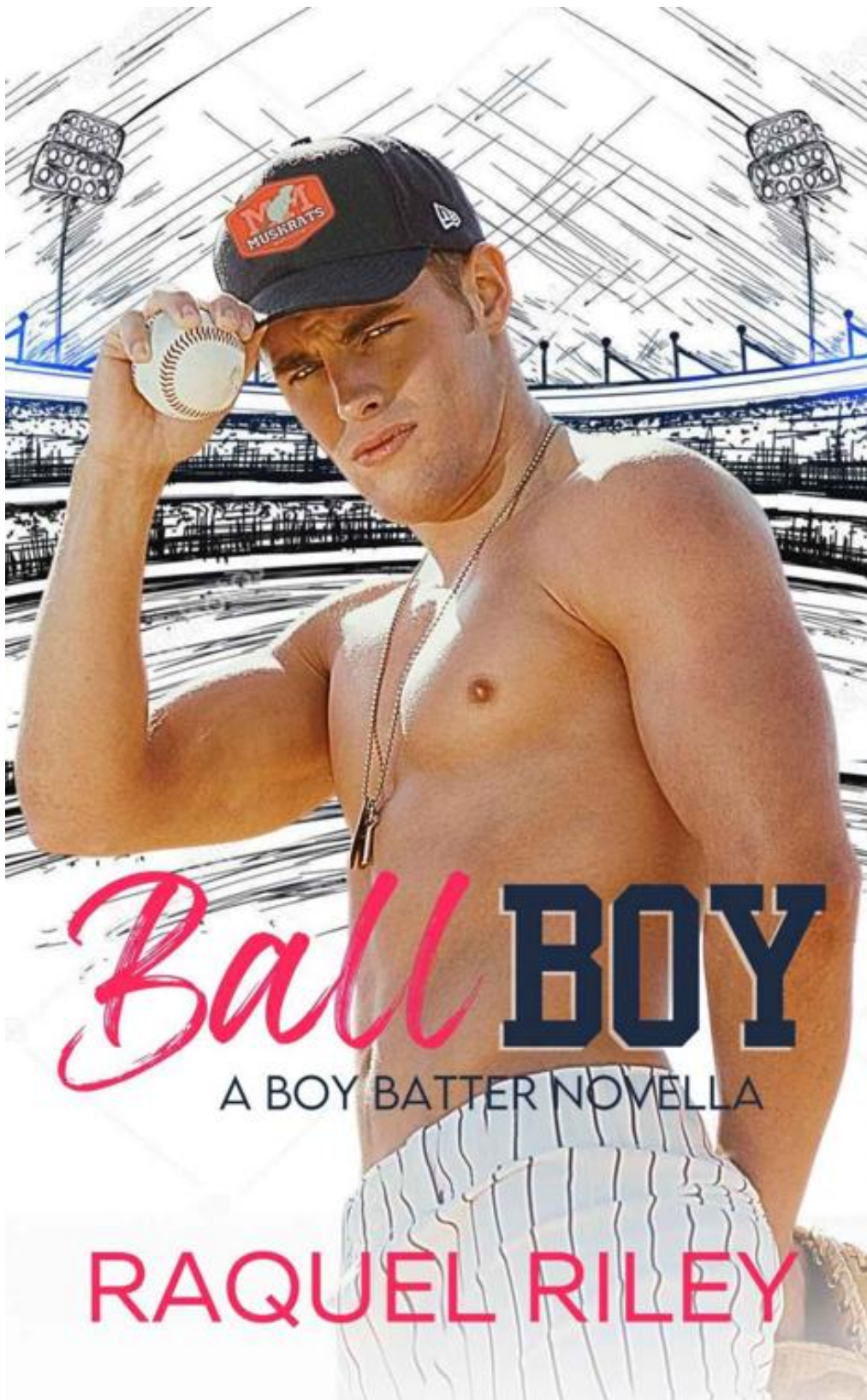


Ball **BOY**

A BOY BATTER NOVEL

RAQUEL RILEY



Ball **BOY**

A BOY BATTER NOVELLA

RAQUEL RILEY

Copyright © 2023 by Raquel Riley

www.raquelriley.com

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be used, reproduced, or transmitted in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies, events, or locales is entirely coincidental. The use of any real company and/or product names is for literary effect only. All products and brand names are registered trademarks of their respective holders/companies.

This book contains sexually explicit material which is only suitable for mature audiences.

Edited by [Elli at Clocktower Editing](#)

Cover design by [Raquel Riley](#).

Proofreading by [Jenn ReadsBooks](#)

Photography by [@tomcullisphoto](#)

Cover Model: Corey

For Austin,

You are one of my favorite people.

With a heart of gold that shines as bright as your personality,

It's no wonder your future is wide open!

Marcus,

Austin couldn't have found a better Coach to guide him in

life, love, and baseball, than you.

Keep an eye on him for me.

And be careful of The Wilder Effect!

CONTENT WARNING

This book contains a large age gap, a power imbalance, and the inappropriate use of baseball equipment as sex toys. Mention of a taboo incestuous couple that live next door.

CONTENTS

The First Inning

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

The Second Inning

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Chapter 22

The Third Inning

Chapter 23

Chapter 24

Chapter 25

26. Epilogue

Dear Reader

[The Family Sins Duet](#)

[Shop \[www.raquelriley.com\]\(http://www.raquelriley.com\)](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

THE FIRST INNING

Close doesn't count in baseball. Close only counts in horseshoes and grenades. -**Frank Robinson**

CHAPTER ONE

AUSTIN

We were up by two.

Danny Sparks, pitcher for the South Side Seagulls, had a hell of an arm and he was a fast runner, I'd give him that, but he couldn't swing a bat for shit. Tuning out the jeering and whistles from the crowd, I looked directly into his eyes and stared him down. Sparks looked away first. We both knew he couldn't hit the broad side of a barn with that bat. His confidence was already blown, and I hadn't even thrown the first pitch yet. I straightened my spine, cradling the baseball behind my back. My fingers rubbed over the roughened red stitches and worn leather stained with red clay.

Counting back from six... five... four...

I rubbed the toe of my cleat in the dirt next to the mound and scanned the crowd, blurred by the glowing halo of the stadium lights. My dad waved back, giving me a solid thumbs up. With a curt nod, I focused on Sparks again, grinding my molars.

It was the same warmup every time. Any pitcher who says he doesn't have a routine is either lying or not worth the sweat staining his jockstrap. It centered me, made the white noise fade away so I could focus.

Three... two... one...

Gripping the ball tighter, I brought it to my glove, changing up my stance, turning my body slightly sideways. With a deep breath that I held in my lungs, I wound my arm back, loosened my grip, and let the ball fly as I exhaled, watching as it rocketed through the air at eighty-five miles an hour.

Sparks leaned into the pitch, letting the ball clip his shoulder. Unfortunately, it wasn't his throwing arm. So predictable. It was the only way he could get on base. I hoped it stung like a bitch and left a nasty bruise. As the crowd gave

him a pity clap, I shook it off and ran through my routine again in preparation for the next guy at bat. No big deal, Sparks wouldn't make it to second base. I'd make damn sure of that.

I glanced over at the dugout. Coach Wolfe gave me a nod followed by a hand signal.

The changeup.

John Cordon was notorious for swinging too early. If he thought I was throwing a fastball, he would be a guaranteed strike when I slowed it down. A series of subtle nods and angling of my head communicated to my catcher, Phil, exactly what I intended to throw out next. He gave me one sharp nod in return, telling me he was ready.

Forming a circle with my thumb and forefinger, I loosely gripped the ball, cranked my arm back and high, and let loose with an exhale of breath.

“Strike!” the umpire called out.

I smiled at Coach with satisfaction. The Seagulls were going home as losers, just like the last time we played them.

“Heal-ey! Heal-ey! Heal-ey!” My teammates chanted my name as we filed into the locker room.

“6-2,” Sean shouted.

Coach's huge hand clapped my shoulder. “Great job, Austin. You were amazing out there tonight.”

Heat bloomed on my cheeks. I was physically incapable of hiding my reaction to compliments. Always had been. Especially when they came from an authority figure. I was no better than a trained puppy, begging and eager to please.

“Let's not forget Bader's double play,” I added, hoping to deflect attention, and comfortably melted into the background as they whooped and hollered for Ricky Bader. But Coach's dark eyes lingered on me, as did his bright smile. He was proud of me. It was a high almost as satisfying as winning. After all, I couldn't achieve one without the other.

I caught up with Sean coming out of the showers, dripping wet, with a towel wrapped around his hips. “Hey, you wanna come over tonight? I got that new game you wanted to play.”

My best friend looked visibly disappointed. “Can’t. I’ve got church in the morning. Maybe tomorrow night?”

His mom dragged him with her every week, against his will. “Yeah, sure. Tomorrow. It’s a date.”

He removed his towel and swatted me with the wet end, leaving a stinging red mark across my back. “A date with your *Xbox* controller, maybe,” he said, laughing as I rubbed my back.

“There he is!”

As soon as I pushed through the locker room door, my dad’s voice echoed down the hall, bouncing off the cinder block walls. He waited for me after every game, without fail.

“Star pitcher and MVP for the Mapleview Musketeers.” He cupped his hands around his mouth to amplify his voice, like a sports announcer. I chuckled at his exaggerated voice and embellished description of my position.

“Dad.” My cheeks were growing warm again.

“I mean it, son,” he said, stealing my ball cap to sit backwards on his own head. “You’re going to go far. Like one of your fastballs. As far as you can dream.”

Inhaling deeply, I felt extremely grateful for his faith in me. I didn’t know where I was going or where I’d end up, but as long as I was playing ball, I didn’t much care. From way back when he used to toss a ball to me in the backyard, back when my bat was huge and red and made of plastic, playing ball was the only dream I’d ever had. It was the only thing that made sense to me.

The heated leather upholstery warmed my ass as my knee bounced repeatedly, driving my dad nuts as he drove us home. Adrenaline buzzed through my veins like an electric current. The exhilaration of winning, the exertion of playing the game,

the locker room banter, it all made me feel restless. I'd be up all night, burning through the high, replaying snapshots of the game in my mind, looking for ways I could improve, noting others' weaknesses.

"We're all set for our trip next weekend. Rock climbing, camping, me, you, and the great outdoors. You excited?"

I made a conscious effort to still my leg. "Yeah. The weather is supposed to be perfect."

If I wasn't playing baseball, my dad and I were outside, doing something physical. Never once over the years was he too busy, never complained about feeling too old. He was up for anything, anytime.

As an only child, I knew how lucky I was to have his undivided attention. Sean's dad never had time for his family, even though he lived with them. All he had were excuses.

"I can't wait to try out that new tent. Definitely an upgrade from our old one."

My dad's laugh was warm. "That thing has seen better days, for sure."

He pulled through the drive-thru of a fast food pizza place and ordered me a large sausage with extra cheese, which I devoured before we even made it home. It was a post-game tradition.

As soon as I got to the privacy of my bedroom, I dropped my bag of gear, peeled off my jersey, compression shirt, and pants, and hit the shower. As of last year, I'd stopped showering in the locker room at school. It was too hard to keep my eyes to myself, and the harder I tried, the more self-aware I became of the effort it took, and the more nervous I became. Not that I was attracted to any of them, but an ass was an ass, and a dick was a dick. I would always want to look. After a series of unfortunate erections in the locker room, I'd opted to shower at home instead.

During my freshman year, I became aware of my interest in guys, and it had only grown stronger the older I got. There was no way I was going to let some homophobic jock accuse

me of coming on to him, or worse. I was too smart and too cautious to let a gaytastrophe ruin my chances of getting drafted by a good college team, especially when I was being scouted constantly. It just didn't feel like the right time to come out. Not when I had no idea of the effect it might have on my future. It wouldn't hurt me to hang onto the secret a little bit longer. Fuck, it was hard enough admitting it to myself. Did I have to find a way to tell everybody in my life that loved me and believed in me as well? Honestly, the thought scared the shit out of me.

Ducking under the showerhead, I rinsed the shampoo from my hair, letting the suds trail down my body. The soapy glide of my hand over my tight sac only added to the buzz in my blood. This was my favorite place to do it, to touch myself. In the shower, with the spray of hot water massaging my back and shoulders. I didn't have to worry about anyone barging in and interrupting me. The soap felt much better than lube—silkier, smoother, less sticky. My mother inevitably found the stains from the lube in my laundry. It left an oily residue on my sheets, towels, underwear—you name it. And when I was finished, the hot water washed away the mess, leaving me clean and satisfied. I tried to bite back the echo of my groans reverberating off the tiled walls as I pumped my hand up and down my shaft, harder, faster, until I erupted in a hot rush over my fist.

Twenty minutes after my shower, that buzz was still there. My release hadn't eased the restless feeling. I ducked out of my bedroom, heading for the kitchen to grab a snack. The house was dark, my parents having already retired to their room. I opened the fridge and grabbed a *Gatorade* and snagged a bag of chips and a granola bar on my way out. Back in my room, I dumped my haul on my bed and spread out, kicking back against the headboard, and grabbed the controller for my game. But it couldn't hold my attention, and after fifteen minutes, I gave up.

Tossing it aside, I scanned my room, looking for a distraction, an outlet. I snatched my laptop off my desk and brought it back to bed with me, lounging back against the pillows propped behind me. Flipping it open, I checked my

social media, but no one I knew was online. The problem was, I was still horny, still juiced, like always after a game, and jacking off was the only thing that would bring me down. Switching to incognito mode on my browser, I searched up my favorite site, looking for newly uploaded videos.

Jackpot! A guy with a smooth chest wearing baseball pants. He looked like he could be any guy on my team. I set the laptop on my thighs and bunched the waistband of my briefs down below my balls, rolling them between my fingers as I waited for the opening credits and ads to finish. The guy looked young, about my age. He sat on the edge of the bed with his thighs spread, his dick already primed and ready in his pants, judging by the size of his bulge. The tight peaks of his nipples poked through the thin white *Lycra* of his compression shirt, and I imagined what they would feel like beneath my fingers. I thought maybe it was going to be a solo jack off session until I saw him look up as another man entered the room. Maybe he was going to hook up with another teammate? That could definitely be hot. The man's face came into view, and I was proven wrong again. He looked older, with a five o'clock shadow and a ball cap covering his dark hair. He wore a polo shirt and khaki pants with a ridiculous whistle hanging around his neck. Was he supposed to be the coach or something? Maybe the guy's dad?

I turned the volume up slightly, just enough so that I could hear what they were saying without risking my parents overhearing the indecent moaning that was no doubt about to start.

"I asked you here today so we could go over the playbook together. I noticed you needed some help. As your coach, it's my job to teach you, to make you better." The man sat down next to him on the bed, a little too close, placing his hand on the player's thigh. "Do you think you could benefit from my help?"

"Yes, Coach. Teach me everything you know," the younger guy begged with an eager smile.

Jesus Christ, only in porn. Like my coach would ever talk to me that way in real life. Actually, he kind of looked like

Coach Wolfe. They had the same body type and coloring. Dark hair, dark eyes, that scruffy jaw, and those rock-solid shoulders. They could be brothers. The coach produced a playbook and scooted closer to the guy. This had to be some low-budget porn because they were confusing their sports. Playbooks were for football, not baseball.

“Do you see this curveball? Look at the picture of his hand. You’ve got to get the ball between your fingers just right. I don’t have any balls handy for you to practice on. Except these,” he said, grabbing his crotch. “Would you like me to show you the proper finger placement?”

The guy swallowed, pretending like he was nervous. “Yes, Coach. I would appreciate all the help I can get.”

The coach unbuttoned his pants—no surprise he was commando—and took his dick out, which was already hard and leaking. He positioned the player’s hand around his cock.

“We can also work on your grip. Wrap your fingers around it like it’s a bat.”

The script was ridiculously cheesy, but I’d never been harder. I was totally buying into the fantasy they were selling me. The guy was actively jacking his coach off with the same enthusiasm I was showing my own dick.

“That’s it, you’re doing so good. Now practice on my balls.” He stood and dropped his pants to the floor, pressing his dick against the guy’s lips. His mouth parted and his coach slipped inside. “That’s it. Get a good grip on it. Shine my bat.”

Fuck, the filthy baseball innuendo was really lighting my fire. I gave in and grabbed the bottle of lube from my nightstand, swiping a liberal amount over my shaft and balls. It was going to get absolutely everywhere, not that I cared at that moment. This was probably going to be the best orgasm of my life, certainly the hottest, and I wanted to enjoy it to the fullest.

I slicked my shaft, getting it good and slippery, and worked the lube over my skin with long, slow strokes, squeezing tighter as my fist passed over the swollen, sensitive

head of my cock. My breath caught in my throat, my heartbeat growing rapidly. It just felt too good to keep the sound inside of me.

“I think you’ve mastered the fundamentals of baseball. Drop your pants and bend over the bed, and we’ll work on your catching skills.”

The muscles in my stomach clenched repeatedly, spasming like they were being shocked. When the coach reached for the guy’s pants, I exploded, making a mess of my stomach and chest. Fuck, it was definitely the most intense orgasm I’d ever felt. I slowed my strokes, pumping out the last drops of my seed, and watched as the younger guy got on all fours on the bed, looking back over his shoulder at the camera—*at me*. That video had definitely jumped to the top spot in my spank bank.

By the time I arrived at baseball practice after school on Monday, I had jacked off to the likeness of my coach three more times.

Something about that video had me obsessed. The player was hot, but that wasn’t what drew my eyes. I didn’t want to touch him. I wanted to *be* him. The older man had all of my attention. I wanted him to guide me, teach me, seduce me with those filthy words, and praise me like I was an innocent.

I wanted him to ruin me.

In the quiet moments, while I lay in bed, replaying the video in my mind as I touched myself again and again, I imagined it was Coach Wolfe. I imagined all the wicked things I wanted him to say to me. Variations of baseball innuendo, telling me how soft my skin was, praising my oral skills. Not that I had any, but if anyone was going to teach me, I now wanted it to be my coach, just like in the video.

I felt like I was becoming a sex addict, addicted to the thought of it, directing new movies in my head like a porn producer. I wasn’t thinking about practice or homework or

texting Sean back. Instead, I was focused on when I could get some alone time in my bedroom with my laptop, how I wanted to wear my baseball pants the next time I did it, with them shoved down around my thighs like it was happening in real time, after a game. I looked around at my teammates in the locker room as they changed into their practice tees and wondered if their heads were consumed with deviant thoughts like mine was. I mean, for the most part, we were all sexually active teenagers, weren't we? At the very least, sexually aware. But it was more than that. It felt like my eyes had been opened wide, and now sex was all I could see.

“Choke up on the bat, Austin. Tighten your grip,” Coach called out.

I added those words to my fantasy script. Tonight, when I was alone, I would replay those words in his smooth, deep voice as I choked up on my dick, imagining it was his. I'd worn my tightest jock underneath a pair of compression briefs just in case of an unfortunate boner. If he continued to say things I could easily misconstrue, it would be unavoidable.

“That's it, get a good handle on that bat,” he called out again.

I could feel it beginning to swell, could feel the tingling low in my belly, as thoughts of baseball were replaced with sex. What was wrong with me lately? It felt like I was undergoing a sexual awakening of some sort, discovering exactly which pressed buttons affected me. I felt a bit pervy thinking about Coach Wolfe like that, like I was violating him in some way. But that thought only made me harder.

“Strike!”

The clap of the ball hitting Evan's glove behind me was a wake-up call. Fuck, I hadn't even swung.

“Healey, you're out! Get off my plate.”

I couldn't get shit right today. Not my thoughts, not my swing, and now I'd pissed off my coach as well. Apparently,

disappointing him was the only thing that could make my dick deflate.

CHAPTER TWO

MARCUS

The head coach of the football team shuffled into my office and shut the door behind him before taking a seat on the other side of my desk.

“Hey, Finch. What did you pack for lunch?” I asked as he set his insulated lunch bag on my desk.

“I think the wife packed me leftover tuna casserole from dinner last night.”

“And I hope you have a spare toothbrush in your office,” I said with a teasing smirk.

“Of course I do,” he confirmed with a laugh. “This isn’t the first time she’s packed me tuna casserole. What did you bring?”

“Same as always; a ham and cheese sandwich and chips.”

“What you need is a wife.”

My face pulled tight, like I tasted something sour. “Yeah, I need a wife like I need a hole in my head.”

“You know what I meant,” he said sheepishly. “The male version of a wife. Someone to pack your lunches and iron your shirts,” he pointed out, motioning toward my wrinkled polo.

Did he even hear himself? I didn’t think he had any idea how ridiculously offensive he sounded. “I’m thirty-six-years-old, Pete. If I can’t pack my own lunch by this point, there’s nothing anyone can do to fix me.”

“How about fixing this damn mess on your desk? I can’t even spread my lunch out. What is all this shit, anyway?”

Haphazard stacks of papers and pamphlets covered most of the available surface area, not leaving much room for productivity or lunch.

“Player stats, brochures from colleges, a couple of waivers for media requests. Athletic department budgets and memos. I need to get this shit cleaned up, and soon. These guys stand a better chance of getting scouted if I post their batting averages and stats. I really need to make this a priority.”

“Looks like you’ll be working over the weekend.”

“Oh hell,” I said with a pained look. “Not if I can help it. I don’t get paid much as it is, but definitely not enough to file paperwork on my downtime. I’ll figure something out. Let’s talk about the car wash fundraiser for summer training camp. Every single one of my boys is participating. Spiegel’s Supermarket is donating cases of bottled water and bags of ice, and I’m still waiting to hear back from Dietz’s Deli about donating sandwiches.”

“That sounds great! All but two of my boys are available to help out, and most of the cheerleaders are coming as well,” Finch said around a mouthful of casserole.

“Well, that will be...*motivating* for the team.” He laughed with me. I could just imagine the boys drooling over the girls in short skirts. They’d most likely wind up washing their drool off the hoods of those dirty cars.

“If they won’t donate sandwiches, maybe you and I can chip in and make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the teams.”

“Anything is better than nothing. We can’t expect the boys to sweat in the sun all day without feeding them.”

“Hell, my boys eat every two hours on average,” he joked.

“I think this training camp is a great idea. Not only does it give the boys something to do over the summer, but it keeps them in shape, and it keeps them focused on the big picture... playing for a college team,” we both said in unison.

“You’re absolutely right. Despite what the school board says, and their reluctance to pay for the training camp, my job is not to win football games so I can add another trophy to the school’s display case. My job is to get my boys into college, so

they stand a chance of either going pro or getting a degree in something useful. Football is the ticket to their future.”

“I couldn’t agree with you more,” I said, taking a bite of my sandwich.

Peter Finch was a good buddy, but we didn’t see each other outside of school. Besides looking after the best interests of the boys on our teams, we didn’t have much in common outside of sports. Peter was a family man who attended church on the weekends and had family barbecues. I lived alone. Washed my car on the weekends, did a little gardening, slept in late, and watched *SportsCenter*. Oh, and I slept with men. That was the biggest difference and something Pete’s wife wasn’t too keen on. I really didn’t have any friends aside from colleagues, with the exception of my college roommate, Baylor. But Baylor lived in SoCal, hours and hours away from Maplevue, Oregon. We spoke on the phone, but rarely made time for each other in person these days.

“You wanted to see me, Coach?”

I looked up from my departmental budget report to see Austin Healey poking his head in my doorway.

“Sure did. Come on in and take a seat.”

Austin was one of those All-American golden boys. He had the looks, the talent, and the sharp mind, and if that wasn’t enough, his personality sealed it. He was a natural-born leader, but not in a dictatorial way. Austin inspired his team by listening, being supportive, and sacrificing his free time to either tutor his teammates or practice with them. He was a likable guy, an all-star, and my favorite student, if I was being honest.

He looked slightly wary as he took a seat across from me. “I kind of feel like I’ve been called to the principal’s office, Coach. Did I do something wrong?”

“Not at all.” Sucking in a deep breath of air, I released it in a rush and cleared my throat, leaning back in my chair. I detested having to talk about personal things with my students. I felt uncomfortable, they felt uncomfortable... it was an all-around clusterfuck of awkwardness. But I would never not help someone just to avoid a difficult conversation. “I’m worried about you. You seem...off today. Is something bothering you?”

Austin’s light brown eyes widened briefly as he swallowed before answering. “Off? N-no. Not really.”

“Austin,” I prodded in a gentle voice. “Talk to me. What’s on your mind?”

“It’s nothing,” he rushed to answer in a slightly panicked voice that did fuck-all to reassure me. “I’m fine, really. Just realizing some things about myself I didn’t exactly see coming. I’m sorry about practice today, Coach. Tomorrow, I’ll do better, I promise.”

I couldn’t begin to imagine what he was referring to. The possibilities of things a guy his age could be discovering about himself were infinite. Hell, I realized I was gay at his age. In fact, it was in the locker room—

Aw, fuck. We were going to have to have *that* talk, weren’t we?

“Austin, I was your age when I discovered some difficult truths about myself as well. It can be...eye-opening, to say the least. Sometimes, we think we like one thing, and then realize we want something else entirely. Something some people say is wrong. Just know that whatever feels right to you can’t be wrong. My door is always open if you need to talk.”

His tawny eyes flared again before his lips curved into a soft smile. “Thanks, Coach. I’ll keep that in mind. Before I go, did you happen to send out the email to the team about the departure time for our next game?”

Shit. What did it say about me that an eighteen-year-old was more organized than I was? I was their coach, for God’s sake.

“The memo is here somewhere. I think.” I shuffled some papers around, knocking a few to the floor. They fluttered softly through the air before landing on Austin’s shoe. He bent to retrieve them.

“Coach, I can help you sort this mess. I know how busy you are.”

“You’re just as busy, Austin. But thanks for the offer. I’ll take care of it soon.” Most likely.

“Coach, after lunch is my study period. I could come work in here for an hour a day and make a dent in this mess in no time.”

“And what about studying?”

“Oh, I don’t actually use that hour for studying. Too many distractions. Those people act like clowns, mostly. I study and do homework at home, after practice.”

He was the quintessential son—A+ student, talented athlete, loyal friend, and I’d bet my last protein bar he kept an immaculate bedroom and mowed his parents’ lawn on the weekends. Austin Healey was the kind of guy you couldn’t help but feel proud of, even if he didn’t belong to you.

“If you swear it won’t interfere with your grades, I’d love your help. I’m in over my head here.”

“Just a bit,” he teased. “I’ll get started tomorrow. Was there anything else?”

“Nope. Just remember, my door is always open, in case you need to get anything off your chest.”

His eyes gleamed as he promised, “I won’t forget, Coach.”

My townhouse was located just blocks away from the downtown area of Mapleview, in a gated subdivision. As soon as I got home, I climbed the narrow staircase to the second floor, making a beeline for my bedroom as I whipped my T-shirt over my head and tossed it onto my bed. I exchanged my

pants for a pair of basketball shorts, and then crossed the hall to the second bedroom, which I used as a home gym. I've come to learn a few truths about myself in the past few years, one of them being that if I waited until after dinner to exercise, it wouldn't happen. A midday workout always seemed to give me a second wind that lasted all night.

I worked up a good sweat on the treadmill to warm up my muscles before moving over to the free weights, where I counted out several repetitions as I curled the dumbbells. When my biceps began to burn, I started on a series of core exercises to keep my stomach tight and flat. As long as I remained single, keeping my body in top shape was a necessity I couldn't afford to slack on. Someday, years from now, when I was happily married and settled down, I could begin to let myself go, little by little, as I enjoyed a second helping of dinner before dessert. But as a single man approaching my fortieth birthday, I wasn't even ready to consider it.

After an hour of burning calories, I showered off the sweat, changed into a clean pair of briefs, and headed into the spare bedroom I used as a home office. Besides my desk and a filing cabinet, I had several bookcases lining the walls filled with baseball memorabilia I've collected over the years. But my pride and joy were the replicas of baseball stadiums I'd meticulously and painstakingly built by hand. *Wrigley Field*, *Fenway Park*, *Yankee Stadium*, *Oriole Park at Camden Yards*, and *Dodger Stadium*. I've yet to find a replica of *Safeco Field*, home of the *Seattle Mariners*, but I would. I was always on the lookout for it.

I'd taken a seat in each one of those stadiums, watching the game from the stands with my best friend, Baylor. Throughout college, we road-tripped many times to games across the country. In fact, he'd given half of my model kits to me as gifts for past birthdays, along with tickets to see the games. Fuck, I missed him. It seemed the older we got, the less time we made for having fun. It was a consequence of adulthood, one of many. Maybe this year for my birthday, I would surprise *him* with tickets.

Taking a seat at my desk, I reclined in the leather chair and opened up my laptop. I pulled up my contact list and fired off an email to the team, making sure to copy their parents as well.

Musketeers,

Friday night away game against the Portland Penguins. Bus leaves the school parking lot at 5pm sharp. Don't be late!

No practice Friday after school. Go home and eat dinner before you get on the bus.

Saturday - car wash fundraiser for sports fundamentals summer camp. 12pm in the parking lot of the Spit Shine Car Wash. Food will be provided. Just bring yourselves and don't sleep in. We need all hands on deck!

Looking forward to a great weekend,

Sincerely,

Coach M. Wolfe

I could wonder about how many other teachers worked seven days a week, but I already knew the answer to that. All of them. But at least they got to work from home. As the baseball coach, I was required to show up in person every day, at least during the spring season. Summer, too, seeing as how the school board wasn't going to pay for my summer camp. I would be working for free during my off time. The football team was bringing in a lot of donations from the school's alumni and booster club that they were gifting to fund the camp because it included both the baseball and football teams. It seemed we were going to ride their well-endowed coattails and just pitch in a few bucks.

Which was fine. Whatever it took to make sure my boys stayed in shape and focused on the game, and their futures, was well worth the sacrifice.

Just before I logged off, a notification came through, alerting me to an incoming message. I refreshed my inbox to see that Austin Healey, my star pitcher, had already replied. *But of course he had*, I thought, chuckling. He had to be first at everything.

Austin Healey: Sounds good, Coach. I won't be late!

I could guarantee that was the truth. Austin would rather cut off his pitching arm than let me down. He'd proven it time and time again. Letting my weight settle back into the chair, it tipped backwards with a creak as I thought back to our conversation earlier. Was he gay? Was Austin questioning his sexuality? Or was I completely missing the mark, and it was something else, perhaps something seriously troubling?

It wouldn't hurt me to dig a little deeper, just to make sure I wasn't missing something important. If it turned out to be a question of his sexual preferences, there really wasn't much I could say to him that would be appropriate as his teacher and coach, despite my experience in the matter. I would have to tread a very fine line to make sure I didn't overstep.

I could see it, though, the unique qualities in him that set him apart from others, the very qualities I looked for in a partner. Qualities that would make him the perfect *boy*. Austin had a strong mind and was as determined as anyone to succeed, but he was subservient to the core, a total people pleaser. It was the perfect mix—drive and deference. Just the right blend to make my dick hard, and with a face and body that could seduce a saint. Yeah, he had it all. Austin Healey was the total package.

If I could find those same qualities in a man my age or, at the very least, a man not more than a decade younger than me, I could settle down and start packing on some comfort pounds around my waist.

Pushing to my feet, I closed my laptop and made my way downstairs to the kitchen to start on dinner. As I prepared the vegetables for my chicken stir-fry, my mind drifted to thoughts of my last boy, a total disaster. John was a selfish man. He had no problem taking, but when it came to reciprocation, he had balked. John couldn't understand that a Daddy had needs as well. It hadn't been a twenty-four-seven lifestyle with us, more of a role we slipped into when we wanted the comfort of it, or the sexual high from it. But John thought that he, as my boy, was entitled to the benefits of our arrangement day and night. The credit card statements I received in the mail were astronomical, climbing higher every month as he continued to charge unnecessary expenditures. Manis and pedis, new clothes, expensive salons. The most bougie gym in all of Mapleview. The list of needless extravagances was endless. In addition to that, John didn't think a Daddy needed love and affection, cuddles, long conversations—any of the softer aspects of our relationship that made me feel closer to him. Bonded. In his mind, dropping to his knees to give me a blow job gave him the right to spend my money, not that I was rolling in it, and the exchange suited him well. After two years, I realized it was all he was looking for from me. It was all I was going to get from him.

The fragrance of ginger and garlic wafted up from the pan, the steam coating my face as I stirred the vegetables. I dumped the contents onto my plate and turned off the stove, moving over to the kitchen table to eat. *Alone*. It was a common theme in my life, feeling alone, eating alone, going to bed alone. Since John, I'd entertained several short-term arrangements with other boys, but I knew going into it they wouldn't last. Just some temporary fun to scratch the itch. That was the mutual understanding. But maybe it was time. Time to gamble again, to take a chance and see if I could find an arrangement that wasn't so temporary.

After all, not all of them were Johns. Just maybe, I would get lucky and find an Austin.

CHAPTER THREE

AUSTIN

“That’s it, take it, Boy. Take all of it.” The man wrapped his fingers around the younger guy’s throat, the tips of his fingers digging into the younger man’s flesh, leaving imprints on his skin. “You want every inch of this big, thick bat, don’t you?”

“Yes, Coach,” the younger guy panted, sounding as if he were about to either come or pass the fuck out. “I want every inch. I need it.”

I was on my knees this time, with my head bent over my laptop, as I desperately jacked my cock. In this position, I could easily imagine Coach was behind me, pushing into my body so hard that my face pressed into the mattress, that it was his hand gripping my shaft, milking my release.

It would be my second load of the day, but certainly not my last. The sun had barely risen. The door to my bedroom burst open, and my best friend walked in like he owned the place.

“You’re still in bed?”

“Sean! Damn!”

“Oh shit, sorry.” He rushed back out as I scrambled to pull up my pants and close the laptop. “You decent yet?” His voice carried through the closed door.

“Yeah, come in,” I called out. He walked back in cautiously, checking around to make sure everything was good. “Next time, knock. It’s not like you live here.”

“Getting an early start, huh?” His wicked grin made me want to throw something at him. Possibly a heavy trophy.

“Like you don’t do the same thing,” I said, shouldering past him on my way to the bathroom to wash my hands.

He followed me, leaning against the doorjamb. “Did you get that email from Coach last night about this weekend?”

“Yep. It’s going to be a busy weekend.”

“Damn right. Save me a seat on the bus.”

“I always do,” I reminded, snapping the hand towel at him.

I pushed past him, stopping in my room to grab my backpack before heading out the front door.

“I can’t wait to see Tyra at the car wash. Do you think she’ll talk to me?”

I climbed into the passenger seat of his car, dropping my bag by my feet. “Why would she? Have you looked in the mirror lately?”

Sean pushed my shoulder playfully. “Hilarious. Who do you have your eye on?”

“No one.”

Sometimes, I felt like it would be easier to come out to my parents than it would be Sean, with all of his religious indoctrination from his parents. I prayed he would accept me, but I didn’t hold out a lot of hope.

“Come on, you expect me to believe that? There’s got to be someone.”

“Unlike you, I don’t browse the school yearbook, looking for a pretty face to beat off to.” Although now that I think of it, Coach Wolfe would be pictured on several pages in the yearbook. It might be worth having a look.

Sean scowled, his brows drawing down tight. “Not everyone has access to unrestricted porn sites like you! My parents have that shit blocked.”

Sean turned up the radio to drown out my laughter as he backed out of the driveway.

When he pulled into a parking spot in the student lot, we grabbed our book bags and headed toward the front entrance.

“See you at lunch,” he called out when we had to split ways in the hall.

“Oh, I’m skipping today. I’ve got tutoring,” I improvised.

Sean just shrugged his shoulders. “Okay then. See you at practice.”

With my eyes on the clock constantly, time slowed to an infinite crawl as I counted down the hours until lunch. When the third period bell rang, I jumped out of my seat like it was on fire, grabbed my bag, and raced toward Coach Wolfe’s office. He was bent over a filing cabinet, which afforded me a great view of his tight ass.

“Hey, Coach,” I called out, dropping my bag in the corner.

“Austin?” He raised his head and turned around. “I wasn’t expecting you for another forty-five minutes.”

“Figured I might as well eat while I work.” That was total bullshit. I just wanted to eat with him.

“No need to eat while you work. Just sit down and eat first.”

He joined me at his desk, twirling a pen between his fingers as he studied me. I let him look his fill while I unpacked my sandwich. Did he like what he saw? Or did he just think of me as some kid, eager to please his coach for brownie points? I didn’t mind earning brownie points with him, as long as I could cash them in for sexy favors.

I wasn’t actively trying to seduce him, though. Not really. Not for one second did I believe I stood a chance with a guy like him—a guy who was mature and sophisticated, intelligent and responsible, selfless, and kind. And smoking hot. Coach Wolfe was worldly and wise whereas I was...not. But flirting with him? Pushing him just a little bit outside the bounds of decent behavior? It just fed my fantasies at night like gasoline on a fire.

“Are you going to eat, Coach?”

He continued to stare in silence, contemplating... something about me... which was beginning to unnerve me.

“Remember what I said about my office being an open door? I was just wondering if you’ve given it any more thought.”

