



AMNESIA

WIDE OPEN SERIES BOOK THREE

SUNDAE LEIGHTON

Amnesia

Wide Open Series

(Book Three)

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Sullen Press, LLC

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Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

[Playlist](#)

[A Note From The Author](#)

[Prologue](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

[Chapter Twelve](#)

[Chapter Thirteen](#)

[Chapter Fourteen](#)

[Chapter Fifteen](#)

[Chapter Sixteen](#)

[Chapter Seventeen](#)

[Chapter Eighteen](#)

[Chapter Nineteen](#)

[Chapter Twenty](#)

[Chapter Twenty-One](#)
[Chapter Twenty-Two](#)
[Chapter Twenty-Three](#)
[Chapter Twenty-Four](#)
[Chapter Twenty-Five](#)
[Chapter Twenty-Six](#)
[Chapter Twenty-Seven](#)
[Chapter Twenty-Eight](#)
[Chapter Twenty-Nine](#)
[Chapter Thirty](#)
[Chapter Thirty-One](#)
[Chapter Thirty-Two](#)
[Chapter Thirty-Three](#)
[Chapter Thirty-Four](#)
[Chapter Thirty-Five](#)
[Epilogue](#)
[One More Thing](#)
[Acknowledgments](#)
[About the Author](#)

Playlist

- “Ghost Story” — Carrie Underwood
- Long Live— Taylor Swift
- “Creep” — Radiohead
- “Just About Over You” — Priscilla Block
- “Like a Stone” — Audioslave
- “Video Games” — Lana del Ray
- “Drive” — The Cars
- “Let Me Go” — Benson Boone
- “Faithfully” — Journey
- “Learning to Walk Again” — Foo Fighters
- “Like A Stone” — Audioslave
- “Everything” — Alanis Morissette
- “Make You Feel My Love” — Adele
- “Apocalypse” — Cigarettes After Sex

Winners get waffles

A Note From The Author

I was having a bit of writer's block when this one came to me as I was writing Kingston High, #4. Like most of my book ideas, this one started in the morning while I was getting ready for work. If you're curious, Oz's book, as well as the rest of the Kingston books, are still coming. Just later than expected. Watson Brooks appeared briefly in *Gravity*. I never had plans to give him his own book, but here we are. There are no triggers with this one unless you don't like the stepbrother trope, and if that's the case, you probably wouldn't have picked up this book in the first place. I tried my best not to include any spoilers for the first two books in The Wide Open Series, but I apologize if one or two might have slipped through. It wasn't on purpose. Like most of my books, you'll find some familiar faces here because that's what I do.

I say this a lot when it comes to my characters, but I love Watson and Holt so much. I hope you do, too.

Prologue

Holt

Four years ago

“You are such a fucking stud!” My stepbrother and best friend, Watson Brooks, catapulted himself at me, nearly knocking me over as he wrapped his arms around me in a tight hug. “You did it!” he exclaimed as he lifted me off the ground. He was six foot three and two-hundred-plus pounds of solid muscle.

I shoved at his chest. “Oh my God, put me down.” I could feel the blush creeping up my neck. “You’re embarrassing me.” I scoffed, even though I secretly liked it.

I loved the attention he wasn’t afraid to give me. He was Watson Brooks, mister popular racecar driver, and I was, well, Holt Walker, nerdy, shy nobody, and everything he wasn’t.

“You love it,” he teased before he placed me back on my feet and hooked an arm around my shoulders. “You know”—he squeezed tightly—“if Mom were here, she’d totally take us out to celebrate.” Our parents, my dad and his mom, were away celebrating their third wedding anniversary.

I rolled my eyes. “It’s just a chess tournament. Not a big deal.” I tried to untangle myself from Watson, but he was too strong.

Lately, things had felt funny for me. The pull I had, the feelings, everything, felt like they were wired wrong, and when he touched me... Yeah, it wasn’t right. I had developed this stupid crush on my stepbrother that simply refused to go away, no matter how far I pushed it back down inside of me.

“Not a big... H, are you serious?” Watson moved, so he was in front of me, and planted his enormous hands on my shoulders. “It’s huge!” He broke out into a giant smile that made my stomach do this funny somersault thing while his dark brown eyes sparkled with happiness. “I am not going to let my brother act like he is not the smartest person at Myers

Park High, not to mention the brainiest dude *I* know. We're going out." He wiggled his brows.

"No way."

"Yes way."

"Watson," I warned.

"Holt," he growled right back.

Why, why, *why* did I have to fall in love with... Wait, was that what this was? Because I wasn't sure what love even was. I was eighteen, a senior in high school, one of a handful of gay kids, never been kissed, and Watson was... *Fuck*. Yep, I was totally in love with him. The coolest, the nicest, not to mention the friendliest guy in school, and my stepbrother. He went out of his way to make sure everyone liked him, and I was head over heels in love with him. Hell. Why me?

"Is that a yes? Because I don't hear you protesting anymore." Watson moved to hug me again, but I stepped back before he could get too close. "Holt, come on!" His shoulders slumped forward as he dropped his chin to his chest. His blond hair flopped down into his eyes, and it took all my strength not to push it back from his forehead. The things I wanted to do to him.

Help me. "Fine, but I don't want—"

"I knew it!" Watson clapped his hands happily before engulfing me in another one of his bone-crushing hugs. "Nothing big, just us," he assured me. "Watts and H."

"Watson and Holt," I corrected him. "Dinner. That's it."

He nodded. "That's it."

Why did he have to smell so good? The scent of gasoline and exhaust were probably gross to most people, but to me, it meant Watson. It reminded me of home.

"Just us?"

That was different. Normally, when our parents were gone, Watson wanted to throw some big party, but just the two of us? I peered up at him warily.

“Come on, come on! Let’s go.” He ushered me out the door before I had a chance to change my mind.

Everyone at the Waffle House knew Watson. Most of the kids there either went to our school, had already graduated, or knew of him from his racing career. So, as we sat in the booth waiting to place our order, people would stop and say hello. It made me more nervous than I already was.

“Do you know what you’re getting?” I kept my eyes cast down on the menu, afraid to look up at him. When he didn’t answer, I had no choice but glance up.

Watson grinned at me. “Winners get waffles.” He sat back and crossed his arms over his massive chest.

I was pretty sure he was just going to keep growing until he was seven feet tall. When we first met, at fifteen, he already towered over me. I was barely pushing five-six now, and I didn’t think I would get much bigger. I was built like my mom—something I was going to have to get used to. I didn’t have any memories of her, since she had died when I was two, but I had seen plenty of pictures.

“Um, what?” I stuttered.

His lashes were so long and framed his warm chocolate-colored eyes perfectly.

Watson chuckled as he reached for the menu in front of me. “Mom used to take me out for waffles when I won a race as a kid. So”—he closed it and placed it on top of his—“winners get waffles.”

“We’re getting waffles?”

“Are you feeling okay, bro? Because you’re not acting like yourself tonight.”

No, Watson, I think I’m in love with you. “Uh, I’m fine.”

“Liar.” He nudged me under the table. “Come on, H, this is supposed to be a fucking celebration. You’re supposed to be happy and smiling, laughing, having a good time. Instead, you look like someone pissed in your cornflakes.” He pouted,

which made me snort. He grinned at me. “There you go. That’s the brother I know and love.” He turned to acknowledge the waitress, who greeted him by name, and I sat there, stunned by his words, while he flirted shamelessly with her. Not even caring because what I wanted, more than anything, was for Watson to love me the way I loved him.

The waitress disappeared after Watson ordered me whatever he was having, and then we were alone again. I met his curious eyes and managed a smile.

“So...” I tapped the table. “Have you thought any more about what you’re going to do after graduation?” Which was coming faster than I wanted. Watson would be gone, and I would be left without him protecting me or being in my orbit.

“I have.” Watson brushed my hand with his long fingers. “You know I’ve been approached by a few truck teams about racing in the big leagues, right?”

I swallowed nervously instead of yanking away from his touch.

“I told them I’m not doing it without you.”

I stared at him. “Watson, why would you... I’m not a driver,” I reminded him. “I don’t even have my license yet.” I was a little scared of the highway. Not going to even lie about it. All those eighteen wheelers. No thank you.

“Duh, but there are plenty of jobs you can do. We’re a team. You’re my biggest cheerleader, other than Mom, and I need you, H. You’re my best friend. I won’t go without you.” It felt like those chocolate eyes could see right into my soul.

I shook my head. “No, don’t say shit like that.” I pulled my hands into my lap. “You’re... You’re Watson Brooks. You’re going to win a million races, have a room built for all your trophies, and win a hundred championships. I will only hold you back.” Not to mention having to watch you with all those pit bunnies... Which might drive me to drink.

“We’re a team, Holt. No you, no me.”

“Why? Why would you throw everything away because of me?”

Watson gave me the goofy, dopey smile he hardly gave anyone else. It did things to my body, especially my dick, that made it hard to think straight. It made me wonder if that's what his after-sex face looked like. All lust-drunk and relaxed.

“Who knows me better than I know myself, huh?” He dragged a hand through his blond locks, and I watched the way the hair settled on his head. It made him look even sexier than normal. Watson tilted his head. “Am I not your best friend? Is there someone else you hang out with more than me?”

“Uh, no, you're literally the *only* person I hang out with. Thanks for reminding me I'm a loser.” I grimaced.

Watson threw his head back and laughed. My dick instantly thickened against my zipper. God, this was torture.

“H, you're not a loser. I wouldn't be caught dead with you if you weren't the coolest person I knew. Do this with me. They'll train you for a job, we'll live together, and come home to visit Mom and Dad during the week. We'll get rich and buy a house for them. We'll literally be kings.” He smirked. “You can kiss all the cute boys you want, and no one—I mean no one—will judge you for it. If they do, I'll kick their asses.” He winked. “Fuck it. I'll kiss them, too. Guess that's me telling you I'm into boys *and* girls.”

Wait a second, did Watson just tell me he was bi? Just as I opened my mouth to answer, a horde of waitresses came out singing some ridiculous song that made absolutely no sense about congratulations with a waffle on a plate with a candle, and I wanted to kill my stepbrother. But at the same time, I also wanted to hug him because no one, and I do mean no one, treated me the way he did. I was thoroughly embarrassed by the time the song was over, but I knew there was a smile on my face because my face hurt.

I stared down at the waffle in front of me, which was covered in whipped cream and sprinkles, before I reached for my silverware. I unwrapped the napkin before I pointed my fork at him.

“You’re an asshole.” I knew my entire face was on fire from that ordeal.

“You love me.” Watson snorted.

“You’re trying to give me diabetes? Is that what this is? This thing... is this even a waffle?” I poked at the mess before me. It smelled delicious, though. I started to cut into the cakey monstrosity, and as I brought a piece up to my lips, I caught Watson watching me with a sad look on his face.

Brows dipped, mouth pinched, he didn’t usually look so unsure of himself. “Say you’ll do it, H.” He worried his lip between his teeth. “I don’t want to do it alone. I can’t,” he confessed.

“Watson.” I swallowed my bite of food. “You’re scared.”

He nodded. “I’m terrified I won’t be that good. That I’m just local track good, and if I crash and burn—no pun intended—I’ll end up coming home with my tail between my legs. You’re good for me, bro. You’re the smart one.”

“You’re smart,” I reminded him.

Watson grunted. “Right, okay, but please?” he begged. “Do this and I’ll never ask you for another thing again. Ever.”

“Watts!” someone called out to him, and he quickly put on his usual smile, our conversation forgotten, as some of the football team came over to the table to bullshit. They acknowledged me, they had to because Watson made sure to include me, but my mind was elsewhere.

Could I leave home and go on the road with him? Could I live in an RV for days, weeks even, with Watson? Learn to do whatever they asked me to do? I had no plans to go to college other than maybe get an education in journalism. I wasn’t even sure what I wanted to do with my life. I was always so wrapped up in Watson. Cheering him on the weekends with his racing and following him around from track to track with our parents. Could I see myself working on some racing team? Also, Watson was bi? Did he just realize this? Why was he just telling me this tonight? Had he been with guys before? I wasn’t sure I could survive here without him.

When his friends left, and we were alone again, Watson checked his phone. “You want to go to a movie or something? Heard the new *Thor* movie was pretty good.” He took a sip of his water.

“You want to go to a superhero movie? With me?”

“I mean, if you don’t want to see it...”

I shook my head. “No, I’ll go,” I assured him.

“Great, let me just get the bill.” Watson flagged down our waitress.

“No, I mean, I’ll go. With you. Wherever you end up. Trucks or whatever.” I watched the way Watson’s face lit up like a Christmas tree. “No, stay in your seat. Watson, I’m serious. No more hugging!” I tried to push him away, but as usual, I was no match for my stepbrother, who swooped in, pulled me from the booth, and yanked me against him. “You know, it’s not like I weigh ninety pounds,” I hissed.

Watson chuckled. “Yeah, but you’re smaller than me.”

“Everyone is smaller than you. You’re literally a redwood tree,” I teased, only for him to laugh even harder before he finally put me back on my feet.

Watson beamed happily. “We’re a team then. Watts and H. They want me; they get you.” He stuck out his hand.

“Watson and Holt.” He knew I hated the nickname he’d given me, even if it did make my dick twitch—something he would never know about. I took Watson’s outstretched hand, and when his large one engulfed mine, I hoped I would never regret it.

Chapter One

Watson

I reluctantly steered my car down pit road, giving up the lead of the race but knowing I had no other choice. My car was perfect. I didn't need any adjustments other than new tires and fuel, so when I slid into my pit stall, I told Miles, my crew chief, exactly that.

“Ten four,” he answered over my headset.

Man of few words, that guy, but it's why we got along so well. He'd been with me since my rookie year in the Xfinity series, and I liked him. Kept me nearly as levelheaded as my stepbrother, Holt Walker. I would be lost without him. He was my best friend, my go-to, and the one person I trusted with my life. It didn't matter that we weren't blood; I loved him like he was. Our parents had married when we were fifteen, and we'd bonded instantly.

Where I was bold and outgoing, Holt was shy and could be a little awkward. He kept me grounded, stopped me from doing stupid shit, and I helped him be who he really was. When Holt had confessed to me he was gay, I'd stood by him when he'd told his father. Who, by the way, didn't even bat an eye at his son. Anderson Walker was a great man. As was my mother, Joyce. It was why our parents worked so well together. Kind of like Holt and me.

I watched as my pit crew launched into action, hoping no one made any mistakes that might cost me the race, and as Holt, who was the tire carrier on my team, got to work. I glanced casually over my shoulder to make sure my blind spot was clear just as Jones Matthew's car came sliding down pit road.

It all seemed to happen in slow motion. I could see that Jones's brakes were locked up on his car, but what I didn't expect was for him to hit my brother. I immediately saw red. I wanted to murder him. I wanted to break every single bone in

Jones's body as his car make contact with Holt. My stepbrother went down like a sack of potatoes.

“Go! Go! Go!” Miles screamed in my ear, and I had no choice but to stomp on the gas to get the hell back onto the track without a second thought.

I gripped the wheel with one hand, shifted the car into gear with the other, and gritted my teeth so hard I was surprised they didn't snap in half.

“Is Holt okay?” I asked. *Please, please, please, don't let him be hurt.*

He didn't deserve this. He was such a good person. The funny, nerdy, smart, cute... No, wait, not that last part. My brain was getting all fucked up because I was so worried about him.

“Worry about the race. You're on track to win this thing. Keep your head in the game. You need this to stay in the chase,” Miles ordered.

“Is he fucking okay?” I growled. I would knock Jones Matthews into next week if he hurt my stepbrother. That kid would never hurt a fly, and as I relieved that moment over and over in my mind, I felt nauseous. Our parents were watching. They watched every race. His dad was probably beside himself, my mother crying, and if he ended up in the hospital, I would do so much worse to Jones. *That cocky prick.*

Miles let out a low sigh. “He's being checked over at the care center, but he was alert and talking, Watts. You have to worry about the race first and your brother second. You know this shit happens. It comes with the job.”

It was on the tip of my tongue to remind him that Holt was my family, so he would always come first, but instead, I gritted my teeth. “You tell Jones I'm coming for him,” I warned.

“Not on the track.”

“Oh, fuck yes, on the track.”

“Watts,” Miles growled. “NASCAR will fucking fine you if you use your car as a weapon. Do not make me remind you again.” He sounded more upset than I was.

He had a point with that. I’d already lost enough points this season running my mouth when I shouldn’t. NASCAR might park my ass for a race if I did something that stupid. I wasn’t known for my brains, though.

I didn’t say anything else as I passed cars to take back the lead. In fact, I didn’t say another word until I crossed the finish line with the checkered flag waving in the air. Then I stopped my car, climbed out, and ran across the track toward my crew to celebrate, because if I didn’t, I was going to hurt someone. That someone being Jones Matthews. I skidded to a stop when I saw Holt standing there, and then I crushed him against me in a tight hug. I knew the cameras were getting all of this, but I didn’t care. The fans knew Holt was my brother.

“You’re okay,” I yelled so he could hear me with his helmet on and over the noise of the crowd.

He nodded. “You think a car is going to take me out? Please. I’m tough as nails.” Holt chuckled as I pulled back to smack at his helmet. “You were worried. Aw, you really care about me.” I watched his hazel crinkle up, which told me he was smiling. Things between us had been strange lately. I wasn’t sure what had been causing it, but I was going to take this as a sign that they might be getting better.

“All I saw was that car hitting you, H, and I thought you were hurt or worse. So yes, I was worried,” I confessed. Holt’s eyes flickered behind me, and I turned to see Jones headed our way, his hand digging through his hair. “No.” I grunted and turned to face him, blocking his view of Holt in the process. “Don’t you think you’ve done enough?” I hissed.

Jones held out his hands. “Watts, I just wanted to check on Holt; make sure he was all right. You don’t think I did that on purpose, do you? Because I would never. It was an accident.”

I took a step forward. “Fuck off.” I clenched my teeth and balled my hands into fists at my side to keep from knocking him out.

“Watson, it’s okay. It was an accident,” Holt repeated Jones’s words. “You need to go celebrate your win. Why are you standing around with me, huh?” He nudged my shoulder with his slim hand.

I narrowed my eyes at Jones before I turned back to Holt to give him another quick hug. Then I ran back up the track to get back into my car and started burning rubber into the asphalt. But on repeat in my mind was the way Holt went down when the car hit him. Over and over. I had to get rid of that image. The best way to do that would be lots and lots of booze.

Holt and I were instant best friends when we met. He was this shy, geeky teen who was obsessed with comic books and superhero movies, while I was this kid racing cars before he had a valid driver’s license, getting his hands dirty fixing said cars, and obsessing over NASCAR every weekend. When I found out my soon-to-be stepbrother didn’t even watch NASCAR, I made it my mission to educate Holt on the sport while he schooled me on *his* favorite things.

I stuck up for him at school and beat up anyone who dared looked at or said anything negative or derogatory about Holt. Holt made me laugh, pushed me to be a better person, and helped me become the racecar driver I was today. When I thought about the negative, he was the positive. I might not have graduated high school if it weren’t for Holt. He helped me study, made sure I completed all my assignments, and maybe, just maybe, might have written a paper or two for me. Smarts were not my thing. That was all Holt.

When I started racing in trucks, I got him a job on my racing team as a tire carrier. I told them we were a pair. They wanted me, they had to take him, and they agreed. Same when I moved up to Xfinity, then to Cup. Holt never complained, and I was never without my best friend by my side. He was always smiling, happy, and cracking jokes. He helped settle me.

When I was younger, I used to have major anxiety in the car when I won, and on more than one occasion, I had ended up throwing up all over myself. It hadn't happened in a long time, but I knew it was because of Holt. He helped calm me. That's why I had to have him with me while I was racing, or I wasn't sure I would be able to pursue my dreams.

After we left the track and did all the post-race nonsense of interviews and photos, I invited everyone out to the closet bar. That's where we currently were. I bought round after round of booze until I couldn't see straight. Everyone in the place was laughing, having a great time, and me? Well, I was trying. Trying to pretend I was enjoying myself when all I wanted to do was go find Jones and smash my fist right through his face. What if Holt had been really hurt, seriously fucking hurt? What would I have done without him? He was... Hell, he was everything to me.

I turned to look at Holt, who was sitting to my right, and when he gave me that crooked smile of his, I wondered what he saw when he looked at me. Did he ever think about kissing me or touching me? I had been with dudes before—sex was sex, after all—and suddenly my cock was interested. I was so drunk right now.

I slipped out of the booth to go outside, mumbling about needing some fresh air. I wasn't thinking clearly tonight. I needed to go back to the RV and get a decent night's sleep, then everything would go back to normal, and I wouldn't keep thinking about being with my *stepbrother*.

“Watson?” I spun around at my name to find Holt watching me. “Are you all, right? What are you doing out here?” he asked.

I let my eyes move to his lips. God, they were perfect. Just like the rest of him. Pink, plump, and so kissable. Wait, no. That wasn't right. Not kissable. Well, maybe a little. I liked men and woman, I just... Holt was Holt. It wouldn't be right to kiss him. I swallowed nervously.

“I needed somewhere to think.”

“Right.” He nodded before crossing his arms over his chest. “You weren’t planning on retaliating, were you? Going to find Jones or something like that, right? That would be very bad. You know it wasn’t on purpose. He apologized to me several times.”

Was he always this adorable, or was it the booze talking?

I rolled my eyes. “What? No. Why would I do that? For you? Please.” I made a raspberry sound with my lips. Only, when Holt stepped closer, I felt like I couldn’t breathe. Why was he so close to me now? Why was I staring at his mouth again? Why did I want to fucking kiss my stepbrother all of a sudden?

“Good.”

“Very.”

Holt flashed his crooked smile with his white teeth at me. “You’re acting weirder than normal, Watson. Are you sure you’re all right?”

He was so close to me I could smell him. The sweet body wash he always used mixed with the scent of gasoline from working around cars all day. He was warm and familiar. He wasn’t much of a drinker, but I knew he’d had a few beers tonight. Nothing that would make him intoxicated, but enough that he was probably a little tipsy.

“Sure, perfect. Never better. I won the damn race. Gotta fill up that trophy room, remember?” I grinned at him. The race he could have been severely injured at if that motherfucker hadn’t been paying attention.

“Uh, you look mad now,” Holt teased and stared up at me wide-eyed.

I grabbed him and pinned him against the building.

“Watson.” My name came out in a gasp. My full name, which no one used except my mother when she was pissed at me.

“What are you doing?” he whispered.

I pressed my body against his. “You could have been hurt, Holt,” I reminded him.

“I’m fine, promise. It’s just a bruise. I’ll heal just like all the times before.”

“You could have been injured or maimed or worse...” My voice caught in my throat when I thought about the something worse part.

We were best friends. He was my stepbrother, my favorite person in the whole damn world. I would be nothing without him. His dark hair moved in the light breeze, his bright eyes searching my face for a sign of what was going through my head. He was my lifeline. My person, and as much as I wanted to beat the living shit out Jones, doing that would accomplish nothing.

Holt reached up to cup my head between his hands. “I’m fine, Watson.” The way he called me by my full name. God, my dick really liked that tonight. “You’ve done much worse when we’ve been horsing around.” He dragged the pads of his thumbs over my cheekbones. “You shouldn’t get yourself so worked up over this. It’s just me. Nothing to worry over.”

My mouth landed on his before I had a chance to think twice about it, alcohol clearly impairing my brain. The soft moan that Holt made was enough to let me know it was the right choice. When I dragged my tongue over his bottom lip, he opened for me, his tongue meeting mine.

God, this felt good. So good, and so right. Holt’s perfect, taut body fit against mine, and when he whimpered into my mouth as our tongues slicked together, I felt like my cock might explode in my pants. I gripped him tighter, brought him closer, and Holt’s hands gripped the front of my shirt.

“If something had happened to you, I would never be the same,” I murmured. Wait a damn second. What the hell was I doing? I pulled away as I stared at Holt. “I’m drunk,” I told him.

He nodded. “Obviously.” Holt’s lips were swollen from my kisses, and I could see faint little burn marks from my

stubble on his skin. A blush had started to creep up his neck and face, but it only made me want him more. Had he enjoyed that as much as I had? Had Holt ever thought about kissing me like this before tonight?

Holt knew I was a bit of a fuckboy. He knew I was bi, but he was the only one; although I'd never put a name on what I was because I didn't care. I liked sex because it felt good. Didn't matter who was on the receiving end. I tried not to bring too many girls back to our RV, but when I did, he was usually in bed.

"This didn't happen. I understand," Holt said. Only it had, and I liked it more than I wanted to admit to him. "Watson?" His brows were furrowed together. "Do you want to go back inside?"

I shook my head. "We should go back to the RV." My lids were suddenly so heavy I felt like I couldn't keep them open.

"You want to say goodbye to everyone first?" Holt asked.

"No, we can just... They all know how drunk I am. The bar has my credit card for the tab. They'll be good until the place kicks them out."

Holt nodded. "I'll get us an Uber then." He reached for his phone.

"Hey." I touched his elbow. "I'm not... I don't..."

Holt flashed an uneasy smile. "I know," he assured me.

But I didn't think he did.

Chapter Two

Holt

I was in bed with Watson. My stepbrother. He'd insisted when we got back to the RV, and honestly, I hadn't fought him on it. I could have. I *should* have, but I didn't.

I'd been in love with Watson since we'd been teenagers. The boy who introduced me to his life. Showed me his favorite thing in the world—stock car racing—and didn't think my favorite thing was stupid or too nerdy. He'd actually watched the movies I enjoyed with me, took me out to buy the latest comics when they came out, and pushed for me to be included when his career took off.

All right, sure, Watson was my best friend. We never used the term stepbrother because we were brothers. It didn't matter that we didn't share blood. I would have done anything he asked of me, and he knew it. I loved him like... I loved him more than I should. He was the best thing that ever happened to me, and I shouldn't feel the way I did. I'd tried to stop the crush moment I realized what was going on. The want that began to build inside me. Only I couldn't, and it bloomed into love.

Watson was real. He didn't hide who he was. He stood up for me. He stood up for himself, and even though sometimes lately he was rough around the edges, he was always kind to me. Watson was everything I ever wanted but could never have.

This was beyond strange, though. I stared at him as he slept, wondering just what he was dreaming about. Would Watson freak out when he opened his eyes and realized I was in his bed? We shared an RV. We'd seen each other naked more times than I could count, but this? This was different.

He kissed you, Holt. Your stepbrother, Watson James Brooks, kissed you last night when he was drunk. You didn't stop him. In fact, you kissed him back. You didn't say no when

he suggested you share a bed because you were hoping for more. Much, much more.

Yeah, this was fucking weird.

I liked it. I was gay. I was into guys. So yeah, I really liked it, but even though Watson had told me he was bi that one time, I wasn't completely sure he meant it until last night. Why hadn't he ever brought guys back to the RV? He was always bringing pit bunnies back to the RV, having sex with them loud enough to wake me even when I kept my headphones on to block out the noise and then sending them home the next morning with money for an Uber. He never promised to call or to see them again. I pretended it didn't bother me, when underneath it all, I hated every single minute of it.

Watson was the sexiest man I had ever laid eyes on. He didn't act like he was God's gift to women. He laughed it off when someone said he was hot or gorgeous, as if he didn't believe them, but he was my dream guy. He kept his blond hair long on the top and short on the sides, so it was always falling in his face. The ladies loved it as much as I did. He had dark chocolate brown eyes that saw everything, a jawline cut from stone, pouty pink lips that up until last night that I had only dreamed about kissing, and don't even get me started on his body. The man worked out like a machine. His muscles had muscles. Watson was a six foot three solid monster, and I wanted him to do more than just kiss me.

“Good morning.”

His voice was sleepy, husky, and sexy as shit.

“Uh, good morning,” I managed before I started to move away from him. “You, uh, passed out, and I wanted to—”

Watson suddenly gripped my wrist to keep me from scurrying away.

“What are you doing?”

“I kissed you last night.” He started to tug me closer, meeting me halfway until we were so close, I could feel the heat from his body.

Why was my throat so dry? Why did I feel like I wanted to throw up? What was happening right now?

“Er... You did.” Brilliant, Holt. “But you were drunk, so it wasn’t a big deal. It’s not like I think you’re into me or anything, so don’t go—”

“Stop talking, Holt,” Watson growled. “Did you like it?”

I stared at him. “Did I like it?” What kind of a stupid question was that?

“Yes, Holt. Did you like it when I kissed you? You didn’t fight me, so I’m assuming you did. In fact...”

Oh, dear Lord, he was touching my face now. The hand that wasn’t holding my wrist suddenly reached up and stroked my cheek.

“I think that I remember you kissing me back.”

My eyes widened. “Well, um, you’re not exactly an ugly man, Watson; so of course I kissed you back.” Fuck me sideways. How had I gotten into this situation? Wait, don’t answer that.

“Would you want to do it again?”

“Now you’re just messing with me.”

A slow smirk spread over Watson’s face before he released my hand to cup my face with both his large ones. Then he leaned forward. “Don’t mind my morning breath,” he whispered, and then his mouth was on mine.

His tongue swept over my bottom lip, and I felt myself start to melt into the mattress. The sound of someone knocking at the front door had us both jumping apart as if we were caught red-handed.

“Cockblocker.” Watson laughed as he sat up and dragged a hand through his messy hair. “I better get that.” He stood up, and I couldn’t help but notice the obvious way he adjusted the bulge in his pants as he walked to the front of the RV.

I probably shouldn’t be in his room, but he had insisted I stay with him when we got home. Even though I loved how it

smelled like Watson—the cologne he wore engulfed me like a cocoon—I climbed from the bed and slinked out, hoping that whoever was here didn't see me.

“What's up, Pelletier?” Watson asked.

Oh, yes. Mason Pelletier. Watson had been a rookie when Mason showed him the ropes. They had shared more than a few girls, but now Mason was married with a couple of kids. His wife, London, was a singer/songwriter, and I liked her. She didn't come around much—I don't think racing was her thing—but when she did, she seemed to find me more often than not.

“Came to say congrats since I missed your party last night. Heard you got pretty wasted. Hey, man.” Mason jutted his chin at me, and when Watson turned around, he flashed me a grin before turning back to his friend. “We should hang out this week since there's no race. Unless you have plans.”

Watson shrugged. “Holt and I are busy.”

Wait, we were? Since when?

“Hey, I don't want to interrupt your bro time.” Mason nodded.

“You could hang out with us,” I blurted out. The look Watson gave me over his shoulder was murderous.

Watson turned back to Mason. “Sure, you could hang out with us,” he mimicked. “Bring the wife. Hell, bring the kids, too, if you want. Make it a damn party.” I could tell by the sound of his voice he wasn't happy.

“Are you sure? Because you might be saying one thing, but your body language is saying something completely different.” Mason tilted his head. “I don't want to interrupt whatever the hell the two of you have going on.”

Please interrupt. Please, please, please.

Watson waved his hand in the air. “It's fine. No worries. Text me during the week,” he assured Mason, and I slipped back into my room before I could hear anything else they were talking about.

I wasn't sure what was going on with Watson, but it was weird. Weird and not like him. He had never kissed me before. Acted like he was interested in me like that. And even though Watson had starred in plenty of my fantasies over the years, I wasn't sure this was a good idea. I didn't want to end up with a broken heart.

"I'm starting to think you don't like me, Holt."

I spun around to find Watson gripping the doorway above him, putting his entire torso on display for me. I tried not to look, but it was hard not to. His toned and flat stomach; the light hair that disappeared beneath his sweatpants as they hung from his hips. *Those muscles, God... Don't stare, Holt.* Why was he torturing me like this?

"Uh... not true." I barked. "I like you. We hang out. We share an RV. We're besties." I grimaced when his eyes darkened.

"We had a moment last night," he reminded me. "Or was that just me?"

I sucked on my bottom lip. "It was nice." *Really, Holt?*

"Nice?" Watson dropped his hands. "That's it? Am I a bad kisser? Has no one bothered to tell me that before?" He looked worried.

I shook my head. "No, you're a great fucking kisser." Although I didn't have too many people to compare him to, but he was absolutely the best guy I had ever locked lips with.

"You're really fucking good, too, Holt." He started toward me, but when I held up my hands he stopped. "You're not attracted to me. Is that it? Am I not your type?"

My cock thickened in my pants. "Watson, you're... fuck, you're gorgeous." There, now he knew I found him attractive. "I just—"

"Just what?" And now he was pissed. Although it honestly didn't take much sometimes. He just didn't usually throw his anger my way.

I sighed. "I think this is a bad idea."

"I liked kissing you, H." Watson dropped his chin. Fuck, he had to bring out the nickname, too. "Your lips are soft, your body felt really damn good pressed against mine, and I liked it. But if you don't want to try this or if you want someone else. I understand." He dragged both hands through his ruffled hair.

My heart dropped. "Watson..." When he looked at me again, his face was like nothing I had seen before. Void of the hard mask he usually wore. Softer, vulnerable, and I would be a liar if it didn't get me going. "Are you really into dudes? I mean, you told me you were once, but I've never seen you with anyone before."

"I like men, yes. But does that matter?"

"No, of course not."

Watson stared at me until I looked away. His eyes were too much. "H," he whispered. "I'm kind of freaking out." *There it was.* "Not about kissing you or how I'm feeling, but about you rejecting me."

"I'm not fucking rejecting you," I snapped.

When I heard his footsteps, I knew he was moving toward me, and then Watson's hand gripped my chin. He forced me to meet his heated gaze, and I felt like I might catch on fire.

His brown orbs search my face. "Are you sore this morning? From where Jones hit you?" He practically growled out the name. A complete change of direction from where I thought this conversation was going.

"A little," I admitted.

Watson's face darkened. "Where?"

"Just my left hip, but I'll be fine. What are you doing?" I exclaimed when he shoved me down onto my bed. "Watson, stop! Get off me!"

He yanked down the side of my sweats where the car hit me, and his jaw tightened. I knew there was a bruise. I could feel it and had stared at it in the mirror while he was passed out last night, but it wasn't a big deal.

“It’s not fine, H,” he hissed through clenched teeth. “This could have been so much worse.” Watson’s fingers were inches from my skin, but he didn’t touch me. “You should ice this. It’s going to be stiff. Didn’t they tell you that?” He dragged his eyes away from my hip. “H, what if…”

“No,” I cupped his cheek. “No what ifs.”

“You’re not into me.” He sounded dejected.

I shook my head. “That’s not it. It’s a bad idea.”

“What if it’s the best idea?”

Looked like we were doing this.

“Why now, Watson? Huh? Why now? After all these years, you’ve decided you want to try to be with me? Haven’t you seen the way I look at you? Haven’t you noticed how I’ve always wanted to be yours?” I exclaimed.

Clearly not, because the surprise on his face said everything I never bothered to.

“I have been into you since day fucking one. Your smile, your laugh, your eyes, your stupid jokes, the way you call me H when you know I don’t like it. Hell, even the grumpiness thing you’ve got going on lately. I have craved your attention since the beginning. Rooming with you has been pure torture.”

I jumped from the bed so I could yank my sweats up over my slim hips.

“The endless parade of girls you bring in here. The way they fawn all over you. It’s horrible. My brain knew not to get involved, but no, my stupid damn heart doesn’t listen. You like me as your brother, your bro, your friend, but that was it. Until last night. Why? Why are things suddenly different, Watson? Because of Jones? Because he hit me with his car? It’s not the first time someone has done that, and it won’t be the last. It comes with the job. I can’t get involved with you because you’re not the type to settle down. I’ll get hurt, I’ll end up heartbroken, and then you’ll just move on to the next clueless idiot like I don’t matter. I’ll have to continue to room with you, work with you, and see you bed someone else.” I slapped a hand over my heart, trying to protect it. “So maybe I am

rejecting you, Watson, but for my own damn good. I don't want to ruin our friendship." When I finished my speech, I was out of breath, but it was the look on Watson's face that made my heart break.

"I'll see myself out then," he mumbled before he turned to go.

I felt like crap. "Watson, wait." I tried to stop him.

But he didn't stop. He left me standing there, and I heard the sound of his door shut and lock behind him.

Chapter Three

Watson

Two days later, I was stretched out on the hammock in our parent's backyard, staring up at the blue sky. I usually loved coming back here. Holt and I bought this place after I won my truck series championship. We'd combined our winnings, let our parents pick out the house, and that was that. We could have our own place now, with all the money we had, but we didn't want that yet. We didn't have a lot of downtime, and honestly, we enjoyed coming back to spend time with our parents.

Fucking Holt. He was all I could think about. Holt. Me. Holt. Me. That damn kiss. Waking up with him in my bed. Now that was something I would like to do again. My phone buzzed, but I ignored it. Most likely it was Mason, *again*, but I wasn't up for company. Or going to his place. Or doing anything. Kissing H would be nice again, but he wasn't here. He was hanging out with some of the guys from the pit crew, and I was so jealous, I wanted to hit something.

Holt was into me? The whole time? Only he didn't want to be with me because he thought I would break his heart. I was a complete fucking idiot. Not that that was anything new, because I had been clueless my whole life.

We had been brothers—stepbrothers, whatever—for seven years. Seven years, and I had never even realized he liked me. What the hell was wrong with me? Why was I so damn stupid?

“Are you avoiding me?” Mason's loud voice boomed across the yard.

I glanced over to see him walking toward me. “Whatever gave you that idea, man?” I was totally avoiding him, but that was beside the point. I was avoiding everyone at the moment.

“I don't know, *man*, maybe because I've been texting you since eight this morning, but you haven't responded.” He

folded his arms over his chest and glared down at me.
“Where’s your brother?”

My lip curled over my teeth. “Out,” I snarled and rolled over to stand up. I let my eyes move over Mason. Tall, not as tall as me, but tall enough, dark hair and eyes to match, but no, my dick wasn’t interested in him. Not at all. I liked guys more like... Holt. *Shit.*

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Mason asked as he wrinkled his nose at me.

Whoops. “Like what?” I played dumb, because that was what I was good at, apparently.

“I don’t know. Like you’re checking me out. It’s weird. Not that I have a problem with guys checking me out, but you’re Watts. If it were Holt, that would be different.”

“You think Holt would check you out?”

Mason chuckled. “I’m not saying he would. I’m saying he has. Come on, everyone knows your brother is gay. No one cares.” He clamped a hand on my shoulder. “Let’s do something, dude. I miss hanging out with you.”

“Not my fault you’re all loved up and married,” I reminded him. “Since when are you so clingy? Don’t you have Shepard to do dude stuff with?” Rand Shepard, another driver, was Mason’s best friend, and the current NASCAR champion. I wasn’t afraid to say I was looking to beat him this year, but he was gunning to make it back-to-back. He probably would, too, with Hutch Kelly as his crew chief. Dude was flawless.

Mason rolled his eyes. “Dude stuff? He’s busy. Besides, when you meet the right person, you’ll change your man-whoring fuckboy ways, too. Trust.” He nudged my side. “London has a friend.” He wiggled his brows.

“Nope, not interested.” I pushed him away. For once, I meant it. My dick and I wanted Holt.

“Tessa’s pretty cute.”

“I said I wasn’t interested.” Unless it was Holt, then maybe... God, what was wrong with me? Maybe I should

meet this Tessa chick. “You got a picture?” I asked against my better judgment.

Mason grinned at me. “Ha! I knew it, because if you turned down a girl, I might start to get worried about you. Hold up.” He slid his phone from his pocket and unlocked it. “Here they are on London’s IG.” He shoved his cell in my face.

“Her hair is silver,” I blurted out, although she wasn’t ugly. Nice rack, full lips, pretty smile. “What?” I snapped when I met his gaze.

Mason shook his head. “You’re acting strange, Watts. Like, stranger than normal. Did you hit your head on something? Burn off a few brain cells from the exhaust inside the racecar this weekend?” He snickered.

“Fuck off.” I gave him the bird.

“You’re normally not so, I don’t know... picky. She’s London’s best friend, other than her sister, and I trust her. Except for the time she dyed London’s hair. That was a terrible idea, but we fixed that.”

I twisted my lips. “Eh, I don’t know.” My dick was not really interested in Tessa. He wanted Holt, who had apparently decided he didn’t want me after all.

“She’s at the house. You could come over and meet her right now.”

“Ugh, fine. But I’m not promising anything,” I warned.

This might have been one of the worst ideas of my life, and that was saying a lot, because I’d had a lot of them over the years. It was how I rolled.

Tessa was not interested in me, and neither my dick nor I was interested in Tessa.

She was a hot chick who smelled nice—I liked nice smelling things, don’t judge a guy—but she was hung up on some dude who lived in the motel she worked at and wouldn’t stop talking about him. Like, the entire time I was there. So, I

spent the whole time at the Pelletier's house getting drunk on the expensive scotch Mason kept in his liquor cabinet. I was actually shocked London didn't kick me out. Pretty sure if she had been Brooklyn—her sister, who was married to Shepard—this night would have gone in a completely different direction.

I was so drunk I was surprised I managed to not pass out in the back of the Uber on the way home. Another one of Watson Brooks's brilliant ideas. God, I was so dumb.

I tried to be as quiet as I could, I really did, but when you're drunk, you think you're doing things a lot differently than you are. I closed the door behind me, toed off my shoes, and started up the stairs to my room, where I found Holt glaring down at me so hard I could feel the anger radiating off him.

"Have fun tonight?" His hazel eyes were narrowed into angry slits.

This was the part where I missed a step, slipped, and smacked my chin on the stair as I went down. The pain was so bad it nearly made me cry out, and I immediately tasted blood on my tongue.

"Shit, Watson, are you okay?" Holt bounded down the steps, his hands on my shoulders. "That looks bad." He tugged my head up to meet his eyes. "You might need stitches."

I shook my head. "N... no." I blinked back tears. "Bed." It hurt really fucking bad, though.

"Can you walk?"

I managed to get to my feet with his help, and when he hooked an arm around my waist, relief flooded my body. "Th... thanks," I muttered. When we stopped outside my room, I shook my head. "Yours."

"Mine?" Holt looked confused.

"Your bed."

His body went stiff. "Watson, no."

"H..." I pleaded. "Please."

Holt let out a low sigh but started to move down the hallway to where his room was and helped me inside. His scent hit me like a brick, and I wanted to bathe myself in it. Warm and sweet, like home, and I wanted to shake him. Tell him I had wanted to spend the day with him today. Not get drunk around some stranger who did nothing for me.

“Let me get something to clean your face. It’s a mess.” Holt helped me sit down on his mattress and then he was gone.

I glanced around the room, which was much cleaner and nicer than mine. He liked organization, while I was messy and dirty. I started to sway just as he appeared in my line of sight again.

“Here.” Holt pressed a cloth to my lip, and I hissed at the contact. “You really should go to the emergency room to get this looked at.”

I grabbed his wrist to maintain contact. “No.”

I hated doctors, the hospital, the smell, the constant nagging. When I crashed in a race, they always did the same tests and asked the same questions. I didn’t need that tonight. What I needed was Holt. I gazed up into his pretty face and wondered what he saw in me. Because when I looked at him, all I saw was perfection. Dark hair he kept shaved on the sides while his bangs were long and swept back from his face on the top. Hazel eyes framed with long lashes that crinkled around the corners when he smiled and those lips. Soft to the touch, warm against mine, and made for kissing.

He wiped the blood from my face and tilted my head it up toward his. “You need to stop drinking so much. It’s not healthy,” he murmured.

“Have I ever hurt you, H?” I whispered. “Have I done something to upset you, to make you think I couldn’t make you happy? Haven’t I always been good to you?” I always cared for him. Wanted him to be safe.

Holt’s eyes went wide. “No, I mean, sometimes seeing you with so many girls hurt me, but you didn’t know how I felt about you. So it’s not like you did it on purpose.”

“I could be good to you.”

“Watson, stop it.”

I grabbed his hand. “Please, H, I need you.” God, why did I sound like such a child? “I was so lost without you today. When you were off with your friends, and I was here. I let Mason talk me into meeting his wife’s friend... Don’t look at me like that.”

“This is what I’m talking about.” Holt shoved my hand away. “You say one thing but do the opposite.”

“I wasn’t interested. I didn’t touch her. All I could think about was you.” I tried to stand but ended up dropping back down onto the bed. “Please, Holt, you have to believe me.”

He shook his head. “I can’t,” he whispered. “I think you should sleep in your own bed tonight.”

“No.” I raised my chin as tears burned my eyes. “I want to be with you.”

Holt stared at me with pinched lips. “Why are you doing this to me?” he demanded.

“Why won’t you listen to me?” My voice cracked, and when I tried to hold back, the tears began to fall. “I want to be with you,” I said again. “Please, just let me stay here tonight.”

“Raise your arms up over your head,” Holt cut me off. “Do it, damnit.”

When I did as he told me, he slipped my shirt up over my head and then folded it neatly before placing it on the dresser.

“Now lie down.”

I did that, too.

“Arch your hips.” He unbuttoned my shorts and removed them. They joined my shirt. “Your underwear stays on. Keep the cloth to your lip until it stops bleeding.”

I watched from the bed as he undressed before putting on a pair of pajama pants with pickles on them. He loved to wear crazy stuff like that. Then he climbed up onto the bed with me and reached over to turn off the lamp.

“What made you—”

His finger landed on my lips to stop me before he brushed the wetness from my cheeks. Was I still crying?

Holt wrapped his arms around me, and I swear I stopped breathing. My heart thundered loudly in my chest as I pressed my nose into his soft, dark hair.

“Why are you crying?” His lips brushed my skin. “Don’t you dare say it’s because of me, Watson James.”

My dick jerked in my briefs. “What do you want me to say, then?” I asked. Why was it suddenly like this? After years of knowing Holt, I was suddenly into him. Suddenly attracted to him when I’d been chasing everyone else. When he’d been here the entire time?

“Why now?” he asked, like he could read my mind. Holt pulled back to stare at me in the dark. “Why not last week or six months ago? I was just about over you, Watson.”

Tears filled my eyes again. I wasn’t a crier, but I felt like I was hurting Holt, and I didn’t want to do that. I wanted to be good for him. “I’m so sorry.” I meant it, too.

“No, don’t say that.” Holt started to untangle himself from my body. “You’re you, Watson Brooks, NASCAR driver, Xfinity cup champion. Everyone fucking loves you. I’m just me. I can walk into any store around town, and no one knows who I am. I don’t have to hide or duck from the crowds. You, Watson, you’re the star. You light up the damn room with your smile, your charm, and you’re living your dream.” I could see his face from the moonlight casting into the room.

