

EVIE:



*Dimples &  
her Devil*



ROSE CEDAR

# Evie: Dimples & her Devil

Havenwood University Book One

Rose Cedar



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ISBN: 9798373755658

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Book Cover Design by Angela Haddon of Angela Haddon Book Cover Design  
<http://angelahaddon.com>

*To everyone and anyone on their own path of self-discovery...  
be patient with yourself. You deserve grace.*

*To my husband, I love you and I like you.*

## Trigger Warnings

Before turning the page, I wanted to let you know that this book explores sensitive topics that include **sexual assault, rape, physical assault, trauma, bullying, body shaming, name-calling, depression, and anxiety.**

This book is recommended for readers over the age of eighteen and includes **explicit language, panic attacks, graphic sex, and graphic violence.**

Reader discretion is advised, and these potential triggers should be considered before moving forward as there is text depicting **rape, sexual assaults, flashbacks of assaults, as well as graphic violence.**

If you are anyone you know is a survivor of rape or sexual assault, you're not alone. If you are seeking support, please consider calling the *National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673.*

*Always take care of yourself, you are important and so is your mental health.*

## Author's Note

Dear Readers,

Evie's story is messy. It's full of personal struggle, strength, and perseverance. It's also full of self-discovery, resilience, and redemption. It's full of fight. It's full of survivorship.

It's also graphic, gut-wrenching, heart-grabbing, and has the potential to evoke strong emotions. The dark elements of this book are exactly that. I'm strongly encouraging you to review the **TRIGGER WARNINGS** before moving forward. Your safety is important to me, please take care of yourself.

Love,

Rose

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## Prologue

# Evie



I dig underneath the piles of clothes folded on my bed and reach for my phone to check the time; I have twenty minutes until I'm expected to sign on with Melanie, my therapist. It's my last virtual session before I leave for school this weekend. I breathe out a heavy sigh, put my phone on my nightstand, and get back to packing. *So. Many. Piles.*

I throw more clothes onto my bed; Hunter's pajama pants, Chase's sweatshirt, and one of their old hats that I wear when my hair isn't cooperating. Touching the soft cotton of their stolen clothes is a sharp reminder of how much I miss them and one of the reasons I'm packing up my life today.

The first reason is for me. I want to continue to heal, grow and do that outside of the comforts of home. That's the second reason: I need to experience some of the world around me. I've been stuck in a routine here and finally feel ready to take some steps in a different direction, challenge myself, and put myself out there. That direction is reason number three. I want to join my brothers at school and follow the plan we set before everything changed three years ago. I miss them, and the emotional and physical distance between us has been painful, especially after everything we have gone through together.

My two brothers, Hunter and Chase, and I are triplets and have always had a strong bond that started when we shared a womb, clung together as preemies, and well into our idyllic childhood. It wasn't until the end of high school that things shifted between us.

The dynamic between us now is strained and I don't like it one bit. I hate to admit it, but a big part of our triplet-hood is broken, and I want to do my part to fix it.

Our birth mother waddled into our parent's hospital, high out of her mind, unable to form words to explain to the Emergency Room nurse that she was only seven and a half months along as she went into active labor. Baby A, Baby B, and Baby C were taken directly to the NICU, and the doctors got to work to get us healthy. We were underdeveloped, addicted, and in withdrawal. Shortly thereafter, our birth mother had hightailed it out of the maternity ward, leaving a note on the bed. She scribbled on a piece of paper that she was signing away her maternal rights, that she didn't know who our father was, and that she hoped the hospital would figure out what to do with us. She hadn't even given the hospital her real name, let alone named us, and we remained Baby A, Baby B, and Baby C for months.

The hospital's NICU doctors, nurses, and staff poured all their love, care, and medical expertise into saving our little preemie butts. The story goes that we all screamed when we were alone and only seemed to settle when we were all squished together, as I am assuming we did in utero. I like to think that our bond, which we refer to as our triplet-hood, had forged strongly from here.

We were adopted by married doctors who worked in the hospital. My brothers and I recovered from our rough start and had a happy childhood full of summer vacations, family-filled holidays, endless trips to the library for me, and weekends at various ice rinks to support Hunter and Chase.

Hunter, or A as we call him, had gotten caught with some weed at the beginning of our senior year of high school and our parents took this as an opportunity to sit us down and tell us about our tragic start, deciding it was finally time to tell

us our truth. I think they were apprehensive and nervous about us experimenting with drugs and alcohol, and the possibility of falling into our assumed predisposition to addiction.

We sat quietly as they explained our unpleasant start. Every eye was wet, except for my eldest brother, Hunter. His eyes remained dry, but his fists were closed so tight his knuckles turned a ghostly shade of white. Those same fists smashed through our kitchen wall before he stormed out of the house, retreating to the treehouse in the backyard.