Aha, we were circling back to the coming out conversation. If only that was the only secret I had to confess. Last night, I fell down a rabbit hole of kink when I researched the tags on my favorite video. #praisekink #praiseslut #daddysboy #goodboy #grandslam #tightestholeaward #ddlb #daddyssextoy #yessir #useme #whateverdaddywants

It was... enlightening, to say the least. It also explained so many things about me. I was a praise slut, even when I was fully dressed and not in a bed. You could get me to do just about anything with a compliment and a smile.

The more videos I watched, the more sure I became, and I also figured out what was so hot about it. The need I had to be the best, the brightest, the most obedient and favored of all, would drive me in the bedroom to do anything—*anything*—to achieve favor with a partner. The idea that I wouldn't have any limitations or boundaries in order to earn that praise made me so hot and hard that I came twice in a row without even needing the video. Praise *slut* indeed. That was me.

But I couldn't tell Coach that. Or could I?

I could only imagine how that conversation would go.

“Eventually, I'm gonna take you up on that offer, but not today.”

I shoved the last bite of my sandwich into my mouth and tried to return Coach's sexy smirk around a mouthful of roast beef and tomato. I probably didn't look as hot as he did. Pushing to my feet, I wiped my hands on my pants and walked toward the file cabinet behind his desk. Opening drawers, I tried to get a feel for his filing system, but there clearly wasn't one.

What a mess.

A framed photo sat atop the cabinet that caught my eye. I easily recognized a much younger version of Coach. I could only guess who the other guy was.

“Who's this, Coach?” I asked, palming the picture.

He swiveled his chair to look. “Baylor,” he said in a voice that made it clear he really liked the guy.

“Boyfriend?” I asked, steamrolling right over the whole are-you-gay issue. He’d already insinuated he was.

“No,” he choked on a laugh. “Baylor is my best friend. We met in college. Played ball together, roomed together...still friends to this day.” He smiled warmly, and I decided I didn’t like Baylor-the-bestie at all. Not even a little bit.

It wasn’t outside the realm of possibility that they were once possibly more than roommates and friends. I replaced the frame with a thunk and purposely reached across Coach’s chest to grab a stack of papers sitting near the edge.

My hand brushed his arm, and when he didn’t pull back or apologize, I immediately wanted to do it again. To push his boundaries. To flirt. To touch his skin.

The contact felt exhilarating. Forbidden. *Addictive*.

I wanted Coach to notice me. Wanted him to *want* me. How high would it make me feel to be the object of his desire, like he was mine?

There was only one way to find out.

With that thought in mind, I dropped the stack of papers in my hand, watching as they fluttered to the floor in a scattered mess around Coach’s feet.

“Sorry.”

The fitted gray joggers I wore cushioned my knees from the cold, hard linoleum floor as I crawled on my hands and knees under his desk to retrieve the papers. He backed the chair up and I was practically in between his legs as I took my sweet time collecting the papers, making my ass sway back and forth enticingly. At least, I hoped it was enticing.

Please God, let his eyes be on my ass.

“Do you need a hand?”

Depends where you’re offering to put it.

“Almost finished.”

When I backed up and turned around, my face was directly between his legs as I stared at his groin, hoping to see it grow

before my hungry eyes. But it didn't, and I couldn't remain in this position without good reason for another second. Unfortunately, curiosity and lust weren't good enough reasons. I climbed to my feet by resting my hand on his knee as I shifted my weight, tightening my grip just before I let go and giving him another sly smirk, this time without the roast beef and tomato.

He returned it tentatively. It was a start.

CHAPTER FOUR

MARCUS

At a quarter after three, I locked up my office and headed out to the faculty parking lot with the intention of running home to grab a quick bite to eat and a change of clothes before coming right back. The bus was already parked along the curb, waiting to take us to Portland for our game in less than two hours.

Pressing the key fob to unlock the doors to my Jeep Cherokee, I jumped when a familiar voice broke the silence.

“Hey, Coach! Headed home?”

Austin Healey was leaning against the side of the bus—his backpack slung over his shoulder and his equipment bag at his feet.

“What are you still doing here? You’re supposed to be at home, eating and taking a quick rest before we hit the road.”

“I didn’t want to risk running late, so I decided to stick around.”

Typical Austin, always so responsible, always on time. Always the boy you could count on.

“What about dinner?”

His signature breezy smile made an appearance as he patted his backpack. “I brought granola bars and an energy drink.”

Christ. He couldn’t play a three-hour game after a long day of school with just a granola bar in his stomach. What was he thinking? Motioning toward the Jeep, I blurted, “Get in the car, Austin. We’ll go grab a bite to eat and head back.”

“You sure?” He was all smiles and eagerness.

“Of course I’m sure. We’ve got to eat a full meal. You’re going to need the calories tonight for energy.”

He dashed across the lot, popped the trunk to stow his bags, and was buckled into his seat before I even opened my door.

I turned the key in the ignition and suggested, “How about Dixon’s Diner?”

“Perfect! They have the best burgers in town.”

The diner was old, the decor dated, but Austin was correct, the food was some of the best in town. We were shown to a booth in the back, and our waitress appeared immediately.

“Hey, Coach? Ready for that game tonight?”

“You bet, Val. Austin is going to make sure we bring home a victory.”

The red-haired waitress gave Austin a second look, smiling as she placed him as my student, and not my date. “You ready to order?” she asked me.

“I’ll have the grilled chicken Caesar salad and whatever the soup of the day is.”

“Extra crusty garlic bread?”

It was my guilty pleasure. “You know me so well,” I confirmed with a laugh.

“And for your MVP?”

His cheeks colored beautifully. “I’ll just have a Dr. Pepper,” he murmured, with his eyes downcast at the plastic-coated menu.

“Austin,” I said in a soft but insistent voice. “I invited you here to eat something hearty. Don’t make me worry about you all night. Order something big. My treat.”

He raised his tawny eyes to Val. “I’ll have the mushroom and Swiss burger with steak sauce, and a side of fries.”

“Coming right up, boys.”

She collected our menus before walking away, and when Austin turned his attention to me, he seemed surprised at the

displeasure on my face.

“What? You told me to order big. Did I do something wrong?”

“No, Austin. But it wouldn’t kill you to order a salad or a vegetable, would it? All that grease.” I shuddered, just imagining the risk to his heart health.

“Worried about my health, Coach?” He seemed to appreciate that.

With a laugh, I recalled, “At your age, I could eat anything and feel invincible. You still need to fuel your body with the right kinds of foods if you want to perform in peak condition.”

“You’re right. Next time you treat me to dinner, I’ll make sure to order the right kinds of foods,” he assured me with a wink.

When Val returned with our drinks, Austin asked, “The next time Coach treats me to dinner, could you maybe remember to bring me a salad or a vegetable, even if I forget to ask?”

She was completely charmed by his friendly flirtation. “I promise, sugar. I’ll bring you whatever greens I’ve got back there.”

I waited until we were alone again before asking, “Next time?”

“Consider it a down payment for organizing your office.”

He had a point. Buying him a meal was the least I could do. My office was a damn disaster.

We talked about the upcoming game until Val brought our food. Then our conversation stopped as I watched Austin shovel food into his mouth as if he were starved and malnourished. I marveled over the endless appetite of a teenage boy. Austin set his burger down and raised his fingers to his mouth, wrapping his lips around each one as he slowly sucked the grease from them. I hadn’t realized I was staring until he smiled, chuckling.

“How’s your salad, Coach?”

Giving myself a firm mental shake, I picked up my fork to resume eating. “Hearty and satisfying. You should try it sometime.”

After Val finished psyching Austin up for a big win, I paid the check, and we headed out to the Jeep. “Do you mind if we stop by my house for a minute? I had expected to go home and change before the game.”

Austin looked downright excited. “Not at all. I’d love to see where you live.”

I was reminded that he was my student and bringing him home with me was somewhat inappropriate. Sometimes, it was easy to forget with Austin. He had a way of putting me at ease to the point of almost feeling as if he were a friend, an equal, instead of someone I was responsible for.

“Do me a favor?” I asked as I buckled my seatbelt. “Don’t mention to anyone where I live.”

“It’ll be our secret,” he promised, as he mimed zipping his lips.

With my thoughts on the upcoming game, the roster, the equipment list, and twenty other things I needed to do before we pulled out of the school parking lot, I didn’t even realize I was indulging my worst habit.

“You shouldn’t bite your nails,” Austin gently reprimanded as I rolled down the window and spat one out of my mouth.

“You’re right. I keep meaning to buy some gum to help me quit.”

We pulled into the driveway of my townhome, and Austin grabbed his bag from the trunk. “Do you mind if I change as well? I was planning on using the bathroom at school. But since we’re here...”

“Not at all.”

“This place is nice, Coach,” Austin remarked as we walked through the front door. “I like the way you decorated.”

“I certainly tried.” What little I knew of decorating I picked up from watching the occasional home design show.

My instinct told me to make everything brown and neutral, but I knew better. I'd added touches of blues and reds to break up the monotony of beiges and creams.

“Don't your parents live on Westwater Lane? I'm sure your place is a lot nicer than this.”

Austin looked directly into my eyes and held my gaze. “My parents have two incomes, and neither of them are teachers. I can tell you've made sacrifices in order to have such nice things on a coach's salary.”

And just like that, I was charmed. His beautiful white smile, his warm truffle irises, the soft blond hair that fell over his eyes. The dimples in his peaches-and-cream cheeks. When Austin gave a sincere compliment, he was dazzling. Blindingly beautiful.

How was there not a line of admirers dogging his steps?

Entertaining those thoughts made me feel acutely aware of him in my tiny kitchen. To cover my awkwardness, I opened the fridge to grab a bottle of water.

“Would you like one?” I offered.

“Sure, thanks.” When he reached in to grab it his fingers brushed mine, and I had the absurd inclination to snatch my hand back, as if I'd been burned.

Austin wandered over to the bookcase that separated the kitchen from the living room. I watched his gaze fall upon a grouping of framed pictures.

“Baylor, Baylor, Baylor,” he sighed with a click of his tongue. “He's everywhere I look lately.”

“That's what happens when you have years' worth of memories in photographs. They end up everywhere.”

“So you're not sleeping with Baylor, but what about other men? Are you dating anyone, Coach?”

I choked on the water in my mouth, inelegantly spitting some onto my shirt. “Austin! I didn't say I slept with men.”

“Didn’t you? In your office? You made it pretty clear you were gay, like me.”

“That’s not—I didn’t—we’re not discussing my dating life. Or my sexuality.”

“If you’re worried I’ll say something, don’t be. I would never spread your private business.” Abandoning the bookcase, he walked toward me, his eyes holding mine. “That’s between you and me. What you share with me stays confidential. You can trust me, Coach. I hope you know that.”

I felt as if I were being backed into a corner, that he was coming too close, probably because of the intimate nature of the conversation.

“That’s—thank you. I certainly hope so. I’m going upstairs to change. You’re welcome to use the guest bathroom upstairs. It’s stocked with toiletries.”

“Sounds good. I’ll follow you up.” He made a quick detour by the front door to grab his bag on our way up the stairs.

“Down that hall to the right,” I pointed out before going in the opposite direction.

I wasted no time changing into gray nylon running pants and a polo with the green and yellow Musketeers logo. Taking a seat on the edge of my bed, I began to lace up my sneakers.

“Is this your bedroom? It’s big, yet feels cozy. I like this bed.” Austin breezed through the open door, coming right over to me. Leaning over the mattress, he brushed his fingers across the blue microfiber duvet. “Feels like velvet. So soft.” Taking a seat without being invited, he continued to run his palms over the plush bedding. “I bet it would feel incredible against my skin.” Then he seemed to realize who he was talking to, and with a blush and a chuckle, he added, “You know, because I don’t wear anything to bed.”

My face warmed at his inappropriate remark. Now that he’d said it, I couldn’t stop picturing it. Austin, naked. Creamy, unblemished skin, bare and snuggled beneath my covers.

Fucking hell. Why would he suggest that?

“That’s—that would be—Did you find everything you needed?” He’d reduced me to a stuttering mess.

“Sorry. Sometimes, my mouth runs away with me. And yes, I was able to freshen up.”

He was dressed in his gray baseball pants that might very well have been left over from last year with the way they fit him so snugly, and his green and yellow jersey.

“I was saving my cleats until we were outside,” he explained, glancing at his socked feet. “You know how filthy they can be.”

“I appreciate that.” Rising to my feet, I hurried for the door, desperate to get him out of my bedroom.

On the way back to the school, we filled the silence with safe conversation. “What does your father do for work? I figure it must be flexible because he never misses a game.”

His face brightened considerably when speaking about his father, and I deduced they must be close, something I observed for myself many times in person, but always from a distance.

“My dad owns the sporting goods store downtown.”

“Is that why we had that huge donation of brand-new equipment this year?”

“He made a few phone calls to some of the reps from the brands he carries. It really wasn’t that big of a deal.”

“It was a huge deal, Austin. Top-of-the-line equipment. It was an anonymous donation, so I’ve wondered.”

“He wanted it that way, so people didn’t think I was buying my spot on the team.”

“Nobody would think that if they saw you play.”

Not only was Austin my best player, his stats were higher than any student who’d played for the Musketeers in the last decade. He was a quick thinker, a strong runner, and had a phenomenal arm.

“Yeah?” His face filled with color, something I was beginning to realize happened often with him, anytime he

received a compliment. “Thanks, Coach. That means...a lot.”

I glanced over just in time to see him adjust his lap. “Sorry, must’ve forgotten my cup.”

Why did he continue to say and do the most inappropriate things? He was killing me.

We arrived back at the school before anyone else. “Would you help me grab some extra equipment from my office to load on the bus?” I always brought extra in case one of my players forgot something, or a bat broke. It didn’t happen often, but it was best to be prepared.

“I’d love to give you a hand. With anything you need.”

That could be interpreted in so many ways, but I knew better. Austin was harmless. He meant nothing by it.

It was unseasonably hot for spring in the PNW. Much too hot to wrangle eighty teenagers with hoses and wet rags. There wasn’t a player on either team who hadn’t been rat-tailed with a soapy cloth or sprayed down yet. They were everywhere. *Everywhere*. Almost forty from Finch’s team and twenty from mine, and a gaggle of cheerleaders.

I was surrounded by hormonal young adults.

And my star pitcher, captain of my team, Austin Healey, was no different. It seemed everywhere I turned, there he was. Bent over a soapy bucket with his glutes on display, squatting to retrieve a hose from the asphalt, smiling at me as he used his shirt to wipe the sweat from his face and neck, showing off a tantalizing peekaboo of his tanned abs. It wouldn’t mean anything, not even a blip on my radar, if his eyes hadn’t found mine every damn time, attempting to charm me with his killer flirtatious smile, as if he were doing it for my benefit.

Was he? Was Austin being deliberate in his juvenile attempt to get my attention?

“Here you go, Coach. I thought you looked thirsty.” I turned to see Austin shoving a water bottle at me. “That should cool you off. You know, if you get too hot, you could just take your shirt off.”

His wink and smile made it crystal clear how deliberate he was being. *Holy fuck*. My student was flirting with me. Now I just had to figure out why. Was it just a harmless flirtation? Possibly because I made him feel safe when I made that speech about how my door was always open and I’ve been where he is. Or was it more than that? Did Austin really think he was going to score with me? I needed to approach the situation very carefully, because an infatuated student was a dangerous student.

I’ve never found myself in this situation before, but I’d seen it happen to a colleague years ago, and it hadn’t ended well.

That wasn’t going to be me. I damn sure wasn’t going to end up like Henry Baskins, the unfortunate object of some teenage crush gone wrong.

“I won’t be taking off my shirt, but thank you for the water.” He looked undeterred, eyeing my chest, no doubt trying to make out the peaks of my nipples through my cotton polo. “Why don’t you join your team and put a dent in this line of cars so we can get home before sundown?”

“Anything you ask of me, I’m your man, Coach.” With a wink, he whipped off his T-shirt, wiped the sweat from his brow, and tucked it into his back pocket, skipping off to find a bucket and a rag.

I watched him go with a shake of my head, knowing full well he now had my attention. I had to know what he was up to and, more importantly, why. Why me? It was fine that he was into boys, but with all these young, attractive athletes surrounding him, why would he choose to pursue a middle-aged high school teacher/coach with no prospects, and who is more than likely the same age as his father?

CHAPTER FIVE

AUSTIN

“Did you see the way Tyra looked at me Saturday?”

Sean laid backwards on my bed, with his head in the middle and his feet propped against my headboard, tossing a baseball into the air before catching it repeatedly.

“I saw the way she looked at Phillip Canlin.”

“Fuck Phillip Canlin. What’s he got that I don’t have?”

“A job, for starters,” I teased. “About twenty more pounds of muscle, and a—ow! Damn, that hurt.” I rubbed my shoulder, where his baseball had surely left a bruise.

“I didn’t see you talking to anyone, except Coach,” he snickered. “How is kissing the coach’s ass going to help you find a date to prom?”

“I was saving myself for you, since it looks like we’ll both be going stag.”

“Fuck no. I’m not gay. I’ll find a date.”

I had only meant to tease him, but I knew Sean was serious. It was moments like this, when he made cutting remarks and slurs, that reinforced that I could never come out to him.

“Come on, don’t be like that. You’ll find somebody to ask. You’re the damn captain of the baseball team.”

“It’s not that. It’s just...Do you ever feel like the people who you’ve known your whole life, who love you the most, don’t really know you at all? Like, they *know* you, your history, your favorite color, or favorite topping on pizza, but there’s this whole other side of you they’ve never met.”

“Dude, are you bipolar or something? Jekyll and Hyde?”

“No, nothing like that. I just feel...” *Lonely. Unseen.* It was pointless to continue. Sean wasn’t ever going to get it.

Nobody would. *Coach Wolfe*, my conscience whispered. He would understand what I was feeling and would undoubtedly have some meaningful pearls of wisdom to share with me.

“It’s way too early in the morning for all this deep shit. Let’s go,” he suggested, sitting up to grab his book bag. “I’ll treat us to egg and sausage biscuits on the way to school.”

Was I counting down the minutes until study period? Of course not...maybe. Alright, absolutely.

Seeing Coach Wolfe again was all I could think about. Well, that and that dream last night, where he caught me naked in his big plush bed, under those soft covers, rubbing myself on the microsuede like I was begging to be used. And then he did.

I woke just before he wrapped his lips around my—

“Austin!”

I whipped my head up in alarm. “Yes, Ma’am?”

“Are you with us today? Or somewhere else?”

Caught daydreaming by my Language Arts teacher.

“Busted,” Sean whispered, grinning goofily.

“Sorry, Ms. Porter. I’m here.” *Just fake it till you make it. Twenty-six more minutes to go.*

When the bell rang, I shot from my seat like my ass was on fire.

“Hey, hold up, Healey. Where you going?” Sean called after me.

“Putting in volunteer hours with Coach Wolfe,” I hollered back as I sprinted down the hall, but not before I saw the look on his face, as if he’d swallowed something sour.

Thanks to my mad dash across campus to the athletic department, I arrived at Coach’s office breathless and panting, covered in a fine sheen of sweat.

“Hey, Coach,” I huffed, sounding way too enthusiastic for a guy about to file papers.

“Hey, Austin. Come on in.” He reached into his pocket and retrieved a tube of chapstick. As he smoothed it over his full lips, I was reminded again of the dream, of those lips. And now I was growing hard. “Don’t mind me; I’ll just be on a phone call.”

Damn. There went my opportunity to flirt. Or even to converse, which I enjoyed. Immensely. Talking with Coach was way better than talking with the guys on the team, or Sean. They were so shallow, so self-absorbed. None of my buddies ever wanted to discuss anything deeper than sports, food, or girls. Like my conversation with Sean this morning. Feelings were a non-starter. Meaningful thoughts, self-reflection and self-actualization, all topics they shied away from. *Mood killers.*

As if on cue, his desk phone rang.

“Marcus Wolfe speaking... a pleasure... thanks for reaching out.”

As they rolled through the usual pleasantries, I dropped my backpack and got to work, grabbing a stack of papers and heading to the filing cabinet behind his desk.

“I have two, actually. Ricky Bader and Austin Healey, my starting pitcher. Yes, I’m sure you’ve heard of him.” Coach swiveled his chair to face me, giving me a wink as he toyed with the phone cord. “I’ll send his portfolio over to you as soon as we hang up... Perfect. Our next home game is Thursday at five... I’ll leave tickets for you at the booth. See you then.”

I was bursting with curiosity and anticipation as he sat silently smirking, a teasing smile stretching across his lips. He was toying with me, like a cat with a mouse under its paw.

“Coach? Who was that?”

“University of Oregon Maplevue. Matt Mitchell. Remember that name, Austin. Memorize it. Eat and sleep that name because he’s coming to scout you on Thursday, and he’s

going to love you. There's no way he won't make you an offer."

"Coach! Holy shit!" I launched myself into his solid chest, crushing him in my embrace. Fuck, he smelled fantastic, like a citrusy musk. Was there anything unattractive about this man? I doubted it. When his hand began to pat my back, I knew it was time to let go, yet I didn't. I couldn't. When would I have a reason to hold him this close again? It became extremely awkward when I inhaled his scent a little too loudly, followed by an equally loud sigh of pleasure.

Coach pulled away first, clapping my shoulder. "It's very exciting. This is big, Austin," he warned, looking directly into my eyes. "Get a good night's sleep on Wednesday and eat something on Thursday. Stay hydrated. And for God's sake, don't be late. Not that I ever have to worry about you," he added with an appreciative grin.

I loved that he felt that way about me. Knew I was reliable and trustworthy. It made my gut churn with adrenaline, just imagining him saying that to me while stroking my cock.

"You can always count on me, Coach. I'll never let you down."

He looked away when I licked my lips. I had a feeling he was becoming aware of my feelings for him. And he wasn't playing along. That didn't mean I was going to give up, though. Hell no! If anything, it meant I just needed to try harder. Because what had started out as a silly fantasy was quickly becoming an obsession, and we were playing a game I intended to win.

"Can you meet with me after school on Wednesday? I've got to practice. We can run drills." With a meaningful look, I added, "You can run me and drill me as hard as you like."

Color rose to his scruffy cheeks, and he averted his gaze. Had I pushed him too far?

"Austin, I—"

"Coach, this is important!" With my most charming smile, I begged, "Please?"

With a sigh, he conceded. “Alright. Wednesday, after school. Don’t be late.”

“You know me better than that, Coach.”

Dad: practice today?

nope.

Dad: I’m leading a small group on a sunset hike today. Join me?

I’ll come straight home after school.

I loved being out on the trails with my dad, almost as much as I loved standing on the baseball field. Both were as familiar as home to me. My dad often was hired to lead groups through the treacherous trails of Mount Hood and Rainier. As an experienced guide, he’d taught me from a young age which areas to avoid, which plants were poisonous, and how to extricate myself from becoming the next meal for a mountain lion or a bear—skills he’d picked up as a scout in the army.

I was grateful for his knowledge and experience, as well as his precious time.

While the group of four were occupied with taking pictures of the scenery, my dad and I found a flat rock to sit and watch the sunset. It was breathtaking every time, a gorgeous painted canvas of deep purples, bright pinks, and fiery oranges that I would never tire of seeing.

Peeling the bark from a fat twig, I debated blurting out the thoughts polluting my mind. How would he react? Would he be angry? Disappointed? God no, please not that. I couldn’t bear his disappointment.

“Got something on your mind, son?”

“It’s nothing.” I continued to stir for several more minutes as the colors in the sky darkened to a glowing amber. “What if I told you—” *I’m gay. I like guys. One guy in particular. Who happens to be about your age.* “—something that made you see me differently?”

“Impossible,” he scoffed. “I could never see you differently.” He studied me while I desecrated the twig. “Why don’t you tell me what’s going on, and I’ll help you find a way through it?”

God, I loved him. How could I consider telling him something that would jeopardize that? How could I continue to lie to him, though?

“I will, Dad, just...not today.”

His hand landed on my knee, squeezing reassuringly. “I’m never too busy to listen. I love you, Austin.”

“Love you, too, Dad.”

He cracked a beaming smile. “Overheard you and Sean talking about prom. Have you figured out who you’re asking yet?”

“Probably no one.”

“Why not? The captain of the baseball team shouldn’t have any trouble finding a date. Especially when he looks like you do,” he grinned, complimenting himself, really, because I resembled him so strongly.

“Just not interested in anyone. Looking forward to going alone and having fun with the guys. Not having to feel stuck with one person all night,” I explained with a shrug.

Coach Wolfe was registered as a chaperone. He’d be there single, as would I. Not that I expected him to dance with me or fetch me punch or anything, but I could talk his ear off all night. Ogle his ass in a pair of fitted dress pants. Maybe even get a picture of us together.

Gauging the color of the sky, he advised, “We better get this group back before dark.” I nodded, coming to my feet. “Austin? We’re not done talking about this.”

He meant what was on my mind, not my prom date. “I know. I just need more time, Dad.”

Before he joined the group, he reached for my hand and squeezed. His touch signaled a promise. A commitment to listen, to make himself available. But was it a promise to still love and respect me no matter what he heard?

I had to hope that it was.

CHAPTER SIX

MARCUS

The silence was deafening. The sound of nothing—that was my life apart from school, nothing. Silent. After the cacophony of students with their nonsense and endless chatter in my ear all day, filling my head, and the team, with their cajoling and shouting, the shrill bite of my whistle, their voices echoing off the tiled walls in the locker room, the lack of sound felt stifling. Stagnant. The absence of life being breathed into the air. My life was stagnant.

Again, I entertained thoughts of dating, in hopes of finding the right partner, the right boy, but after a long day of work, which often turned into long evenings, and even long weekends, I wasn't convinced I had the energy to begin searching.

After a hot shower, I grabbed a cold beer from the fridge and settled in on the couch, with the remote in one hand and my phone in the other. As I surfed through the channels in search of something entertaining, my eyes constantly drifted back to my dark phone screen. After ten more minutes of infomercials and news broadcasts, I gave up and dialed his number.

“Baylor,” I greeted when he said hello. “What’s up, buddy?”

“Marcus? Where the hell have you been? I’ve left three voicemails for you, and you’ve returned none of them. I was getting ready to send out a search party.”

Chuckling, I answered, “Call off the search party. I’m fine. Just busy.”

“Busy? You don’t know the meaning of the word. I’m working at a baseball training center running drills all day, while umpiring high school baseball and teaching drivers ed. I’m exhausted. Anyway, your job doesn’t pay you enough to be that busy.”

“And yours doesn’t pay you enough to risk your life in the passenger seat of a car being driven by pimply-faced teenagers who don’t even have a license yet.”

“Truer words have never been spoken.” I listened as he breathed out a long, loud sigh. He sounded exhausted. “I don’t know, man. Maybe it’s time for a change of pace.”

“Are you ready for a road trip? Just say the word and I’ll get the tickets.”

“I wish,” he sighed. “How could I find the time to take off in the middle of the season? How could you?”

Of course, he was right. “Wishful thinking.”

“Maybe I just need a change of scenery, not pace.”

“What are you saying? A new job?”

Taking a long pull from the bottle of beer, I almost choked when he said, “New town. I’m thinking of checking out Mapleview.”

“Mapleview? Oregon?”

“Yeah, why? You always make it sound so quaint and charming. Is it not? Do you mean to tell me you actually live in a dump and you just lie to make it sound nice?”

Chuckling, I answered, “It’s as nice as I’ve led you to believe. I just never imagined you slowing down or downsizing.”

“Downsizing, huh? You’re right, I think that’s the word I’m looking for. It’s time, Marcus. I’m getting older, and the older I get, the less patience and tolerance I have for city life and all its bullshit. I don’t want to work three jobs anymore just to make rent. Hell, I don’t even want to rent. Time to settle down. Time to get serious about my future, or I’m afraid I’m not going to have one.”

“Jesus Christ, you do need a vacation. You sound so morose.”

He laughed softly, putting me at ease. “Just tired. And ready for a change. Ready for something new. Are you

prepared to put up with my ass every weekend?”

“Of course I am. Although I work many weekends, especially during the season. But I would love nothing more than to look up and see you waving at me from the bleachers.”

“Damn, and here I thought moving to a new town would get me away from the pimply-faced teenagers.”

“No, sir. I’m surrounded by them. Inundated with adolescence, hormones, and acne.”

“They definitely don’t pay you enough. Anyway, we’ll talk more about it in the coming weeks, but I’m not trying to drag my feet. I’ll be there before you know it, Wolfe.”

“Looking forward to it, Buchanan.”

After we ended the call, I finished off my beer and thought with a snort of amusement, Big City Baylor Buchanan was coming to sleepy little Maplevue. He was going to turn this town upside down. I almost felt sorry for all the unlucky ladies whose hearts he was going to break. Recalling Austin’s words the other day, I had to laugh again, thinking of how jealous he sounded when speaking about Baylor. Austin had no idea the man was straight, and that I was the last person he’d want to sleep with.

Unfortunately, I was first on Austin’s list of bedmates, which was a huge problem. I couldn’t afford to rock the boat or piss him off to the point he developed a chip on his shoulder. A bad attitude could ruin not only his season, but his future prospects. As long as his flirtation remained harmless, I could sweep it under the carpet. I just hoped he didn’t decide to take it a step further. With a shake of my head, I considered him for a moment, not as my student, but as a man, albeit a young one. And that was the problem. He was too young, too naïve, no matter how gorgeous he was, how easy to please, and eager to please, Austin Healey was off-limits. He was a potent cocktail I could not afford to indulge.

Austin had yet to realize, and hopefully he never would, that the fantasy of me and the reality were two very, very different things.

“Let’s work on your swing, then we’ll switch things up.”

“You got it, Coach. You’re pitching and I’m catching,” Austin agreed with a leer.

Fuck me. Another sex joke. It seemed like he had an endless supply of innuendo. Where did he come up with this stuff? I had to admit, if it wasn’t so inappropriate, it would be almost charming. His inexperienced and amateur attempts at flirtation never failed to make me smile. On the inside, that is. I could never let him see how it affected me. It would only encourage him.

Adjusting my baseball cap, I stood on the mound and ran through my warm-up, rotating my shoulder, flexing my fingers. Positioning my index and middle fingers front and center over the ball, I snapped off a slider, using the stitching as leverage as I watched it spin through the air, headed straight for Austin’s bat. He made contact as the crack of the ball hitting the wood of his bat reverberated across the field.

“Good job! Here comes another one,” I warned before firing off a fastball. It whizzed past his bat, but Austin remained still, not trying to swing at it. “Good eye! If it’s not right, let it roll past.”

He shook his head, and the motion rolled through his body, as he shook his arms, and then his legs, literally shaking off the bad pitch. My next pitch was a curveball, but he was ready for me. Austin had an uncanny ability to predict what kind of pitch would come his way. He wasn’t always right, of course, but eight times out of ten, he nailed it.

The power in his swing was awesome as his arms arced forward, rocketing the ball into the outfield.

“Solid hit, Healey!”

He grinned from ear to ear.

Bending my fingers at the joint, I threw out a knuckleball. It was one of the rarer pitches, difficult to control, and even

harder to hit. The pitch went wild, sailing to the left of the batter's box, and completely missing Austin by at least four feet.

“Sorry, those are difficult, and I'm a bit rusty.”

“No, it's good. Throw me another one. I would like to get better at timing those,” he countered.

Taking a deep breath in through my nose and exhaling through my mouth, I slowed my breathing and focused on the projected trajectory of the ball, trying to visualize it before releasing it into the air. I wound my arm back and let it rip, sending the ball hurtling straight for Austin at ninety-five miles an hour. Again, the pitch went wild, not landing where I'd hoped it would. Austin jumped back from the plate, but not before the ball caught him in his thigh. He doubled over, dropping the bat in the dirt as he clutched his leg.

Horrified, I shook off my glove and ran to him. “Austin, are you okay?”

“Son of a b—”

“Don't finish that,” I warned, smirking. “Come sit down in the dugout.” He leaned on my shoulder as I led him to the long wooden bench.

“Damn, Coach. You've got an arm on you. A freaking cannon. I didn't know you could throw like that.”

“I told you I played in college. Do you think they'd have hired me if I didn't know shit about baseball?”

“With an arm like that, why did you quit?”

“Because as fast and hard as I can throw, there's plenty of other guys that can do it faster and harder than I can. I'm good, but not that good.”

“Yeah, well, my leg begs to differ.”

Gently, I wrapped my fingers around his thigh, applying soft pressure on the bruise. My thumbs worked circles into his muscle, encouraging blood flow and disbursement, hoping to minimize the damage.

“That feels really good,” he murmured, staring into my eyes.

“Promise me you’ll ice this when you get home.”

“I promise, Coach. Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do it.”

Christ, he needed to stop mooning at me like that, all googly-eyed and breathy. Continuing to massage his quad, I focused on my task and not his face. Until he hitched his leg over my thigh.

“Austin—”

“You sound like my mother when you say my name like that,” he teased with a playful smile.

“Then stop giving me reasons to scold you.”

“Scold me? I like that, Coach.” I removed my hands immediately. “Don’t stop, please? My leg hurts so bad, and your hands feel so good.”

“Austin,” I warned.

With a defeated sigh, he added, “I know. I pushed you too far again. I’m sorry, Coach. I’ll behave.”

“Austin, we can’t—”

“You know what?” He glanced at his wrist, pretending there was a watch there. “I better get going. I promised my dad I’d be home for dinner.” He stood and hobbled over to his backpack, hitching it over his shoulder with a grunt. “Thanks for the practice, Coach. I’ll see you tomorrow. And don’t worry,” he called out over his shoulder, “I’m gonna ice it.”

As he walked away, he mumbled, “That’s not the only thing I’m going to have to ice,” but I heard him clear as day as his voice carried on the wind.

Jesus Christ, this kid was going to get me fired. If I wasn’t so scared, I would be impressed with him, but his flirtatious game had the ability to ruin my career, and that absolutely terrified me.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AUSTIN

“Strike three!” the ump boomed.

My arm was on fire tonight. The Falcons didn’t stand a chance with the score seven to zero in our favor. I’d struck out every single player with the exception of one, who was out before he even made it to first base when I caught his fly ball. Every glance I snuck at Coach Wolfe yielded a beaming smile and thumbs up. He was proud of me, and that elevated my excitement to a fever pitch.

My dad was seated next to Matt Mitchell. Their heads were bowed together as they conversed, and I wondered if either of them had a clue who the other was or if it was a mere coincidence.

But even without my dad’s glowing reprisal of my abilities, Mitchell had to like what he was seeing tonight. I was pitching one of my best games—almost a total shutout.

Despite the cool breeze, a fine sheen of sweat covered my body, soaking into my compression shirt. The pressure of throwing a perfect game, of impressing the scout—the outcome of my future—was riding my shoulders like a heavy weight.

The crowd cheered me through two more innings until the game came to a crushing conclusion. Crushing for the Falcons, that is. The team crowded into the locker room and began to undress as I hung back, my eyes on the door to the equipment room where Coach Wolfe was stacking away bases, buckets of baseballs, and other necessary equipment. When he emerged, his gaze caught mine, and he grinned, looking truly happy. A fire blazed inside my belly from knowing I’d made him feel that good. He came right up to me, swinging a muscled arm over my shoulder.

“I’m so proud of you! God, you blew me away out there tonight. Mitchell, too. He’ll be in touch soon, I guarantee it.

What got into you tonight?”

The thought of you getting into me.

“I’d do anything to make you proud of me, Coach.” A sly smile stretched my lips. “*Anything.*”

His smile dimmed as he realized my meaning, and he gave me a warning look before shaking his head. “Go get cleaned up.”

“Thanks, but I’ll shower at home. See ya, Coach.”

I pushed through the heavy metal door into the hallway where my dad was waiting for me with fist pump, chanting our last name.

I hoped he would always be my number one fan.

“Hold up a minute, champ. I’d like to have a word with your coach.”

A hot rush surged through me that tasted a lot like panic. Had Coach said something to my dad? Had I crossed too many lines? Pushed him too far?

“What for?”

Before he could explain, Coach Wolfe exited the locker room, stopping short when he saw us.

“Coach Wolfe, just the man I wanted to see.”

“Mr. Healey, a pleasure,” he returned, shaking my dad’s hand. “I can’t thank you enough for your anonymous donation earlier this year. The team really needed new equipment. I’d like to think it helped make a difference in our outcome this season.”

A touch of amusement lifted the corners of my dad’s lips. “Maybe not so anonymous, after all,” he said with a pointed look at me. “I just wanted to thank you for putting Austin on Matt Mitchell’s radar. From what Matt said, Austin made quite an impression on him. He wants to meet him next week. Invited us to tour the campus.”

“I didn’t do anything. It was all Austin. He was already on Matt’s radar. You should be proud. Your son is quite...” his

dark gaze landed on my face, a soft smile teased his bearded lips, "...extraordinary. He continues to impress me every day."

Nothing, absolutely *nothing*, could compare to the thrill of his compliment, the teasing flirtation in his smile.

"You got that right," my dad agreed, clapping me on the back. "You know, if you ever want to see something truly extraordinary and impressive, you should join me and Austin on a sunset hike on Mount Hood sometime. We lead groups up through the trails most weekends when he's not with you on the field."