I reached over to brush his hair back from his forehead. “You’re not?” I asked.

“As a tire carrier?” He laughed, but it sounded forced.

“Tell me your dreams, Holt.”

“I’m tired, Watson.”

I watched as he dropped onto his back, no longer touching me.

“What did you mean when you said you were just about over me?” I whispered. He turned to face me. “Were you in love with me?” I slid closer. “Can I kiss you again, H?”

“No.”

I dragged my thumb over his fat bottom lip. “I asked you three questions,” I murmured, and felt the way he shivered at my touch. When Holt didn’t answer, I pressed my forehead against his. “You’re so fucking beautiful.”

“And you’re drunk.” His voice shook as he spoke.

“Let me kiss you again.”

Holt stared at me in the dark, his eyes wide with want and desire. He hadn’t pushed me away or climbed from the bed. “You’re going to break me, Watson.”

“You’re going to save me,” I promised him.

Those five little words were all it took before Holt’s mouth came crashing down against mine.

Chapter Four

Holt

I kissed Watson this time. Me, I did it, and I didn't ever want it to stop. His lips were so amazing, soft and plump, and the man knew how to kiss. No wonder the girls liked him.

No, don't think about that, Holt. Think about the fact that Watson's cock is hard and pressed against your stomach. His big, thick cock that you've seen a million times and jerked off to more times than you can count.

"Watson, your hurt. Shouldn't—"

"Don't care. Keep kissing me."

Now my body was splayed over his. Had I climbed on top of him, or had he dragged me over him like this? I was in a fucking Watson haze and couldn't remember anything but him.

"Fuck, H." Watson groaned into my mouth. "We fit so good together." He gripped my hips as he rutted against me. "You make me so hard. You smell so good, and I just want to touch you, taste you, do everything I can with you. You want that, too, I know you do."

Don't come, don't come. Because I could right now. The way Watson was dirty talking, breathing, and grunting at me in the dark. His body was so big against mine, and fuck, I had never been with a guy like this before.

"Let me touch you," Watson whispered, and that brought me right back to reality.

I broke our kiss so that I could stare down at him. "Like touch me, touch me?"

"You don't want to touch me?" He nipped at my jaw, and I whimpered. "Yeah, you totally do." He started to slip his hand between us, but I grabbed his hand.

"Watson, our parents are right down the hall."

"You can't be quiet? You want me to gag you?"

I hooked a brow. “We can’t... This is a terrible idea.” Suddenly I was flipped onto my back, and I was staring up into Watson’s face. “Not fair.” I pouted.

“If you say no, I won’t. But...” Watson started to tug my pajamas down my hips. “I think you want me to touch you.” I groaned when my dick popped out and slapped my stomach. “Lick you.” Wait, we were doing that, too? “Make you come in my mouth.”

I sat up on my forearms. “Have you done that before?” I watched as he wiggled down in-between my thighs, dragging my pants to my ankles.

“H, there isn’t anything that I haven’t done,” he assured me. “Nothing is off limits when it comes to sex with me.”

“Watson, you don’t—Oh sweet Jesus.” I whimpered when his tongue made contact with the tip of my dick, and there was no way I could stop him now, even if I wanted to.

A deep chuckle escaped Watson’s throat. “Should I continue?” he asked before he wrapped a hand around my shaft.

“Fuck,” I hissed. “Fucking fuck, fuck.” I was going to die tonight. This was all my dreams wrapped into one, not counting the one where he was fucking me, and that wasn’t going to happen. Not with our parents in the house with us.

“Holt. I need you to tell me that this is what you want.” Watson’s voice was stern. “Because I would never do something you don’t want me to do.”

I found him watching me with a seriousness I had never seen before. “Watson,” I whispered. “I want this more than you could possibly ever know. Please, please don’t stop. But I’ll warn you that I am not going to last long.”

Then Watson’s mouth was around the head of my dick. His tongue flicked against the slit, and I swore I might have blacked out for a second. I clamped my hand over my mouth to try to keep quiet. No need to wake anyone up. Watson gripped my balls, and I couldn’t stop watching him. He gagged when he tried to take my dick all the way but quickly

recovered, and I was pretty sure I heard angels sing when he started to jerk me with one hand while sucking me off at the same time.

“Does... Does it feel good?” he stopped and asked softly, as his hand pumped up and down. Watson’s tongue flicked over the head before he sucked my cock back into his mouth.

I dragged a hand through his thick hair. “Yeah, it feels so good. You make me want to come.” His eyes met mine. “You want that? You want me to come in your mouth, Watson?” His lips turned up, and that was all the reassurance I needed.

My hips suddenly had a mind of their own when that feeling ripped up my spine, but Watson didn’t seem to care. When I began to fuck his mouth, he took it like a champ. Took all my hot cum without missing a drop. And when I was done? My body was shot.

“Did you like that, H?”

How could one man be this sweet? I reached for him.

“God, yes,” I whispered. “You want me to return the favor?” I had never given a blowjob before, but I could certainly try. For Watson, I would do anything.

“You’re tired.” Watson pressed his face to my neck despite the fact he had face planted into the stairs. “Morning blowie?” he whispered.

I chuckled. “You’re on.”

I was awake long before my alarm went off, staring at the ceiling as the sun began lighting up my bedroom. My gaze drifted over to fix on Watson, one of the most popular drivers in NASCAR, two years running, my stepbrother, and now the man who had given me my first blowjob. I couldn’t tell him that, though. Watson was nothing close to a virgin—probably hadn’t been since before I even came into his life—and the thought made me break out in a cold sweat.

He was lying face down on the pillow, his firm, round butt on display, and I couldn’t help but reach over to drag my hand

over one cheek. Wait, hadn't he had underwear on last night? If this was a dream, I never wanted to wake up. Watson didn't even move as I touched him. Didn't make a sound. When I grabbed my phone to turn off the alarm before it went off in half an hour, I thought about taking a picture, just on the off chance I never had him here in my bed like this again.

"What the fuck time is it?" Watson grunted before rolling onto his back. "You know we're off this week, right? You don't have to get up at the crack of dawn."

My eyes went wide at the bruise on his chin and the way his lip had swollen to twice its size. That was not going to be something he couldn't hide from his mother.

"Go back to bed," I murmured. "I'm going to the gym."

His hand wrapped around my wrist as I started to climb from the bed.

"You're coming back, right?" His eyes pleaded with me.

I might have melted into a puddle of goo at his words if I wasn't too worried about his face. "Duh, of course. I owe you a blowie." I tried to play it cool, tried to pry his fingers from my wrist, but he only held on tighter. "Watson?"

He tugged on my arm. "I'm serious, H. Come back, okay?"

My brows dipped at his words.

"Hey..." I moved to brush my lips over his cheek. I was scared to touch his lips right now. "I promise I'll come back to you," I murmured.

This seemed to satisfy Watson, because a smile slipped over his face, only for him to groan. "Fuck, my mouth." He grunted, and when he reached up to touch his lips, he let out a yelp. "Oh hell." He sat up. "How bad is it?"

I grimaced. "Not that bad," I lied.

Watson flopped back onto the bed. "Bring me home something to eat," he muttered before yanking the pillow over his head.

I felt like I was sneaking around when I left my room for the gym. I grabbed my gym clothes to rush across the hall to the bathroom I shared with Watson, brushed my teeth, slapped on some deodorant, and then quickly yanked off my pajama bottoms so I could put on my workout clothes. I ran a comb through my hair and slipped on my socks and sneakers before I remembered my phone. I hurried back to my room to a now snoring Watson, who I stopped to admire much longer than I should.

I kept expecting to run into my dad or his mom. Guilt riddled me to the bones. What we did wasn't exactly wrong, but I knew they would probably be disappointed either way, and I didn't want them to find out like this. We needed to be honest. We should tell them. When I made it out of the house, to my car and out of the driveway, I let out the breath I didn't realize I was holding and drove to the gym, telling myself I would talk to Watson about this. That if he wanted to be with me, if that's what his plan was, we would have to talk to our parents. Tonight, if possible.

The gym was mobbed when I got there, but I managed to find an unoccupied treadmill, got in a quick run, and then did some free weights. I had started working out because of my job. Because those tires were damn heavy, and even though I worked out with the rest of the pit crew every day, I liked to do my own thing, too. I had bulked up a lot since I started this job, but I would never have the muscle Watson had because my body wasn't built the way his was, and I was okay with that. I liked his body way more than mine, anyway.

On the way home, I stopped at the drive-thru to grab some coffee and McDonald's breakfast for Watson before I headed home. Both our parents' cars were gone, and I happily walked into my room, only to find my bed empty. I left the coffee, along with the bag of food, on the dresser and found Watson's room the same way. Empty.

Had he freaked out just like I thought he might? Had he needed to get as far away from me as possible because he didn't like me that way? I knew this was a mistake. Fuck.

“H.” I spun around to find Watson standing in nothing but a towel and holding a bag of ice to his mouth. “How was your workout?” His dark eyes moved over my face. “You look worried. Something happen while you were gone?” He reached up to touch my face with his long fingers.

I shook my head. “No... I... My workout was good. Gym was busy. I brought food like you asked.” I started to go back to my room, only to have Watson’s arm come out to block me.

“What’s going on?”

“Nothing.”

Watson moved his giant body in front of me. “Why are you lying to me?” He moved the ice, and I was relieved to see the swelling had gone down, but the bruising on his jaw was still pretty ugly. “I might be stupid, but I’m not *that* stupid.”

“You’re not stupid.” I balked and dropped my gaze to his bare feet. God, even those were sexy. “I just... I thought you had left when I didn’t find you in my room.”

Watson’s hand gripped my chin, forcing me to look back up. “Why would I do that? You brought food.” His lips twitched as he tried not to smile. “I wanted to shower before you got home. Make myself all clean for you.” His eyes were full of something I had never been on the receiving end of before, causing desire to shoot up my spine and curl inside my stomach.

“Watson.” I felt like I couldn’t breathe when he looked at me like that. “What... What are we doing? I mean, is this...?” I didn’t really want him to answer that question. Not really. Because if he broke my heart, I might not ever recover.

He cupped my cheek with his free hand. “I don’t know what this is or what we’re doing, Holt, but I like it,” Watson whispered before brushing his lips over mine. “Fuck, that hurts.”

“Maybe no kissing for now?” I suggested.

“Uh, no. I’m kissing you because it feels right.” Watson dropped the bag of ice to the floor at his feet, then did just that.

All my worries disappeared as he caged me in against the wall, his tongue suddenly filling my mouth. I groaned softly as his body splayed over mine, his hard muscles making my body heat.

“You’re so fucking amazing, H,” Watson murmured, his hands gripping my neck. “I just can’t get enough of you. What are you doing to me?”

You? What about me? I opened my eyes to find him watching me with wild desire. His mouth turned up into a smile.

“You’re real, right?” I heard myself ask.

“You tell me.” Watson dropped a hand between us to cup my dick. “How real does that feel?”

My eyes rolled slightly. “Real. Very real,” I assured him as he massaged my cock.

“Let’s go back to your room.”

“Why?”

“I think you owe me a blowjob.” Watson’s teeth grazed my jaw.

I grinned. “No one said it had to be in my room. We’re all alone.” I smirked and dropped to my knees, yanking the towel from his hips.

Chapter Five

Watson

I stared down into Holt's hazel eyes as he gazed up at me. He looked... Fuck, he looked perfect, and maybe a little nervous.

"You okay, H?" My voice had a little bit of a wobble to it as I spoke. "You don't... you don't have to do anything you don't want to," I assured him. I let the pads of my fingertips graze the stubble on his chin.

He flashed me that crooked smile. "No, I want to do this," he whispered.

"Yeah, you do." I placed a hand on his head and combed my fingers through his soft brown hair. "You're so beautiful." I watched the way Holt's cheeks turned pink. "No, I mean that." Did he not realize how attractive he was?

Holt shook his head as he wrapped his hand around the bottom of my shaft. *Fuck*. "This isn't about me, Watson." He moved his lips closer to my dick but didn't put his mouth on me. "Why are you making this about me?"

"Because you're you, H. You're special."

Instead of arguing, Holt ducked his head and sucked the head of my cock into his mouth. He used his free hand to cup my balls and jerked my length as he slowly—ever so damn slowly—took me down his throat before pulling back out. He stopped to look up at me before doing it again, his eyes never leaving mine as he worked me over.

"If you keep... if you keep looking at me like that, I'm going to fucking come."

Holt dropped his eyes and hummed around my dick, hollowing his cheeks to the point it looked like it hurt. No, I wanted his gaze on mine. Those hazel orbs that looked at me like I was the most important thing in the world. I reached down and gripped his dark hair to yank his head back up. His eyes went wide as he released my dick with a loud pop.

“Did I... am I doing it wrong?” He sounded worried.

I shook my head. “Look at me. I need to see you,” I growled, then released my hold. *Shit*. “Did I hurt you? I’m sorry.” I smoothed down his hair.

“No,” Holt assured me, but I saw the fear in his eyes. Something I never wanted to be the cause of.

I dropped to my knees. “H...” I cupped his face with my hands. “I love the way you look at me. I want you to see how good you make me feel when I come.” I kissed him, not caring if it hurt, because I deserved that after scaring him. “We can do this another time.”

“No!” Holt exclaimed. “I want this. I want to suck your dick.” He reached for the deflating cock between my legs, which caused it to instantly perk back up. “Please, Watson?” he begged.

I nodded before standing back up. This time, Holt kept his eyes pinned on mine as he lowered his head back to my straining cock. He flattened his tongue against the sensitive tip before rolling it down the length and began to bob up and down.

“God, yes, Holt, so damn good.” I groaned as I felt that buzz began to zip up my spine. “Keep doing that and you’ll make me come so hard,” I assured him as his eyes sparkled with his own need. My fingers knotted into his hair, not too hard this time, and I moved Holt’s head in an easy rhythm. “I can’t wait until I get to fuck you.” Holt’s eyes went round as molten desire began to burn in my veins. “I’m close, H, so very close,” I warned.

I exploded a second later, my orgasm became a blade severing me from reality for what felt like minutes as I filled Holt’s mouth and throat with hot, sticky cum. He didn’t complain or choke, only took it all before my legs started to give out and I joined him on the floor again, trying to catch my breath.

“It doesn’t taste like mine.”

My eyes flew open. “What?”

“Your cum. It tastes different.” He blushed as red as a tomato.

I leaned forward. “Have you never tasted cum before? I mean, other than your own?” Was Holt a virgin? Holy mother of sin. Did I just get to be on the receiving end of his first blowjob, because it hadn’t felt like it had been his first time.

“No.” He turned his gaze from mine, and I hated that.

I gripped his chin to force him back to me. “Holt Walker.” His name came out in a moan. “How is that possible?” I wanted to kiss the shit out of him right now.

Holt shrugged. “Maybe because I never found the right person before?” He worried his lip between his teeth.

“Or?” I pushed.

“Or because I’ve been in love with you for years, and I never really looked at anyone else.”

“You’ve been on dates.”

Holt rolled his eyes. “Dates doesn’t mean fucking,” he blurted out. “For me, at least,” he added.

“I’m a whore, then?” I didn’t think he meant it like that, though.

Holt touched my knee. “No, Watson, you’re not. I’m just... shy and a little nervous, maybe.” He smiled. “I always wanted it to be you. If I met a guy who changed that, well—”

“I would have punched him,” I hissed.

Holt snickered. “I doubt that. You never looked at me until the other night.”

“I’m sorry about that, H. I really am.” I stared at him, letting my eyes move over his dusky hair, his hazel eyes, and his perfect body. I liked how he was smaller than I was. I was always bigger than the kids in school, even the rest of the drivers except Shepard, and when I hit six foot three, I started to get worried I would keep growing. Lucky for me, I topped off there. Holt was perfect, with a lean build, but he didn’t carry the muscles I had.

Holt blushed again. “Why are you staring?”

“You’re beautiful,” I said again, and then the sound of my growling stomach made us both chuckle.

“Let’s go eat the now-cold food I brought.” Holt started to climb to his feet, and I followed. “Then can we do that again?” he asked.

I grinned. “All day, H. All day,” I assured him.

Two days later, and I still couldn’t keep my hands off my stepbrother. He was addicting. I found myself sleeping in his room every night, sucking him off, and waking in his arms every morning. I couldn’t get enough. I didn’t want this feeling to end, and I hoped he felt the same way.

“Stop moving!” Holt exclaimed as the hammock threatened to spill us both on the ground.

I snorted. “Me? You’re the one who keeps moving,” I reminded him.

“Because you keep making me!” He shoved at my arm which was wrapped around him.

I only tightened my grip, my legs twisted with Holt’s. “If you keep doing that, H, we’re going to end up face first in the grass,” I warned, before I tickled his ribs again.

“Watson!” He giggled, his knee coming too close to my junk.

I loved the sound of Holt’s laugh, as did my dick. “You fucking love it.”

I wanted to bottle this moment up for the rest of my life. We had been out here for hours, just wrapped in one another without a care in the world. Making out, snuggling, it was pure heaven. My phone was full of pictures of Holt. The two of us together. It was ridiculous the number of times I made him stop so I could take a selfie together, but I wanted to imprint everything and not forget it. Nothing made me as happy as his smile. How did I never notice the way he looked at me before? It was more than obvious in every picture I took.

“You—Stop!” Holt jerked away, the hammock twisted beneath us, and we both ended up in the grass. The upside of the situation was Holt’s small, hard body was trapped beneath mine.

I smirked. “Well, what’s this?” I murmured as I ran my hand through his silky hair. “Think you’re trapped now, H.”

“Do you hear me complaining?”

“No, not really.”

I was obsessed with this feeling. The way Holt looked at me, the way he made me feel like I was the most important person in his life, and when he touched me, I wanted to claim him as mine. No one had ever made me feel like this before, and it probably should scare me, but it didn’t. I wanted him. I wanted him now, tomorrow, and the day after that. Forever, if he would have me.

“Watson.” Holt’s voice dripped with desire. “We should —”

“We should tell everyone about us. We can talk to Jenna about us and see what she says,” I blurted. Jenna was my PR person.

A look of absolute terror came over his face. “What? Why?”

I dropped a wet kiss against Holt’s nose. “I need everyone to know you’re mine.” I wanted everyone to see us together. Hold his hand at races, kiss him, and not have to hide what we were. This was something I had never actually felt before, but I knew it was real the moment I put my lips on Holt. Fuck what everyone else might think about us being together.

“Are you saying what I think you’re saying?” he whispered. “Watson, that’s... that’s a big commitment. I don’t... we don’t need to rush into that.” I noticed the way his hands shook when he reached up to touch my face.

I nodded. “You’re nervous. It’s okay to be.” I leaned my head against his. “You’ve waited a long time. If you’re not ready for that, I completely understand.” I kissed him lightly.

“Watson, we should tell Mom and Dad first. Tonight, maybe. They need to know before everyone else.”

“Uh, no. That’s the worst idea you’ve ever had.”

Holt struggled to get out from beneath me, his small frame wiggling like a worm. “Move, please.” He sounded mad. “Watson, I’m fucking serious.”

Clearly, because he hardly swore at me. “H, don’t.” I did as he asked though, and just in time, because my mother appeared out of nowhere.

“Boys, there you are!” Mom was still dressed in her scrubs from work. She was a vet technician. “What are you doing out here on the ground?” Her brown eyes, identical to mine, narrowed.

“Just horsing around,” I assured her before standing up.

She had been concerned about my face when she’d seen it. I’d told her that too had come from us goofing off, but it was Holt getting hit by Jones’s car that had really set her off. She had fussed over him like a mother hen, and he’d hated every single moment of it.

Holt’s ears were bright pink as he kicked at the grass with his sneaker. “You know us boys,” he muttered.

Jesus, he looked guilty as fuck right now.

“How was work?” I tried to change the subject.

“Good, good. Are you staying for dinner? You leave tomorrow morning, and I was going to make your favorite.” Mom moved to put an arm around me.

My favorite meant chicken cordon blue. I glanced over at Holt, who looked ready to pass out.

“That sounds good, Mom.”

I wanted more time alone with him, but I didn’t want to push it with Holt, either. He was already mad about me not being ready to tell our parents about us, but I liked keeping him to myself. He was mine.

“I think after that we’re going to Mason’s for a small get together, though.” Oops, a little lie wouldn’t hurt anyone.

Holt’s head shot up before his eyes narrowed at me.

“You should invite him over soon. I miss him. I would love to see his children.” Mom sighed. “But I’m glad you’re spending time with you friends and all. It’s important. Mason’s a good influence on you. He’s married, and maybe you’ll meet a nice girl to settle down with.” She patted my cheek. “How about you, Holt? Any boys you’re interested in?”

I was pretty sure Holt wanted the ground to open and swallow him. “Uh, no.” He shook his head. “I don’t really have time for that. There are only a couple of other guys who aren’t straight in the circuit, but they’re already taken.” He stared down at the grass again. My poor guy. He wasn’t a very good liar.

“I’m going to go change so I can get dinner started.” Mom gave my shoulder a squeeze before she went back inside the house. When I turned to look at Holt, his eyes flashed with anger.

“You made me lie to her,” he hissed at me. “I don’t like that.” His nostrils flared.

I held up my hands. “I’m sorry. I just... We’ll tell them, H, I promise. Just not yet. I kind of like sneaking around with you.” I took a step closer, only to have him take one back. “Don’t.” It felt like someone slapped me. “Please, I don’t want you upset with me.”

“Too late.” Holt turned to head back to the house only for me to follow him, grab his wrist, and spin him back around. “Watson, I’m fucking warning you.” Oh, he was really upset with me. I kind of liked it.

“I’ll beg.”

“Don’t you dare.”

I nodded. “I’ll do it. I’ll get on my knees.” I dropped down onto the grass. “That’s what you want, right?” I watched as Holt looked around to make sure my mother wasn’t watching. “Please, please, please, don’t be mad at me, H.” I reached for

his hands. “This, whatever we’ve been doing these past few days, has been so good. It’s like nothing I’ve ever felt before, and I want to keep you, Holt. I want to keep this.”

“Get up, Watson.” Holt tried to pry my fingers off his hands.

I shook my head. “Nope, not until you tell me yes. That we can continue this. That you feel the same way.” I watched the way his throat moved when he swallowed, remembering what it felt like to lick it, how he shivered whenever I touched him, and how he sounded when he came. “Please, Holt. I’m a better person with you.” I whispered.

“Fine, just get up.”

I jumped to my feet, wrapped my arms around Holt’s trim body so I could lift him off his feet, then swung him around. “You love me,” I murmured.

“You’re fucking lucky.” Holt stiffened in my arms when he realized what he said. “I didn’t... I mean...” When I placed him back on his feet, his eyes were full of fright.

“You won’t be sorry.” His words didn’t scare me as much as how badly I wanted to say I loved him back.

Chapter Six

Holt

This was the most awkward dinner I had ever had with our parents. Watson kept nudging me with his foot, wrapping his leg around mine, and at one point, when our parents were deep in conversation, slid his hand up my thigh so he could cup my junk. I nearly choked on my baked potato, causing Watson to thump on my back until the food was unclogged from my throat.

“Stop it.” I glared at him with murder in my eyes and my cock so hard I wanted to shove it in his mouth.

He only smirked at me and patted my arm. “Mom.” Watson tilted his head. “I think I might have met someone.”

I began coughing up the water I’d started drinking, nearly snorting it up and out of my nose.

“Son, what’s gotten into you?” My father was quick on his feet to come over to smack me back this time.

Gee, Dad, I don’t know. Your stepson? I shook my head. “I’m fine.” I held up a hand as I wheezed.

“You don’t seem fine.” Dad’s brows dipped. “Are you feeling all right? You’ve been quiet this whole weekend. You didn’t hit your head when that car hit you, did you?”

I tried not to roll my eyes. “I had a helmet on, Dad, and no, I didn’t.” I could feel Watson’s smirk digging into me as I spoke. I was going to have some serious words with him later. This was all his damn fault. “Uh, this is great, by the way, Mom.” I flashed a smile and watched her beam happily.

“It’s so good to have you boys home. I know you’re busy with racing, but the house just isn’t the same when you’re not here with us.” She sighed. “Watts, what were you saying about meeting someone? What’s her name? Did you meet her at the track? She’s not one of those pit girls, is she?”

Watson shot me a wicked grin before he lifted his napkin from his lap and placed it on the table. He wasn't going to tell them after he said he wasn't ready. I told him I wanted to do this together, and we hadn't even spoken about how we would approach it. Was he just going to blurt it out to them? Give his mother, my father, a heart attack over dinner? I felt anxiety start to creep up my spine like the time I'd told them I was gay, only this time—

“I'm bisexual.” Watson dropped that bomb without warning.

Our parents, as to be expected, looked more than a little confused.

“Sweetheart, I don't want to seem ignorant or anything, because you know, with your brother being out, I try to understand everything; and you know we love you both very much, but you like boys, too?” Mom asked softly.

Watson didn't even bat an eye. “Yes. I like both men and woman,” he announced happily.

Oh, dear God, I wanted the roof to collapse on me. Or maybe the floor could just open so Lucifer could drag me down to hell with him. I'd always wanted to visit there. My cheeks were so red, they felt like they were on fire. I was so thankful that no one was paying attention to me right now.

My father's jaw was set so tight I thought his head might pop off. “So, uh, this person you met is male then?” Jesus, Dad, way to be...

“Yes.” Watson raised his chin. “I hope that isn't a problem because, you know, Holt's gay and all. I figured you wouldn't have an issue with me being with a man, too. I still like woman, but I think he might be the one for me.”

Mom was out of her seat and coming around the table in seconds to hug Watson. “Oh, sweetie,” she gushed happily. “We're so happy for you, and no, it's not a problem if you're with a man. We love you and your brother, no matter what,” she assured him.

My father plastered on his own smile, but it didn't look as sincere. "Right." He shoved his seat back. "This calls for a celebration." He disappeared from the room, and we could hear him in the kitchen gathering glasses, which only meant he was taking out the Johnnie Walker. He came back in with four glasses, and the clear bottle filled with brown liquid. Yep, just like I thought. He placed a glass before each of us, opened the alcohol, and filled them before sitting back down.

"So..." Mom wouldn't touch hers. She hardly ever drank. "Tell us about this boy." She moved to go back to her chair.

Watson swirled his drink. "Well..." I swore a blush crept up his neck. "He's special." He ducked his chin. I might die from secondhand embarrassment right now.

"Watson James, you're in love this boy." Mom gasped.

"No, he's not," I blurted out. "Ow, did you just kick me?" I glared at Watson. Mom and Dad were now watching me with suspicious eyes. Oops. I picked up my drink and drained it in one shot. Then I reached across the table to pour myself another one so that I could do it again.

Watson pursed his lips. "H." He twisted his large frame to look at me. "Do you think that I'm not capable of loving someone?" His eyes dared me to fight him. I knew if I did, he would tell our parents everything without batting an eye. After all, wasn't that what I had told him I wanted in the first place?

"That's not it at all." My chair scraped the dining room floor as I pushed it back to stand up. "I just hope you know what you're getting into. Being with someone of the same gender is only going to put the spotlight on you in ways you're not used to. I'm going to my room. Thanks for dinner."

I rushed past our parents and sprinted up the stairs before anyone could say anything else, then flung myself onto the bed.

"Fuck." I muttered into the pillow just as there was a knock on the door. "Go away," I grunted.

"Not happening," Watson answered as he pushed open the door. I heard the lock click once he shut it behind him.

“What’s going on with you right now?” he asked.

I shook my head without looking at him. “Nothing,” I mumbled into the pillow.

“Liar.”

I turned to glare at him. “Please leave me alone,” I ordered. “I don’t want to... What are you doing?” I asked when he yanked his shirt off and proceeded to climb into my bed and wrap himself around me. “Get off.” I tried to untangle myself, but he simply wrapped his legs around me, too. “Watson, seriously. Stop it.”

“Why are you mad at me? I just confessed to our parents.”

“No, no, you didn’t. They think you have a boyfriend. They don’t know we’re together.” I stopped him. “Release me, jerk.” I shoved hard at his chest just as my elbow knocked into his face. “Shit, Watson, I’m sorry.”

He fell off the bed in his attempt to get up. “Jesus Christ, Holt.” Blood seeped through his fingers, as he clutched his nose.

“I didn’t mean to!” I insisted. “Let me see—”

He shook his head. “I think you’ve done enough.” Watson grabbed his shirt from the floor and pressed it against his nose.

“You don’t... you don’t think I did that on purpose, do you?” Tears stung my eyes. “Watson, I would never hurt you. Like, ever.” The way he was looking at me told me he didn’t believe a word I said. “Watson?”

“I know you wouldn’t.”

“Then why are you backing away from me every time I step closer? I need to touch you. Make sure you’re okay.”

The shirt against his nose was slowly turning crimson. “Funny, five minutes ago you couldn’t get away from me fast enough,” he barked bitterly. “I’m going out.”

“Watson, no. Wait a minute.” I grabbed at his arm. “Talk to me. Just for a second.” He looked down at my hand. “Didn’t... didn’t we have a good week? Together? Wasn’t... don’t...” I

couldn't get it out. I couldn't talk, and I couldn't get the words to come together the way I wanted them. I suddenly couldn't breathe. My lungs were fighting for air, and I felt like I might choke.

Watson placed his palm over my hand. "H, are you okay?" He sounded scared as he moved me back to the bed and sat me down on the mattress. "It's okay. I'm not going anywhere." He rubbed my back with his big hand while he kept his shirt against his face. "Look at me, okay?" His dark eyes never left mine. "Focus, there you go, baby, right here." I watched his eyes crinkle up into a smile as I managed to suck air in through my nose and out my mouth.

I let out a shaky breath. "Sorry," I muttered. *Wait, did he call me baby, or did I just imagine that?* "I thought you were going to leave, and I didn't want you to be mad at me. Go find someone else..." I swallowed nervously at the thought of him kissing another person after everything.

"I was going to. Leave, I mean," Watson admitted.

My stomach dropped. "You were?" My chin began to tremble.

"No, no, don't... Shit." He dropped the shirt as he cupped my face, and I was thankful the bleeding had stopped. "I'm so fucking sorry, baby. I shouldn't have said anything at dinner. I just wanted to start to prepare them." He took a deep breath.

I dropped my chin to my chest. "Don't leave, okay? Just... I'll do whatever you want as long as you don't go. You want to fuck? We can do that. As long as you're here, in my bed, I'll let you do whatever you want to me." Christ, that sounded pathetic. I couldn't stop the tears as they filled my eyes and slipped down my cheeks. I was already too far gone with him.

"Baby." Watson forced me to look back at him. "I would never, *ever* want you to have sex with me when you weren't ready. Is that the kind of man you think I am?" His thumb brushed at the tears on my face. "Why are you crying, huh?"

"I love you."

“You’re crying because you love me? Shit, I’d be crying, too.”

A laughed bubbled out of my throat. “I do, though, love you, I mean.”

“I know, baby. I know you do.” Watson brushed more wetness from my face. “You scared me.”

My throat grew tight. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to do that.” I reached up to touch his face.

“No, I mean, that’s what happened to make me realize I wanted to be with you.” I stared at him as the words sank in. “When Jones hit you, I realized that if you were really hurt or worse, I wouldn’t be able to survive. Okay, sure, we had been forced into being stepbrothers, but friends? That came so naturally to us. I care about you, H, and if you were gone, who would take care of me like you? Who would make sure I was eating my vegetables, not getting into trouble, stop me from beating the crap out of Jones for hitting you with his damn car?”

“Watson—”

“I’m not fucking done,” he growled. “Maybe I needed something almost horrific to happen for me to open my dumb eyeballs, okay? I never... I never realized you felt that way about me because I didn’t know I did, too.” Watson suddenly dropped down between my thighs. “I’m not easy, you know that. I’m a slob, I’m an idiot, I’m not a morning person, I drink way too much, but you don’t care. You’ve lived with me for the past couple of years in an RV, which, by the way, is hard to do, and you’ve never complained once. You wash my dirty clothes, pick up my messes, and cook me dinner. You cheer me on when I win races, even when I don’t, and hell, you’re my shoulder to cry on when I have a horrible one.”

I combed my fingers through Watson’s light hair. “I think I’m your biggest fan, Watson James Brooks.” I smiled down at him.

“Hush, my mother might hear you.” He gasped before he laid his head in my lap. “You’ve loved me when I didn’t

deserve it. When I didn't know it, and I'm so sorry you had to stand by while I brought all those girls around. That must have been absolute torture. I wish I could take it all back and unbreak your heart, H. You're the most amazing person in my life." His arms wrapped around my legs.

My eyes burned with tears again. "Watson." I stared down at him.

"Yeah, baby?"

He was going to kill me with this baby shit. When I didn't answer right away, Watson's head popped up to look at me, his eyes filled with worry. "I like it when you call me that." I dragged the back of my hand over his cheek.

"Baby?" He smiled. "I thought you liked it when I called you H."

I felt my cheeks heat up. "I do. But baby is more—"

He climbed back to his knees. "Intimate?" This time he stood up before he slowly pushed me over onto the bed so he could splay his heavy body over mine. "Baby," Watson whispered against my mouth. "What do you want from me, baby?" he asked as he kissed my neck and dragged his tongue over my skin and Adam's apple, causing me to shiver beneath him.

"Let's go somewhere," I suggested. "Just us. For a drive or just... I don't know. Get out of the house for a couple of hours. You did tell Mom we were going to Mason's," I reminded him.

Watson pressed another kiss to my neck before he stood up and helped me to my feet. "I did, didn't I? I have the perfect place." He smirked.

I'd follow him into hell if that's what Watson asked of me.

Chapter Seven

Watson

Holt stared at me as I parked the car. I could see by the look in his eyes that he was scared we were going to get caught, but I knew for a fact that no one ever came here. The track had been abandoned for years, and I used to bring girls here in high school after dark when it was closed. No one ever came by, and if they did? We wouldn't get in trouble.

I was, after all, Watson Brooks.

"Relax, baby." I grinned. "You're safe with me," I assured him before opening my door. "Come on, we'll be fine." I climbed from the car and thought I might have to persuade him until the sound of the door slamming shut behind me and the crunching of his shoes on the broken-down pavement told me he didn't need me to. "Remember this place?" I asked as Holt walked over to me.

He nodded. "Of course."

"First place we met." I hooked my arm around his neck. "Mom and Dad thought it would be the perfect place to introduce us." I smiled in the dark. "You were so shy." I squeezed him closer.

"You were fucking intimidating, Watson. Fifteen years old and six feet tall. God, you were so gorgeous even back then."

"Was I?"

Holt looked up at me. "Yeah, you were," he murmured.

I stopped so I could kiss him. His lips were warm and inviting. He didn't hesitate to open for me, letting me take control. His tongue curled around mine as he pressed his body closer before he suddenly pulled away.

"How is this so easy for you? You're not freaked out about kissing me or being seen with me like this?"

"No, because it's right." I rested my forehead against Holt's. "Being with the others might have felt good, but the

way I feel when I'm kissing you, touching you, sucking you off? That is something completely new. I want to bottle it up and keep it inside me." I gripped the back of his neck. "I can't even describe how good it makes me feel, H."

Holt's eyes were pure fire. "You don't have to, Watson," he whispered.

"Come on." I grabbed his hand, and we started walking again. "I was excited to meet you that night. I always wanted a brother." I squeezed his fingers. "Even if you were a nerd."

He yanked my arm. "Hey!" He chuckled. "You were surprisingly nice to me, even though I was scared of you."

"I didn't know that."

"Yeah, well, most kids our age weren't nice to me, so I was prepared to have an asshole as a stepbrother."

We walked through the broken-down gate and onto the overgrown track. I was sad to see the track had fallen on hard times and completely broken apart like this. I had won several races here as a kid and teenager before I moved up to the truck series. Had my first kiss under the bleachers at the age of fourteen with some random girl I met after a race, and spent countless Saturday nights here with my dad, stepmother, and Holt.

"You okay?" he asked. "You miss this place?"

I nodded. "Lots of good memories." I walked us over to the first set of bleachers so we could sit down. "Had my first kiss here."

"Of course you did." Holt groaned.

I cupped his head and slid my mouth over his. "But my favorite memory will always be you, baby," I assured him. "Lie down." I patted my lap, afraid he wouldn't do as I asked, but when he did, I happily combed my hands through his dark hair. "What about you, H? What's your favorite memory?"

"When you finally kissed me."

I swallowed the lump in my throat. "That's your favorite memory?" I whispered, as Holt grabbed my hand and brought

it down to his lips.

“I waited a long time for you, Watson, so yes, it is.” He peppered kisses against my palm.

“Thank you.”

Holt twisted around to look at me. “For what?” he asked.

His eyes looked nearly green in the moonlight. “For never giving up hope,” I murmured. Holt rose into a sitting position, then climbed into my lap. “Oh, I like this a lot.” I grinned. He hooked his hands behind my neck. “You getting frisky with me, baby?”

“I love you, Watson James.” Holt rested his head on my shoulder. “I don’t care if you never say it back. I just need you to know that I always have, and I always will.” His breath was hot against my skin.

I wrapped my arms around him, willing myself to say it back. Because I did. I did love Holt. I just... I never even told my mom I loved her. Just always “me, too,” or “same.” Never “I love you.” Was that weird? Probably.

Holt began tracing circles with his fingers against my back. “This is a dream, right?” he said softly. “A crazy dream that I’ll have to wake up from but don’t want to.” He sounded sad.

“Not a dream, H. I’m yours, I promise.”

“No more pit bunnies.”

I squeezed him closer. “No more pit bunnies,” I assured him.

We sat there wrapped up in one another for what felt like hours. Kissing, touching, and talking in hushed voices, knowing we wouldn’t have time like this once we left for Nashville in the morning. When we finally agreed it was time to leave, Holt’s lips were swollen from my kisses, and I could see burn marks from the stubble on my face against his skin.

On the drive home, Holt fell asleep, his head pressed against the glass, and I didn’t have the heart to wake him. Instead, I took it upon myself to unbuckle him from the car so

I could carry him inside as if he weighed nothing. I only stopped to unlock the front door, thankful our parents were sleeping. We had spent the past few days in his bed, but this time I wanted Holt in mine, even if it just meant sleeping. I removed his shoes before stripping off his clothes to leave him in nothing but his briefs.

I stepped back to gaze at his perfect body, wondering how I never realize just how beautiful he was until recently. Holt's body was lean from all the running he did, but his arms and legs were muscular from carrying tires over the years, and I had the sudden urge to sink my teeth into his calves, stake my claim on what was mine. His stomach was flat, and I could count the faint abs lines where my own were more defined. My cock jerked in my shorts at all the dirty things I wanted to do to him. If I had known Holt Walker was my kink, I wouldn't have waited so long to get him in my bed.

I quickly lost all my clothes, made sure my door was locked, and then joined him in bed, wrapping myself around him. His scent, his warmth, the sound of his soft breathing. It was all too familiar and everything I needed to lull me to sleep.

Just as predicted, morning came and was complete chaos. I needed more time with Holt but didn't get it. He was up before I was, his side of the bed already cold when I rolled over to reach for him, but his scent was there, and I took too much time inhaling him when I should have been in the shower.

"You're going to make us late," Holt scolded from the doorway.

When I rolled over to look at him, his crooked smile only made my morning wood even worse. Holt stood in a pair of blue jeans that fit him perfectly, as well as one of our white team polo shirts that stretched over his shoulders just right. I'd be a liar if it didn't make me want to do all sorts of dirty things to him.

I reached for him. "Come back to bed, baby," I pleaded.

“Oh no.” Holt shook his head. “You need to get up, shower, and move before you get us both in trouble.”

I pouted. “You’re no fun.”

“I’m doing you a favor.”

“Yeah, a boring one.”

Holt snorted. “Remind me again what it is I like about you?” he asked.

“My sparkling personality? Oh, and maybe my giant dick.” I sat up and swung my legs over the side of the bed. “That’s it, isn’t it? You’re in love with my cock.” I watched the way his ears turned pink. “You’re blushing, baby.” I stood up to stalk toward him.

“Watson.” Holt held out a hand. “Mom and Dad are still here. Remember that.” He started moving backward, stumbled over something on my messy floor, and nearly went down just as I hooked an arm around his waist to catch him. “Hi,” he murmured as he looked up at me.

I grinned. “Hi yourself.” I brushed my mouth over his. “Next time you wake me, so we can shower together, okay?” I murmured.

“O...okay,” he agreed before reaching up to lightly touch my nose. “It doesn’t look as bad as I thought.” His eyes searched my face.

The sound of footsteps had us breaking apart, and I rushed into the bathroom across from my room, leaving Holt behind even though what I really wanted was to drag him into the stall with me. My cock begged me for release as I rushed through my shower, though I had no time for that. When I walked back into my room, he was gone, and I was more than disappointed. I hastily packed my bag and changed into a shirt that matched Holt’s because we both had to stop by the shop before we left for Nashville.

Downstairs, I found him in the kitchen with our parents. He was sitting at the breakfast bar, a cheese Danish in one hand and his phone in the other. He looked up, met my eyes, and I watched as a smile broke out over his face. It had my

heart rattling so hard in my chest, I was sure everyone could hear it. I couldn't help but notice the way his neck and ears turned pink before he ducked his head.

“Good morning, sweetie.” Mom kissed my cheek. “How... What happened to your nose?” Her eyes narrowed. “Honestly, you two have got to stop horsing around so much. You're not kids anymore.” She shook her head.

Dad sipped quietly on his coffee. “What's your boyfriend going to think?” he asked. “Coming back with all those bruises on your face? Assuming you're going to see him this weekend?” Clearly fishing for information I wasn't going to give.

“Uh, I am.” I grabbed the half-eaten Danish out of Holt's hand.

“Hey!” he exclaimed.

“Oh, were you eating that?” I teased, before shoving it all inside my mouth at once. “Sworry.” I grinned through a mouth full of food.

Holt started laughing and shook his head, which only made me feel even weirder. Is this what love was? Because I didn't ever want this feeling to end. I caught the look his dad was giving us, the way my mom was watching like she couldn't be prouder that we got along so well, and I honestly had never felt happier in my entire life. Not after winning a race or the championship. I looked over at Dad again to find his eyes narrowed and a very pissed off look on his face. *Oh shit.*

“We should get moving.” I suggested once I swallowed my stolen breakfast, along with some sip of orange juice. “Miles is probably pacing the floor already.” I didn't mention he had already texted me and asked where we were. I hugged Mom and Dad quickly before Holt moved in to do the same, while we both promised to call them when we landed.

Once we were in my car, I pressed my lips to Holt's cheek before I pressed the ignition to start the vehicle. “It's going to be hard to keep my hands off of you,” I warned, and reached for his hand.

What I wanted to tell him was that I thought his father suspected something. The way he was watching us, the way he was fishing for information this morning. Yeah, he knew. But I didn't want to worry Holt.

“We have RV time,” Holt reminded me. “No one can see us when we're inside there. Which means we can walk around naked; I can blow you in the living room—”

“Jesus, baby, you can't say shit like that while I'm driving.” My cock knocked against my zipper. “I'm driving and will not have any time for relief until who the hell knows when.”

Holt chuckled. “I promise you plenty of blowies this weekend, Watson. Don't you worry,” he murmured.

Yeah, I think I liked being with Holt. A whole fucking lot.

Chapter Eight

Holt

I was used to not seeing much of Watson during race weekends, but now that we were together—or whatever this was between us—it was absolute torture. I wanted alone time with him, but I knew it would hours before that was going to happen once we got to the shop.

After our brief meeting, Watson and Mason left with car owner Rick Dalton while I had to stay behind with the rest of the crew guys. That was probably the worst of it. Having to watch Watson leave without me. I knew it was stupid because I would see him again in a few hours, but what if Mason convinced him to go out? What if he ran into some stupid girl who he thought was cuter than me, or what if he—

“Walker!” I flinched at Miles shouting my last name. “Now is not the time to daydream! Get your head out of your ass and keep it in the game. We have a big weekend ahead of us. Watts needs you.”

I nodded. “Yes, sir,” I mumbled, trying to ignore the snickering around me. My cheeks flamed with embarrassment. I really had to get my head in the game, or I was never going to get through this weekend.

By the time we flew into Nashville later that day, it was nearly eight o’clock, and I was a bundle of nerves. I checked my phone when we boarded the plane but hadn’t received any texts from Watson, which only made me more anxious. When there was nothing from him when I stepped off the plane? I felt sick to my stomach. His normal routine when NASCAR drove into town, after tech, the inspections, and interviews was to go out for a night of fun. Find some girl he could get lost in but wouldn’t get too clingy. Had he gotten restless waiting for me and decided to do that instead?

I hiked it to our RV, which was parked between Mason’s and Finn Cooper’s, ready to find it empty and have my heart broken in two. But when I opened the door, my bag slipped off

my shoulder and landed on the floor with a thud at the glorious vision sprawled out before me.

“What the fuck took you so long?” Watson growled.

My mouth opened, closed, and dropped open again, but no words came out. He sat on the small couch in the living room totally and completely naked with a pint of his favorite Baskin Robbin’s ice cream on the table next to him.

“Well, I guess my surprise worked.” He grinned. “Come. Here.” He crooked his index finger at me.

I was on him in a second, my hands in his hair, my lips on his, and the groan that escaped Watson’s mouth was all I needed to hear to make all my worries fly from my head.

“Missed you,” he told me as our kiss deepened and our tongues slicked together. I didn’t want control. I wanted Watson to have it all. I wanted him to dominate me, take me, have me, and do whatever he wanted with me. I was his forever and always.

He slipped his hands up the back of my shirt causing me to tremble at his touch.

“I missed you more,” I promised.

I let Watson tug my shirt up over my head, only breaking our kiss for a second before bringing my mouth back to his. His eyes were heavy with lust and longing as he slid me onto my back so he could undo my zipper.

“Fuck, Holt.” He groaned as he slowly pulled my pants down to my thighs. My hard-on was ready to break through my briefs. Watson dragged a finger over my cock. “You want something from me, baby?” He bit down on his bottom lip.

I nodded my head.