Hunter doesn't do feelings and when he's confronted with even the slightest bit of uncomfortable emotions, he lashes out, usually on the ice, on walls, or on whoever the offending party is. It's not that he doesn't have a big heart, he does, even if it only extends to his family and a small circle of friends.

Chase, or C, my younger brother, ran after him, but not before gripping my shoulder in a tight squeeze and wiping some stray tears off my stained cheeks. That's Chase for you, our sweet baby brother who's sensitive and makes no apologies for his bleeding heart. His passion for his family, our triplet-hood, and his love affair with hockey pour out of him.

The treehouse served us all in different ways. Hunter could usually be found there often, blasting angry, loud music from his phone and doing copious amounts of sit-ups and pushups or throwing a tennis ball up against one of the walls. I'd find Chase there, carving stumpy tree limbs, folding paper into origami animals, or taping up hockey stick blades.

I found my peace there as well and spent my time either reading or writing while lying on my soft belly, propped up under one of the pillows that resided inside the treehouse. It now serves as a sacred space for healing and has solely been mine and mine alone since everything went down.

I didn't blame my mom or dad back then. There was never going to be an ideal time to break this news to us or for it to be an easy light-hearted conversation to have.

I had composed myself enough to follow my brothers out to our special place. The string lights I had hung from

inside the treehouse rooftop burned bright and were visible through the windows. I had found both of them propped up against the interior walls and plopped down between them, taking my usual middle spot as B with Hunter on my left, Chase on my right. We always clustered together in order this way; subconsciously finding comfort in our triplet-hood bond. And that night we really needed it.

I looped my arms in the crook of each of their muscular arms. My head naturally fell onto the broad shoulder of my big brother and Chase on my own on the opposite side. We didn't talk about it; we didn't say a word then, nor did we bring it up again.

The days, weeks, months, and even the recent three years that followed, were full of confusing and conflicting thoughts that were running through my head. My heart had cracked and the feelings of both depression and anxiety had easily flowed through those fractures and were burrowed deep.

Since I had found out about our start, my journal writing had gotten darker, my mood edgy and I'd isolated myself more and more. I stopped responding to the few friends I had. I had been secluding myself to my room or to the beloved treehouse. My anxious mind raced with depressing thoughts. I buried myself in books and music and M&Ms.

My brothers seemed to swallow their thoughts and feelings, remaining steadfast in their position to stay rooted in their hockey routines, high school popularity, and securing a mask of being unscathed by the ground-shaking news. They continuously gave nothing away, but our triplet mental bond had clued me into ripples of pain that they both had fought to keep in check.

My family maintained our closeness following the aftermath of that conversation but there is an underlying guilty current that flows with questions about our rough start that none of us have brought up, I am convinced that my brothers have the same loop of who, what, where, when, and whys roaming their thoughts as I do. These are questions that we may never have answers to. We don't talk about it out of

respect for our mom, dad, and extended families. I don't want it to taint who I am any more than it already has.

The only part of the crappy start situation we allow ourselves to acknowledge is calling one another by our silly alphabet letters when referring to the other. I'm B since I was the second born, wedged in between Hunter aka A, and Chase aka C. Chase came up with it to lighten the mood and it just kind of stuck.

Our parents offered individual counseling, family therapy, and anything else they could think of to take away the lingering pain of our harsh entrance into the world. I was the only one who accepted the offer and began my therapy journey. It helped and I found myself coming out of my shell more by the time senior year rolled around, but it didn't last long. Drama and trauma struck again before senior year was over.

I sink into my purple bean bag with my laptop open and rest it on my knees. The screen connects to my therapist, who greets me with a smile. Melanie and I have been on this journey together and she knows all about my back story as well as the traumatic event that took place a few years ago. She has seen me through my darkest times with crippling anxiety and depression. She supported me to get to this point where I'm now preparing to transfer from community college to Havenwood University.

I just haven't been ready before this academic year. I've stayed behind to take care of myself. My family understood; our parents wanted me home and both A and C had trouble looking me in the eye after everything that happened.

A spring night our senior year changed my life forever. The night that haunts my daydreams, lives in my nightmares, and has caused me to question my sanity at times.

"Hi, Evie!" She waves at me through the screen with a big smile on her face and follows with, "Can't believe we're almost there: T-minus two days until move-in day. How are you holding up?"

“I was packing up before and got overwhelmed by all the piles of clothes and thinking a-a-about w-w-what’s to c-c-come,” I respond with a stutter while twisting my hands in my lap. I take in a deep breath to calm my nerves. My stuttering started when I was a kid and now, it gets the best of me when I’m stressed, anxious, and uncomfortable.