The expression on Coach's face was better than the last one. He was positively awed. By me.

"You hike those trails often, Austin?"

"You bet. Dad taught me everything. He's right, you won't find a prettier view of the sunset anywhere."

"Maybe I'll take you up on that offer someday."

No time like the present. "How about Sunday? We'll meet at Dad's store and drive over to the trailhead together."

Thank God for my father, who insisted, "Sunday is perfect! Great idea, son."

Coach's eyes lingered on me as he murmured, "Yes, Austin, great idea."

I wasn't fooling him for a second. He knew exactly why I had invited him. *Ulterior Motives*. I was brimming with them.

The cool water felt refreshing as it cascaded over my shoulders and back, rivulets running down the crack of my ass teased my senses, and I imagined it was Coach Wolfe's fingers or his tongue. The thought of being licked there like a delectable treat made my cock kick in my hand. I tightened my grip, squeezing just shy of pain as I pumped my shaft quickly, fantasizing about his flirtatious smile earlier as he praised me.

I wanted that secret smile focused on me as I worshiped his body with my hands and mouth.

“So good, Austin. So talented. Such a wickedly sweet tongue you have.”

I wanted to feel his hands grip my head as he forced me to swallow him whole.

And I would—or die of asphyxiation trying.

With a shout, I sprayed my seed across the tiled wall of the shower and slowed my hand to milk every last drop. I *had* to know what that ecstasy would feel like in person someday. Had to know the incredible pleasure his mouth could wreak upon my body, how his strong, calloused hands would feel on my skin. I was more determined than ever to have him, even if for just one night.

Seducing my coach wasn't just a fantasy any longer, it was a full-fledged plan.

After toweling off, I changed into gray sweats and grabbed a snack from the kitchen, bringing my haul back to my room to spread out on my bed with my laptop. I scrolled through comments about the game, our win, my near shutout, and the short hemline of Tyra's cheerleading skirt in my team's group chat before closing out the conversation and browsing porn. My skin felt tight, that post-game high buzzing through my blood, keeping me on edge. I'd need to come again before the night was over.

Lying back against my pillows, I wondered what Coach was doing right now. How did he come down from a big win? Did he jack off like I did? Imagining him lying in his big plush bed, naked, touching himself, made blood course through my dick, plumping it.

Idly, my fingers slipped past the waistband of my sweats to drag through my dark blond curls. I'd bet anything he had a thick, trimmed nest of dark hair surrounding the base of his undoubtedly thick cock. A perfectly cut head, bulging veins, and fat, juicy balls. I could just picture it, the way they would feel under my tongue, the tang of his seed. Shoving my pants

all the way down my hips, I continued to tease myself, tracing along the seam of my sac, touching my finger to my wet slit to draw out a sticky string of cum. Using the tip of my finger, I rubbed the wetness in circles over the swollen head of my cock, making my stomach muscles contract from the pleasure.

My phone dinged, alerting me of an incoming message from Sean. I jumped and then laughed at myself, so absorbed in my fantasy world that it had startled me. But an idea formed as I dismissed his message and opened a new one. Searching through my contacts for Coach's number, the one we were only supposed to use if we were calling out due to sickness or emergency, I plugged his number into the address bar and took a picture of my engorged cock in all its stiff, weeping glory, and hit send. After waiting and wondering for two full minutes whether or not I'd gone too far, I tossed the phone and decided to finish myself off to the thought that he secretly loved what he saw and was mirroring my actions right now, about to come with my name on his lips.

Yeah, right. Wishful thinking.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MARCUS

Holy fuck! Can't a man just lie in bed undisturbed as he slowly, lazily rubbed one out without his student sexting him?

Apparently not!

My heart seized in my chest, and for half a second, I panicked, thinking I had been pranked somehow. But all I could hear was the low hum of my ceiling fan, so my attention returned to the screen. Austin's body, his lower half, stared back at me in all its tanned, bare glory. I could tell it was Austin without a doubt because the hand that gripped the erection bore his class ring, with the number seventeen staring back at me, the number on his jersey.

What in God's name was he thinking?

That was my second thought. My first?

Jesus Christ, he was perfect. A fucking work of art.

Tomorrow, I would delete the photo. First thing in the morning. But tonight, right now, I was going to finish jacking off while *not* thinking of Austin's perfectly cut seven inches.

As I stroked my length, tugging on my heavy sac, I tried to recall the guy in the last video I watched, in complete denial of the image of Austin's perfect body dancing around the perimeter of my mind's eye. I came with a shout, spilling over my stomach as his dick flashed before my eyes again.

Ugh, no! I refused to dwell on him—it—whatever.

After washing up, I padded back to bed and buried my head under my pillow, trying to smother thoughts of him from my mind. And it worked for the twenty minutes it took for me to fall asleep. But my subconscious didn't want the reprieve. Oh no. It woke me from my slumber with a vivid dream of Austin. I was transported back to the beginning of the evening, lying in bed as I scrolled through video after video on my favorite site, and every single one was of him. I couldn't *unsee*

him. His cock was everywhere I looked. Until it morphed into him lying at the foot of my bed, thighs spread as he touched himself, his gaze falling on my hand mirroring his actions. His stiff shaft bobbed with each tug, each stroke of his hand, until a clear drop seeped from his slit, glistening in the pale moonlight slipping through the sheer curtain.

Just as I reached forward to collect it on my tongue, he shot pulse after pulse of thick cream over his torso.

Austin smiled in that lazy, flirtatious way that never failed to charm me just before he faded away; nothing more than a figment of my imagination.

And then I woke, covered in sweat and achingly hard. It took less than six quick tugs before I came in a hot rush over my stomach.

Fuck. Me. I was *so* getting fired.

All the caffeine in the world couldn't fix my dumpster fire of a day.

I was exhausted from getting so little sleep last night. This morning was a disaster. I spilled coffee on my shirt, forgot my messenger bag which made me late, then I had to play referee to two students in my gym class who wanted to tangle with each other in a kerfuffle over a girl, of course. What else did teenage boys fight over? And to top off the shit sundae with a cherry, the mayonnaise in my ham and cheese sandwich tasted off, and I had to ditch it in the can, leaving me with only a bag of chips and a diet soda for lunch. I was hungry, irritable, and tired. To compound my problems, Austin had skipped coming to my office today, which made my anxiety over his late-night text spike even higher.

I was going to have to confront him, and I hated confrontations. Especially with him. He meant no harm. Austin was just a kid with a crush. Which, granted, was growing into a mild obsession with each passing day, hence the needed confrontation. I didn't want to send him back into

the closet before he was fully out of it, but a boundary needed to be set.

The acrid smell of exhaust fumes choked me as I leaned against the side of the bus, checking my watch again. Where was he? It wasn't like Austin to be late.

"I'm coming, Coach," Austin yelled from across the lot as he fell into a jog.

Thanks to him, so had I last night. Twice. *Nope, not gonna think about that.*

Thank God I didn't have him as a student in my gym class. Austin had Coach Finch for gym, which suited me fine. Considering our current situation, I didn't need to share a locker room with him.

When he was more than halfway across the lot, I climbed onto the bus and sat in the last available seat. A minute later, Austin clambered onto the bus amid cheers from his team, and he plopped down next to me, breathless and damp with sweat.

"Thanks for saving me a seat, Coach."

"I didn't. You're late."

"Best seat in the house," he said, bumping his thigh against mine. I scooted over an inch to add space between us.

"It's not like you to be late. Or to skip coming to see me." I realized my folly when his face brightened like the sun. "I mean, coming to my office. To work."

"I know what you meant. You had it right the first time." He dropped his bag at his feet and kicked it under the seat. "Didn't mean to skip without notice or be late. I'm sorry if I made you worry. My dad pulled me out of class early. Some hikers went missing earlier, and they called in all experienced guides in the area to help out, including my dad. He asked me to go with him. You know, buddy system and all that. I barely made it back in time."

I felt like an ass, thinking he'd been avoiding me when there was a real emergency. "Did they find the missing hikers?"

“Yup. Turns out they took the wrong trail and headed back up the mountain instead of down. They were exhausted with blistered feet, but they were fine,” he explained with a chuckle.

Without thinking, I laid my hand on his thigh. “Next time, send me a text to let me know, so I don’t worry.”

Austin covered my hand with his own. “I would love to send you a text.”

My cheeks heated thinking about the one he’d sent last night, and I pulled my hand away. Had he deliberately misinterpreted my words to suit him? “About that. Last night...”

His eyebrows shot up to his hairline. “Yeah? What about last night? Did you do something you need to confess?”

“Austin, you sent me a text last night.”

“I did?”

His face was the picture of innocence. He had to be playing me for a fool. “You did. It was highly inappropriate.”

Two bright spots colored his cheeks. “Shit. I meant to send that to a different guy. No wonder he never answered back.”

A different guy? Couldn’t be. Had it been a mistake?

“That’s even worse,” I hissed, mindful to keep my voice low amid the team’s chatter. “You can’t send pics like that to guys. You have to think of your future, your reputation. What if they post it on the internet? Blackmail you?”

“You worried about my reputation, Coach?” His lopsided grin made his lips look kissable.

“At least one of us is,” I grumbled under my breath. “Promise me you won’t send any more pictures like that to random guys.”

Austin reached out for my hand again, brushing his warm fingers over mine. “I promise. I’ll only send them to you.”

“That’s not what I meant!” I felt completely inept. How did he always manage to get the upper hand?

But he just grinned, completely unrepentant. “Be honest, did you like what you saw?”

“Austin,” I warned.

“There you go scolding me again.” Without an ounce of shame, he brushed his hand over his crotch, cupping his sac and squeezing lightly. “You know what it does to me when you say my name like that.”

Austin continued to massage his groin, and like a train wreck I couldn’t look away from, I watched. His pleasure broadcasted across his lovely face as he toyed with his growing bulge. “Did you imagine what it would look like in person?” He dropped his voice two octaves. “Did you touch yourself while thinking about me?”

“Austin, you sent it to me on purpose, didn’t you?”

Of fucking course he did. God, I was a fool for giving him the benefit of the doubt.

“Doesn’t matter. It’s in your head now.” His voice dropped to a whisper. “It’s okay to admit you liked it. I won’t tell anyone.”

Now was the time to set that boundary.

“You know I could report you for this behavior.”

“You could,” he drawled lazily, “but you won’t. I’m the best player on your team. If you report me, they’ll kick me off. And then there goes your chance of winning the championship. The one you’ve worked so hard for all year. The championship I’ve helped you prepare for. We both deserve that win, Coach. Don’t *blow* it now.”

He emphasized the word blow, packing all the innuendo he could into the word. “Are you threatening me? Blackmailing me?”

“Of course not,” he dismissed with a grin. “Just stating facts.” He scooted closer, closer than he should, erasing the inch of distance between us until his thigh fused with mine. “Let me ask you a question, Coach. Am I being inappropriate?”

Or am I being offensive? Because there's a difference, and I don't want to be one while I don't mind being the other."

"What you're being is... You're..." Austin fingered the whistle around my neck, brushing the pad of his thumb over the opening where my lips blew. With a quick tug, throwing me off balance, my face ended up inches from his.

"What am I being, Coach?"

"Inappropriate," I blurted, realizing my folly. I'd just given him the green light to continue his seduction.

"That's what I thought," he purred, putting my whistle into his mouth. He gave it a soft blow, not loud enough to draw attention, before gently placing it back against my chest. "You know what I think? I think you love it as much as I do."

If I admitted that, even to myself, I would assuredly end up as Maplevue's next big scandal.

CHAPTER NINE

AUSTIN

A hot flush spread over my body, and I pulled my T-shirt over my head to cool off. His voice wasn't as deep as Coach Wolfe's, who sounded like a voice double for an action film star, but it was mellow enough to do the trick. My stomach was full of jitters. I'd never tried this before, using an AI voice as a substitute for the real deal.

I let the recording play on my laptop as I spread out on the bed, buck naked and hard.

"Have you been a good boy today? I bet you were, and you deserve a reward for your obedience. Daddy always rewards good behavior."

Substituting Daddy for Coach in my head, I reached for the bottle of lube from my nightstand and drizzled it over my shaft and balls, smearing the slick into a slippery mess on my skin. There would be no hiding the stains from my mother when she did laundry, but come on, I was eighteen; what did she think I did in here?

"I can't reward you with all of those clothes on. Why don't you take some off for Daddy?"

Fuck, yeah. This was exactly what I needed. I had already replayed the incident on the bus three times, each time imagining Coach had reached over and covered my hand with his own, jacking my cock in the shadows of the bus's interior as we rode to the game. It was time for a new fantasy, and this simulated voice was telling me everything I wished my coach would.

"Good boy. You follow Daddy's directions so well. I can't wait to reward you for your good behavior."

To hear Coach call me a good boy in person, and not just in my fantasies, would probably make me combust instantaneously. I wanted to be his good boy more than anything—his *ball boy*.

“Spread your legs for Daddy, so I can help you find your reward.”

God, yes, my legs are fucking spread, ~~Daddy~~ Coach. Come reward me.

My fingers traced over the thick vein in my shaft, a teasing caress to keep me on edge.

“Touch yourself, boy. Show Daddy where you want it.”

Shit. I traced over my tight pucker and across my balls, heavy and full with my unspent load. My heart thrummed with anticipation as I teased over my taint and back down between my cheeks, circling my entrance.

“That’s a good boy, a sweet boy. That’s exactly where Daddy wants to touch you. You’re doing an excellent job.”

Hell yeah I was, I thought with a shiver as I pressed against my slick rim, pushing past the barrier and sliding my finger inside my warm body.

“That’s it, boy, stretch yourself. Widen the way for Daddy. You’re so small and tight, and your Daddy is so big.”

I wondered if Coach would ever be into something like this. The chances were looking better and better that he might succumb to me eventually, and if he did, could I ever get him to treat me like his good boy?

I fucking hoped so. I needed it.

*It—*This feeling of euphoria, of glowing from the inside out, of pleasing the man whose cock I wanted to worship and obsessed over. I would do absolutely anything to have it inside me, filling and stretching me as his sweet praise kissed my ears.

As it kissed my soul.

“A little deeper now. Show Daddy how needy you are.”

His smooth voice caressed every nerve ending in my body, sparking a fire inside my belly that made my thighs writhe together. God, how I craved the real thing.

“Faster now, boy. Convince Daddy you want it. The quicker you please your Daddy, the sooner he rewards you.”

My left palm stroked down my shaft, squeezing the base before gliding back up to twist over the sensitive head, while the fingers on my right hand sank as deep as they could before sliding back out. Over and over, I alternated the motions of my hands until my biceps burned and the muscles in my stomach contracted, spasms of white hot pleasure as I crested the wave of heat riding me. My breath came in short pants as I listened to my fantasy coach tell me to find the magic spot inside of me and press it for him.

“You’ve done so well, sweet boy. Go ahead and find your reward now. Press that button for Daddy.”

Unggh! My body jackknifed off the mattress, nearly folding in half as I came in a hot rush over my chest and stomach.

My face and chest were damp with sweat as I struggled to slow my breathing.

I was definitely doing that again. Soon!

The sky blazed with colorful fire. The view of the sunset was breathtaking, but it was the man standing beside me who stole my focus. Dressed in black jogging pants and a fitted gray long-sleeved T-shirt, I could see the definition of muscle in his chest. It made my mouth water for a taste of him.

I’d bet soft dark hair covered his chest. I’d love to run my fingers through it, cuddled against his broad hard body as he stroked my back, my hair, whispering sweet things in my ear as I drifted off to sleep. That’s what fuzzy Daddies were made for.

After listening to the simulated jack-off guide the night before, I’d thought of little else since. I could see the appeal of having not only a coach, but one who was also a Daddy, and I would bet my next game ball that Marcus Wolfe would be exceptional at both roles.

He was so patient, so tolerant of my bullshit shenanigans and scheming seduction. He could have reported me, he should have, but he hadn't, and I knew without a doubt he wouldn't. He barely hid the struggle that raged in his conscience, the struggle of wanting me, knowing he shouldn't. I could see it in his eyes, the way his hands balled into fists at his sides when I pushed him too far. How he bit his nails to the quick when I spent time in his office, bent over the filing cabinet with my backside pushed in his face. He was fighting his desire for me, and if I continued to push, I just might tip him over the edge.

With our hands at our sides as we looked out over the edge of the cliff, I brushed my fingers against the backs of his, silently begging for his touch.

“Behave yourself in front of your father,” he hissed.

Dismissing the warning in his voice, I asked, “Does that mean I can misbehave when he’s not around?”

His lips pulled into a half smile that he fought to hide. “Don’t you always?”

My tone sounded more serious when I admitted, “I’m glad you’re here. I’m glad I get to share this with you.”

“A little piece of your world, huh?” He turned to face me with a smile. “I’m glad, too,” he whispered.

“When are you going to share a piece of your world with me?”

“Austin—”

I met his gaze, grinning hugely.

“Christ,” he mumbled, “is there a way to put you in your place without turning you on?”

“I don’t think so,” I said as I pretended to mull it over.

“I can’t—I’m not sharing my world with you. You’re not my partner. That’s...there’s no future for us. You have to get over this obsession. It isn’t healthy.”

Leaning over his shoulder, I whispered, “I learned in health class that it isn’t healthy for a man your age not to ejaculate at least three times a week. Don’t you care at all about your prostate health? Studies show that men in committed long-term relationships have better prostate health than single men your age.”

“Austin,” he seethed, “don’t say—my prostate health is just fine. Thank you for your concern.”

He glared as I chuckled and left me standing there alone as he wandered over to my father to discuss safer topics.

I’d bet anything I’d made him hard.

He thought we didn’t have a future together? I begged to differ. Couldn’t he see we were perfectly matched?

“So, Tyra said yes. She agreed to be my prom date.”

Sean and I had collapsed in sweaty heaps on my bed after practice, not even bothering to shower and change first. He was scrolling through his phone while I traced the stitches of a baseball, idly picking at them.

“Sweet! How much did you have to pay her?”

“Man, you wish. She was dying for me to ask her out. What about you? Have you found a poor, unfortunate victim yet?”

“Nah, I think I’m just gonna go solo. I told you, I’m not interested in finding a date.”

Sean raised his upper body off the bed, leaning on his elbow as he peered at me. “I don’t understand what’s gotten into you lately.”

“Into me?”

“Yeah. You skip study hall and lunch every day to spend time with Coach, and you haven’t joined me and the guys after school or after practice in weeks. You used to always join us

for burgers and shakes, but lately, I guess you're just too busy. With Coach," he sneered. "And now you don't wanna find a date for prom. Why don't you just volunteer to join the chaperones?"

"I've just been busy studying and practicing."

"Something has changed with you. You're just not the same guy you used to be anymore."

You mean, I'm not the same guy you want me to be.

"We graduate in four weeks. I'm focused on choosing a college, applying for scholarships. I have more important things to worry about than prom dates and burgers. What about you? I haven't heard you mention anything about college. Have you even applied?"

Sean scoffed. "If I go anywhere, it'll be to the community college. I don't have the grades for that shit, and my parents don't have the money." He sat up straight, fidgeting with his phone in his lap without looking at it. "I guess Coach is going to make sure his pet gets the best scholarships and is scouted by all the best schools." He'd injected as much acidity as possible into his words, making my ears burn. "It's like I don't even know you anymore. I guess we're just not the people I thought we were."

Me. He meant me. I wasn't who he thought I was.

Sitting up to mirror his posture, and I gripped the baseball with all my strength, making my knuckles turn white.

"Someday soon, there's going to come a time when you are faced with a situation that makes you question everything you know or have been taught, and you're going to be tested in ways you weren't prepared for. I can only hope when it happens you stand on your own two feet and think for yourself, and not just automatically repeat everything you've been taught. You are not a mouthpiece for other people's ideology and opinions. Don't take what other people say at face value. Think with your heart, not your head, and do what feels right."

His brows drew down tight in confusion. “We’ve been best friends since the third grade. You know exactly who I am, Sean. I’m the same Austin who purposely fell off my skateboard so that we could have matching skinned knees. The same Austin who traded my mother’s chocolate chip cookies with Billy’s *Fruit Roll-Ups* at lunch every day so you could have them because your mother wouldn’t buy them for you. The same Austin who sold my favorite video game to the kid down the street to use the money to get your bike fixed so your dad didn’t beat your ass for bending the rim of the brand-new bike he bought you.” I placed my hand on his knee. “You know me, Sean. I’m the same Austin I’ve always been, even though we’re growing up.”

He pushed my hand away and swallowed, conveniently changing topics without acknowledging my words. “Whatever. You want to go grab a burger?”

I felt deflated and defeated. We were just running around in circles, he and I, chasing our tails.

“No, thanks. I’m gonna get some homework done. You go ahead.”

He grabbed his backpack and baseball bag and headed for the door. “See ya, Austin.”

With an exhausted sigh, my head thumped against the pillows. I laid there for a long time as thoughts ran through my mind a mile a minute. Sean was right about one thing; we were changing into the men we were going to become, and I knew in my heart of hearts that we were becoming two very different people.

A feeling of loneliness overcame me, and I reached for my phone, needing to feel connected to someone, anyone. Not the kind of loneliness born from boredom, but the kind that made you feel as if you walked the Earth alone, that you were the last man standing, and there was no one in your corner that had your back. Realizing there was no one I could call that would help me feel better, more connected, just intensified the feeling of isolation. The guys on the team were carbon copies of Sean. Hell, they were probably with him right now at the

burger place, stuffing their faces, talking about the same old shit, going absolutely nowhere in life.

There was one person that could make those bad feelings disappear. One man who could understand the burden I carried.

I hope you're not too busy.

Coach: Austin? What's wrong? You're not about to warn me of an incoming video or picture file, are you? Something you sent 'by accident'?

Not this time 😊 Remember you said your door was always open if I needed to talk?

Coach: No, I'm not too busy. I'm never too busy to listen if you need to talk.

A smile tugged at my lips. God, he was so amazing. I began to tap out my message, but realized I had too much to say.

He answered on the first ring.

“What’s wrong, Austin? Talk to me.”

Tears threatened to spill just hearing the concern in his voice. I felt like I could tell this man anything, and he would listen and not judge me. He would understand.

“Have you ever felt completely alone when standing in a room full of people, completely surrounded by people you know?”

A breathy little chuckle escaped on a sigh. “I have felt that way a time or two in my life, yes. I’m sure everyone has at some point.”

“I feel like I’m standing at a crossroads, faced with two choices. I can cross the street, dodge oncoming traffic and whatever other pitfalls, but I’m not sure what’s waiting for me

on the other side. It would be the fastest route, but not the easiest.”

“Or?”

“Or I could detour to the left and take the side street. There’s no traffic on that street, no danger, but it’s definitely the longer route. In the end, don’t all roads lead to the same place?”

“Austin,” he murmured in a voice so soft I almost didn’t hear. “How did you get to be so wise for someone so young?”

My breath came through my nose in a rush, making a little chuffing sound as I smiled at his compliment.

“I’ve been at the crossroads before. I stood at that same intersection and had to make the same choice—do I go straight ahead or turn left?”

“And? Which way did you go?”

“What do you think, Austin?” I knew he’d gone straight ahead, forged through the traffic to get to the other side. “Sometimes, what seems like the easier route isn’t always the easiest.”

I knew he was right, which only made me more anxious.

“Let me ask you a question,” he continued. “In five years from now, do you want to be the same man you are today? Or do you want to move forward?”

The fear that I was about to acknowledge something that terrified me made my throat tighten, making it hard to swallow as my mouth went dry. “The thought of losing five years of my life scares the shit out of me. I can’t even do this for another year.”

The lying, hiding who I am, going solo to events because I have no desire to ask a girl to be my date. Feeling as if I’m keeping a part of myself from my father and my mother. I want to have a full life and not have to hide or miss out because of who I am.

“I think you have your answer, don’t you? It’s definitely not going to be an easy road to travel, but nobody ever said

you had to walk it alone.”

The tears that had threatened to fall finally spilled over my cheeks, soaking into my T-shirt. My inelegant, snotty snuffle drew a laugh from Coach.

“My door is always open, Austin. You can call me anytime, day or night.”

“Really?” I sounded way too chipper for someone on the verge of an emotional and life-changing epiphany.

He barked out a sharp laugh. “You never quit, do you? I meant what I said. You can call me anytime, as long as you have real things to talk about. No more dick pics, okay?”

“Hey, Coach? You still haven’t answered my question.”

“What question is that?”

“Did you like what you saw?”

“Good night, Austin.”

Before he disconnected the call, I could hear the smile in his voice. It sounded like victory.

CHAPTER TEN

MARCUS

“So we’re all set to go for summer camp. We’ve got the equipment, a full roster, and the school gave us access to the entire campus. The weight room, the pool, the locker rooms, and the gym.”

“Finch, you’ve done an incredible job.”

“Well, I didn’t do it by myself.”

“Hey, Coach,” Austin greeted, stepping into my office despite the closed door. When he noticed I wasn’t alone, he offered Coach Finch a smile. “Hey, Coach Finch.” He stowed his backpack in the corner and reached inside to retrieve a lunch bag, placing it on my desk.

“Wait until you try this new concoction I came up with for sandwiches. Mayonnaise and grape jelly. I know it sounds disgusting, but just wait until you taste it. Creamy sweetness, *mmm*,” he moaned, licking his lips like he could taste it. Like a Pavlovian response, my dick kicked, making me extremely uncomfortable and self-conscious.

Could he not read the room? The awkwardness Finch felt from Austin’s familiarity with me was palpable. His eyebrows nearly touched his balding hairline as he looked at me expectantly, likely waiting for me to dismiss Austin.

“Sounds delicious. I’ll have to take your word for it.”

When I offered no explanation or correction of his behavior, Finch asked, “Did you stop by for lunch, Healey?”

“I always eat with Coach,” he explained easily, taking the empty seat next to Finch.

“Austin has been graciously volunteering to straighten up my office.”

“Well, I’m not going to complain about being able to see the surface of your desk again, but it looks pretty clean to me.”

He warily watched Austin unpack his lunch and spread it out over my clean desk. “I guess I’ve missed a lot while I’ve been heading up lunch detention for the past few weeks.”

Either Austin was absolutely clueless and just naturally a sweetheart, or he was playing it cool deliberately.

“You haven’t missed a thing, Coach Finch. Tomorrow, I’ll bring you a mayonnaise and jelly sandwich.” His easy smile and generous offer seemed to put Finch at ease.

“God no, but thanks. I’m better off sticking to my wife’s tuna casserole. Well, enjoy, I’m going to head out.” He gave us one last lingering look before closing the door behind him.

“Well, that was awkward,” Austin quipped, biting into his sandwich. A dollop of mayonnaise remained on the corner of his mouth.

Without thinking, I reached across the desk and swiped it clean with my finger. Austin’s eyes widened to the size of dinner plates before his mouth stretched into a kissable grin. He stared at my finger, at the mayonnaise glistening on the tip, before raising his eyes to my mouth. Well, fuck, I hadn’t thought that through, and I had nothing to wipe my hand on, no napkin handy. His peach lips parted, his pink tongue peeking out as he waited to see what I would do. As if a magnet were connected between my finger and my mouth, slowly, I brought my hand closer to my face. With my gaze locked on his, I slipped my finger between my lips, sucking it clean. Austin gasped and licked his lips, no doubt wishing it were my finger or my mouth he was licking instead.

What devil made me do that? I was behaving as badly as he usually did. We were definitely becoming too familiar with each other. Never one to miss an opportunity, Austin poked his finger into his sandwich, and retrieved another dollop of mayonnaise. He brought it to his mouth and licked it clean, making a show of it with his tongue. My cock thickened between my legs, and I was grateful there was a desk separating us, hiding my shame.

When had I started to sexualize him? Probably when he began making a habit of throwing himself at me constantly or

sending me dick pics in the middle of the night.

“Creamy sweetness, just like I promised.” His dashing smile dared me to play along.

This had to stop. I hadn’t touched him, yet it felt as if we were crossing lines and destroying boundaries. The boundaries I’d purposely set myself. Not that Austin ever adhered to them. If I were being honest, I would be disappointed if he stopped trying at this point. His flirtation had grown on me, and he was beginning to creep beneath my skin.

Choosing to ignore his comment, I changed the topic. “You have a busy week ahead. College campus tour, prom, grad night, and our last game.”

“I’m ready. I won’t let you down, Coach.”

My heart softened like ice cream left out in the sun. He was growing on me, perhaps more like a fungus than a rash.

“I know you won’t. Not in a million years. I’m just talking to you, as Marcus, not your Coach. You have a lot on your plate right now.”

His throat bobbed as he swallowed. “Honestly? It’s all fun and games. I’m not taking any of it too seriously. Grad night, prom, even our last game, it’s all just meant to be a good time. I’m so focused on my future right now that nothing else is tracking. And the championship game, of course. I feel like I’ve been walking down this very narrow path for the last few years, all of high school really, just keeping my head down and moving forward, putting one foot in front of the other. And now, with college on the horizon, that narrow road is widening, it’s opening up, and the possibilities are endless.”

The hope and exuberance in his voice when he spoke, the joy on his face, touched me. Once upon a time I was young and full of ideas and dreams, just like him. On the verge of sexual discovery and self-discovery. It was an exciting time.

Austin continued. “I want to be free to be myself, to make mistakes and learn from them. I’m ready to grow up and become an adult.”

For me, making mistakes I was slow to learn from hadn't been a great experience. I worried about him following in my footsteps, getting carried away with his new identity, with the buffet of eligible boys he would surely encounter at college. Not only did he have his health and safety to worry about but also his career to prioritize. Understandably, Austin was going to be too excited to be cautious. Maybe it wouldn't hurt for me to keep my eye on him.

My departmental budget meeting ran late, and as I drove home, the only thought that occupied my mind was the lemon garlic chicken pasta I was going to make for dinner. When I pulled into my driveway, I realized my growling stomach would have to wait.

Austin's SUV was parked in my driveway, but he wasn't inside of it.

So where was he?

Grabbing my messenger bag, I climbed out of the jeep and realized exactly where he was. In my backyard. Bypassing the pathway that led to my front door, I circled around the side of the house and pushed through the gate, following the sound. Austin was dressed in a pair of olive-green cargo shorts and sneakers. He wore no shirt. His toned body dripped with sweat as he pushed a lawnmower back and forth across my yard.

What in the ever-loving hell?

Just when I thought he'd pushed me as far as he could, pulled out every trick in the book to get my attention, he exceeded my expectations.

I dropped my bag on a lounge chair and headed across the yard to get his attention. White earbuds peeked from his ears, so shouting his name would be useless.

Tapping him on the shoulder, I had to take a step back when he turned abruptly.

“Fuck, Coach! Warn a guy.” He pulled the earbuds from his ears and turned off the lawnmower.

“Me, warn *you*? Maybe you should have warned *me* you would be here mowing my lawn when I got home.”

“Oh, right. Sorry. Welcome home, Coach,” he amended, flashing his pearly white smile.

Stand firm, don't fall for his charming, guy-next-door sex-appeal.

“Austin,” I sighed, resting my hands on my hips. “What are you doing here?”

“Mowing your yard?”

My eyes dropped to his chest glistening in the bright sun, his tiny pink nipples hardened into tight peaks.

Raise your eyes to his face, Marcus.

“Why? Why are you mowing my yard?”

“Because you're busy, and I'm not. I wanted to do something nice for you, to thank you.”

“Thank me for what?”

“For everything. Mentoring me these past few years, listening when I needed someone to talk to, being someone I can trust and count on. And lately, to thank you for becoming a friend.”

A friend? Is that what we were now? It didn't feel as if I was doing something wrong, but I had a feeling the school board wouldn't see it that way. Austin was harmless. Nothing but a sweet kid looking to impress his first crush. A sweet, *horny* kid.

With a huff, I conceded. “Come inside and get something cold to drink.”

I watched from the lounge chair as he put the lawnmower back in my shed and eagerly followed me into the house.

“On one condition,” I said, blocking his entrance through the patio door. “You keep your pants on.” It needed to be said

because I wouldn't put anything past him.

"That doesn't mean you have to keep yours on," he teased.

With a shake of my head, I thought, *this Casanova wrote the rulebook on seduction*. "My pants are staying on, Austin. Sorry to disappoint you."

I wandered over to the fridge and pulled out a bottle of water, handing it to him across the kitchen island. He twisted off the cap and took deep pulls from the bottle, his throat bobbing with each swallow. When he finished, he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Anything else you need done? I could wash your jeep or clean the gutters."

"Austin, this needs to stop. This isn't what you want." My heart squeezed painfully at his crestfallen face. I hated to hurt him, but it seemed unavoidable at this point. "You have so much going for you. Your future is wide open. Don't get stuck on this."

He scratched at the granite countertop with his thumbnail, avoiding my eyes. "Who says I can't have both?"

"College is hard enough without adding a sport to your load. Baseball and your studies are going to require all of your attention and energy. Don't waste your time on this." *On me*.

In addition to disappointed, he looked hurt. Deeply and genuinely wounded. His face, his beautiful face, with his sculpted cheekbones and square chin, and his *Coppertone* complexion, would haunt me in my sleep tonight as I recalled the moment I crushed his spirit, his tender heart.

Heaven lost an angel the day Austin Healey was born. He was that perfect, that beautiful and sweet.

There was no greater pain to someone his age than realizing your first crush was nothing but an empty fantasy.

"Do you know the difference between wanting to spend a night with someone and wanting to spend the rest of your life with them? You're just a rookie in this game of love and life. You're going through enough turmoil and upheaval that I don't

need to add another weight on your shoulders. I know everything is up in the air right now, and when the chips land, you may not have as many friends as you do right now, but I can promise you one thing, you'll still have me."

A myriad of emotions played across his face, each and every one broadcasted clearly before my eyes. He wore his heart on his sleeve, and he wasn't afraid to gamble it.

"I don't mind you thinking I'm just some silly boy with an overblown crush. You're worth making a fool of myself for. I don't mind wearing a little egg on my face for you." He sounded broken, but proud, and my heart bled for him.

My chest felt heavy, and although I would be smart to remove my feelings from the equation, a sadness pressed down on me, causing me to fight off a rush of emotion that would only lead to tears if I gave into it. But I could not stop myself from reaching across the distance that separated us to caress his face. My thumb stroked over his cheek, still flushed from the heat outside.

"There's nothing on your face. You're beautiful just the way you are."

Austin turned his face to brush his lips across my hand, and I pulled away with reluctance.

"I think it's best if you leave now."

I followed him to the front door, neither of us saying a word as I held it open for him. He turned to face me across the threshold, a look of regret, almost pity, tainting his beautiful features.

"It must be a real bitch to want something so badly and have to convince yourself you don't. I may be lying to my family, to my team, and the rest of the world, but at least I'm not lying to myself."

I watched him walk away, his shoulders sagging with defeat, and marveled at how someone so young could be so wise, and yet so naïve at the same time.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

AUSTIN

Throughout the game, Coach kept his distance from me, but his dark eyes tracked me all night long, as if he were watching me closely, waiting for me to fall apart or spontaneously combust into a ball of emotion and snotty tears. I'm sure I would be an emotional wreck if I planned on giving up and accepting defeat, but I'm no quitter. I'm the best pitcher the Musketeers have seen in five years, captain of my team, Little League All-Star, and Junior Nationals MVP. I've climbed to the top of four of the tallest mountain ranges in the country and hiked half of The Pacific Crest Trail. I don't give up easily. And I wasn't giving up on Coach Wolfe either. Not when I was so close to having him. When I pushed, he pushed back harder, because he was having an emotional epiphany, an awakening of the heart. If I kept the pressure on, he would soon collapse like a house of cards, and we would both be happier for it.

In the ninth inning, I shut down the Eagles' best hitter like it was a cakewalk and we won our last game of the season with a five run lead. After lining up to high-five the opposing team, we gathered in the dugout where the team went wild, hugging and back-slapping, high-fiving, and even throwing ice at each other. Wrapped up in the moment and riding his winning high, Coach forgot himself as he slid his arm around my hip, pulling me in close to his body for a hug. His body was warm and solid and felt fucking amazing. I returned it by wrapping both my arms around his waist, letting my right hand drop to his ass to cop a feel.

Damn, his cheeks were firm. The perfect handful.

"Austin." His deep voice rumbled in my ear like a warning.

"Jesus, Coach. I just won us the damn game. Can't you give me a little reward?"

He pulled back, dislodging my hand, and smirked. “I’ve created a monster.” I thought that was it, that was all he was going to offer me, and just as I turned to give my attention to a teammate, he pulled me back in with his words. “You were phenomenal out there. Your team is grateful to you for the win.”

I could read between the lines. “The team, Coach? Or you?”

He leaned in close enough to whisper without being overheard. “Me. I’m grateful for you, Austin.”

That compliment felt better than seeing the scoreboard, felt better than striking out the Eagles’ best hitter. Hell, it felt better than that time my dad bought me a brand-new *PlayStation* for my birthday.

An announcement blared through the loudspeakers, echoing across the field. “Remain seated for an exciting performance by our very own first-place Musketeers!”

Coach blew into his whistle to get the team to quiet down. “I don’t know what you boys have planned, but whatever it is, I’m sure we’re all going to enjoy it. Head to the locker room and do whatever it is you have to do to get ready.”