“Tell me,” he murmured. “Tell me what you want me to do to you tonight, H.” He pressed soft kisses against my jaw as he moved down my body. Watson met my gaze. “I need to hear you say it, baby.” He ran a finger over one of my peaked nipples, and I groaned softly. “You like that?” He dropped his head to lick at it before he grazed it with his teeth.

My hips bucked up against him like they had a mind of their own. “Watson,” I whimpered. “Do that—God, do that again.” I gripped his blond strands between my fingers.

“This?” When his teeth made contact with my nipple again, I swear I saw stars.

“Holy... that’s... fuck.” I closed my eyes.

Watson chuckled softly. “You’re into nipple play. I’ll keep that in mind,” he purred against my chest. “Baby, look at me.” He smiled when I did. “It’s just us, all alone in this RV, and I want to make you feel so damn good. What do you want me to do to you tonight?”

My hand immediately dropped between us so I could wrap it around his cock. “You and me,” I murmured. My cheeks burned as I try to get out the words that were stuck in my throat.

“I love the way you get nervous, baby.” He grinned. “What about us, Holt? You want... Oh, I know what you want.” Watson removed my hand from his length, and I watched as he climbed from under my body. “I’ll be right back. Don’t go anywhere.”

It was hard to look away as Watson left the room. He was all thick muscles and hard body. His ass alone was a work of art, round and tight. But when he disappeared from my sight, I tried to get my brain to actually fucking brain. I’d never been this nervous around him. It was the whole sex thing that got me confused. I wanted him. Every single damn part of him. So now that I had him, why couldn’t I tell him the things I’d dreamed of doing to him?

“Here.” Watson suddenly dropped down next to me.

I stared at the bottle in his hand. “Is that... I wasn’t...”

He held a bottle of lube in his hand. As much as I wanted Watson inside of me, I hadn’t planned on doing that tonight. I wasn’t ready to take that next step.

“Baby.” He shook his head. “I’m not getting inside that ass yet. Soon, but not tonight.” He squeezed my leg. “You’re still wearing clothes.” He jutted his chin at me.

I stood up to remove my pants and underwear. When Watson leaned forward to kiss the tip of my dick. I groaned. His tongue swiped over the precum that had begun to leak out.

“What... what’s that for?” I asked nervously.

He patted his thighs. “Come find out.” His lusty voice sent my body into overdrive.

I climbed up onto Watson’s lap so my cock pressed against his, and Watson moved my legs so they were wrapped around his waist.

“This, baby, is going to rock your damn world.” He kissed me hard on the mouth. “I can fucking promise,” he whispered before he uncapped the bottle and spread some of the lube on his fingers. When he began to spread it over his cock, I watched wide-eyed, but when he reached for mine, and began to jerk us together, my eyes rolled into the back of my head as a lusty, warm feeling spread through my body.

“Fuck me.” I started to lean back, but Watson’s arm hooked around my waist to keep me in place.

“Told you.”

“That’s... so...”

Watson grunted. “I need your mouth, Holt.”

My lips slammed over his before he could finish. Our dicks rutted together, and I gripped his strong shoulders until my nails broke the skin. It was like nothing I had ever felt before, like a match and gasoline as he worked us over. I couldn’t get close enough to Watson. He swallowed my whimpers. I captured his groans. I didn’t want this moment to ever end. His hard body against mine, the beads of sweat that had begun to drip down my back, the droplets of moisture I noticed against his hairline, and the way his arm clung to my waist like he would never let go.

“Holt,” Watson whimpered my name. “Fuck. God, I can’t...” He yanked me closer, his hand moving faster. “Tell me you’re close because I want this with you, baby, tell me... I need...”

“Yes.” I reached for his face. “Now.” I nodded.

It was an explosive reaction as we came together. Sticky and hot, I felt it against my stomach, but I couldn't tell what was mine or what was his as he gritted his teeth before burying his face in my neck, his body going slack against mine. I slumped against him, my hands combing through his damp hair as I felt my heartbeat slowing to normal.

“Mfffph,” Watson muttered.

“Agreed,” I teased before he sat up. “Everything all right?” I dragged my thumbs over his cheekbones.

Watson nodded before his eyes closed. “You keep doing that, and I'm going to fall asleep. Need to wash this cum off,” he murmured.

I started to climb from his lap, only to have Watson tighten his grip on my hip.

“Where do you think you're going?”

“Uh, to wash up?” I reminded him.

He popped open one eye. “Not without me, you're not.” He broke into a huge grin before scooping me up into his arms. “Think that shower is big enough for the both of us? Guess we're about to find out!” he exclaimed before walking us both to the bathroom.

We met Mason for breakfast the next morning after our shower, another jerk off session, and the best sleep of my life. But I couldn't help but feel like Mason was watching us, like he knew something. But that was impossible. He couldn't know. Could he?

“Good morning,” Watson said cheerfully. “Where's Shepard? Aren't you two like connected at the hip or something? It's unusual to see one with the other.” He nudged my knee playfully under the table, and I blushed, ducking my head.

Mason's eyes ping-ponged between us. “What's going on with you two?” he hissed. “You know, you couldn't have been

more obvious last night. Didn't think that one through, did you?"

My stomach dropped, and I looked down at my bagel. It suddenly looked less than appetizing. I busied myself with the paper napkin wrapped around my silverware, hoping I was just being paranoid.

"Nothing? No smart ass comments. That is so unlike you, Watts," Mason snapped. "You know my RV is parked right next to yours? I heard you. Hell, everyone probably fucking heard the two of you." He tapped the table with his knuckles. "Holt, look at me please, because this is serious. I always knew you had a crush on Watts because you looked at him like he hung the moon, but this has got to stop. You want him to lose his ride? Lose everything he's worked for? Because that's what's going to happen."

"You better watch it," Watson growled. "You don't get to talk to him like that. Not ever. Understand me?" When his hand landed on my thigh, I felt my worries disappear.

Mason's eyes narrowed. "How long has this been going on? Is this why you weren't interested in Tessa? Because... Watts, he's your brother," he whispered.

"Step-," Watson barked. "*Stepbrother*, Mason, and... You know what?" He stood up. "This really isn't any of your business."

My mouth flopped open like a fish. "Is that... is that true? Will he lose his ride?" I asked.

"No, don't you listen to him." Watson grabbed my arm and tried to force me to stand up.

Mason nodded. "It's possible."

"Says the guy who is raising... Nope, I won't stoop to your level. Leave Holt out of this. You have a problem, come to me. Not him, me. You ever talk to him like that again, and I'll knock all your damn teeth out," Watson warned. "Let's go, H."

I followed him because it's what I did. Because I loved him, because he was everything to me.

Chapter Nine

Holt

Things went from bad to worse in a second. Watson was on edge the rest of the day, and even though we weren't near one another, I could feel the negative energy he was putting out there. In the garage, as he was getting ready for practice, I watched him pacing like a madman. Back and forth from one wall to the next. He was an absolute disaster. When he took his car out, he brushed the wall in practice. I cringed and tried to not think it could get any worse. But it was when his blue thirty-one skidded around turn two, hit the wall, then slammed into the safer barrier that I knew this weekend might turn into a lost cause.

Watson's car was destroyed. He wasn't going to be able to finish his run, which now meant bringing out the backup. Which meant he would start at the back of the field, and he would need to drive his way up through the field.

Watson was pissed. He threw his helmet off as he climbed from the damaged car before tossing it across the infield. Then he yanked off his gloves and those followed his helmet onto the grass. I had seen Watson angry, but never like this. He ignored the EMS workers when they tried to escort him into the emergency vehicle, which was a no-no, and started across the grass, only to stop and head toward the ambulance when he realized how much trouble he would be in.

The rest of the pit crew had started cleaning up their things since we weren't going to be needed for the rest of this qualifying session, so I joined them. I wouldn't see Watson for quite some time. He would be released from the care center, need to field questions, have to talk to Miles about the car, and so, once everything was cleaned up, I headed back to the RV to wait for him.

"Hey." Carson Carey, another driver, fell into line with me. "You want to hang out?" He gave me a nervous smile. We had gone out a couple of times over the past, but since I hadn't heard from him after that, I figured he wasn't interested.

Well, this was awkward. “Uh...” How did I approach this? Watson and I hadn’t exactly said we were a couple, but clearly that’s what we were. I stopped to stare at him. Carson was cute. Blond hair, dark eyes, and obviously my type... If I weren’t totally and completely in love with Watson.

“Shit, I waited too long, didn’t I?” His shoulders slumped. “Why does this always happen to me?”

I put my hand on his shoulder. “It’s not you, Carson,” I assured him.

“I was going to text you last week, but then I just got nervous, and crap... You’re like one of the nicer guys around here. Also, it’s hard to find someone who’s into racing and queer, too. Man, I really screwed this one up.” He looked deflated.

It wouldn’t have worked out, anyway. “Want to come by and have a beer? I could always use another friend. I never have enough of those,” I suggested.

“The dreaded f word.” Carson gave me a smile, though, so I guess it wasn’t that bad. “Yeah, I could do that.” We started walking back to the RV, and I invited him inside, hoping Watson and I hadn’t left anything out from last night in our hurry to get to the track on time this morning.

I moved to the fridge to grab a couple of beers while he sat down at the small table.

“So...” I popped open my can. “How was your week off? Do anything fun?”

“Clearly not as fun as you.” He grinned.

I felt my ears heat. “Yeah, well, it wasn’t expected,” I murmured.

“You like this guy.” Carson knocked my leg with his knee. “How did you meet him? Because I’m sick of the random hookups that lead nowhere. That’s why I thought we sort of had a connection. We shared a kiss, which was nice, but when you didn’t seem interested in fooling around...” He broke into a big smile. “You’re shy. I get it.”

Now I was really blushing. “Also, very inexperienced.”

“Yet you have a new man in your life.”

I took a sip of my beer, hoping for some liquid courage. “Yeah, about that—” I jumped when the door slammed opened and Watson’s large frame appeared in the doorway.

“Am I interrupting?” he growled. “Please, continue. I clearly only fucking live here.” His dark eyes narrowed into angry slits as he stomped into the room.

Carson was already on his feet. “I... I’ll talk to you later, Holt. Congrats on the new boyfriend. I hope it works out.” He nodded at me before he rushed from the RV.

I watched wide-eyed as Watson ripped open the fridge and then turned back to stare at me. “What the fuck was that?” he asked. “I wasn’t here, so you decided to, what? Bring someone else in instead?” His nostrils flared as he stared at me with contempt in his eyes.

“What, no. I... We’re just friends. I can have friends. You have tons of friends.”

“Not friends I’ve gone on dates with.”

I gritted my teeth. “You and Mason have shared women before,” I whispered.

“Is that why you brought him here? So we could share?” Watson asked.

I shook my head. “No, I was waiting for you.” I felt sick. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fucking great.” Watson grabbed his beer from the counter and brushed past me to head to his room.

I stared at his retreating back as he slipped inside. Should I go after him? Did he want me to do that? Was he really upset with me or just at what happened today? I checked to make sure the door was locked to the RV before I traced his steps and found Watson curled into a fetal position, his back to me. Shit. I kicked off my shoes and climbed up next to him, hoping he didn’t push me away. As soon as the mattress dipped under my weight, Watson turned to face me. He

quickly wrapped his large body around mine, burying his face into my chest.

I threaded my fingers through his thick hair to tug his face up to look at me. “You want to talk about what happened out there today? Why you’re picking fights with me?” I asked.

Watson shook his head before he pressed his face back into my shirt. “No,” he mumbled. His fingers clung to my shirt as he tried to get even closer to me, and then he began to cry softly.

“Hey,” I whispered. “It’s okay,” I assured him, my hand rubbing circles against his back.

His crying turned into sobs, and his large frame shook against mine. I had never seen Watson this upset before. Sure, he’d had bad days, bad races, and I had seen him cry, but nothing like this.

“Sssshhhh,” I murmured into his hair. “It’s all right.”

I wasn’t sure what had set him off other than this morning with Mason or him coming home to Carson in our RV, but he had to know I would never do anything to hurt him. Didn’t he? I loved him.

Watson only seemed to want to get closer as he slipped one leg between mine and then wrapped the other around my waist. When I tried to force him to look at me, he shook his head and kept his face pressed against my chest, his sobs still heavy enough to shake us both. But when he finally grew quiet, Watson pulled back to look at me with red eyes and a vulnerability I had never seen before.

“Better now?” I dragged my thumb over his cheekbones the way I knew he liked. He shook his head before dropping his gaze to my mouth. “What can I do to make it better for you?”

“Just this... It’s nice.”

“This is all you need from me?”

Watson nodded. “I like being close to you like this, baby.” He leaned forward to brush his lips over mine. “Another time I

would say I want you to get me off, but now? Right now, I just want to cuddle.” He told me before burying his face in my neck.

This was... this was different. Not something I would expect from Watson when I knew his sex drive was extremely high, and he liked to fuck to get out his aggression.

“Whatever you need.” I rested my chin against his head and listened as his breathing grew deeper, his arms loosening around my body.

When I was sure Watson was asleep, I untangled myself from his body to go back to the kitchen, where I dug through the cabinets and fridge to make something to eat when he woke. I knew he’d be hungry, and when I found the ingredients for pizza, I quickly whipped up a vegetable one. Once that was in the oven, I checked on Watson, who was still sleeping. I went back to check my phone, which I’d left charging in the kitchen.

“Holt!” Watson’s voice from the bedroom was desperate and scared. “Holt, where are you?” I rushed in. He was sitting in his bed, looking more than a bit frightened and alone. “Where were you? I needed you. Why did you leave?” He reached for me.

I sank down next to him. “I’m right here, baby.” The endearment slipped from my lips. “I went to go start dinner.”

“You left me alone.”

“What’s going on with you today?”

He shook his head. “Nothing, I just...” Watson’s eyes met mine. “You made dinner?” When I nodded, he smiled. “Is it pizza?”

“Of course.” I gripped his chin between my fingers. “You need to talk to me first.” I leaned closer. “Tell me what happened today, Watson. This isn’t like you at all.” I was starting to get a little nervous.

Watson worried this lip between his teeth. “Mason... Everything just...” He sighed softly. “I don’t want you to think I’m going to lose my job.” He reached for my hand. “You and

I... we're good, okay?" He reached for my free hand and squeezed my fingers. "I got all up in my head, wrecked the damn car, and then I started thinking about what would happen if you weren't here with me. I need you. I've always needed you, H. You're my best damn friend. No one is taking you away. No one is breaking us up."

I watched the way his chin trembled, and I was scared he might start crying again.

"If it comes out before we're ready, are you going to be okay with that? I was scared for you more than me. I can get another ride. Hell, I'll go back to Xfinity or trucks or something else if comes down to it, but you, fuck, baby." He reached up to cup my head with his hand. "I was worried about you."

"Watson." I touched his wrist. "I—"

The buzzer for the pizza went off, and I jumped before I laughed softly. My body was all nerves and electricity at the fact he was worried for me, not himself or his career, and as I got up on shaking legs to go turn off the oven, I couldn't seem to calm my racing heart.

Once I put the pizza on the stove. I took a few quick breaths, trying to gather myself together, only to have Watson come up behind me and wrap his arms around me.

"You called me baby." His breath was hot in my ear. "Fuck, that's so hot." He groaned, his tongue flicking against my skin as he ground his hard cock against my backside.

There he was.

Watson spun me around to face him. "I think I'm ready for you to take care of me now." He gripped the sides of my head. "You think you can do that?" He nipped at my bottom lip before fixing his mouth to mine.

I could definitely do that.

Chapter Ten

Watson

Mason sat down next to me in the drivers' meeting before the race Sunday morning, and I had to stop myself from getting up. If I did that it, everyone would know something was wrong. We were teammates and friends, after all, and we always sat together. I did, however, move my chair away from his without even glancing in his direction. Last night had been good—no, better than good... fucking great—with Holt. He was my happy place, and once he made me feel like myself again, made me come, and I returned the favor, we stuffed ourselves with pizza, fooled around again, and then slept like babies in my bed.

I would not let Mason Pelletier ruin that for me.

“Mature, dude.” He grunted.

I ignored him when I wanted to punch him in the face. I didn't even give him the finger or look in his direction. I simply continued to scroll through my phone as I waited for the meeting to start.

“Are you going to just pretend I'm not here? Not text me back? Act like I don't even exist? We have to work together. We're a team. We're friends, man,” Mason reminded me.

My head shot up. “Friends? Oh, is that what we are?” I leaned toward him. “Because friends wouldn't pull what you did yesterday.” I realized everyone was turning to look at me because I had raised my voice. “Friends wouldn't scare my boyfriend the way you did. You're an asshole.”

“*I'm* the asshole?” Mason placed his palm over his chest like I had wounded him and stared at me with wide eyes. “How am I the asshole in all this? Do you even hear yourself right now? Wait a second, did you just call Holt your boyfriend?”

Rand Shepard suddenly planted a hand on either of my shoulders. “You guys are a bit loud. What's going on? Lover's

quarrel?” He smirked.

“Go fuck yourself.” I shrugged his hands off.

Shepard and I never really got along. I think because he thought I was trying to steal his best friend when he settled down first, or maybe because I was willing to have sex with him. No, not like that, although I would have if Mason asked. Mason was into threesomes, foursomes, whatever, and Rand didn't like to share. Mason—again, before he got married—was the kind of dude who didn't have a problem with another man in the bedroom, like me. Although I don't think Mason ever had sex with men like I had.

Rand's hand clamped back down on my shoulder before his face was in mine. “Say that again, Watts, because I haven't gotten into any fights in a while. I'd be more than happy to rectify that situation this morning.” The smile he flashed didn't reach his eyes.

“That's enough.” Hutch Kelly, his crew chief, pushed him off me. “You, too, Brooks. I'm not sure what's gotten into you assholes today, but if anyone throws a fist, I'll be throwing the one that knocks you both into next week,” he warned. “Sit down, shut up, and leave each other the hell alone.” He shoved at Shepard's back. “Go sit down.”

I turned to look at Mason, who looked exactly like I felt. That was very unlike Hutch. He was usually very quiet, laid back, and hardly said much to anyone.

“That was—”

“Weird.” Mason finished for me.

I snorted. “Right? Dude is Zen as fuck, like *all* the time. Who pissed in his coffee this morning?” I glanced behind me where it looked like Hutch was scolding Shepard like a child. It was odd to see Rand, the six foot five, tattooed, former bad boy being punished like that. It was almost comical.

“Hey.” Mason smacked my arm before he shifted his chair closer. “About yesterday... I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said anything. At least not with Holt around or without knowing

the truth.” He tilted his head. “Are you guys, you know, in love or whatever?”

I gripped the back of my neck. “Yeah, yeah we are.” I nodded.

“Seriously? You?”

“What, you don’t think I’m capable of loving someone?”

Mason shook his head. “You’re kind of the biggest fuckboy, man, and that’s saying a lot, since my best friend was pretty bad until he found Brooklyn.” He clapped a hand on my shoulder. “I’m happy for you.” He grinned.

“You’re not freaked out or anything? That I’m with a guy or that he’s my stepbrother?” I asked.

“I always known you weren’t straight, Watts,” Mason told me. “You might not have brought guys back when we were doing our thing, but I saw you. I couldn’t give two shits. If Holt makes you happy, then I’m happy. We’re friends.” He ruffled my hair until I elbowed him. “It’s kind of, I don’t, strange, but it’s not like you’re the first one to end up with your step sibling. You know, London reads books like that all the time. Stepbrother, stepsister. That kind of shit.” He smirked. “Super sexy stuff that gets her going.”

I held up my hand. “Do not tell me about your sex life with your wife,” I warned, just as the head of NASCAR walked in. “So, we’re cool?” I muttered. When he nodded, relief flooded my body.

Now all I had to do was get out there and get a decent finish.

I wanted a decent finish, but I didn’t expect second place. I pulled that one right out of my ass. What was more enjoyable was that Mason finished first, which meant the two of us had back-to-back interviews after the race. I wasn’t complaining. I was more than happy to promote my sponsors, talk about the race, hell even myself, which isn’t something I usually liked to do. But I really wanted Holt tonight. I wanted to touch him, feel him, and hell, have his mouth on mine. At least I wasn’t

alone. Having my friend and teammate by my side was always a good time. We could laugh and make jokes about things no one would understand.

“Watts, do you ever think you’re going to settle down?” Someone, I think it was a podcast guy, Seth something or other, was talking to me. I’d had issues with this dude in the past. He was one of those nosey, gossipy sports people who cared more about our personal lives than the actual sport itself. “Mason seems to be a good influence on you. Any chance you might follow in his footsteps soon?”

God, the balls of these damn people sometimes. I needed to tread lightly here. I leaned forward in my chair as I tried to approach this topic without upsetting my boyfriend and not outing us at the same time.

“Why, Seth, are you asking me out?” Everyone chuckled at my joke while Mason kicked me under the table so hard, I flinched. I watched the flush that spread up Seth’s neck and face. Well, well, did I just hit on something I had no idea about?

He coughed nervously. “No, but the rumor is you’ve been quiet around the track this weekend. Staying close to your RV, so people were speculating—”

“People, or do you mean *you* were speculating?” I smirked.

Where the hell was my Jenna, my PR girl right now? She was supposed to stop this shit before it got out of hand. I certainly couldn’t walk out of here without finishing the rest of these interviews.

Now Seth was redder than Mason’s fire suit. He dragged a hand through his copper hair. “Uh, well...” He stumbled over his words.

“Let me just stop you before this gets out of control.” I tapped on the table as I got ready to drop a bomb no one was prepared for. “I have a reputation, everyone knows that, but I do see myself settling down, having a few kids, that whole thing. And yes, I am seeing someone.” The crowd exploded

into absolute chaos, and when I glanced over at Mason, who had eyes as wide as saucers, he simply shook his head at me.

“When do we get to meet her, Watts? Is she here at the race this weekend?” Seth pushed.

You sweet summer child. “He is, yes, but we’re not ready to go public yet.” I crossed my arms over my chest as the room went absolutely feral.

Mason covered his microphone before he leaned over to me. “You are so fucked,” he hissed.

Seth jumped to his feet as he tried to get my attention. “So, you’re gay?” he exclaimed.

“Never said that,” I answered.

“Bi?” Seth tried again.

Jenna suddenly appeared by my side. “This interview is over. Thank you.” She dug her nails into my arm. “You are in big trouble, Watts,” she growled. “No more questions for this one tonight.” She tried to drag me from my chair, which was impossible, since she was Jenna and I was, well, six foot three, two hundred plus pounds of muscle.

I stood up and followed her out of the room. “Don’t start with me.” I grinned. “You’re supposed to stop that shit from happening,” I reminded her.

“And you’re not supposed to do that, Watts!” She put her hands on her hips. “A boyfriend? Really? Are you crazy? Because the last I knew, you were straight? When did that change, or have you been hiding that from me all along?”

“I’m bi,” I corrected her.

Jenna narrowed her eyes. “Is this because of Holt? I know your stepbrother is gay, and you’re besties or whatever, but seriously?” She sighed.

“Don’t bring Holt into this,” I growled.

She stared at me until realization flashed in her blue eyes. “No, oh no.” Jenna reached up to twist her blond ponytail

around her fingers. “No, Watts, tell me you didn’t.” She dragged her bottom teeth across her bottom lip.

I raised my brows. “I didn’t what, Jenna? Because you know I’m not the brightest bulb here.” I watched the way she unlocked her cell and clicked around for a second. “Well, there’s nothing out there, so maybe you two have been discreet enough that we can stop it before it gets out of hand.”

“What are you talking about? Stop what?”

“Did you fuck Holt? Is that what we’ve got going on here? Because I know you two spend a lot of time together. It’s bound to happen. Two good-looking men stuck in an RV together. You get horny, stuff happens. I’m honestly surprised it didn’t happen sooner.” She said it so casually, like Holt was just a piece of ass that meant nothing to me.

I balled my hands into fists at my side as my blood pressure began to rise. “You better watch it, Jenna,” I warned. “Holt isn’t some random dude I picked up off the street for a night of hot sex. He’s a beautiful human being who I would never hurt in a million years. He’s funny, smart, and he cares about me. He listens to what I say, and he doesn’t think I’m stupid or just a fuckboy like everyone else does. He loves me.”

She stopped to stare at me, and her entire expression changed. “Oh shit, Watts.” Jenna sighed. “You love him, too.”

“I do.”

Jenna shook her head. “This is really going to complicate things; you know that right? I’ve never—”

“We’re not ready to make it public,” I assured her. “We need to tell our parents first, and that’s something I need to talk with Holt about. How he wants to approach it with them. This is all on his terms. I had no plans on dropping that shit out there, but that fucking guy...” I closed my eyes. “I don’t want him here anymore. Get rid of his press pass or whatever you need to do.”

Jenna giggled. “He likes you. Think of how happy you just made him. Knowing you’re into men. Wow, he’s going to go

home and jerk off to the great Watson Brooks until his dick falls off.” She slapped my arm playfully.

“Thanks for that thought.” I rolled my eyes. “Although it’s too bad I hadn’t known that before. I bet I could have pounded him into the mattress when I was having a bad night. It would have really taken the edge off,” I teased.

“Wow, now that’s a vision I didn’t need in my head. I like you, Watts, but not like that,” Jenna said.

I nodded. “Because you’re into girls. I know.”

“Yep.” She hooked her arm through mine. “I’m going to need to talk to Holt,” she told me. “Don’t roll your eyes at me. You knew that was coming, and that’s before you tell your parents. You need to do that before someone catches the two of you together, because the second someone does? It’s all over for the both of you.”

I groaned. “I’m the one who’s holding out. His dad is going to kill me.”

“Why? Because you defiled his son?” she teased.

I shook my head. “I haven’t even done that yet, but I’m just afraid he’s going to, I don’t know, kick me out or something. He’s incredibly protective of Holt. I don’t think he’ll ever believe that I’m good enough for him.”

Jenna slid her arm out of mine and moved to face me. “Watts, you might have this fuckboy reputation, but you’re an absolute sweetheart when you want to be. Anderson Walker knows that. Don’t be afraid of him. He only wants the best for his son,” she assured me.

I just hoped that that was me.

Chapter Eleven

Holt

I tried to stay awake for when Watson came back to the RV after all the post-race shenanigans, but I was exhausted and must have fallen asleep, because the next thing I knew, his breathy voice was in my ear waking me up.

“Hey, baby.” He pulled me flush against his hard body. “No, no, don’t move. I like you just like this,” he murmured when I began to turn around to face him.

I wanted to see Watson’s face, touch his chest, and kiss his lips, but I guess I would have to settle for this instead. “Everything all right?” I glanced over my shoulder.

“Mmhmm.” He grunted into my hair as he tightened his hold on me.

Yeah, something was up, and it wasn’t just his dick. “Watson, what aren’t you telling me?” I gripped his hands as they clung to my bare stomach.

“I fucked up, H.”

“What does that mean?”

When he loosened his hold on me, I flipped over to stare at him. Only, Watson kept his chin down, his eyes closed, like he was avoiding eye contact.

“I sort of... Well... I came out tonight during the post-race interview.” When his lids opened, his brown orbs were full of regret. “I mean, I don’t care if people know I’m bisexual, but that means we have to be really fucking careful right now.”

“What happened?” I moved to touch his jaw, only for Watson to pull my hand up to his cheekbone. I gently ran the pad of my finger over the bone the way I knew he liked.

Watson groaned. “This stupid podcaster, Seth, God, he just pushed all my buttons... Fuck, if you don’t stop that, I’m going to maul you.” He stopped to look at me with lust-ridden eyes. “He was goading me about settling down like Mason,

how he was such a good influence, blah, blah, blah, and I just blurted it out. That I had a boyfriend. My stupid ass brain didn't even stop to think about the repercussions, as usual, of what might happen if someone saw us together after I did that. I'm such an idiot, Holt. Jesus, I don't even know what you see in me." He pushed away from me and climbed off the bed.

"Watson." I watched as he paced the floor, his hands in his hair. "You want to come back to bed?" I hated the way he put himself down like that.

He shook his head. "Why am I like this, Holt?" He stopped to stare at me. "Why am I so fucking stupid?" He looked like he was on the verge of tears. "You're so damn smart, and I'm just this idiot grease monkey. I don't even know why you bother with me."

"Why do you keep doing that?" I growled before I climbed from the bed.

Watson's shoulders slumped forward. "What am I doing?" he asked.

I sighed. "Putting yourself down like that. You say that you're stupid or dumb. We both know that's not true. You're incredibly talented. You get in that damn car every week. You drive the hell out of that thing. I could never do what you do." I ran my hand through his blond locks.

"That's because I'm the stupid one. It's dangerous. I could go out there some weekend and die, H. You wouldn't ever do something that reckless." He gave me a weak smile.

Someone had told Watson he was stupid once, and he'd never gotten over it. "Who told you that, huh?" I slid a hand up his chest. "A kid at school? Some teachers, or maybe a girl you dated once?" When he tried to duck his face away, I gripped his chin to force him to look at me. "Tell me so I can go find them and set the record straight." I wasn't the one who got into fights, that had always been Watson, but I could talk some sense into them. When he didn't answer right away, I started to get worried.

“My dad.” His dark eyes met mine. “My real dad,” he clarified. “I haven’t... I haven’t seen him in years, but when I used to visit him, he would tell me all the time how stupid I was.” Watson shrugged. “I guess it sort of stuck with me over the years.”

My lip curled up over my teeth. “A parent shouldn’t tell their child something like that.” I dragged the pads of my fingers over the skin of his cheek. “You’re not, Watson. You have to know that.” Rage filled me like nothing ever had. Watson Brooks was the sweetest, kindest, most loyal person I knew, and not in the least bit stupid.

“C student, remember?” His brows dipped.

“School doesn’t define you, Watts.” I never called him that, and his eyes widened in surprise. “You’re a badass motherfucker when you’re behind the wheel of a car, foot on that gas pedal, winning races, and chasing checkered flags. Fuck school, fuck people who say it matters, and fuck your father for making you think you’re not good enough. Because, damnit, you are. You’re the most important person in my life,” I assured him.

A smile spread across Watson’s face. “God, it makes me so hot when you talk like that, H,” he growled. “Kiss me.”

Which I did. I kissed him with everything I had because I was afraid that what we were doing wasn’t going to last. Because I was scared that Watson would get bored of me and move on to someone else or some pit bunny once things began to cool off between us. I would have to go back to watching him with a different girl hanging off his arm, or maybe a guy now that he had admitted he liked both, but everyone knew Watson Brooks wasn’t the settling down type. I would have to act as if it didn’t gut me to the core because we were stepbrothers by fate, best friends by choice, and nothing more.

“It’s never...” Watson murmured as he gripped the back of my neck. “It’s never felt like this with anyone before, H.” Words I wanted to believe but couldn’t, no matter how hard I tried. His lips moved down to my neck where he started to suck, and I knew he was going to leave a mark.

I wanted to believe him, I did, but right now my brain wouldn't brain properly. He'd come out today. He did that for us, and the way my body was reacting to the things Watson was doing, the way he was grinding his body against mine, was everything I wanted only—

Watson pulled away to watch me with concern written all over his face. "You've been mumbling under your breath. Are you not into this? We can stop. I know it's late, and you're probably tired. I just wanted to make you feel good." The way he was watching me was more than my heart could handle.

"Bed," I rasped out.

Watson nodded. "Sure, right." He moved to get back onto the mattress before I attacked him. "Wait, I thought..." He didn't argue as I climbed over his body, my tongue sinking into his mouth. "Oh, bed." His lips curved up into a smile as his hands yanked my briefs down over my ass.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck." I ground against him. "Watson," I grunted. My body felt like it might burst into flames.

Watson gripped my hips. "No coming, Holt," he ordered. "I haven't even touched your cock yet." His eyes flooded with need as one hand cupped my ass.

"I need... Please." I couldn't even think straight. All the blood in my body had suddenly moved between my legs.

"I know what you need," Watson assured me before flipping me onto my back.

The moment his warmth was gone, I missed it, but I watched, lust drunk, as he slowly slithered out of his briefs, then grabbed mine from my ankles so we were both naked.

"Touch yourself," he ordered.

I hesitated. "I..."

Then my hand wrapped around my length, and my eyes slammed shut as a low groan rumbled from my chest. My balls were already pulled tight, and I didn't want to come yet. I wanted Watson to be the one to make it happen, and if I kept doing this, I would explode.

The mattress dipped beside me, and I heard Watson spit.

“Baby.” His voice was low in my ear as his wet hand wrapped around my cock. “Let me help you with that.” He flicked his tongue against my skin, and then he splayed his thick body over mine.

Pleasure spiked through me. “Both... yours and mine.” My brain was so fuzzy. I wanted his dick to rut with mine. I wanted... “Put your dick with mine,” I managed to tell him.

Watson gripped my chin. “Look at me,” he whispered, but it was too late.

The second his dick slid over mine, it was all over. Stars exploded behind my eyes, and I bit down on my lip to keep from crying out as I got lost in the pleasure. I felt the cum splatter against my stomach, only to realize it wasn't just mine; it was Watson's too. His groans filled the room, and then his face was buried against my neck.

There was a sticky mess between us, Watson's heavy body pressed over mine, and I knew we should clean up, but my heart was full, and all I wanted was to enjoy this moment. Because I was terrified that it wasn't going to last.

I barely had a chance to spend a second with Watson once we got back home to North Carolina. He had interviews, meetings, and autograph sessions while I had my own messes to deal with. Pit practice, interviews, and our own meetings. By the time I was dragging myself home at eight o'clock, Watson was already half asleep at the dinner table. That didn't stop him from sneaking into my room when I was dead to the world so he could wrap himself around me and tell me how much he missed me before we both fell asleep. No hand jobs or blowjobs, just hurried kisses in passing or murmured promises of what was yet to come.

Then on Friday, it was off to Wisconsin, where he had interviews with a radio station in the afternoon, autographs in the early evening, and a meeting with a possible new sponsor first thing Saturday morning. I had more free time than I knew

what to do with, so when I got up that morning and Watson was already gone, I went for a run and found myself stopping to do a little shopping.

Since it was Wisconsin, they had more items with cheese on them than you could possibly imagine. I bought a few things for Mom and Dad, but it was the pair of boxer briefs I found that I couldn't pass up for Watson. Totally and completely not his style. He was more the boring kind of underwear—think solid colors—but as I picked them up and brought them over to the cashier, I hoped he would at least wear them for me.

“Gift?” the girl asked as she rang up my order.

A blush settled on my cheeks. “Uh, for my boyfriend,” I heard myself admit.

That sounded so strange, yet so right, when I said it. I had heard all about Watson's post-race interview last weekend, and yes, people were wondering who he was dating, but he hadn't freaked out about it. In fact, Jenna had reached out to me several times about how we were going to approach the subject. I hadn't gotten back to her yet, but that was only because I really wanted us to talk to our parents first.

“I hope he likes them,” the cashier told me as she handed me my bag.

I was smiling when I made it back to the track with a little bit of a pep in my step, but when I opened the door to the RV, all of that changed. Sitting inside, with Watson, was a man I didn't recognize at first. The energy inside was anything but comfortable.

“Holt.” Watson was on his feet. “This is... Where have...” he stumbled as he tried to get out a sentence, but my eyes were glued to the man on our couch.

He looked at me while his dark eyes sized me up. As he climbed to his feet, I realized I already knew who he was. He was tall, taller than Watson, and even though his hair was no longer blond like his son, it was hard to not see the resemblance.

“You’re Watson’s father.” I gritted my teeth before I looked at Watson. “Why is he here?” I asked.

“I came to see my boy race.”

“Why?” I hissed.

Watson wrapped his hand around my arm. “Don’t, H.” His eyes begged me, and I knew he only wanted to make his father proud, but the memory of him telling me his father called him stupid still rattled around my head. He didn’t deserve anything from his son.

“I need to go.” I yanked away from Watson and headed to my room, where I dropped my purchase on the bed and slammed the door shut. I needed to get down to the garage. I needed to change, but I noticed my hands were shaking. That motherfucker. They were still there when I came back out, and I left without saying a word.

Chapter Twelve

Watson

I wasn't expecting my father to show up at the track today. I was more than surprised and maybe even a little upset that he'd just dropped in without calling first, but not as pissed off as Holt. He couldn't even look at me when he left, but when he didn't say goodbye? It that stung more than anything my dad had ever said to me. We hardly argued about anything, but usually when we did, we made up right away.

"That's your stepbrother, huh?"

I wrinkled my nose. "What's that supposed to mean?" I asked.

Dad shrugged. "Nothing. I mean, he's different. Not what I expected." He flashed a quick smile. "You two are close." Not a question.

"We are. He's my best friend. I would be lost without him." The words came so easily to me. Only having Holt mad at me? Yeah, I didn't fucking like it.

Dad steepled his hands as he brought them to his chin. "You got him the job?" He waited for my answer with furrowed brows.

"Yeah, so? He's good at it," I snapped. "What's with all the questions about Holt, Dad? You came here to see me, right?" I folded my arms over my chest. "I'm going to be late if I don't head down to the garage, and Miles hates when I'm late. You going to come down and watch or just stay here?" Holt was going to be even more pissed at me if Dad stayed overnight. I would pay to put him in a hotel if it came down to that. I needed alone time with my boyfriend. Needed him to let me smooth things over.

Neither one of us spoke again until we were outside the garage. Then it was Dad that spoke again.

"You're seeing someone, right? You mentioned that in your interview. He coming to this race, or is he already here?"

My stomach dropped. “No... He’s... Why?”

My throat was suddenly so dry, I could hardly swallow. Like when you take an aspirin without anything to drink, and it gets lodged there. My stomach churned slightly, and I realized exactly what this feeling was. It had been a while, but I would recognize it anywhere.

“Just thought I could meet your boyfriend, Watts, that’s all.” He gave me a smile that didn’t meet his eyes as he watched me.

He knew. He knew, and if he knew, did that mean everyone else might, too, or was he just trying to rattle me? I was going to be sick. My stomach flipped, and as much as I tried to push the thought down, push the feelings away, the sweat that had broken out on my skin was enough to make me stop to catch my breath. Fuck, I was going to be...

Too late. My breakfast came up, the coffee and eggs I had eaten before Dad showed up, right down my fire suit, but I was too stressed out to even care. I stopped, put my head down, and pressed my hands to my thighs. Anxiety clawed at my skull, at my mind, and all I wanted right now was Holt. He would help. He would know exactly what I needed. He always did.

“Watts?” Mason called to me from inside the garage. “Man, are you okay?” He sprinted across the building to get to me. “You look like you’re going to pass out. Uh, did you puke all over yourself? Maybe you should sit down. Holt!” When he called my boyfriend’s name, it was like music to my ears, and when I felt his hands on my face, I didn’t even care what everyone thought. Especially my father.

Holt’s face appeared before me. “Talk to me,” he whispered, tilting my face up. “Jesus, you’re burning up.” He looked blurry, but I think that might have been me. “Mason, get some water and napkins so I can clean him up.” He turned his attention to my teammate before his fingers brushed over my cheekbones. “What happened?” He helped ease me down into one of the metal chairs in the garage.

“He was fine a few minutes ago,” Dad answered, and I felt Holt’s fingers tighten against my skin.

I reached up to touch him. “Don’t, H,” I moaned. I knew he was going to lash out, tell him to back off, or worse. I didn’t want that. Not here. “I just... I’ll be okay. I need a second,” I assured my boyfriend.

“What did you say to him?” Holt, my shy, sweet, loyal Holt, actually sneered. “Did you say something hurtful to him or put him down? Is that what happened?” His hands were suddenly gone from my face. I immediately missed the contact.

“Boy, you better calm down.”

“Excuse me, where do you get off calling me boy?”

Then I slipped into a fever dream I never wanted to wake up from.

Holt

A hand clamped down on my shoulder.

“Holt, do you need me to call security?” Mason had no idea who this guy was. Did I want him gone? Yes. But would Watson forgive me if I did that? I wasn’t sure.

“He’s fine,” I lied to Mason. “Stay the fuck away from me,” I warned Watson’s father. “He might want you here, but I don’t.” I moved back to my boyfriend. “You still with me?” I murmured. I had never seen him like this before.

Watson’s eyes fluttered. “Yeah, baby, I’m here.” *Oh shit.*

“Uh, Watson, we’re in the garage,” I reminded him. “You, me, Mason, Miles, *your dad*, everyone’s here.” I couldn’t bring myself to look around to see who else might be standing around watching. “You’re delirious,” I tried to brush it off.

“Okay.” His eyes rolled back.

“Mason, get EMS.” I slid my hands over Watson’s cheekbones. This was more than just being upset over his father. This was serious. “Hey, stay with me, okay?” I needed him to keep his eyes on me. Whatever this was, whatever was going on, I needed him alert. “What did you eat for breakfast? Did you cook something, or did you get lunch after your autographs?” Jenna had been with him, so had Miles, but I knew he wasn’t allergic to anything.

I caught sight of a couple EMS workers headed toward us, so I started to step away, but Watson grabbed at my hand and laced his fingers through mine. “Come with me, please,” he begged.

I followed behind as the EMS workers moved Watson to the medical center, making sure to stay out of their way as they looked him over. They checked his temperature, his ears, his eyes, heart, and lungs. He didn’t say much as he clung to my hand, not loosening his grip as he groaned from time to time, but his body began to shake with chills, I started to get scared. What was taking so long to give Watson a diagnosis?

“Hey.” I dragged my hand through his sweat-soaked hair. “I’m here,” I assured him. “I’ll take care of you.” My lips brushed Watson’s ear as I spoke. “You know that.”

His lips twitched as he tried to smile. “Mad?” he asked.

“At you, never ever.”

“My dad.”

I cringed but didn’t want to get into that with him now. Maybe later, when he was back to his usual self. “I love you,” I reminded him, and that seemed to work because Watson relaxed against the table before he started to drift off.

“You’re together.”

I jumped at the voice, then realized his father was standing behind us. *Oh crap.* “What do you want?” I ignored the question.

“You’re the man my son is with.” He moved into the room, his eyes dropping to where our fingers were still laced together. “No wonder he doesn’t want anyone to know.”

I kept a tight grip on his hand. “It’s none of your business.” I kept my voice low so no one else could hear. “I think you’ve done enough damage today.” I glanced over at Watson to make sure he was still resting.

“Really? You think *I’m* the one who has done the damage? Imagine what this will do to his career when it gets out.”

“Are you... Is that some sort of threat?” My lip curled up over my teeth.

“If you say one more word, I will have you arrested for blackmail.” Miles’s voice bounced through the room. “Do you understand me? Out!” He pointed toward the door as he stepped inside. “Not you, Holt. You stay right there. I want Ethan Brooks gone. You’re not allowed anywhere near the races, but I bet Watts didn’t tell you that. No, he’s too busy looking for your damn respect. Not me, though. I won’t hesitate to call security and have your ass hauled right out of here.” His nostrils flared angrily. “If you say one word, one

damn word about these two boys, I will make your life a living hell. Do not make me tell you again, Ethan,” he growled.

I watched, wide-eyed, as Watson’s father left without a word before Miles turned back to me.

“I can explain.” I couldn’t, but that didn’t stop me from trying to come up with something.

“I’m no fool.” Miles shook his head. “I’m just surprised it took this long for Watts to figure it out. You know the media is going to have a field day with this, Holt.” He waved a hand at me when I started to protest. “I don’t care, it’s none of my business if you two are together, even if you are stepbrothers. It happens more often than you think. You’ve always taken such good care of him, and he loves you just as much as you love him. He just needs to catch up.” He winked at me. “You need to make an announcement before Ethan does, though, because he *will* say something. It may not be tomorrow or next week, but he will open his mouth to the wrong person.”

I nodded. “Yes, sir.”

“It’s stress. I think having Ethan show up pushed him over the edge,” Miles told me. “Watts needs to rest up today so he can race tomorrow. I’ll get a sub to qualify his car today, which means shit, because he’ll have to start at the back tomorrow, but it’s something. You want help getting him back to the RV? Mason’s outside.”

“Yes, sir, thank you,” I said again because I wasn’t sure what else I could say. So many things were running through my head right now, but mostly I was worried about getting Watson back to his normal self again.

Unfortunately, I couldn’t stay by Watson’s side the entire day because I had to work. Miles was able to get one of the Xfinity drivers, Noel McCormack, to qualify his car. Once that was over, I rushed back to check on him and found him still sleeping in the exact same position I left him in. Mason had helped me change Watson into a pair of sweatpants, which he

had sweat right through, and as I tried to get them off, he opened his eyes and grabbed at my hands.

“What...doing?” He sounded out of his mind.

I swatted him away. “You need to get out of these, Watson. You’re not well. You’ve sweat right through them,” I tried to reason.

“Naked time?” He smirked at me.

I nodded. “Sure, naked time.” I figured it would at least get him out of his pants.

Watson was quick to slip his bottoms off along with his briefs, and I was more than surprised to see his dick was hard when it nearly smacked me in the face. He reached down to wrap his big hand around the shaft.

“Need you, baby.”

“Watson...” My voice came out in a whimper as he started to slowly stroke himself.

Fuck. This was not what I had planned on doing, but when his fever-streaked eyes met mine, I found myself climbing up onto the bed so I could push his hand away.

Watson’s hand curled into my hair. “Feels good, Holt,” he purred. “Love you.”

He whimpered, and my heart shot into my throat. I knew he wasn’t lucid, that the things Watson was saying weren’t what he meant, but I could pretend they were. Just this one time.

I dipped my head to drag my tongue around the tip of his cock, against the slit, before I tasted the salty precum that had begun to leak out. He groaned, tugging lightly on my hair, urging me on. My own dick pressed eagerly against the zipper of my pants, but this wasn’t about me. This was about Watson. I opened my mouth to take him inside, his dick hotter than normal due to his fever, and when his hips bucked up, I let out my own groan of desire.

“Fuck, baby, you’re so good to me,” he told me. “You suck my cock just right; makes me want to come right in that pretty

little mouth.” His hand tightened in my hair.

Jesus, his dirty talk would do me in every time. I wished I could see Watson’s face, but I was sitting in the wrong position. I had already done this enough to know he was getting close. The way he was panting, the way he was moving to meet my mouth, and the way he was angling my head to get what he wanted. It was only a matter of time before he let loose.

“Holt, baby, I’m gonna come.”