“I hear you. This is uncharted territory for you and it’s okay to feel a bit apprehensive. Remind yourself that you’ve done the work and will continue to heal while taking in all that college has to offer. What do you think is concerning you the most right now?” She’s right; I’ve done the work and it’s been hard.

There is nothing easy about therapy; dealing with anxiety and depression is hard, and having PTSD is *rooouuuuugghh*.

“I know, I guess now that it’s really happening, I’m doubting that I’m ready.” I chew my lip and deflate into my bean bag.

“It’s okay to feel this way. We’ve been talking and preparing for this weekend for months now, and now that’s finally here, it’s normal to have some second thoughts about it. But Evie, you’re ready. Focus on what your goals are, let’s go through them.” I take a deep breath, she’s right, I am ready.

“I want to experience a new place, new things, with new people. I want to continue to focus on my healing and grow as a person, and I want to reconnect with my brothers. I’ve been thinking of an addition to the list.” I hesitate and my therapist gives me a nod of encouragement to continue. I haven’t said this to anyone yet.

“I want to be open to l-l-love and b-b-being in r-r-relationships, either with f-f-friends or of a r-r-romantic nature. I don’t want to close m-m-m-myself off a-a-anymore to the degree that I’ve had.” I hold her eye contact, meaning every word even if they did come out with stammering.

“Evie! Wow, that’s great progress! I’m really happy to hear you say that. I can see the thought of this makes you anxious though, and that’s understandable. I think as long as



you listen to yourself and are aware of your triggers, that goal is completely doable. All of your goals are! Remember to try and be *kind* to yourself as you take these next steps.” She says, with an emphasis on “kind.”

It’s been hard for me to do that. I get frustrated when my anxiety gets the best of me and sometimes, I get angry thinking about all of the things that lead up to my poor mental health then I get pissed at myself for not being over it. The internal battle leaves me feeling absolutely exhausted and sometimes the cycle is so bad, I’ve ended up depressed, which only made matters worse.

“Ugh. I know, I know,” I say with a sigh.

“I’m trying to be o-o-p-timistic...but what if I c-c-can’t do it? What if I get there and take ten thousand steps back in my progress. What if I fall and can’t get back up...o-o-or the new people I meet think I’m c-c-ra-a-zy and no one wants to be my friend, much less date me.” I’m rambling now. I know these are unhelpful thoughts and I’m spiraling down a rabbit hole big enough for all of them.

“Evie, we’ve talked about how healing isn’t a straight line of progress. Healing isn’t linear. You’re bound to have some hard days as you tackle this next step and that’s okay. Be as patient as you can with yourself. You truly deserve grace. Remind yourself that those who are worthy of being in your life, whether as friends or romantic partners, will be able to honor your boundaries and support you, even if you do fall.” She says gently, and her reassuring smile encourages me to keep going.

“Thanks, Melanie. The logical part of my brain knows this, but it’s hard when my emotions get the best of me. I’m my own worst bully.” I say with a defeated sigh.

“I really appreciate it though and I-i-i know you’re right. I wish I could have as much confidence in myself as you do! I guess the next time we talk I’ll have some u-u-updates for you,” I say with a shaky laugh and rub my sweaty palms over my thighs.

“You can do this Evie; I believe in you! Now, let’s do a refresher on some strategies. Are you going to bring your little toolbox with you?” Ah, yes. My toolbox: a makeshift box that holds grounding items I can use when I’m drowning in a wave of anxiety. It’s an old Warby Parker box that my glasses originally came in. Melanie suggested we make one that focuses on grounding with sensory items. It’s small enough that I carry it with me most of the time, especially when out in public.

In it, I have a lavender essential oil roller, an extra set of earbuds, mint, a mini polaroid of my favorite beach, and my personal fave: an aquamarine worry stone. I remember laughing at the thought when Melanie first introduced it. How can a stone help me feel better? Safe to say, I was totally proven wrong. The idea behind them is to rub the stone in your hand with your thumb when you’re overwhelmed or worried. Rubbing the perfectly indented flat, smooth, oval stone has done wonders when my anxiety rises. It’s my go-to to fidget especially since I used to wring out my hands so hard they would chafe. Who would’ve thought that such a simple object could help manage such complex and intense feelings?

“Absolutely! Wouldn’t dream of not taking it with me. I-i-i actually treated myself and picked up a fidget ring, too. That way I can always have something on me if I can’t pull out my full box.” I say as I show her my new purchase of a thin double banded ring with a circular amethyst gemstone resting on a tiny bar lodged between both bands. The sunlight perfectly reflects off of it and shows off the varying hues of purples.

“That was an excellent idea. I see you went with your go-to color. The purple amethyst looks beautiful!” She says with a smile. I smile back and feel proud of myself for coming up with the idea the other day.