He began gathering the equipment as we filed out of the dugout. It rubbed against my inner grain not to offer him a hand, but I had a lot to do and a short amount of time to get it done, so I followed the team.

In the locker room, the chaos ran high as we transformed ourselves, and our genders, for a surprise performance to celebrate the end of the season and our upcoming graduation. The team had voted as a unit on the idea, and I had to agree it was brilliant. But mostly, I couldn’t wait to see Coach’s reaction to me wearing a skirt.

A few guys needed help stuffing their bras, which delayed me and caused me to come out last, making what seemed like a grand entrance. The tips of my black heels kept sinking into the soft grass, making me wobble like I was drunk, but hell, it was worth it when I saw the look on Coach’s face.

He was quite literally staring open-mouthed, struck speechless.

I'd chosen a tight white tank top that hugged my ribs and left the ridges of my abs on full display. The color stood out in stark contrast against my tanned skin, as if I'd been kissed by the sun. The hot-pink-and-black plaid pleated skirt I wore barely touched the tops of my thighs, and if I had to bend over for any reason, I was pretty sure my ass would be bared. Ricky Bader's girlfriend had helped with our make-up and hair, not that there was much to be done with mine since it was cut short. But I had to admit the overall effect made me look like a femme fatale.

Coach must have thought so, too, because he was still staring. I'd give almost anything to know what was going on in his head.

The pep squad was asked to judge our appearance. We lined up on the stretch between home plate and first base in a single file line as the squad took a minute to assess each one of us. In the end, they declared me the prettiest drag queen on the team and placed a crown on my head and a sash around my neck.

"Boys," Coach called, "you've outdone yourselves. The game, the show, let me treat you to dinner tonight. All of you. We'll meet at the diner, and if you feel like changing first, please, be my guest," he teased.

I wasn't changing a thing about my appearance. If he liked what he saw that much, I'd let him look his fill for as long as he wanted.

Dinner was a chaotic affair. The diner was packed with people wanting to eat after the game. I helped the team push tables together so we could all be seated together, and of course, I snagged a seat beside Coach. He just shook his head with an amused chuff. When the waitress approached our table, a smile touched her lips when she recognized me.

"Mr. MVP, glad to see you return. Looks like you brought the entire cheer squad with you this time," she teased,

referring to the team's attire. "What would you like to order with your salad?"

I loved that she remembered my resolution to eat more greens. "A burger with everything on it and loaded cheese fries."

"And for you, Coach? The usual grilled chicken Caesar?"

"You know me so well. Thank you. I'm treating the team tonight to celebrate our big win in the last game of the season. So bring the bill directly to me, please."

Her eyes lit with excitement, and she turned to address the entire table. "Congratulations on your big win tonight, and an incredible first place ranking, Musketeers! Dessert is on the house tonight."

The guys went wild, banging their fists on the table and whooping.

While waiting for our food to arrive, Coach made small talk with the team, discussing summer plans and college aspirations, but his gaze strayed to my lap several times. Shifting in my seat, I casually hiked the hem of my skirt up enough that the bulge of my balls was visible. He became nervous, biting his nails down to the skin of his fingertips, and I captured his hand in mine and placed it on my thigh so that his fingers dipped between my legs.

"Stop biting your nails."

"Stop making me grope you," he hissed under his breath.

"Did you delete that picture from your phone?"

"Of course I did," he insisted in a righteous tone.

"Let me see your phone then," I suggested, holding out my hand.

"I'm not giving you my—"

Ignoring him, I reached for his phone lying on the table. He jumped to grab it before I could, a guilty blush staining his cheeks.

“I’m going to,” he decried. I gave him a knowing look, making his blush deepen. “I’ve been busy.”

“I don’t blame you one bit, Coach. We’re all busy.” He glared at me when I gave him a shit-eating grin.

But later that night, when I was alone in my bedroom, I decided to treat Coach to one more picture for his collection. Taking my bare, hard cock in hand, the tip glistening with precum, I arranged it so that it peeked from beneath the pleated folds of my skirt, winking at the camera.

A gift for him from me. And this time, I didn’t even pretend that I sent it to the wrong number.

With it being the last day of finals, and the day before prom, they let us out of school early, and my dad and I were taking advantage of the extra time to sneak in a last-minute camping trip. By the time I got home, he had the car packed and ready to go.

“All set?”

“You bet. I can’t wait to check out that new trail they cleared.”

We drove for almost an hour before arriving at the campsite, and it took us another hour to get set up. With our backpacks loaded up with first aid kits, survival gear, protein bars, and bottled waters, we set off to explore.

I wanted to be in the moment with him, but my mind was on my coach. As soon as I graduated next week, I was going to make my move. I just had no clue what that was going to be.

We hiked for hours, my dad using his trail guide book to make notes about coordinates and the difficulty of the terrain. He took notice of landmarks or things that could be used to identify someone’s position on the trail, and the time and distance it took us to clear the trail at a moderate pace. We made it back to our campsite just as the sun was setting. It blazed orange and red against a canvas of purples and pinks.

I couldn't paint something that pretty even if I were an artist.

I started a fire while my dad prepared dinner, and before long, we were seated in our camping chairs around a warm crackling fire with bowls of chili and crusty bread in our laps.

My phone vibrated, interrupting the peaceful silence.

A smile tugged at my lips when I saw it was from Coach.

Coach: Just wanted to tell you again how well you played last night. Because of you, we are first place champs this year. I'm so proud of you. I guess I'll see you tomorrow night.

He didn't need to tell me again how well I'd played. It was nothing but an excuse to reach out to me. I was sure of it. A rush of heat licked through my belly. He missed me, was thinking of me. I wondered what he'd done with my photo.

You'll definitely see me tomorrow night. I'll be the one solo, looking for a dance partner.

It was a not-so-subtle hint that I wanted to dance with him. Hopefully, he would get the message. Actually, I was positive he got the message. I just hoped he would do something about it.

"Who's got you smiling like that?" My dad's question broke through my thoughts, and I schooled my features so as not to give anything away.

"No one, just a buddy."

"I doubt it. I can't remember the last time you smiled like that when Sean texted you."

I pocketed my phone and scooped the last bite of chili into my mouth.

“Austin? Do you think maybe we’re ready to have that talk now? You’ve had something on your mind for quite a while, and I’m sure you’ve been meaning to tell me about it, haven’t you?”

The gentle reminder that I was keeping a secret made me anxious, like a swarm of bees buzzing under my skin. A heavy weight settled in my chest, making it difficult to swallow.

“Yeah, Dad. I guess it’s time.” I laid my empty bowl down by my feet, using the empty space in my lap to fidget, picking at my nails and the loose threads of my cargo pants. “For a while now, I’ve felt like…” Pausing to swallow again, my heart beat loudly in my ears.

“Austin,” he said gently, reaching forward to place his hand on my knee to still my bouncing leg, “whatever it is, it can’t be as bad as you think. I promise you, I will still love you the same, no matter what you say.”

Tears flooded my eyes, blurring my vision and running down my cheeks. “I’m—I—” my voice wavered, and I had to sniffle to clear my sinuses so I could breathe. “I like guys, Dad. I’m g-gay.”

I couldn’t look at him, couldn’t face his disappointment because I would crumble.

He squeezed my knee before giving it a reassuring pat. “Now, was that so hard? The world didn’t end,” he teased, looking up at the sky as if he were waiting for the apocalypse to descend.

Again, I sniffled before raising my eyes to his. “Did you know?”

“I might have had a feeling, but I didn’t want to make any assumptions before you were ready to figure it out. But I was wrong—I don’t still love you the same as I did just minutes ago.” Fresh tears fell down my face, and I sucked in a deep, ragged breath, trying to hold the pieces of myself together that were threatening to splinter apart. “I love you more, because

what you just did, Austin? It was the bravest, most honest thing you've ever done, and I not only admire you, I'm in awe of you."

That was the last straw. Broken sobs escaped from my constricted throat as I furiously swiped the tears that continued to fall. My dad pulled me to my feet and into his arms, crushing me in the security of his embrace. I'd done the hardest thing I've ever had to do, and it was okay. It turned out to be okay. No matter what I had to face for the rest of my life, it would feel like a cakewalk compared to this.

Also, I had the best dad in the whole world, but I already knew that.

CHAPTER TWELVE

MARCUS

I couldn't remember the last time I wore a suit. Probably last year, at prom. Tugging at the button by my throat, I loosened it and the next two, rolling my neck from side to side. The air in the gym was stifling, thick with body heat, the scents of cloying perfume and cologne, sweat, and residual BO from being used primarily for gym classes.

The music was terrible and way too loud. How did anyone dance to this?

Yet they did, and it was my job to make sure no one got knocked up or knocked out on the dance floor.

If I were being honest with myself, I could admit I was just biding my time, waiting until Austin arrived. I'd thought of little else since he sent the second dick pic, this one still dressed in the skirt.

Shit, I'd been wrecked by the orgasm of my life after seeing him like that. His muscular calves in those heels, the cut of his abdomen in a crop top, and that pleated miniskirt teasing the swell of his perfect ass.

I wasn't supposed to notice these things, but fuck, what normal red-blooded gay man wouldn't? That was like asking a priest to walk past a holy relic without giving it a second glance.

Impossible.

I wasn't capable of performing miracles, which was a shame because I was going to need one to get through this night without embarrassing myself.

Of course he knew I'd jacked off to him, to that picture of the bright pink head of his cock, shiny and wet with precum, peeking from beneath that pink-and-black plaid hemline. He *had* to know.

And when I finally met his wanton, calculating stare tonight, there would be no disguising my guilty blush.

I was in danger of sweating through my shirt when something caught my eye, and when I turned fully to look, there was Austin, striding toward me in all of his blond, cocky perfection. His devastating grin was my undoing as I popped another button on my chest, struggling for a deep breath of air.

This boy, this perfect forbidden temptation, was eventually going to be my undoing. The one thing that could threaten to end a stellar fourteen-year career, because I was definitely getting fired for this, no doubt. For what I was capable of doing, for what I dreamed of doing. Austin Healey was going to ruin me, and I would probably let him, with a smile on my face.

In his black tuxedo, with his green Musketeers jersey underneath, he looked incredible, unforgettable, the epitome of cool swagger. Not that Austin was egotistical, quite the opposite actually, but he was confident in his seduction of me, knew that he had me exactly where he wanted me.

No, on the inside, Austin had no artifice or calculation, no need to be the center of attention. The boy lived for the praise and compliments of those he admired. It's what drove him and gave him the confidence to shine and succeed like he did. And that made him needy, vulnerable, and so fucking attractive... *my kryptonite.*

"Hey, Coach," he greeted with a breezy smile. "Mind if I help you hold up this wall?"

A smile tugged at my lips. "Be my guest. Nice suit, by the way. The green in your jersey really brings out the classiness of the tux," I teased with a smirk.

"I thought so, too," he agreed, touching the lapel of his jacket. "What's a guy gotta do to get a cup of punch around here?"

"It's as simple as walking over to the refreshment table and retrieving yourself one," I pointed out, making a walking motion with my fingers.

“Some date you are,” he pouted, leaning against the wall with his arms folded across his chest.

“I’m not your date, Austin,” I whispered softly.

“And here I thought that picture would have put you in a good mood.”

A dangerous teasing glint sparkled in his soft brown eyes, like he was daring me to deny it.

“About that picture—”

“Don’t bother to deny it. We both know you loved it.” He pushed off the wall. “I’m going to get us some punch.”

How did he always get the last word? Better yet, why did I allow it?

Because you want to fuck him, the little voice in my head screamed.

I scrubbed my face, shaking off the thought. When Austin returned with our drinks, he resumed his place against the wall beside me, finished off his punch in two swigs, and crushed the plastic cup in his fist, like a frat boy with a beer can.

“Came out to my dad this weekend.”

I almost missed his confession over the pounding beat of the music, and I turned to him, giving him my full attention, concern and empathy written all over my face.

“Seriously? How did it go? What did he say?”

His lips pulled into a smile, and his gaze fell to the cup in his hand, as if he were remembering the moment.

“Better than I thought it would. He was okay with it.”

“Austin.” Instinctively, I reached for him before checking myself and pulling back. “I’m so proud of you. God, that took huge balls to admit to him, but you did it. I’m so relieved it turned out alright.”

“It was pretty scary, but you got me through it.”

“Me? What did I do?”

“I got your text message just before I spilled the beans.”

“And?” I tried to recall what earth-shattering wisdom I might have imparted in a few meaningless words.

“I realized from your text that you missed me, that you were thinking of me, and that you liked my picture *too* much,” he added in a soft whisper. He looked directly into my eyes, holding my gaze as he admitted, “It gave me the courage to come forward, because if there’s even the slightest chance that I could be with you, I don’t want to miss it because I was a coward.”

Fucking fuck. His words were unraveling my conscience. “There’s no chance of us being together, Austin. You know that.”

“What you say and what you do are two different things. As long as there’s an inconsistency, I choose to believe there’s still a chance.”

I was spared from having to answer by an approaching commotion. Two girls, walking hand-in-hand, wearing the same color dresses were followed by a group of boys I recognized from the football team. The ugly taunts and hateful jeers spewing from their mouths made my blood boil. It was obvious the girls were a couple, and that the boys had a zero-tolerance policy for the whole concept of love is love.

Stepping forward, I shielded the girls behind me. “Absolutely not! Under no circumstances are you going to get away with that mouth and those remarks in front of me. At this school, we have a policy of acceptance and tolerance, not harassment and bullying. Apologize, right now.”

When they hesitated, I insisted, “Right now!”

The boys murmured a half-assed apology.

“Not nearly good enough. Just get out of my sight. And don’t think your coach won’t hear about this.”

When I turned to check in with the girls, they were gone, not that I could blame them. The whole debacle just called more attention to something they probably didn’t want broadcasted. The bullies lingered, not heeding my threat. The

weight of their hatred burned a hole right through my heart, igniting my temper and, subsequently, my retaliation.

Looking around for a willing participant, my gaze landed on Austin. “Let’s demonstrate the way it should be done.” Holding out my hand to him, I offered, “Mr. Healey, would you grant me the honor of your next dance?”

Austin looked stunned, his eyes shifting left and right. “Seriously?”

“Seriously,” I insisted.

“Hell, yeah. I mean, yes, sir, Coach. The honor is granted.”

I bit back my smile as I led him onto the dance floor. As was appropriate, I put a hand on the small of his back, and one on his shoulder, holding him at arm’s length, with a good distance between us. But of course, Austin wouldn’t have it. He pulled me in close, and I could hear him inhaling deeply, breathing in my scent. A thrill shot through me, and I closed my eyes, soaking up the pleasure of the moment. I could pull away, blame it all on him, but I was enjoying myself. And that made me as guilty as he was. His body was warm and solid beneath my hands, his chest pressing against mine, the tips of his fingers digging into my skin as if he were afraid to let go because I might disappear.

“Is this really happening? Or am I dreaming? Because if I am, I don’t want to wake up.”

A warm chuckle bubbled from my throat. He never failed to seize an opportunity with me.

“If this is a fantasy,” he continued, “I want the full treatment.”

“The full treatment?” I asked.

“Yeah, a kiss during our last dance. And then I want you to take my virginity in a tawdry hotel room.”

Discussing his virginity made my dick instantly harden in my slacks. It was unavoidable, a natural reaction.

“Austin.”

“Careful, Coach. It almost sounds as if you’re scolding me, and you know what that does to me.”

“Austin,” I hissed in his ear. He shivered in my arms.

“It almost feels as if you’re blowing in my ear when you do that.”

“Stop it,” I whispered. He ceased his flirtation, content to just remain in my embrace as our feet shuffled in circles. So why couldn’t I let it go? I just had to poke the hornet’s nest, didn’t I? “A tawdry hotel room? Really? Is that the best you can do?”

Just imagining some bumbling idiot or opportunistic predator stealing his first time, taking him to some cheap no-tell motel that rented rooms by the hour, made me sick to my stomach. What about protection, a gentle hand, someone who appreciated the demigod that he was?

“Well,” he considered, “you do have a job and you’re not eighteen, so perhaps you can do better than tawdry.”

There were a million things I could say in response to that, but I wisely held them back. Instead, I played the mentor card.

“Don’t give it away so easily, Austin. Hold on to it a little bit longer. You won’t be sorry.”

“Let me guess, I’m supposed to save it for the right guy? For when I’m in love?”

With his head resting on my shoulder as we danced, I couldn’t see his face, but I could hear the smile in his words. “I know it sounds cliché, but trust me.”

“Don’t sweat it, Coach. I know exactly who I’m saving it for. And nothing about it has been *easy*.”

Me. He was talking about me. The only thing I could do in this case was feign ignorance. But I held him a little tighter, and he came closer willingly, breathing a sigh of contentment.

“One more week, Coach. Then I’m not your student any longer.”

“I’m aware, Austin. You sound as if you’re counting down the days.”

“What if I am?”

“And then what?” I had to know, although I was sure I would regret asking.

“Stay tuned, the next inning is about to begin.” He breathed the words across the shell of my ear, sending shivers straight down to my balls.

I felt the unmistakable press of his groin against mine, and he was as hard as a baseball bat. The song ended, morphing into one with a quicker beat, and Austin pulled away from me. His smile was decadent, tilted slightly on one side, highlighting his dimple. If he wasn’t eighteen, maybe just a few years older, I could admit he looked like a fucking wet dream when he grinned like that.

“Let me know if you change your mind about that after-party, Coach. I’ll be around,” he informed me with a wink before disappearing into the crowd.

I was so fucked. I’d be lucky if I wasn’t tomorrow’s news headline. I could see it now. Coach fired for lusting after his student.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MARCUS

The fucking tie was already choking me and I hadn't even left the house yet. My anxiety was mounting by the second, causing damp stains in the fabric under my arms. At this rate, I would have to change again before I left if I didn't get a hold of myself. As certain as I was of my own name, I knew he would be waiting for me, watching for me the moment I arrived, his eyes on me throughout the ceremony.

For half a second—alright, more like two whole minutes—I entertained the idea of grabbing a hotel room last night and texting Austin the address. Further proof that I was actually beginning to lose my mind. My mental health, along with my will, and my morals, were deteriorating rapidly in this little cat-and-mouse game he played with me.

Under no circumstance would I ever, *ever*, secure a hotel room for a student and myself to rendezvous after prom.

What in the fuck was he doing to my head?

I needed to put an end to this, sooner rather than later. In all likelihood, the beginning of the end would commence after the ceremony today. Austin was headed to college in the fall, where he would focus on his new season, his studies, and a plethora of hot, single boys to choose from. He would forget all about me in no time and chalk it up to a silly crush. That's all it was, a boyhood fantasy. A passing fancy.

I was almost in the clear. In the coming weeks, I could put this entire messy debacle behind me and focus on my training camp and the start of the new school year.

A wave of melancholy washed over me. Thinking of Austin moving on was safe and sensible...and lonely. It was depressing as fuck.

I pulled at my tie, taking a deep breath as it loosened its vise around my neck. Unbuttoning my shirt, I was adding a fresh layer of deodorant when a knock sounded on my door.

Christ, what now?

Fastening the buttons of my shirt as I trampled down the stairs, I swung the door open wide to see my best friend standing on the other side with his arms opened wide, his teasing grin beaming back at me.

“Miss me?”

“Damn, am I glad to see you.”

I pulled him into a hug, just keeping him in my embrace for minutes, soaking him up. Already, I was feeling a bit calmer, steadier, and more in control.

When he pulled back, he took in my appearance. “You’re all dressed up. Where are we going?”

“Graduation.”

“Oh, then I’m dressed perfectly.” He pushed past me and dropped his duffel by the door.

“Why are you all dressed up? And why didn’t you call to tell me you were on your way?”

“Surprise!” God, I missed his face. Baylor was here, and he was going to help me through this quagmire I’d gotten stuck knee-deep in. “I had an interview and figured I might as well just make today my official move-in day.”

“That’s great! Where did you interview?”

His grin stretched impossibly bigger. “The NCAA, baby. A college umpire position.”

“College? Moving up from the high school level, huh?”

“That’s right, eat my dust, Coach.”

Laughing, I hugged him again, the contact sucking most of the anxiety from my body. “We’ll have to celebrate.”

“I’ve got to get hired first. Where should I put my bag?”

My gaze fell on his navy duffel by the door. “Why would you need to put it anywhere?”

“Because I’m staying.”

“For how long?”

“For a few days. Hell, Marcus, I just got into town literally twenty minutes ago. My place isn’t move-in ready yet. I don’t even have sheets on the bed. Nothing is unpacked, and my refrigerator isn’t stocked.”

“Of course,” I agreed, running a hand through my already styled hair. I was a fucking mess, unraveling at the seams. “Stay as long as you like. Unfortunately, the two bedrooms I have are both being used as an office and a gym. So I guess you’re on the couch.”

Shrugging casually, he said, “No biggie. I’ve slept on worse.” He grabbed his duffel and began climbing the stairs, looking back over his shoulder to make sure I was following. “Come on, you need to change that shirt and tie. You look like a damn mess. What’s got you so stressed out? Shouldn’t you be euphoric on graduation day? You have your entire summer ahead of you.”

“The couch is in the living room.”

“As most people’s are,” he returned sarcastically. “Did you expect me to brush my teeth and get dressed in the kitchen? I’m gonna keep my stuff in your room. Lighten up, geez.”

“Fuck, sorry. You’re right. I don’t know what’s gotten into me.”

“I don’t believe that for a second,” he said, with a knowing look.

“Did you forget that I have a training camp all summer long? I’ll be working.”

“Even still, you don’t have to teach class every day. You’ll be outside doing what you love for a few hours here and there.” He dumped his duffel just inside my closet and paused, his fingers roaming over the shirts lined up on hangers. Baylor selected a lilac button-down with a silver tie that had a dark purple baseball pattern. “Here,” he offered it to me, “put this on, and wash your face. You’re all sweaty.”

My fingers went to work on unfastening the buttons of my shirt, removing my tie while I felt the weight of his gaze upon

me.

“What?”

“I’m still waiting for you to tell me what’s got you in such a tizzy.” He leaned against the door of the closet with his arms folded across his chest, casually biding his time.

“Not a what, a who,” I grumbled.

“Now we’re getting somewhere,” he said, clapping his hands and rubbing them together with glee. “What’s his name?”

With a roll of my eyes, I huffed, “Like I’d tell you.”

“Course you would. I’m your best friend! Who would you tell if not me?”

“No one! Nobody needs to know about this.”

“Ohhh, sounds illicit. Is it another faculty member? Oh, it’s a student’s father, isn’t it?”

“No, and no.”

“Then what’s with all the secrecy? The principal?! Didn’t you mention he was like ninety something?”

“I’m not screwing the principal, Baylor, and the man is in his sixties.”

“I’ve got all day, man. Just give me a name.”

“It’s a student,” I murmured, almost inaudibly.

His eyes widened. “Get the fuck out. Marcus Wolfe would never sleep with his student. What the fuck?”

“I haven’t slept with anyone!” I was in danger of sweating through this shirt as well.

Baylor sat on the edge of my bed, studying me as I buttoned the clean shirt. “Better start from the beginning.”

With a long, loud sigh, I gave him the condensed version. “He’s been after me for weeks. It’s starting to become a problem.”

“For who? You or him?”

“Both. Mainly me. I’m not trying to get fired.”

“I guess not. Is it a student in your gym class? Some kind of locker room situation?”

“He’s on my team.”

“Whoa, seriously?”

“He’s my star pitcher.”

Baylor cackled. “Hailer something or other?”

“Healey. Austin Healey.”

“He’s good. I’ve read his stats. No doubt he got scouted, right?”

I looked up from my shirt in surprise. “You’ve been following my team?”

Baylor looked affronted. “Of course. You’re my best friend.”

I smiled as I threaded the tie through my collar. He really was a good friend. With any luck, he could help me sort out this seduction situation.

“So, this kid has a wild hair up his ass for his coach? Putting the pressure on?”

“More like I’m swimming inside of a pressure cooker, and I’m about to combust. I don’t know what flipped his switch so unexpectedly. He’s been on my team for years, and suddenly, he’s pursuing me with a relentless determination that I have to admit is kind of flattering and hard to resist coming from someone like him.”

“Like him?” Baylor asked, arching his brow.

“Yeah, like him. Gorgeous like a model, obedient and sweet, talented as fuck, a perfect GPA. He’s so generous and kind. God, listen to me,” I huffed, scrubbing my face. “I sound like a—”

“Lovesick fool?” He was enjoying this too much, his Cheshire grin stretching from ear to ear.

“Probably,” I agreed, sick of myself. “He would make the perfect boy, Baylor. Why does he have to be my student?”

“The perfect boy? Isn’t he a little too young to be into all that? How do you know he is for sure?”

“I don’t know, just bits and pieces of things he said that make me think he’s alluding to it. If he’s not, he’s still well-suited for it without realizing it.”

“Isn’t he graduating today? He won’t be your student much longer, so what’s the problem? He’s eighteen, isn’t he?”

“He’s been eighteen for most of the school year, and yes, he’s graduating today.”

“So then, what’s the problem? All I see are solutions.”

“You would. Unfortunately, the school board doesn’t share your opinion. It would come into question how long this has been going on, and it would be hard to prove that I’ve done nothing wrong or calling into question my reputation with other students.”

“Have you done this before?”

“Hell no. But I guarantee you if people realize I’m gay, they’ll start insinuating all kinds of ridiculous lies and behavior.”

“Yeah, that sounds like a minefield you should avoid.”

But as a crowd of students, faculty, and parents surrounded us after the ceremony, shaking hands and taking pictures, Baylor did nothing to help me avoid the minefield. He craned his neck, looking for... someone.

“What are you doing?”

“Looking for your stalker.”

Pushing my elbow into his ribs, I scowled. “Quit it! Don’t be so obvious.”

“Coach Wolfe,” someone called. I turned to see Mr. and Mrs. Healey approaching with bright smiles. “There you are.”

We wanted to thank you again for everything. These last four years really shaped Austin's skills and his future, and we have you to thank for that."

Mr. Healey pulled me into a half hug, clapping me on the back. Over his shoulder, Baylor's smug grin was blinding.

"You're welcome. But it wasn't me, it was Austin. He's brilliant. Full of potential. Are you all signed up at UOM?"

"Yup. Full-ride, thanks to you."

"Again, I take no credit. It was all Austin." I looked around the sea of black graduation gowns, trying to spot a blond head. "Is he around?"

From out of nowhere, he appeared by my side, wrapping his arm around my shoulders. "Hey, Coach! Did you see me walk across the stage?"

Anxiety warred with a surge of relief, both caused by him standing next to me, touching me. The moment he'd accepted his diploma, with honors, pure unadulterated pride spiked within my chest. Austin had accomplished so much, while carrying so many heavy secrets on his young shoulders. There were countless wrong turns he could have made, but no, my boy had made the right choice every time.

My boy?

Jesus fuck. I'm a glutton for punishment.

"I saw, Austin. You were amaz—I'm so proud of you."

My best friend chose that moment to cough loudly, inserting himself into the conversation.

"Austin, you remember my best friend, Baylor."

Austin's beaming face dimmed abruptly, like someone stole his sunshine.

"Baylor Buchanan," he introduced himself, offering his hand to Austin, who blatantly ignored it.

Austin glared, and Baylor grinned.

"What's he doing here?" Austin sounded almost petulant.

“Just moved here. Staying with my buddy for a few days while I get settled,” Baylor answered before I could explain.

Austin’s glare turned positively lethal. “He’s staying with you?”

“Austin,” I admonished, “it’s not really your business.”

“Can I have a word with you?” When I hesitated, his eyes pleaded with me. “Alone? Please?”

Against my better judgment, I allowed him to pull me aside. “What is it, Austin?” His soft brown eyes were pools of quicksand, sucking me in and trapping me in his imploring gaze.

“I really just need your arms around me. Tell me you’re proud of me.”

With caution, I eased into the hug, checking to be sure we weren’t receiving curious stares. He was a warm solid weight in my arms, and he smelled incredible, sweet and musky. His soft breath tickled the shell of my ear, sending a shudder rolling through my shoulders.

“I’m so fucking proud of you. You surpassed all my wildest expectations.” He gasped in my ear, the sound pushing me to continue. “You shine brighter than a supernova. I can’t wait to see how far you’re going to shoot.”

“So far, I’ve only shot two feet at most, but maybe with some edging...”

A bark of laughter cracked from my throat, and I brushed my lips over his ear. “You are so fucking incorrigible, brat.”

“Tell me this isn’t the last time I’m going to feel your arms around me.” His voice wavered, and it sounded like he was feeling as choked up as I was.

“I can’t make that promise.”

“At least tell me the championship game isn’t the last time I’m going to see you.”

Reluctantly, I pulled away and locked eyes with him. “I guess if it’s meant to be, then you’ll see me again.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

AUSTIN

I was born to play baseball. It was my identity—my past and my future—it owned me, grounded me, gave me purpose.

What was I without baseball?

Standing on the pitcher's mound surrounded by my team, gripping the ball tightly, I held the power to win or lose the game in the palm of my glove.

It was an exhilarating high I had difficulty describing to those who hadn't experienced it.

The game was being held in the stadium of my future team, the University of Oregon Maplevue. This was what I had to look forward to, a packed stadium, the faint buzz of drones hovering overhead, recording every play, the antics of the team and also UOMs mascot.

God, I was so ready for this.

The only thing this school didn't have was Coach Wolfe.

I'd met my new coach, Casey Collins, when I'd toured the school. He seemed nice enough and eager to sign me, but he couldn't hold a candle to Marcus Wolfe.

If I stopped long enough to think about how it would feel not to see him every day, I'd break down and cry like a baby.

For now, I had to stuff those feelings down, because I had a game to win, to make my coach proud.

I focused all my energy on the Falcon's third basemen up at bat. Feldman was good. There wasn't much he couldn't hit. Running through my warmup routine, I positioned my fingers for a curveball and let it fly. He must have smelled it coming because his bat connected with a crack that echoed across the field. My outfielder ran for it and held up his glove, catching it with ease.

Damn, that was close.

Next up was their best hitter, and he stared me down across the plate, his determination swallowing up the distance between us. I threw out a changeup, and he swung with extraordinary force, striking out but not before showing me a glimpse of what he was packing. Fuck. I needed to step it up. We'd overcome a six-six tie with a run in the top of the ninth, but the Falcons had the bases loaded. And now, in the bottom of the inning, we were running out of chances for me to shut this down. Precious seconds ticked by as I tried to whip myself into shape with an unforgettable mental pep talk.

My heartbeat spiked like I'd swallowed pure adrenaline as sweat beaded under the brim of my cap and rolled down into my eyes. I swiped it away and straightened, running through my warmup again.

"Healey!" My head whipped up. Coach was flagging me. He motioned to the ump for a time out and jogged across the field. "Talk to me. What's wrong?"

His concern was my undoing. I felt shaky, nauseous. "Need you to take me out of the game."

"Not a chance. You're doing great."

"I can't do it. I'm—"

"Austin, look at me." With his hand clutching my shoulder, he stared hard into my eyes. "I believe in you. Just do the best you can. That's all I want." His throat bobbed as he swallowed, his dark eyes imploring me.

The fear of disappointing him was greater than my fear of losing the championship title for my team, for my school. He deserved this trophy, and I was going to fucking deliver it to him on a silver platter, somehow.

With a curt nod, I kicked my own ass and got my shit together. Hussein smirked at me across the plate, knowing I was choking like a toddler on a *LEGO* brick.

Fuck you, Hussein. I won't let you take this win from my coach.

Mustering every bit of courage I possessed, I ran through my warmup a final time, sucking a deep breath into my lungs,

and let it rip.

“Strike!” That had to be a top speed for me!

I threw out two more, feeling stronger with each pitch, each strike, and when the game ended and ‘*We Are The Champions*’ blared through the overhead speaker, tears of relief threatened to spill. My team engulfed me in a mass of bodies hugging and hollering, and someone dumped a cooler of Gatorade over our sweaty heads.

It felt euphoric. The last game of my high school career was a success. My coach was getting that big-ass trophy proudly displayed in his cabinet at the school that lined the front hall.

My eyes searched for him. He was being congratulated by faculty and parents. I needed him. Right fucking now, I needed his attention, his embrace.

Shaking off the team, I crossed the field to him. He saw me coming and excused himself. My body crashed into his with force as I crushed my chest against his, wrapping my arms around him.

“You fucking did it!” He beamed, returning my hug with equal force.

“Because of you, Coach. Everything I do is because of you.”

“Bullshit. It’s because you’re amazing.”

I pulled back, my eyes boring into his darker ones. I needed him to know I would do anything for him, give him anything, be anything, for his pleasure, his happiness.

“I won that trophy for you.”

He stared back for a few long seconds before crushing me in his arms again.

“I know, sweet boy.”

His whispered words made my blood sing. It was what I’d dreamed of hearing for weeks.

It felt better than all my fantasies.

The beating of my heart threatened to split my chest wide-open as I held my breath and waited for him to answer my knock. Would he let me in or shut the door in my face? My intentions were all over the place. While the special-order underwear I wore burned a hole through the seat of my pants, I would be happy if all we did was just sit and talk.

The door swung open, and there he was, fresh from the shower, and wearing nothing but black track pants. It was the first time I'd seen his chest, and it was better than I could've imagined. Dark fuzz covered the space between his toned pecs. It looked soft, like something I wanted to run my fingers through or lay my cheek upon. His nipples were small and brown, and the trail of dark hair trickled down to his belly button. My mouth watered, picturing what he looked like below the waistband of those pants.

“Austin?”

“Hey, Coach. Can I come in?” I knew better than to wait for an answer, taking the lead and pushing past him into the room.

“Austin, you can't—”

The door to his bathroom opened, and a cloud of steam billowed out, followed by a very naked and damp Baylor. Well, not completely naked. He wore a towel wrapped around his waist.

“What's he doing here?”

I sounded like a toddler about to throw a tantrum, but seriously, I was planning his seduction here, and this asshole was going to ruin the whole thing.

Baylor pretended like I'd paid him a compliment, sauntering over to me with a cocky gait, offering me his hand to shake. Again, I dismissed it, just like I had on my graduation day.

“Nice to see you again, kid. Don’t mind me, I’ll be out of your hair in a heartbeat.”

Marcus blanched. “What? You’re leaving? Baylor, you don’t have to go anywhere. Austin was just leaving.”

Was Coach seriously going to stand here and encourage him while planning to toss me out? Just another reason I hated Baylor Buchanan.

“Well, don’t let me hold you up,” I suggested, stepping aside.

He laughed easily, pulling a T-shirt over his head. Baylor disappeared into the bathroom and emerged a moment later, wearing dark wash jeans.

“It’s okay, Marcus. The bar is calling my name. No better time to introduce myself to the ladies of northern Oregon.”

He grabbed his wallet and room key, shoving them in his back pocket, and shot me a wicked grin. “Good luck, kid. I’m rooting for you.” To Marcus, he said, “Don’t wait up.”

When the door shut behind him, I gave Coach my full attention. “He’s straight?”

How did I miss that?

“I told you I wasn’t sleeping with him.” He scrubbed his hand through his damp hair. “Christ, why am I reassuring you or defending myself? I don’t owe you an explanation, Austin. You shouldn’t even be in here. If someone found out I had a student in my room...”

“I’m not your student anymore. This game is just a formality, scheduled late in the season. I’m a student of Oregon Maplevue now, and you’re just the guy that used to coach me.”

His Adam’s apple moved up and down as he swallowed hard. “Is that all I am?”

“No,” I protested, my voice cracking. “No.” This time, I sounded much stronger. “You’re so much more than that. Haven’t I proven that to you? What is it gonna take for you to

finally take me seriously?” I trailed my fingers down his corded biceps, skimming over his soft, warm skin.

“I don’t—stop, Austin!”

He changed direction mid-sentence as I began to unbutton my pants. Ignoring his outcry, I dragged the zipper down over the bulge in my jeans, revealing the thin, white, almost transparent, bikini briefs I wore beneath. The words Ball Boy were unmistakable at a glance, making him do a double take. The O in Boy was a baseball. And my cock was as hard as a baseball bat, just from knowing his eyes were on me. He stood speechless, frozen like a statue as I let my pants drop to the floor, pooling around my sneakers. I palmed my erection through the thin cotton, his gaze devouring my actions.

“I bought these for you, Coach. Do you like them?”

“A-Austin, I—”

It appeared he was having difficulty swallowing, and I took pity on him. Kicking off my pants, I approached him slowly, taking his hand in mine and placing it over my cock.

“Touch me,” I pleaded roughly.

His broken moan told me just how hungry he was for me.

His rapturous gaze followed the movements of our joined hands as we moved up and down my shaft. A wet spot formed inside of the letter A, spreading rapidly as my precum was absorbed by the cotton fabric.

“So hard and wet.” His thumb swept over the stain, his pupils dilating. “Where did you get these?”

“On the Internet. I thought...I *hoped*, I would have a chance to show them to you, that you would like them.”

He finally raised his eyes to mine, and the fire in those espresso-brown irises burned me alive.