He flooded my mouth, and I greedily took everything Watson had to give me. Salty spurts filled my mouth and throat as he cried out my name, telling me how good it was, how much he loved it when I made him come, and how he couldn’t wait to return the favor. When Watson’s body went limp, I turned back to look at him, and he had a lazy smile on his face.

“Feel better?” I teased, wiping a bit of cum from my face.

He reached up to touch my chin. “Love you, H,” Watson murmured before he slipped off into another fever-induced nap.

I wished that was the truth.

Chapter Thirteen

Watson

I sat straight up in bed. Why was I naked? What time was it? Where was... Holt. He was sleeping soundly in the bed right next to me, his small frame facing mine. God, why did I feel like absolute shit right now? My dad...

Shit, what happened with my dad? I remembered bits and pieces. Holt being angry with me, throwing up all over myself, nearly passing out, Miles forcing dad out of the medical center, getting a blowjob. My dick perked up at that memory.

I lay back on the mattress before I curled my body toward Holt again. Was he still furious with me? He was here, so maybe not. I lightly touched his face, the dip in his upper lip, and watched the way his long lashes fluttered against his skin. But when Holt's eyes opened and those hazel orbs sparkled like the morning sun at me, my own burned with tears I didn't want to fall.

"Feeling better?" His voice was thick with sleep. "You look better, Watson, what you are..." He protested only slightly when I wrapped myself around his body and buried my face against his neck.

Breathing in Holt's scent was all I needed. His sweet body wash, his aftershave, everything about him, was all I craved. His fingers combed through my hair as I clung tightly to him and tried to push all the horrible things out of my mind.

"I'm sorry," I murmured. My lips brushed over his skin. "You have every right to be upset with me. Hell, I'm upset with me, but I had no idea my dad was going to show up yesterday, and I know I should have told him to fuck off..." I shook my head when Holt tried to force my head up. "Tell me you're not mad."

"I'm not mad."

I pulled back. "You're not." I searched his beautiful face for any sign he was lying, but when that crooked smile slipped

over his face, relief flooded through my body.

“What’s this, huh?” Holt dragged his thumb over my cheek to wipe away the wetness.

I shook my head. “I just... I was scared.” I reached for his hand to bring it back to my face. “You know what I like, baby.”

“I do.” The moment Holt’s fingers made contact with my cheekbone, my eyes drifted shut. “You remember much?” he asked.

I shook my head. “Did you give me a blowjob?”

“Of course, you remember that.” He chuckled. “Miles knows about us.” My eyes popped open. “Uh, you called me baby in front of the entire garage. Not sure who heard, but... yeah.” Holt grimaced. “Your dad knows, too. Miles kicked him out, so he’s gone, but we’re going to have to tell Mom and Dad.” He worried his lip between his teeth.

I nodded. “We can do that.” I was ready. Ready to claim Holt as mine despite the issues it would cause. “Qualifying.” I suddenly remembered about the race.

“Noel,” Holt assured me before pressing a kiss to my forehead. “You should get some more sleep before the alarm goes off. You’re still a little pale. You scared me.”

“I’m sorry,” I whispered. “Thank you. For taking care of me. For helping me, and... for not being mad.” I snuggled against him.

Holt wrapped his arms around me. “I love you, Watson. I’ll always take care of you.”

His words floated over me, and just as I started to fall back to sleep, I perked up again. “Baby?” I murmured. “How did you know?”

“Know what?”

“That you loved me?”

When Holt didn’t answer me right away, I thought maybe he had fallen asleep, but then he spoke softly. “Winners get

waffles.”

“Winners get waffles?” I sat up so that I could stare at him.

I hadn’t heard that in years, but it was something my mother used to always announce when I won a race, and I did it for Holt only once when he won that chess tournament senior year in high school.

He raised his chin to meet my gaze, and I saw it. The look of pure love in his hazel eyes.

“That long?” I whispered.

He blushed. “Give or take a few days, but yes. That long.” Then Holt’s lids fluttered closed again, and he left me sitting there with my thoughts.

Five years. Holt had been in love with me for five damn years, and I had been too stupid to notice. All those girls I had brought around while he’d had to watch. Sleep wasn’t going to happen for me now. I was too busy working out a way to confess my feelings, work out a way to tell Holt I loved him, and make sure I was worthy of him.

When I arrived at the drivers’ meeting later that morning, I wasn’t sure what to expect. I still felt a little off. Holt had forced me to eat a couple pieces of dry toast, refused to let me have any coffee, and then handed me a bottle of Gatorade before we both left the RV. He had his own meeting, and I had mine, but we both left at the same time. I wanted to hold his hand. I wanted to put my arm around his shoulders and pull him tight to show everyone he was mine, that we were together, but I couldn’t. Not yet. Not until we had told our parents and sat down with Jenna so we could put out some sort of press release.

Bullshit.

I stepped into our meeting, and Mason waved me over. Shepard had a scowl on his face, his long legs stretched out in front of him. It was on the tip of my tongue to give him hell, but when his eyes shot up to mine, I changed my mind. He looked, well, beat down. I loved to give the guy a hard time,

but today was not that day. I eased myself into the chair next to Mason and jerked my chin at his best friend.

“Eh.” Mason shook his head. “He’s not talking about it.”

Shepard grunted. “We talking about Watts puking all over himself yesterday? That was classy AF.” He shot me a smirk. “Or are we talking about—”

“Stop it.” Mason punched his shoulder. “Stop being such a fucking prick. I thought we were done with this ever so pleasant version of you, man.” He shot me a look that said, don’t engage.

Fat chance. I leaned forward. “You want to talk about Holt? Is that it?” I asked.

“You two together?” Shepard shot back.

“Maybe we are? You got a problem with that?”

Shepard’s brows dipped, and I watched as his face grew dark. “Are you fucking him?”

Mason stood up. “Go sit with Finn,” he exclaimed. “I’m not doing this. I won’t be the middleman because you’re jealous I have other friends. I have no idea what’s gotten into you the past couple of weeks, but I’m sick of it. Both of you. It’s like dealing with children, and I already have enough of those at home.” He spun around to face me. “Knock it off, Watts.”

“I wasn’t—”

“You were, and I’m not going to defend you either.” Mason sat down as Shepard shuffled into the back to sit with his teammate, Finn Houston, but not before I heard him grumble about fucking my stepbrother. I let it go because he was having a rough couple of weeks. I understood that.

Until forty laps into the race...

I’d had enough of Shepard’s shit. Clearly neither one of us was having a great run today, driving near the back of the pack, but he was using my bumper, and I’d had enough.

“Tell him to back off, Miles,” I warned. “If he does that one more time.” Shepard slammed into the back of my car. “I’m going to beat the shit out of him.”

Miles sighed. “I’ve already spoken to Hutch. Shepard hasn’t said a single word over the radio since this thing started.”

I gritted my teeth. “What’s his deal? I know we don’t exactly like one another, but I haven’t done anything to him. He won’t get off my ass. I’ve moved over for him to go around, waved at him when I want to flick him off and.... Son of a bitch!” My car spun around into the wall, and I bounced back into Carson Carey’s car before I settled in the grass.

Oh, if Rand Shepard wanted a fight, that fucker was going to get one. I ripped my window net down before I climbed out of my car and yanked off my HANS device. I was going to throttle him. Did he have a problem with queers? Was that what this was? I was going to shove my foot so far up his ass he was going to feel what it was like to get fucked without lube. Then he could decide if he had a problem with it or not.

I had no choice but to climb into the ambulance, go get checked out by the EMS crew, *again*, and do the normal interviews about my car, what happened, yada, yada yada, but I wasn’t going anywhere. The second the race was over, I made a beeline for Shepard’s car, watched as he removed his helmet, then smashed my fist right into his face before he had a chance to see me.

“What the—Are you serious?” he roared before he swung at me.

I ducked, only for him to come at me with his right arm. That one I didn’t see coming, and when his hand made contact with the side of my head, I went down.

I grabbed at Shepard’s leg, pulling him down with me, and he hit the asphalt with a loud thud.

“Fucker, what is your problem with Holt?” I growled before rolling on top of him.

“Nothing, get off me.” Shepard’s eyes flashed angrily.

“Is it because he’s gay?”

“Of course not!”

I wanted to wrap my hands around his throat, but as soon as the thought ran through my brain, someone grabbed me by the armpits. “Let go!” I kicked my legs up as I was hauled back up to my feet.

“Are you crazy?” Miles hissed. “You’re both in serious fucking trouble.”

I turned around only to see Holt standing behind him, fear written all over his face. “I... He...”

“You attacked him unprovoked.” Miles gritted his teeth.

I shook my head. “He wrecked me on purpose!” I reminded him.

“I did,” Shepard confessed. “I’m having a shitty month. It was all my fault. This is on me.”

I glanced over my shoulder to find Shepard watching us, blood caked on his face from where I’d hit him. Hutch stood next to him with the same look Miles had on his face.

“I’ll take all the blame for this. I deserved it. I took out my frustration on Watts because he was an easy target. Uh, I’m sorry, man.” He gripped the back of his neck, not meeting my eyes.

What the hell had just happened?

“NASCAR wants to talk to you both.” Miles grunted. “Doesn’t matter that Rand just took the blame. This entire thing was on live TV, and you waited around for him to get out of his car. Go.” He pushed my shoulder.

I walked two steps before I moved around Miles, grabbed Holt, and wrapped my arms around him in a tight hug. When he returned the embrace, it didn’t matter what happened because I had the love of this man. Which I didn’t deserve. I resisted the urge to kiss him but gave Holt a wink before Shepard and I walked off like we were headed to the principal’s office.

“How’s your head?” he asked.

“Hurts. How’s your nose?”

He chuckled. “I think you broke it.”

“Lucky that’s all I did. I wanted to choke the shit out of you,” I admitted.

Shepard stopped right outside the door to the hauler. “Do you know who my brother is?” he asked.

“Uh, Eli? Sure, man, everyone does. He’s a fucking legend.”

The way his eyes flickered with contempt told me he didn’t feel the same way as everyone else. Eli Shepard was the top NASCAR driver a few years before I got here, until his drug problem ruined everything. Rand and Eli were closer than anyone, until Eli disappeared one night in a drug-induced haze. Or at least, that’s what the rumors said.

Shepard popped his jaw. “Yeah, well, the legend is back.” He pushed open the door to the hauler without saying anything else, and I followed him inside.

Chapter Fourteen

Watson

After our meeting with NASCAR, where we were both put on probation until the end of the year pending no more altercations and told we should expect a hefty fine for on-track fighting, Shepard suggested we go out for a couple of drinks. His nose wasn't broken, but it was banged up pretty good, and he was going to end up with two black eyes tomorrow morning. My head was fine, but Rand had managed to knock one of my back teeth loose. I was going to have to see a dentist about that.

I'd texted Holt to let him know, and now I was watching Shepard slam back shots like they were water. I had to hand it to him. The man could drink.

Shepard placed his shot glass down on the table and grinned at me. "You're a lightweight." He slurred. "Mason would brag about all the times you two would go out to drink, grab a couple of girls, and then bring them back to his place, but man, I think I've drunk double what you have." He sat back before letting out a loud belch.

As long as he didn't throw up on me, we were good. "I think you might be wasted." I raised my beer glass at him.

"That I am, dude, but isn't that the point?" He leaned forward. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure." I knew it was going to be about Holt, but if we were bonding, which I thought we were, I figured he could ask. I just might not answer.

Shepard twisted his lips. "Is the sex good?" He placed his inked arms on the table. "I mean, with a guy? I know sex is good because I have a wife, but I mean, you know?"

"Have you never had anal sex before?"

"Not in my own ass."

I snorted. “It’s fucking fantastic, man. You should try it sometime.” Panic ran across his face. “I’m not offering, relax. You are so not my type. I don’t like...” I waved my hand in his direction. “Tattoos or whatever else that you’ve got going on.” Was he terrified that I was going to hit on him? Was that what this was?

“We’re basically the same person. I’m kind of hurt.” Shepard pouted. “You love him?” He suddenly looked serious. “I knew the moment I first saw Brooklyn that I wanted to spend forever with her. She hated me, though. God, did she fucking hate me...” A dreamy look came over his face at the memory.

I chuckled. “You were your usual charming self, right? Cocky, shameless, I’m the best?” When he pretended to be shocked, I threw my head back and laughed.

“Yeah, well, she tried like hell to act like she didn’t want me, too, but here we are. We wasted some time getting ourselves together. I’d be fucking lost without her.” He beamed happily. “She’s fierce, but I need that in my life. *I need her.*”

My heart did this weird thud when I thought of a future with Holt. Marriage, kids, the whole thing. “Yeah, I love him,” I admitted.

“Does Holt know that? Because if not, you need to tell him. Don’t dick around like I did.” He slapped at my hand when I went to look at my phone. “In person.” Like that was even a question.

“I need to go.”

Shepard nodded. “I got this, man. After what I did today, it’s the least I can do. Call yourself an Uber, go to your man, and tell him you love him.” He nodded when I met his gaze. “Oh, and I don’t give a shit what your sexuality is. We’re still friends off the track and competitors on the track.” He gave me a half smile.

“Uh, thanks.” I had no idea we were friends, but I was glad to know I had more than just Mason in my corner right now.

By the time my Uber dropped me back at the track, I was antsy. Nervous to tell Holt how I felt, but ready for him to know the truth. When I unlocked the door, kicked off my shoes, and walked to my room, I found him sleeping in my bed. *My bed*. He was on his back, wearing a pair of boxer briefs covered in paint splatter and one of my shirts, which had my number on it. It had risen to expose his flat stomach. There was a small gift bag on my pillow. Had he... Had Holt bought me a present?

My eyes moved over Holt's exposed skin, the happy trail that disappeared beneath his underwear, before I looked back at his gorgeous face. Holt looked so peaceful, but I was about to change all that. I climbed up onto the bed and splayed my body over his.

"Wake up, baby." I pressed my lips against his neck, dragging my tongue against his soft skin.

His hands found my shoulders. "What... what time is it?" He groaned softly. "Fuck, Watson." His hips arched up against me.

"Miss me?" I murmured.

Holt nodded. "Yeah, yeah, of course. Can't you tell?" He was hard as a rock.

"Got something to tell you." I inhaled his sweet scent before I met his heated gaze.

Holt suddenly grew nervous. "Shit, did you get parked? Or did you lose points?" He tried to sit up, which was useless with my heavy ass on top of him. "I figured since you and Rand went out for drinks, it wasn't that big of a deal." He gripped my face. "Why are you so calm about this? How drunk are you right now? How's your head?"

"I've actually sobered up a bit. My head's fine." Truth. I watched the way his hazel eyes searched my browns. "I love you," I whispered.

When he just continued to stare at me, I was afraid I hadn't said the words aloud, just inside my head.

"Holt, did you hear me? I said—"

His mouth met mine before I could finish. Soft, plump lips which were warm and sweet. Then Holt's arms wrapped around my torso. His tongue prodded the seam, and when I opened, it swept inside as he clung to my body. Holt's eyes were open, full of love and happiness as the kiss deepened. I dragged my hands through his dark hair, hoping he knew just how much I meant those three words. That I would always mean them, want him, and take care of him.

"Watson." Holt gasped when we broke apart with swollen and bruised lips. "Say it again," he begged.

"I love you, Holt Walker. I want forever with you, baby, and if you don't want that, well, I'll take whatever you want to give me. Being with you these past few weeks has made me so damn happy. I don't want to hide anymore, either. I want to tell Mom and Dad, the press, everyone. I want you with me when I win a race, by my side and posing with pictures, because that's what everyone else gets to do. You're my boyfriend. You deserve to be in victory lane as that."

Holt smiled at me with tears in his eyes. "I love you, too," he whispered.

"I'm sorry it took me so long to catch up."

"No, don't apologize to me, Watson. You never have to apologize to me."

I flipped us over so that we both lying on our sides and wrapped myself around Holt, pushing my leg between his and hooking one of his legs around my waist.

"Let's get our own place together," I suggested.

"You're just full of surprises tonight, Watson James." Holt's thumbs came up to massage my cheekbones as my eyelids grew heavy.

My dick twitched at my full name on his lips. "Yeah, well, I might just want you all to myself. Although don't you think Mom and Dad might want their privacy, too? We're a bit old to be living at home."

"Mhmm," Holt murmured as he pressed harder against my face. "I'd like that. A nice big bed to share with my

boyfriend, a place to shower with him whenever I want, and..." He leaned forward so his lips were near my ear. "A place we can fuck whenever we want."

My eyes flew open. "Holt" I growled.

"Sleep, baby," he told me. "Soon though. Soon I want to have you inside me. I'm ready to find out what all the fuss is about."

My eyes burned into his hazel orbs. "What makes you think I'm doing the fucking?" I asked, and loved the way his skin turned red and blotchy.

"I thought... You said... Do you?" Holt stared at me as he stumbled over his words.

I broke into a big smile. "Sometimes, H, sometimes when the itch hits me, I like it, too," I told him. "But don't you worry, baby. I'll be getting into that ass way before you get into mine." I slid my lips over his.

"I got you something." Holt gave me a shy smile as he pulled his hands away.

"Yeah?"

He nodded and reached for the bag on my pillow. "You want to open it?" He placed the bag on my chest and watched as I opened it.

I let out a loud laugh as I held up the briefs covered in cheese. "These are the best, baby." I watched the way Holt's cheeks burned pink. "You want me to wear them for you?"

"If you want. I just thought they were cute," he murmured.

I gripped the back of his head. "I love you," I whispered.

Jenna looked like she hadn't slept much last night, but honestly, she probably hadn't. After the fight with Shepard, which I assured her wouldn't happen again, and me texting her to tell we needed to talk first thing, she was probably a nervous wreck.

“You’re killing me, smalls.” She dropped her purse on the table in the kitchen of the RV. “You two are adorable, though. I can work with this.” She crossed her right leg over her left. “We’re doing this?”

I nodded. “Not until after we talk to our parents, which we’re going to do it after the Daytona race.” I squeezed Holt’s hand.

“Why are you waiting?” Jenna asked. “Don’t most of the guys already know?”

I watched as Holt chewed on his lip. “There’s a lot of pressure on me right now with the playoffs coming up. We also want to get our own place first. Just a small apartment or something. That way, if they freak out, we can just bail. I don’t think they will, because I’m pretty sure his dad already suspects something.”

“What?” Holt gasped. “He does? How?”

I grimaced. “Uh, that morning I stole your Danish. He was asking all these questions and acting weird, remember?” I dropped his hand to wrap my arm around his shoulders. “Don’t worry.”

“He’s my dad, though. What if he hates the idea of us together?”

“I’m your boyfriend. If he disowns you, I’ll take care of you, baby.”

Jenna clapped her hands. “You two are so cute. This is so marketable. You have no idea.” She squealed.

“No.” I shook my head.

Jenna raised a perfectly manicured brow. “What now?”

“We are not marketable. We’re not going to be pushed as some agenda for gay NASCAR. We’ll do one or two interviews once it’s out, but that’s it. I don’t want people to see me as the guy dating his stepbrother, the bisexual driver, whatever. I’m still Watson Brooks. I’ve always been this guy, and Holt doesn’t need all the attention either.” That was what I was worried about.

“Newsflash, Watts, it’s going to happen the second this story breaks.” Jenna sighed. “You sure you want to do this? Because you’re going to have to build some big gates at your place. It’s not a bad thing. You’re both adorable as hell. Probably going to get a lot more invites to some celebrity-heavy events.”

Fuck. “We’re doing this, but under our terms,” I reminded her. “Right, baby?” I asked Holt, who suddenly looked terrified. “Holt, you still with me on this?” I tilted my head to look at him.

“Uh, yeah.” But he didn’t sound like he was.

I twisted my body around to face Holt. “You’re sure? We can continue to hide from everyone. Forever, if that’s what you want.” I cupped his head in my hands to bring those hazel eyes to me. “Say the words, H, and we never tell a single soul.” I leaned down to press my forehead against his.

“I want this.” Holt gripped my wrists. “You know I want this. I want the world to know I’m yours, Watson.”

“Yeah, you totally are. But you know what’s better than that, baby? I’m one hundred percent yours, too.”

Chapter Fifteen

Holt

I dragged my hand over the smooth countertop in the kitchen as the realtor, Gina, droned on about all the amenities included. This all seemed so overwhelming. We had come home from Wisconsin, dropped our things off at the house, and immediately came here. Our parents were at work, so we hadn't even told them our plans yet. I knew they would be surprised but probably excited to finally have a little freedom of their own.

"You hear that, baby?" Watson's arms wrapped around my waist. "There's a gym." He leaned his chin on my head. "We don't even have to leave the building to work out." He squeezed me tightly back against his body.

Gina beamed happily at us. "I'll just let you two to look around. I'll be downstairs when you're ready." When she closed the door behind her, Watson released me, only to spin me around to face him.

"What's up, H? Do you not like this place? Do you want to look somewhere else? Or is this too fast for you?" He tucked a finger beneath my chin. "It might hurt my feelings, but I only ever want the truth from you." He rubbed my skin lightly.

I shook my head. "I want this," I assured him. "It's just..."

I let out a slow breath before I grabbed Watson's hand to lace our fingers together, then I dragged him across the small living room, through the hall, and into one of the bedrooms. The carpet was white, plush and when we stepped inside, we sank right in.

"I can see this being your trophy room," I whispered. "Stocked full of everything you've ever won since you started driving a stock car. It's almost too small." I glanced at Watson to find him grinning happily. "And this," I moved us across the hall to the larger room, identical in color with one more window. "Ours." I felt my heart fill with happiness. "Where

we sleep together, hold one another, and love one another forever.” I squeezed his hand tighter.

“Why do I feel a but coming?” Watson whispered. “Holt.” He tugged me closer. “Talk to me because right now you’re scaring me, and I don’t like it.”

I pressed my lips together. “You know I love you—”

“Are you breaking up with me right now?” He cut me off.

I took in the fear in his eyes, the tightness of muscles, and the tremble of his chin.

“Jesus, Watson, fuck no.” I waited for him to relax, but he stood there staring at me. “I’m scared that *you* won’t want this in six months or a year from now. That *you* will get bored. That you’ll wake up one morning and go, yeah no, this isn’t for me. I’m not the settling down type, and—Holy shit! What are you doing!?”

Watson wrapped his arms around my waist to lift me up over his shoulder. He carried me as if I weighed nothing back into what might be our future kitchen and placed me down onto the counter, so I was facing him.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Watson assured me. “I swear to fucking God, H.” He slid one hand into his front pocket. “I was going to wait to do this after Daytona, but...”

He dropped down to one knee.

“Watson, what... what are you doing?”

“What the hell does it look like I’m doing?”

I swallowed nervously. “It kind of looks like you’re proposing to me, baby, but that’s impossible, right? I mean... Is that your championship ring?” The way all the stones sparkled made me dizzy. “You’re really doing this? Right now?”

“Kind of looks like it, doesn’t it?” Watson grinned up at me. “I’ve had this thing in my pocket for a day, H, a day, and I’ve been dying to give it to you. When you’re ready, we’ll go pick out something better suited for you.” I noticed the flush that had started to creep up his neck and face. Watson was

actually nervous, something I had never seen before. He was the most confident person I knew. “But this, I want you to have this so that you know how much I love you, how much you mean to me, and that I want you. Always.” He held up the ring so I could see it.

This was a big deal. That ring was more important to Watson than anything. When he won the Xfinity championship, he had actually cried when they presented it to him. He had worked so hard that year and had nearly missed out on winning. So, if he was giving me that ring—

“Yes,” I blurted out.

“I didn’t ask you yet, baby.”

“Uh, sorry, I got a little ahead of myself.”

Watson chuckled softly. “I think that makes two of us, then.” He shook his head. “So, how about it, Holt Alexander Walker? Will you marry me?” He reached for my hand before I even said anything and slipped the heavy, oversized ring onto my finger.

“I don’t get to answer this time?” I whispered as Watson stood up.

He shook his head. “Nah, baby.” He sealed his lips to mine before he pulled back. “It’s yes, though, right?” he murmured.

“Of course, it’s yes.” I yanked his head back to mine and wrapped my legs around his waist to bring him closer.

Mom took a sip of her wine, which she had opened the second we dropped the bomb about moving out, then placed the glass back on the table.

“I’m confused,” she said again, looking between Watson and me. “You got your own apartment? The two of you? Even though this is technically your house?” She glanced over at Dad, whose brows were so furrowed together, they looked like they might dig their way into his nose.

“Yes.” Watson was holding onto my hand so tightly beneath the table that it felt like he might break a few bones.

I was glad I had taken the ring he had given me off. One, because it was too big for me, and two, because that would bring on another round of questions we weren't ready to answer. It was hidden under my shirt on a gold chain, and I kept reaching for it as if I was afraid it would disappear. After Daytona. That was when we were going to tell them. Just one more race to go, then everyone would know about us.

Dad leaned forward. "You boys don't have to move out. We like having you here. You know that, right?" His nostrils flared slightly, which I knew was a sign that he was trying to hold back his anger.

"Don't you want your own freedom?" Watson squeezed my hand even harder, and I flinched.

"Watts, can I maybe have a word with Holt?" Dad asked. "Because you're doing all of the talking and he looks a little, well, frankly, scared."

I shook my head. "I'm not. I want this just as much as Watson does, Dad. We're adults, too. We need to grow up." Watson kicked my chair, and I wasn't sure if that was good or not.

"What's going on with you two?" Dad finally asked. "You've been acting strange since before you left for Nashville. Watts has a boyfriend we still haven't met, he has all these bruises, gets into a fight with Rand Shepard, and now the two of you just want to up and move out? Something isn't adding up here."

Fuck, fuck, fuckity, fuck.

I rubbed the ring over my shirt before I ripped my hand out of Watson's. "I want my own place." I stood up so fast my chair slammed against the wall. "I'm twenty-two damn years old. Why can't you just accept this and move on?" I shouted. I hadn't meant to get so angry, but I was sick and tired of everyone treating me like a child.

"Holt." Mom flashed a smile. "Sweetie, why don't you relax, sit down, and finish eating? No one is trying to force you to stay here if you don't want to." She turned to look at

her husband. “Alex, please, if the boys want to get their own apartment, they should. They’re adults, just like Holt said, and maybe it’s time.”

Watson coughed nervously. “We, uh, already sort of signed a lease, so... whenever we’re ready we can move in,” he muttered.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake.” Dad grunted. “You two... I seriously... You didn’t even think to ask...”

“Dad!” I exclaimed. “We didn’t have to ask your permission!”

He shook his head. “You know, if I didn’t know better, I would think you were...” He narrowed his eyes. “Are you?” he asked. “Watts, I love you like you were my own son, but if you’re doing what I think you are with my own boy, you need to come clean right now.”

Watson dropped his chin. “Sir, I... it’s not like that.”

“Get out of my house.”

“Alexander!” Mom cried. “What’s going on?” She looked between us and her husband. “You can’t kick them out.”

“I don’t need to kick them out, Joyce. They already have their own place,” Dad growled. “Leave your shit and get out before I remove you myself.” He stood up. “I can’t even look... How could you? I’m going to be sick.” He shook his head.

Watson stood up. “I love him.” He turned to me. “We love each other, right, baby?” He held out his hand, which I took without hesitation.

Joyce gasped. “Watts, sweetie, are you saying that you and Holt...” She looked between the two of us before she made the sign of the cross on her chest. Ironic, considering, we weren’t even religious.

“Get. Out,” Dad hissed. “Come back and get your crap when we’re not around. Just get the hell out of my sight.”

This wasn’t how we wanted things to go with our parents. We had hoped they would accept us, love us, because we

loved one another, and yet here we were, running out of the house to Watson's car as fast as we could because my dad was threatening to physically do it himself. The second we pulled out of the driveway, a sob burst from my throat, and I buried my face in my hands.

"Oh, hey, no, none of that." Watson reached over to rub my shoulder. "Baby, it's going to be okay. We just need to give them a little more time, that's all." He squeezed lightly. That only made me cry even harder. "Jesus."

He kept his hand on my shoulder, and I felt the car begin to slow before it came to a stop. I heard the sound of the seat belt as he removed it. His door opened and closed, then mine opened. He unbuckled me and pried my hands from my face.

"Holt." His voice was stern.

I stared into Watson's dark eyes. "They hate us," I choked out.

"They don't, baby." He pushed the hair from my forehead. "They're just confused. They're upset, but they don't hate us." Watson slipped his fingers beneath the collar of my shirt before he pulled out the necklace to expose the ring he'd given me. "I thought that would go better. I really did." He gave me an apologetic smile.

"Me, too." I sniffed.

Watson squatted down outside the car. "I have to ask because after how this went tonight, if you want to wait on coming out with everyone else, we can. If you're afraid how the public is going to react..." He let his thoughts trail off as he stared at me.

I cupped his face with my hands, marveled at his beauty, because that's what he was to me. Beautiful with his blond hair, chocolate brown eyes, and perfect face. His cheerful disposition, his killer smile, and positive attitude. Watson loved me. He'd picked me. He was mine, just like I had always dreamed.

"Doesn't change how we feel about each other." I dragged my thumbs over his glass-like cheekbones to watch his lids

flutter. “If everyone hates us, wants to burn us at the stake, we still have each other,” I reminded him.

Chapter Sixteen

Watson

We hardly had time to get furniture for our new apartment before we had to rush off to Daytona. I had to admit it was nice to be able to blow my boyfriend in our kitchen and listen to him make as much noise as he wanted without having to worry about anyone hearing us. Okay, maybe our new neighbors might be able to hear us, but that wasn't our problem.

I wasn't convinced Holt was one hundred percent all right with what happened with our parents. His dad's reaction was not what I had expected. My mother had already texted me to apologize, telling me she wanted to talk as soon as possible. She and I hardly ever fought about anything, but I wasn't ready to talk to her yet. It was the sadness I had to see in Holt's eyes that kept me from going over there to give Alexander Walker a piece of my mind. Holt deserved so much better than the way he was being treated.

I was totally pumped for this race, though. I had always done well at the track, and I felt like after last week with the crash, fixing things with Shepard, and the mess with our parents, I needed a damn win in my column. Not to mention once this was over, once I was firmly in the championship hunt, Holt and I could talk openly about being together. I just had to get through this weekend first. I didn't want to have to worry about the stress of anything else before that.

Thursday and Friday were an absolute blur. Practice, interviews, autographs, signings, everything that led up to the race on Saturday night that kept all of us drivers busy. I was used to this, but when I wanted to spend time with Holt, it was hard because it was nearly impossible. He was doing one thing; I was doing another. We saw one another in passing, but usually by the time I made it back to the RV each night, he was already passed out. I hated it, but I completely understood.

When I managed to get the pole position for the race, he was the one I wanted to hug when I climbed from my car. Holt

was the one I wanted to kiss and have congratulate me. I saw him watching me with the rest of the crew. It wouldn't have been too weird if I had gone over to him, but instead he gave me a quick little nod before turning away.

After all the post-race interviews and pictures, I was exhausted. Some of the drivers suggested we go out for drinks to party and celebrate, but all I wanted to do was go back to the RV. Back to Holt. He was where I wanted to be right now. I felt like I was dragging all the way back to where the RV was parked and was surprised when I found the lights still on when I walked up. Holt was sitting on the couch half asleep when I stepped inside. My eyes immediately went to the ring hanging from his neck. God, I loved him. How had I not realized that until just a few weeks ago?

He gave me a crooked, sleepy smile. "Winners get waffles," he murmured.

"You made me waffles? I didn't win anything."

He nodded. "Yeah, I know, baby, but it's our thing. You won the pole, and I wanted to do it." He climbed from the couch. "I mean, they're probably cold by now, but—"

I covered his mouth with mine before he could say anything else. His eyes went wide when my tongue slipped between his lips. Holt's arms wrapped around my neck as I deepened the kiss, his eyes growing drunk with lust, and he groaned softly.

"You're fucking amazing. You know that, right?"

"It's tradition," Holt reminded me.

I dragged a hand through his dark hair. "I'm so lucky you're mine." No one was as important to me as Holt was. "I can't wait to show everyone, either." I traced his lips with my finger. "I know we talked about getting you a proper ring to wear, but what if we got this resized, huh? I kind of like that idea. Unless you have your heart set on an actual engagement ring."

"I kind of like this one, too," he admitted to me. "It's yours; you gave it to me, and I know how important it is to

you. You're trusting me with it."

I leaned forward so that my lips were against his ear. "I love you, Holt," I murmured. "I love you. I love you. I love you." He shivered against me, and my own skin broke out in goosebumps as I pulled back to look at him. "You're my biggest fan, and... I would be lost without you."

That crooked smile slipped over Holt's face again. "I'll always be your biggest fan, Watson," he assured me as he reached up to stroke my cheek with his fingers.

I kissed him again, but this time it was different. Slow, tender, and drawn out until we were both panting and trying to catch our breath. Holt gripped my wrists as I cupped his face. "I want..." He blushed as he stared up at me with desperation in his eyes. "I want you inside of me, Watson."

"H, you don't have—"

"I need you," he murmured, and this time when our lips met, the desperation I felt was mine. Desperate to please him, to make this good and painless because Holt deserved nothing but amazing things.

I came up for air only because I had to. "Baby." I searched his face. "If it hurts or if you want to stop or at any point, if you're not into it, tell me. We'll stop. We'll do something else." I began to drag him toward my room. "God, you have no idea how hard I am right now. I can't wait to be inside that ass." I groaned the moment we stepped into the room.

"You act like I've never tried it." Holt moved to sit on the bed, but I blocked him.

"Please clarify what you mean by that," I growled. "Tried what, exactly?"

Holt patted my chest. "I have a few toys, and I've used my fingers. I know it's not the same, but—Jesus Christ, Watson!" he exclaimed when I pushed him onto the mattress before jumping on top of him.

"You need to show me." I practically ripped the shirt from his body. "Now. Show me how you stretch that little hole to prep yourself." I could hardly think straight as Holt moved so I

could get the fabric free from his chest. “Fuck, you’re driving me crazy. Did you think of me?” I slammed my mouth against his again, as my hands moved all over his warm torso.

Holt whimpered. “Yes.” He groaned. “I always thought of you, wished I was with you when I touched myself, and wondered what it would be like to have you inside me.” I expected him to look away when I met his gaze, and I was more than surprised when he didn’t.

“Get naked.” I jumped to my feet as a burst of energy hit me. “Those pants need to disappear, baby, because they have no business being in my way.” I reached behind me to pull my shirt up over my head and then popped the button on my pants as Holt stood to do the same.

I noticed the way his hands shook as he pulled them down his legs along with his underwear and sat down on the bed. I’m not sure if it was nerves, excitement, or both, but I wanted Holt to know that I was going to make this good for him. He glanced up, and a blush crept up his neck and face when our eyes meet.

“Nervous?” I asked as I sat down next to him.

He nodded. “I am, yeah, a little,” Holt admitted before I kissed him again. He moaned softly, his mouth instantly opening for me, and when I pushed him over on the bed, he let me.

“Are you...” he started to interrupt.

“Relax first, baby, just go with it.”

I felt Holt do just that, his body loosening up beneath me, and then we got lost in one another. Our tongues tangled together while our hands roamed all over each other. He clawed at my back. I sucked hard on his tongue. He yanked me closer, and I only pulled harder at his hair.

“That’s it. Tell me you want me.”

I groaned as his cock rubbed over mine. His hips arched up while I nipped his bottom lip.

“You want to show me how you stretch yourself out, baby? Pretend it’s me filling that little hole?” I peppered wet kisses against his jaw, down his neck, and sucked hard on his collarbone.

Holt groaned. “Can’t you just do it?”

“No way, Holt. I want to see you touch yourself. You can’t tease me like that and not show me.”

I pulled back to look down at him. Hooded hazel eyes, swollen lips, and his lust-filled face. I was so ready to fuck him, but first, Holt needed to show me what he liked.

“Show me.” I begged before I reached down to palm at my hard cock. “It’s going to drive me so crazy, baby, trust me. Seeing you stretch yourself with your fingers.”

“Okay.” He flashed a nervous smile, and I reached over to open the drawer of the bedside table. I swore he grew even redder when I handed him the bottle of lube while I tossed a condom onto the table.

I moved to touch his face, my fingers dancing over his skin. “You need some help?” I murmured. “Here.” I popped open the bottle and took Holt’s hand, stopping to kiss each finger lightly. “Like this, H.” I used too much, and his whole hand was coated in it, but it didn’t matter. “Show me,” I whispered again and stepped back from him.

Holt’s thighs widened, and my cock began to throb as I watched him curl his hips to do as I asked. He slowly slipped one finger inside himself before he glanced up at me, his eyes full of want. I groaned when he added a second digit.

“Fuck.” My hand instantly went to my dick.

“No.” Holt croaked out. “Please don’t. I want you to fuck me, and I need you to want me so bad that you can hardly stand it. Don’t touch yourself yet.” His voice is so full of need. “Just watch.”

I dropped my hand back to my side, and when I did, Holt began to slowly stretch himself. He scissored his tight, needy hole slowly. Soft little moans escaped his mouth, and I swear it took me all of thirty seconds before I ripped open the condom,

sheathed myself and spread lube on my hard length before I was on him again.

“Enough,” I growled. “Mine.” I watched the way his eyes grew wide. “You think I could sit there and watch that? Fuck.” I leaned down so that he could feel the head of my cock against his entrance. “You set the pace, baby.” I pressed forward. “Ready?”

Holt nodded. “Yeah, I’m ready.” He immediately tensed up.

“Relax, let me in. Think about how good this is going to feel.”

“It is, isn’t it?”

I reached up to grip the back of his neck. “So damn good,” I assured him, and his entire body went slack beneath me. “There you go, H, just like that.” I praised as I slipped farther inside, past the tight muscled ring, and then, fuck, I was all the way to the hilt. “Okay?” I whispered.

Holt’s eyes were squeezed tight, his chest moved with every breath, and his hands fisted the blanket beneath him. He nodded, his tongue coming out to lick his lips.

“Okay,” he hissed.

“Does it hurt, because if it does, I’ll pull out, and we can wash up.” *Open your eyes, baby, look at me. Let me see you.* “Holt?” The last thing I wanted to do was hurt him.

Holt’s eyes fluttered, and then he was staring at me, hazel orbs filled with lust and need. His hands slipped up my chest before he hooked them around my neck, then he arched up toward me. He brushed his lips over mine, and that’s all the assurance I needed to start moving.

My hands moved to his waist to keep Holt in place, and his eyes never strayed from mine. His mouth dropped open as I slid in and out, his soft moans turning into loud grunts the second I started to peg his prostate. I’ve had sex with men before, but it had never been with someone I loved. I dropped my hands under Holt’s ass, lifting him slightly, and the sound he made was animalistic as his legs wrapped around my waist.

“Watson.” He moved to touch his cock, but I smacked his hand away. “Please, I need to,” he begged.

I pushed him back on the bed and covered his mouth with mine. “A little longer, H,” I assured him, sweat slicking down my back. “I love you.”

“Love... you.” Holt groaned as he tugged at my hair. “Jesus, this is... so good.” His eyes were clamped shut again, and his body shook beneath me.

“I’m going to get tested so I can fill you with my cum,” I promised. His lips turned up into a smile against mine. “Yeah, you want that, too.”

Holt nodded. “I do. I want all of you, Watson, forever.” He nodded, and I watched as my ring rolled around his chest as I started to move back.

“No.” He dug his hands into my shoulder. “Stay close. Need you.” His breath was hot against my face.

A tingle started up my spine and over my body. “Get yourself there, Holt. Do it now because I’m about to fill this condom up for you.”

The second his hand dropped between us to start jerking himself, I let go, biting down on Holt’s shoulder to keep from screaming out my release. Light exploded behind my eyes, and my legs nearly gave out beneath me as I felt Holt’s cum splash against my stomach and chest. His own sounds were loud enough for the both of us as he let go. I didn’t stop until I knew he was done, and once he was, I stared down at him, taking him in. His hazel eyes were blissed out, and that crooked smile was fixed on his beautiful face. I didn’t want to break this connection, but I knew we needed to clean up, rest, and get ready for tomorrow. I slowly eased myself from between his legs and flopped down next to him on the bed.

“Hi,” he whispered, causing my heart to thump loudly in my chest.

“Hi,” I murmured back and twisted on my side to drag him closer. “You all right?” I asked, pushing the damp hair from his face.

Holt nodded. “Oh, yeah, more than all right. Pretty fucking good, actually.”

I snorted. “Want to wash up?”

“Basking first, clean up after.”

I could live with that, because I wanted to do the same.

Chapter Seventeen

Holt

Sex was not what I had expected. It was even better than anything I'd ever imagined. Losing my virginity to Watson made me glad that I had waited for him despite everything we were going through right now. I didn't want to get up when the alarm went off. I didn't want to leave this little bubble Watson and I had created for ourselves. I wanted to stay wrapped up with him forever. Only, I couldn't. We had obligations. He had a race to go win, and I had every intention of helping him do that to the best of my abilities.

I had always had a love-hate relationship with Daytona. On one hand, I loved the roar of the engines when they hit nearly two hundred miles an hour. The thirty-one-degree banking, the smell of the gasoline and exhaust. The roar of the crowd as their favorite driver took the lead, the checkered flag as it waved in the air. It was hard not to get caught up in all the excitement.

But then there were the crashes. The way one little nudge could send multiple cars flying. That was the part I hated. Watching your friend or family member flip end over end until they landed on their hood. Pieces of their vehicle scattered across the track like Legos. Praying that they survived. Hoping that all the safety devices inside the car did what they were supposed to do, because you couldn't bear to think about what might happen if they failed.

At least I was able to stand with Watson before the race during the invocation and the National Anthem. Then I wished him good luck. Even if everyone thought it was a brotherly thing. Only this time, when we hugged and pulled apart, Watson took the time to place his hand right over where he knew his ring was, rubbed it lightly before he winked at me. Then he tugged his helmet over his head and slipped into his race car.

My heart fluttered in my chest as I made way behind the wall to get ready with the rest of the crew. I tried to convince

myself that this was a normal race, just like all the others; only, the other races didn't leave me with a feeling of dread in my head and a sick feeling in my stomach.

I was able to relax a bit once the race started, despite how things felt this morning. By lap fifty-three, when Watson took the lead again, I began to think he might win this thing. It was every driver's dream, and I knew if he did, the celebration would never stop. What would it be like to hear the words "Watson Brooks, Daytona winner"? The thought made me break out in goosebumps. When the caution came out for debris on lap seventy-three, everyone came in for fresh tires, fuel, and adjustments.

That was right about when everything went to shit.

Daytona was famous for what was referred to as "the big one." All it took was one car to get out of line they might have had a shot at the win. Someone might be pushing a little too hard. Wanting to help their teammate, their friend, or maybe just being a little too aggressive.

Watson's blue car wiggled, and it was like watching a nightmare you couldn't wake up from. His car slid against the wall first, but no, that wasn't enough. Watson's car moved back down onto the track, nudging Lake Mills, who then slammed into Grant Michaels. I watched in horror as my fiancé's car flipped over once, twice, then a third before resting on the front stretch. The entire crowd grew quiet as the race was red flagged and the rest of the cars were led down pit road.

My feet were glued to the asphalt where I stood. Why wasn't Watson getting out of his car? Why wasn't he moving? I needed to get to him. Needed to hear his voice. See his warm brown eyes just to make sure that he was okay. Make him laugh the only way that I could. Everyone knew he was my brother. No one would question it if I went out there now.

"Don't." Someone's hand was on my shoulder, and when I looked up, I was surprised to see it was Hutch, Rand's crew chief. "This could be really bad, Holt, and if you go out there,

you might not recover from what you see. That's not what you want right now."

My chin trembled as I watched the emergency crew come to Watson's rescue. Everyone was out of their cars. Everyone except...

"Oh, God." I managed to remove my helmet before I bent over and threw up all over the pit stall. Was I going to pass out? I had never passed out before, but I felt like that might be what this feeling was.

"Sit," Hutch instructed before helping me onto the wall.

I did as he instructed but mostly because I didn't trust my legs. Why wasn't Watson out of his car yet? What was taking the emergency crew so damn long? I felt wetness on my cheeks. When did I start crying?

"Hey." Hutch put an arm around me. "He's Watts, man. He'll be okay." He tugged me closer and pressed my head against his shoulder. "He's a badass, right?"

I sniffed. "Right," I lied. Not about the badass part. That was true.

Mason suddenly came rushing toward me. "Holt, hey, have you—" He stopped when he saw me with Hutch. I instantly sat up. "Are you okay?" he asked before sitting down next to me. "They won't tell me anything, but you're his family. Have you heard anything?"

"I haven't asked. I'm kind of scared," I admitted.

As if on cue, Miles came walking toward where we were. "Holt." He said my name with such authority. "Come with me now." I stood up on legs that felt like they were made out of rubber, and when I reached him, his hand landed on my shoulder. "Your parents have already been notified." I must have stopped walking because he turned to look at me. "Son, you have to come with me. Watts won't stop asking for you."

"He... he is? Then he's awake?"

Miles nodded. "Watts is in the ambulance, so hurry up."

I practically floated to the ambulance, or at least, it felt that way. I climbed up inside to find Watson strapped onto the gurney, his blond hair sticking up in every direction, while his face was a massive mess of cuts and bruises. The EMS workers were already hooking him up to machines and medication that I'm sure would dull the pain, but when he saw me, his hand shot out.

"H." Watson's voice sounded slower than normal, like maybe said medication was already working. "Let my brother through," he demanded. When I reached him, he squeezed my hand tightly. "I'm gonna live. Bet you're disappointed about that." That was weird. Why would he say that to me, especially after last night?

"I would want to die with you," I whispered to him.

Watson grinned; his teeth caked with blood like the rest of his face. "Sure, you would, H. You would be thinking that the idiot survived another mess."

Okay, wait, that he *knew* better than to say around me. We'd had the discussion about how I felt when he put himself down like that.

"Watson," I warned.

"I don't... I don't remember what happened." His lids were so heavy. "The crash or..." Watson tugged me closer. "Did Jones hit you with his car? When did that happen?"

What did he mean? He didn't remember? "What?" I asked.

"Jones. Did he hit you with his car? I remember... I remember wanting to hit him." His eyes closed before they popped back open. "Did I win a race recently?" Watson muttered.

I swallowed the bile that threatened to come up. "Yes," I told him. "You won, and then..."