We talk for a bit more and go over some other strategies to help me tackle the upcoming move before ending the call. I hang out in the treehouse a little longer as the sun begins to set. It’s been my safe space and I’m going to miss it.

In addition to therapy with Melanie, I also attend a support group for sexual assault survivors. This group of other young women who have had similar experiences has made me realize that I wasn't alone. I was inspired by my group mates for their courage to attend college in person, and their bravery to take their life back on their terms. I can't remain at home anymore; I've taken online community college as far as it can go. I need to discover exactly who I am at this point in my life, I need to find me.

We talked about it as a family and decided that attending Havenwood would be a great place to start. I will be joining my brothers this fall for our junior year. I'm looking forward to a fresh start and having new positive experiences. I'm hoping to make some friends, immerse myself in classes, and grow into the woman I know I can be. And who knows, maybe I'll find love along the way.

## Chapter One

# Max



Classes start next week, and I can't say that I'm looking forward to it. Since moving back into the hockey house at the beginning of August, I've only had to attend pre-season practice and weight training sessions. I'm not counting down the days until I add four classes, homework, and studying to my schedule but that's the trade-off to playing for one of the most sought-after Division One hockey programs in the country. Our coach is known for producing professional-level talent and if I'm humble about anything, it's that I'm a part of his team. I guess getting my degree is par for the course. I do want a backup plan. I know NHL hockey players don't typically last more than ten years in the league and I'm not naive to think that I'm untouchable.

Hockey is a physical, aggressive, and dangerous sport. Hell, we skate around on razor blades, wielding sticks, and get into it when we need to. Anything can happen, even at this level, the possibilities are endless. I think that's why hockey

players, as well as athletes in general, are so damn superstitious. Several of my teammates have pre-game rituals; listening to a specific playlist, wearing the same socks game after winning a game, or one of the most popular, and growing out facial hair during a playoff run. I don't for one buy into any of that bullshit. My ability to kick ass game after game is due to the hard work I put in, both on and off the ice. I push myself to the brink at the gym, run a few extra blocks every time I'm out there, and eat as reasonably healthy as any college athlete can. I don't mess around. This type of opportunity, to play here, at Havenwood, is a once-in-a-lifetime chance that I don't plan on blowing.

Now, that doesn't mean that I don't plan on being blown because I do – and as often as I can. The one promising thing about classes starting is the tidal wave of girls that are about to crash into campus and I for one can't wait to sample the selection of girls that will want to worship the Havenwood Hockey Devils. Jersey chasers, puck bunnies, sorority sisters, whatever, I have no personal preference. I never have. I like beautiful women and they like me.

Women make it known that they want to hook up with me and my boys. I'm of the mindset that they can use me all they want; the feelings are mutual. I'm always down for a good time. One-night stands and easy, no strings attached fucks are all I need. What I don't need are girlfriends, semester flings, or anything more than one night with a willing woman; and willing being the keyword here. Every girl knows the deal and I don't butter them up with promises of love, fairy tales, and flowers. Fuck that. My time and energy are strictly for my team, my sport, and my family.

My parents and sister mean the world to me and I'm well aware of the second job my dad took to pay for my equipment, travel teams, and everything hockey related when I was growing up. I don't need a girl blurring my vision and clouding my judgment. My dreams are filled with the NHL, buying my parents a big ass house and car, making sure my Broadway-loving, show-tune singing sister goes to every performance she wants to see, and eventually being married to

a blonde, blue eyed, big-boobed bombshell of a wife. Nothing is going to stand in my way. *Especially not some college girl.*

Most of the Havenwood athletes live in donated houses that make up Devils' Row, the street's unofficial name that is two blocks from campus. We have several generous alumni, most of whom went on to play or work in their sports of choice, giving back to their alma mater by making sure that future superstars have a comfortable place to call home while bringing in Ws, trophies, and titles. Our team has three oversized houses and across the street is a block full of football houses. Our neighborhood is hardly ever quiet and fellow classmates make their way here nearly every weekend. This Saturday is no different.

I hit the housing jackpot and have been lucky enough to live with my best friends who are also my teammates, and linemates. There are the twins Hunter and Chase, and our two other buddies Jake and Monroe. We've been tight since day one. I love those fuckers.

Currently, I'm sitting in a lawn chair with my bare feet in a water-filled blow-up pool with my teammates, a beer dangling from my fingers, and sunglasses on my sun-kissed face. It's a hot-as-hell summer afternoon in August and we have plenty to drink as we watch students move back into campus. I take in the scene: long legs in short skirts, bouncing tits, and pretty faces giggle and wave to us as we take it all in from our front lawn. Our new teammates are wide-eyed and grinning ear to ear at the beautiful scenery. I would have to agree with them; if things look this good now, I can't wait to see what tonight brings when we open our doors and welcome our new classmates for the Devils' Row block party. *The possibilities are indeed endless.*

## Chapter Two

# Evie



“We are so proud of you Evie! You are going to have a wonderful year; I just know it!” Mom squeals in my ear, hugging me goodbye for the fifth time in the past twenty minutes. My dad is attempting to pry her off me... again.