“I love them,” he rasped in a gravelly voice. “How did you know?”

“I didn’t. I just hoped, like I said. Hoped we shared the same fantasy, the same needs.”

His big, rough palm continued to stroke up and down my shaft, creating more wetness leaking from my tip. The heat of his hand, the pressure of his touch, the visual... it was all too much, making my balls draw up tight. But I needed more. I couldn't let this end with a hand job after waiting so long. Not when there was every possible chance he would regret this and never do it again.

Gently, I pushed him down onto the edge of the bed, dropping to my knees between his spread thighs. My heart beat painfully hard within my chest, like a ticking time bomb ready to explode. All the hours I spent fantasizing about this moment were coming to fruition.

I rubbed my hand down his hard length, and he sucked a breath between his teeth, making a hissing sound. Before I could pull his pants down, he stopped me.

“Have you ever done this before?”

Raising my eyes to his, I swallowed hard and shook my head from side to side.

“Oh, Austin,” he exhaled on a sigh. His fingers gripped my chin, the rough pad of his thumb caressing my lips. He slipped the tip of his thumb inside my mouth, and I eagerly sucked on it before he pulled it out, tugging my bottom lip down.

“I can't believe this mouth, so soft and lush, has never been used, and you want to put it on my cock?”

Despite his firm grip on my chin, I was able to nod.

The fire in his eyes dimmed, and he looked sad, unsure. “Austin, what are we doing? Are we making a huge mistake?”

“It doesn't feel like a mistake. It feels like a dream coming true.”

A small smile touched his lips. “You really want this? I don't want to be something you regret someday.”

Shaking my head, vehemently, I swore, “Never, Coach. I could never regret you.”

“Oh God,” he groaned. “Don't call me Coach right now. It feels so...inappropriate.”

Grinning wickedly, I teased, “It feels so...*right*.”

I returned to my task of uncovering his cock, but again, he stopped me. “Let’s put those lips on something softer first. How about a kiss?” He studied my reaction. “Have you ever kissed a boy, Austin?” When I hesitated, he warned, “Don’t lie to me.”

“Yes, but I was at a party, and I was drinking. I don’t really remember it clearly, and I don’t think I enjoyed it. I mean, I know what boy it was, and I think I was excited, but it’s not what I want to remember as my first kiss.”

“What do you want?”

“I want you to be my first kiss. I want to remember it for the rest of my life.”

“Austin,” he said, so softly, reverently. “What is it that you see in me? Because I’m afraid I will never live up to it, and I just couldn’t bear to disappoint you.”

“I wish you could see what I see,” I said, looking at him with stars in my eyes. “I don’t want you to change a thing.”

“Come up here,” he suggested, patting his thigh.

I crawled up onto his lap, straddling his hips with my thighs. His erection pushed against my bottom, and I rocked back and forth on it.

“Oh my God, that feels good. Just having you in my arms feels so good.” He rested his forehead against mine, his breath puffing over my lips. “Let’s recreate that first kiss and make it something to remember for a lifetime.”

I tilted my head, my mouth fusing with his, softly at first, just a brush of my lips on his, and then sucking kisses that made my stomach flutter. I tried to mirror his actions by sucking on his lip, but my inexperience and eagerness made me go too far. He pulled back with a chuckle and rubbed his nose against mine.

“Sweet boy, take your time. Melt into the kiss.”

It was the second time he called me his sweet boy, and my aching cock grew impossibly harder. The words sparked a

desire within me, so swift and strong, making me recall every filthy fantasy I'd watched on my laptop.

His hands cupped my ass, kneading my cheeks, spreading them apart, and then squishing them back together again. I let him set the pace, gently suckling my lips, and when his tongue slipped between them, I opened for him eagerly. I loved the way his tongue filled my mouth, rolled with mine, sliding, dancing in the wet heat of my mouth. I tasted his saliva as I swallowed some of it with my own, taking a piece of him deep inside my body, into my belly.

His hands moved up my back, tangling in my hair, digging into the back of my neck as he pulled me closer. I had octopus hands. They slithered over his body, feeling his curves and hardness, his rigid spine, his ribs, the coarse texture of his hair. His lips skipped my mouth and landed on my neck, where he ravished the skin of my throat like a feral animal, nipping, sucking, bruising me. I panted like a dog, scorching heat consuming my body. I'd never been harder, hornier, or more desperate to be touched and filled than I was at that moment.

This man could have all of me, every piece of me. I would hold nothing back from him.

He parted his lips from mine just long enough to steal a breath. "You're made of sugar and sin. Your mouth could ruin a man."

"Can I ruin you?" I breathed the words over his lips, and he returned them with his next breath.

"You already have."

I had him right where I wanted him. He belonged to me. And I would cherish him every single day.

"Will you show me how to please you?" He brushed his lips back-and-forth over mine, his nose bumping into mine.

"You already do, Austin. God, how you please me."

"You know what I mean."

"You don't have to rush into things you're not ready for just to hold my attention or impress me."

His concern for my limits touched a place deep inside my heart, making me more convinced than ever he would make the perfect Daddy.

“I’ve never been more ready for anything.”

“You want my cock in your mouth, Austin? Is that really what you want?”

“Fuck, yes.”

I bit my bottom lip, and his eyes dropped to my mouth, nostrils flaring wide. He liked when I acted coy and innocent. With a swipe of my tongue, I soothed the indentation left by my teeth, and he captured my tongue in between his lips, bathing it with his tongue.

When he finally released it, he murmured, “On your knees, boy.”

Scrambling to my knees, I kneeled between his thighs, peeking up at him as I awaited further instruction.

“God, this face,” he purred, caressing my cheek. “The face of an angel, with a body made for sinning.”

That made my dick impossibly harder. I was a temptation he couldn’t resist. The idea made me giddy.

“Open your mouth wide. Show me how far you can stretch it.”

I complied, widening my jaw as far as I could until it ached.

“Impressive. You might wanna practice that at home. It starts to hurt after a while if you’re not used to it.”

“I promise to practice every night, Coach.”

“Fuck, Austin, you are the perfect boy, like I knew you would be.” He slipped his thumb between my lips to gently pry my lips apart. “Show me your tongue.”

I held it out as if I were having my tonsils checked without making the ridiculous noise.

“That’s a good boy. Such a pretty sight. When you’re on your knees in between my legs, always sit with your tongue out, waiting.”

I had to palm my cock as it throbbed and kicked in my tight briefs. He was telling me the things I fantasized about hearing from him, the filthy sweet words falling from his lips like candy, the sweetest praise.

He pulled the waistband of his pants down below his balls, showing off the most beautiful cock I’d ever seen. Wide, but not a monster, perfectly straight, with thick veins running the length of his shaft. The base of his cock was covered in a nest of dark curls that he kept trimmed short. But the head, perfectly cut and leaking from his slit, resembled a dark red mushroom that I wanted to pop into my mouth. He wrapped his fingers around his shaft, stroking it slowly as his hooded gaze devoured my mouth, my tongue outstretched, waiting for a taste.

“Ask me nicely,” he rasped in a gruff voice, thick with desire.

“Please?” I asked timidly.

“You can do better than that, sweetheart.”

Swallowing past my nerves, I took a deep breath before speaking to calm my racing heart. How far was too far? I had a feeling that with Marcus, there was no limit. I could be as filthy as I wanted, or as innocent and sweet as I wanted to pretend to be, and either one would be exactly what he was hoping for.

“Please, Coach, may I have a taste of your cock?”

“Damn, that was perfect.”

With my tongue stretched out and waiting for him, he trailed the tip of his cock down the center of my tongue, leaving a sticky trail of his flavor behind. When he pulled back, I swallowed, tasting his seed. It was the first time I’d tasted a man’s precum, besides my own. His had a different flavor than mine, stronger, a little more bitter with a tang of salt. I liked it.

“Can I have more, please?”

He stroked his shaft over my open mouth, squeezing out a few precious drops that I collected with my tongue, eagerly lapping up his taste like a kitten. Boldly, I licked his slit, pushing the tip of my tongue inside to collect more.

“Wrap your lips around the head and suck,” he instructed.

This was it, the moment I sucked my first cock, and it was my coach, just like in my dreams. The moment was almost surreal. I stretched my mouth around the engorged head of his cock, feeling his silky smooth skin beneath my lips, and gave it a strong suck, holding the pressure on his head as I took greedy pulls.

“Lightly sweetheart. It’s sensitive.”

I nodded obediently, learning my lesson, and tried again, this time with soft teasing sucks. He cupped his sac, pulling it away from his body, and I knew that meant he liked the way my mouth felt.

“Can you take a little more?”

I could, or I would die trying. Sliding my lips down the length of his shaft, I could feel his dick kick in my mouth, the blood in his veins pulsing in a hot rush. I was able to take half of him before I had to pull back.

“Such a good boy, so hungry for me. Relax your throat and take more, little by little.”

I loved his guidance, his patience with me. Not only were his words turning me on, he was putting me at ease. It was okay to make a mistake with him; he wouldn’t punish me, laugh, or, God forbid, kick me out. He was my coach. He would teach me how to please him.

“Again. Up and down my shaft. Try to take a little more each time.”

Tears welled in my eyes and my throat burned from the intrusion, but I refused to give up until I’d pleased him. Saliva was collecting in my mouth, and I used it to lube the glide of my lips along his shaft, allowing me to take in another inch. I

gagged, and I had to hold still while I swallowed repeatedly to calm my reflex.

“Jesus Christ, when you swallow like that, I could come down your throat.”

So he liked that? Noted.

I swallowed again and again, catching the head of his cock in the back of my throat. His hand dropped to my neck, feeling my Adam’s apple slide up and down as I swallowed.

“So good, baby. So good,” he chanted over and over. “Gonna make me come. Do you want to swallow or do you want me to paint your face?”

Fuck, how was I supposed to decide? I was greedy for a taste of him, but I wanted to wear his cum, let it soak through my pores and stain my skin. I decided to continue slurping, feeling the head of his cock bang against the roof of my mouth until he groaned, shooting his pleasure down my throat. With his hand around my neck and his flavor on my tongue, I welcomed his load, feeling owned by him, branded.

My eyes locked with his as I swallowed.

“Show me your tongue.”

Holding out my tongue for his inspection, I felt like the most obedient and cherished boy in the whole world as his lips descended on mine for a sweet kiss. He was tasting his cum on my tongue, and the idea made my balls throb, desperate for release.

“Stand up.”

His fingers went to the waistband of my briefs, tugging them down my hips until he freed my cock.

He sighed with satisfaction. “So pretty and pink, just perfect.” He stroked my straining shaft until I was bucking into his hand, begging for more. “Do you want to come down my throat or on my body?”

Again, decisions, decisions. I would love to see ropes of my cum crisscross his chest, but the idea of making him swallow me held greater appeal.

Without answering, I gripped the base of my cock and guided it to his lips. He opened obediently, sucking me to the back of his throat in one pass.

A tortured hiss escaped my lips. The feeling of his warm, wet mouth, with incredible suction, was my undoing. My stomach clenched, a final shattering release as I emptied pulses of creamy seed down his throat. He swallowed every drop and continued to suckle me, milking my shaft dry.

“I could become addicted to the taste of you.”

I felt the same fucking way.

“Come here.”

He patted the bed beside him, but I opted to crawl into his lap instead, straddling his legs.

“How do you feel?”

“Amazing. Like I’m dreaming.”

A smile touched his lips, and he ran his fingers through my hair. “It was amazing. Just like a dream. I’m not going to insult you by saying that was a mistake or point out the obvious that we shouldn’t do it again. I think both of us are smart enough to know better. I’ve learned the hard way. There’s no stopping you when there’s something you want. And I’m not going to pretend to hide my attraction to you. But I have to point out that we need to be very cautious and safe about how we proceed.”

I nodded in agreement, for his sake, not mine.

“I won’t allow you to get swept up in this...affair, infatuation, whatever it is you want to call it. You have to focus on school and baseball in that order. The time you spend with me is at the very bottom of the list, Austin, behind your friends and your family.”

“But I—”

“No buts,” he stated firmly.

Fuck, what that commanding voice does to me.

“Yes, Coach. I understand.”

“Good boy.” He captured my lips in a drugging kiss that made my toes curl. And then, he just held me for several minutes, gently rocking me in his lap, rubbing his cheek against mine, like he was soaking me in. It was the best feeling in the world, like I truly belonged to him. A cherished possession. A prize.

All too soon, he picked me up and set me on my feet, helping me into my jeans and T-shirt. I slipped my feet into my sneakers, and Coach bent down to grab my foot, propping it on his knee so he could tie my laces. It was such a Daddy thing to do. I loved it.

Reluctantly, I followed him to the door. “Austin, this stays between us. What we do behind closed doors is nobody’s business but our own.”

“Yes, Sir.”

He dragged his rough knuckles across my face again, as if memorizing it by touch before opening the door. I stood on the other side of the threshold, lingering.

“Coach?” God, I sounded vulnerable and scared. I didn’t want to go. I wanted to rush back into the safety of his arms, crawl into bed with him, and never leave.

Gently, he gripped my chin, tilting my face up for his kiss. “I promise, this isn’t the end.”

He touched his lips to mine, sharing a minute of euphoric sweetness with me, and when he pulled away, my world crashed and burned. The flash of a camera blinded me. A shrill voice burned my ears.

“Austin?” As if in slow motion, I turned to the sound of his voice. The look of horror and disgust on my best friend’s face was something I would never forget as long as I lived. “How could you? Are you fucking him?” He turned his attention to his coach. “You’re disgusting. Both of you.”

“Sean, wait!” He was already backing away, slowly down the hall. “I can explain!”

“I don’t wanna hear anything that comes out of your lying cocksucking mouth, you fag.”

Coach intervened. “Sean! You will not speak that way to him. You need to head back to your room now.”

“Don’t tell me what to do. You’re no longer my coach!” He turned his venomous eyes on me. “Neither of you are no longer anything to me.”

THE SECOND INNING

People ask me what I do in winter when there's no baseball.
I'll tell you what I do. I stare out the window and wait for
spring. -**Rogers Hornsby**

MAPLEVIEW DAILY NEWS

BREAKING NEWS

JULY EDITION

The right news comes first at your door



School Board members are shocked. Calling for resignation.

Turn to page 7A for details.

What does this mean for the Musketeers winning streak?

Sources project with the two strongest players, Austin Healey and Bader having graduated, their next season doesn't look promising.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

AUSTIN

“Austin!”

The sound of my father’s voice booming through my closed door just before the pounding started filled me with dread. Rolling off the bed, I opened the door and faced off against the man who was my idol, my hero, and now, who probably was disgusted with me.

“Your mother and I are waiting for you in the dining room. We need to talk.” He looked ominous. It wasn’t an invitation, it was a demand.

With my head down, I shuffled after him, taking a seat on the far side of the table, as if facing off against an inquisition.

My once loving parents had now become a panel of my fiercest judges.

“Explain yourself,” he barked, arms folded across his broad chest.

I didn’t have a clue where to begin.

“What were you doing in Wolfe’s hotel room?”

Having the best night of my life. “Dad, I think that’s pretty obvious, don’t you?”

“You want to get flippant with me? I wouldn’t advise it, son.” He glared, barely maintaining his composure. “How long has this been going on?”

“I’ve been attracted to him for months. But nothing happened until last night.”

“So, he took advantage of you?”

“No, Dad. It’s the other way around. I went after him. Pushed him. He tried so many times to get me to stop.”

“I have a hard time believing a grown man couldn’t fight off a teenage boy’s crush, Austin. Forgive me for being

skeptical.”

“He didn’t do anything wrong!” I defended vehemently.

“He most certainly did!” His solid fist pounded the table, making the glass vase centerpiece shake.

“I’m not a kid anymore!” My voice rose along with my body as I stood, intending to stomp back to my room.

“Sit down,” he said with deadly calm. “We have a lot to discuss.” He shared a look with my mom I couldn’t read. “When you came out to me this summer, I was understanding. I still am. What I don’t understand is why you would choose to be with a man instead of someone your own age.”

“Really, Dad? Are you having a hard time figuring that out?” My smirk wasn’t serving me well.

“Careful, Austin. I’m in no laughing mood. I see his actions as predatory, as an experienced man taking advantage of an inexperienced boy. It’s disgusting! I won’t allow it to continue, so don’t think it’ll happen again. Not with him or any other man.”

My blood boiled, a flash of heat warming me all over, making my face feel hot. “Really? What’s the cutoff age, Dad? Twenty-three? Twenty-five?”

“Just use good judgment, Austin. If you want to be treated like an adult, start acting like one.”

“How convenient. When you approve of my actions, I’m a man you’re proud of, but when my actions don’t align with your standards or beliefs, I’m behaving like a child. You can’t have it both ways. You may not always agree with my decisions or understand them, but you have no choice but to accept them.”

Tears ran down my mother’s cheeks, and my heart clenched painfully. I didn’t want to hurt her, either of them, but in my heart, I knew I hadn’t done wrong, and I was going to stand by my decision, and my coach, come hell or high water.

“We’ll see about that,” he challenged.

For days, my calls and texts went unanswered, and I began to wonder if he blocked my number. I had to make things right with Sean. There was no way I could leave for college with things such a ruined mess between us. If I could just talk to him, try to explain...

I drove to his house with my heart in my throat. My knock on his door fell on deaf ears.

Boom, boom, boom, my fist pounded against the weathered wood. "Sean!"

When he continued to ignore me, I went around the side of the house to his bedroom window and tapped on the glass.

"I know you're in there, Sean. Answer me. We need to talk."

"My parents won't let you in the house, so you might as well leave."

I couldn't see his face, but his muffled voice could be heard through the glass. He was probably lying on his bed.

"Open the window, Sean."

"Go home, Austin. We're through."

His words cut through my heart like a knife. "No! We've been best friends since third grade! You can't just ghost me."

His face filled the window, looking angry and mottled red. "You've been lying to me since the third fucking grade, asshole! Probably jacking off to me while I slept at your house."

Nausea rolled around in my stomach, souring it. I had to breathe through my nose in order not to throw up.

"That's bullshit! I'd never. I'm not into you. You're my friend, Sean!"

"Not anymore. You're dead to me, Austin. Leave." He closed the curtain, effectively blocking me out. Hot tears

streamed down my cheeks, blinding me as I collapsed against the side of his house, just before I emptied my stomach into the weeds.

One week passed into another as my summer wasted away. My parents had nothing to say to me. Most of my time was spent closeted away in my room or driving around town aimlessly. I went to the ballpark and practiced my pitch and swing in the batting cages. Drove by Marcus's house at least twenty times. I hadn't heard from him, not one word or text since *'the incident.'*

I was cruising through the downtown streets with my windows rolled down because it helped me to feel less solitary, more connected with my surroundings. Lately, all I felt was solitude. Not one single day so far this summer had I felt like a part of my old life or anyone connected with it.

The summer heat was brutal, burning the side of my face nearest the window as I scanned the sidewalks. I passed the café and saw a group of my teammates standing around outside, goofing off.

They saw me. I waved. They ducked their heads.

Fucking cowards.

I was basically *persona non grata*.

What must Coach be going through?

I'd seen the headlines in the paper. Every one of them had covered the scandal. Many had tried for an interview or statement from me or Coach, but the answer was always the same.

No comment.

This isn't the end.

His words came back to me, and I held onto them desperately, like grains of sand slipping through my fingers. Tears blinded me. It seemed all I did anymore was cry. My

body felt sluggish and weak. I was officially depressed. That night, in his arms, with his lips on mine, I thought we were starting something new, something wonderful. I'd felt fucking euphoric. Now, I had to doubt his promise. Had he meant it? Did he mean it now?

I had to know. I needed answers.

On autopilot, I drove through the streets of Mapleview, completely lost in thought, and ended up parked in his driveway.

Walking up the stone path to his front door and knocking on it was the bravest thing I'd ever done. My body was frozen with fear. Would he reject me like Sean had? Like my team had?

He opened the door, and I almost collapsed with relief when he opened his arms. "Austin," he sighed softly.

The floodgates holding back my emotions burst open. Sobbing uncontrollably, I allowed him to crush me in his big, strong arms. He pulled me into the house and shut the door behind us.

Marcus rubbed soothing circles down my back, shushing me softly. It was the first time I'd been touched in weeks. He led me into the living room and urged me to curl up on the couch, covering me with a soft throw blanket. My tears continued to fall, sapping the rest of my energy as he sat down beside me, pulling my head into his lap. His fingers carded through my sweaty hair, lulling me into a subdued snuffle.

"Talk to me, baby. Tell me what's wrong."

"Everything," I cried brokenly. "Sean won't talk to me. He hates me. The team turned their backs on me. My parents don't understand." I closed my eyes and focused on his soothing touch. "I'm all alone. You haven't called or texted." I looked up, raising my tear-stained face to his. "I thought maybe you hated me, too."

He closed his eyes and sighed, as if indulging in a moment of self-persecution. "That's my fault. I didn't mean to make you worry. I've had a lot on my plate, as you can imagine.

And ultimately, I needed you to reach out to me—as difficult as I knew that would be for you. In case you changed your mind.”

“Are you in trouble with the school board?”

“They fired me.”

“What? Why?”

“You know why. Inappropriate conduct with a student. There’s no legal action because you’re over eighteen, thank God.”

“But you love your job. You love the team.”

“I did, but I found something I love more.”

“Really?” I gasped, sitting up, so we were on the same level.

“Really. I loved it because it was all I had. But now that I have you, my job pales in comparison.” He brushed the back of his hand over my wet cheek. “My golden boy—golden hair, golden skin, a golden arm, golden record, and a heart of gold. My ball boy.”

My heart spiked with a shot of pure adrenaline, threatening to beat right out of my chest. “Ball boy? Really?”

“I know,” he laughed. “It’s cheesy. I’ll think of something bet—”

“No! That’s perfect. I love it. I want to be your ball boy, Coach.”

I leaned my face right up close to his, breathing him in, his minty breath, his musky, spicy scent like pepper and cloves. He touched his forehead to mine.

“Tell me about Sean.”

“He called me terrible names, accused me of ugly things that made me sick to my stomach, literally. He said I was dead to him.” The tears started again, clouding my vision.

“It’s okay,” he whispered against my lips.

“It’s not okay,” I hissed angrily.

“Austin, calm down.” I struggled to sit up, to shrug him off, but he held me tight. “I know it hurts. I know you’re angry. It’s happened to me so many times. People come and go from our lives. Important people. People we love. Then they’re replaced by new people who we come to love just as much, if not more.”

His patient wisdom calmed me somewhat. “And they leave, too?”

“Sometimes. Sometimes, they stay.” He brushed the fresh tears that rolled down my blotchy cheeks. “I want to stay. I’m not going anywhere.”

I hugged him hard, my fingers digging into his back. He squeezed me just as tightly.

“It’s all going to work out. I promise. You’re starting school soon. You’ll make new friends. I’ll find a new job. The gossip will die down, people will forget and go on with their lives. Your parents still love you, Austin, no matter what. Don’t ever forget that.”

I nodded into the crook of his neck. God, how I needed this man. Needed his strong embrace, his wisdom and empathy, his warm skin, and addictive scent. This was why boys my age weren’t worth a second look. They couldn’t dream of offering me what Marcus could.

He was a man—*my* man. He hadn’t given up on us just because things were rough. No, when the going got tough, he absorbed my tears and offered me a solution. Those were just some of the many reasons he would always be my coach. *My Daddy.*

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MARCUS

We spent the scorching, sticky summer days secreted away in a bubble of pleasure where nothing and no one could burst our happiness.

Picnics at the ballpark after batting practice. Shirtless, sweaty hikes up Mt. Hood that ended in blowjobs at the end of the trail. Bowls of ice cream and movies on my couch, snuggled under a blanket, his legs across my lap. Sunbathing in my backyard, side by side in loungers. Mouth training. Steamy shared showers where I introduced Austin to the incredible ecstasy of having his ass eaten.

We learned each other's secrets, likes, and dislikes. Over dinner in my kitchen, he disclosed he had a peanut allergy. At the park, I discovered he lost his pretty head over cute dogs. During a trip to the mall for school supplies for him, I realized he couldn't correctly pronounce the word hippopotamus for the life of him. Sounded more like hipatomas. He cut like two whole syllables out of it. Fucking adorable.

In exchange, Austin found out I couldn't start my day without coffee, I was terrible about keeping up with laundry, and I'd rather cut off my pitching arm than eat eggs without ketchup on them.

The chemistry and passion sizzling between us was addicting. The more of his time he shared with me, the more of it I wanted to steal. My head swam with ideas of things I wanted to teach him, ways to give and receive pleasure. Austin was a quick and eager learner, if a bit shy, an intoxicating combination.

The batting cage blowjob was a day I'd never forget. After a grueling two-hour practice, I led Austin into the deserted dugout to cool off in the shade while he rehydrated. His breath rushed in and out from between his chapped lips, skin flushed red and slick with sweat. I leaned in to lick the salty dew from

his neck, spreading it over my lips before licking them clean. Austin's wide eyes fixed on my mouth as he took long pulls from the bottle. Watching his throat work made my balls throb for his mouth. Stepping closer, I slid the zipper of my shorts down over my hardening bulge.

"If you're still thirsty, I have a protein shake for you." He absolutely loved my corny jokes. It seemed to excite him the more absurd the exchange became, which suited me just fine because I wasn't all that slick.

Crushing the empty plastic bottle in his fist, he tossed it into a nearby trashcan and freed my aching cock from its cotton confines. Like I'd trained him to do, he always kept his eyes on me as he slurped on my cock. I wanted to read his pleasure on his face, witness his reactions.

"All the way to the root, sweet boy. Just like I taught you."

He gagged himself repeatedly while trying to swallow my entire length, but he never seemed to mind choking for me. He knew how much I loved his tears, his drooling mouth, and I always gave him a sweet reward for a job well done. His discarded glove sat beside him on the bench, and an idea formed in my head. Today, he would have to work for his prize if he wanted to cum.

The wet suction of his mouth made white-hot embers of desire unfurl in my stomach as I thrust against his palate. His tongue swirled around the fat head of my cock, teasing the groove underneath, making shivers dance down my spine as I pushed in deeper. His face was a lovely mess as my cock wrecked his throat. He reached for his dick, and I stopped him, not yet ready for either of us to cum.

"Pick that glove up and put it on."

He raised his head, a thick rope of saliva connecting his lips to my crown that glistened in the sunlight. With confusion in his eyes, he hesitantly reached for the worn glove, sliding his hand inside.

Reaching into his equipment bag, I retrieved a bottle of glove oil from a side pocket and tossed it to him. He caught it

easily.

“Drizzle a good amount in your glove.”

“But, Coach, my glove doesn’t need oiling.”

“Are you questioning me or following orders?”

“Following orders, Sir.”

“Good. Get it nice and slick.” I palmed my wet cock as he oiled his glove, his eyes straying constantly to my dick.

When the leather glistened, he looked to me for guidance.

“Stand up.” I tugged his shorts down to his knees and helped him step out of them, then laid them on the bench so he didn’t splinter his ass when he sat down. “Sit.”

“What are we—”

“Do you want to come?”

“Y-yes. But I was gonna—”

“Don’t worry about me. Worry about you. If you want to come, do it. But you’ll have to use that hand only,” I insisted, pointing at his gloved hand.

“But how?”

A wicked heat burned behind my eyes. “I guess you’ll have to get creative, won’t you?”

His cheeks, already flushed with color from the heat, flamed bright red with mortification. His innocence was a tempting, poisoned apple, begging to be tasted.

Slowly, he brought the glove to his dripping cock, his eyes asking me for permission to touch himself.

“Go ahead, Austin. Put your balls in the glove.”

I imagined how self-conscious he must feel in this moment, completely exposed and vulnerable in the middle of a ball field, where anyone could happen by, doing something he had never considered doing to himself before, something wicked, under my penetrating gaze. He was visibly conflicted, squirming inside, and I loved putting him in that position and watching as he stretched the limits of his comfort zone.

Having his complete trust was a powerful high I wouldn't trade for anything.

He flexed his fingers, wrapping the rough, worn leather around his shaft, his eyes on me as he stroked up and down, slowly.

“L-like this?”

“Just like that. Work that oil into the leather, make your glove nice and soft, just like your skin.”

His rapid-fire breaths as he worked himself over made my cock twitch. Continuing to stroke it in sync with his pace, I kept my eyes peeled on his groin, the wet, pink head of his cock peeking out from the top of his glove with each downward stroke. He was leaking, his seed mingling with the oil to make a sticky, slippery mess.

Taking a step closer, I widened my stance, putting my dick just out of reach of his mouth. He leaned forward, trying to capture a taste, but I pulled back, denying him.

“Not yet. You haven't earned it.”

With his understanding not to reach for me, I leaned in closer, almost brushing his lips with my wet crown. His pupils dilated with lust and want.

“What do I need to do to earn it?”

“Talk to me. Tell me how good it feels.”

“The glove, it's rough, but beginning to soften and warm up. I wish it were your hand,” he suggested, begging with his eyes.

“I like to watch you like this, substituting my touch, using your gear inappropriately.” His other hand found his balls, and he cupped them, tugging on them gently and rolling them between his fingers as he continued to stroke his shaft. A decadent moan slowly released from his mouth, like letting the air from a balloon. He was enjoying this. “There's no better fit for your balls than a well-oiled glove. The next time you're standing on the pitcher's mound, cradling the ball in your glove, I want you to remember this moment, remember how

the leather feels sliding over your skin, so slippery and rough, the way it feels to have the wind whisper over your bare, wet cock, exposed where anyone can see. Remember this moment, Austin. Remember how you made yourself vulnerable for me, for my pleasure.”

He groaned again, louder this time, a deep rumble in his chest. “And my pleasure. Feels so good, Coach. I’m going to come.”

“Did you ask for my permission?”

His eyes, closed and lost in rapture, flew open wide. “I’m sorry, Sir. Can I come? I’m so close. Please?”

A little bit of begging would keep him humble, and knowing how desperate he was for his release, holding back as he waited for my permission, brought me closer to the edge.

“Not just yet, sweet boy. Open your glove and catch my load.” Squeezing tighter, I stroked over my shaft twice more before the muscles in my abs seized up and shot ropes of cum directly into his glove, crisscrossing over his dick. “Now you can finish.”

“*Ungh!* So warm.” He coated his shaft with my seed, and I watched as it oozed between the fingers of his glove, dripping down the back. Furiously, he jacked himself, face scrunched, eyes shut tight as he moaned long and low, filling his palm with his release.

I tucked myself away and kneeled between his legs, gently removing the catcher’s mitt from his hand. “Never in my life have I had the pleasure of being with a boy as amazing as you. You dazzle me, Austin. Completely astound me.” Softly, I captured his lips in a sweet, slow kiss, showing him with my mouth just how much I cherished him.

And I did cherish him. In a short amount of time, he had become the most important thing in my life, something that would shatter me if I lost.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

AUSTIN

The atmosphere in my house was stifling, the air heavy with unspoken words. With every breath, it choked me until my only choice was to escape. With Marcus, I could breathe easily, let my guard down and laugh, and enjoy what remained of my summer.

From before noon until late into the night, I whiled away the hours in his arms, seeking comfort, seeking pleasure, and as the days turned into weeks, I left pieces of my heart with him every time I said goodbye, until on the last day of summer, before I was scheduled to move into my dorm, he had collected enough pieces to make it whole again and was now the sole owner of it.

As excited as I was to start school and begin practicing with my new team, I resented the change. Resented that our schedule was changing, and we were losing our routine of long, easy days, scorching nights, dinner at the diner, and grilling out in his backyard with Baylor. He wasn't so bad after I convinced myself he hadn't slept with Marcus. Every day, Marcus showed me something new, opening my eyes to a whole new world of sexual exploration and delight. He edged me for hours while I begged and cried for release. He showed me how sweet it could be to let go and give him control of my body.

His Daddy side was in full force as we shopped for school supplies and filled my backpack with necessities. He even mapped out the entire campus, showing me a direct path to my classes, so I wouldn't be late during the first week.

Marcus purchased several delicious pieces of underwear for me to model for him. Jockstraps with matching baseball socks, boy shorts that said '*Daddy's boy*'. A harness and matching thong. Everything we tried was my new favorite thing and I couldn't get enough of him—being in his arms, his mouth on my body, my hands on his. I wanted more and more.

I wanted everything. He had yet to take my virginity, and God, I was so beyond ready to feel him moving inside of me, filling me with his seed, claiming me.

He was seated at his desk, checking his email, probably hoping to hear back from one of the many schools he'd applied to while I studied his bookshelves, marveling at the patience and the time that it took to build each of his model stadiums. The attention to detail was astonishing. To him, it was just a hobby, a way to memorialize the games he and Baylor had seen, the stadiums they'd traveled to. The models encapsulated his memories of road trips he and his best friend had taken over the years. But to me, it was so much more than that. It was a glimpse behind the curtain, a peek into the man himself.

Marcus was careful and he thought things through methodically, making plans before acting them out. He was smart, organized, and patient. I didn't have much experience, if any, really, with dating. Had never been in a good relationship, or a failed one, but I knew exactly what qualities I wanted in my future partner.

I wanted a man just like Marcus Wolfe.

He shut down his computer and spun his chair to face me, watching as I ran my fingers lovingly over the roof of the ticket stand of Fenway Park.

"It must have been amazing to see all these games. There's nothing wrong with watching baseball on TV, but to see it in person, to be there in the stands, to smell the food, to feel the ground vibrate when people stomp their feet and cheer—it's magical." I glanced over my shoulder to see him smiling fondly at me. "Do you think I'm silly?"

"No, I don't think you're silly at all. I think you're intelligent and beautiful and just maybe, there's a bit of magic in you as well."

With a chuff, I brushed off his characterization of me. He was definitely wearing rose-colored glasses when he looked at me. I was just a kid who had a lucky arm and a blessed life. There wasn't any magic in me. It was just a fluke, wrapped in

pretty packaging. What Coach saw in me, I'd never know. It wasn't just my body or my face. I could feel it when he touched me, when he held me, as if I were made of porcelain, something priceless to be treasured. He always seemed in awe of me, like I would disappear like a mirage if he reached for me.

It was exactly how I felt about him. Too good to be true, yet it was.

I wanted to fill the empty space on his shelf with the Safeco Park model he'd been wanting for years. I found one on an online auction site but was astronomically outbid. I didn't have that kind of money to spend, but if I had, I'd have happily given every penny to secure it for him.

But I wouldn't give up. Not until it sat proudly on his shelf.

"You excited about starting school tomorrow?"

I turned my body, giving him my full attention with a shrug of my shoulders. "I guess so."

Marcus chuckled. "That wasn't very convincing. I'd hate to see what you sound like when you're *not* excited about something."

My lips tugged into a reluctant grin. "No, I am. It's just that... I don't wanna give this up. All the time we get to spend together, seeing you every day."

"Come here," he invited, patting his knee. Obediently, I sat across his lap, nestling my face into the crook of his warm neck. He wrapped his arms around me, cuddling me against his broad chest, his fingers stroking down my spine. "What did I tell you that night at the hotel?"

"This isn't the end," I repeated, mumbling the words against his throat. I would never forget those words, or the soaring hope I felt just before it crashed and burned.

"That's right. This isn't the end, Austin. We'll just create a new routine around your schedule."

"Yeah?" I asked, raising my head.

“Yes. And while you’re busy at school, I need to get busy finding a job. Someone has to pay for all those burgers you eat at Dixon’s Diner.”

I brushed my lips over the pulse in his throat, sucking a dark red mark into his skin. “Will you come with me tomorrow? To say goodbye?”

He carded his fingers through my hair before cupping the back of my neck. “Austin, I’m not sure that’s a great idea. Aren’t your parents going to be there?”

“Yes, but I want you there. It would mean everything to me.”

“Everything?” His lips were pulled into an amused smirk.

“Someday, when we’re old, gray men, retired and traveling to every baseball stadium in the country,” I paused as he chuckled, “I want the day I was dropped off for my first year of school to be among the many memories we share together.”

He swallowed, his eyes growing slightly wet. “Oh, Austin,” he breathed. “I wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

“Really?”

“Really.” He brushed his nose against mine. “Have I told you how crazy I am about you?”

I pretended to think about it. “Hmm, not today, I don’t think.”

Marcus nipped at my bottom lip with soft, little sucking kisses that made my cock twitch. “I’m fucking crazy about you. Out of my mind, cap over cleats, crazy about you. I’ll be there tomorrow come hell or high water. Even if your parents slap me with a restraining order, I’ll be there.”

I sent him a text when we were on our way to let him know where to meet us.

My dad and I were unpacking the car while my mother took pictures of the building and the grounds when Marcus approached us.

“Need a hand?” he asked as my father wrestled with a large box.

“What the hell are you doing here?”

“Austin invited me. This is an important day for him, and I wouldn’t dream of missing it.”

“You’ve got some nerve,” my father barked, pointing his finger at Marcus’s chest.

“Dad,” I pleaded, “please, don’t start. I wanted him here.”

Without a word, Marcus grabbed a box from the back of my father’s trunk and hefted it onto his shoulder. “Lead the way,” he said to me.