Did Watson not remember everything that happened? How we'd kissed outside the bar, and that he loved me? That we were together? We had had sex last night. We were engaged.

“Watson, what exactly do you remember?” I dragged my teeth over my bottom lip.

“Jones hitting you with his car. That bastard.”

“Okay, what else?”

He nodded. “Yeah, and then... I don’t remember anything else after that, Holt. It’s a big fat nothing. My stupid brain, as usual.”

Holy shit. “You don’t remember anything else? Like at all?” My stomach dropped.

He shook his head. “Nah, bro, nothing. Weird, but I guess that’s probably a good thing, because—” Watson stopped and let out a big yawn. “I’m such a mess. Maybe once I’m at the hospital, my dumb brain can function again.” His eyes fluttered shut as the pain medication started to take over.

My eyes filled with tears. I turned away so he couldn’t see and let them fall, but the only thing I could think about was that he didn’t remember.

Watson had forgotten about us.

Watson was so drugged up, he had been sleeping since they moved him into the hospital room. I couldn’t sit there and watch him. I didn’t want to be there when he woke up, because I didn’t want him to act like we weren’t anything other than brothers or friends. So instead, I walked the hospital. Paced the halls, wondering how I could make him remember without actually telling him. More than once, I had to step outside and resist the urge to scream at the sky about how unfair this was. How I’d finally had what I wanted, only for Watson to be taken away. My phone buzzed in my pocket.

Watson: *Where are you? Are you avoiding me or something? Is my face that hideous to look at? Whenever I wake up, you’re never here.*

Shit, he was awake.

Holt: *Be right there.*

Watson: *Bring me some real coffee. This shit they have here sucks.*

Holt: *Sure.*

Watson: *Best brother ever.*

Right, because that's all I am to you anymore. Just your brother.

“Hey, bro.” Watson’s face was a mess of bruises and cuts, and his dark eyes glittered with whatever heavy medication they had given him for the pain. “You worried about me?” he teased. “You shouldn’t. I’m tough as nails. Nothing can kill me. Where have you been hiding?” He took the Starbucks I handed him. “Lifesaver.” He moaned as he took a sip, and of course it went right to my dick, because why not? Let’s add that to the list of things I had to deal with today.

My throat felt tight. “Do you remember anything yet?” I sat down on the chair next to his bed.

“Nah, funny thing...” He tapped my arm. “I can’t remember anything from like, I don’t know, from like weeks ago. Weird, right? I must have really knocked my head good. What happened? Did I win any races?” Watson wiggled his brows. “How about any hot dates?”

Shit, that also meant he didn’t know he came out. That wasn’t something he could hide, nor that he announced he had a boyfriend.

“Uh...”

How was I going to approach this mess? Hey, Watson, you kissed me after Jones hit me with his car, we started fooling around, and then we sort of became a couple. You gave me your Xfinity ring, Mom and Dad are pissed as hell, but we’re in love, so what does it matter? Oh, and we got our own apartment together.

“H?” Watson touched my arm. “Are you all right? You look funny. Aw, were you worried about me? Because that’s super sweet, man. I love you, too,” he teased. Just hearing those words made me want to hit something.

I was going to have to go through all of that again. The endless girls. The heartbreak. When Watson promised me, he wouldn't. That he would love me. Keep my heart safe.

"I can't... I have to—" I bolted from his room, only to run smack into Mason in the hallway.

"Where's the fire?" He gripped my shoulders. "Shit, is it that bad, Holt?" His brown eyes searched my face. "Is he awake?"

I shook my head. "Yes, I mean no. I mean, he's going to be okay." I tried to blink away the tears. "He doesn't remember anything that happened."

"That's good. Sometimes the wrecks can keep us up at night. Sleepless nightmares that—Oh, oh shit. He doesn't remember... Oh crap," Mason murmured.

I worried my lip between my teeth. "He doesn't remember us, I mean me, and I don't know what to do. I can't go through that again, Mason. I just can't." Tears burned my eyes.

"I'll wring his neck."

"Mason, it's not his fault."

He tilted his head. "Don't you love him, Holt?" He looked confused. "Don't you want him to remember what the two of you had together? Because honestly, I've never seen him happier."

"I... I want him to remember on his own." Why did it feel like my heart was being ripped from my chest?

"Pelletier, is that you out there? Get your ugly mug in here!" Watson exclaimed. "God, I hate hospitals. I can't wait to get out of here."

Mason nudged my shoulder. "Come back in there with me. Talk to him. He's going to get worried, start asking questions I can't answer. You're his best friend," he reminded me.

"Holt, honey!" The sound of Watson's mother's voice made me freeze, and when I turned around, she stood there with my father. "How is he?" she asked. "Oh, Mason, it's so good to see you, sweetie." She beamed.

Mason nudged me.

“Uh, he’s awake, but he doesn’t remember much,” I muttered, afraid to meet my father’s hard gaze. I could feel his eyes digging into me.

“That’s good. That crash was horrific. It’s better off that way,” Dad said.

Mason sighed. “With all due respect, I know you’re not exactly happy with Watson and Holt getting together...” My head spun around like *The Exorcist*. “What Holt meant was that Watson doesn’t remember *them*. He doesn’t remember anything after Jones hit Holt with his car. I’m sure that makes you both very happy. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to say hello to my friend before I head home to my family.”

When I looked back at my parents, they both looked shocked before Mom wrapped me in a hug, and I burst into tears.

Chapter Eighteen

Watson

Whatever medication they were giving me was messing with my mind. I kept having these whacked out dreams about Holt. We were kissing. He was sucking my cock. We were cuddling in my bed. Hell, I even had one about us having sex, and yeah, sure, it was totally hot as fuck, but when I woke up, my dick was hard enough to cut stone. Plus, it was Holt. My stepbrother and best friend. It was kind of freaking me out.

“Hey.” I glanced over to where Rand Shepard sat. “You, uh, okay, man?”

He sat back in the chair, and I noticed it looked like he might have been in a fight recently with the multicolored bruises around his eyes. This was beyond awkward with the giant boner I was currently sporting. I was more than thankful I had some underwear on, and I wasn't just lying here with some flimsy hospital johnny, because my dick would probably be waving hello right now.

I still couldn't believe Shepard was in my hospital room. He hated my guts, so what was he doing here?

“Sure, fine. Never better.” I shifted, trying to deal with my hard-on. “Are you hoping I might die or something? Is that why you're here? You have to know that you're not in my will,” I blurted out just as his wife, Brooklyn, came into the room. Christ, her, too?

“Watts!” she exclaimed before flinging herself at me, and when I met Shepard's eyes, I was sure I saw actual concern on his face. “I'm so glad you're awake. We were so worried.” Brooklyn pulled away to press a kiss to my cheek. “How are you feeling?” She moved to sit on her husband's lap.

“Er... like shit, but otherwise all right.” What in the hell? Had Hell frozen over? What was going on?

Shepard pushed the dark hair back from Brooklyn's neck. “Darlin', I think you're scaring Watts. Bring it down a notch.”

He chuckled softly. “You look a bit confused.” His brows dipped.

“He doesn’t remember anything.”

Holt was leaning against the doorway, and the second I looked at him, my cock perked right back up at the memory of the dreams I’d had. I was going to have to find out what drugs they were giving me because, because wow, they needed to switch them to something else, pronto.

“So, your fight and bonding session? Nothing up there.” He moved his hand up to his head and wiggled his fingers around before he pressed it against his sternum and rubbed lightly.

I smirked. “Thanks, H. That pretty much described my brain before the accident, so I guess nothing has changed. No chance of me waking up brilliant like Einstein.”

“Right.” Holt didn’t smile or even laugh at my lame joke. *Rough crowd.*

Shepard’s eyes slid over to me. “You don’t remember anything?” he asked. “Like at all. Not even—”

“Nope, nothing.” Holt cut him off. “You might have to convince him to be your friend again.”

Rand Shepard and I were friends now? Someone was going to have to explain that one to me like I was a two-year-old at some point in the near future.

Shepard snorted. “Jesus, the first time was hard enough.” Brooklyn nudged him, and he laughed before wrapping his thick arms around her to draw her closer. If you had told me that they were a couple, I probably wouldn’t have believed you. Apples and oranges, I suppose.

“Seriously, though, Watts, how are you? I know when Rand had his accident, I was terrified. You know we got married the next day. In the hospital. If you need anything, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us.” Brooklyn gazed at her husband.

My brows shot up. “Right, well, that’s not happening to me today or ever, but I’m all right. Like I told your hubby, I feel like I was hit by a bus. Everything literally hurts. Doc says I can’t race for a bit.” I groaned at the thought. “Won’t stop me from going to the track, though. I hope to be set free in a day or two from here. I’m getting stir crazy in this place.”

“What about your memory?” Shepard asked. “Did they tell you if it would come back or when?”

I looked over at my stepbrother, who was rubbing that same spot on his chest again. “In time, maybe, or if not, they said they could try to help. They said I should try to talk to people I’m closest with, although this one”—I hooked a thumb at Holt—“doesn’t seem to want to be around me.” I watched the surprise in his face, like I hadn’t noticed. I patted the bed. “You know I won’t bite, H.” I flashed him a smile, but he didn’t budge.

Shepard coughed. “We’ll let you rest. I’m sure Mason has his hands full with all the kids, anyway.” He helped Brooklyn to her feet. “I mean, with his two and ours at the RV? That’s a lot of energy.” He glanced at my brother before he held his fist out for me. “I’m glad you’re okay, man, other than the brain scramble. I’m sure Holt will help you figure all of that out, though.”

I gave his fist a bump, then Brooklyn hugged me again. They did the same with Holt and then we were left staring awkwardly at one another.

“So…” I took a deep breath, wondering why this was so weird with us. I wasn’t making it that way. Holt was. “You want to sit or just stand there, making me feel more useless than normal?” I pointed to the chair Shepard had just vacated.

Holt’s eyes hardened. “Don’t say shit like that.” He grunted before moving to sit down. “You know how I…” He stopped and dragged both hands through his dark hair as he let out a long breath.

“Did we have a fight?” His head shot up. “It’s like there’s some wall between us now. Like we don’t know one another, and I know that’s bullshit. You’re Holt, my best friend, and I

would do anything for you. We don't fight, so if we did, I want you to tell me. I'll fix it right now."

Holt shook his head. "No, no fight." He flashed me his crooked smile, and for some reason, it made my heart feel all flighty and happy. "I was just... worried."

Lie. Holt was lying to me, and I think it was the first time he had since I'd met him. I opened my mouth to call him out on it, but at that exact moment, my doctor walked in, stealing my chance. What reason would Holt have to lie to me?

I was released from the hospital the next day, only to go home and find out that Holt had gotten his own apartment and moved out of our parent's place. Something was wrong. What had happened between us that he wasn't telling me?

"I'm sorry, but you did what?" I stared at him as I sat down on my bed. "Why would you do that?"

Holt shrugged. "I don't know. I wanted to?" He seemed so nonchalant about it. Like it wasn't a big deal. We were a team.

"What's going on with you, bro? You seem different. What happened before my crash? Did you meet someone?" I was suddenly green with jealousy when I thought of Holt having a boyfriend. "You know I don't care if you bring someone back to the RV, right?" I did, but I shouldn't.

He shook his head. "Duh, but aren't we a little old to live at home?"

What in the actual fuck? Where was that coming from? "Can I move in with you?"

"No." Again, Holt rubbed his sternum.

I narrowed my eyes. "Can I at least come visit you?" I watched the way he avoided looking at me. He was looking anywhere but me. Above me, next to me, but not directly at me. "Holt." I stood up and watched the way he stiffened. "What's going on with you?" He took a step back when I got closer.

"N... nothing."

“Why are you lying to me?”

“I’m not.” His hazel eyes finally landed on me, and the way they softened, Christ, it made me want to kiss—no, that was a dream. “I should go. Let you get some rest. You must be exhausted from the flight home.” His hand came up to rub his chest, but he stopped just before he did it.

My stepbrother was a good-looking man. I knew that. I liked men, so would it be a bad thing if I kissed him? Would Holt want me to do that? Was he attracted to me? Would it freak him out if I cupped his face in my hands and lightly brushed my lips over his? Would he want more? Would he want to suck my cock? Because I certainly wanted his mouth on mine right now.

Christ, I needed to get laid. These drugs were totally messing with my head, and it was already a scrambled disaster.

“Watson?” Holt was watching me with nervous, wide eyes. “Are you all right?”

I nodded. “Sure, never better.” I moved to go sit back on the bed. “I’m just... surprised, that’s all.” Disappointed, sad, confused, all those things. It felt like our friendship was broken and it was my fault, but Holt didn’t want to fix it. Clearly, I had hurt him. Why couldn’t I remember that?

“I’m sorry,” Holt mumbled as I looked back at him. “I didn’t mean to upset you. It just kind of happened.”

I dragged a hand through my hair. “Hey, I get it. We all have to grow up at some point, but...” I stopped when I thought of something. “You don’t drive, so how do you get around?” I pursed my lips.

“Uber,” he answered, like it wasn’t a big deal.

“You take an Uber everywhere? Maybe it’s time you get your license, H. You’re twenty-two, after all. I’d offer to help you, but I can’t drive right now. Maybe when I’m cleared.”

Holt shrugged. “Maybe.”

“It’s going to be weird without you here.”

“You won’t even notice I’m gone.”

I blinked in surprise. “Why—Holt, that’s not even funny.”

He looked so sad and lost; I wanted to shake him. Make him tell me what was running through his head.

“I should go.” He turned to leave. “Come over whenever you want,” he said, but it didn’t sound like he meant it.

Chapter Nineteen

Holt

I was never so happy to see the racetrack on Friday. I hated that apartment. Okay, no, I didn't; but I hated being there by myself. I wasn't supposed to be there alone. Watson was supposed to be with me. Every single time I went into the bedroom, I wanted to put my fist through the wall because it was supposed to be our bed, our place, and he was back with our parents. Half the time, I ended up sleeping on the couch because I found myself reaching for someone who wasn't there next to me.

Mom had told me I could stay there if I wanted but being near Watson was too much for me. Seeing him, hearing him, everything about him was too much. It was bad enough that he was going to be at the track this weekend, even though he couldn't drive, staying in our RV, and I was going to have to see him and make awkward conversation. At least I would be busy.

"You can't avoid me anymore, H." Watson greeted me as I stepped inside the RV on Friday afternoon. He waved a hand at me when I tried to object. "Don't try to deny it. Your one word text messages do that for you." He stood up. "I miss you," he admitted.

I tugged my bag up closer to my shoulder. "You do?" I hadn't expected that.

"Why does that surprise you? Why is everyone acting so weird? Mom, Dad, you? Hell, even Mason. I'm starting to think it's me. Way to give a guy a complex."

I swallowed nervously. "How are Mom and Dad acting weird?" I knew the answer, but I needed to hear it from him.

"Dad's sleeping in your room." Watson sat back down and dragged a hand through his blond hair before he met my gaze again. I noticed a splash of freckles on his face, like maybe he had spent some time in the sun.

“I don’t... He’s sleeping in my room?”

“I know they fight, every couple does, but I’ve never seen them like this. It scares me.”

Watson looked heartbroken.

“How so?” I asked softly.

“They’re talking in these hushed, angry tones. When I walk into the room, they stop and glare at each other. Is it because of me? Because of the crash? Are they mad because I can’t remember things?” He dragged his hands through his hair again and tugged on the ends before he let out a loud sigh.

I dropped my bag before I moved to sit down next to him. “It’s not your fault,” I assured him.

“Yeah, well, it kind of feels like it is.”

“Watson.” I reached out to touch him but stopped right before my hand made contact with his face. He stared at me, his eyes landing on my lips before they dropped to my hand. “It’s not you, trust me.” All the air in the RV suddenly disappeared. I couldn’t breathe, and if I didn’t get out of here, I was going to do something really stupid.

Watson suddenly gripped my fingers. “I miss you,” he said again. “Are we still friends, Holt?”

“Of course.” I gasped.

“Why doesn’t it feel like that way? Why does it feel like you’ve pulled away? Like you’re hiding something from me?”

“I-I’m not.”

Watson’s dark eyes felt as if they were burning into my soul as he stared at me. Again, he gazed at my lips before he dragged his teeth over his own.

“Why did you really move out? Why are Mom and Dad whispering angrily when they think I can’t hear them?” He tugged me closer. “Why am I having these dreams—”

A knock at the door caused us to jump, and I’d be lying if I didn’t feel relief course through me.

“You two fuckers in there?” Mason’s voice boomed cheerfully. “Miles is looking for you.”

Watson stood up as he laughed nervously. “You could have texted me,” he shot back.

“Tried that. You’re ignoring me,” Mason answered.

“I might be,” he muttered before he climbed to his feet to open the door. “Hey.” He waved Mason inside.

Mason jutted his chin at me as he walked in. “You two look serious. Am I interrupting?”

He and I had been talking about what I should do about Watson. About if I should tell him about us being together or wait to see if he remembered on his own.

“Nah, we’re good. You said Miles was looking for us?” Watson shrugged everything off like nothing had happened. Like we weren’t just having this huge discussion or that it didn’t feel like we might rip one another’s clothes off.

Mason nodded. “We should head down to the track. All of us.”

Watson was absolutely miserable all weekend long, not being able to race his car. I’d be a liar if I wasn’t trying to avoid being alone with him as much as possible. But it almost seemed like he was doing the same. When I ran into Carson Carey after qualifying on Saturday afternoon and he suggested we go out for a couple of drinks, I agreed faster than I should have. Probably not the smartest idea I ever had, but I couldn’t bear the thought of going back to the RV and finding Watson with some stupid pit bunny. Once we ordered a couple of beers and found a booth, I found myself wondering if I should I at least text Watson and make sure he was okay. It wouldn’t hurt, right?

“So,” Carson smiled at me from across the table. “How’s this new boyfriend of yours?”

I grimaced. “Complicated.” Not a complete lie. My eyes kept going to the door like I wanted to make an exit.

“Really? You seemed so over the moon before. Did something happen? Does that mean I have a chance now?” he teased. “Holt?”

I didn’t even hear him because right at that exact moment, Watson walked in. With not one, but two girls, and I felt like I might be sick. What did I expect would happen? A blonde, and a brunette hung off him. Watson looked amazing with his hair styled to perfection, his collared shirt hugging his shoulders and chest just right. The tan he had managed to gain over the past couple of days looked even darker. He spotted me at that moment, a smile spreading over his handsome face and, of course, he made a beeline to where we sat.

“Bro!” he exclaimed. “Wait, are you on a date?” His dark eyes bounced between Carson and me.

I shook my head. “Not a date,” I assured him.

“Kind of looks like a date.” Watson smirked. “Carson, is this a date?” He wiggled his brows.

Carson’s eyes went wide. “Uh, no. Holt has a boyfriend, and it’s not me.” *Oh, shit.*

“You have a boyfriend?” Watson asked. “How come you didn’t tell me?” He removed his arms from around the two girls. “Ladies, will you excuse me for just a minute?” He moved to slide into the booth next to me. “Who the fuck is this boyfriend? Is he why you moved out? Does *he* live with you?” he growled.

My stomach dropped. “Watson, can we maybe do this another time?” I whispered.

“Sure, why the fuck not, H? We can do it another time. You want to pencil me into your very busy schedule because you don’t seem to have time for me anymore? Your own brother. The guy you claim is your best friend, but I clearly can’t be, since I didn’t even know you had a boyfriend,” he roared.

Carson started to get up.

“Oh, no, stay. I’m the one who isn’t wanted. Holt doesn’t tell me shit. He avoids me, gets his own place. Goes out with

you and not me during race weekends.” Watson moved out of the booth. “You know, maybe I should get my own fucking RV. That would save you from having to see me at all, right? Or, hey, I have an idea. Why don’t you find another team to work on? Be a tire carrier for someone else when I’m cleared to drive again. Maybe Mason or maybe Carson here. Then we won’t have to see each other ever. I think that would be a great idea.” His nostrils flared as he stared at me.

“Watson.”

“Don’t you fucking Watson me, Holt. I can tell when I’m not wanted. I’m not that stupid,” he seethed and then stomped away from the table over to where his dates were waiting for him.

My eyes dropped to my half full glass of beer. “I’m sorry you had to hear that,” I mumbled to Carson. When he didn’t answer, I glanced up to find concern in his face.

“I’m going to ask you something and I hope that you don’t take this the wrong way when I do. Is Watts your boyfriend?” he asked.

I started to open my mouth to object, but Carson shook his head.

“It makes a lot of sense now that I think about it. How jealous he was when he came back to your RV to find me there. How close the two of you are. I get it now. But why aren’t you two together?” He tilted his head.

I dragged a hand down my face. “Watson doesn’t remember.” I felt my chin start to tremble. “He... Shit.” I reached for a napkin as a few tears slipped out. “He remembers when Jones hit me with his car, but that’s it. The doctors said his might memory come back in time, but...” I dared to look over at where Watson sat, both girls flanking his side, and I was surprised to find him watching me with burning hatred in his eyes. “It hurts, Carson.” I whispered.

“I bet it does. You look like someone just ran over your dog, man. Go to him.”

I shook my head. “I can’t.”

“That’s absurd, Holt. Do you love him?”

“Yeah. With every fiber of my being.”

“Should I go? Would that make it easier for you? Would Watts come back over to talk to you?”

I worried my lip between my teeth. “Can we just go together? I don’t want to watch him anymore. He’s going to do something horrible to make me jealous, and I can’t see that.”

“He doesn’t even know he’s doing it, Holt,” Carson reminded me. “If you don’t tell him, he’s going to feel horrible about it when his memory does come back.”

When I looked back over at Watson again, he was talking to the brunette as she touched his arm, but he looked bored. “It’s okay. I won’t be mad at him if something happens. It’s not his fault,” I tried to tell myself. “Let’s go.” But when I stood up, Watson turned to look at me, and it took all I had not to beg him to leave with me.

Chapter Twenty

Watson

I was not interested in Sandy and Carla. Or maybe their names were Tandy and Darla. I couldn't remember. Every time they touched me, I cringed. I didn't want their hands on me. I didn't want them anywhere near me, if I were being honest. I thought maybe, just maybe, when they approached me when I was leaving the garage that I could try to get lost in them, and the old me might have been able to. Only the second I saw Holt sitting in the bar with Carson? All thoughts of being with those two girls went out the window.

I drank too much, got too loud, and ended up so drunk I could hardly walk. I knew it was bad. I knew the doctors had told me to watch my alcohol intake because of the accident, but I really didn't care. My brain was already scrambled, so what would a little more hurt? I stumbled out of the bar, made sure the girls had an Uber home, and then took my own back to the RV, only to find Holt's room empty.

I had never felt so angry and hurt in my entire life, but instead of hitting something like I so desperately wanted to do, I curled up on his bed and cried. Maybe it was because I couldn't remember anything from the past few weeks. Or it was possible it was because Holt, my stepbrother, my so-called best friend, had suddenly pushed me away like I didn't matter. Why couldn't I remember? Was it so horrible, so tragic, that my brain didn't want to remember? If he had a boyfriend, why didn't he tell me it was the reason he'd moved out?

At some point, I obviously fell asleep, because when I woke up—with a hangover so bad I instantly swore I would never drink again—disappointment hit me hard when I found myself alone. Holt had never left me for this long before. Was that what this was about? Had I gotten too needy? Did he want to find his own friends, make his own life without me? I somehow managed to get up, shower, and get dressed to head

down to the drivers' meeting. Even though I wasn't racing, I wanted to be there.

When Mason saw me, he shook his head.

"You look like shit."

"Feel like it, too."

He snorted. "Drink the whole bar, did you?" Mason nudged my shoulder. "Thought you might give that up with your head injury and all."

"Yeah, well, I thought it might help get over... Can I tell you something and have you not judge me for it?" I watched the way his brows dipped, but he didn't look worried. "Say you won't judge me first, dick, because I don't want you to tease me about this later."

"I'm your friend, man. I won't judge you. You can trust me," Mason promised.

I looked around the crowded room, narrowing my eyes at Carson, who seemed to be avoiding me, and then chewed nervously on my lip. "I've been having these dirty dreams, uh, about Holt," I confessed.

"Like sex dreams?" Mason whispered.

I nodded. "Yeah, sex dreams. Like every single night. I thought at first it was just the medication they were giving me at the hospital, but they haven't stopped since I got home." I gripped the back of my neck. "Is that weird?"

"No," he murmured.

My brows shot up. "No? How is that... He's my stepbrother."

"And you both like guys. You're close. You room together, you spend a lot of time together. You've probably seen one another naked once or twice. It's probably some kink you got going on. I say you go with it."

"I'm sorry, what? Go with it? Like I should"—I lowered my voice—"fuck him?" The thought had my cock thickening in my jeans.

Mason smirked. “I didn’t say that, but if you want to, I’m not going to stop you.” He wiggled his brows at me.

“What is wrong with you?” I balked.

“What’s wrong with who?” Shepard swung the chair next to me around and dropped his large body down, so he was facing us.

I gritted my teeth and narrowed my eyes at Mason in warning. I didn’t care what anyone said. I wasn’t friends with Rand Shepard yet. My brain was going to need a lot more convincing.

“Uh, me.” Mason coughed. “I’m trying to convince London to adopt another kid.”

Shepard cocked a brow. “We both know that’s a lie because you can’t handle the two you already have.” He chuckled before he folded his arms over the front of the chair. “Watts, man, how does it feel to not be driving?”

“You really know how to stab a man in the dick when he’s down, don’t you?” I asked.

Shepard grinned. “It’s my specialty.”

Luckily, the meeting started, which took the attention away from me, but it didn’t stop me from thinking about what Mason had said. Go with it? Would Holt try to hit me if I tried to kiss him? Was he even into me like that? I guess there was only one way for me to find out.

Shepard won the race and then promptly decided that he needed to throw a party that following night. Which is why I found myself, despite knowing it wasn’t a good idea, drinking again and getting my head all screwed up even more than it already was. Because I kept having those same dreams about Holt. More dreams about us together, and I wasn’t sure what to do about it, even though Mason thought it was a good idea to kiss Holt.

I tried to psych myself up. I dressed up, or at least I thought I looked nice. I put on a pair of dark dress pants, one

of my polo shirts that showed off all the hard work I put in at the gym, and even got a haircut the day of the party. I even did a little manscaping, in case you know, Holt liked that sort of thing. God, what was wrong with me? Was he even going to see my dick tonight?

I did all of this only for Holt to not show up.

I was on my third or maybe fourth shot of vodka when someone took the bottle from me.

“That’s mine!” I exclaimed, only to come face to face with my stepbrother. “You’re here.” I stared at him with wide eyes and hope blooming inside of me.

“I almost didn’t come.” He put the bottle down on the table.

I smiled, despite how shitty I felt. “I’m glad you did.” I took in the way his hair moved in the breeze and how the lights hit his hazel eyes, making them look a pretty green. “Can we go somewhere and talk?”

“Can you even walk?” Holt teased, and it made my stomach feel funny. Not in the throw up way, but more in the *I’m having inappropriate thoughts about my stepbrother* way.

“Come on.” He put his arm around my back to steady me as we moved across the crowded lawn.

I caught Mason giving me a thumbs up, hoping Holt didn’t see, and the way Shepard gave a little smile of his own as we made our way to the front of the house, but when I went to move up to the large wraparound porch that was strangely empty of party goers, Holt stopped me.

“Nah, this way.” He jutted his chin toward the lawn, then crouched down and spread out on his back. I did the same, and we stared up at the bright sky in silence for a while.

“Holt?”

“Yeah?”

“Why did you really get an apartment without me?” I asked, before turning my head to look at him. “Are you sure we didn’t have a fight?” My pinky brushed over his in the

dark. My entire body felt like it was on fire, and goosebumps broke out over my skin. “Did I upset you somehow? You can tell me. I won’t get mad. I just want to fix it.”

Holt kept his face away from mine. “No, never.” But he sounded so sad.

“Liar.” I reached over to force him to look at me. “Did...” A flash from one of my dreams hit me. His lips on mine, his hard, small frame beneath me, and I shivered despite the warmth of the summer weather.

“Watson?” Holt moved closer. “Are you all right? Should I call someone? Your doctor, maybe?” His voice sounded worried. “You want to go inside?” His beautiful face appeared in my vision.

I shook my head. “No, I... This is going to sound crazy.” I dragged a hand through my hair. “I keep having these dreams.” I met his gaze. “Okay, maybe this is going to be more like embarrassing.” I watched as Holt rubbed that spot on his sternum. “We’re, uh, kissing, and, uh, it’s good. Really good.”

“You’re having dreams about me?” Holt’s cheeks instantly turned red.

He’s cute. I wanted to... “Holt?” I swallowed down the nerves as he watched me. “Can I... I want to...”

I kissed him before I can get the words out. His mouth was warm, softer than I imagined, and when he didn’t fight me, it made me think he wanted this, too. Because I wanted this more than I thought imaginable.

Holt’s fingers dug at my shoulders when I start to press myself against him. He whimpered softly. “Watson, wait, wait,” He pulled back. “What are you doing?”

“Is this too much?” I knew it wasn’t. His hard cock was right there, lodged against me. I moved so that we were both on our side and nudged his thighs open. “You’re into this, right?” I nipped at his jaw and watched the way his lids fluttered.

Holt bit down on his bottom lip. “Dreams?” he whispered. “Tell me about them.” His hands came up, and he dragged his thumbs over my cheekbones.

“We’re kissing in the RV and in my bed. We’re in the hammock at Mom and Dad’s place.” I groaned when he applied pressure to my face, and my eyes started to close. “We—Shit, that feels really good.”

Holt hummed softly. “I know,” he murmured.

“We fucked.” His hands disappeared, and my eyes popped open to find him watching me with hazel eyes full of lust and want. “I just... it felt so fucking real, H, and I... I want to kiss you again.” I started to do it again, but he was up and on his feet before I had the chance. “Holt, wait a second.” I reached for him, but he was too fast.

“I shouldn’t have come here tonight.”

“I’m glad you did. Let me kiss you again.”

He shook his head. “I don’t think that’s a good idea.” Holt started to back away from me.

“You liked it.” I realized. “You liked it as much as I did.” I took a step toward him. “In fact,…” I watched the way his pink tongue peeked out as he wet his lips. “I think you want to do more than just kiss me.” His hand went up to rub his chest again as he watched me. “Come here, H. You know I won’t hurt you,” I assured him, and then he surprised me when he attacked my mouth.

Holt didn’t hold back this time. His hands were in my hair, his tongue dipped between my lips, and I swear all hell broke loose. Grunts and groans escaped from Holt as he tried to get closer to me, one hand dropping to the hem of my shirt so he could touch my skin. It was as if he was giving himself permission to let go on. His palm was warm, softer than I thought, and I wondered what took me so long to explore him this way. He was so beautiful, handsome, smart, and funny. Then I remembered what Carson had said.

“You have a boyfriend?” I yanked my mouth away.

Holt blinked in confusion. “Wh-what?”

“Carson said you had a boyfriend. Aren’t you technically cheating on him right now?” His hand went up to rub at his chest. “Why do you keep doing that?” I start to reach for that same spot, but Holt stepped back. “Did he give you something?”

“Yes... I mean, no... Fuck.” Holt dragged a hand through his hair. “I can’t do this.”

“Obviously not. You have a boyfriend.”

Holt’s mouth dropped open, and I watched as he tried to say something, but then he sprinted across the lawn, up the steps, and inside Shepard’s house, leaving me standing alone on the front lawn.

Chapter Twenty-One

Holt

I shouldn't have come to this party. I also shouldn't have let Mason convince me I needed to talk to Watson about things, maybe even tell him the truth about us, and I certainly shouldn't have let Watson kiss me on the front lawn like that. One damn kiss was all it took for me to turn into a bumbling idiot for him again. Moron, stupid, dumb—

I turned around, only to smack right into a giant wall of muscle. He had a mass of messy chocolate curls on his head, a perfect jawline, and I might have been interested if I wasn't hopelessly in love with my stepbrother. When I met his blue eyes, his brows went up and automatically I took a step back. I *knew* this guy, only I didn't, and when he raised his chin in a greeting, I let my eyes move over his tattooed arms and hands before I met his cold gaze again. Yikes, this guy looked like a lot of fun. Not my type at all. No thank you.

“Get a good look?” he grunted.

“I wasn't... I'm not... Shit.”

He broke into an easy smile, and it was hard not to notice the dimples that appeared in his cheeks. “Relax, man, I'm just fucking with you.” He shook his head before he stuck out his hand. “Killian Hampton.”

My jaw dropped. “No way.” I managed to shake his hand despite the nerves in my stomach. “What are you doing here?” The lead singer of the biggest rock band in the world, Mulligan Downtown, was standing in Rand Shepard's backyard?

“Just moved to town with”—Killian glanced around for a second—“my fiancé, who seems to have disappeared on me.” He leaned back. “I lost him. You know, he's a quiet one, but I think he likes it here. Might have made more friends than me already.”

Holy shit. I had forgotten that Killian had come out as gay recently, or wait, I think he might be bi.

“You’re engaged.” Good job, Holt. You’re talking to a multi-Grammy winner and that’s what you come up with? Smooth.

“I am, sorry, I’m very Matthias-sexual.” He grinned.

“No, I mean, shit. I’m gay. I mean, damn, I can’t even talk right now.” I could feel my ears burning with embarrassment. My hand instantly started rubbing at the ring hanging against my sternum.

Killian chuckled softly. “I see.” He folded his thick arms over his chest. “Boyfriend?”

“Uh, it’s complicated.”

“Sorry, that’s none of my business.”

Just at that exact moment, a sandy-haired man who looked about my age walked up to Killian and slipped an arm around his waist. This must be the infamous Matthias. Also incredibly cute.

“Babe, I made a new friend. You should be proud of me.” Killian pressed a kiss to the side of Matthias’s head. “Although I didn’t catch your name,” he admitted.

Matthias rolled his eyes. “Nice, Kill.” He shook his head. “Matthias Fuller.” This time when he stuck out his hand, I was a little less star struck.

“Holt Walker.”

Killian snapped his fingers at me. “You’re Watts’s brother!” He pulled his fiancé closer, like he was afraid someone might try to steal him away at any moment.

“Stepbrother, but yeah, that’s me.” I nodded.

“What’s that like?” Killian asked. “Wait, didn’t he just come out recently?” He tilted his head. “Did you have a hand in that since you’re gay and all?”

Matthias elbowed him. “Kill, manners,” he hissed.

“It’s fine. I’ve been out for a long time,” I clarified as my eyes darted around the backyard, knowing at any moment Watson was going to come find me after I left him the way I did. I spotted him in what looked like a heated conversation with Brooklyn Shepard.

Killian snickered. “She’s *so* much fun. Hope Watts can handle her,” he muttered.

“Again, manners,” Matthias reminded him. “You just don’t like her because she doesn’t take any of your shit.” He smiled at me. “Sully likes me. We’re besties.”

“*I’m* your bestie, babe, and don’t you forget it.” Killian leaned closer to whisper something in Matthias’s ear, and I couldn’t help but feel lonely when he blushed before burying his head into Killian’s neck. I turned away to find Watson watching me, and when he started in my direction, I cringed. *Shit*. He did not look happy.

“Want to introduce me to your friend... Holy mother fucking shit!” he exclaimed. “You’re Killian Hampton.” He was totally fanboying right now. It was hard not to.

“And you’re Watson Brooks.” Killian fanboyed right back.

“You weren’t going to introduce me, H? The hell kind of brother are you?” Watson gave me a playful shove. “Watts, please. Holt and my mother are the only ones who get away with calling me by my full name.”

It kind of felt like a slap in the face the way he called me his brother, but I tried to keep in mind that Watson didn’t remember we were together. Even though he’d been dry humping me on the front lawn just a few minutes ago.

“Come on, Holt.” Matthias rolled his eyes. “Can you show me where the bathroom is?”

It was on the tip of my tongue to say something about if he and Brooklyn were besties, he would know where the bathroom was, but I needed to get away from Watson. All I could smell was his aftershave, and it was driving me crazy.

Once we were in the house, Matthias turned to me and gave me a knowing smile.

“How long have you been in love with your stepbrother?” he asked.

“What? No, I’m not—”

Matthias placed a gentle hand on my shoulder. “Killian kissed me for the first time when I was eighteen.” His eyes glittered with happiness. “It was the scariest and best time of my life. He found me in his treehouse one night after my dad beat the crap out of me. He helped clean me up and then, well, he kissed me. I had always loved that man but lived in constant fear of what he would ever do if he found out. He used to act like I didn’t exist. Killian swore he was straight, but turned out he was just—”

“Matthias-sexual,” I finished for him.

“What?” He ducked his head as he chuckled and shook his head.

I grinned. “Sorry, that’s what Killian told me earlier. That he was Matthias-sexual when I blurted out I was gay. I was a little starstruck when I bumped into him.”

“Kill has that effect on people. He’s larger than life.”

“Sure, we’ll go with larger than life, but I was going to say scary as hell, which is saying a lot, because Rand Shepard is kind of intimidating, too.

Matthias grinned. “Right? If I didn’t know that Rand and Brooklyn were married, I would never picture them together. I mean, he’s clearly my type, since I have a thing for the whole bad-boy-tattooed-grumpy guy, but he’s more than I could handle.”

“Ha! Agreed.” I nodded before I leaned back against the wall. “You know, I feel like we could actually be friends, and I’m not just saying that. Everyone I know is in the NASCAR business, which is great and all, but it would be nice to hang out with someone who doesn’t always talk about cars.”

“I know nothing about NASCAR. Or cars,” Matthias assured me.

“Bonus points for you.”

“Did we just become best friends?”

I threw my head back with laughter only to feel jealous eyes digging into me. I half expected it to be Killian but was more than surprised to find Watson standing in the doorway, arms folded over his chest, his dark eyes narrowed as he watched us.

“Having fun?” he asked. “We thought you two might have gotten lost.” His gaze was unnerving as he glared at me.

Killian squeezed past him. “Aw, this is cute. They’re bonding.” He winked before hooking an arm around his fiancé.

“Miss me?” Matthias beamed happily.

Killian nodded. “Always.”

“I’m going to head out.” I avoided eye contact with Watson. “It was great to meet you both,” I told Matthias and Killian. “I’m sure I’ll see you around now that you’ve moved to town.”

“Uh, wait a second, new best friend. We need to exchange numbers.” Matthias untangled himself so he could get his phone from his pocket. “In case you need to talk or whatever.” He gave me a look I hoped no one else caught.

Once we had exchanged numbers, promising to get together soon, and said goodbye, I made my way toward the front of the house. I knew Rand and Brooklyn wouldn’t care that I snuck out without saying goodbye. I would see them both again soon enough. I pulled up the Uber app on my phone just as I heard the door open behind me. I knew who it was without turning around.

Watson moved to stand next to me. The scent of his aftershave, mixed with the booze he had been drinking earlier, swirled around us. He didn’t say anything, only stood next to me in silence. I wanted to confess everything. It might fix or

destroy us, but it would get all this damn stress off my chest. Only, when his pinky brushed lightly against mine, my heart fluttered in my chest, and then when he did it again, I grabbed his hand to lace our fingers together.

“Can I come home with you?”

“I’m not sure that’s a good idea.”

“Yet here you are holding my hand.”

I ducked my head. “You got me on that one.” I glanced over to look at Watson in the dark. A few strands of hair hung in his face. He was staring down at his feet. “Okay, you can come home with me.”

“Yeah?” His lips turned up. “I’ll sleep on the couch.”

I chuckled. “You can sleep in the bed.”

Watson’s fingers twitched around mine. “With you?” he whispered.

“No. I mean, I’ll sleep on the couch.” My breath caught in my throat when he turned to meet my gaze. “While you sleep in the bed,” I added.

“I think I’d like it better if you slept with me.” He twisted his large frame toward me.

I wanted that. I really did. God, I missed that so much, but Watson was having dreams that were flashbacks of us. I didn’t want him to wake up and freak out because I hadn’t told him the truth.

“That’s not a good idea.” I reminded him.

“Your cock thought it was a good idea earlier.”

“Jesus, you can’t just say shit like that, Watson. What if someone heard you?”

He shrugged before he took a step closer. “It’s only us. Watson and Holt,” he murmured before bringing his free hand up to my face. “I’ve missed you so much,” he confessed before he dragged the tips of his fingers over my cheek. “If I promise not to touch you, if I promise to be good, can we sleep in the same bed?” He gripped my jaw. “Or...” He moved so

that our lips were just inches apart. “Maybe if I’m not a good boy?”

“Watson.” His name came out in a moan. “Someone might hear you.”

“I really don’t fucking care, H. Fuck ‘em. We’re adults.” His lips fluttered over mine before he released me to take a step back. “Think that’s the Uber.”

Uber, right. The car that was taking me, and now Watson, back to the apartment I hated. As we climbed into the car and his hand found mine in the backseat of the car, that feeling of dread I usually felt when I found myself going there didn’t hit me.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Watson

I expected Watson to refuse when I asked him if I could go home with him. Because I figured his boyfriend was waiting for him. *Boyfriend*. The thought made me want to punch the guy in the face, and I hadn't even met him yet. He didn't deserve Holt. No one would ever be good enough for him. Not even me.

"Why are you growling like that?" Holt asked as the Uber driver started to slow down in front of an apartment building.

Was I? "Uh, sorry." I chuckled to myself. "Must have fallen asleep. Snoring. Yeah, I was snoring, not growling."

"Sounded like growling." Holt tried to pry his hand away from mine, but I held on tight. "I need to get out of the car, Watson. Can't do that with you acting like a stage five clinger."

Right. I released him and let him climb out before I followed behind him. The apartment building was nice, something I probably would have picked out for myself. With a pool outside and a gym that might not be exactly what I would use for everyday use, but it would work if I couldn't make it to my usual place.

Inside the elevator, Holt tried to keep his distance, watching me like I was going to attack him at any minute. Or maul him like a bear. My dick twitched in my pants as I thought about pressing him against the wall, running my hands through his dark hair, and shoving my tongue into his warm, soft mouth.

"You're doing it again," Holt interrupted my spicy thoughts.

I shrugged. "Sorry, H, you bring out the animal in me," I admitted.

"I bring out..." He stared at me with wide hazel eyes filled with desire.

“Is your boyfriend going to get jealous? About me being here alone with you?”

Holt swallowed, and the way his throat moved, his Adam’s apple bobbing against his skin... Yeah, it took all I had not to drag my tongue over it. “No, I don’t have... Watson, stop it.” He let out a shaky breath just as the elevator came to a stop and the doors opened. He lifted his chin. “You first.”

“Oh, no. You first, baby,” I insisted, but the moment the endearment slipped from my mouth, it made my entire body break out in goosebumps, and the air felt like it was sucked from the small compartment. “You know, maybe I will go first.” I wasn’t sure which apartment was his, but all of a sudden, I felt like I needed to put some distance between us.

Holt slowly followed behind me. “It’s this one.” He had stopped at the first door from the elevator, unlocked it, and went inside, leaving me to have my own mini panic attack.

Okay, Watts. You can do this. You’ve been having wet dreams about your stepbrother since you smacked your noggin around at Daytona. You want into his pants? Get into them, let him suck your dick and then—

“Watson?” Holt’s head popped back out of the doorway. “You coming inside, or are you going to stand out here muttering to yourself? Hey, are you all right? You look a little pale.” He stepped back into the hall.

“I might need to sit down.”

I felt a little dizzy, and maybe like I might be sick to my stomach. The second I stepped into Holt’s apartment, his scent overpowered me. Sweet, like home, and yep, I was going to throw up. The feeling hit me hard, and before I had a chance to warn him, all the vodka I had had tonight came right back up, down my chin, and all over my shirt, jeans, and onto the carpet. Tears stung my eyes.

“H, I’m sorry.” I met his hazel orbs.

He shook his head. “No, no, it’s all right.” He assured me as he grabbed a handful of paper towels from the counter in the kitchen before pressing them to my chest. “It will wash

out. It's not a big deal." He swiped at my chin. How was he so calm about this?

"I haven't... It's been so long that I did that." I watched Holt's face. "Or has it?"

He chewed on his lip. "Uh, no, you actually had an episode a couple of weeks ago, before your crash." He wiped off my face before he started on my shirt. "Yeah, this is going to have to come off. You can shower if you want, and I'll find something for you to wear."

"Shower with me." The words were out of my mouth before I could stop them. The way Holt's eyes flashed with heat told me he wanted that, too. "Don't say no," I whispered. "Just think about it. Show me where your bathroom is."

Holt didn't say anything as he led me farther into the apartment, down the hall, past what I assumed was his bedroom, and then stopped outside the bathroom. "Uh, just leave your clothes in the sink. I'll wash them for you."

I flipped on the light and shut the door behind me. I stared at myself in the mirror, noticing how much of a damn mess I was right now. My blond hair stuck up at all angles, and there was puke on my face, shirt, and jeans. Jesus, no wonder why he didn't want to shower with me. Forget mess; I was a train wreck. I stripped out of my clothes, folded them up, and placed them on the sink like Holt had told me before I opened the door to the shower. I used the toothpaste on the counter to brush my teeth by using my finger, then I turned on the water to step inside the tub.

Under the hot water, I felt my muscles loosen. The stress and anxiety from earlier began to slip away, and I tried to relax. Only, the scent of Holt was everywhere, which caused my stupid dick to chub up. What was it about my stepbrother that was driving me crazy like this all of a sudden? I must have knocked something loose during that crash because it had never been like this before.

"Uh, it's me." Holt's voice made my already hard dick twitch. "I was going to grab your clothes. I left some clean

underwear here for you. I'll try to find some sweats that might fit, but most of my stuff is going to be too small for you."

I tried not to be disappointed that he wasn't going to shower with me. "Thanks."

"Water okay?"

"It's fine."

When Holt didn't say anything else, I figured he had left, but then I saw the outline of his body standing outside the door. "You still want me to join you?"

"Are you serious?" I whispered.

The shower door opened and then Holt was standing there, naked. His body was beautiful, smaller than mine but lean with hard muscles. I let my eyes drop to his flat stomach, the dusting of hair that was his happy trail, and to his more-than-eager cock which stood at attention.

"Jesus Holt, you're fucking gorgeous." I stared wide-eyed as his skin turned pink under my gaze. "Let me... I need to touch you." I reached out to pull him closer. "Why did we wait so long to do this?" I pushed the wet hair back from his forehead as he stood under the showerhead.