“Sweetheart, let her be. She’s going to be fine. Hunter and Chase are just down the road, and I’m sure they’ll check in. Time to go now.” My dad replaces my mom, giving me a big bear hug and I soak up his warmth. After another round of hugs, along with promises to call and text, they walk out of my female-only dorm.

I unpack and neatly place my favorite book boyfriends, my Kindle charger, and other school supplies on my university-issued desk. After setting up my printer and laptop, I lay down on the fresh bed that my mother insisted on making. My new lavender bedding is soft and looks good on my side of the room. Being here feels good. It feels right.

I made a lot of promises to myself when I decided to transfer here. Havenwood will be a fresh start that includes a new place to live and learn, as well as a new setting to make friends. I’m looking forward to meeting girls who share my interests and who will accept me for being me. Maybe, I’ll even make some friends who love books as much as I do.

I'm settling in when the door flies open, and I am greeted by a redheaded beauty. She's polished, trendy, and is looking at me with a huge, white-toothed smile on her face.

"Oh, my goodness! Hi there, Roomie!" She shrieks and rapidly claps her hands with excitement.

"I'm Sloane. It's so nice to meet ya!" She comes up to me and goes in for a hug. I awkwardly hug her back and try to force a smile on my face.

"I have a really good feeling about this semester. How 'bout you? Have you been here long? Oh my, I just love your lavender bedding!" I've been nervous to meet her, and her bubbly greeting is only increasing my nerves.

"H-h-h-i-i, I'm, E-e-vie. It's n-n-ice to m-meet y-y-ou," I manage to get out and frown at myself when the first words that come out are sticky. Sloane doesn't seem to care how my words sound and goes on to ask me fifty more questions in the brief span of time it took for her to make her bed and sit down on top of it. She also claimed with conviction that she has a great feeling about me and hopes that we'll become great friends. *Be open, Evie.*

Sloane tells me about herself, and I learn she is a natural redhead from Georgia and competed in beauty pageants throughout high school. She's a die-hard football fan, a cookie baker, passionate about singing, and a sorority legacy.

She seems to hit several stereotypical boxes that I'm checking off in my head, and I keep reminding myself to keep an open mind, to give her a chance, and that I want to make friends here. I've been leery of girls since high school. I would attempt to make friends and then become collateral damage when my brothers would hook up with them. It got to a point where the three of us made a, "Do Not Date Each Other's Friends," rule and we've stuck to it since.

Sloane and I have more in common than I expected, and I'm pleasantly surprised. She's a transfer student and an English major like I am and a romance novel junkie. She's also a multiple; her twin brother Davis goes to Southern University and is on the football team. She's also not very



trusting of girls since she's been used by fake friends in the past for them to gain access to her quarterback star brother.

We bond, laugh, and I spend the rest of the hot and humid afternoon in my air-conditioned dorm room, feeling excited about the possibility of making a real legitimate friend.



Sloane and I are walking to the cafeteria for dinner when my phone buzzes. The back-to-back vibrations let me know that it's A and C checking in since they know I moved in today. I silence my phone. *I'll text them back later.*

In the cafe, we pile food from the buffet onto our trays and head to a table along the wall of windows that overlook the center of campus. We're up on the second floor and Havenwood looks beautiful from this view. Weathered-brick buildings with white trimmed windows, cobblestone walkways, black iron lanterns, gardens full of flowers, a water fountain, and tall, green-leafed trees. It's a picture-perfect landscape and the students roaming about match the aesthetic.

"There you are, B. You weren't answering our texts." I turn around and see two scowling faces and two sets of arms crossed across their chests.

"Hi guys," I attempt aloofness, avoiding eye contact with them both. They'll see right through me otherwise.

"We made a deal. You answer the damn text thread, so we know you're okay. We had to look at your location to find you when you didn't answer." A, dictates while crossing his arms over his chest and pinches his face in a scowl, clearly aggravated with my lack of communication. He's the most intense out of the three of us.

"I'm sorry guys, I-i-i was j-j-u-s-s-t settling in. By the way, this is Sloane, my new roommate." I tell them while gesturing to Sloane. This appeases them and they pull out chairs and join us. C, reaches over and plucks the apple from

my tray, and takes an obnoxious bite spewing apple juice my way. “Sloane, these are my brothers, Hunter and Chase.”

“I hope you treat my sister right,” A states and stares Sloane down for a few seconds, refusing to break eye contact with her. She gives it right back to him, crossing her arms over her chest, mirroring A.