My rooming assignment listed Michael Jenkins as my roommate, but I’d yet to meet him. His side of the room was stripped bare, currently unoccupied. I dropped both of my duffel bags packed full of clothes in the closet and shut the door, deciding to deal with it later. I wasn’t going to waste a minute of my time with Marcus to put clothes on hangers. He set his box down on the desk and opened the flaps, pulling things out, and marveled at the gaming system inside.

“I don’t remember my college dorm having a gaming system or a TV,” he recalled with a smile. “We had a radio. Baylor and I used to fight over what we would listen to.”

Taking the controller from him, I set it down and took his hands, wrapping them around my waist. I rubbed my cheek against his stubbly beard, trying to memorize the way it felt scratching my skin. Already, I missed him, and he hadn’t even left yet.

“A radio? Did you have to wind it up on the side to get it to play?”

He swatted my ass and then squeezed it. “Snarky little brat,” he teased, chuckling at my joke.

Of course, that’s when my parents walked in. My father slammed his box down on the desk. “Cut that shit out right now,” he growled.

We jumped apart, like guilty teenagers caught groping in the backseat of the car.

Marcus intercepted a box from my mother filled with sheets and blankets. “Why don’t you give me a hand making up your bed?”

“You’re not going anywhere near his bed!” The color of my father’s face darkened to an angry shade. “Austin, is this how you want to start your school year? Embarrassing yourself and shredding your reputation from the very first day? You need to ask him to leave.”

The weight of frustration and disappointment I’d shouldered for weeks bore down on me, bringing tears to my eyes. Why couldn’t he just accept my feelings for Marcus? Why couldn’t he even *try* to understand how I felt?

Marcus stood firm behind me, supporting me by stepping forward and putting his hands on my shoulders. It was the final straw for my father.

“Come on, Michelle. Let’s go home. We’re done here.”

“Kevin, wait,” she sobbed, breaking my heart in half. My mother reached for Marcus’s hand. “I just want to say thank you for taking my boy school shopping. It was kind of you to contribute. There’s just so many things to buy all at once,” she pointed out with a little snuffle that was probably supposed to be a chuckle.

At least one of them was trying.

“It was my pleasure, Mrs. Healey. It was a small gesture, and I would like to have done more, but I wasn’t going to usurp that honor from the both of you.”

“Why not? You have no problem usurping everything else from us.” My father’s snide remark was only escalating the

heat when everyone else was doing their best to cool things down.

“You’re right, honey. I think it’s best we leave now. Austin, I love you, sweetheart. I’m so excited for you to begin school here. I’ve dreamed of this day for many years.” Fresh tears filled her eyes. My eyes were having a similar reaction. “Make sure you call if you need anything. We’ll be back to visit soon.”

The only thing my dad said before he left was, “Keep up with your laundry, and no staying out late partying on a school night.”

I waited until they left before sinking into the solace of his embrace. Silent tears spilled down my cheeks, soaking into the cotton of his shirt. He rubbed down my back, soothing me with his touch.

“He’s going to come around. Just give him some time.”

I clung to the hope in his words. “Do you think he’ll accept us someday?”

“No, I don’t think he’ll ever accept me. But he’ll forgive you, eventually, for breaking his heart.”

“What’s his deal, anyway?” I asked heatedly, swiping my cheeks dry as I raised my head. “How did I even break his heart?”

“Austin, can’t you understand? He loves you. He’s probably mapped out your entire life in his dreams. You’re going against the grain, making choices he’d never approve of, and yes, it’s heartbreaking for him. He thinks you’re headed for disaster, and he doesn’t want to see you go down that road.”

“Seriously? He’s afraid for my future?”

“Maybe he’s even a tad bit jealous. You’ve looked up to him your whole life. He might see me as stealing that place in your heart. *His* place.”

“My heart is big enough for the both of you.”

“Someday he’ll realize that.”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

MARCUS

I was washing my hands at the kitchen sink when a knock sounded on my door. Closing my eyes, I tipped my head back and smiled, breathing a sigh of relief.

He's here.

With his first week of school behind him, Austin raced over here the second he was finished with his team meeting. Anticipation and excitement had warred for the top spot in my head all day as I awaited his arrival. Tonight would be his first sleepover. The first night he ever spent in my bed. Before I even had the door open all the way, Austin burst through it and into my arms, wrapping himself around me like a koala.

“God, I missed you.” I breathed him in, the scent of Axe body spray and bubblegum. *My Austin.*

“Missed you more,” he breathed against my lips before stealing my breath with his mouth.

His kiss was all-consuming, as if he were starved for a taste of me. I knew exactly how he felt. I was just as hungry for his kiss.

“Come, sit down and tell me all about school.”

Austin groaned like I asked him to scrub the grout lines of my tile with a toothbrush. “Can’t we just go upstairs and settle in for the night?”

“Austin, it’s five o’clock in the afternoon. We have plenty of time for that after we catch up.”

“I have a special surprise for you,” he teased coyly.

Jesus, he was an eager, horny mess, just how I liked him best. “I love surprises.”

“You can unwrap me later while I’m wearing it.”

I nipped at the spot behind his ear, making him shiver in my arms. “Those are the best kind of surprises.” With a swat on his butt, I urged him into the kitchen. “Sit and tell me all about school while I heat up our dinner.”

With a sigh of resignation, he settled into a chair at the table. “Well, you know I haven’t actually begun classes yet. I’ve been in orientation all week long. You wouldn’t believe how many orientations there are,” he lamented with a huff, slumping in his seat. “New student orientation, athletic department orientation, an introductory meeting with my housing authority. Honestly, Coach, I’m oriented the fuck out.”

I was laughing as I set the table with silverware and glasses.

“The dining hall isn’t so bad. They serve a good burger.”

“What more do you need?” I asked flippantly. “Do they serve a good salad as well?”

“Probably.” He shrugged.

“Good, new rule. I want you to eat at least three salads a week. You can send me a picture of the lettuce actually being forked into your mouth.”

He leaned across the table, walking his fingers over the back of my hand and up my arm. “Would you like pictures of my mouth, Coach? I’m sure I could find better things to shove in it than lettuce.”

Like I needed those images in my head? I had enough already to last a lifetime. “Austin,” I scolded.

He laughed that breezy laugh of his that never failed to remind me how magnetic and charming he was.

“I like this rules thing. You could give me a whole list, you know.”

“I think you like rules too much. They turn you on, don’t they?” I leaned across the table to steal a kiss. “You must be the only boy I’ve ever known who loves rules.”

“Does that make me the best boy?”

I had to palm my twitching cock under the table to calm it down. “It sure does. Tell me about your team meeting.”

“We’ve got a great team. I looked up some of these guys’ stats, and they’re good, Coach. Real good.”

“That’s wonderful. What did you think of Coach Collins?”

“He seemed all right. I mean, he’s not you.” His devilish wink was sexy as hell.

“Of course he isn’t,” I returned with a smirk.

“He pulled me aside after the meeting, told me how excited he was to have me on the team. He’s starting me as a pitcher.”

“Starting pitcher in your rookie year? That’s amazing, Austin.”

“Yeah, kind of took me by surprise.”

“What else did he say?” Austin hesitated, and a foreboding worry came over me. “Austin?”

“He said he heard about the ‘*little problem*’ I had after graduation. He said I should think about the kind of future I want to have in baseball and let it guide my actions and my sexual activities.”

A hot flash of anger burned through me, igniting my blood. “He said that?” I did not like any man warning my boy about his sexual activities. No matter what his intentions were.

Austin dropped his head. “Yeah. Said I should be careful.” Then he raised it, looking unsure. “I told him you and I were still together. I hope that’s okay,” he quickly tacked on. “I didn’t want him to think I planned on sleeping with the whole team.”

“It’s fine, Austin,” I assured him, covering his hand with mine. “What did he say?”

“He said I shouldn’t spread that around. Then he clapped me on the back and said, ‘*Isn’t life grand?*’ I got the feeling like he wasn’t judging me for being gay, he was just trying to look out for me. But I don’t know, Coach. I mean, would it be

so bad if I didn't have to hide who I am? I'm so fucking tired of hiding."

"I know you are. There are so many athletes who hide and it's exhausting. Of course, it's not just limited to athletes either. Keeping a secret every day of your life is mentally and physically tiring and affects pretty much every area of your life." I walked over to the stove to give the sauce one last stir before plating it over the pasta. "I think before you make a decision, you should give this a lot of thought. It's a big step. Huge, Austin, and I want you to be sure you're making the right one. There's nothing wrong with coming out. I honestly think you have a bright future in baseball either way. Ultimately, it comes down to what you want to be known for. Sometimes, one can overshadow the other."

"So you're saying no matter how good a player I am, people will see me as the guy who is known for coming out instead of the guy with the golden arm?"

"Unfortunately, sometimes that's the truth." I placed the steaming bowl in front of him.

"Are these vegetables?" He poked around with his fork.

"Pasta Primavera, which is a fancy word for vegetables, yes." Instead of complaining, he gave me a soft, secret smile. I couldn't read the expression on his face. "What?" I asked, taking a seat at the table next to him.

"Nothing." But he continued to steal glances at me.

"What is it?"

"Just you. Being an amazing Daddy. An amazing guy."

"Because I served you pasta?"

"No, because you care about filling my stomach rather than my ass."

"Austin."

"Sorry, that was vulgar for the dinner table," he teased with a slant of his lips. "But it's true. You care about salad and vegetables, and how school is going, and my future. All of

those things are more important to you than just getting me into bed. It's how I know."

"How you know what?" I asked with a forkful of pasta suspended halfway to my mouth.

"How I know you're the one."

My stomach flipped upside down. A warm glow sparked in the pit of my belly and spread throughout my body. I sure hoped he meant it because I was falling blindly in love with him, and there was absolutely no way to stop it or even slow it down. The feeling was so addicting, such an exhilarating rush, I didn't know if I even wanted to slow it down or put a stop to it.

Why would you want the best thing in your life to end prematurely?

"How's your roommate situation working out?"

Austin snorted. "Mike Jenkins is the straightest dude-bro who ever bro'd."

I almost choked on my pasta. "Is that a bad thing?"

"He's so gross. His personal hygiene is equivalent to a ferret. He leaves dirty socks and underwear all over the floor, and when he comes in from practice or the gym, he lies on his bed with sweaty clothes. His feet stink something awful, and he's addicted to Diet Coke. He drinks them constantly, one after the next, and leaves the empty cans all over the room. And he's always burping, probably from the soda. It's like he's in a contest with himself to see just how loud and long he can make it last." He shivered before pretending to gag. "I'm telling you, if jocks were more concerned with their appearance, I'd have a big problem."

I tried to disguise my smile behind the rim of my glass, I really did, but it slipped through as I tried to swallow, making me sputter and cough. "You would be surprised how many gay men find the Mike Jenkins of the world attractive. Something about straight, clueless men is like catnip for some gay guys."

"I don't get it. I don't have a problem with jocks, but guys like him don't even rate on my scale."

“These moments that seem so shitty are going to be the things you look back on fondly someday when you think about your time at college.”

“So what you’re saying is, you’re glad it sucks so bad?”

“Thrilled,” I said with twinkling eyes.

When I stepped out of the bathroom, fresh from my shower, Austin was kneeling on the bed, naked except for the boy shorts he wore. His hands rested at his sides, head tilted back slightly, his tongue was stuck out, mouth open and waiting, just like I taught him. As I rounded the bed, I saw his shorts said ‘*Coach’s MVP*’ across his ass. My cock tented the towel around my hips. After seeing him every day over the summer, I’d missed him terribly this last week. Tonight, I planned to abuse his mouth and reacquaint myself with it.

“Is this the surprise I get to unwrap?”

He nodded, mouth still open. My God, he was fucking perfect. “I hope you digested your dinner already, because I’m going to test your gag reflex tonight.”

Drool escaped from the corner of his mouth, dribbling down his chin. He moved to swipe it away, but I stopped him.

“Don’t. Leave it just like that. I want to see how thirsty you are for me.”

Even with his lips parted, he was able to moan.

The Daddy in me wanted to slide my hand inside his shorts and edge him until he cried for his release. But the man in me wanted to tear a hole in the back of his shorts and shove my cock in his ass while I watched the words *Coach’s MVP* bounce on my lap as he rode me reverse cowboy style.

But all of my plotting and fantasizing came to a screeching halt when I noticed two condoms and a bottle of lube on the nightstand next to him. Austin had something else in mind. Of course he did, I chastised myself. His first sleepover. The special underwear he bought for me. Was he trying to seduce me into stealing his virginity?

Knowing Austin, I would have to say yes. Unequivocally.

And there went my boner, deflating as sudden as a popped balloon.

I wanted to shove into his mouth, not sit and hash this out. I'd been avoiding it as long as possible, knowing it was coming for me soon. It would lead to an argument. That wasn't how I wanted us to celebrate our first night together. Unfortunately, my towel was staying on while we had this talk.

God, I felt like an ass. Here was this perfect, beautiful boy, kneeling for me with his mouth agape, trying his damndest to seduce me, and I was about to crush his confidence. Really, I was less than deserving of him.

"Be at ease, Austin." He dropped onto his bottom and closed his mouth. "Are you planning on using those? Because if so, we should have a talk first."

"It's a little late for the birds and the bees talk, Coach." He gave me a wry smile, tilting his head.

"Austin."

His face crumpled. I knew he heard it in my voice, the rejection that was coming. "I thought we were going slow this summer because you were teaching me, preparing me."

"I was," I insisted. "That was part of it."

"What was the other part of it?"

"I don't—I don't think—" My heart hammered in my chest. Was this going to end badly? Would he tell me to fuck off and leave?

"Why don't you want to have sex with me? Is there something wrong with me?"

Fuck, it was the total opposite. His eyes were misting, his voice wobbling. "Oh God, no, no. You're perfect."

"Then why are you denying me?"

"Austin, I don't want to be something you regret. I don't want you to look back in ten years and hate me for taking

something I didn't deserve."

"Are you kidding me? Seriously, you must be fucking kidding me. How could I regret you? You're the best thing that's ever happened to me."

"I know you think that now, but..."

"No! You don't get to tell me how I feel. You told me to wait, to save it for someone I was in love with. Well, I did."

My heart was breaking, the pain of it wrenched from my lips in a gasp. He was falling in love with me. It was inevitable that I was going to sleep with him, and just as inevitable that he might someday hate me for it.

"I'm in love with you, Marcus. I'm sure that's what it is. It's not obsession or lust. It's love. The all-consuming kind, the kind where I'm planning the next twenty years of our life together. The kind where if we didn't work out for some reason, I would spend the rest of my years comparing other men to you, and I'm sure they'd fall short. Because there's no one like you. Not for me, at least. I've spent months dreaming about making love with you. Fantasizing about how good it would feel when you're moving inside me."

His declaration pulled a tortured moan from my chest. I had spent many nights dreaming of the same thing.

"Imagining the things you would say to me, and the things I would say back. But I'm sure no amount of creative imagination could prepare me for how incredible it's going to feel. And when you're inside me, pushing into me, I'm going to tell you just how exquisite it feels. Every thrust, every kiss, every touch."

I pulled him into my lap, running my hand over his bottom. "I'm going to hold you to that promise. I want to hear every word."

"You could never be something I regret, Coach."

All the struggle fled my conscience, leaving me a ball of putty in his hands. "I hope not, because it would break me."

"Show me how to please you. Teach me what to do."

His body melted into me, his hips moving in sync with mine as he rocked back-and-forth over my lap. We became one body chasing the same high. I lapped at his nipples, suckling the hard points until he squirmed, the stubble on my cheeks and around my lips rubbing them raw. My fingers slipped inside his shorts to tease the valley between his smooth cheeks. He was already wet for me, slick with lube and soft. I rubbed over his hole, back and forth until he was loose enough to take the tip of my finger.

“Fuck, you are incredibly tight.”

“What did you expect?” he asked with a laugh.

“I expected you to be tight, but goddamn, you’re going to strangle my cock.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll resuscitate it with my mouth.”

I could feel his breezy smile against my neck, could hear it in his voice. He was sunshine and starlight and everything bright and shiny. He could make my briefs sopping wet just from looking at him, imagining the filthy things I wanted to do to his body.

“My sexy MVP, my sweet ball boy,” I whispered, teasing a moan from him. “Are you ready to learn what I’ve been dying to teach you?”

“Hell, yeah.” He caught the narrowing of my eyes and amended, “Yes, Sir.”

“Reach inside the top drawer. There’s something in there I want to show you.”

Warily, he leaned over and pulled the drawer open. Right on top sat a white sheet of paper. “This?” When I nodded, he pulled it out to read it, his eyes growing wider the further down the page he read. “Are these your test results? You got tested?”

“I did. I thought you deserved to know my status before we took things any further, even if we decide to use condoms.”

“Decide? You mean I have a say?”

“Austin, you have a say in everything, always.”

“Then I say no. No condoms.”

“That’s...incredibly reckless.”

“It’s not. It’s an informed decision based on your negative results, and the fact that I’m trying to build something long-term with you. This is what I want.”

Christ, I wasn’t sure I was going to survive this night, at least not with my heart intact. “Lie back against the headboard.” He stretched out his long tan limbs, reclining against the wood with a pillow behind his back. “Spread your legs for me.”

As with everything he did, he went the extra step, drawing his fingers down either side of his shaft, showcasing his hardness.

“Did I say you could touch yourself?”

“N-no, Coach.”

“Suck on your fingers, Austin. Soak them for me.”

He pushed two into his mouth, hollowing out his cheeks as he sucked. When he pulled them free, a thick trail of saliva connected his fingers to his lips. The sight made my already aching cock twitch, just begging to get wet.

“Now pinch your nipples. Tease them for me. Make them hard and red.”

His smooth pink aureole glistened with his spit, and my mouth watered for a taste. His breath hitched as he tugged on the hard points.

“Keep going until they’re raw.”

He rolled them between his fingers, flicking the pads of his thumbs back-and-forth over the sensitive peaks until breathless, urgent gasps fell from his lips. Palming my cock, I kept a slight pressure on it to keep it from twitching as I watched him work himself up.

“Tease your balls for me.” He moved to slide his hand down his pants, but I stopped him. “Leave them on. Tease yourself through the fabric. Make them wet for me.”

Austin whimpered, his eyes locked with mine as he trailed his fingers over his taint. His hot gaze gave away the urgent need clawing at his body. He wanted me to touch him, to take him to the edge and over, but I wasn't ready for that just yet, and neither was he. I wanted him with a desperate urgency I've never felt before. This was his first time, and I wasn't going to ruin it by two-pump-chumping him. Austin gyrated his hips in slow, insistent circles, chasing that elusive high as the fire in his body burned hotter.

“C-Can I touch it now?”

He begged so prettily, with his soft whimpers and hooded eyes. A dark wet spot stained the front of his briefs, and I granted him mercy for giving me what I wanted. “I think you're wet enough. You can touch yourself now. Slide them off your legs.”

He kicked them off in a hurry and spread his knees, showing off creamy thighs dusted with soft peach fuzz. His perfectly cut cock was surrounded by pale blond hair trimmed short. He stroked his taut length, rubbing his thumb over the head of his cock, drawing moisture from the slit and painting sticky circles over his crown, making it shine in the lamplight.

“Suck on your thumb. Tell me how good it tastes.”

He obeyed like the perfect boy, sucking his thumb clean and even going back for a second swipe.

“Do you want to taste me, Coach? Please?”

I did, and I didn't. Once I put my mouth on him, on any part of him, things were going to move very quickly.

Crawling between his legs, I licked a wet trail up his thigh, starting at his knee and not stopping until I reached the juncture of his groin. Then a soft pass over his sac that made him shiver before continuing down the other thigh. When I reached the sensitive, tender skin behind his knee, I nipped him there before sucking a welt that made his legs shake.

“Please, Coach. Please taste me.”

I blazed a path of love bites up his leg, nipping the thick skin of his balls with my lips before sliding my tongue over

the seam and tracing up the fat vein running up the underside of his cock. When I got to the tip, I closed my lips over the engorged head, slurping lightly in a series of tiny sucks that had him pushing at my head.

“Too sensitive?” I chuckled as he gasped.

Slowly, I swallowed his length down to the root, taking him to the back of my throat. The tang of his flavor hit my tongue, and I swallowed around his cockhead, hoping to draw out more. He began clawing at my head, my shoulders, pulling me closer instead of pushing me away.

“Oh God. Anything. I’ll do anything. Just don’t stop.”

I swallowed my chuckle along with a pulse of his cum. A man with his cock in another man’s mouth would promise God just about anything to make it last a few more minutes.

“Turn over, Austin. On your knees.”

He flipped over in a heartbeat, his body going rigid when I palmed his cheeks and spread them.

“Relax, sweetheart. I’m not going to enter you just yet.” Running my tongue through his crease, I licked over his hole, once, twice, as he cried out.

“*Fuck*. Oh, fuck.”

“At least, not with my cock,” I amended.

He ground his ass against my mouth, a silent invitation for me to delve deeper. I swept my tongue inside his channel, a sweet invasion that made his knees collapse. His chest was now flat against the bed, with his ass stuck high in the air, in my face. Just how I wanted him. I brushed my fingers over his soft hole, and his body opened for me.

“So tight and hot. Going to have to stretch you so you can take my cock.”

“Fuck, yeah, stretch me. I want to take all of you.” He moaned as I breached his tight rim. “Damn, that burns. It burns, Coach.”

I cared very much for his comfort, or discomfort in this case, but fuck me if his pain didn't turn me on just a little.

"I know, sweet boy. You're so small and my fingers are thick. It will start to feel better in a moment."

I watched, mesmerized, as my fingers were swallowed up by his body, glistening as they slid from his hole, only to slide right back inside deeper. "You're doing so good, baby. Taking my fingers so good."

"*Ungh*, yeah. Talk to me like that, Coach. Tell me how good I am."

He was a natural-born praise slut. Was there anything sexier?

"You should see how your tiny hole stretches around my fingers, begging me inside. So beautiful. Such a good boy for your coach. My ball boy."

He arched his spine beautifully, like he was begging to be stuffed. Skating my fingers down his back, I followed the curve, his skin soft and warm. Every part of him was beautiful, desirable, addictive. I couldn't look enough or touch enough, and without a doubt, when I finally got inside of him, it would *never* be enough.

He stiffened again when my body covered his as I reached over to grab the lube from the nightstand. "Austin, you need to relax, sweetheart. I'm not going to hurt you. We're going to take this nice and slow, and if you need me to stop, just say so."

"I want this so bad, wanted you for so long."

My cock pressed between his cheeks, and he pushed back against me, proving his point. I took his chin between my fingers, turning his head to meet my mouth. "I know. Me, too. But it's not a contest to see who can get to the finish line first. It's an adventure we're taking together, and if the whole ride isn't pleasure-filled, then we're not doing it right."

"Have you ever done this before?"

"A few times." I smiled against his lips.

“No, *this*. Taken someone’s virginity. Shown them the ropes.”

“Just once before. The first boy I had an arrangement with. I met him in a club, we got to talking, and it was a good fit. He asked me to show him what’s what, said he trusted me.”

“So, I’m not your first then.”

“It was nothing like this, Austin. You’re the only one that matters. I can’t remember anyone or anything before you. You have no idea how much I crave you, how hard I dream of and hope for our future. What we’re doing is as new to me as it is to you.”

I saw relief in his eyes a moment before I took his lips, suckling them until they were puffy and red. With his hole still wet from my mouth, my cock slid easily through his crease, catching on his rim and stretching it. He gasped into my mouth, his eyes going wide.

“Is it going to hurt?”

“Do you want the truth?” He nodded, and I took his lips again before answering, “No matter how much I prep you, it’s going to hurt at first. It will burn like fire and feel uncomfortably full, but I promise you it won’t last long, and it will give way to the most incredible pleasure you’ve ever felt. Do you trust me?”

“With my life,” he confessed, swallowing.

“Let me show you how good I can make you feel.” He nodded again, and with a quick peck on his lips, I sat back and flicked the cap on the bottle of lube.

Upending the bottle, I drizzled it right over his ass, getting turned on by the sight of the viscous fluid dripping down the valley between his cheeks.

“I’m gonna open you up a little more, spread this inside of you. Gonna make you nice and slick for my cock.”

He licked his lips, still plump from my kisses. “Tell me everything you’re doing, just like that.”

I only meant to ease his fear by explaining my actions, but I had a feeling it was more than that, that the way I explained it was turning him on. Slipping three fingers inside of him, I stretched him good, thrusting my fingers faster and deeper the louder he moaned.

“You k-keep brushing that spot.” His breathing grew ragged, and with my other hand at the base of his spine, I could feel his skin growing hotter.

“That’s the sweet spot. Feels so good when I touch it, doesn’t it?”

“Yeah, incredible.”

“If you beg real good, I’ll touch it again.”

His lips parted on a gasp, and he looked at me as if I’d surprised him. “Please, Coach? Touch it for me, please.”

“I think you can do better than that, can’t you? You can let go with me, Austin. Let go, and fall into your fantasy. Be the filthy, dirty, sweet boy you dream of being in your fantasies when you’re alone in your room at night. Tell me everything you’ve imagined. There’s no limit, nothing is too much.”

He groaned as if I had touched his prostate again, but I guessed my words stroked him just right. He’d been waiting for that permission to let loose. I wanted this experience, his first time, to be magic, to exceed all his expectations. That meant he needed to be free to be himself, to live inside his filthiest fantasy and know that it pleased me just as much—to know that version of him was exactly what I wanted.

“Coach,” he breathed, “I need to feel you touch me deep inside. Please, please touch that spot I like best. I’ll be the best boy for you if you just let me feel your fingers there.”

He bucked his hips against my hand, trying to impale himself on my fingers.

“That was so good, sweetheart. You beg so good, and now I’ll keep my promise to touch you like you want.” My fingers scammed along his walls until I found the spot where he craved my touch. He cried out brokenly as I rubbed over it again and again.

“I could come like this.”

“Yeah, but you’re not. You’re going to come on my cock when it’s buried deep inside you. And only after I’ve filled you with my load.”

“Oh, God, please. I want that. Want to feel it inside me.”

“You will. And I’m going to enjoy watching it slowly dribble out of you.”

“Oh, fuck. Am I ready yet? Please?”

He was practically mindless with want, writhing and bucking against me, fucking my fingers shamelessly. He was definitely ready.

Lining my cock with his entrance, I pushed against his pucker lightly, again and again, patiently waiting for his body to accept me. He held his breath as I pushed past his tight rim. “Breathe, Austin.”

“I can’t. It hurts.”

He was, unfortunately, making my cock grow thicker. “Just give it a minute, baby.”

Continuing to push into him, I fed him two inches before he tensed up again. “Feels weird, like I want to push you out.”

“Do you need me to stop?”

“No! Please. Don’t stop.”

Pressing him down into the mattress, I laced my fingers with his above his head and stretched his body flat underneath mine. With shallow thrusts, I gained another inch with each glide in and out of his incredibly tight channel.

“That’s better,” he whimpered, arching beneath me to take me deeper.

“Your body feels like hot silk around my dick. So fucking tight, ball boy.” I nipped the shell of his ear, making him shiver as I drove into him with more force. When I was fully seated in his body, I paused, holding myself. “You feel how deep I am? All the way, Austin. My cock is buried all the way inside you.”

He squeezed his muscles around my shaft, choking my dick. Pulses of my precum spilled inside him, further aiding my glide.

“Feels so good, Coach. Give me more. Fuck me for real.”

“Like this?” I asked, shoving into him hard. My balls slapped against his taint.

“Yessss,” he hissed, popping his ass to meet my thrusts.

Hooking my arms under his, I leveraged my body against his, thrusting more forcefully, again and again. My body thundered against his, my hips bruising his ass as I tried to sink deeper into his blissful heat.

I was losing myself in him, lost in his body, my head spinning, and my heart thundering as the pressure built within me.

“Up on your knees.”

At this angle, I could drive deeper, harder, and hit that sweet spot that would send him over the edge. His pleas and moans drove me, spurring me on to help him get there. Gripping his hips, I dug my fingers into his skin and drove into him hard, our bodies slapping together. I felt like I was losing control, feeling almost feral with lust. I wanted to bite him, scratch his perfect skin, mark him. Pulling him up against my chest, both of us sitting up on our knees, my hands roamed over his chest and stomach, pulling on his nipples, squeezing his pecs. My hand slipped lower, wrapping around his cock. I stroked him in sync with my thrusts, fucking into him hard enough to make him grunt.

“I want to see you shoot, then I’ll give you my load.”

“*Ungh*, yes.”

When I bit into his shoulder, he came, thick white ropes of cum shooting over my hand, over the sheets, and dribbling down his balls.

“Agh, Coach, you made me come,” he panted breathlessly. “Give me your load. Shoot it deep in my ass.”

Fuck, his mouth was filthy, and I loved it. I spilled my release, filling his channel, coating his inner walls, marking him as mine. Finally, after months of being chased, of running from my fate, he was truly mine.

My boy. My partner. The man I'd fallen in love with.

We came down slowly, catching our breath, my kisses landing on his neck, his cheek, his shoulders. I didn't want to separate myself from his body.

"Austin, I love you, sweetheart. And now that I've shown you with my body, I'm never going to stop."

He squeezed my softening shaft again, almost convincing it to rally. "Promise?"

"I promise."

Reluctantly, we finally separated long enough to shower the sweat, lube, and cum from our bodies before snuggling under my covers, naked. Austin was lying in my arms, his head on my chest.

"Nothing can beat this feeling. I've never felt happier than I do right now."

I walked my fingers up his chest. "What if I told you I got hired?"

"Hired? Where?"

"Head coach for the Rainier Cougars."

He shot up like a rocket. "My rival University? Get the fuck out."

I flipped him over, tickling his ribs until he squirmed against my body. "Looks like the competition for the top spot is just beginning."

"Oh, it's on, Coach."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

AUSTIN

Marcus pressed his body against my back, his morning erection snuggling between my cheeks. “Do you have any idea how much I love waking up to you?”

His hands crisscrossed my chest, pulling me in closer. “Can I get you a cup of coffee?”

“You can get me coffee every morning,” he breathed over my neck, raising bumps on my skin.

“I wish,” I said, reaching for a mug from the cabinet.

“Don’t wish, do it.”

Moving from his embrace, I stepped over to the coffee maker, and poured his cup full. “Do what? Are you asking me to move in with you?”

“Isn’t that what it sounded like?”

“Are you serious? You would want me to live with you?”

“I’m damn serious about you, Austin. Serious about us. And yes, I would love to have you live with me. I know it’s quick and you have school, but I’m thinking of putting the house on the market.”

“You’re selling your townhouse? To move where?”

“Closer to my new job. It’s a long commute from here. It would also be closer to your school.”

I considered it as I retrieved the creamer from the fridge. It was thrilling to think he wanted me to move in. Like a big flashing neon sign advertising our future together. And yet, I suddenly felt so small and insignificant, like a kid trying to swim in the deep end, knowing his feet couldn’t reach the bottom of the pool.

“What do you say?” he asked, turning my chin to meet his mouth. He tried to convince me with a kiss, a toe-curling kiss

that made me forget about all of my reservations.

“I say...can I think about it?”

“Austin, if you have to think about it, then you’re not ready.” He popped another kiss, this time to my forehead. “It’s all right, it was a big ask. Forget I said anything.”

“I don’t want to forget. It’s just...”

“It’s just what?”

“My housing is covered by my scholarship, but only if I live on campus. I can’t afford to split any bills with you without finding a job, and that would just be too much right now, with school and baseball.”

“Just focus on baseball and school. Don’t worry about finding a job. I make more than enough to pay our bills.”

My heart overflowed with tenderness and gratitude for him. He always said exactly what I needed to hear. “I know you do, but that doesn’t mean you should have to.”

His gaze softened. “I’ve waited a long time to find someone who would feel that way. That’s why I want so badly to do this for you. I want to invest in your future, so I’ve earned a reason to feel so fucking proud of you.” He brushed his knuckles over my cheek.

“You should feel proud. The support and encouragement you give me, the skills you’ve taught me, and the discipline you’ve instilled in me. You make me feel incredible, make me want to be a better person, a better player. I want to train harder just to show you what I can do.”

“I already know what you can do, Austin. Anything. You can do anything. Everything. And I’m gonna be right by your side to see you do it every step of the way.”



He would live to regret those words. Every time I handed him a cup of coffee or a towel when he stepped from the shower, he was constantly reminded that we played for rival teams.

Our house became filled with the red and gray colors of my team, the Muskrats, invading our home. And in turn he filled the empty spaces with blue and yellow Cougars paraphernalia. The competition between us was fierce. Our living room resembled a school bookstore, filled with throw pillows and blankets, pennants, drink coozies and tumblers—absolutely anything and everything that proudly displayed our school’s colors.

We chose a home on a quiet cul-de-sac halfway between his school and mine, about a twenty-minute drive for each of us. My parents had yet to visit, nor had his. It was only recently they found out about me, and they were about as thrilled as my parents were.

Our days were filled with school, practice, and then home at about the same time in the evenings for dinner and a workout, followed by a shared shower and then falling into bed together. Marcus and I found time to make love twice a day. We couldn’t keep our hands to ourselves, no matter how busy or tired we were.

“She’s staring again,” I complained, gazing through the window on the side of our house. The one that looked right into my neighbor’s kitchen, and which afforded her a perfect view inside my living room. She watched us constantly. It was more like stalked, actually.

She wasn’t hateful, just competitive. One of the first things Marcus did in our new home was begin seeding his garden. Large containers of tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and herbs lined the perimeter of our back deck. Two days later, she had her husband out there building raised beds that covered half their backyard.

When we had finished the tedious process of unpacking our moving boxes, I made a trip to the nursery to buy pretty little flowers to plant in the bed that lined the walkway from our driveway to our front door. It was one of those little things that fed the excitement I felt over becoming a first-time homeowner. The following week, she planted her beds with the exact same flowers. And when Marcus hung a porch swing, she hung one exactly five hours later. If she wasn’t

careful, the next thing I would add to the curb appeal would be a six-foot high privacy fence. Just to keep her nosy ass out of my business. I wondered if I hung a pride flag outside she would hang one, too?

Marcus stood behind me, his broad chest warming my back, his strong arms wrapping around my waist. “If she wants to look, let’s give her something worth watching.”

He breathed the words over my neck, his lips nipping my throat, at the soft spot behind my ear. Every time he touched me, every time I even thought about him touching me, my dick got hard for him.

“By all means, don’t stop.”

He slid his hand inside my pants and palmed my cock, wrapping his fingers around my shaft. With slow, lazy strokes, he had me leaking in my shorts in no time, my hips moving in sync with his hand. He popped two fingers in his mouth, sucking on them before sliding them between my cheeks, probing up my hole. I pushed back against his fingers, welcoming him inside me. I was always ready for him, always hungry for his touch.

“I think it’s neighborly that we entertain her curiosity.”

“I think you’re right,” I panted, quickly losing my head over him.

“Put your hands on the glass.”

I did and spread my legs for him as well. I heard him spit on his cock and felt the wet, thick head poke at my entrance a moment later. It would burn without lube, but I craved it. I loved to suffer for him. And he loved to hear about how good it hurt me.

“Going to be a tight fit, ball boy,” he warned as he shoved inside my body.

“*Ungh*,” I grunted, biting back my curse.

“Does that hurt, sweet boy?”

He knew it did. Had made sure it would just so he could hear me describe the pain to him.

“Burns,” I grated between clenched teeth.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to hurt you, sweetheart,” he purred as he shoved into me more forcefully, plastering my body against the glass with the force of his thrust.

He changed the angle, stretching my hole wider. I cried out at the invasion.

“You take it so good, bear the pain so well. My little pain slut. Such a good boy for his Daddy.”

A pain slut I was not, but a praise slut... indeed. I would take all the pain he could dish out if only he continued to tell me how good I was, how well I took it.

“Let me touch you, to make it feel better.” He stroked me through the burn and stretch in my ass, and before long, I was bucking into his fist, chasing my release. “You forget all about the pain in your little bottom when I touch you like this, don’t you?”

“Y-yes, Coach. Harder, please!”

He obliged, slamming the weight of his body into mine, forcing his cock deeper inside my channel, nailing my prostate with each thrust, again and again until he had me on edge, my cock weeping for him like a broken faucet.

“As your coach, I have to recommend we do this again today, to keep you loose and stretched. Training for your hole. Practice makes perfect,” he growled in my ear just before I came, shouting his name as I slapped my hand against the glass. My harsh ragged breaths fogged up the window as he released inside me, filling me up.

And still her eyes were on me. On *us*.

I traced a dick in the condensation on the glass before giving her a little salute.

“What in the hell is he doing here?” My father sneered at Marcus, contempt radiating from him like a heat wave.

As if I weren't nervous enough about pitching the first game of my college career, I was caught between my father and my lover, having to defend one and placate the other.

"We live together, Dad. Of course he was going to be here."

"Live together," he scoffed, making it sound like a disgusting, absurd joke.

