassidy. “These two are looking to entertain us for the evening.”

“Fantastic,” she said and turned to Guy, “But don’t get any ideas. I’m taken.”

“Oh. Then challenge accepted,” Guy said and smirked. He held out his hand. “I’m kidding, I’m Guy.”

Cassidy took his hand. “I hope so. I’m Cassidy. Interesting name you have there.”

“That never gets old,” he said and chuckled.

“His parents had no originality,” Gemma offered.

“It’s a family curse, I’m afraid,” Guy said. “All joking aside, how did two beautiful ladies such as yourselves manage to land an invite to this exclusive party?”

Gemma shrugged. “I might have seen it on an event list.”

Weylan stepped closer to her. “So, it’s just happenstance meeting you here like this?”

“Maybe,” she said, playing coy and buzzing with arousal.

“Shall we dance?” he asked. He breathed in deep the scent of her perfume.

She nearly swooned. “I would love to.”

She flashed a grin to Cassidy and Weylan whisked her off to the dance floor and spent the next however long in a dizzying array of fire and ice. And once the last song ended, he kissed her.

The rest of her time at the pavilion was a blur. A blissful, acholic blur. When it was time to go, Weylan took her keys.

“Hey! Those are mine!” Gemma said.

Weyland chuckled. “You’re in no shape to drive. I’ll drive you home.”

“How will you get home?” she asked.

“You let me worry about that, okay?” he asked, pressing his hand onto the small of her back.

She sighed and said, “Okay.”

By the time they made it to her apartment, she had electric sensations rippling all over her body. She was going to ask him inside, and then into her bed.

This wasn't her usual behavior. But there was something about this man that got to her. He crawled under her skin and stayed there. Nice and warm.

And she wanted all that she could have of him. Even if it was only for the night.

She didn't even have the chance to open her own door. Seconds after her vehicle was put in park, he was at her door, helping her out.

It was the perfect segue.

"So, are you going to help me up to my apartment too?"

"I wouldn't dream of anything else," he said.

Gemma giggled and patted him on his face. She sighed. "You're too much."

"Not yet, anyway," he said.

"Oh, come now. With that face? Bet you make all the ladies melt," she said.

"I've been known to melt one or two," he said, helping her to the main entrance.

"Humble too," she said as she pressed the button for the elevator.

"Naturally," he agreed.

A few short minutes later, the couple was at her apartment door. She slid in the key and twisted, the knob turned, and the door opened in. No sooner than she was inside, he pulled her to him. His mouth collided with hers. Her back was pressed against the wall.

She was dizzy. Her nerves burned like fire. Electricity danced along her skin, and an ocean flooded the space between her legs.

"Bedroom. Now," he said between kisses.

“Door on the left,” she mumbled around his lips.

He picked her up. She wrapped her legs around his waist, and he carried her to her room. Once her back was on the mattress, he quickly undressed.

Gemma started to do the same.

He pushed her back to the bed and kissed her deeply. He growled out, “Don’t you dare do my job.”

She smirked, wondering if this was what it was like to feel worshiped by a man.

Her clothes were ripped from her and Weyland appeared above her again, nestled oh so delicately between her legs. The tip of his hard erection pressed against her swollen, wet entrance. His mouth claimed hers as his dick slowly slid inside her.

She sucked in a breath, eyes rolling into the back of her head as she arched her back against his methodic movements.

He gripped her legs, placing each of them over his shoulder, and moved even deeper into her.

Gemma couldn’t think straight. The delightful sensations rushed over her in waves of pleasure that was divine, otherworldly, and just pure ecstasy. And the way he was controlled in his movements was mind-blowing.

Pressure started to build within her center. Her breaths became more ragged. Her nails raked along the peaks and valleys of muscle that covered his arms.

And then it hit.

The orgasm of orgasms.

The pillar of pleasure.

The ultimate climax.

She cried into the air of her apartment as he moved in her, still controlled, still mind-blowing.

He settled her legs on either side of him. “Can you do anymore?”

She stared at him as though he spoke a different language.

“Are you worn out?” he asked.

“That was a powerful orgasm. I don’t know if I have any more in me,” she said.

“I appreciate your honesty,” he said and plowed into her with surprising force. He plowed into her pussy so hard and fast that she wasn’t sure if her wall was going to have holes in it from the bed frame.

After about two minutes of being torn from the inside out, she orgasmed again. She tightened her sex around his organ and buried her face into his neck. All the while she kept thinking of how he was full of wonderful surprises.

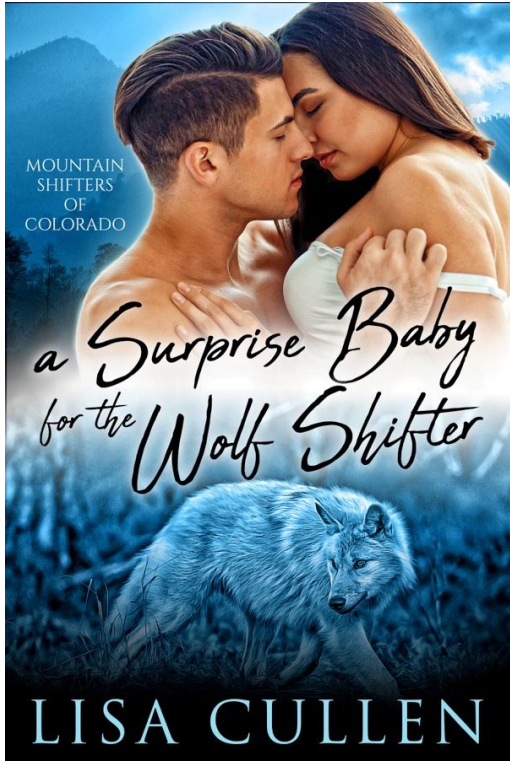
Weylan bent over her and grunted, slipping his fingers into Gemma’s hair and clutching a fist. The feel of his body over hers was amazing and warm and smooth. His movements turned jerky, and he grunted more. Then hot liquid spilled inside her and she sucked in a breath, letting it out in a slow sigh.

He ended their night of sex with a kiss and helped her under the covers. She closed her eyes, falling asleep to the warmth around her body.

In the morning, she woke to find him, and his wonderful warmth, missing. He had left.

It was better this way.

Find out what happens next. Grab ***A SURPRISE BABY FOR THE WOLF SHIFTER NOW!***



MOUNTAIN
SHIFTERS
OF
COLORADO

*a Surprise Baby
for the Wolf Shifter*

LISA CULLEN

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