Sloane’s squinty stare softens as she grins ear to ear, “And here I thought you boys were just scoping out the new girls on campus,” she drawls with a smirk.

“Pleased to meet you both and I cross my heart to be the best roommate and friend that I can be to Evie,” she says as her hand gestures over her chest, flashing the same white-toothed grin from earlier. I can’t help but smile back this time.

A breaks his growly expression and smiles wide, respect for Sloane strewn across his face. His dimples even pop, which rarely happens. It’s one of the few things that the three of us share in the looks department.

We also have the same shade of brown hair, brown eyes, and a cluster of freckles across the bridge of our noses. It makes me look like I am seven and has the opposite effect on them.

Our similarities stop there, though; I got the weirdo genes. I’ve got hair that can’t decide if it’s wavy or curly, eyes that are too big for my face, and at least a foot deficit in height between myself, A, and C. My breasts are more than a handful and my inner thighs touch. I’ve been a double-digit size since ninth grade and don’t possess one athletic bone in my body. My cheeks turn crimson red regardless if I’m anxious, mad, or turned on. And yeah, I only know about being red when I am turned on because every time I read a steamy scene in one of my smut-filled romance books, it looks like I have scarlet fever.

Sloane extends her hand to C in greeting, and I can feel his bouncing leg up against mine underneath the table. *Is he nervous?* He shakes her hand and they both immediately release their grips as if their touch burns. He even goes so far as to shake his hand out.

A declares that he wants to see my dorm room. Sloane and I lead the way to our new home away from home. After careful inspection and some teasing from A and C over me bringing my beloved book boyfriends that they eye on my bookshelf, they head out. Before they get very far, C spins and turns to me and says,

“Listen B, there’s a block party on our street tonight and all the team houses are going to have their doors open. If you and Sloane come through, just let us know so we can keep an eye on things,” C says with an uneasy expression and pleading eyes.

“Well, aren’t you the sweetest thing? You don’t have to worry yourself though sugar, we have plans tonight and we won’t be needing any brotherly services or a babysitter,” Sloane coos to my two-minute younger brother, complete with a mouth full of southern twang and a teasing wink.

I look up and C is totally entranced with my redheaded roommate. Or maybe she’s a witch since she’s clearly cast a spell on him with her southern accent as he’s rendered speechless. A is laughing behind a fist and smacks C in his stomach to bring him back to earth.

“Come on, C. Max just texted for us to pick up some ice before we head back to the house. Let’s go.” He then narrows his gaze at me and tells us to let them know if we do make it out to the block party. I shoo them away, they’re being so embarrassing! I close the door on them and turn around to see Sloane with her hands on her hips in front of her closet.

“So...what are our big plans for the night?” I literally have only spoken to my parents, my brothers, and her since arriving a few hours ago and have made no plans for the night. Usually, a fun Saturday night is starting a new book series and moving through my TBR list.

“Oh, honey bunny, we’re going to that block party, but we will *not* be under the thumb of your brothers while we do it. I love how protective they are of you, but we are two single ladies going out tonight!” She sing-songs her words and pumps her perfectly manicured hands into the air. She puts

together an outfit and looks at me, claps her hands, and tells me to hop to it. I take a long look at myself in the full-length mirror inside my closet door and sigh. *Be open, Evie. New experiences, right?*

Before I can shake off my own pep talk and adamantly decline to go, I feel a brush being pushed through my wavy, unruly hair and see a straightening iron plugged in.

“What are you doing?” I say to Sloane, who has changed into a cute summer romper with gladiator sandals tied up to mid-calf. On her, it doesn’t look like her circulation is being cut off. My calves can’t handle shoes like that, and I always opt for my slip-on sneakers. *In case I have to run.*

“We’re getting ready to go out, silly! What on earth does it look like we’re doing?” She draws out her exasperation with me waving around a hair tool in each one of her hands. The next thing I know, my hair is straight and shiny with some curls at the ends and laying gracefully over my shoulder blades. I have on a cute form-fitting sundress and my trusty checkered Vans. I think the last time I wore a dress was for our high school graduation and don’t even remember buying or packing this one. My sneaky ninja of a mother must have snuck it into one of the many clothing piles that were on my bed when I was packing up.

My eyes have been bothering me, so I keep my glasses on. My contacts will only irritate my eyes and I don’t want to touch them and smear the mascara that Sloane insisted on coating my eyelashes with.

She lines us up shoulder to shoulder and raises her phone above our heads, throws her arm around my shoulders, and says “smile” as she takes a selfie of us to post on Instagram. I hardly recognize myself.