"You should come by and see the house. It's beautiful. I planted flowers, and Marcus started a garden, and the kitchen is—"

"Not yours! The kitchen, the garden, the flowers, none of it is yours. You're a student. You're nineteen years old. Your name isn't even on the deed. The house belongs to Marcus, and you just get to live there as long as you continue to sleep with him. Like some rented boy toy."

His words and rejection stung like the bite of a viper, the venom spreading through my system like poison, killing our relationship.

"Is that really how you see me, Dad? Is that what you think I am?"

"No, Austin," he defended, sounding anguished as he ran a hand through his hair. "I don't see you that way. I don't *want* to see you that way. But what am I supposed to think? He's a grown man, and you're just a..."

"A what, Dad? I'm just a what?"

"A kid, Austin! You have no job, nothing to contribute to the relationship. You're not his equal, you're his—"

I cut him off before he said something we would both regret, something I wasn't strong enough to hear.

"Dad, I *am* his equal. I am his partner. And if there is any imbalance of power in our relationship, it's because we want it that way. It's not really something you would understand."

He realized I was talking about something kinky or sexual, and his face changed, looking horrified and a bit nauseous.

“I don’t want to know. Keep it to yourselves.”

“Healey, get your ass in the dugout. Game starts in ten,” Coach Collins called.

“I gotta go, Dad.”

“Wait, Austin. I didn’t mean to go down that road. I just wanted to congratulate you, to tell you how proud I am of you today.”

“I see. You’re proud of me for what I can do, not who I am. Well, thanks, Dad. Just the boost of confidence I needed before my big game.” I turned on my heel, heading down the corridor that led to the dugout.

“Austin, wait!”

“Dad, I’ve got to go.”

“I know, I just...here, take this.” He unfastened the top two buttons of his shirt and reached inside, pulling out his chain and whipping it over his head. “I want you to have this.”

“Your dog tags? What for?”

“I know they hand them out to everyone as standard issue, but I worked hard for my rank and title, trained hard, studied, and accomplished a lot in my military career. I’m proud of these tags. That’s why I still wear them.” He lifted the chain over my head, settling the tags underneath my jersey. “Wear these when you play. Keep me with you, close to your heart. Because that’s where I am, Austin. And that’s where *you* are. In my heart. Always, since you were a little boy, you’ve been my pride and my joy. The most important thing I’ve ever done with my life. I *am* proud of you. I may not like what you’re doing with him, but it doesn’t change how I feel about *you*,” he said, pointing at my chest. He leaned in and pressed a kiss to my cheek. “I love you, son. And you will *always* be my son. Now, get out there and shut them out.”

I had to wipe the tears forming in my eyes away as I hustled out to the field. My heart burned with conflicted feelings, but when I raised my hand to my chest to soothe the ache, I felt his tags under my compression shirt, and it settled me. He loved me. I knew he did. And I hated to disappoint

him, but it was time I became more than just his son. It was time I became a man—*my own man*. And that man wanted to become Marcus's partner more than anything.

As I stood on the pitcher's mound, running through my warm-up routine, both mentally and physically psyching myself up for the game, I looked into the stands to see my parents sitting next to Marcus. His head bent close to my father's as they exchanged words. I could only guess what they were saying, but with any luck, they were making a truce, for my sake. Burying the hatchet. They were the two most important men in my life, and I wanted more than anything, *needed*, for them to get along.

My father was never going to welcome Marcus with open arms. I could see that now, but at the very least, he could perhaps treat him civilly.

CHAPTER TWENTY

MARCUS

“You have some nerve,” he hissed from between clenched teeth. Austin’s father was having trouble keeping his temper in check.

“I have every right to be here, just like you do,” I defended, striving to remain polite.

“Of course you do. You think you’re entitled to everything when it comes to Austin. Just waltz in and take over his whole life.”

“It’s not like that. I’m not trying to take over his life. Austin is my partner, my equal. He’s entitled to everything I have. I would never take advantage of his trust in me.”

“It’s your world, Wolfe. He’s just visiting temporarily until the next best thing comes along.” He shook his head and laughed without humor. “Wolfe. The name suits you perfectly. That’s what you are, the big bad wolf who swooped in like a predator to swallow up my lost little lamb.”

I could understand he was upset, could even make allowances for him, but I refused to sit quietly while he used me as a punching bag. And to think of Austin as a lost little lamb was ludicrous. Did his father not realize how he’d calculated and manipulated his seduction of me? I never claimed to be his victim, because would that have been so terrible? Not even for a second. But Austin was not blameless in our getting together. In fact, he was instrumental in it. I never would have considered him or even looked twice in his direction had he not come on to me again and again, wearing down my resistance, until choosing to make a bad decision was the *only* decision I could make.

“Your son is precious to me, but he is not, and never has been, a lost little lamb. Austin is a strong and independent young man. And it’s time you started to see him that way. I know it’s difficult because you think of him as a little boy.

Your little boy that you used to carry on your shoulders after he won his Little League games. But he's grown up now. Can't you see that? Can't you trust that you did a great job raising him and let him make his own decisions?"

"Not as long as he's making bad ones."

"Look, if Austin wasn't with me, what do you think he would be doing on his own? He's nineteen years old and living away from home for the first time in his life. Do you really think he'd be sitting alone in his dorm every night—the weekends especially—studying?"

At least he had the grace to blush.

"We both know he would be out partying with his teammates. Drinking, making bad decisions, and bed-hopping from dorm to dorm. If you think those are better decisions than him choosing to live with me, then I'm glad he's making the wrong choices. I've provided him with a stable and loving home. His laundry is clean, he has healthy meals to eat. I help him with his classwork and his studying. He has responsibilities and structure. And he doesn't have to worry about money. I just want him to focus on school and his career. And instead of encouraging him to fuck around like someone his own age would, I make sure he stays focused on baseball, drilling him, driving him to practice, keeping his skills sharp in the off-season. Austin is my top priority. His happiness, his welfare, his future. How can you look me in the eye and honestly tell me someone his own age could put his needs first?"

"I can't," he reluctantly conceded. "I just want Austin to do those things for himself. I want him to enjoy his youth and not waste it."

"He's the most responsible and structured young man I know. But he also has a carefree and loving spirit. He's not wasting his youth. If you ask me, he's living his best life. Just let him live it. Give him a chance to make his own mistakes and learn his own lessons. Just like you did at his age."

He considered my words as he kept his eyes peeled on his son. "Just so you know, I'll be keeping my eye on him—and

you.”

“As you should.”

“Stop by the house this weekend. You can pick up a few of Austin’s things for your new place.” He took a sip of his soda before continuing. “And you can stay for dinner.”

It was a small victory, but it would mean everything to Austin, and therefore, it felt like winning the *World Series*.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

AUSTIN

“What’s this?”

Marcus stood before a wall of trophies and framed pictures that covered an entire wall in my bedroom, my parents’ shrine to my little league career.

“A trophy bat from junior nationals.”

The wooden bat was a mini replica, no more than three inches thick and ten inches long. A wicked gleam twinkled in his dark eyes.

“Put that in the box.”

“I can’t take all of this with me.”

“Just the bat,” he insisted, popping a kiss on my lips.

He touched a framed picture of me dressed in my baseball uniform. I couldn’t have been more than seven or eight years old. His face reflected love and pride, and for the thousandth time, I felt loved and cherished by him.

Swallowing hard, I took a deep fortifying breath and asked him the question that had passed through my mind several times in the past few weeks.

“Do you think you want to be a father someday?”

He replaced the picture on the shelf and turned to me, placing his hands on my shoulders. “To tell you the truth, it’s not something I’ve allowed myself to think about much over the years. I’m more of a one step at a time kind of guy. I had to believe that I could find the right partner before I could plan a life for us.”

“And now?”

“And now, it’s something I would love to discuss with you when you’re ready.”

When I was ready. When would that be? When was anyone ever ready to take responsibility for another life? I was only sure about two things—one, that I loved Marcus with all my heart and wanted to spend my life with him, and two, that I wanted to play baseball until I retired. At what point did I fit a child into those plans?

“But I can tell you one thing for sure.” He gripped my chin, raising my unsure eyes to his. “If we ever have a boy, I hope he’s exactly like you.”

And suddenly, looking into his face, softened by his love for me, his adoration, I knew unequivocally that no matter what our future held in store, I would be ready, and it would surpass my wildest dreams.

“Marcus,” I breathed over his lips, “let’s hurry up and eat with my parents so you can take me home.”

He teased my lips with soft, sucking kisses. “What’s the big rush?”

“I need you inside me.”

He moaned into my mouth. And when he released my lips, he complained, “I wish I didn’t have qualms about fucking you in your childhood bedroom with your parents right down the hall.”

Two hours later, we said goodbye to my parents and drove home. I hit the shower immediately, hoping to get his mouth and hands on my body. But when I stepped from the bathroom naked, I got neither of those things. Marcus sat in the chair in the corner of our bedroom, wearing nothing but navy-blue briefs and his whistle that hung from his neck, the silver metal nestled between his fuzzy pecs.

“Crawl up on the bed on all fours.”

He toyed with the whistle, his eyes hot and hungry on my body as I positioned myself on my hands and knees.

“Not like that, Austin. Turn around. It isn't your pretty face I want to see.”

My dick kicked, hardening to steel, as I spun around, presenting him with my ass. I made sure to keep my legs spread so he could see the goods.

“If you follow my instructions very carefully, you will earn yourself a sweet reward. Are you ready to be a good boy for me?”

“Y-yes, Coach. Please let me be your good boy.”

“So sweet. So eager to please. You are a treasure to be cherished.”

He circled the bed, leaning down into my face as he spoke. He stroked my jaw, caressed my cheek, touching me like the finest porcelain, the rarest silk. In the future, I would come to realize that meant he was about to debauch me, but for now, I was content to believe in all my naïveté that he was going to make love to me, slow and sweet.

“I'm going to give you a set of instructions, and if you follow them correctly, I will praise you.”

“And if I don't?”

“Then you get nothing. Nothing but the sound of my whistle to correct you.”

My mouth watered as I salivated over the fantasy he was spinning; straight from my wickedest dreams.

He reached for the bottle on the nightstand, holding it out to me with a smile so wicked it bordered on evil.

“Take this and make yourself nice and slippery for me. Your ass, not your cock.”

I sat up on my knees and flicked the cap on the bottle.

He blew on his whistle, a short, sharp sound that brought me up short. “Not like that. I told you to remain on your knees.”

“But how will I reach?”

“I guess you’ll have to do the best you can with your face and chest smushed into the mattress and your ass stuck high in the air, wiggling for my benefit.”

I felt ridiculous in this position, wide-open and vulnerable as I slicked my cheeks. “I feel so exposed, Sir.”

“Just how I like you best. And when you feel like that, you rely on me harder, trust in me deeper, and secretly, we both know you love the way it makes you feel.”

“Like your slut boy,” I whispered, as my fingers probed my hole.

He ran his fingers through my hair, a silent form of praise for admitting the truth. “I’ll be right back. I want to watch the show.” I felt even more exposed when he stood behind me, watching as I opened myself up. “Two fingers,” he commanded.

My breath came faster as I stretched my opening, sliding two slippery fingers inside my channel. I was already beginning to feel like a slut for him, my inhibitions starting to melt away in a thick cloud of desire.

“Use both hands. Stretch yourself open so I can look inside your hole.”

My heart rate spiked as adrenaline flooded my system, making my dick pulse and leak like it had its own heartbeat. Using both my index fingers, I stretched my rim wide-open. My identity was beginning to slip away, replaced with a new one, Coach’s slut boy, his ball boy. A boy who would do anything his coach asked, who only existed for his coach’s pleasure. That is what I became—a vessel for his lust.

I heard the click of his camera phone and knew that he was taking a picture of the inside of my body, memorializing my shame, my submission. My dick had never felt harder. As I laid there, my body contorted in an absurd pose, my muscles straining to provide him with the perfect view, complying with the filthiest request I’d ever obeyed, the mortification I felt slowly gave way to pride.

Pride in my submission.

Pride for pleasing him so deeply.

Pride in my bravery.

My eyes tracked him as he crossed the room to the dresser and reached into the box we carried home.

“Now to prepare your lover.”

But he didn't reach for the waistband of his briefs. Instead, he reached into the box and pulled out my trophy bat. Marcus returned to the bed and snatched up the bottle of lube. Leaning in close, his words were a teasing breath over my lips.

“Did you think I was going to fuck you with my dick?”

I did—until now.

He drizzled lube over the smooth worn wood of the bat, and my heart thundered in my chest, knowing where he intended to stick it.

He chuckled as he rounded the bed, climbing up onto the mattress behind me. “Sometimes, I forget how innocent you are. It's like the most potent aphrodisiac.”

He wiggled out of his briefs and tossed them to the floor. When the weight of his body covered my back, I felt comforted by his warmth, less exposed. The cold metal of his whistle lay between my shoulder blades.

“Are you ready for batting practice?”

I shivered, a full body shiver from my head to my toes. I felt so conflicted as warm, fuzzy thoughts of my childhood, of receiving the bat in recognition of my team's win were shredded apart by the immoral voice in my head that begged to feel that bat inserted inside my body. To sit perfectly still like a fuck doll as he abused my hole with it.

“You're gonna feel the burn from this as I stretch you. No matter how much it hurts, I want to hear you tell me how good it feels, the pain, the fire. Tell me how much you love it, how much you love to hurt for me.”

Whimpers and moans spilled from my lips, and he hadn't even touched me yet. I was already a needy, sticky mess.

He pushed the broad end of the bat against my pucker, twirling it in circles. Just as I began to open for him, he pulled away, trailing it through my crease until it pushed against my taint.

“So smooth and pink. Delicious.”

He was teasing me, drawing out the exquisite torture before the final act.

The bat slid back up to my hole and twirled again, pushing against my resistant muscles. I clenched tightly, my body going tense as I anticipated the painful invasion.

He blew the whistle, a shrill sound to correct my actions.

“Stay loose, sweetheart. Bear down.”

I blew out the breath I’d been holding and sagged into the mattress, opening for him.

“That’s good, baby. So good.” His voice was husky, almost hypnotic. “Let me in. Get a good grip on your bat.”

He sounded just like the coach in the video that had started it all, the video that sparked my incessant obsession with him and filthy baseball innuendo.

He pushed harder, and my tight rim gave way with a squelch as the bat filled my body, stretching my hole beyond its previous limits.

“Fuck,” I hissed.

He tsked with a chuckle. “What was that?”

“Hurts so good, Coach.”

“You bet it does.”

Since I was feeling brave and I wanted him to continue with the whole baseball fantasy, I chose to share a truth with him, hoping to distract myself from the pain of my body becoming accustomed to the invasion.

“It all started just like this. With a video I found online.”

He gave me another inch before pulling back out, only to slide in again. “What kind of video?”

“A coach and his player. He wore a whistle, just like you.” I licked my lips and turned my head, trying to catch a glimpse of him.

“And what did this coach do to this player?”

He stroked my inner walls with the slick wood.

“It’s not so much what he did, but what he said.”

“What did he say, Austin? Tell me.”

I gasped as another inch made its way inside me. “He talked about baseball like sex. About practicing catching, finger placement on his balls, proper grip on his bat.”

“And you liked it? You liked being seduced by the game you love?”

“I watched it every chance I got. Jacked off until my dick was raw.” He was twirling the bat in circles inside of me. “Ungh, so full. Feels so good.”

“You dirty little boy,” he scolded. “Getting hard for your coach, misconstruing my helpful advice in a naughty way.”

“I was hard during every practice.”

“Fuck, Austin. I can’t believe how perfect you are for me.” He held still, and I anticipated what would come next. “I’m going to fuck you now with this bat, and you’re going to tell me how much you love batting practice, how good my swing is, my aim. Do you understand me?”

I was panting like a dog in heat. “Yes, Coach.”

He started out slow, sliding the bat in and out of my body with gentle strokes. Gradually, I became accustomed to the girth, even craving it. When my hips began to writhe, seeking more, trying to match his rhythm as I pushed back against the wooden phallus, he increased the force of his thrusts, fucking me in earnest. Again and again, it slid over my gland, making the fire licking at my body burn hotter.

“Perfect aim, Coach. You’re really hitting the right spot.”

He had a good grip on the bat about a quarter of the way up the shaft, preventing my body from sucking all ten inches

inside.

“You should see the way your hole squeezes around the bat.”

“Nobody has a better swing than you, Coach,” I panted, my breath coming short and ragged. “A little harder and you’ll hit a grand slam.”

“Is that right? I know you’re dying to touch yourself. Do you think you’ve earned the privilege?”

“Yes, Coach. Please.” I was a begging, sobbing mess, willing to do anything in order to come, chasing my orgasm like a dog with a bone.

“Go ahead, ball boy. Touch yourself. Stroke your cock, your bat.”

Furiously, I jacked my shaft until thick white ropes covered my fist, pooling on the bedding beneath me. I collapsed in a sticky heap as he slid the bat from my body.

“Goddamn, you’re gaping. It’s fucking beautiful.” I heard the click of his camera phone again and again. “Now it’s my turn. Come over here and suck me off.”

I swallowed him whole, still overcome with desperate lust despite my balls being drained. Roughly, he fucked my mouth, gripping the back of my head and pulling me down onto his dick until my nose tickled his pubes and I gagged. That’s when he came, shooting thick pulses down my throat. I swallowed every drop of my reward and licked my lips with a smile.

Leaning down, he stole my lips in a fierce kiss, tasting himself on my tongue.

After I hopped up to shower, I returned to find him waiting for me in bed, still naked under the covers.

“Come here, sweet boy. Come lay on my chest and let me tell you what a good job you did.”

I liked this part almost as much as the actual sex. The aftercare, where he stroked my skin, my hair, my face, and told me how good I was, how obedient and sweet. These were the moments where my heart split wide-open and all the love

that I felt for him poured out, flooding my entire body with endorphins, my head with sickly sweet thoughts of forever.

As if he could read my mind, he said, “Tell me this is forever. Tell me it’s never going to end.”

“This is forever,” I whispered reassuringly. “It’s never going to end. I’ll always love you.”

Marcus laughed harshly. “I feel like such a fool, falling for you. I keep waiting for you to wake up and realize you can do so much better than me.”

“That’s never gonna happen. There’s no one better for me than you. I keep waiting for you to wake up and realize you don’t belong with me, that you should be with someone your own age, someone wiser, more mature.”

“Austin—”

I lifted my head from his chest to look into his eyes. “No, I know you belong with me. I know it,” I hissed fiercely. “You’re *mine*. My Coach. The man who was meant to love me and belong to me. I’m not letting you go. Ever.”

He laid his warm lips against my forehead and smiled. “That sounds perfect.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

MARCUS

I bit off another nail, my third on this hand, chewed it up and spit it out. Jealousy churned in my gut as I watched the easy camaraderie between Austin and his teammates. They smacked his butt, draped their arms around his shoulders, hugged him, and teased him—all in the name of good sportsmanship, or so I assumed. That was the natural assumption. My green-eyed answer was that they all wanted to sleep with him and were undercover, bi-curious boys who wanted Austin to confirm for them whether they were attracted to dick or not.

Who would blame them? Hell, who could blame me? Austin Healey was the kind of guy you couldn't help but gravitate to, like the earth rotated on his axis, and we were all caught in his orbit.

Shit, he didn't even have to work for it. Just taking off his shirt and smiling was enough to land him any man he wanted.

I watched from my dugout across home plate from his as a player handed him a bottled water and then stared as he chugged it.

Sportsmanship my ass. They wanted his dick.

Was I being irrational? No. Yes. Maybe. It was exhausting, constantly comparing myself to guys half my age.

Austin never made me feel like anything less than the hottest man on the planet, but my insecurities screamed louder with each passing birthday. I was fast approaching thirty-nine, and he'd just turned twenty.

The later it got, the stiffer and colder the wind blew, and I reached for my blue and yellow Cougars jacket, slipping my arms through the sleeves. In a desperate attempt not to bite my nails down to bloody stumps, I balled my fists and shoved them into the pockets of my jacket. My fingers brushed against something foreign, and I pulled it out to see what it was.

A package of Big League chewing gum and a folded note.
I bit back my smile as I unfolded it and read his words.

Relax, Coach. Your team is doing great. You're the hottest guy in baseball, and I'm in love with you. I'm also going to suck your dick tonight if you win, but if you lose, I guess I'm going to be the lucky one. Either way, we both win. Chew on this instead of your nails.

Love, Austin

My stomach settled as I shoved a thick wad of shredded bubble gum in my mouth. He knew me better than anyone did... well, except for maybe Baylor.

Speaking of Baylor, my eyes found him across the field, watching over first base. He had overseen almost every game Austin and I played this season, and had earned a notorious reputation for making questionable calls. At least, according to Austin's coach, Casey Collins.

This was our last game to play for the championship, and we both had a lot riding on it. Collins was friendly to me, and he was the only one who knew our secret, that Austin and I lived together. For Austin's sake, and as a professional courtesy to me, he kept quiet, and I respected him for it.

"Are you fucking blind? I'll get you a pair of glasses, you fucking imbecile!" Collins screamed, his voice carrying across the field. Baylor just smiled and gave him a thumbs up.

I was amused until he called my runner out. “He was safe by a mile, you senile fuck!”

Again, he just smiled and waved at me. But the Baylor I knew was mentally flicking me off, telling me to go fuck myself as he laughed at me.

Austin was called up to pitch the next inning, and I had to resist the urge to clap for him along with his teammates and his fans. His fans, God, that took some getting used to, not that I had. We couldn’t eat at Dixon’s Diner without someone asking for a picture or for his autograph. It was the same story at the grocery store, the post office, and the mall. In a town the size of Maplevue, everyone knew who the star pitcher for the Muskrats was, especially when they looked like Austin.

I watched as he ran through his warm-up routine, and I smiled, thinking how much I loved him, loved everything about him.

He shut out my first two batters, and despite feeling disappointed in our loss, my chest burned with pride for him. Up next at bat was Randall Gullum. There was no way Austin was going to strike him out. Randall was my best hitter. Austin ran through his warm up again before throwing out a slider, sending the ball spinning through the air at ninety-five miles an hour. Against all odds, Randall’s bat connected with the ball with a ferocious crack, sending it hurtling back across the field, heading straight for Austin. In the blink of an eye, he was down on the ground, the ball having connected with his head. I was up and out of the dugout, running across the field in a split second, neck and neck with Collins and Baylor. Collins reached him first, gathering Austin into his arms.

“Move,” I barked. “Let me see him.”

“Are you fucking nuts? You can’t be out here. Right now, he’s my concern, not yours. Go,” Collins hissed.

I’d never felt so helpless. So restricted. The man I loved, the center of my whole world, was lying motionless in another man’s arms, and he was right—there was nothing I could do to help.

“Go, Marcus,” Baylor insisted. “I’ll stay with him.”

The emergency crew carried over a stretcher, and they lifted Austin’s body onto it and carried him off the field as I watched, feeling powerless.

“Get your assistant coach to cover your team and meet me in the locker room,” Collins called.

As I made my way back to the dugout, I received many curious looks from my team. I understood their confusion. They couldn’t figure out why I cared about a player from our rival team.

“Win or lose, you guys played a great game. I’ve got to go. Coach Marley will take over. I’ll see you tomorrow at practice.”

By the time I jogged across the stadium to the Muskrats’ locker room, the team doc was already checking Austin over.

And he was conscious, thank God.

I hovered over Collins’ shoulder while the doctor finished his examination. In addition to the three of us were Baylor, the Dean of Athletics, a physical therapist, and four of Austin’s teammates, who were sitting this inning out.

The doc flashed a penlight in Austin’s eyes. “You got lucky, kid. I don’t think you have a concussion, but I’m sending you to the hospital to get checked out, just to make sure. It says here your emergency contact is Marcus Wolfe,” he added, checking over Austin’s paperwork. “Do you want me to call him and tell him you’re on your way to the hospital?”

“No need, I’m right here.” Austin’s head whipped in my direction. “Coach,” he murmured, exhaling with relief. I shoved Casey Collins aside and made my way to Austin’s side.

“I’m right here, sweetheart. You’re going to be fine. Don’t you ever scare me like that again.” Already, a large goose egg had formed on his head, and his right eye had a broken capillary, causing a red splotch.

Several people cleared their throats, and when I looked up, the doctor asked, “Coach Wolfe? From the Cougars?”

“That’s me.” We were playing in Austin’s stadium, and the Cougars were the visiting team, so I didn’t have to clear my actions with anyone but Coach Collins and the team doc. “I’m riding with him to the hospital. I’ll see you there.”

We ended up riding in the ambulance, and I held Austin’s hand the entire way. But when we arrived in the emergency room, we were met with another challenge. Although Austin had listed me as his emergency contact on his school forms, legally, his parents were his next of kin. I had to cool my heels in the waiting room while Austin underwent x-rays and a head scan, and the nurses refused to tell me anything. Although we’d been together for the past two years, I was not legally his partner. When his parents arrived, they filled me in on his diagnosis and informed me what room he’d been moved to.

I felt like a third wheel, like someone who was just begging for scraps, not entitled to the main course. Me, his partner, the man who washed his body in the shower, who held him in my arms every night as we fell asleep and made love to his body and nourished his soul with the praise he needed, who showered him with love and support, was left to hang out to dry in the cold wind like a stranger.

I had a lot to think about while he was laid up in the hospital bed, resting and recovering. Mostly, I thought about how to avoid either of us ever having to be in that situation again. It was a long night.

Austin was discharged the next day. No concussion, just a nasty blow to the head and an even nastier bruise. The only reason he stayed home to rest and agreed to miss practice was because I threatened to punish him if he didn’t obey. Our teams were facing off again in two days for the season championship, and I needed him to be ready.

The fallout from the emergency wasn't too terrible. Most of my team, including my assistant coach, remained quiet. I received lots of silent stares while they drew their own conclusions as to why I disappeared during our final game of the season, right after Austin was injured.

As for Austin, his team was not as quiet as mine. Some of them made jokes, while others talked behind his back, spreading whispers and gossip like a rash around the locker room. But thanks to Casey Collins, our secret stayed in the locker room.

Austin pitched a great game. Not his best, but also not his worst. Unfortunately, though, it wasn't enough to win his team the championship. The Cougars proudly took home the trophy, and I was promised a raise by the very excited, very exuberant Dean of Athletics at Rainier University.

They celebrated our win after the game with fireworks. I herded my team out to centerfield, and they sprawled out in the grass, side-by-side with the Muskrats, as they shut down the stadium lights. Darkness descended over the field. Music spilled out of the speakers. As the first bright sparks rocketed across the sky, the crowd *oohed* and *aahed*, and I found Austin's form in the dark. We drifted closer, shrouded in the safety of the shadows, and when I wrapped my arms around him and pulled him closer for a kiss, it was hard to tell that we weren't teammates, just two lovers coming together to celebrate.

"Congratulations, Coach. You deserve the win."

"So did you, baby. How's your head?"

"Which one?"

"Austin," I scolded, trying not to laugh.

"Careful, Coach. You know what that tone of voice does to me."

He looked up to the sky, and the colorful bursts of light reflected in his eyes. Austin slipped his hands inside my jacket, and I knew exactly when his fingers closed around the surprise in my pocket. He stilled, turning his attention back to

me. Slowly, he pulled it out, trying to make out what it was in the darkness. Gently, I took the box from him and opened it, retrieved what was inside, and took his hand in mine, sliding the band onto his fourth finger.

“Coach?”

“I’m in love with you, Austin. I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Please tell me you’ll marry me.”

Before he could answer, I captured his lips, sliding my tongue along his, licking over his teeth, nibbling his lips with sucking kisses.

When I finally let him up for air, he slid his lips and nose along my cheek, along my jaw, until he found my ear and whispered, “Yes, Coach. I’ll marry you. I’m in love with you, and I want to spend the rest of my life with you.”

I laced his fingers with mine, the metal of his band pressing into my skin as the grand finale exploded above us and the crowd went wild.

THE THIRD INNING

Love is the most important thing in the world, but baseball is pretty good, too. -**Yogi Berra**

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

AUSTIN

I dumped my equipment bag and kicked off my red-clay-caked cleats in the garage, entering the house through the door that led into the kitchen. Marcus stood at the stove, stirring something in a pot that smelled delicious, like garlic and herbs. Heading straight for him, I wrapped my arms around his waist and peppered kisses along the back of his neck and shoulders.

“Hmmm, someone’s in a good mood.”

“I’ll give you three guesses as to why.”

I continued to nibble on him while he played along. “You aced your foreign studies test?”

“Yes, I did, but that’s not what the good mood is for.”

“Let’s see, ummm...my starting pitcher still has two good arms, so it’s not that your rival has been taken out of the game. So what else could it be?” I laughed as he continued to guess. “It couldn’t be that our neighbors stuck a for sale sign in their front yard, could it?”

“You know it is,” I confirmed, tickling his sides until he squirmed. “God, I couldn’t be more excited about their departure.”

“Be careful what you wish for. You just might get it.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It means the new neighbors might be even worse. They might be bigoted, homophobic assholes.”

I slipped my hands underneath his T-shirt, sliding over his smooth, warm skin until he purred. “Well, in that case, we’ll just be having lots of sex in front of the open windows until we drive them out of town.”

Marcus laughed. “That’s probably why the current neighbors are leaving.”

Exactly twenty-seven days later, the Taylors moved in next-door. They were the farthest thing from bigoted, homophobic assholes we could have imagined. In fact, they were just like us, a gay couple with a significant age gap. Wilder was slightly younger than me, while Penn had a couple of years on Marcus.

We clicked instantly. Wilder was standoffish at first, but I wore him down with persistence and charm until we spent practically every day together.

We had nothing in common. He hated sports, and I thought he had terrible taste in music. Wild was a brat through and through. You could just see the trouble gleaming in his eyes, like he couldn't wait to find it. But somehow, we'd grown thick as thieves in no time. Most days, we lounged around the living room, doing homework and studying, watching movies together. We often had dinner with them as a couple. Sometimes, Wild showed up to watch me practice.

I tried to explain the rules of the game to him, but quickly realized it was futile.

Wild Child: Meet me outside on the back deck in ten minutes.

I walked outside to see Wild climbing in my hot tub with a six-pack of beer.

“What are you doing?”

“What's it look like? Getting the party started.”

I'd bet my best bat he wasn't wearing anything beneath the surface of the water, as he often did.

“Is that beer?”

“You bet.”

“I can’t, Wild. I have a game tomorrow. Coach would kill me.”

“Kill you? He’s your husband, not your dad.”

When I remained quiet, he filled in the blanks. “I see, he’s your Daddy, too. What do you mean when you say he would kill you?”

“I don’t know, like, he would be really disappointed in me.”

“Disappointed in you? That’s it? Hell, Penn is disappointed in me before he even wakes up in the morning. He goes to bed disappointed in me so that he’s prepared.”

He drew a reluctant laugh from me, as he always did. “You’re a mess.”

“And you need to be messier. I’ll give you two seconds to get naked and get in this hot tub with me.”

“Or what?”

“Or I’ll drag you in.”

I felt flushed all over as I stripped, praying he didn’t watch as I dropped my pants. But, of course, he did. That was Wild; hornier than a bunny in the spring. I climbed into the hot water quickly, hoping the bubbles would obscure my lower half.

“I think Penn would be disappointed in me if I didn’t disappoint him.” He handed me a beer, despite my objections. The thing with Wild was, it didn’t matter how loud or how many times you said no, he was going to get his way whether you liked it or not.

Taking a sip of the cold beer, I relished the fizz on my tongue and the slight sour burn as I swallowed. I didn’t drink often, and when I did, it hit me hard and fast.

“What if he punishes me?” My face scrunched with worry.

Wild clapped me on the back. “You should be so lucky!”

Rolling my eyes, I smiled at him indulgently.

He brushed off my concern. “You know, there is a difference between punishment and *funishment*.”

“A funishment? What’s that?”

This time, it was him who rolled his eyes. “Has your Daddy never talked to you about funishments?”

I finished half my beer before answering. “Marcus was the first guy I’ve ever been with. The only guy. He taught me everything I know.”

“But he didn’t teach you that? I see...selective education. Well, Penn is the first and only man I’ve ever been with. It was the first thing he taught me.”

“I can’t imagine why,” I replied with a smirk.

Wild chuckled, finishing his beer and opening another one. “As you can imagine, I made it too easy for him.”

“I can imagine,” I teased. “So, what is it?”

Mischief twinkled in his eyes. “It’s the best kind of punishment. A spanking, orgasm control, being made to do something humiliating.”

“That doesn’t sound like any fun at all.”

“Boy, do you have a lot to learn.” He shook his head with a snort and tilted his head at my beer. I swallowed the last of it. “Yeah, chug it like you’re at a frat house party,” he urged, handing me a fresh one.

“I’ve never been to a frat house party.”

“Neither have I, but I’ve seen enough movies to know that’s what they do.”

Like me, Wilder fell in love with the man who took his virginity. Which meant he was short on life experience, again, like me. “Do you ever miss it?”

“Miss what, frat movies? No, I have a whole collection of frat porn to keep me going.”

I splashed him with water. “No, doing things like guys our age do. Going to parties, dating.”

“Hell no! I don’t miss that shit. At least, I don’t think I would if I’d ever done it. If there’s one thing I know for sure, it’s that men are assholes. I was lucky to find a good one. I don’t ever need to date again.”

“Yeah, I feel the same way. Pretty lucky, huh?”

“I guess you could say we struck out,” Wild teased.

Laughing, I explained, “It’s hit a home run, not struck out. We hit a home run.”

“Whatever. I know fuck-all about baseball. To tell you the truth, the only reason I go to see your games is to watch the cute guys in tight pants.”

“You’re so full of shit.” I splashed him again. “The reason you go to my games is because you love me and you’re my biggest fan.”

“Oh, Austin, score that touchdown, *rah, rah, rah.*” He sounded like a cheerleader with his falsetto voice.

“That’s football, you dumbass.”

“Like I said, I know fuck-all about baseball. How come you don’t hang out with any of the guys from your team?”

I shrugged off the question, not really wanting to get into it. “Guess I’d rather be here with you.”

“Of course you would,” he snorted, chugging his beer. “But that’s a bullshit answer. What’s the real reason?”

The steam and the beer were combining to do a number on my head, making me feel light and dizzy. “Sometimes, I worry that Coach might think I want that kind of life more than I want to be with him. But also, I’d rather just be home with him. A lot of them don’t know we’re married. I don’t know how I would even explain that to them.”

“I get it. I can’t really explain me and Penn, either. I guess it’s a good thing I have you, huh? I don’t have to explain it to you. You already get it.”

“Yeah, Wild child. I get it.”

He leaned closer and pressed his lips to the sensitive spot behind my ear that always made my dick hard. Wild was not a demonstrative kind of guy, but when it came to me, he was very touchy-feely with his affection. I took it as a compliment that he felt so comfortable with me. After the terrible childhood he told me he endured growing up in the foster care system, alone and neglected, I thought he deserved all the love and physical touch he could get.

“Are you hard?”

Normally, I would shrug him off, change topics, or tell him to knock it off, but perhaps the alcohol was to blame for making me lean into him. “A little.”

“Bullshit. A lot, not a little.” He brushed his lips over the shell of my ear. “Want me to prove it?”

God only knows what my answer would have been if Coach hadn’t chosen that moment to come home. He slid open the glass door and stood with his arms crossed over his chest, glaring at the pile of empty beer cans on the deck.

“Boys, out. Now.”

Wilder was the first to jump out, striding for his towel while sporting a huge grin and not an ounce of shame.

“Hi, Mr. Wolfe.”

“It’s Marcus, and so help me God, Austin, if you’re also naked and buzzed, you’re going to regret your life.”

“Sounds kinky,” Wild quipped, shooting me a thumbs up. “Are you going to tell Penn about this?”

“Should I?” Marcus asked as I climbed out of the water, my cheeks flaming brighter than my flushed skin.

“Yes, definitely! Why should Austin have all the fun?”

He scurried off in a hurry, leaving me to face my consequences. I went straight to the shower to buy some time, but Marcus was waiting for me when I got out. As I reached into my underwear drawer, he barked, “Don’t bother. Come here and kneel for me. Mouth closed this time.”

Fuck, I never should have listened to Wilder. He was nothing but trouble with a capital T. He lived for this shit while I detested it. Facing Marcus's displeasure made my stomach churn with nausea.

"How many times have I warned you about playing with fire? Well, Wilder is fire. You have a game tomorrow, and yet here you are, buzzed, and instead of studying or preparing for your game, I come home to find you naked in the hot tub, about to fuck your best friend and neighbor." He fixed his stern Daddy look on me, the one that made me squirm like a bug under a microscope. "What do you have to say for yourself?"

"I'm sorry, Coach. I wouldn't have fucked him."

"No? Just a quickie handjob under the water?"

It was a rhetorical question, and I knew better than to answer.

"Seems you have plenty of time to waste today, so you won't be missing out on anything if we use it for something more productive, like learning a lesson. I have an idea that might remind you about your priorities."

I swallowed hard, anxiety swirling through my body like a tornado. Careful not to move my head too much, I covertly tracked his movement across the room as he collected a bat weight and a bottle of lube.

He wrapped his fingers around my soft shaft and stroked me with a slippery hand. I was hard in seconds.