Holt gave me a shy smile before he kissed me, his lips warm and inviting as his body melted against mine. I pushed his body back against the wall, my hand against the tile as our kiss deepened, wanting to taste every part of his mouth. Holt groaned, his hands digging at my shoulders before he pulled back. Then he dropped down to his knees.

Holt sucked me down right to the balls, and I threw my head back in ecstasy, my hands combing through his hair. I wanted to see. I needed to watch what he was doing, but it was close to impossible with the way Holt was working me over and the water dripping into my eyes. He gripped my balls with one hand, the shaft with the other, and when I felt him flatten his tongue against my length, I couldn't resist fucking his mouth.

Holt moaned around me. He was good at this, and it made me wonder who else was lucky enough to be on the receiving

end of one of his blowjobs. I managed to drop my gaze down to him to find him watching me with blown out pupils, his face full of lust, and that was all it took before I came in his mouth. He took it all, even hollowing his cheeks around me, and then giving me a shy smile when he pulled off with a pop.

“God, Holt.” I gripped his chin. “Where the hell did you learn how to do that?” I dropped to my knees on the floor of the shower with him.

He blushed, something I noticed he did a lot when it came to sex. “Uh, someone helped me.” he muttered.

“Yeah, well, he was a good teacher.”

“The best.”

I cupped his head in my hands. “You want to dry off and go to your room so I can return the favor?” I was more than ready to get my hands, and mouth, on his dick. Not to mention the rest of his body. I wanted to mark him. Claim him as mine, even if it was just for this one night.

“I’d like that.” Holt nodded.

Once we had dried off, he led me back to his room, sat me down on his bed, and tilted my head up to look at him.

“How are you feeling?” Holt stood before me with a towel wrapped around his slim hips.

“Like I want to ravish you,” I told him. “The way you did me.” I tugged on the towel so that it fell to the floor. “You sucked me off so good, Holt. It’s only fair I return the favor.” I widened my legs and gripped his waist to pull him between my thighs.

That sexy blush was back. “That’s not... That’s not what I meant.” God, he was fucking cute when he got all nervous. How was so I clueless about my stepbrother before?

“I know,” I teased and dropped a hand to wrap it around his hard length. “But it’s the truth.” His head fell back. “You’ve been all up in my head, Holt, and I can’t think about anyone else but you. Your mouth, your eyes, your body, and fuck, this cock.”

Holt groaned. “What do you want to do to me?” he whispered. “Tell me, Watson.”

Oh, the shy one wants me to talk dirty all of a sudden? I stood up, flipped him around so that I could push him back onto the bed, and then dropped to my knees. I hooked my hands against Holt’s legs so I could yank him closer to the edge of the mattress. “I want to fuck you, Holt, but tonight, I’m going to make you come so loud you wake the neighbors.”

“Do it,” he begged. “Suck me, suck my cock and make me—Watson!”

I flicked my tongue over the tip and tasted his salty precum. My own groan rattled through my chest as I sucked the head of his cock inside my mouth before I glanced up to find Holt leaning up on his forearms watching me, mouth open, and eyes hooded with lust. I smirked before I swallowed him all the way down, not caring that I gagged or the way my eyes teared up.

“Watson, that’s... uh.” He dropped back down onto the bed, his hips bucking up, and his body trembled with pleasure. I caught the way his hands fisted the blanket, and I only wanted to give him more.

I reluctantly released him. “Holt, have you ever had sex?” I whispered. When he nodded, I licked my index finger, slipped it between his crack, and rolled it over his backside. “Don’t worry, I won’t go deep.” I winked before I sucked him back inside my mouth.

“Fuck.”

That was all it took for Holt to explode. One finger, one little tease, and his cum filled my mouth in hot spurts as he cried out. His body shook and withered beneath me as I made sure to take everything he offered, almost like the dreams I had been having since I ended up in the hospital. Once I was sure he was done, I climbed up onto the bed with him and pulled his small frame next to me.

“How did that compare to your dreams?” Holt murmured, his hand combing through my hair, his breath warm against

my face.

I nipped at his jaw. “Better than any fantasy I ever had,” I assured him. When Holt didn’t say anything, I opened my eyes to find him watching me with tears in his eyes. “Hey, what’s this?” I asked. “Are you freaking out?”

“No, I’m sorry.” He blinked the tears away. “I should get dressed.” He tried to get up, but I only held him tighter.

“You never have to tell me you’re sorry, okay?” I assured him, and when he nodded, I let him go.

Holt got up from the bed and went to his dresser, pulling out a pair of sweats. He pulled out a second pair, which he held out for me.

I took them, knowing they wouldn’t fit but wanting to wear something of his. He avoided looking at me as he moved to the other side of the bed, pulled back the covers, and climbed onto the mattress.

“Am I sleeping with you?”

“If you still want to.”

I practically jumped onto the bed, and the sound of Holt laughing made my stomach flutter happily.

“Can I cuddle with you?” I murmured as he flipped off the light. “Or are you not... Oh, I guess that answers that question.” Holt had already curled himself around me.

Yeah, I kind of liked this way more than I should.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Holt

I stumbled from my bedroom the next morning, leaving Watson tangled in the blankets to start the coffee machine, only to find numerous text messages from my father. Maybe I should have stayed in bed because all this was doing was maybe my blood pressure skyrocket to dangerous levels. None of this was his business.

Dad: *Did Watson stay with you last night?*

Dad: *Do you think that's the best idea? He isn't exactly in the right state of mind. Did you tell him?*

I gritted my teeth as I finished off my coffee and placed the empty cup in the sink. I think our parents were getting a divorce, or at least a legal separation. What happened between Watson and me had really screwed things up between them. Or at least it did my father.

Holt: *Yes, he stayed here. Yes, it was a good idea. He's still my brother, even if his brain isn't working properly. Stop treating him with kid gloves for once.*

Dad: *Did you tell him? You know what that could do to his recovery.*

Holt: *I know what it might do to you.*

I flung my phone onto the counter before I thought about it and hoped I didn't crack the screen again.

"Yikes, who are you fighting with so early in the morning?" Watson grinned at me from the hallway before his face grew dark. "Is that Matthias?"

"Are you jealous?"

"What if I am?"

I shook my head. "I think Killian might murder me if I was hitting on his boyfriend—Oh! Good morning." I gasped when Watson pushed me back so he could pin me against the counter. "Was last night not a onetime thing with us?"

“I think you know damn well it wasn’t.” He growled before his mouth met mine. He didn’t even wait for me to open for him and instead pushed his tongue inside, finding mine and groaning as I sucked hard on it. “God, it’s like... I don’t know. You’ve woken up a beast or something.” He leaned his forehead against mine. “What took us so long to do this?”

I reached up to drag my thumbs over his cheekbones. “This isn’t freaking you out? Not even a little bit?” He seemed to be taking it all in stride, just like the last time. Like we were just picking up where we left off in even though he didn’t remember. He picked me up and placed me up on the counter. “This is—”

“Crazy,” he finished

I nodded. “I like it.”

“Me, too.”

I should tell him. I should tell him that we had started this before his crash, that he’d given me his ring, that this was our apartment, and that we were a couple. That we loved one another before he found out or remembered. Got mad I held back. I just wanted Watson to remember us without my help. I didn’t want to push him. He was already remembering some things, just not why.

“Lost you, huh?” Watson nuzzled into my neck. “I should call Mom. Tell her where I am.” He stepped back and reached for his phone, which was on the counter. “Shit, looks like she was already looking for me.” He unlocked his phone to read his texts.

“Hey, H?”

He glanced at me over his shoulder, and just the sight of him had my breath catching in my throat. Messy bed head, the way his long locks fell into his dark eyes, made my heart stutter against my chest. I missed having him around, and now this place really felt like home with him here. The way it was supposed to be.

I nodded. “Yeah?” I almost couldn’t speak.

Dressed in my sweats that barely fit, snug in the hips, ass, and, well, everywhere, he looked gorgeous. Broad chest, thick arms, and muscled body. How was he mine? Even now, even with his mind confused about some things, he was still compelled to come to me. I wasn't one to ever believe in soulmates, but was it possible Watson was meant for me all along?

"You think Mom and Dad are going to break up?" He sounded scared. "I mean, I always thought they were so happy, and in love, but clearly that wasn't the case."

I hopped off the counter so I could go to him. "I don't know," I answered truthfully.

"Can I stay here with you?" I hadn't expected Watson to ask that. "I mean, if that's too soon or if you don't want me around, I can find something else. Maybe Mason will let me crash at his place for a little while. I just, it's too intense at Mom and Dad's right now. I don't even know how else to describe it; it's just... The energy I feel whenever I'm in the same room as them. And sometimes Dad doesn't even come home until I'm in bed. Like he doesn't want to be around me." His eyes were filled with sadness and hurt.

I pressed my face into his back, the scent of my body wash strange coming from his skin. "Stay with me." I murmured as his big hands came up to grip mine. *This is your place as much as mine* is what I wanted to say, but the words were stuck in my throat.

"You're sure? I don't want to ruin your bachelor pad," Watson teased.

"Mfffppph," I grumbled against him.

He chuckled. "What?" He started to turn around, but I only held on tighter.

"It's not a bachelor pad, Watson, it's just a stupid apartment and I'm lonely here." I paused before I decided to just go for it. "Without you."

This time, I let him turn around. "There had to be some reason you left." Watson gripped my head between his hands.

“Something you’re not ready to tell me just yet.” He brushed his lips over mine. “It’s okay, Holt. I trust you. When you’re ready.” He gave me a small smile. “Don’t you have to be at the shop?”

“Oh shit!” I broke away from him. “I’m going to be late.” I dashed down the hall to change. “I washed your clothes. They’re in here,” I called out. Once I put on jeans and a fresh shirt, I found Watson watching me. “Unless you want to hang here while I’m gone.” I had to resist the urge to drag him onto the bed and strip him naked.

He smiled. “Nah, I’ll come with. I should make an appearance.” He was quiet as he changed, but then he grabbed me and pulled me into a soft kiss. “Thanks, H, for last night, this morning, for everything.”

Watson hung out at the race shop while I trained with the pit crew for most of the day. He caught up with Noel, the substitute driver, signed some die-cast cars, and I even caught him watching me for a little bit. It was rare we were both at the shop at the same time, even when he was his normal self, so I enjoyed it while I had the chance. The sound of his voice while he spoke with Noel, his laugh at the joke he shared with Miles or just the burn of his eyes when he watched me practicing with the pit crew.

“You need to get your license,” Watson commented as we stood outside in the late afternoon for the Uber. “Kind of sad that you work on a pit crew, have this hot stepbrother who is literally a racecar champion, yet you don’t drive.”

I rolled my eyes. “That’s a bit much, don’t you think?”

“Which part?”

“Hot stepbrother.”

His entire face lit up as he smiled at me. “You don’t think I’m hot, H?” Watson tilted his head. “I don’t do it for you? Like not even a little?” He placed a hand on my shoulder.

“Watson, everyone can see us,” I reminded him.

He shrugged. “You don’t like my body or my face?” He leaned down so that his lips were right next to my ear. “My cock not good enough for you? Because it sure seemed like it last night when you sucked me so hard I came in your mouth.” Watson took a step back to stare at me with fire in his eyes. “Looks like the Uber is here.”

I couldn’t speak as we climbed into the back of the car and verified the address to our parents’ house. Watson wanted to pick up some of his things to bring back to the apartment tonight. I was trying to come up with the right words to say to him, and when I turned to look at him, he was watching me.

“You’re quiet,” he commented before bringing his hand up to comb it through my hair.

I love you. That’s what I wanted to say. Only I couldn’t. “You know I find you insanely attractive.” I blurted out, and my hand came up to rub at my sternum.

“Thank you.” Watson stroked my cheek. “Can I ask you why you keep doing that?” He made the motion over his own chest.

I felt a blush creep over my cheeks. “Uh...”

“It’s all right if you don’t want to tell me. We all have our secrets.”

“What secrets are you keeping, Watson?”

He only grinned. “Another time, baby.” The nickname seemed to surprise him as much as it did me, but we had pulled up in front of our parents’ house. I quickly paid and tipped the driver so we could climb out of the car.

“Boys!” Mom was on the front porch, waving happily. “It’s so good to see you. I hope you’ll stay for dinner.” She held out her arms, and we both stepped in, something we hadn’t done since we were teenagers.

Watson nudged my side. “Sure, Mom. Is Dad going to be here?”

“Uh, no.” She stuttered slightly. “I’m afraid he’s working late again.”

I caught the side-eye Watson gave me as she pulled back. “But I made enough to feed an army, so don’t worry about that.” Mom pressed a kiss to Watson’s head. “How are you feeling, sweetie?” Which was code for *have you remembered anything?*

“Fine, Mom, nothing to report. No memories have come back yet,” Watson told her. “I’m going to stay at Holt’s for a couple of days, if that’s all right. I don’t want to burden you and Dad.” He held up a hand when she started to protest. “He already has all the doctor’s information for when we’re at the track, and if anything happens, we’ll make sure you know. I’m a big boy now. You don’t have to worry so much.”

Mom’s brown eyes moved to me.

“I’ll take care of him. Scout’s honor.” I held up two fingers.

“You weren’t even a scout.” Watson elbowed me.

“So?” I elbowed him back, and that turned into him putting me into a headlock, giving me a noogie, and yanking me down the steps of the porch and onto the grass.

Watson laughed. “I’ll always be the bigger brother, H, so you might as well give up now!” He started to tickle my side with his free hand, and I poked at his stomach with my fingers.

“Not fair!” I double over as tears poured down my face. I had always been the more ticklish of us.

“Boys, be careful!” Mom giggled from the porch. “I swear, the way the two of you still horse around like you’re kids...”

“Be careful.” Watson’s husked voice caused goosebumps to break out over my skin, and then he easily lifted me before placing me on the ground so he could straddle my hips. “Oh, someone is awake.” He smirked.

My eyes went wide. “Watson,” I hissed. “Mom is literally right there.”

“And your father is right here.” Dad’s voice was louder than I had ever heard. “This is what I have to come home to?”

Watson helped me to my feet once he climbed to his own. “We were just playing around,” he assured him.

“Is that what you call it?” Dad grunted.

I brushed off my backside. “Hi, Dad.” The look on his face was anything but happy. “Uh, maybe we won’t stay for dinner,” I muttered.

“Probably for the best.” Dad started toward the house, ignoring Mom, and letting the screen door slam behind him.

Watson gripped the back of his neck. “See what I’m talking about?” He grimaced. “It’s like he hates the sight of me. I’m glad that I don’t have to stay here tonight.” He sighed.

That would make two of us.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Watson

Holt was quiet on the way back to his apartment, and even though I wanted to push him, I let it go. I left my bag in the bedroom before coming back into the kitchen to find him digging things out of the fridge. He didn't hear me, so I took the opportunity to watch him, the way he chewed nervously on his bottom lip and kept tugging on the ends of his hair.

"Whatcha' making?" I asked.

"Jesus Christ!" Holt exclaimed before dropping the items in his hand. "You can't just sneak up on people like that." His hazel eyes were huge as he stared at me.

I moved to scoop up the cheese and tomatoes. "Sorry." I placed them on the counter. "Want to talk about it?"

"No," he grumbled before going to back to the fridge.

I nodded. "Want me to suck you off?" I chuckled when Holt turned around to stare at me with no sign of a smile on his face. "I'm only teasing, H. Just trying to get you to loosen up a bit." I moved closer. "You don't have to cook. We can get takeout instead."

"I want to cook. It helps me keep my mind off things."

I realized as he placed the dough on the counter next to the other ingredients, he was making one of my favorite meals. "Pizza." A feeling of warmth spread through me.

"Yeah."

"You're making pizza."

Holt sighed. "Yeah, I'm making pizza. It's not a big deal, Watson; so don't go making it out to be. I make it all the time when we're at the track, and what are you doing?" His eyes met mine when I spun him around to grip his chin.

"I'm sorry," I whispered, dragging his body closer to mine. "I'm sorry your dad's acting like an asshole, that our parents might end up separating because of me, that I got into a

terrible accident that messed up my head, and that I'm having these weird feelings for you that I don't understand. But don't push me away, H. You're all I have, and I..." I let my voice trail off.

Holt fingers clung to the back of my shirt. "None of this is your fault. The crash, my dad, your memories," he assured me, and I felt him take a deep breath. "Your feelings."

"Being with you feels so right," I murmured. "I just... I don't want it to be wrong, baby."

Again, that intimate word, and even though it should scare me, it didn't. I had a couple of girlfriends in high school but none that I could ever see a future with. But Holt? Yeah, he was someone I could actually see that with. When he didn't say anything, I thought I might have scared him.

"H?" I worried my lip between my teeth as I risked looking down at him.

His hazel eyes shimmered with tears. "I-I..."

"It's okay," I said. "I know it's a lot, maybe even too much."

"That's not it."

"Your boyfriend?"

He smiled. "I don't have a boyfriend."

I pushed the hair back from his face. "Just, just think about it. Don't say anything now. Think about us, how good and right this feels." I saw the emotion in his face, the way his eyes warmed to me. "Need some help getting the pizza ready?"

"Are you kidding?" Holt scoffed. "Go sit on the couch. We'll Netflix and chill." When I grinned, he rolled his eyes. "*Just* Netflix and chill, Watson. Now go. I have some Wild and Reckless ice cream in the freezer for later." He smacked at my hands when I tried to get handsy with him.

After we ate the pizza Holt cooked, which was fantastic as always, we ended up cuddled up on the couch. Holt lay between my legs, his small frame over mine, and our legs twisted together. I could freely admit Netflix and chill was

nice, even when it was just that. I had my arms wrapped around his torso, running my hands through his dark hair, and it was, well, it was fucking perfect.

“You still awake?” I asked, dragging my nails over his scalp just to hear the sexy groan I knew he would release when I did it. I had come to realize he liked it as much as I did when he soothed my cheekbones with the pads of his thumbs.

He nodded. “I’m awake.”

“Yes, but how awake?”

“I’m awake, so no, you can’t take advantage of me.”

I smiled to myself. “I didn’t touch those girls the other night. When you were out with Carson, and I saw you at the bar.” I felt like I needed him to know.

“Okay,” he grumbled.

“I just... I thought I could, you know, be like the old me before the accident, but I... You were all I could think about. All I wanted, and even though I thought if I got lost in them, it would help, I couldn’t do it.” I sighed, and then Holt twisted his body around so that he was on his stomach, looking up at me with those hazel eyes, his dark hair all messy from my fingers. “You’re so—fuck, you’re gorgeous,” I heard myself tell him.

Holt blushed. “I’m glad you didn’t touch them, Watson, but I have no right to be mad at you if you did.” He started to move onto his back, but I stopped him.

“Come here. Sit on my lap,” I whispered.

Holt didn’t hesitate to do what I asked, and when he was straddling me, I buried my face in his neck. “You ever get a good look at yourself, Watson?” he asked as he raked his hands through my hair. “You’re pretty damn special, too.”

“Thank you.” I held him tighter. “I never thought...” I pulled back to look at him. “Have you ever been in love before or—”

My body suddenly went stiff. My eyes rolled back, and my body began to shake.

“Watson? Holy shit, Watson?” I could hear Holt talking to me, but I couldn’t answer him. “Jesus Christ.” He sounded like he might be crying. “It’s okay. I’m right here,” he assured me, his hands cupping my face. “Can you hear me? Are you with me, baby?”

My lids were so heavy—my body, too—and all I wanted to do was sleep.

“No, no, don’t pass out on me. I think you just had a seizure.”

“What?” I mumbled. My eyes focused in on Holt’s face for a second. Did he say I had a seizure?

He climbed from my lap. “I need to call your neurologist.”

“Don’t—Please don’t leave me.” I reached for him, but Holt slipped from my grasp. “I’m scared,” I whispered as I realized what he just said.

Holt stopped and moved back to lace his fingers through mine. “I know. Watson, I’ll be right back,” he promised, but before he came back, I slipped off into darkness.

I was absolutely drained.

Holt had called the doctor’s office and got the on-call staff, who had stated that I needed to go to the emergency room, which I refused to do because I hated the thought of going to the hospital. So instead, first thing the next morning, he called the office again, and I was told to come right in.

Even though I slept after what Holt thought was a seizure, I was still more tired than I had been in my entire life. My whole body felt as if the bones had been sucked right out. My muscles weren’t doing that great either, so it took nearly all I had to walk from Holt’s apartment to Mason’s waiting car, since he was nice enough to give us a ride, and from the car to the doctor’s office.

I was a fucking wreck. What if I wasn’t able to drive a race car again? What if I had another seizure? What if my career was over before it even really got started?

“Hey.” Holt placed a hand on my knee that I hadn’t even realized was bouncing up and down. “It’s going to be all right.” He looked like I felt. Dark bags under his eyes, exhaustion written all over his face.

I tried to smile. “Easy for you to say. The doctor didn’t stick some ridiculous cap on your head full of electrodes to record the activity of your brain. It was embarrassing.” I dropped my gaze to the floor of the room.

Holt moved in front of me to cup my face with his hands. “I think you need to remember that you were in a horrific accident. You’re lucky to be alive, and it might take longer to heal than you realize,” he murmured, dragging his thumbs over my cheekbones. Lust and desire spread through my stomach as he touched me. “It might be time to rest instead of rushing around. You are still young, Watson. You have plenty of time to worry about your future.”

I widened my legs and placed my hands on Holt’s hips to pull him closer. “You always were the smart one,” I murmured.

There was a knock at the door that had Holt pulling away from me, and then Doctor Sherman entered the room. “How are you feeling, Watts?” he asked, placing his laptop down on the counter.

I gritted my teeth. “About the same as when you asked me earlier. Tired, sluggish, and ready to collapse. Nothing a few hundred hours of sleep wouldn’t fix,” I reminded him.

“It’s to be expected after a seizure.” Doctor Sherman washed his hands before he moved to lift my head and inspect my eyes.

“So, it was a seizure?” Holt spoke up before I could. I was still a little shocked.

The doctor nodded. “It’s not uncommon after suffering a traumatic brain injury like your stepbrother did. Sometimes they occur right after the accident, but other times it can be days, weeks, or even months.” He turned to look at Holt. “He probably won’t be driving again until next season.”

“What?” I exclaimed. “That’s... I have a championship on the line!” I felt sick.

Doctor Sherman gave a quick smile. “Not this year, son. I’m sorry.” He moved to his laptop. “You live together?” He glanced over at Holt.

“Yes,” he answered.

Dr. Sherman nodded. “Good. Watts is going to need someone to watch him in case he has another seizure. This doesn’t mean he will. Most people are exhausted like your brother is this morning after they experience something like this. Keep an eye on him, let him rest, make sure he eats, and just make sure he stays calm. That’s the best thing for him right now.”

Tears stung my eyes. I had worked so hard toward this championship only for it to be ripped away because of one accident. It wasn’t fair. It wasn’t. I wasn’t...

“Bullshit.” I gritted my teeth. “You can’t expect me to just sit back and watch someone else take what’s mine. I earned this.”

“Watson.” Holt placed a hand on my arm.

I ducked my chin. “Sorry.” I took a shaky breath. “Am I good to go?”

“Yes, but if this or anything else happens again, I want you to call me.” Doctor Sheldon handed a business card to Holt. “This has my personal cell. For emergencies only, of course.”

We made our way out of the office, where Mason was waiting in the car. We had invited him inside, but he’d said he didn’t want to intrude. Holt climbed into the back. On the way over, I’d sat in the front with my teammate, but this time, I needed Holt, so I moved into the backseat with him.

“Sure, I’ll chauffeur your ass around.” Mason chuckled, but when he caught my gaze in the rearview mirror, his brows dipped. “Shit, this is bad, isn’t it?”

I nodded. “You could say that.” I started to slide the seatbelt across my chest and then changed my mind. I moved

so that I was lying with my head on Holt's lap, my arms wrapped around his waist. I hoped he didn't fight me, hoped he knew I needed this connection. I felt Mason start his car, and when no one mentioned anything, I felt myself start to relax for the first time all morning.

“Can I ask what happened?” Mason asked.

Holt started to drag his hands through my hair, and before I could stop myself, I had fallen asleep.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Holt

Mason helped me get Watson into the apartment, where he slept for the rest of the day. I had to leave to go to the shop in the afternoon, which I hated to do, so I texted him and left him a note. I was surprised to find him sitting on the couch when I returned. He had changed into a pair of sweats and a clean shirt, but his hair was matted down on one side of his face from where he had been sleeping. It hurt my heart to see Watson look so drained. He was already having such a hard time dealing with his memory issues but now throwing in not being able to drive into the mix? It was going to eat him alive.

“Hi.” I dropped my keys and phone on the counter, flashing him a smile.

Watson jutted his chin at me. “Hi,” he muttered.

“Nope, we’re not doing that thing where we feel sorry for ourselves right now,” I told him as I walked over to the couch so I could climb into his lap. “We’re going to order some dinner, enjoy ourselves, and then if you’re a good boy—” I tilted his head, so he had no choice but to meet my eyes. “Maybe I’ll suck your cock.”

Watson’s eyes flashed with want. “I’ll be a good boy,” he promised.

“I know.” I brushed my lips over his before he shoved me over onto the couch and splayed his body over mine. “Be careful,” I reminded him.

“Holt,” he murmured, his breath warm and minty. “What if this is the end? What if my career is over before it’s just begun?”

I searched his face, taking in the sadness, the fear, and everything he was showing me. “I won’t let that happen,” I promised, running the back of my hand over his cheek. “I’ll do everything in my power to make sure you’re back in a race car. As soon as you’re cleared to start working out again, we’ll hit

the gym. As soon as you're cleared to drive? I'll be there. You'll be damn sick of me, you'll be looking for your own place to live," I teased.

"You would do that? For me?"

"I would do anything for you."

Watson pressed his lips together. "H, I... I need you," he whispered.

My stomach fluttered, and heat exploded inside my body. "Baby, I don't think—"

"Please, I need to feel you, be inside you, and I just... You said you weren't a virgin, right?" His dark eyes searched my face.

I shook my head. "No." *Because you took care of that already.*

"You're blushing," Watson murmured. "It's so damn hot when you get nervous about sex." He pressed his lips against my neck as he started to pepper wet kisses over my skin, his hands dipping down to the hem of my shirt. "Say yes, Holt. I'll be gentle, let you take the reins, and go at your own place." He eased my thighs open with his knee, and I groaned when he made contact with my erection.

My hips bucked. "Watson."

When he stopped to stare at me, the look in his eyes made every doubt in my mind disappear. I grabbed his head to seal my mouth to his as my body trembled beneath him. Goosebumps pebbled over my body as Watson's hands slipped under my shirt, and he rubbed his hard cock against mine.

"Is that a yes?"

He nipped at my bottom lip. His fingers brushed my peaked nipples as his tongue invaded my mouth. I loved how our tongues felt rubbing together, the sound of his grunts rumbling through his chest. *I loved him.*

I grabbed at his hair to yank his face away from me. "Yes." I finally get the smile I'd needed from him all day. "If you

start to feel off or it gets to be too much, you need to tell me.” I released his hair.

“Absolutely.” Watson nodded. “You have supplies?”

I felt that blush start to creep up over my face. “Uh, yeah. In the bedroom, next to the bed.”

“Be right back.” Watson climbed up off me, and I sat up on the couch.

The doctor hadn’t said sex was off the table. He just said that Watson should keep his exercise, anything aggressive, down to a minimum. I figured hand jobs and blowjobs were all we would be able to do for the time being since his seizure.

“You’re still wearing clothes.” Watson grinned as he placed a condom and the lube on the coffee table. “Stand up,” he ordered. When I did, he lifted my arms and removed my shirt. “I’m not sure I’ll ever get used to how insane your body is, H.” He moved to pop the button on my pants, and I noticed his hands were shaking.

I placed my hands over his. “Are you okay?” I whispered.

“Yeah, just a little nervous.”

“Nervous to be with me?”

Watson worried his lip between his teeth. “I suppose I am, yes.” Heat bloomed in his cheeks.

“Let’s finished getting undressed.” I squeezed his hands. “Then you sit down so I can take care of you.”

He nodded, and I watched as he started to remove his clothes. He yanked off his shirt before he slipped his sweats down his thighs. His thick cock sprang up, smacking him in the stomach. The tip looked red and angry, the precum already gathering at the slit.

“Don’t.” I shook my head when Watson went to wrap his hand around his length. “Sit.” I jutted my chin. I wasn’t used to being so bossy, but I knew he needed this.

Watson nodded and did as I told him, his eyes wide and eager. “You... you... God, Holt.” He groaned as I unbuttoned

my jeans and removed them, along with briefs. My own dick was just as eager and needy as his.

“Now.” I grabbed the lube and condom, making sure to place them on the couch next to us as I straddled his waist. “You want me?”

“Yes, fuck yes. I want you so bad, H.” Watson nodded.

I reached for the condom, ripped it open, and rolled it down his length, watching the way his eyes rolled back. Then I popped open the lube to coat my fingers. The way his eyes widened to watch me get myself ready; it was just like the first time. Two fingers, three fingers, and the sound of Watson’s heavy panting as I prepped myself, was nearly enough to push me over the edge. I slicked up his dick, and then I met his heated gaze.

“Still with me?” I barely brushed my lips over his.

Watson nodded. “I think so.”

I gripped his cock with my hand, and then felt him at my hole. It breached me. I grimaced, then the head slipped inside. We both groaned, and my hands slipped up to grip at Watson’s shoulders as I started to sink down. His eyes never left mine. I watched the way they grew wider, the fire that burned inside them getting brighter. When he was all the way inside, his thick, hairy thighs against my ass, I finally let out my breath.

“Can... can I touch you?” His voice was hardly a whisper.

I wanted to deny him. I wanted to be that guy, but there was no way I ever could do that. I wanted Watson as much as he wanted me.

“I wish you would.”

Watson’s hands suddenly gripped my hips to yank me forward. His mouth crashed against mine, and when I finally began to move, desire hit me like a brick. I needed him. I couldn’t be without him. I needed to tell Watson the truth about us.

“You feel so good, Holt.” His hands tightened against me. “Please look at me.”

I hadn't realized my eyes had closed, but when I opened them, Watson's lips turned up into a smile. His eyes never left mine as my legs shook while I continued to slowly ride him. My cock was desperate for attention, but this wasn't about me. This was about Watson and making him feel good. I dragged my nails across his skin, needing to mark him, wanting to make him mine as he leaned forward to bring our lips together.

Watson broke our kiss. "Tell me how close you are, baby. Tell me you're ready to come all over me." One hand dipped between us as he wrapped it around my cock.

That's all it took for me to spill over his hand, down his wrist, and onto both of our stomachs. My head fell forward just as I heard his low growl, his own release hitting him. He thrust up and then he went slack beneath me.

I carefully eased myself off him, slipped the condom off, and hurried into the kitchen to drop it in the trash. When I came back, I found Watson with his mouth open and snoring quietly. My heart thudded against my chest. I leaned forward and slid my lips over his before I went down to the bathroom to get a washcloth to clean him up. He didn't wake up as I cleaned my cum from his hand and arm, the little bit that had trickled down his stomach, and then ran it over his dick. It perked up at my touch.

Watson blinked at me as he reached a hand up to touch my face. "Thank you." He gave me an easy smile.

"You don't have to thank me." I moved to keep his hand against my face.

"Cuddle with me?"

I nodded. "Of course."

Watson moved to lie down on the couch and made room so I could tuck myself in front of him. He reached up to grab the blanket off the back of the couch and wrapped it around both of us, his arms circling around my waist. "Do you think we could, I don't know, be a couple?" he murmured. "Or is that not something you would be interested in with me?"

"You want us to be exclusive?"

Watson buried his head into my neck. “Yeah.” He held me closer. His brain still knew. He might not understand what was going on between us, but fuck; somewhere deep inside, he still knew.

“I’d like that,” I whispered. When he didn’t answer, I twisted my frame around to find him sleeping again. I cradled Watson’s face in my hands. “I will always want you, Watson James. No matter what,” I assured him. “I’ll take care of you, baby. No matter what happens.”

He muttered something in his sleep and snuggled back against me. Then he shook his head. “Shit, did I fall asleep again? Wait, did you answer me about being a couple?” Watson’s eyes searched my face.

“Yes.” I smiled, dragging my hand through his hair.

He nodded. “Wait, yes? As in, yes?”

“Exclusively yours.” I grinned, and when I saw that he was going to get all excited, I shook my head. “Don’t go getting all rowdy on me, Watson. You’re already exhausted. We can save that for another day,” I promised. *Just like me telling you about us. The real us. The us you keep having dreams about.*

He rolled his eyes. “Fine.” He huffed. “Can we order some food? I’m starving. Oh, how about Chinese?”

I chuckled. “That sounds good.” I started to wiggle out from under the blanket. “You want to move in here with me?”

“Permanently?”

“That would be what I mean.”

Watson slapped my ass playfully. “Damn right I do.” He grinned.

Then after that, I can tell you the truth. Before you figure it out on your own.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Watson

I was tired. *All. The. Time.* It was like that seizure just zapped all the energy out of my body and I couldn't get it back, no matter how much sleep I got. And, trust me, I was getting a lot of it. More than I was used to, but I had no other choice.

Friday afternoon, Holt and I headed down to Talladega with the rest of the team. I might not be driving, but I certainly wanted to show my support for my crew. I slept the entire plane ride there and woke to Holt gently shaking me awake. He had tried to convince me to stay home but that meant staying with Mom and Dad, something I wasn't about to do. The doctor told me it was fine to travel, after another visit with him this morning, just as long as someone was around to watch me most of the time. Like I was a child. A toddler who needed their hand held crossing the street. Absolute bullshit.

"This weekend is going to be great." I grunted before I stretched my arms over my head. "Me missing most of it while you spend the time waking my ass up."

He tilted his head. "You're here with me. Doesn't that at least count for something?"

"Yeah," I agreed, resisting the urge to kiss him. "You're the only good thing in my life right now, H."

Holt nudged my side as we stepped out of the airplane. "Listen, grumpy, we talked about this. You need to think of the brighter side." His hazel eyes sparkled with happiness that I wished I could absorb into my body. "You're alive, you're here another day, and..." He wiggled his brows. "If you play your cards right, you might just get lucky tonight."

At least my dick wasn't feeling depressed, because just the mention of getting any, had it perking up and pressing at my zipper. When I wasn't sleeping? I was all over Holt like a second skin. He didn't seem to mind, though. He was more than happy to oblige when I woke him in the middle of the night, attacked him in the middle of the day, or found him

when he was making dinner. As an athlete, my sex drive had always been high, but since my seizure? It seemed to have taken on a mind of its own. I simply couldn't get enough of Holt.

Once at the track, I had every intention of making the rounds, saying hello to everyone, but the second I sat down? I fell asleep. It kind of made me feel useless, and when I woke up, Holt was cooking dinner.

"Good nap?" he teased, plating what looked pasta before he placed the strainer in the sink.

"This is fucking ridiculous."

"We talked about this."

I rolled my eyes. "I didn't talk about anything." I folded my arms over my chest. "I was told that this was going to happen. I didn't have much of a choice because of the accident, and I had to go with it. All I've done is sleep, eat, and fuck for the past few days. I hate it. I'm miserable. I feel like life is passing me by. I'm just... I don't..." I tried to swallow the lump in my throat as Holt rushed over to me.

"Watson." He placed a hand on my thigh. "I can't pretend to understand what you're going through, but your body is healing. You can't go through what you did and expect to just bounce back. You had a traumatic accident. You're lucky to have walked away from it the way you did. Things could have gone a completely different way." He squeezed my leg.

Tears stung my eyes, and I hung my head so he wouldn't see them fall. "No one knows how hard it is to sit here while someone else is driving my damn car. It tears me up inside to not be out there. Ever since I can remember, all I wanted to do was this, and now that I'm to not be able to do it?" I glanced up to find Holt watching me. "It's torture."

"I know, baby," he murmured.

"Maybe coming to the track isn't such a good idea, you know? Maybe I should stay home. I mean, I want to be with you. I want to be wherever you are, but not like this. Not when it eats me up inside just hearing the cars and knowing I

can't..." A sob burst from my throat, but when I started to get up, embarrassed, Holt climbed into my lap and pressed my head into his neck.

I didn't want to cry in front of him. It wasn't the first time he had seen me like this. I'd had accidents before, although not as serious. Ones where I had broken an ankle, a foot, even my leg, but none of them had kept me from driving my car. I had always been able to get into the vehicle, drive it like I stole it, and that was what had mattered.

I clung to Holt like he was my lifeline. Because right now, he was the only good thing left in my life. The only thing keeping me from drowning.

Holt's hands dragged through my hair as I let everything out. I cried like this might be it for my racing career. As if I might not ever get back into another car again and might have to change my entire life around. He didn't say a word as sobs wracked my body, tears stained his shirt, or when I yanked him as close as he possibly could get to me, begging him to help me. Screaming that life wasn't fair. That this was everything I had ever worked for, and I couldn't ever see myself doing anything else.

When I had finally calmed down, which could have been seconds, minutes, or hours later, Holt pulled back to cup my face in his hands. "I love you." The words sounded so perfect coming from his lips. "I'm not saying that to try to make you feel better about this situation. I'm saying that because it's true. I love you, Watson." His lips slid over mine, in spite of the fact that my face was a wet and snotty mess.

"Would you go with me if I had to leave all this? If I had to do something other than racing?"

"I'll go wherever you are, Watson James. We're a team, a packaged deal."

I felt my chin start to tremble again. "Holt." My voice cracked as I spoke his name.

"It's okay, baby. I know." He pressed his forehead against mine, brushing the fresh tears from my cheeks with his

thumbs.

I managed a small smile. “I don’t think I’ll ever be good enough for you, but I’m going to try like hell. Do you hear me? To give you everything you deserve, to make you as happy as you have made me these past few days. You’re so fucking amazing.”

His cheeks grew pink, and his eyes lit up. It made my heart ache and my whole body come to life.

“You already make me happy,” Holt assured me.

By the time we got back to North Carolina on Sunday night, I was starting to feel a little better. I was still sleeping more than I wanted, but it wasn’t bothering me quite as much. I realized that if this was the end, if I truly never wasn’t able to get into a car again, my life wasn’t going to end. I had Holt, he loved me, and that made me happier than anything ever had.

Tuesday afternoon, we walked into an out of the way restaurant to have lunch with Matthias and Killian after Matthias had texted Holt to see if he was busy. When Holt suggested it, I thought it sounded like a great idea, but now I wasn’t so sure.

“What if I fall asleep?” I squeezed his hand tightly.

Holt smiled at me. The smile that he always gave me that sent my stomach into a twist. Like someone had released butterflies inside of it.

“I’ll move your food so you don’t make a mess,” he teased.

“You’ll... Holt!” I gasped before he threw his head back, laughing. “This is my health we’re talking about, and you’re making jokes?”

He stopped to step up onto his toes and brushed his lips over mine. “You’re not going to fall asleep. Have ever done that during a meal?” He gripped both of my hands with his own. “Come on, we’ve kept them waiting long enough.”

“You have,” Killian commented from the booth right next to us. “But I’m curious how”—he waved a hand between us—“this is going to play out. Are you two together? Like a couple?” he asked as we slid into the booth across from them.

He was hardly recognizable with the baseball cap he wore, pulled down to cover his face with his dark curls sticking out on the sides. If I hadn’t seen his arms and hands covered in tattoos, I might not have known it was even him.

I turned to see Holt’s entire face turn bright red. “Right, well.” I dropped my arm over his shoulder. “We’re a couple. I love him.” I raised my chin, waiting for his reaction, not even realizing it was the first time I had admitted that aloud.

“Hey, that’s cool with me.” He picked up his straw, pulled the paper wrapper off the tip and then turned to look at Matthias. “Babe.” He grinned before he blew the rest of the wrapper at him.

“Always the mature one in the relationship, Kill.” But he was smiling. “How are you feeling, Watts?” he asked me.

Holt’s hand landed on my thigh. “I’m tired. I, uh, had a seizure last week, and that really knocked me on my ass. I probably won’t be back in a car until next year.”

“Shit, dude, that sucks. I’m sorry.” Killian pressed his lips together. “You know I’m a big fan of racing. It was weird not to see you out there on Sunday.”

The waitress came over to ask if we were ready to order, and I noticed Killian made sure to keep his face away, hidden, so she didn’t see him. Matthias put in both of their orders, and I wondered what that must be like. To be so popular, people knew who you were. Sure, people around here knew who I was, but it wasn’t the same. I wasn’t going to get mobbed by hordes of people if word got out that I was having lunch with my fiancé at some restaurant in the middle of nowhere. Some might come to say hello, ask for a picture or an autograph, but I didn’t have to hide the way he was right now.

I knocked on the table with my knuckles when the waitress had left. “We could have eaten at our place or yours. Gotten

takeout,” I told him when Killian met my eyes. “I didn’t realize what a big deal it was for you. I guess I take it for granted.”

He shrugged. “I get sick of being a hermit sometimes. We spend a lot of time alone at our place. It’s nice to go out now and then. Not that I mind being alone with him. He saved my life.” He reached over to grip the back of Matthias’s neck before pulling his face to his.

Holt turned to look at me. “They’re cute, huh?” He smiled, and I reached up to trace his lips with my index finger. The dent in the middle, plump, full bottom, the thinner full top, and moved to press a kiss to them before I pulled back.

“Not as cute as you.” I murmured.

“We’re all fucking cute.” Killian tossed a napkin across the table. “Although, I prefer ‘hot as shit’ if you’re talking about me.” He grinned.

Holt rolled his eyes before he leaned toward Matthias. “Is he always like this?”

“He’s tamer than normal today. Probably the blowjob I gave him this morning.” Matthias snickered.

Killian clamped a hand over his fiancé’s mouth. “No sex talk at the table.” He chuckled.

For the rest of the afternoon, I felt almost normal. Just a guy having lunch with his boyfriend and their friends. Not a racecar driver whose career was hanging in the balance of his shitty brain, which may or may not give up on him at any minute.

Little did I know the worst was yet to come.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Holt

It was strange being at a race without Watson, but he had decided last night he didn't want to go to Charlotte this weekend. Mom had said she would come and check on him throughout the day since I would be home at night. The track was so close to home I would be able to be there at night with him. If I were being honest, I didn't like being there without him. I knew that he was struggling; I saw it every single time someone brought it up or when Dr. Sherman told him yesterday that no, no chance of him getting back into the car any time soon. He just wasn't ready yet.

Watson was still tired. He was still sleeping a lot more than he had before the seizure, though not as much as when it first happened, which was close to twenty hours a day, but it still was more than he had been before.

Friday night when I got home, I found Watson sitting on the couch flipping through his phone, alone, which surprised me. Mom was supposed to be here until I relieved her. His jaw was tight, his eyes narrowed, and I could immediately tell he was angry about something.

"Where's Mom?" I asked causally, trying not to make things worse. When he didn't answer, I took a step closer. "Watson? Everything all right?" I hated to say I was getting used to this version of him, but it was his normal lately.

He turned his dark eyes on me. Eyes that were full of anger and confusion. "I sent her home, Holt. What the fuck are these?" He held his phone out to me.

I moved closer. "What's..." On his phone was a picture of us. In the hammock in the backyard of our parents' house. Happy and smiling. Fear clawed at my brain. "Uh..."

"When was this taken?" When I didn't answer, he climbed to his feet toward me. "Holt, when the fuck did I take these pictures of us?" He turned the phone back, and I could see he was flipping through more. Pictures from that week, when we

went to the abandoned track, when we were exploring everything and having so much fun together. “How long have we been together? Why didn’t you tell me? Did you want to break up with me? Did we break up?” Watson lifted his gaze back to me.

“The doctors said it was—”

“You didn’t tell me we were together? We were in love? Did Mom and Dad know? Is that why they’ve been acting so fucking weird? Is... is this *our* apartment?” He stumbled back at the question. “Am I the boyfriend Carson said you had? Do you not love me anymore? Is that why you didn’t tell me? Why did you let me come here if you don’t want me? I don’t... Why... Oh my God!” He started back to the bedroom. “I should have left with Mom. I can’t be here with you right now.”

I chased after him. “Watson, wait. Just talk to me.” I touched his arm, but he shrugged me off. “Please, just let me explain.”

“I think you already explained more than enough without saying anything,” he snapped and then he stopped, reached forward to yank the necklace out from under my shirt. “Holy fucking shit. This is mine.”

I tried to grab it back, but he ripped it right off my neck, causing pain to vibrate through my body. “No, Watson, that’s... You gave that to me,” I told him. “You love me. I love you. That part is true. You... Don’t take that away from me. It’s all that I have left.”

“You love me? You fucking love me? If you love me, why didn’t you tell me? Why did you let me go on thinking I was having these dreams when they weren’t just dreams? They were memories.” He shoved the necklace into the pocket of his jeans. “You don’t fucking deserve this.”

“Watson!” I exclaimed. “Don’t!” Tears slipped down my cheeks, and I smacked them away.

“I’m leaving.”

“No! Please don’t leave like this. Let’s talk about this.” I felt like I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. “I love you, Watson, please. I beg you.”

He narrowed his eyes. “Well, I guess it’s a good thing I don’t remember loving you, Holt, because this is a shitty thing you’ve done to me.” He shoved his feet into his shoes. “I don’t need my clothes back. Burn them, throw them away, whatever you want. I really don’t give a damn,” he sneered, then slammed the front door behind him.

A sound I had never heard ripped from my throat. I was going to tell him. I had planned on telling him, but with everything that had happened, his seizures, I kept putting it off. I dropped to my knees in front of the door.

“Come back,” I heard myself whimper. “Please, Watson, come back.”

But he didn’t.

I curled up into a fetal position and cried until I had nothing left. Screamed and sobbed until I had no voice. Then I managed to move to the bathroom, where I pulled off my clothes, stared at myself in the mirror, and tried to figure out where I had gone wrong. The swollen eyes from crying, the red lines around my neck from where Watson had ripped the necklace right off me. I felt like my entire world had changed in a blink of an eye.

“You look like shit,” Mason commented when he saw me the next morning. “What’s going on with your face?”