I grab my phone and resist sending my brothers a text to tell them we are headed over. As close as we are and as much as I am happy to be here at Havenwood with them, I am also determined to make my own memories. I take a deep breath to steady my creeping nerves. We shut the door and are on our way. *Here goes everything.*

## Chapter Three

# Max



“Where have you guys been? After you left for campus, people started showing up,” I ask Hunter and Chase, annoyed that they’ve been MIA.

They shrug their shoulders in unison and at the same damn time say, “Sorry, Max.” It’s always freaky when they do that shit, and I remind them of their twin attunement. I watch as they both exchange a look that shows that they are silently communicating.

“You’re doing it again!” I tell them.

“Yeah, about that, man. We haven’t exactly been honest with you or anyone else...but we aren’t twins,” Hunter explains, while his brow rises at me. *Wait, hold up. They aren’t twins?*

“We’re two of three; we have a sister who just moved to campus today, so we went to check out her dorm and meet

her roommate. We're triplets," Chase proudly states with a smile. *Triplets? What the fuck?*

I guess I shouldn't have assumed, but going out on their shared birthday for the past two years seemed to convince everyone on the team that they were goddamn twins.

Not once have they mentioned a sister and we talk about sisters all the damn time; I have one and our housemate Jake has several. I'm feeling all kinds of hurt that they didn't share this with me before. We've spent a shit ton of time together, two years' worth, and it's weird they haven't mentioned her. *Who is she? Does she look like them? Why have they kept her a secret?*

On cue, two of our housemates walk through and overhear our exchange. "Hey Monroe, did you know that these two asshats aren't twins?" Monroe looks at me like I have two heads.

"They're a part of triplets." I've never met a triplet sibling set before. Chase fills in the blanks for Monroe as my brain is still coming up with questions about this mystery sister.

"And where is your sister? Is she joining us on this fine evening?" Monroe asks while raising an interested eyebrow and has a devilish grin. Hunter gives him the evil eye and his jaw ticks. *Okay then, I guess he's the protective brother of the two.* I'm honestly intrigued now. Chase answers before Hunter responds and his scowl only deepens.

"We told her to let us know if she's coming through with her hot as fuck roommate." Chase is all smiles as he tells us about his brief introduction to the redhead. He's got a look on his face and it's completely clear how fucked he already is over her. *Sucker.*

"You calling dibs, brother?" I ask him while elbowing him in the ribs. He's got the biggest cheese on his face.

"Nope. Can only admire her from afar. We agreed in high school to never date one of each other's friends and we stick to it. Plus, I would never want B to be linked up with any

of you fuckers, hence us keeping her a secret.” He shoves me and makes an identical face to Hunter as his grin fades. Guess both these boys are protective of her. I get it. I’m protective of my sister, too.



Most of the guys pair off with girls as the sun sets. I sit in between the Wilton brothers and see a flash of red.

“Hey Chase, is that your girl? Just saw a redhead across the way.” He turns his head so fast I swear to fucking God I have whiplash from just sitting next to him.

“Motherfucker,” he sighs loudly and shoves his brother to get his attention. He points towards the five football houses across the street.

I follow his outstretched, pointed finger and see his pretty redhead, who has her arm linked with a short, curvy, cute, brown-haired girl. She has black eyeglasses, a tight sundress that perfectly hugs her large hips, and checkered Vans. She looks uncomfortable and her widened eyes dart around lookin’ like a damn deer caught in the headlights as she takes in the scene around her. *What a cute little doe.*

Her friend, who I’m now calling Red, is talking to three football players and seems to have them eating out of her hand as they smile at her. I’d bet money that they much rather be eating out another part of her based on the hunger in their eyes that I can see from fucking here.

I can understand Chase’s admiration for Red. She’s hot, but my eyes keep darting back to the brunette. She looks like she’s about to jump out of her skin and I realize...I don’t like it. *Woah, what the hell? I don’t even know her.*

I’m still watching her when both Hunter and Chase rise and walk toward them. Hunter stands directly in front of the doe-eyed deer and blocks her from the football O-line. Chase inserts himself next to Red and crosses his arms over his chest,

which steers the footballers in different directions. *Impressive, considering they're the size of fucking refrigerators.*

Hunter bends down to whisper something in her ear. She's nodding her head up and down and wringing her hands together in front of her ample chest while she listens to everything he says. *This girl has a great set.* I swear I'm going to give myself fucking whiplash with how this girl is getting to me tonight. First, I don't like her being upset and now I'm thinking about her tits? *I shouldn't be thinking about her at ALL.*

Pigs must be fucking flying because that's the only explanation I can come up with when I witness grumpy ass, Hunter Wilton, show this sweet-looking girl some kindness when he places her small hands in his. I narrow my eyes at his closeness to her, to him touching her. I don't know why I'm having such a strong reaction to a girl I've never seen before.