"Naughty boys earn punishments, not rewards, so don't get too excited."

"Wilder calls them funishments."

He chuckled almost evilly. I was so screwed. Why couldn't I just learn to shut my big mouth?

"I bet he does, because he isn't like you. No, my sweet boy doesn't find pleasure in punishment. Which is exactly what you earned yourself today. I promise there won't be anything fun about this."

He slipped the heavy bat weight, a bright red plastic ring weighing about a pound, over my hard dick. It slid down to the base, resting against my balls.

“Go study for your foreign politics test, and if that weight drops off your cock, you’ll be severely punished.”

“I have to stay hard while I study?”

“While you study, help with dinner, eat, clean up, and go over some fundamentals for tomorrow’s game. Is that a problem?”

“N-no, Sir.”

He actually smiled as I scampered off the bed while balancing the awkward weight on my cock. Damn, my Daddy was evil. Who knew?

I had to stroke myself constantly to stay hard. It was the longest I’d ever been edged, or more accurately, edged myself. It was torture. The weight was heavy, and my dick wanted nothing more than to shrivel up and admit defeat. To make things worse, after dinner, while I sat and watched an hour of boring videos on the fundamentals of the game, another punishment, he slipped the ring off and replaced it with a sleeve weight that weighed an extra pound. It covered the entire length of my shaft. I wanted to cry at his feet and beg his mercy. He couldn’t have concocted a more evil punishment. I hoped Wilder was getting his ass beaten raw!

Never mind, he’d probably like that.

When we finally climbed into bed, I kneeled on top of the covers, waiting for my hellish punishment to end.

“Have you remembered your priorities, boy?”

“Yes, Coach. Baseball, school, and you.”

He slid the weight from my shaft, and immediately, I felt relief. My cock bobbed, feeling like a limp noodle. My balls ached.

“Does it hurt?”

I nodded pathetically, giving him my best puppy dog eyes. He was defenseless against them. Usually.

“Does it need kisses to feel better?” His husky voice sent shivers dancing down my spine.

“Yes, Coach.” I wanted to palm it but figured that would dash my chances of a happy ending.

Thankfully, he did it for me. “I know he’s your friend, but I get terribly, irrationally jealous when he flirts with you.”

“It’s harmless, Coach,” I whispered.

“I know, but I can’t help myself when it comes to you. I don’t like to share what’s mine.”

Hell, my cock was rock hard and turning a dark, concerning shade of purple, and his firm strokes and possessive claim on me wasn’t helping it go soft anytime soon.

“I belong to you, Coach. Only you. Yours is the only cock I want to suck or touch.”

“Good boy,” he praised, using his other hand to squeeze and stroke my ass as I thrust into his fist.

I could dream of ten different ways to make the night end unforgettably, but sadly, I couldn’t last that long. The moment his lips touched the engorged head of my swollen cock, I was done for.

Just before my heavy lids drooped shut, he warned, “Be careful about playing with fire, Austin. I wouldn’t want you to get burned.”

But just days later, the heat of Wild’s flame did indeed burn me. It burned so hot it scorched the foundation of our friendship.

Wild was rocking in his porch swing, his ever-present sketchbook in his lap. I skipped up the steps and nudged him aside, taking up all the extra space in the swing.

“Hey, Wild man, what’s up?” My teasing about his name had become a thing with us.

“Not much. Just enjoying my day off. Waiting for Penn to wrap up his work so we can figure out what to have for dinner.”

“Wanna toss a baseball around while you wait?” I’d just come from practice and had my equipment bag slung over my shoulder.

“Sure. I’m not really coordinated when it comes to sports. There’s only one set of balls I know how to handle well.”

He cracked me up. Playfully, I slapped his knee and tossed the glove to him. He barely caught it, fumbling it in front of my face. We moved to the side yard between our houses where there was more open space to toss the ball back-and-forth.

Wild was wrong. He wasn’t just uncoordinated, he was terrible. There was not one ball I pitched that he caught.

“Don’t worry. You’ll catch the next one.”

“Yeah, right. Highly unlikely.”

The next one flew over his head, going right past him with great speed. I cringed when I heard the glass break. It was the window in Penn’s office. Not even a minute later, I heard the front door slam, his voice carrying across the yard as he yelled.

“Wilder Raines! Just because I’m sleeping with you doesn’t mean I won’t kick your ass. You’re still my son and I’m still your father, and you’ll never be too old to go over my knee! And not in the sexy way! You better—”

The rest of his sentence died in his throat, his words echoing in the silence as he rounded the side of the house and spotted me.

“Fuck.” He stood like a deer frozen in the headlights, his panicked eyes ping-ponging between Wilder and me.

Time stood still. Words dissipated like water in the desert. My throat felt just as dry as one. “I’m sorry about your window. I have to go.” With one last look in his direction, I ran across the yard back to my house and slammed the door shut behind me.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

MARCUS

“Are you sure you heard him right?” I was pacing the floor like a maniac, wearing a hole through the hardwood.

“Yeah, crystal clear.”

“Tell me exactly what he said, word for word.” My hair was standing on end from having abused it repeatedly with my hands.

Austin sighed, sounding broken and defeated. “He said just because I’m sleeping with you doesn’t mean I won’t kick your ass. You’re still my son and I’m still your father, and you’ll never be too old to go over my knee, and not in the sexy way.”

“Fuck me.” How could that be possible? Our friends, our next-door neighbors, were...incestuous?! Was Wilder being coerced? Abused? Was he even legally an adult? He said he was nineteen, but how could I believe anything they said now? “None of this makes any sense, but I know one thing that does. You,” I stated, pointing at him, “are not to go over there or speak to Wild, in person or on the phone, until I sort this mess out. Do you hear me?”

“But...”

“No! No buts, Austin. This is serious business, and I need to know you will obey me. If they’re doing something immoral or illegal, I don’t want you within spitting distance of them.”

“Yes, Sir.”

He didn’t wait around for further instruction, just stomped off, slamming our bedroom door shut.

The next few days were rough. I could feel the tension carry over from our property line into our home. Austin wouldn’t speak to me. He just moped around, slamming doors and glaring at me. If looks could kill, I’d be six feet under. On the fourth day, things came to a head.

I was in my office when Austin planted his feet beside my chair, arms crossed and poised for defensive action. “I need to see him.”

“Not gonna happen, sweetheart.”

“I’m not your sweetheart!”

Remain calm, Marcus. Don’t let him bait you. “Since when?”

“Since you won’t let me go see Wild.”

“Do you think this is some sort of game? They could go to jail for what they’re doing! We don’t know the whole story. He could be abusing that kid, brainwashing him. I won’t let you get caught up in their web of deceit.”

“Are you kidding me? You know them, they aren’t like that! They love each other, just like you and me.”

“I thought I knew them, but it turns out I don’t. And neither do you.”

“Marcus,” he begged, tears gathering in his eyes that squeezed my heart like a vise. “He’s my best friend. My *only* friend. I trust him, and I believe what he’s told me, that Penn is the love of his life, no matter what else they are to each other.” His throat bobbed, and he swiped at his eyes. “I need him. He needs me right now, and I’m not there for him. Please, Coach. If you can’t understand that, then you aren’t the man I thought you were.”

It sounded an awful lot like an ultimatum. My boy was telling me, with his heart on his sleeve, that he needed to uphold his loyalty to his friend. A quality, along with his compassion and unconditional love, that I loved and admired most about him, and here I was, squashing it under my shoe. He’d only had one other friend, Sean Wilkins, and that boy had broken Austin’s heart, and now I was breaking it again, and basically forcing him to act like a Sean to Wilder.

As much as the thought soured my mouth, I needed to man up and put aside my personal feelings for the moment so I could give him what he needed.

“Stay here,” I conceded with a sigh, pushing to my feet. “I’ll go over there and get to the bottom of things.”

“Thank you!” Austin squeezed me like I held his life in my hands.

“Don’t thank me yet. I have no idea how this will turn out.”

With my heart in my throat, I closed the distance separating our houses and knocked on the Taylors’ door. Penn answered, with Wilder glaring at me over his shoulder as if I were the devil.

“Can I come in?”

“Are you sure you want to?”

“Please, Penn. There are some things I’d like to discuss with you, and I’d rather not do them standing out here.” He stepped aside and motioned for me to come in. “Hey, Wilder.”

His evil eye could melt glaciers. “Did you report us?”

“No, I didn’t. It never even crossed my mind. Is that what you were worried about?”

“Of course it is. Last time I checked, it was against the law.”

A long, steadying breath through my nose helped to remind me of my purpose for coming here. Austin. “Well, so is jaywalking and sodomy, but I practice both on a regular basis, so...”

“What did you come here for, then?” Penn asked.

“Please, help me understand. Make this make sense to me,” I pleaded.

“Where’s Austin? Did he not want to participate in story hour, too?”

“He’s—” I swallowed, my gaze flicking between Wilder and Penn. “I needed to make sure he stayed out of this until I feel it’s a safe situation for him to be involved in.”

“I see. Why don’t you just come right out and say he thinks I’m a disgusting pervert, and he wants nothing to do with me? Better yet, why can’t he say that for himself?”

I felt sad for him, and I was clearly able to see the damage I’d done by keeping them apart. “Wilder, Austin made up his mind about you the day he met you. Nothing has changed for him. It’s my concern, not his.”

Penn patted my knee. “What do you want to know?”

I sat down and listened while they explained how they’d accidentally fallen in love without realizing they were related by blood. How Wilder, needy and confused and horny, had latched on to Penn and chased him down, a lot like Austin had done to me. And by the end of their story, I was more conflicted than ever, because I was actually happy for them. They weren’t monsters, and they weren’t involved in something nefarious. They were just like me and Austin, in love with the right person, no matter how wrong it looked from the outside looking in.

A flash of movement outside the window caught my eye, and everyone turned to look.

A smile teased my lips. Did I really expect him to follow my instructions and stay home? “Wilder, I think Austin is outside. He’s dying to knock on that door and come in and see you. He’s probably waiting for me to say it’s okay. I would’ve likely continued to stew in my feelings for another week or two before I was ready to confront you, if not for Austin. I couldn’t take one more day of his silent treatment and his hostile glaring.”

“You should’ve seen Wild. He was much the same. I’m surprised you didn’t hear him cursing you from all the way over here.” Penn smirked.

He squeezed Wild’s leg and pressed a kiss to the top of his curly head. “Go on, Wild. Go make things right with him.”

He jumped to his feet and ran to the door. “I see you, Wolfe, you dickhead! How could you ignore me for a whole week?”

The porch swing creaked as it accepted the weight of the two boys. I could see their heads close together as they made up. Austin hadn't lost his best friend, and neither had I. Sometimes, my husband knew best, despite his lack of experience.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

AUSTIN

Wild toyed with the wedding band on my fourth finger, and it occurred to me, “You’re not actually married, are you?”

He frowned like I was a fool. “Of course not. My last name is Raines. The first day I met you, you introduced yourself as married. So I just repeated it and said the same thing. Wishful thinking. Every time I see this ring, I get jealous.”

I hated that I had something he didn’t, that he wasn’t entitled to the same rights as me, to marry the man he loved.

“I’m sorry,” I said, meaning it wholeheartedly.

“Yeah.” He kicked his feet, staring at the ground.

“You know, you could still do it.”

“Do what?”

“Get married.”

“Oh yeah? How do you figure? Last I checked, it was illegal to marry your dad.”

“It still is,” I smirked, “but you could exchange rings and vows, and no one would have to know but you and Penn. Tell people you’re married. What do they know?”

He thought about it, chewed on his fingernails, and thought about it some more before finally answering, “You know what?”

“What?”

“I could marry him.”

“You have the best ideas,” I teased.

“And you’re very devious. I think I’m rubbing off on you. It’s the Wilder effect.”

I scoffed. “You wish you could rub off on me.”

“I almost did! Your damn Daddy ruined it,” he quipped.

“I’ve got a game tomorrow. You want to come watch?”

“Of course. I’m your biggest fan, remember?” He batted his eyes, matching his falsetto voice, and I was in stitches.

“And I’m yours.”

But Wild turned serious. “Don’t ever ditch me like that again, or I’ll squeeze your balls in a vise.”

Nodding, I swore, “I promise.”

Closing my eyes, I breathed in the scent of roasted peanuts and popcorn that carried on the wind. I was home. No matter what city I played in, no matter what stadium I stood in, the familiar scents and sounds, the feel of the pitcher’s mound beneath my cleats, would always be home to me. Had been since I started playing little league when I was six. No matter how old I got, I would never outgrow my love for this game.

In the distance, I could make out exactly where my biggest fan was sitting. He shouted my name above the roar of the crowd, madly waving his red and gray Muskrats pennant.

We beat the Orange Valley Ospreys by six points, and after the game, Wilder waited for me outside the locker room.

I handed him the winning game ball to add to his collection. He had them all lined up on a shelf above his dresser.

He tossed it in the air, catching it repeatedly. “Have I told you how hot you look in your uniform?”

I couldn’t help but smile whenever he opened his mouth. “Only like six times.”

“Well, clearly that’s not enough. Hey, have you ever done it in your uniform? With the coach?”

My cheeks burned brighter than the red jersey I wore during the game. “I’m not telling you that.”

“You have! You totally have. Did Marcus wear his coach uniform?”

“Maybe.” I was grinning like a fool, giving myself away.

“That’s hot.”

“Austin! Austin! Wait up.”

I turned to see who was shouting my name and froze. His was the last face I ever expected to see at one of my games. Sean Wilkins. My former best friend.

“How are you? How have you been? I caught your game. You were amazing. You just keep getting better.”

He continued to ramble on, peppering me with questions as if there weren’t a giant divide between us, created by his hatred and unacceptance of me.

“Sean, this is Wilder.”

Wild frowned. “Sean? *The* Sean? World’s shittiest friend Sean?”

He really had no filter. “The one and only,” I confirmed. At least Sean had the grace to blush. He looked ashamed of himself, as he should.

“Well, he replaced you with the world’s bestest friend—me. So thanks for stopping by. See ya.” Wilder grabbed my arm and tugged me along with him.

“Can you wait a second, please?”

I pulled away from Wild and turned around to face him. “What is it, Sean? What can you possibly have left to say to me that you haven’t already said?”

“I just wanted to say...” He seemed to lose his courage in the face of Wild’s evil glare. “I just wanted to say I’m sorry. I behaved like an asshole.”

“Sure did,” Wild confirmed, smirking.

“You didn’t deserve that, and I didn’t really give you a fair chance.”

I'd waited years for his apology, thinking the words would magically fix things between us. But now, faced with the one thing I wanted, I really didn't feel any different.

"You're right, I didn't deserve that. And neither did Coach. You were my friend, and when I needed you, you weren't there for me. You let me down. I begged you to listen, Sean. I stood outside of your window and begged you, and then I threw up in your bushes because of the terrible things you called me. I'm glad to see a change in you; it's long overdue. And I appreciate you coming out here to apologize to me, but I don't see how it changes anything."

"Do you think... Maybe I could see you again? If you're not busy?"

"He's always busy," Wild interjected.

"O-okay, then. Sorry. It was good seeing you."

Again, Wild tugged me along, but halfway down the corridor, he surprised the shit out of me. "We're on our way to Dixon's Diner. There's probably an extra seat at our table." And then we were off again before Sean could respond.

"Why did you do that?" I asked in the car.

"Cause I knew you wanted to and didn't have the balls to say it."

I hadn't really thought about asking him, but once the words were out of Wilder's mouth, I was glad for his big balls.

"Thank you."

"Don't expect me to get buddy-buddy with him. *I'm* your number one friend. He's yesterday's news. Don't forget it." He threw the car in drive and peeled out of the parking lot.

As I stared at his profile, a smile teased my lips. I could never forget it. Wilder Raines was the best friend a guy could hope for, and I was never letting him go.

One of the worst possible times to seduce a guy is when he has a mouthful of toothpaste and it's running down his chin. Marcus slid his arms around my waist, skating his hands over my bare flesh. He nibbled my ear, his hot breath sending shivers down my spine.

“Sorry I missed your game.”

I spit and rinsed before answering. “It couldn't be helped. You had a game of your own to play.”

“Two games on the same night. Speaking of, have you ever played a doubleheader?”

“Nope.” I studied his face in the mirror, noticing a teasing smirk pulling at his lips.

“Would you like to?”

“I don't follow.”

“You will, if you follow me.” He sucked another kiss onto my neck before tugging me into the bedroom. “Kneel for me.”

Shucking the towel from around my hips, I let it pool on the floor before climbing on the bed, onto my knees, with my hands by my sides and my head tilted back, mouth open wide.

He pulled back the covers to reveal a hot pink double-headed dildo. It had to be at least three inches thick and possibly twelve inches long. It was a monster.

In shock, I forgot myself and my pose and gasped. “Where did that come from?”

“Ball boy, is that how you behave when you're kneeling for me?”

“No, Sir.”

Grabbing it up, Marcus brought the toy to my mouth and rubbed it over my lips, dipping it inside my mouth to tease my tongue.

“Let me watch you suck on it.”

I closed my lips around the silicone and sucked it in as he fed it to me, inch after inch, in and out in a slow glide.

“Good boy. Pretend it’s my cock and suck it good. Show me how much you love it.”

I went to work on the dildo, hollowing my cheeks, puckering my lips, making it look good for him. It must’ve been a good show, because I could tell he was affected when he unzipped his jeans and pulled his stiff cock out. He rubbed it as I sucked, continuing to praise my oral skills.

“You have the prettiest lips, the most talented mouth. I love to watch you suck cock.”

The blowjob was becoming sloppy, the sound of my slurping becoming louder. Drool dripped down my chin.

“I remember the first time you sucked me off in my hotel room. You were wearing those tiny little shorts that said ‘*Ball Boy*’. That was the night you became mine.” Leaning in closer, Marcus licked my wet, swollen lips as I continued to suck. It was a messy kiss that made my dick throb. “You taste so fucking sweet.”

He licked along the length of the silicone shaft until he reached the opposite end and popped it into his mouth. Like a scene from *Lady and the Tramp*—but in this case, it was a dildo between us and not spaghetti—we came closer and closer until our mouths almost met in the middle. The damn thing was just too long for that. He bit into the silicone and held it between his teeth as he fed it to me, pushing it further down my throat before retreating. Again and again, he fucked my mouth with the toy, forcing it past my limits until he triggered my gag reflex, and then praised my tears.

“That’s it, baby. Cry for me. Choke on it until your throat burns for me.”

Why in the hell did that turn me on so much? But it did. It drove me wild to hurt for him, to please him. I sucked the toy like a maniac, starving and obsessed for another taste of cock—his cock, fake cock—it didn’t matter, as long as I was filled.

“Sit down and lean backward. Spread your legs for me. I’m gonna fuck you with this dildo just like this, with my mouth.”

I scrambled into the position, spreading my thighs as wide as I could. Marcus kneeled between my legs and teased my balls and my taint with the wet cockhead. My hips moved on their own, pushing against the toy, writhing like I was already being fucked. He was driving me wild, making me desperate for it. I wanted him to hear me beg.

“Please, Coach. Push it inside me. Stuff me with your cock.”

Without any further prep, without lube, he pressed the head past my tight rim.

“*Aagh!*” I swallowed past the kiss of fire. “It burns.”

“Does that hurt your tight little hole, ball boy?”

“Yes,” I hissed.

“The best way to make it better is to let me keep going, deeper. Let me stretch you.”

I bucked my hips, forcing another two inches inside my tight channel. “Stretch my tight hole, Coach. Stuff me with your bat.”

He chuckled, his scruffy lips twitching sexily. “You love that nasty baseball talk, don’t you? You want me to play along?” He nipped my thigh, licked up the seam of my balls before nipping them, too, and looked up to see me nodding. “You’ve got some filthy balls. Would you like Coach to shine them for you?”

“Yes, p-please.” My breathing was a ragged mess.

His tongue snaked out to lick and suck my sac, lightly pinching it with his lips.

“You didn’t put any oil on your bat, naughty boy. I better keep it slick for you.” He spit on my hole and then watched the toy glide back inside me, taking his saliva with it. “Like any good warm-up, it’s good to stretch before the main event. Let’s keep stretching you so you’re ready for anything.”

My eyes widened as he took the toy in his teeth again and fucked my ass. *Ready for anything?* What else did he have planned for me? It wasn’t long before he tipped his hand. He

popped his end of the dildo from his mouth and brought the glistening head to my stretched pucker, circling my entrance and the shaft already buried inside me.

“No,” I whispered, realizing what he was planning. “I can’t. I’ve never had two inside me before at the same time. It’s too much, Coach.”

“Lean down and take this end in your mouth. You better make it nice and wet so it doesn’t hurt so bad.”

I sucked on it greedily, knowing he was right, that the wetter I made it, the easier it would slip inside me. While I suck at one end and fuck myself with the other, he slipped his fingers inside me, stretching me to receive both ends.

Then he pulled the toy from my mouth, and with a wicked gleam in his eye, he began pressing it against my entrance until it gave way with a pop.

“Fuck. It burns for real.”

“I bet it does.” He chuckled, spitting on my hole again. “Look at your ass, look at it swallow this toy. I’ve never seen anything like it.” He tore himself away from the view to look into my eyes with awe. “You’re so fucking beautiful. You take my breath away.”

He dropped his mouth on my cock and sucked it hard and fast as he fucked me without mercy. It was so depraved, so extreme, and it felt fucking amazing as it pushed against my gland, that I couldn’t hold back. I emptied my load down his throat in a hot rush, and he gagged trying to swallow it all at once. When he caught his breath, he slid the toy from my body and then climbed up over my chest, straddling my face. Marcus grabbed his cock by the base and smacked my lips with the tip.

“Suck it. Suck it just like you sucked that dildo. I’m going to flood your throat like you just did mine.”

I choked on his length, bobbing and slurping, until he grabbed the back of my head and held it tight against his thatch of curls, emptying down my throat with a primal grunt.

And then he gave me the sweetest, softest kiss, putting me back together again after wrecking me.

“That, my filthy little ball boy, is a double-header.”

EPILOGUE

MARCUS

“It’s time to tie the knot. You ready?”

“Hardly. I think Wild must be unbalanced to want to marry me, but I’d better hurry up and snag him before he comes to his senses.”

We drove forty-five minutes to arrive at the beachside wedding destination Austin and Wilder had carefully chosen to match the sketches in Wilder’s notebook, straight from his dreams.

I herded a terrified Penn into a covered pavilion with bathrooms to freshen up before the ceremony. “When Austin sends me a text that they’re finished preparing, we’re going to walk out to the spot where we will meet Austin and wait for Wilder.”

He peered into the dirty mirror, straightening his tie. “Okay, sounds simple enough.”

A door banging shut on the other side of the pavilion echoed through the air vent in the wall above our heads. It must connect to the other bathroom. A moment later, two familiar voices drifted through the vent.

“Stop flirting with yourself in the mirror and help me fix this damn tie,” Wilder complained.

I turned to Penn, my eyebrows raised in question. Should we continue to listen, or let them know we could hear every word? He shrugged and held his finger to his lips, urging me to stay quiet.

Austin sounded amused. “Where did you get this thing, the thrift store?”

“No. It’s new. Why would I wear a used tie to my wedding?”

“Am I missing something? Who is DB and why are their initials all over your tie?”

“You’re definitely missing something, jackass.”

I held my hand over my mouth, snickering along with Penn as we listened in.

“Fine. Be mysterious.”

“How do you know how to tie this thing?”

“Because Coach and I wear them sometimes when we travel for games and interviews.”

“Whatever. Not too tight! I can’t breathe.”

“Is that better, whiny baby?”

“Sorry. I’m just nervous. I want to make sure everything turns out perfect.”

“It will, Wild man. Quit your worrying. Penn can’t wait to marry you, although I can’t figure out why.”

I glanced at Penn again, his eyes twinkling and full of laughter. Austin and Wilder were hilarious together, teasing each other much like brothers.

“Hey! Hands off my shirt. I don’t want it to wrinkle. I was just teasing, geez. Are you gonna tell me why you’re wearing that stupid tie?”

“It’s my nickname.”

“I can’t recall Penn ever calling you anything besides Wild and brat.”

“He saves it for when we’re alone,” Wild teased.

“Oohh, sexy.”

“You don’t have to know everything, nosy ass!”

“I’ll tell you what Coach calls me.”

At that, Penn’s eyes widened hugely. Whatever it was, it must be good.

“Why do you think I would want to know?”

“Liar. You do.”

I shook my head, feeling a little panicked.

“Fine. But it better be good. DB stands for Daddy’s Boy.”

Austin’s choked laughter carried loudly through the vent, echoing off the walls.

“But you’re actually his son. He gets off on also being your Daddy? Damn, that’s twisted, but kind of hot.”

I gave Penn a knowing look. He was head over heels for his boy, just like me.

“Well, I’m waiting...” Wild taunted.

“He calls me his ball boy.” Austin’s voice was now so low I could barely hear him.

But Wilder’s laughter came through loud and clear.

This time, it was Penn wearing the knowing look. Neither of us had a moral leg to stand on. He was as bad as I was, and our humiliation was equal.

“Fuck you,” Austin grumbled.

“You wish! Ball Boy? That’s even more twisted than Daddy’s Boy. Hey, don’t tell Penn you know. He’d never live down his shame.”

“Same. Don’t let Marcus know that you know.”

“Deal. Now, hurry up and get out there so I can marry him before he changes his mind and goes back home.”

“Wild, that’s not going to happen. You and your Daddy are one in a million. You were made for each other. And I’m so glad I get to be here to see your special day. I only hope someday Marcus and I can redo our vows and have something special and beautiful like this.”

“Why? What was wrong with your wedding?”

“Neither of our parents were happy to be there. They kind of ruined the whole thing with their mood. It was just a quickie at the courthouse with a barbeque in the backyard. I’d like to have something like this, with friends who support us and

want us to be happy on our special day. Anyway, I'll see you out there. Wait five minutes before coming out."

And then all was quiet, except for Marcus's phone notifying him of an incoming text message.

"Come on, that's our cue," I whispered.

He followed me out of the bathroom. "And it's your cue to marry that Ball Boy of yours the right way. Make it good for him."

"I intend to, *Daddy*," I quipped. "But first, you."

Our quickie wedding wasn't much of anything romantic, a memory hardly worth framing, yet Austin had. In every single room of our house. As I stared into a photograph of our first kiss as Mr. and Mr. Wolfe, the desire to have a redo of our sacred day grew stronger. The more I flirted with the idea, the more convinced I became it was necessary. Austin deserved to be a prince in a fairytale for one day and to have a real honeymoon.

He deserved to have a dream to remember twenty years from now.

And so I planned, and coordinated, and budgeted, and soon enough, the day came. Austin had no clue.

I'd enlisted the help of Penn and Wilder to ensure Austin got to the ceremony on time and without a hitch. At five o'clock, everyone was in place. My team was lined up along the baseline between third base and home plate. Austin's team was lined up along the baseline between home and first. And our friends and families filled the one hundred and eighty feet between first and third.

I stood on the pitcher's mound with Penn, my best man, and Baylor, who was officiating in his umpire uniform, with the addition of a boutonniere. Despite having done this once already three years ago, my stomach tangled with butterflies.

My heart pounded in my ears. I could feel it beating, hammering away at my chest.

Another thing I put Wilder in charge of? Choosing Austin's walkout song. Usually, for games, he walked out to '*Here Comes The Thunder*' by Tim Hicks, but not today. Thanks to Wilder, Austin approached me to the National Anthem, like it was a frickin' bridal march.

The smile on his face was his best accessory, elevating his appearance in his navy tux to heart-stopping levels. He was absolutely glowing from the inside out. And just like that, the butterflies took flight, fleeing my stomach. And in their wake, a calm feeling of rightness, of assuredness. No matter how many times I promised my life to this man, I was always making the right decision.

And I was always luckier than I had any right to be.

"Of all the places we could have married, it had to be Safeco Field, didn't it?" he teased, stepping into my arms.

"Technically, it's *T-Mobile* now. Our history is baseball. And it's our future. And if everything works out the way I plan, you'll be standing here someday pitching for the *Mariners*. And during every game, I want you to remember this moment, when you promised for the second time to love me forever."

"I'll promise you every day."

After we exchanged our vows, we went up to the clubhouse for our reception. Austin pulled me aside and handed me a box.

"I have something for you."

It was wrapped in silver paper with wedding bells. "How? How did you know to have something for me?" His grin started small and spread slowly, stretching from ear to ear. "Wilder," I guessed.

"He calls it the Wilder Effect," Austin rebutted with a smirk. "Said he figured I wouldn't appreciate being surprised about something like this. And he was right. It was a spectacular surprise, though."

He nodded toward the box in my hands, and I carefully tore the paper off to reveal a cardboard box that held something precious to me. Not nearly as precious as Austin, but the Safeco Field model that would complete my collection. Finally, after years of searching, I held it in my hands, the crown jewel.

“Austin,” I whispered reverently. “Where did you find this?”

“Tracked down a private collector. I told him what it meant to you, and that we were renewing our vows here. After promising a hefty price tag, he agreed I had to have it.”

I laid the box down and took him in my arms, holding on a little too tightly, my lips descending on his a little too roughly. My heart felt like it was expanding too quickly, like it was going to crack open, and my love for him was going to spill out.

“Follow me to the locker room.”

“Coach, now?” He looked around at the assembled guests.

“I can’t think of a better time to consummate our marriage.”

“We’ve been married for three years,” he pointed out, laughing.

“You just promised to obey me. You’re already breaking your vows?”

“No, Sir, Coach. I’m right behind you.”

Wilder intercepted Austin. “Not so fast.”

“But we were just—”

“I know what you were just about to do, Ball Boy. But first, open my wedding gift.”

Austin blushed hard at being called Ball Boy by his best friend, but not as hard as when he opened his gift.

“What am I supposed to do with this?”

“Ask yourself, WWWD, What Would Wild Do?”

“A double-headed dildo? I can figure it out, thanks.” Then, under his breath, he whispered, “I already have one.”

“You nasty fucker,” Wild crowed, beaming with pride. “I’m not surprised. Later,” he said, eyeing me, “you can fill me in on the details.”

Politely ignoring his comment, I asked, “What kind of wedding gift is this?” I replaced the lid on the neon blue dildo.

“Hey, I work in an adult toy store. What’d you think I was gonna give you?”

Admiring Austin’s adorable blush, I saved him by changing the subject. I took him in my arms and dipped him back, planting a long, thorough kiss on his sweet lips.

Baylor hooted and called out, “Mr. and Mr. Wolfe!”

Casey Collins cut his joy short with his sarcasm. “Not a bad ceremony, Buchanan. Pronouncing them married might be the best call you ever made.”

The two of them reminded me of toddlers with the way they sniped at each other.

“Get lost, Collins. You wouldn’t know a good call if it crawled up your ass and fucked you.”

Fire danced in Casey’s eyes. “Back the fuck off, Buchanan, or I’ll show you what that would feel like.”

Austin and I snickered. “If I didn’t know he was straight, I’d swear the tension between them was sexual,” he insisted.

“That’s just Baylor. When he finds your soft spot, he can’t help but squeeze it until you bruise.”

He rubbed his nose behind my ear. “Damn, better keep your eye on them, then. In the meantime, I’ve got something else you can keep it on. Meet me in the locker room.”

“On my way, Mr. Wolfe,” I promised my husband.

DEAR READER

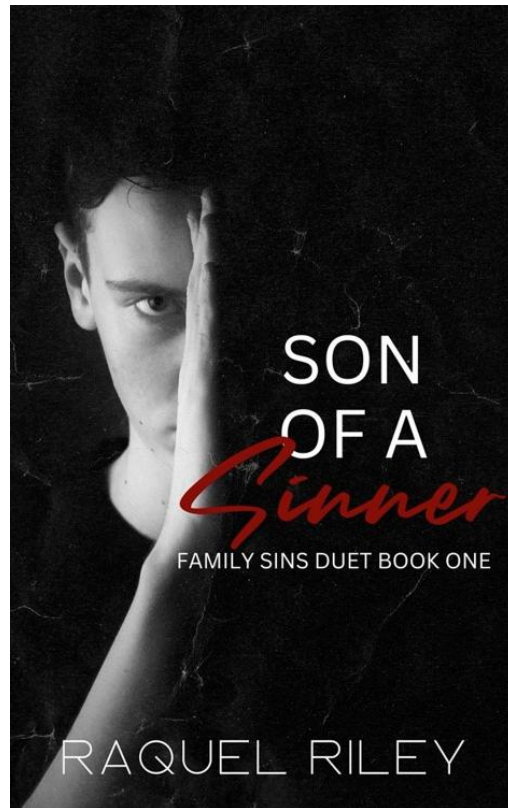
Thank you so much for reading **Ball Boy**, the first novel in the *Boy Batter* series.

If you enjoyed Austin and Marcus's romance, [please leave a review](#) to tell other readers how much you loved them. Telling your friends and spreading the word on social media helps people find their new favorite book.

With love,

Raquel Riley

THE FAMILY SINS DUET



There is a fine line between love and obsession.

Wilder

But I cross lines, blur them until they can't be seen. Considering my traumatic past, I don't fall easily. Penn is the exception. The manifestation of my dream man.

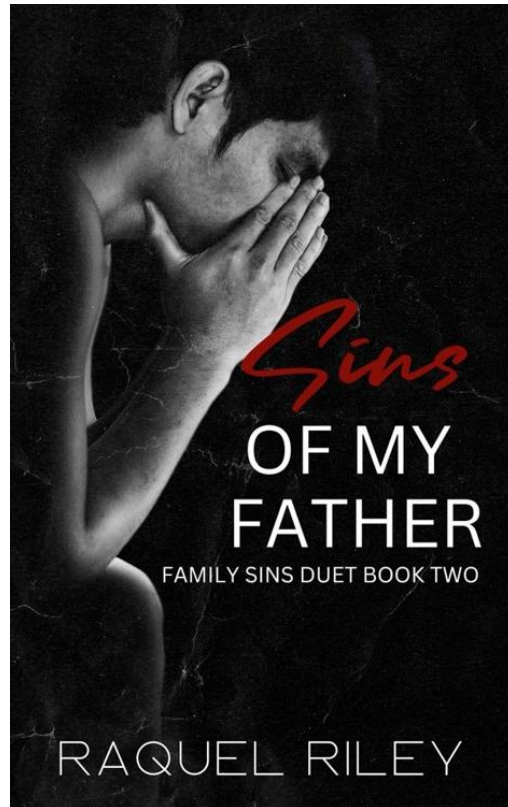
The problem? Penn is my father. A shock to both of us, he's determined to keep me at arm's length. But can either of us fight this temptation?

Penn

I can't... I shouldn't have... But I did... And then I did it again. It seems I can't stop. Wilder is all that I want, all that I need. How can I reconcile my guilt with my desire for him?

My conscience won't let me touch him again, but walking away is not an option. I'm committed to keeping Wilder in my life... but do I want a son or a lover?

[Son of a Sinner on Smashwords](#)
[Son of a Sinner from Raquel's Website](#)



What is the consequence for falling in love with someone you are forbidden to touch? An eternity of guilt? Shame? Misery? Or can you find incredible bliss?

Penn

I've resigned myself to a lifetime of loving the wrong person because it feels so right. But nothing worthwhile comes that easily.

The challenges we've had to face to be together just kept on coming, like a storm with no end.

Would this ever get any easier? Or was it always going to be a tug-of-war between my head and my heart?

Wilder

There was no going back. No do-overs. I fell in love with my father and I have zero regrets.

Every day was a battle to keep our secret from getting out, and when it finally does, will the bubble surrounding our perfect world burst?

[Sins of My Father from Smashwords](#)
[Sins of My Father from Raquel's Website](#)

SHOP WWW.RAQUELRILEY.COM

Check out my store for signed books, digital downloads, special editions and release boxes, art (NSFW), merchandise and apparel, and so much more!

Shop www.raquelriley.com today!

Use code **WELCOME10** at checkout for 10% off

[Ball Boy Release Box](#)

[Ball Boy Signed Paperback](#)

[Family Sins Signed Paperback](#)

[Ball Boy Team Shirts](#)

[Ball Boy Team Hats](#)

[Ball Boy Swag Packs](#)

[Family Sins Swag Packs](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Raquel Riley is a native of South Florida but now calls North Carolina home. She is an avid reader and loves to travel. Most often, she writes gay romance stories with an HEA but characters of all types can be found in her books. She weaves pieces of herself, her family, and her travels into every story she writes.

For a complete list of Raquel Riley's releases, [please visit her website](#).

Click the buttons below to follow her on social media. You can also find all of Raquel's important links in one convenient place on her [Link Tree](#)



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Tracy Ann, your feedback is so appreciated! You help me shape these books and characters and give them life. Thank you for your continued praise and support of my stories.

Also, thank you to my **ARC/street team** for your insightful input and reviews and outstanding promotion.

A huge thank you to the **86'ers!** You crazy bunch are guaranteed to make me laugh at least fourteen times a day.

I can't forget the **Secret Circle!** You bunch keep me accountable and sane and cheer for every one of my accomplishments, both big and small.

Last, but never least, thanks to my family for being so understanding while I ignore you so I can write.