I ignored him and kept walking, hoping he would just leave me alone. I had texted Mom last night before going to bed, after the longest shower of my life, and she said that Watson was there, wasn’t talking, and had locked himself in his room. When she asked me what happened, I left her on read and tried to sleep, but I was lucky if I got two hours. I was a wreck and was dreading being at this race.

“Uh, hello?” Mason grabbed my arm.

I whipped around. “What?” I exclaimed. “What do you fucking want, Mason?”

“Okay, relax.” He held his hands palms out. “Don’t go all Shepard on me.”

“I heard that,” Shepard called out. “He’s not even close to being at my level... Dude, what’s wrong with your face? Why does it look like that?”

I gritted my teeth. “Why does everyone care about my face? Is it that ugly? I cried myself to sleep last night, okay? Is that the answer you needed to hear? Fuck off!” I turned to stomp off toward the garage.

“Holt.”

I glanced up to find Hutch Kelly standing in front of me. “You, too?” I snarled.

“Let’s talk.” He motioned for me to follow him. “That was not a suggestion,” he added.

I sighed, dropped my head, and did as he requested. We walked across the track, and when he sat down on one of the walls, I did the same. He turned to look at me as if he was waiting for me to say something, but when I didn’t, he let out a low sigh.

“I’m assuming this has something to do with Watts?”

“You assume correctly.”

Hutch nudged my shoulder with his. “You’re together.”

“Not anymore.” I felt my heart break again. “He... you know... Shit.” I swiped at my eyes. “You know he forgot a lot of things after his accident? The doctors said he might remember on his own, but if he wanted to try some other approach, he could. But Watson was having dreams... about us. And the night of Shepard’s party, he told me. We hooked up or whatever, and we got back together. Although he didn’t remember us. That we were officially together after Jones hit me with his car.”

Hutch made a clucking noise with his tongue. “What did he find?”

“How did you—?”

“Everyone thinks I’m stupid because I’m quiet. I just keep to myself because I don’t like big crowds. Funny that I picked this job, huh?”

I blushed. “I don’t think you’re stupid, Hutch.” I didn’t either.

“Didn’t say it was you, kid.” He smiled. “So, what did he find that upset him?”

I bit my lip. “Pictures on his phone. Of us. And, uh, the ring he gave me.”

“He gave you a ring?” His eyes went wide.

I nodded. “His Xfinity Championship ring. I sometimes wear it on a necklace around my neck because we hadn’t told anyone yet. He wanted to get it resized for my finger. Oh, Christ.” I tried to hold back the tears. “He took it. He ripped it right off and told me I didn’t deserve it. I don’t think... He was so upset with me.” I buried my face in my hands.

“You need to talk to him, Holt.” Hutch wrapped an arm around me and tugged me closer. “Watts needs you now more than ever. If his career is over, he’s going to need your love to get through this.”

I tried to calm myself down. “I-I know... But he won’t answer my texts. His phone goes right to voicemail. He’s so mad at me. You should have seen him. Watson and I never fight. Like ever.” I sat up to look at Hutch. “Even as teenagers. We got along from day one. I was so worried he was going to hate me. Think I was some weirdo. He was just the coolest guy.”

“What would make him happy? Other than racing? What would make him smile? You need to think about that.”

“God, you’re good at this,” I told him.

Hutch shrugged. “Lots of therapy, and a fucking good wife who loves me.” Just mentioning his wife made him go all dreamy in the face as he stood up. “Think about what I said. Don’t push him too hard or he’ll shut down completely.”

I watched as Hutch went back to the garage before I followed after him. Driving was all I knew that made Watson happy, but if he couldn't do it, what else was there?

When I walked back to the track, I found Mason first. "Sorry, uh, about before." I felt my cheeks burn.

"What happened?" He tilted his head. "Obviously, you and Watts had a fight. He's not here, and he's not returning my calls or texts."

I shook my head. "I can't talk about this now." Fresh tears began to fall. "Maybe I should have taken the weekend off."

"You need me to kick his ass?" Shepard grinned. "Man, you look like shit. I remember that look. I started fights with everyone. It wasn't fun. You don't look like the fighting type, though. No offense." He hooked an arm around my shoulders. "You want to stay at our place after the race? Hang out with the kids, me, and the wife?"

I was pretty sure my eyes might have popped out of my head. "What? Why are you being so nice to me?" I whispered.

He gasped, holding his free hand to his chest. "Uh, because *I am* nice. No, dude, it's because you're hurting. I've been there before." Shepard pulled me away from Mason. "I mean it, Holt. If you need to talk or whatever, I'm here for you. I know I seem like an asshole at times, but that's not who I am."

"Thanks."

"Any time."

Mason snorted when I walked back over to him. "You should see your face. Did you shit yourself?" He laughed even harder when I gave him the finger. "You've been hanging out with Watts... Oh shit." He grimaced. "Did he remember? Did he get mad because you didn't tell him?"

"He found pictures of us." I felt that ache in my chest again. "Mason, he's never been this upset with me."

Mason held up a hand. "Why don't we go talk to Miles? Maybe you should go try to talk to Watts. Or at least take the

rest of the weekend off. You're not going to be able to work like this. I can already see it in your eyes. I'll be your backup."

I nodded. I probably should have thought of that before, but then that meant I was going to have to go back to the apartment I didn't want to be in without Watson. It was a lose-lose situation.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Watson

I hadn't left my room in three days. What else could I do but sleep? I couldn't drive myself anywhere. I wasn't supposed to drink, but that didn't stop me from stealing Dad's bottle of whiskey when Mom wasn't looking and bringing it up to my room. I drank, slept, jerked off to images of Holt in my head, and passed out again.

I felt—fuck, I felt betrayed. Betrayed that Holt didn't tell me about us. I knew my stupid brain couldn't work right, but I had confessed to him about my dreams. That meant something. It meant my useless head was trying to tell me something. He denied he wanted to break up with me. So why not tell me? If he loved me like he claimed he did, why wouldn't he tell me?

Speaking of my head...

I had drunk too much whiskey last night and was really regretting it right now. I could hardly get out of bed to go take a leak, and it felt like Lars Ulrich was playing "Enter Sandman" in my head right now. Ugh, so not the best idea to drink last night.

"Sweetie, are you hungry?" Mom knocked lightly on my door.

My stomach turned at the thought of food. "Uh, no thanks, Mom," I called back to her before climbing back into my bed. "Just tired."

"Well, I'm going to the store. You need anything?" she asked.

Yeah, my boyfriend. "I'm good, thanks."

"Text me if you need me."

I reached for my phone. Should I turn it on? I wanted to look at those pictures again. We had looked so happy. I missed Holt. Even being away from him for a day was torture. Sure

enough, texts and missed calls flooded my screen. Some from Holt, a few from Mason, and even a couple from Shepard.

Holt: *Come back, Watson.*

Holt: *I'm sorry. Please, don't shut me out.*

Holt: *I love you. This isn't how I wanted you to find out.*

Holt: *I'm so fucking sorry. Please don't do this to us. If you would let me explain.*

Holt: *I can't sleep.*

Holt: *This apartment isn't a home without you.*

Holt: *I love you.*

Holt: *I fucking love you.*

Holt: *I will never stop loving you.*

Mason: *Dude, what did you do? Holt is a mess.*

Mason: *You're ignoring me now?*

Mason: *Fucking mature, dude.*

Shepard: *I thought I was the asshole.*

Shepard: *I shall call you King of the assholes*

The last one made me laugh. At least I wasn't completely broken. In need of a shower maybe, but not broken. Only the thought of getting up again would use too much of my energy. Something I didn't have much of.

I opened the photos app on my phone and stared at the picture of Holt. I couldn't remember where it was, maybe a racetrack, but he looked beautiful. His dark hair was a tangled mess as he smiled up at me. Was he lying on my lap? It looked like he was. His hazel eyes sparkled with happiness; and shit, I was going to cry again. Something I wasn't used to, but it felt like he'd stabbed me in the back. I had a flash of him straddling me, us kissing, and then it was gone. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get the memory back again. *Fuck.*

Watson: *Where was this taken?*

I saw the bubbles come up that he was responding. I'm sure he was surprised after the radio silence that I was reaching out. But I needed answers.

Holt: *Riverside Speedway.*

My heart shot up into my throat. The first place we met. Holt was shy, quiet, but I got him talking and laughing by the end of the night.

Watson: *Why did we go there?*

Holt: *You wanted to take me there. It was sort of like a date.*

Fuck. Why couldn't I remember? Why was my brain trying so hard to block it out if it was such a good memory for us?

Holt: *Watson? I'm sorry. I really wish you'd talk to me.*

Yeah, that wasn't going to happen. I dropped my phone screen-down on the bed. My body was already exhausted and telling me to rest.

The next thing I knew, someone was knocking at my door.

"Watts, sweetie, you have a visitor," Mom called out. It was dark again. Shit, what time was it?

I grunted. "No visitors," I reminded her. She knew not to let Holt in, unless he was here to see her, so maybe it was Shepard or Mason. Still not happening.

"Too late, asshole. I drove all the way over here."

I didn't recognize the voice. "Who is it?"

"Killian. Now let me the fuck in. Uh, sorry, Mrs. Brooks."

"It's Walker, but that's okay, dear. The boys' friends always call me Joyce." Mom giggled.

Killian Hampton was at my house? I scrambled out of my bed, tripped over my shoes, and nearly landed flat on my face.

"Give me a second." I stank from lack of bathing, my room was an absolute mess, and I really didn't want him in here.

“You okay, dude? Should I send for help?” Killian chuckled.

I pushed the shoes and clothes out of my way before I unlocked the door. “Uh, hi.” I dragged a hand through my messy hair. “I wasn’t expecting anyone.”

“That’s the point.” Killian pushed his way in. “Dear fucking Christ, when was the last time you left this room? It stinks like my high school bedroom in here. Have you bathed today?” He turned around to stare at me. “Put on a shirt. I didn’t come to see your nipples.” He jutted a chin at me.

“Sorry.” I grabbed for the closest one to me and instantly regretted it. It smelled like Holt. “I’ll just... let me... Shit.”

I rushed to the bathroom to brush my teeth and tame my hair, which was in desperate need of a cut. I stared at myself in the mirror. I looked as shitty as I felt. Red-rimmed eyes from the crying and drinking, exhaustion, yeah, I looked horrible. I walked back out to find Killian tossing my empty bottles of booze into the garage.

“You don’t need to do that.”

“I do, Watts.” He grunted. “I’m sober. It bothers the fuck out of me. This shit stops now.”

I folded my arms over my chest. “Thanks, Dad.”

He whirled around to stare at me. “This is funny to you?” He narrowed his eyes. “I hope you don’t think this is funny. Do you want to ruin your life, lose Holt? Your career? Because acting like this is a surefire way to do that.”

“If you came here to lecture me, Killian, you can find your way out. I don’t want to hear it.” I popped my jaw.

He dropped the garbage can. “I came here as your friend, man. I’ve been where you are. I didn’t lose my memory in a horrible accident, but I was fucking around, drinking, doing drugs, cutting myself, and thinking I was on top of the damn world until it all came crashing down on me. I nearly lost the only person who mattered to me, Matthias. Someone helped me get my act together, and that’s what I’m here to do for you. You can thank me later.” His blue eyes flashed with anger.

“What if I don’t want your help?” I did. I needed someone to smack me around.

“Then you lose him. Can you live with that?”

My chin trembled. “He lied to me.”

“He loves you. He did it because he thought it was the right thing. Looking back, it probably wasn’t, but what else was he supposed to do?” Killian moved to sit on the bed.

I leaned against the wall. “Why you? Why not Mason or Shepard. No offense, but I’m not that close to you. I don’t even know where you live.”

“I’m the one who volunteered to come talk to you for that exact reason. You might hit your friends, but would you dare hit Killian Hampton?” He grinned before his face fell. “Holt’s a mess. He was staying with Shepard until Matthias texted him. I told him he needed to come to our place. Did you really take back the ring you gave him?” Killian asked.

I lost it then. A sob escaped my throat, and I couldn’t stop the tears even if I wanted to. I pushed Killian away when he tried to comfort me. It didn’t feel right. He wasn’t someone I trusted yet, but when I heard my mother talking softly, her voice soft and sweet, I let her hold me, her warmth just what I needed.

“I know, sweetie, I know,” she assured me. She let me cry, she let me scream, she let me get it all out until there was nothing left inside of me. “You feel better now?” She pushed the hair back from my face. “You and your friend want to eat dinner?”

I glanced over to find Killian watching me. *He was still here?* He gave me a sympathetic smile. “You’re kidding.”

He smirked. “Dude, it’s nothing I haven’t seen before. You should have seen me at my lowest. Train-fucking-wreck. I’m surprised I’m still breathing. Remember who you’re talking to, Watts. I’ll have to tell you about it sometime when your mom’s not around. I wouldn’t want to scare her.”

Mom shook her head. “Like I wasn’t wild in my day.” She pressed a kiss to my forehead. “Come on, boys, I made plenty

for both of you.” She linked her arm through mine. “Then you’re going to shower because you, Watson James, smell like absolute shit.”

“So, Maverick decided he wanted to read the entire Twilight series for whatever reason, but Dean’s not having it.” Killian shook his head. “He doesn’t understand why, for one, Mav doesn’t have them on a Kindle so the entire world doesn’t have to see him reading those books, and two, why read books when they’re movies.”

I snickered. “Aren’t they brothers?” I asked.

“Yeah, but Mav’s, I don’t know... He’s like allergic to fun or something.” Killian’s face grew dark for a second. “Maybe it’s the age difference, Mav’s two years older than we are, or maybe he’s just a dick, but he just pushes Dean’s buttons. Mine, too, but I’ve gotten better about letting him get to me. He wasn’t always this way, but something changed in him a while back.”

I nodded. “Like Shepard.”

“Exactly,” Killian agreed. “Mav’s minding his own business, lying on his bunk reading, and Dean just grabs the book and tries to flush it down the toilet.”

I snorted. “That must have been something. Not only wouldn’t that work, but Maverick must have tried to kill his brother.” I removed my napkin from my lap to place it on the table.

“Maverick hung Dean out the door of the bus by his ankles for about five miles. I thought Dean was going to piss himself.”

I laughed until my stomach hurt. “They really don’t like one another, huh?”

“They used to. It’s just Mav being Mav.” Killian reached for his phone. “Sorry, I should probably head out. It’s getting late.”

Mom stood up. “So, no dessert for you? I made apple pie.” She wasn’t used to having such an empty house, so I knew having Killian here was making her happy. Probably more than my lazy ass.

“My fiancé is waiting for me.” Killian looked like he had hearts in his eyes when he said that, and my own stomach sank.

Mom nodded. “You could take a couple of pieces home. For the two of you.” She started gathering the empty plates.

“Holt is staying with them. Make it three,” I grumbled.

Killian turned to look at me with something in his blue eyes I couldn’t read. “You could come visit any time you want. We’re practically neighbors.” His brows dipped. “I like you, man, I do.” He waited until Mom left the room. “You look miserable, and I’m not going to talk about anything Holt told me or tell him what you said. When you’re ready, come by. I’ll give you my number.”

“Maybe.” I suddenly felt exhausted and knew it was only a matter of time before my body passed out.

“Just make sure you shower first, though.” Killian chuckled, and I flipped him the bird.

Once Killian had said goodbyes, and we had exchanged numbers, I took a long shower before I climbed into my empty bed. I had left my phone because I didn’t want to be tempted to text Holt or look at the pictures of him. I missed him. So. Fucking. Much.

Watson: *Killian’s bringing pie back from Mom. If he hasn’t already given it to you.*

Holt: *Yeah, I’m in bed with earbuds in. I didn’t need to hear them when Kill got home. They go at it all the time. I learned really quick to block that out. Apple?*

Watson: *God, that’s embarrassing. Of course it’s apple. I know it’s your favorite.*

Fuck, I miss you. Do you miss me? I deleted, retyped, and then deleted those words as I watched the bubbles on his

message.

Holt: *I think Killian figured it out the first time, but Matthias doesn't care.*

Holt: *Thanks for thinking of me.*

Watson: *Of course. You're welcome.*

Holt: *How are you feeling?*

Like shit. Like the biggest asshole in the world. You lied to me. If you loved me so damn much, why couldn't you have just told me the truth? But I didn't say that.

Watson: *I'm still tired, but at least I'm not sleeping twenty hours a day anymore.*

Holt: *I'll let you rest. Goodnight, Watson.*

Watson: *Goodnight, H.*

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Holt

I got home from the shop around two on a Wednesday. I was starting to think I was overstaying my welcome at Killian and Matthias's house, which meant I was either going to have to go back to the apartment or take Mason up on his offer to stay with him after this weekend's race. It might be nice to spend some time with his wife, London, but the thought of being around another loved up and happy couple just made me even more depressed.

It had been two weeks, and even though they said I could stay as long as I wanted, I didn't want to make things weird. It wasn't that either Kill or Matthias had said anything, but I didn't want to be a bother. I liked them. They made me feel included. We went out to a couple of movies and played some board games—shit I hadn't done in years—but they were a couple. I was the third wheel. I didn't want to get in their way. Plus, I wasn't kidding about them going at like rabbits. It was all the time with the two of them.

Mason beeped his horn as he drove off, and as I walked up the walkway, I noticed Killian sitting on the porch, his head buried in his phone. He grinned at me when our eyes met.

"How was your day, dear?" he teased.

"Long." I dropped into one of the chairs next to him.
"Where's your other half?"

Killian grunted. "With Brooklyn."

"You really don't like her, do you?" I asked.

He twisted his frame to look at me. "I'm trying to be a better person, Holt, I am." He steepled his fingers and brought them up to his chin. "There's a lot you don't know about Matthias and me. I did some shitty things to him when we were younger, even after we got back together, and I will spend the rest of my life proving to him how much I love him. He probably shouldn't have forgiven me, but he did. Right

before I got clean, I embarrassed the hell out of Matthias, and I don't think Brooklyn has gotten over that." He ducked his head. "I really can't blame her. I was an asshole. Still am, but I was a bigger one."

"Matthias is crazy about you. It's so obvious when he's near you or talks about you," I pointed out.

Killian shrugged. "I'm pretty crazy about him, too." I thought he might be blushing, but he kept his gaze away from mine longer than he needed. "You hear from Watts at all?"

"We've texted here and there."

"That's progress." When I didn't answer, Killian looked back up at me. "Or not." He nudged my arm. "What aren't you saying, man?"

"I feel like half of me is missing right now."

Killian nodded. "Can't you go over there? Drop by and say 'Surprise! It's me, and by the way, I came by to give you a much-needed blowjob.'" He waved his hands in the air, causing me to chuckle. "There, that's what I wanted. At least I made you smile."

"You know, being this nice isn't going to help your bad boy reputation."

Killian rolled his eyes. "It's overrated, anyway. If I was the asshole everyone thought I was, you wouldn't be here having this bonding experience, and I wouldn't be all loved up with the most amazing man on the planet."

We both turned as a car pulled up. "Who the hell..." Killian stood up as a thin, light-haired male climbed out of the back. "No, no, hell fucking no." He started down the steps. "Maverick, no. I don't have time for your shit. You don't even live anywhere near here. Get back in the car and..." His voice trailed off so I couldn't hear him anymore, but the way his hands were flying around, I could see he was upset.

So that was Maverick Frost, the drummer for Mulligan Downtown. He looked harmless enough. He was about my height, but with more muscle. Although from what Matthias

had told me, he was the reason that he and Killian had broken up in the first place a few years ago.

“I don’t fucking care! You could have texted me about your problems with Jackson instead of just showing up at my house unannounced!” Killian’s voice boomed loudly before he glanced at me over his shoulder.

Maverick must have realized they had an audience, because he placed a hand on Killian’s shoulder, which he quickly shrugged off. *Yikes.*

I moved into the house to give them some privacy, pulling my phone from my pocket to find a text from Watson. A smile pulled at my lips.

Watson: *How was the shop today?*

Holt: *The usual. Everyone was asking for you. You should come by.*

Watson: *Hard pass. It’s too painful to go there when I can’t get in the car.*

Holt: *Yeah, that’s what I told them. How are you feeling? Still sleeping a lot?*

Watson: *I managed to go for a walk today, but then napped for two hours after.*

Watson: *I’m bored AF.*

Holt: **laugh emoji* You could get out of the house.*

I glanced up as I heard Killian’s voice turning into what sounded like screaming. Shit, this might get bad. Should I intervene?

Watson: *Are you asking me to do something, H?*

I swallowed the nerves in my stomach. I wasn’t, but if I did...

Holt: *What if I was?*

The door slammed, and I jumped. I turned around to find Killian, with Maverick behind him, his jaw set in a tight line. “Maverick, this is my friend Holt Walker. He’s also staying

here, but you leave Holt the fuck alone. Understand me?" He stomped past me.

"Uh, hey." I nodded at the drummer, who juted his chin at me in greeting. His emerald-green eyes looked sad as he glanced around his surroundings.

"This fucking way, Mav," Killian snarled.

Awkward.

Watson: *Okay. I'll get a ride over.*

Okay. OKAY! Holy shit! Watson was going to come here. He wanted to see me. We were going to hang out. Shit, we were going to hang out.

"You're smiling, Holt." Matthias clapped me on the back as he walked in behind me. "That's good, right?" He dropped a couple of Target bags on the couch. "That Watts?"

I nodded. "He wants to hang out," I whispered.

Matthias clapped his hands together. "I'm so happy for you!" He moved in to give me a quick hug before he took a step back. "You look not so happy. Why?"

"I'm nervous." I chewed on my bottom lip. "I mean, we've been texting pretty regularly, but whenever I try to bring things up about us, he changes the subject or says he's tired. Either he doesn't want that with me anymore, or he's still mad. I get it. I would be mad, too, but I love him, Matthias. I will always love him, and if he doesn't want to be with me anymore? I don't know what I'm going to do."

Matthias sighed. "Watts being willing to see you is a big step. Look at it as him mending the bridge between you. You want me and Kill to take off? We can go on a date or something?"

"Uh, babe?" Killian interrupted. "Kind of need to talk to you about something."

Matthias winked at me as he glanced up at his fiancé. "You look serious... Maverick, what the hell are you doing here?" His eyes went wide as he took a step back when he saw the Mulligan drummer. "Really, Kill?" he hissed.

“Did I not tell you to stay upstairs?” Killian grunted.

Maverick dropped his head. “Sorry.”

Okay, no. The guy looked like he’d lost his best friend, and I could totally relate. “Hey, I’m Holt, remember?” I nodded at him. “Want to go sit outside with me for a second?” When Maverick nodded, I waved him toward me, and we quietly moved to the porch and sat down without a word.

“Thanks,” Maverick muttered after a few awkward minutes. He stared out onto the grass. “I shouldn’t have come here, but I didn’t have anywhere else to go. They sort of hate me, so I’m sure they’re going to kick me out tonight.”

I glanced at his profile. His blond hair was so light it was nearly white, and it made his green eyes stand out even more. His jaw was set in a tight line, almost painfully, and I could make out days’ worth of stubble dusted across his face. He had a septum nose piercing as well as a few scattered tattoos up one arm. I watched as he wrapped his arms around himself and shivered despite the warm sun.

“You’re here. If Killian wanted you gone, you’d be gone.”

“Maybe,” Maverick answered. “You have a girlfriend?”

I watched him closely as he continued to stare out across the lawn. “Um, I had a boyfriend, but we sort of broke up, I think.”

He shook his head. “You think? Also, I shouldn’t have assumed you were straight in this day and age. My apologizes.” Maverick turned to look at me, and it struck me just how beautiful he was. “Sorry to hear you broke up. My love life is a shit show right now. All on me, though; because of course it is.”

I opened my mouth to respond, but my stomach knotted when the next car pulled up and Watson stepped out. His blond hair was longer than normal, in desperate need of a haircut, and my fingers itched to comb it back from his face. He stopped when he saw me sitting with Maverick, his eyes moving between the two of us, until he realized who he was. I climbed to my feet, unsure of how to greet my stepbrother.

Hug? Handshake? We had never gone this long without speaking in person or seeing one another since we met, so I wasn't prepared for how to handle it.

"Maverick Frost." Watson's lips twitched into a smile. "As I live and breathe. Not who I thought I'd be seeing today."

Mav stood up. "Watson Brooks. Man, sorry about your head. How are you feeling?" They did a little side bro hug. "You're friends with Killian?"

"I've been better. You could say that, but I'm here for this guy." He hooked a thumb at me. "Stepbrother." I tried not to flinch, but it was the truth. We might not ever go back to being anything else.

Maverick sat back down. "No shit. You don't drive, do you?" he asked me.

"Nope. Just his tire carrier," I told him.

Killian pushed the door open. "Mav, in here, now," he ordered. "Watts."

"Kill," Watson responded but kept his eyes on me, and when we were alone, he let out a long breath. "I don't know how to do this."

I let out a weird laugh. "I don't either," I confessed, even though I wasn't sure what we were doing.

"I'm still really fucking pissed at you."

"I'm still really fucking sorry."

Watson closed his eyes. "How do we fix this? Go back to the way things were and just... just be us? Watson and Holt?"

I was pretty sure my heart shattered at his question. That wasn't what I had expected him to say to me. I slapped my hand over my mouth, trying to keep myself quiet, but I must have made some sort of noise because his eyes popped open.

"Shit, H, did you think I was going to... Oh fuck. I should have clarified my intentions." Watson put a hand on my shoulder.

"Please, don't make it worse," I begged.

Watson's dark eyes searched my face. "You really love me, don't you?" When his hand moved to touch my face, I pulled away. "I want to remember, but I can't. I only remember after, and the fact that you lied to me. I just... I can't trust you now."

"You asked me to marry you. We got an apartment together." I wasn't going to fight with him. That's not why I wanted him here. "I can't go back to the way things were, Watson. I can't see you with someone else. Bringing random girls or boys back to the RV while I pretend I can't hear you. I won't do that again. You promised me you wouldn't do that."

He nodded. "I understand."

"You understand?" I exclaimed. "I don't think you do."

Watson dragged a hand through his hair. "I spoke with Miles earlier today. When I'm cleared to go back racing, he's going to have you moved to Mason's team. Get you your own RV. That way—"

"You did what?" I took both of my palms and shoved at his chest. "That's an asshole thing to do, Watson. You had no right to do that. No right to have me traded to another team without talking to me first. This is my career because you wanted me here. Is that why you wanted to come here? You could have texted me." I glared at him with so much anger inside that I think for the first time in my life, I might have hated him. "I'll give my notice before I work near you again."

"If that's what you want."

I balled my hand into a fist and aimed for his face. It hurt like hell, but I think the surprise in Watson's eyes was what made it worth it. "What I want? What I want is for you to remember us! How much you loved me. What we had together. I'm sorry I didn't tell you. Is this some sort of punishment? Because it's working." I went to hit him again, but he caught my fist in his palm.

"Don't do that again, Holt, because I might have to hit you back. I don't want to hurt you like that," Watson warned.

"Do it!" I used my free hand to point to my face. "Because maybe then I'll be able to feel something other than a broken

heart, asshole!” I slapped at his chest, but he grabbed that hand, too. “Please, don’t do this to me.” When I started to drop to my knees, Watson went with me.

He released my hands and cupped my head. “I’m sorry, H,” he whispered before pressing a kiss to my forehead.

When I looked up again, Watson was gone, and I was alone again.

Chapter Thirty

Watson

The hammock picture might have been my favorite one with Holt. The two of us smiling like idiots in the sun, wrapped up together. I stared at it a lot when I started to miss him. Which was pretty much every minute of every day. I had made it the background on my phone. He looked—fuck, he looked good. Now that I had gotten approval from my doctor, I was torturing myself at the gym... again; and to get through this workout, I kept glancing at my phone.

I broke his heart. I wanted to do it in person because over the phone didn't feel right. Holt needed someone who could take care of him. Not the other way around. He needed a strong, decent man. I couldn't even remember if I'd taken a shower this morning. Hand to God. It felt like my memory was getting worse. I had to set reminders in my phone to do things, and I was starting to get worried that the doctor was right about my racing career. It might end before it really began.

Not the man Holt needed in his life.

I had no desire to be with anyone else. He was the one I wanted. He was still the one I dreamed about at night. Let Holt think I was the bad guy, the asshole, and hate me all he wanted. It would certainly make for an interesting Thanksgiving and Christmas with the family.

Someone knocked my shoulder, and when I looked up, I found Mason glaring at me. I yanked my headphones down.

"Hey." I greeted him.

"Hey?" His brows shot up. "You've been ignoring me for weeks, Watts. You've ruined your brother, and all you can say is 'hey'? Douche, what is wrong with you?"

"Uh, TBI?" I tried.

Mason's eyes narrowed. "Try again."

"I'm an asshole?"

“Better. I’ll allow it.”

I flashed him a grin. “It’s good to see you.” When he didn’t return my smile, I grimaced. “So, you’re mad then.”

“Mad? Mad isn’t the word I would use.” He reached over to yank the emergency release on my treadmill, and I might have flown backward if I wasn’t paying attention. “What did you do to Holt?”

I dragged a hand through my sweaty hair. “He didn’t tell you?”

“The second anyone even mentions your name, he drops what he’s doing and walks away. I mean that literally. He was in the middle of a practice with the crew when Eli Shepard—yes, Rand’s brother is back—started asking him when you were coming back. Holt stared at him, put the tire on the ground, and walked away without saying a word. I had to explain to Eli that you two weren’t exactly on speaking terms right now.” Mason pursed his lips. “I thought Holt was going to punch a hole in the wall. What did you do?”

I reached for my water bottle. “My brain is a bit foggy.” I swallowed the rest of the liquid and recapped it.

“You can’t keep using that as an excuse, man.” Mason folded his arms over his chest.

“I’m not. It’s the truth. My injury is getting worse instead of better. This morning I put my phone in the fridge instead of on the counter to charge it. Last night I put my clothes in the garbage instead of the laundry basket. I don’t think I’m ever going to race again.”

Mason’s jaw dropped. “Are you fucking shitting me? Because that’s not very funny.”

“I’m not trying to be funny. I’m telling you the truth. I broke it off with him for good. It’s really the best thing for him. Holt doesn’t need to take care of me, Mason. He needs a guy who’s going to take care of him. I love him, I think I really do, but I don’t want him to look back on his life ten years from now and regret falling for me.” I grabbed my phone to stare at the picture as anxiety began to niggle its way

inside my head. “I wish I remembered this. Hell, I wish I remembered a lot of things, but this most of all because I looked happy.” I glanced up to find Mason glaring at me. “What?”

He shook his head. “You pushed him away because you want him to be happy, but all you’ve done is create this version of Holt who is horrible to be around. Did you tell him why you did it, or did you just break it off with him for good?”

“I just broke it off with him. Holt didn’t need a reason, because he’d—”

“You’re a fucking idiot.”

I gasped. “Excuse me?”

“You heard me, Watts, but I’ll say it again. *You’re a fucking idiot.* Holt will never get over you. Ever. He’s staying with Carson, so bravo for that, and I’m pretty sure he’s planning on giving his notice when the season is over.” Mason narrowed his eyes. “I saw that.”

I gritted my teeth. “You saw nothing.” Carson Carey. He was staying with Carson Carey? He was just waiting to get into Holt’s pants. What happened to staying with Killian and Matthias?

“You have this little vein.” Mason reached over to touch my face, and I smacked his hand away. “It’s Carson, huh? You’re jealous of him.”

I rolled my eyes. “Not jealous. Holt can stay with whoever he wants.” Except Carson. Anyone but Carson. My blood pressure spiked at the thought.

“They would make a cute couple.” Mason smirked.

“Stop it,” I warned.

Mason’s smirk grew wider. “Stop what? Just talking about your stepbrother and his future husband. Oh, Holt Carey? That has a nice ring to it, don’t you think?” He wiggled his brows.

“Mason,” I growled.

He chuckled. “Carson Walker? Does that sound better?”

I gritted my teeth. “We’re done with this conversation.” I grabbed my empty water bottle and towel. “Don’t.” I narrowed my eyes before I stepped off the treadmill.

“Need a ride home or were you going to get an Uber?” he asked. When I started to object, he held up a hand. “I promise not to mention Carson again.”

I nodded. “Thanks.”

For the first time since my accident happened, I couldn’t sleep. Maybe it was because of what Mason had told me about Holt or more likely the bomb that Mom had dropped that Dad had served her with divorce papers while she was at work today, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t fall asleep.

I looked through the pictures of us for the millionth time.

I thought of the first kiss I could remember with Holt. On the front lawn of Shepard’s house.

When he sucked my dick in the shower.

Holt’s small, firm body wrapped around mine.

The way he told me loved me.

Yeah, no, this wasn’t going to work. I ripped the covers off and reached for my phone, hoping he hadn’t blocked me.

Watson: *I can’t sleep.*

I stared at the screen, willing him to message me. But after five minutes, he hadn’t responded, and I dropped back on the mattress. I was such an asshole. Mason was right about that. I flopped onto my stomach, thinking about the way Holt sounded when he came, and my dick instantly thickened in my sweats. Maybe if I just jerked off, I could sleep. I slid my hand into my pants as my phone buzzed. Holy shit.

Holt: *How is that my problem? Don’t text me again.*

Not the answer I had expected, but he didn’t block me.

Watson: *Why are you awake?*

Holt: *I’m blocking you.*

Watson: *Wait!*

Holt: *Why should I?*

Watson: *Because this is all I think about every single day. A day I can't remember but wish to fuck I could. Trust me, H. You're much better off without me.*

I quickly attached the hammock picture and hit send. When Holt didn't respond, I figured this time, I wouldn't hear from him. I let out a low sigh and then watched as the dots from his text told me he was fighting himself.

Holt: *I wish you remembered, too, because then maybe I wouldn't hate you. I wouldn't feel like I was living an out-of-body experience. This is what you've done to me. I hope you're happy with yourself, Watson.*

Holt: **picture downloading**

My breath caught in my throat, and if my heart wasn't already broken from how much I missed him, it would surely have broken at the sight before me. He looked nothing like the Holt I knew. Sadness I had never seen before filled Holt's hazel eyes. He looked as tired as I felt, and his lips—God, those lips that felt perfect against mine—were pinched together in a tight line. His dark hair was in a desperate need of a haircut as it curled around his ears and forehead.

I'd done that to him. Mason had told me I'd broken Holt, and he was absolutely on point. He looked miserable.

Holt: *Nothing to say? No smartass comment or quick remark? Figures. Leave me alone. I need to keep your number in my phone for emergencies, so I can't block you.*

Watson: *What kind of emergencies?*

When he didn't respond, panic began to spread through my body. He wouldn't actually hurt himself. Would he? Should I call someone? Carson, maybe? The thought made my stomach turn.

Watson: *Holt, what kind of an emergency are you talking about? Don't fuck around like that. You know I still care about you. You're still my best friend.*

Watson: *HOLT!*

God damnit! He knew I wasn't supposed to drive, so I couldn't go over to Carson's place. I was starting to really freak out. I glanced over at my dresser where my keys were. I could just take a quick jaunt over there. Make sure Holt was all right. No one would know. I jumped from my bed, pulled a shirt on over my head, and slipped my feet into my sneakers before I shoved my keys into one pocket and my phone in the other. I didn't bother to give Holt a heads up because he was obviously ignoring me.

I quietly moved down the hall, past where my mom was sleeping, and jogged down the stairs. I could do this. Leave, make sure Holt was okay, and get back before Mom realized I was even gone. Nothing would happen. No one but Holt and Carson would know. I gritted my teeth at the thought of Carson's name.

Once in my car, I checked my mirrors like it was the first time I had driven, plugged Carson's address into my GPS on my phone, pressed the start button, and backed out of the driveway. This was good. I was fine. There weren't too many people on the road this late, or maybe it was early, and I didn't have more than ten minutes to go. I made sure to stop completely at every stop sign. Even the yellow lights. I wasn't going to get pulled over.

Only...

Chapter Thirty-One

Holt

Watson wasn't supposed to drive. He knew that. What was he thinking getting into his car? The GPS in his phone had Carson's address in it. He was coming there. To what? See me? I shouldn't have engaged with him when he texted me that night. I shouldn't have sent that picture, but I needed him to know how hurt I was. What he had done to me. I just... I collapsed onto the chair next to his bed. He hadn't hurt anything, other than forcing the doctors to induce a coma. If he hadn't been wearing his seatbelt, if he had hit someone else, if he wasn't a professional stock car driver. I shivered at all the things that could have happened to him. So many what ifs.

"Watson." I grasped his hand in mine. "I need you to wake up for me," I murmured. "The doctors... they said you had another seizure. I don't... I don't know what I'm going to do if you don't wake up, baby." I pressed my lips to the palm of his hand. "This is all my fault. I take all the blame."

"That's bullshit, and you know it," Killian sassed from behind me. "He wasn't supposed to be driving."

I shook my head. "I should have ignored his texts. I let him think... I fucking did this to him."

"Come with me." Killian squeezed my shoulder. When I shook my head again, he pressed his fingers into my muscles. "That wasn't a request, Holt. You need to get out of this room. You've been here for two days. Come with me."

I hung my head as I reluctantly let go of Watson's hand. "I won't be gone long," I promised, and followed Killian out of the room. Neither one of us spoke as we waited for the elevator, stepped inside, and went down to the cafeteria. Mom had gone home to shower, to get something to eat, and get some clothes together for Watson while I stayed. I wasn't going anywhere. Not back to work, Carson's, anywhere. Not until Watson opened his eyes and saw me. I didn't care how

mad at me he was or if he never remembered anything. I was determined to fight for my man for as long as it took.

“Hungry?” Killian asked. The smell of food made my stomach turn. “Too bad, you have to eat something. Get us a table. Don’t argue with me, just fucking do it,” he ordered.

I sat down as Killian walked up to grab some food, and I closed my eyes for maybe a second before he was dropping wrapped sandwiches on the table. I glanced up as he slid into the seat across from me.

“Thanks.” I started to remove the plastic wrap. “Where’s Matthias?” I asked.

“I sent him home to get some sleep, something you should be doing right now, too.” Killian pulled at the bread of his chicken salad. “Making yourself sick, staying here; it’s not going to make Watson get better any faster. You need to shower, rest, eat. Because when he’s ready to leave here? He’s going to need you to take care of him.”

“Watson made it pretty clear he doesn’t want me.”

“We both know that’s fucking a lie, Holt.”

I stared at Killian as his words vibrated through my head. “How do you know that? You heard him that day. He doesn’t trust me; he took the engagement ring back.” I pushed my sandwich away and placed a hand over my heart. “It hurts so much.”

“I know. I broke Matthias in ways I can never fix, but he forgave me.” Killian’s blue eyes looked sad. “If he can do that, Watson can do the same. You need to fight for him, Holt. Fight for him like your life depends on it.” He knocked on the table with his ink-covered fingers. “Okay, that’s enough of my sappy bullshit. Finish that or we’re not leaving.”

I rolled my eyes. “Okay, Daddy.”

“Yeah, don’t call me that. It’s fucking gross.”

“Bet you like it when Matthias calls you daddy.”

I watched as the tips of Killian’s ears turned pink. “We aren’t talking about my sex life, Holt. Unless you want to tell

me about yours.” He leaned forward.

“I was a virgin before Watson.” I took a bite of my sandwich and watched his eyes grow wide. I shrugged. “What? You asked.”

He shook his head. “I really didn’t. We’re not talking about sex.”

“I miss it, though,” I murmured. “I just...” I watched the way Killian’s brows dipped in warning. “I miss the closeness with Watson, the way he would hold me. He wasn’t my first kiss or anything, but he was my first everything else.”

“Shit, you’re really tugging at my heartstrings.” He sighed. “You remind me of Matthias.” He popped another bite of his sandwich into his mouth. “He told you, right?”

I shrugged. “Not everything, but some stuff. You kissed him first. He had a crush on you. That sort of thing.”

“I am not talking about this with you, Holt, no matter how much I like you.” Killian’s entire face went red. “My love life is no one’s business. I’m a private person when it comes to that.” He pressed his lips together before he dragged a hand through his dark curls. “I will tell you one thing. If I hadn’t found Matthias in the treehouse? I’d be dead right now. I wouldn’t be sitting here with you, living in North Carolina, a changed man. He saved me as much as I saved him that night.”

I swear I saw tears in Killian’s blue eyes before he dropped his gaze from mine.

“I need to go back upstairs.” I stood up.

“I know you do. I’ll catch up. I have a call to make.” Yeah, he was going to call his fiancé., and I got that.

The elevator was empty on the way back to Watson’s room. I was exhausted, and I knew I was going to have to leave at some point to rest. The few power naps I had gotten here weren’t giving me much, and the terrible coffee they sold wasn’t doing me any good. When I stepped off the elevator and down the hall to Watson’s room, it was different from when I left. Nurses and doctors were rushing back and forth. I

could hear yelling and screaming coming from inside. Yelling that sounded exactly like—

“Watson.” I squeezed past two nurses and rushed to the door. He was awake, eyes wide, and confusion was written all over his face. But the moment he locked in on me, his face lit up. Like he was happy to see me.

“We stepped away for lunch. I didn’t think... crap.” I couldn’t move.

He looked like shit with bruises and cuts all over his body from the second car crash, but his eyes, they hadn’t left mine.

“I was confused. You weren’t here. They said I was in an accident. At first, I thought you might have been in the car with me, that maybe you were hurt, too, but they said I was by myself.” Watson lifted his arm, but a nurse pushed it down. “He’s my fiancé. You can let him in.”

Fiancé? Wait a second. “Watson, what do you remember?” I felt a hand nudge at my back. Someone, it sounded like Killian, telling me to go. He must have followed right behind me from the cafeteria.

“Baby, please come here,” Watson whispered, and when I got close enough, he reached for my hand. He laced his fingers through mine. “I remember everything.” His eyes looked heavily medicated.

I wanted to go to him, only the words he said to me echoed in my mind. “Everything? Watson, what does that mean?”

“Sir, you need to give us some room.” One of the nurses tried to push me away.

“He fucking stays with me,” Watson growled.

The nurse shook her head. “Mr. Brooks.” She reached for our hands.

“No!” Watson tried to pull me toward him.

I squeezed his hand. “It’s okay. I’ll be right outside the door, I promise,” I assured him.

“Holt, no,” Watson whimpered. “Don’t leave me again.”

But then the nurses and doctors were moving me out of the way, and I could hear Watson begging me to stay with him. The sound of his voice was heartbreaking, but I couldn't get in the way of the staff trying to make sure he was all right. He had just woken up from a coma after a serious accident. They needed to check him over first.

"I know." Matthias pulled me into a hug. "I'm glad I got here when I did, because I know my fiancé wasn't going to be able to give you the affection you so desperately need right now."

"Babe, I'm so jealous right now, you're lucky I don't rip Holt's arms off. You're not funny." Killian grunted as I hugged Matthias back.

I started to move away, but Matthias wouldn't let me. "He's kidding. He knows we're friends." But when I looked up at Killian, he looked absolutely jealous as hell.

"I'm okay," I assured them both, but that was a lie. My stomach was in knots. The sound of Watson pleading with me not to leave him was all I could hear, and I felt like I was going to burst into tears at any moment.

Killian nodded. "Sure, Holt, you're fine. That's why you look like you might shit yourself." He nudged my arm. "He's awake. That's the important thing."

"HOLT!" Watson screamed my name. I peeked into the room, and he was staring right at me.

"You can come back in now. We're almost done," the same nurse told me. "He's pretty out of it now with the medication, but he keeps asking for you." She gave me a soft smile.

Right... me. Watson wanted me. I slowly moved into the room, feeling Watson's eyes as they followed my every step. His hand instantly reached for me, and I took it.

"What happened?" His voice was hoarse, something I hadn't noticed before.

"You had more than one accident," I heard myself answer. "One on the track and then this one in your own car."

Watson nodded. “Yeah, I remember that. I remember... Oh shit. Shit, shit, shit.” His eyes went round. “I fucked up. Oh, I fucked up so bad.” He dropped his head against the pillow. “Holt, you know I love you. I didn’t it mean it. I didn’t mean any of it.”

Tears spilled down my cheeks. “Fuck, Watson.” I buried my face into his neck, not caring who saw or what they said. When his arms wrapped around me, it felt like everything slipped back into place. His big hands rubbed my back while I cried, and when I climbed up onto the bed with him, not one person tried to stop me.

“That’s better,” Watson murmured. “This is where you belong, H. Right here by my side.”

“Look who finally got their shit together.” Killian’s voice filled my ears, but I kept myself tucked against Watson. I never wanted to be away from him again.

“Kill, maybe we can give them a little privacy?” Matthias suggested.

Watson kept rubbing circles into my back until I was done crying and then lifted my face to look at him. “You still love me?” he asked.

“I’ve always loved you. Why would that ever change?”

He pressed a kiss to my forehead. “I’m so damn sorry,” he whispered. “Things are foggy, but I know that I shouldn’t have pushed you away. I’m pretty sure that I’ll never be able to drive again. I’m not sure what I’m going to do with the rest of my life, but as long as you’re in it, I’ll be okay.”

“Wait, why wouldn’t you be able to drive again?” I started to sit up, but Watson held me against him.

Watson let out a slow breath. “My memory was getting worse, and I didn’t... I didn’t want you to have to see that. I didn’t want you to have to take care of me. I wanted to be the one to take care of you.” The catch in his voice caused me to look up in surprise. “H, I love you. I want to be the man you deserve. I want to buy you the big house, give you two point

five kids, and the dog, and the car, and I don't know if I'll be able to do that for you now."

"Fuck that." I twisted away from him. "Watson, I don't need that. What I want—what I've always wanted—is lying in a hospital bed in front of me." I reached up to lightly run my thumbs over his cheekbones.

Watson smiled at me. "I've missed you." His dark eyes glittered with moisture. "Can you forgive me?"

"Can *you* forgive *me*?" I asked. "I lied to you. I ignored your texts, and you got into your car. You had another seizure, and what if—"

"Nope." Watson yanked me back against his body. "This was not your fault. Don't try to blame any of this on yourself, Holt."

My head rested against his heart, and I listened to the sound of it thumping against his chest, his body warm against mine. I could do this for a lifetime if it meant he was mine. If he needed me to take care of him, I would do that. I didn't need him to do that for me. I had been doing that since the first day we met.

"Watson?"

"Yeah, baby?" Just hearing him call me that made my entire body come alive. When I didn't answer him right away, Watson tucked a finger under my chin and forced me to look at him. With his other hand, he smoothed the hair from my face and pressed a kiss to my forehead.

I snuggled closer. "Do you really want all those things with me?"

"You know I've always wanted a dog." He chuckled softly, which turned into a deep belly laugh when I tickled his side, before he flinched like he was in pain.

I sat up. "I'm sorry. Did I hurt you?"

"No, but I hurt you, and I'm sorry, Holt."

I moved so that I could slide my lips over his, and a soft groan escaped Watson's throat.

“I love you,” I whispered as he fought to keep his eyes open.

“Love you,” he murmured. “Don’t leave. Stay. Need you here when I wake up.”

I leaned my head back against his chest. I was never leaving his side again.

Chapter Thirty-Two

Watson

“Watson James!” Mom’s voice woke me from my slumber as she burst into the room. It felt like I had been sleeping for thirty seconds, but it could have been thirty days for all I knew. Holt was tucked under my arm, and he gave me a sleepy smile when our eyes met.

“Mom.” I tried to adjust myself in the bed. When Holt tried to get up, I held him firmly in place. He wasn’t going anywhere. Not ever again.

She pressed her lips into a firm line. “Care to explain to me why you got into a car when you were told not to drive?” Her chin started to tremble.

Hell. “I was—”

“You could have been killed,” she whispered. “I know you were worried about your boyfriend, but you should have woken me up. I would have driven you wherever you needed to go. I don’t know what I would have done if something had happened to you.” She brushed the tears from her cheeks.

She called Holt my boyfriend. She didn’t even flinch or make a face. “You don’t... You don’t care that I’m with Holt? That we’re together?” I looked down at his beautiful face. He blushed and buried his face into my neck.

“Sweetheart.” Mom patted my arm. “I’ve always seen the way Holt’s looked at you. It was more than obvious to me and his father that he was in love with you. It just took you a little longer to catch up.”

My brows dipped. “You... you knew?”

She nodded. “Of course. At first, I thought maybe it was just a crush, something innocent, but as you both grew up, and he followed you as you went on to pursue your dreams, I knew right away it was so much more than that.”

“I think, yeah, I’m going to go use the bathroom,” Holt muttered, but I shook my head. “Please, this is super embarrassing.” His eyes pleaded with me.

I cupped his head in my hands. “How did I not notice?” I searched his eyes, the speckles of brown inside the hazel orbs. “What if I had? What if we could have been together sooner, baby?”

“What was meant to be, happened when the time was right,” Mom assured me. “Now let Holt up before he dies of embarrassment.”

Holt jumped up so fast you would have thought his ass was on fire and rushed into the bathroom off my room, shutting the door behind him.

“How’s Dad?” I asked. “Is he...?”

“That’s a story for another time, Watts.” Mom looked sad for a minute. “Your friends are still here.”

I stifled a yawn. Whatever drugs they were given me were already making me tired again. “They should be at the race.”

“She means us, dickhead. Er... Sorry, Joyce.” Killian poked his head in, and Matthias did the same. “We weren’t leaving until we made sure you both were all right.”

It made me smile, knowing they had stuck around. “Come in.” I waved at them. “Thanks for keeping Holt company while I was out. Letting him stay with you.” I gritted my teeth. “Away from fucking Carson Carey.”

“Watson James.” Mom hushed me.

“You have nothing to worry about with Carson,” Holt assured me as he opened the door to the bathroom. “He’s my friend, nothing more.”

My lids felt heavy again. “Right.” My voice sounded slurred.

“They must be giving him the good stuff,” Killian commented.

I felt the mattress dip next to me and Holt's warmth as he pressed his lips against mine. His breath smelled minty, like he had brushed his teeth.

"You're the only man for me, Watson James," he whispered, his thumbs brushing my cheekbones.

"Yeah, baby, I am."

This was absolute torture. This couldn't be legal what they were doing to me right now.

"Just a little farther, Watson. You can do it," Holt murmured as I lifted the walker to take another step.

I gritted my teeth as I slowly moved down the hallway. If he hadn't promised me a hand job later, I would have told him, and the physical therapist, Marco, to fuck right off. Every single muscle in my body was screaming at me. Everything hurt, and I honestly want to throw the biggest temper tantrum of my life. I was exhausted. All I wanted to do was get back into bed with Holt and sleep for a million days.

"Great job, Mr. Brooks." Marco clapped his hands like I was five, and yep, he was totally checking me out. Again. How unprofessional could one guy be? "Do you think you can make it back to your room, or should I get a wheelchair?"

Holt's eyes were narrowed into angry slits. "I think my fiancé can walk. Right, baby?" He seethed.

I smirked as he rose onto his toes to kiss me. "I think I like this version of you. Will this transfer over to the bedroom?" I teased.

"It makes me want to slap him because he keeps trying to get a look at your dick."

I snorted. "Fuck, you're hot when you're jealous." We started to circle back to my room. "I'm wearing underwear, H, it's not like he can see anything."

"Mine." He grunted.

Pride swelled in my chest at that single word, and I stopped suddenly right outside the door to the room. I'd almost lost him. The thought made me want to slap myself in the face.

"Watson, are you okay?" Holt gripped my arm. "Should I get someone? A nurse, maybe?"

"Kiss me," I murmured. "Kiss me right now so everyone can see that I'm yours."

Holt's eyes went wide before he did as I asked. His soft lips met mine, my arm wrapped around his back to pull him closer, and I didn't give two shits who saw. I loved him. He loved me. No one was going to keep us apart ever again.

Holt's hand came up to stroke over my cheek, up into my hair, and when my tongue slid over his bottom lip, he opened his mouth for me without hesitation before he pulled back, his cheeks pink and eyes bright.

"Mine," I teased before I grabbed the walker to head into my room. I sat down on the hospital bed just as Dr. Sherman walked in. My stomach dropped.

"Doc."

I met Holt's eyes as he moved around the doctor to get to me and grasped my hand to lace our fingers together.

"How are you feeling, Watts?" He didn't seem fazed that I was holding hands with my stepbrother. "You look tired."

I nodded. "I'm exhausted, but I have no one to blame but myself."

Holt squeezed my hand. "He's doing good, though, right? He's moving around with the walker. Should be able to go home with me soon. Or at least that's what the physical therapist said." He gave me a brief smile.

"Yes, very soon." Dr. Sherman nodded. "However," He cleared his throat. "You won't be driving again." I felt sick to my stomach. I did that. I fucked up that chance by getting behind the wheel and causing another seizure. "The scan shows you had more than one seizure. On the night of your accident, and another one here, in the hospital while in the

coma. It might happen again, or it might not, but we can't chance it." He gave me a sad smile. "I know it's not the news you wanted, and I'm sorry to be the one to have to tell you."

Holt's grip was so tight it hurt. "Do you... Do you know what caused it?" he whispered.

"Possibly stress, or lack of sleep. It could have been because of the brain injury sustained from the original accident. We would need to do more tests—"

"No." I shook my head. "No more tests," I told him. "I don't want that." I felt tears burn my eyes as I turned to look at Holt, whose face had grown white.

"Of course, if you change your mind. I'll come to check on you later," Dr. Sherman said.

Holt stared at me with big eyes. "I'm so damn sorry, Watson."

"What are you thinking, baby?" I asked. "You look like you saw a ghost."

He nodded. "Is this my fault?"

"No." I untangled our fingers so I could cup his face with both of my hands. "The first accident caused all of this. I was worried about you. I wanted to make sure you were okay." I struggled to get up onto my knees, wanting to get closer, but body wasn't strong enough yet. "Holt, look at me." When his eyes moved to my face, I saw tears shining in them. "No, don't put the blame on yourself."

"Watson." His chin trembled as he spoke.

I yanked the blanket back. "Get up here." When he shook his head, I popped my jaw. "I swear to fucking God, Holt." I was sick of this game. "I love you. You're not going to do this to yourself, and you're not pushing me away. I won't let you. Get. Up. Here."

With a sigh, Holt climbed up onto the bed and buried his face against my chest. I wrapped my arm around his small frame to pull him closer. "It's—"

“Nope.” I combed my hand through his hair. “What do you think we should do with our lives now that my racing career is over? Travel the world?”

“Watson.” His voice shook.

“Start a band? Oh, maybe Killian will let us open for him?”

“Watson.” A sob escaped Holt’s throat.

I pulled back. “Baby, it sucks, yeah, but I’m not going to let it ruin my entire life.” I dragged a thumb over his face to collect the tears that had started to fall. “I have you, you love me, and as far as I’m concerned, that makes me the luckiest fucker in the world.”

Holt smiled. “I’m the luckiest fucker in the world.” He chuckled. “What about starting your own race team?”

“Holy shit.” I stared at him. “You’re so smart, baby.”

A blush creeped up his neck. “It makes sense, right? Find a driver or two, get the money you need with some partners. You’ll be unstoppable.”

“Mason would do it. I know he’s not happy with his team.”

“What about Shepard?”

I chewed on my lip. “I don’t know, maybe?” A smile spread over my face. “This could totally work.”

“Yeah?” Holt asked.

“We could start a race team,” I whispered. “Watson and Holt. Not me, *us*.”

Holt stared at me. “You want that with me?”

“Baby, I want everything with you. I’m not doing it without you, remember?”

Chapter Thirty-Three

Holt

Watson was released from the hospital two weeks after he woke up from his coma. Mom tried to get us to come and stay with her, but neither one of us wanted that. We hadn't been alone together in weeks, and we were both desperate for each other.

"I can't promise you this place isn't a mess," I teased as I opened the door to the apartment, but the second Watson stepped inside, he grabbed me and shoved me against the wall. "Hi." I gasped as he pinned his large body over mine.

The doctors had said he was cleared for sexual activity within reason, but that didn't mean I wasn't still worried. Scared that something might happen to him. Afraid he might push himself too soon, too fast. I wanted him to be safe and would do anything in my power to make that happen.

He ran his nose down the curve of my neck, then I felt his teeth prick my skin.

"Hi," Watson murmured.

I raked my hands through his hair before I pulled his head back to mine. "I haven't had a proper shower in days."

"Don't fucking care, Holt, I need you."

Warmth spread over my body. "I love you," I whispered.

"I love you, too," Watson replied before his lips met mine. He pressed hard, bruising kisses against my mouth as his hands slipped up under the hem of my shirt. "Hurried hand jobs in the hospital haven't been enough, baby. I need to feel you. I want—" He stopped to stare at me as fire flashed in his dark eyes. "I want to feel you inside of me. I need you to fuck me."

A shudder ran through my body. "Are you... Is that... I..." I stumbled over myself as I tried to form coherent words.

Watson pressed his face into my neck. “Like I said before, it’s not something I do often, Holt, but with you, yeah, I want that. I want everything with you, baby.”

“Yes.”

Watson’s head shot up. “Yes?” He reached up to grip my face. “I don’t want to force you to do something you’re not comfortable with, H. If you’re not ready or you’re just a bottom, that’s okay. Don’t feel like you have to do it because it’s me.”

“Everything,” I repeated.

“Did I break you? Are you all right?” He chuckled as he dragged a finger over my bottom lip.

I nodded. “I thought I lost you.” I watched the way his face fell. “And now you’re here, with me, back in our apartment. I’m just trying to wrap my head around all of this. I—”

Watson’s lips found mine again, softer this time, as he told me without words how much he loved me, needed me, and how sorry he was for everything that had happened between us. His hands twisted into my hair as I dug my own fingers into the front of his shirt before he pulled back. “You want me.”

“Yeah, I do.”

“Now?”

My cock pressed against my zipper as I stared at Watson. Knowing that he was mine, for good this time, and that everyone knew. No more hiding, no more pretending, and no more worrying about what anyone else might think because fuck them if they didn’t understand.

“Now works good for me.”

“Come on.” He grabbed my hand to drag me to the bedroom. He moved me toward the bed, urging me to sit down. “It’s been a while, you know, since I’ve done this.” He slowly pulled his shirt up over his head, and I let my eyes move over his muscled chest. The bruises and cuts had healed,

so they were all but faded, but I could still see them. Could trace them with my eyes closed if I had to.

I stood back up, itching to touch him. “Watson.” My throat was dry, my voice a hushed whisper as I placed my hands on his chest. “Let me do that for you.”

He nodded, watching as I popped the button on his jeans and slid down the zipper. I lightly touched the dusting of hair that disappeared beneath his briefs before I dragged his pants down over his thick, muscled thighs. Watson lifted his right leg and then his left, and when I looked up at him, he smiled, gripping my chin between his thumb and forefinger. “You’re so perfect, Holt. Beautiful and smart. All mine.” He leaned down so he could press his lips gently against mine.

I felt a blush creep up my neck and rested my face against his chest, breathing him in. This felt different with Watson. Neither one of us rushing but still wanting to be together. This wasn’t just fucking. I peppered soft kisses against his chest, over each pebbled nibble, listening as he whimpered and hissed. I dragged my hands over his defined abs, his hard muscles and tight body, just like I used to dream about before I finally dropped to my knees.

“All mine,” I repeated, casting a glance up at Watson.

His dark eyes were hooded, and his chest heaved with each breath. I kept my gaze on his as I slowly slid his briefs down to his ankles and sucked the head of his length into my mouth.

“Fuck, Holt.” Watson’s hands gripped my hair. “That’s it, baby.”

My tongue rolled over the slit, his precum salty yet familiar. I gripped the base as I slowly pushed him farther into my mouth, trying to take as much as I could. When his eyes rolled back, his hips arching forward, I pulled back, only to repeat the motion. Over and over as Watson’s grunts grew louder before I yanked my mouth off him and sat back on my heels.

“You’re so good at sucking my dick. I’m glad you stopped; I was about two seconds from coming in your pretty mouth.”

Watson motioned for me to stand up. “Let’s get you out of these clothes.”

I climbed back to my feet, and Watson helped me undress the way I did him. My shirt was the first thing he removed, landing on the floor in a pile with his clothes. His hands slid over my chest, my back, and up into my hair before he tilted it back to kiss my mouth. His tongue slowly licked around before plunging between my lips, curling with mine as he walked me backward to the bed.

“I love you,” he repeated, over and over.

Watson was quicker about getting my pants and underwear off than I was with him before he splayed his body over mine to continue kissing me. One hand slipped between us so he could wrap it around my dick, and when he slowly began to pump me, I swear I saw stars. He moved in even, moderate strokes as his tongue caressed mine until I thought I might lose my mind.

“Watson.” I dug my nails into his shoulder. “You have to stop.”

He sank his teeth into my bottom lip. “Close, baby?” he teased before he released me. “I have something for you.”

“You have something for me?”

“Yeah, something that belongs to you that I need to give back.”

Watson stood up, and I propped myself up on my arms as he disappeared from the bedroom. When he returned, he held his hand out toward me.

“That’s...” I stared down at the Xfinity ring in his palm. “You had the chain fixed?”

Watson shrugged as he gave me a bashful smile. “Killian and Matthias might have helped. Holt, I’m so damn sorry. I shouldn’t have taken this from you. My stupid brain, fuck.” He closed his eyes. “I don’t blame you if you don’t want it back. I can get you something else, something better if that’s what you want, or maybe you don’t want a ring at all. That would make sense, too.”

“Don’t call yourself stupid,” I growled, causing Watson’s eyes to pop back open. “Will you put it on for me? Until we can get it resized? Because that ring, that one right there? That’s the only one I ever want from you.”

Watson didn’t hesitate as he moved to unhook the clasp and hang it around my neck before using his knuckle to turn my head back up at him.

“It looks good on you, Holt.” He pressed his forehead against mine. “I’m so—”

“I know, baby, and no matter how many times we tell one another that, it won’t change what happened. I fucked up. You fucked up. We said horrible things, we did terrible things, but in the end? We’re still here. You found your way back to me because we were meant to be.” I saw the way he took a shaky breath, his Adam’s apple moving when he swallowed down his nerves. “Ask me again.”

Watson’s brows went up. “Ask you?”

“You just gave me a ring; shouldn’t you be asking me something?”

Watson broke into a wide smile. “You want me to ask you to marry me again?” His voice caused goosebumps to break out over my skin. “Shit, I’ll ask you that every day for the rest of my life until our wedding day. Even after we get married, I’ll ask you.” He sunk to one knee. “Holt Alexander Walker, will you marry me?”

Tears filled my eyes. “Fuck yes, I will.” I nearly knocked him over as I kissed him, wrapping both my arms and legs around his body to get as close as I possibly could.

Watson laughed, the sound filling me with a happiness I hadn’t felt since before his accident. “It’s not like I thought you’d say no, but still. I might have been a little worried.” He stood up with me in his arms and placed me on the bed. “Watson and Holt,” he whispered, and covered my body with his.

“Watts and H,” I murmured back.

He tucked a piece of hair behind my ear as he rolled onto his back so that I was above him. “Yeah, baby, I like the sound of that.”

Chapter Thirty-Four

Watson

I stared up into Holt's face as I took in every perfect feature. His hazel eyes, the handful of freckles spread across his nose, the soft plump lips I could never get enough of, and my ring dangling from his neck. *My ring.*

"You still want to do this, baby?" I nipped at his jaw.

"I'll do anything with you," he assured me.

I tilted my head. "That's not what I asked you."

"Yes, Watson, I want to do this."

I smiled before I eased Holt down onto the mattress next to me so that I could reach into the nightstand beside the bed to pull out the lube and a condom before I pinned his body back beneath mine. "You're going to have to be gentle with me."

"You don't like it when I'm gentle," Holt teased.

I chuckled softly. "I'll make an exception this time." I sealed my mouth to his. "Fuck, I can't get enough of you."

"I missed this."

I fingered the necklace around his neck before I met Holt's gaze again. "Want to help me?" His eyes flashed with desire as he grunted at me. "Use your words, baby."

"Y-yes." He nodded. "I'll help you." Holt chewed on his bottom lip as I sat up. "I know you mentioned it before, but..." His chest and neck turned pink as he gathered himself together. "Do you think that we could forgo the condoms if we got tested?"

I stared at Holt as he kept his gaze on the bed. "H, look at me." His head shot up. "You don't need to get tested. That's all on me." I touched his cheek, and my heart leaped against my chest when he leaned into my hand. "I'd love to have that with you. I'll get tested as soon as possible for you, baby," I murmured, then I threw my legs up onto the bed. "Let's get started. Grab the lube."

Without hesitation, Holt did as I told him and popped off the top. “You act like I don’t know how to prep an asshole, Watson. I’ve been doing this for a lot longer than you think.”

I snorted. “Fine, showoff, you do it all then.”

“I will.” He smirked, and I watched as he spread it over his fingers. “Lift your legs up toward your chest for me.” I did as he instructed and let out a low groan when Holt slid his middle finger inside to the knuckle. “How am I doing so far, boss?”

“Good, really good.”

He leaned forward. “More?”

“Yeah, more, please,” I begged, and when he eased a second finger inside, I fell back onto the mattress muttering profanities. I glanced up to find Holt’s face over mine. “You’re enjoying this, aren’t you?”

He shrugged. “Not as much as you, but I am. The blissed-out look on your face is pretty fucking hot.” He slid his finger in and out before he scissored them, then slipping them back inside and tapping my prostate with the tips.

“Fuck, Holt,” I whimpered. “I think... I think I’m ready. I need you. I want you inside of me before I embarrass myself.”

He reached up with his clean hand to rub at my ring and gave me a quick nod. Then Holt grabbed the condom, ripped it open with his teeth, and slid it down his length with one hand before slicking it with more lube.

“Get on your knees for me.”

I did as he told me and glanced over my shoulder as I felt the head of his dick against my tight hole. “Baby, just make it... Fuuuuck.” I groaned as he slipped inside, past the tight ring. My chin dropped forward.

“Okay?” Holt whispered. “Tell me if it’s too much, Watson. I don’t want to hurt you.” His breath was hot against my neck.

I pushed back against him. “It’s more than okay,” I assured him. “I can take it.”

“Yeah, you can.” He slapped at my arm when I went to reach for my cock. “Not yet.”

Fuck, I really liked bossy Holt. He grasped my hips, shoved forward, and stilled inside me. I could hear his heaving panting, his chest against my back.

“How about you, baby? Okay?” I teased.

“Like you said, don’t want to embarrass myself.” Holt peppered kisses against my shoulders. “You still good? This isn’t too much?”

I turned to look at him. “You feel so fucking good, baby. I want you to fuck me. I’m not going to break.”

That was all Holt needed to hear before he sank into me over and over, stretching me to the limit, digging his nails into my skin. He bit down on my shoulder, his teeth breaking the skin as he groaned out my name. Sweat beaded around my hairline before dripping down my face as I fisted the blanket beneath me. He twisted my face back to his so he could brand hard kisses to my mouth, and when I tugged hard on his bottom lip, Holt shoved his tongue into my mouth. We had done this before, but this time was totally different, and it was hotter than anything I had ever done. It was sex. It was fucking. It was making love. When I looked at Holt, my heart threatened to burst from my chest.

“I love you so fucking much,” I whispered.

He smiled at me with tears in his eyes. “I love you, too.”

Then he finally reached around to grasp my leaking cock in his hand. The second Holt’s hand made contact with my needy shaft; it was all over. I clenched around him as cum spilled from my dick over his fingers and onto the bed as I cried out his name. I felt Holt shudder above me, his own release hitting him, and then his body slumped over mine, slick with sweat.

“Jesus, fuck.” He moaned before dropping onto the bed on his back, slipping the condom off and tying it up to drop it on the floor. “That was—”

“Amazing.”

Holt's eyes met mine. "We need to do that more often." He smiled.

"Oh, so now you're not a power bottom anymore?" I teased before I moved onto my side and wrapped myself around him. I listened to the sound of his heart as his breathing started to slow back down.

Holt tangled his hands in my hair. "No, but I liked it. Maybe when we feel like switching it up now and then."

I stared at my ring as it sparkled against his chest. "Mmmmm."

"Wore you out?"

"A little bit."

Holt let out a soft chuckle. "Should we bother to wash up or are you going to just fall asleep in post-coital bliss?"

I muttered something, or at least I thought I did, but before I knew it, I drifted off, dreaming about Holt and our future together.

I woke up sleeping upside down on the bed with a blanket covering my naked body. It was dark, I was alone, and for a moment, I was confused. I thought I was back in my room at my parents' house, that Holt was gone, and we were still broken up. I sat up, my heart racing, and gathered my thoughts before everything came flooding back to me. The accident, the hospital, and....

"Holt." When I called out my fiancé's name, it came out in a whisper. "Holt!" This time, it sounded a little louder. When I didn't get a response, fear prickled through me until I heard the soft murmurs of voices coming from the other room. I yanked the blanket off and climbed from the bed. I dug around on the floor for my clothes to get dressed, then headed down the hall.

"We're fine." Holt had the door open enough so he could talk to the person on the other side, but they couldn't see inside. "You don't have to worry."

I pressed myself against his back as I wrapped my arms around his waist. “Who are you talking—Dad.” His dad, Alexander; not my father.

“I came by to check on you and Watts. I wanted to make sure you both were all right.” He looked terrible. Like maybe everything was finally catching up with him. Good. He should feel like shit after what he’d done to my mother.

Holt glanced up at me before he turned back to his father. “I told you. See, we’re fine. You can leave now.”

“Do you want to come in?” I asked and felt Holt stiffen in my arms. I slid my hands up to his shoulders and squeezed them lightly. I knew he was upset with his father; I was too, but maybe this was the olive branch we both needed.

Dad looked at Holt before he met my eyes. “If it’s okay with Holt. I don’t want to make him uncomfortable.”

“You all right with it, baby?” I murmured. When Holt nodded, we stepped back and let Dad into the apartment.

He looked around for a second before he dragged both hands through his hair. His hazel eyes met my dark ones before he let out a long sigh. “I need to apologize to the both of you. For everything. I shouldn’t have... Your mother knew. She always saw the way you looked at Watts, son, and I was in denial when she tried to tell me.” He hung his head. “You’re happy?”

“Very,” Holt answered before he took my hand. “We love one another, Dad. I know it might weird you out or whatever, but we’re only asking for you to be happy for us. You know Watson will take care of me. He’s a good man, and that’s all I ever wanted.” He squeezed my fingers.

A lump formed in my throat as I tried to gather my thoughts. “I can’t drive anymore. It was Holt’s idea to start a team together, and we’re going to do that. We’re going to get married and start a family at some point, too. We want you to be a part of our lives. If you want that.”

Dad’s head shot up. “I’d like that.”

Holt practically flung himself at his father, and I stood back to let them have their moment before they both reached for me to drag me into their hug. Maybe everything was going to turn out to be okay after all.

“Your mom and I are trying to work on things,” Dad confessed once we broke apart. “Counseling, that sort of thing. I really fucked things up. It’s all on me, and I’ll take all the blame if that’s what it takes, but I love her. So much.”

I pulled Holt closer to me. “I’ll agree with you on the fucking up part. But the two of you were always so happy, so I have no doubt that you can work things out.”

“I hope so. I’ve been a pretty horrible husband and father lately, so I wouldn’t blame anyone for giving up on me. The fact that I served her with divorce papers. That was the worst thing I could have done.” He took a shaky breath. “I’m honestly surprised she’s even talking to me right now.”

Holt moved to go hug him again, so I took a moment to brush my teeth and wash my face. When I came back into the living room, they were sitting on the couch talking. I eased myself next to Holt, slipping my arm around his shoulders. He looked over at me and put a hand on my knee.

“Feeling all right?” he asked softly.

I nodded. “Yeah, baby, I’m perfect.”

Chapter Thirty-Five

Holt

Watson gripped my hand tightly. “I’m going to vomit.” He turned to look at me with wide eyes. “I’m serious, baby. I think—”

I reached up to drag a thumb over his cheekbones. “You’re just nervous,” I murmured as his lids fluttered. “You’re going to be just fine. Relax, take a deep breath,” I reminded him, as the sounds of everyone around us threatened to push him over the edge.

Watson was scheduled to give a news conference in about five minutes about his future as a driver and whether he was coming back next year or not. We already knew the answer to that, but we hadn’t told anyone else. Not even Mason or Shepard. Watson wanted to announce it publicly to everyone at the same time at Phoenix, which was the last race of the year.

“Why does this calm me?” he asked before he gripped my wrists. His dark eyes softened as he smiled at me. “Is this some sort of witchcraft?”

I snorted. “You are such an idiot.”

“But I’m your idiot. I love you, H.”

Warmth spread through my body. It didn’t matter how many times Watson said those three words to me, because it meant one thing. He was mine. All mine.

“I love you, too,” I whispered before he leaned down so he could brush his lips over mine.

“All right, you two.” Jenna clapped her hands together. “Watts, you ready to go out there? Because you got a packed house for this one.” She winked at me.

Watson visibly paled. “Oh, crap.” He turned and leaned over the garbage can like he might actually throw up this time.

“Seriously?” I hissed at Jenna. Wait, when had I become the strong one? “I just got him calmed down and relaxed.” I

pressed my hand over my sternum to feel the ring there.

Jenna grimaced. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you, Watts. You’re going to do great. We went over this, and you have the whole speech written out. You just need to read what’s in front of you.”

He shook his head as he kept his face over the trash. “I don’t know if I can do this,” he muttered. “Baby.” Watson held out his hand, which I took so he could tug me closer. “What if I fuck this up?”

Since his second accident, Watson, who used to be one of the most confident people I had ever met, had been less sure of himself. He got confused easily, sometimes woke up terrified in the middle of the night, and needed reassurance with things he never had before. The doctor said he might outgrow this, or he might not. This was part of living with a TBI.

“You’re going to be amazing,” I told him. “You’re Watson James Brooks.” I pressed a kiss to his neck as he squeezed my hand. “There’s no way you can fuck this up.”

He leaned into me. “Well, we all know that’s a lie.”

“Look at me.” When Watson turned his head toward me, I released his hand to grip his head between my palms. “I’ll be right there the entire time. You can look over at me any time you’re feeling unsure of yourself, baby, okay?” He nodded. “Who’s your biggest fan?”

Watson smiled. “You are.”

“Don’t let your mom hear you say that.” I grinned before he pressed his forehead against mine.

“Are you ready, Watts? It’s time,” Jenna announced from behind him.

Watson nodded as he kept his eyes on me. “I’m ready.”

“I’d like to thank everyone for coming out today.” Watson glanced across the room at me, and I gave him a thumbs up. “More importantly, I need to give a shout out to my fiancé, Holt, yeah that’s my stepbrother, but y’all should know that

we're together. We're in love, so if that's a problem for you, you should probably just leave now. I'm not even sorry. It just kind of happened. He's always been an important person in my life, my best friend, and if I didn't have him, I highly doubt I'd be here right now." Watson dragged a hand through his blond hair. "I love you, H." He flashed a big smile before he picked up the papers on the table. "I won't be answering questions about my personal life after this, so don't even ask about him."

Everyone laughed, and I felt a weight fall from my shoulders as Jenna nudged my side. "I told you," she mouthed.

"Right." Watson squared his shoulders. "I'm officially retired from racing after that Daytona crash." The crowd went deathly quiet. "Yeah, it sucks, right?" His chin quivered, and I felt tears fill my eyes. "Not exactly the news you all expected, but maybe you kind of figured it out with this conference. It's okay, though." I saw the tear that slipped out before he brushed it away. "I've had a few great years racing in trucks, Xfinity, and right here in Cup. I've made some fantastic friends with Mason and Shepard. But this is not the end, trust me. I am not going anywhere."

Watson reached for the water in front of him and took a drink before he continued. "But it's not as bad as it could be, because with the help of my amazing fiancé, I am going to come back better, stronger, and more amazing than ever before." His eyes found mine again. "Actually, this is all his idea, but Holt didn't want to come out and talk to you about this." There were a few soft chuckles in the crowd. "Holt and I will be starting our own racing team. We don't have a driver, a name, or even a manufacturer yet, but those details will come. You all know how much I like to win, so it will only be the best." He beamed happily when a few people clapped and cheered. "I'll take a few questions now."

The first person stood up. "Mike Wade, NASCAR radio," he introduced himself. "The accident in Daytona is the reason you're retiring, Watts?"

"I've had a few seizures." He kept his eyes on me as he spoke. "I can't drive at all right now, and I may never be able to. Sometimes I wake up confused. I forget things. I don't

really have a choice in the matter right now.” I saw the pained look on his face as he spoke.

I should be sitting with him. Damn it, why wasn't I?

“Claire Morgan, Watts, SMN radio. Do you think your team will be ready to race next season?”

Watson shook his head, but I saw the flinch as he tried to get his thoughts together. “Maybe the following year, if we're lucky. Like I said, we, uh, have a lot of things to work out before we can start to think about racing.”

I moved around Jenna before I could even think twice about it and went up to sit next to him in the empty seat to his left. I covered the microphone with one hand while taking one of his with my other.

“Okay?” I asked.

The smile on Watson's face told me it was more than okay. It wasn't that he needed my help; he just needed my reassurance.

“Holt,” someone called my name, but I didn't catch theirs when they introduced themselves. “Watts said the team was your idea. Does that mean you won't be a tire carrier any longer, or do you plan to continue with that as well?”

I glanced at Watson to find him watching me with love beaming in his eyes. “Watson's dream is my dream. If he's not driving, then there's no reason for me to stick around here.” A few people chuckled. “I know how important racing is to him. It's in his blood, so I want to be wherever he is. We're going to start this team together from the ground up.”

Watson squeezed my hand in his.

We fielded as many questions as possible before Jenna finally ended the news conference. Most of the questions were about the future race team. Did we have any idea who we might ask to race for us? What were our plans for sponsors? Things we had only thought about but hadn't really gotten around to contract negotiations with. Once we were alone again, Watson wrapped his arms around me and pulled me against him.

“That went better than I thought.” I could hear his smile.
“Thank you.”

I rested my chin on his chest. “For?” I asked.

“Being there for me. Coming up there when I started to panic and holding my hand.” He brushed the hair from my eyes. “I was getting a little freaked out. You saw that.”

I smiled. “I saw you.”

A loud whistle caused us to break apart and turn around to find Mason and Shepard, both with smirks on both of their faces.

“Makes you sick, doesn’t it?” Shepard rolled his eyes.

“I think they’re kind of cute,” Mason commented.

“Assholes,” Watson muttered before he yanked me against him again. “I thought someone was mad at us for a second.”

Mason shrugged. “I don’t know. I’m kind of mad you didn’t tell me you were starting your own team. I thought we were friends. I mean...” He looked around before he spoke again. “Do you need a driver?”

“Are you serious?” Watson gasped.

“My contract is up at the end of next year, Watts. I’m going to need options.” Mason started toward us. “I’m not getting any younger. My wife is already talking about me retiring after what happened with you. I’d love to go out on top.”

I looked between the three of them for a second. “What about you?” I asked Shepard. “Are you looking for a new ride?”

“Fuck no, I’m not.” He shook his head. “No offense. But I will back you up one hundred percent with whatever you end up doing.”

Watson nodded. “No offense taken.”

“I might be.” Carson’s soft voice traveled across the room, and I felt Watson’s entire body go rigid next to mine. “I know that Watts isn’t my biggest fan...”

“Fucking Einstein,” Watson muttered under his breath.

I pinched his side. “Stop,” I hissed. “Carson, you don’t have to—” I paused when he held up his hand to stop me.

“Look, I’m not exactly having a stellar year or even years. I’m struggling. My team isn’t that great, and my contract is going to be up at the end of next year, just like Mason.” Carson looked like he was afraid to meet Watson’s gaze. “I’m not a bad driver. I won an Xfinity championship, too. My car owner doesn’t know what he’s doing, and I just... Shit.” He sighed.

I nudged my fiancé. “Say something,” I told him.

“Me?” Watson looked surprised. “He’s your friend.”

“Yeah, and he thinks you hate him.”

“I... don’t hate anyone. I just thought he wanted into your pants. I was jealous. I didn’t know what was going on between the two of you. Scrambled brain, remember?”

Shepard snorted. “Could you two do this another time? You’re making the poor guy suffer here.”

“Carson, I don’t hate you,” Watson blurted out and we all watched as Carson’s head shot up. “You looked after Holt for me, so I guess that doesn’t make you a bad guy.” He grimaced when I pinched his side again. “We could talk about you joining the team.” He looked like it actually physically pained him to say that. “As long as you don’t flirt with my man.”

“Jesus, smooth, Watts.” Mason shook his head.

Carson worried his lip between his teeth. “I admit I was into Holt at first, but as soon as I saw the way he looked at you, the way he talked about you, I backed off. So I can promise you that you don’t have to worry about me trying to date Holt. We’re only friends, and that’s the way it’s going to stay.” His face turned beet-red. “Wait, did you say we’ll talk about me joining the team?”

“I did, yes.” Watson nodded.

God, I loved him so much.

“Th-thank you, Watts.” Carson grinned happily.

I looked up to see exhaustion all over Watson’s face. “You want to head out? You look like you might pass out at any moment.” When he started to object, I shook my head. “Nah, don’t do that. I can tell by now when you’re going to lie to me, baby.”

“Barf, you two are gross.” Shepard grunted, but I saw the smile on his face.

Mason nudged Watson. “I told you, didn’t I? That you’d find someone who would make you happy.”

“I was already half in love with Holt when you told me that, but yeah, you did.” He pressed a kiss to my head. “Let’s get out of here,” he whispered into my ear.

Epilogue

Watson

Two years later

“I’m going to pass out or throw up. Maybe both.” I warned Holt as we watched Mason cross the finish line in first place, the checkered flag waving. Carson was right behind him in second, and honestly, if you had told me this was how this would go on our first race, I would have called you a big fat liar.

Holt wrapped his arms tightly around my waist. “No, you’re not, because if you do, you’re going to miss the massive burnouts our driver, and one of your best friends, is about to do because he just won the Daytona 500. We finished one, two, baby. Can you believe it?”

He was right about that. But my husband was right about everything. That’s right, I said *husband*. Holt and I got hitched on New Year’s Eve in our parent’s backyard with a handful of our friends. Our mom and dad, by the way, managed to patch up their relationship with a lot of help from their therapist and seem to be happier than ever.

Mason was my best man and Matthias was Holt’s, while Mulligan Downtown was our wedding band. The entire thing sounds crazy to me even now when I think about it, but it was the happiest day of my life. Nothing compared to it. My face hurt from smiling so much, and I don’t think I sat down once. I was too busy kissing, dancing, and touching Holt the entire night. Sometimes I had to remind myself that all of this was real because sometimes it didn’t feel like it.

Brooklyn, Shepard’s wife, had taken the pictures, and they’d come out damn good. So good, in fact, that I made one my background on my phone, replacing the hammock photo I was so obsessed with. Maybe it was the look on Holt’s face as we danced together, or maybe it was the fact that I would take a bullet for him if it came down to it.

Sometimes I got really upset with myself for not realizing my feelings for him earlier. Maybe we would have gotten together sooner. Then I only have to remember that what we have now? Not everyone is lucky enough to find their soulmate. I was a lucky bastard, and I made sure Holt knew that every single day.

We both watched as Mason did a massive burnout along the front stretch of the track, the same one that had nearly ended my life and took my memories of Holt that day, before he came to a stop. Then he climbed from the car to remove his helmet and walked over to the flagman, who was waiting for him.

Mason grabbed the checkered flag, walked up the steep embankment so that he could hand it to a little boy wearing one of his shirts. No, not his, one of *my* shirts, and then I lost it. Sobs burst from my chest, and I buried my face in Holt's neck, hoping the cameras weren't on us right now. I knew he did that for me. We had become extremely close since he joined our team.

"You did this," Holt whispered into my ear. "You helped Mason Pelletier win his first Daytona 500, baby," he reminded me. "I know you wish it was you out there right now."

I shook my head. "No, that's not it." I pulled back. "That little boy was wearing my shirt. Mason gave him the checkered flag. I just got emotional." Something I was more now than ever thanks to the TBI.

"Fuck yes!" Mason came sprinting toward me and engulfed both of us in a hug before he took a step back. "Dude, are you... Are you crying?"

I shook my head as I wiped my face with the palms of my hands. "I'm fine."

"You're not fine... Hey!" Mason planted himself in front of the camera when the interviewer came toward him. "I just won the Daytona 500 because of Brooks Racing!" he exclaimed.

I snorted and reached for Holt's hand, which instantly calmed me, like his touch always did. I appreciated Mason and what he was trying to do for me, but a lot had changed because of my accident. Things for the worse and for the better.

I released Holt's hand so I could wrap my arm around his shoulders and pressed a kiss to the side of his head just as Carson came toward us with a big smile on his face. I had warmed up to him, too, after I met his boyfriend and finally realized he wasn't after Holt anymore. Although that relationship started off rocky, but that was Carson's story to tell, not mine.

Shit, we really had just finished the race in first and second place. Our first official points race of the season. Things could only get better from here.

Holt

One year later

I leaned against the doorway as I watched my husband with his chin down against his chest in his office at Brooks Racing. I'd taken his last name after we got married, and I loved it. I loved being Mr. Holt Brooks more than I ever thought I would. Only now, I had to wake Watson up to take him home, because as usual, he had stayed back at the shop too late when he could have easily done it tomorrow or the next day.

Watson still ended up exhausted a lot more easily than most people. He hadn't had a seizure in over three years, but I would always worry. My husband liked to work himself until he was ready to drop, and I sometimes had to remind him that everything would still be there in the morning. He had other people to do things for him. He didn't have to do everything.

"Hey." I dragged my hands over his cheekbones, and he groaned at my touch. "You fell asleep at your desk again, baby."

Bella, the lab mix we adopted a couple of weeks ago after we finalized the sale on our new house, popped her head up from her bed, but when she realized it was only me, promptly went back to snoozing.

"We should go home," I added when he opened his eyes.

"I'm working."

"Baby, you were sleeping."

Watson grunted before he grabbed me and hauled me onto his lap. "We could fool around."

"Someone could walk in."

"That's the fun part. We're the bosses. No one can say anything."

I moved to straddle his waist. "We have an entire house to fool around in. Besides, the bags under your eyes tell a different story."

“No one knows me better than you do, H.” Watson’s lips found mine, and I got lost in him as I always did before he pulled back. “We still have that appointment tomorrow afternoon?”

I nodded. “We have to be there at one o’clock.”

“Excited?” he asked.

“About possibly buying Riverside Speedway? The place we met for the first time? Nah... Okay, maybe a little. What about you?” I watched the way his dark eyes searched my hazel ones before he nodded.

“Terrified,” he murmured. “What if they don’t like the offer? What if they want more money?”

I tilted my head. “Then we offer them more money.”

I didn’t bother to tell Watson they were going to accept our offer. That was my little secret. Something I had worked out with the realtor. It went back to that conversation with Hutch when he reminded me I should do something I thought Watson would want.

“Trust me. I have a feeling they’ll accept.”

“I can’t believe we’re going to own Riverside Speedway,” Watson whispered.

I smiled. “Crazy how things have worked out. Want to get out of here?” I asked.

He helped me to my feet before joining me. “Watson and Holt forever, right?”

“H and Watts,” I answered.

He slipped his arm around my waist. “I like Watson and Holt much better.” He grabbed Bella’s lead from the hook by the door, causing her to jump to her feet.

“There’s Wild and Reckless in the freezer waiting for you.”

“Baby, you spoil me.” Watson stopped to press a kiss against my lips.

I smiled up at him. “Always,” I murmured.

The End

One More Thing

I put a little bit of all my favorite NASCAR drivers into Watson because I thought it would be fun to include them. My absolute favorite driver, Ryan Newman, had a horrific accident at the Daytona 500 in 2020 but then walked out of the hospital with his daughters two days later. I have never cried more at a race. He no longer races in NASCAR, but I was lucky enough to see him win in 2022 at my home track in Stafford Springs, Connecticut in SRX racing, and I would be a liar if I didn't have tears in my eyes. Newman will *always* be my driver.

Alex Bowman, who became my favorite driver when I knew that Ryan Newman was going to be retiring at the end of 2020. His love for animals was something I am also passionate about. Unfortunately, in the fall of 2022, Alex suffered a concussion which hit a little too close to home and had to miss a few races. He's okay now, but it was terrible to have him miss the end of the season.

The winners get waffles, the stress and throwing up, and the Wild and Reckless all belong to Noah Gragson. He's one of the strangest, funniest, and wildest drivers I have ever come across, and I just adore him. As I am writing this, he's won seven Xfinity races in 2022 and might win the championship. He's going cup racing in 2023, which I'm more than excited about. He's also subbing for Alex in cup while he's out.

If you're interested in learning Killian and Matthias's story, they have their own book called *The Lying Tree*. Please check the trigger warnings.

Maverick Frost will be getting a book. You can expect that in 2023, which will come with all the trigger warnings. He was also in *The Lying Tree*.

Hutch Kelly's book is called *Out of the Dark*. Please check trigger warnings before reading.

Rand and Brooklyn have their own book called *Picture Perfect*. It's free on all digital platforms.

Mason's book, *Gravity*, is where Watson first showed up briefly. Again, please check trigger warnings.

I have plans for Carson Carey to get a book, as well as some of the others who have been written into the Wide Open Series.

For a complete list of all my books, check out my website sundaeleighton.com.

Acknowledgments

My husband, Earl — You are the most amazing, supportive, brilliant and perfect husband in the world. Thank you for being the love of my life, my rock, my biggest cheerleader, and helping me achieve my dreams. I couldn't do any of this without you. Now it's your turn. *Real Love Is Forever*. IOYAT.

Stephanie — I miss your face. Hopefully by the time my next book releases, I'll be visiting you, because it's my turn. Thanks for being my bestie for all these years and supporting me with my career. I'm trying my best, okay? I LOVE YOU, BE FRI! Let me know what Phil thinks of this one.

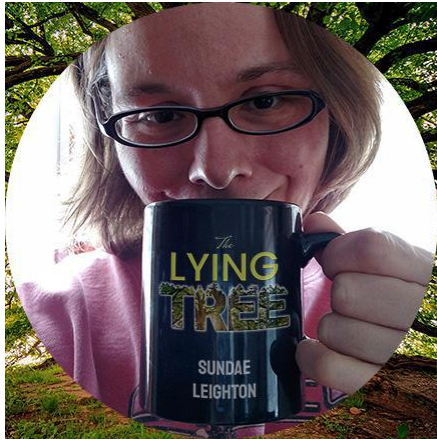
My readers — Everyone who has read, loved, and shared my books over the years. I honestly wouldn't be able to keep doing this if I didn't have you. I appreciate you all so very much. I honestly think I put Killian and Matthias into this book for you more than myself because you all loved them so much. You'll probably continue to see them pop up in all my books.

My family — Your support is amazing. Mom, Ellen, Sissy, Dea, and Serena all of you share my teasers, cover reveals, and everything I post on Facebook. I appreciate you all so much even if some of my books are too spicy for some of you.

T. Ashleigh — Thanks for dropping into my DMs at the end of 2022 after I had just finished the first two books in the LionHeart Academy series to tell me you enjoyed *The Lying Tree*. You have no idea how hard I fangirled that day.

Noah Gragson — You are Watson Brooks minus the whole being in love with your stepbrother thing. You made me fall in love with Xfinity racing again. You're crazy, wild, and not afraid to say what you mean. I can't wait to watch you go Cup racing. Let's get Petty/GMS in Victory Lane four Sundays in a row, just like you did for JRM. Winners get waffles. Throw your nuts on the dash and GO FOR IT! Thank you for inspiring me to create Watson around your weirdness.

Michelle Lancaster, Lochie Carey, and Andy Murray — Michelle for taking those pictures that helped inspired me to write this book. You're so talented, girl, but stop, because every single time I see a new model, I want them for my next cover. Lochie and Andy for being the muses behind Watson and Holt. Someday, I hope to be able to use the two of you on a cover or two.



About the Author

Sundae Leighton writes romance novels that are sweet with a dark twist.

She got her start writing fanfiction with her friends in school, but didn't take the plunge to publish her first book (Picture Perfect) until 2020. Born and raised in Connecticut, where she currently resides with her husband and their cats. She sometimes scares herself when she writes things darker than intended, considers coffee the nectar of the gods, and once ran the NYC marathon (OK - *half* marathon). When she isn't writing down what the voices in her head tell her to, she likes watching murder shows, auto racing, and reading romance books with a lot of dark angst.

Read more at [Sundae Leighton's site](#).