She's pretty, like, *really* fucking pretty. She has that whole innocent girl-next-door vibe going on, which I rarely go for, but on her? I can't stop staring. *There's just something about her.*

Chase has joined their conversation, temporarily peeling himself away from Red. He puts his arm around one of her shoulders and Hunter does the same.

I see three identical smiles, six dimples pop out of their cheeks, and three sets of freckles across their identical noses as they embrace. I'm absolutely sure that this is the mystery sister. *Their triplet sister. Their triplet sister whose tits look fucking fantastic in that sundress and whose cute face I can't stop looking at. Fuck.*

My stomach does a damn backflip when I see that million-dollar grin across her beautiful face. *Goddamn, she's gorgeous.*

Now the Wilton brothers definitely can pass for siblings. They have the same lean build and height, the same dark brown wavy hair and brown eyes, although Hunter's can look lighter sometimes. This girl is much shorter, curvier, and has straighter brown hair, although in the girl world that means



nothing. I have a sister who colors and changes her hair weekly.

They lead her back towards our house, with Chase gently guiding Red behind them.

“Hey Max, we’re gonna run the girls home real quick, okay?” Chase yells over to me. I wave to him to let him know I hear him.

That smile. Those dimples. *Damn.*

I feel a twinge of disappointment as the four of them walk away. Interesting that he didn’t introduce us, ramping up not only my curiosity but also making me goddamn angry. I wanted to meet her and take in up close those thick thighs and curvy hips.

She was all kinds of cute, even for a girl who isn’t my type. She has that Jessica Day vibe about her: sneaker-dress combo, black-rimmed glasses, and plump lips that leave me wondering what her mouth could do...Fuck. *Clearly, I need to get my dick sucked.*

As they walk away, I catch a glimpse of her wide hips and big ass. As I’m taking her in, I feel my dick start to bulge and pulse. That feeling quickly fades as my gaze shifts and lands on two big walking red flags flanking her on either side.

Sisters of your boys, and especially your teammates, are off-limits. Bro code and all. I’ve also made it this far without a girl and don’t plan on screwing up my goal to make it to the pros. I guess this means the hot mystery sister is going to have to be admired from a distance. *It’s probably better this way.*

A group of girls walk toward the semi-circle of guys I am sitting with and one by one, they plop down on open laps.

“Hi, Max. I’m Lexi,” the blonde chick purrs while making herself comfortable on my thigh. “I’ve been waiting for my chance to spend some time with you.” I feel a hand trail down my t-shirt and slip under my waistband reawakening my dick. Now, Lexi is more my usual speed: blonde and bold.

“No time like the present. Tonight’s your night then, but just tonight, ok, babe?” She smiles, grabs my hand, leading me inside, with an understanding of what’s about to happen.

The doe-eyed, adorable deer with the dynamite smile is momentarily forgotten.

## Chapter Four

Evie



I haven't been to a party since the night that changed the course of my life. It's taken a lot for me to be here standing amongst Havenwood's student population on Devils' Row. I was doing fine at first. We met some girls who also live in our building, and we took some more selfies.

When A and C texted our triplet chat and asked if we had decided to come, I felt guilty for ignoring them. I wanted to do this on my own, to just go out with a friend and have a good time. I was doing just that until Sloane captured the attention of three very large and in-charge football players. Then things shifted for me.

It was their size that triggered my anxiety and all of the people milling about. It's as if the population in the street had doubled in the few moments since they had walked over to flirt with my beauty queen roommate.

The enormous men tried to engage with me, and because I'm socially awkward and my words don't work when I'm uncomfortable; I stayed quiet as a church mouse. They probably thought I was rude and ignoring them. Sloane must've thought the same. She was stealing glances at me, silently encouraging me to join in. *If only she knew.*

The ginormous jocks got the hint and ignored me right back, paying me no mind while they spoke to Sloane. One of them was more forward with his intentions, and his flirting was downright creepy. Sloane threw her hand up to stop him from spewing any more sexual innuendos toward her and, for a few moments, he did. Then he set his sights on me.

When he shifted towards me it sent my already rising anxiety into a frenzy. He blocked Sloane and his friends from my view as he turned his back to them.

He had a creepy expression on his face, and the way he looked at me when the movement caught my downcast eyes, had a shiver climbing up my spine.

This entitled ass reached out and slipped a meaty finger under the strap of my dress, touching my skin, which had me wanting to scream. My voice was frozen in my throat. He tugged the material away from my shoulder. I wanted to protest, but my voice still wouldn't work. *STOP TOUCHING ME!*

I wanted to run away, but my Vans were full of cement, and it rooted me to this very vulnerable spot. He watched my frightened face and if he was an animal, he could have smelled my fear. It only spurred him on.

“Three seconds is all I need. One, to rip this dress off, another second for you to be open to me, and one more for me to take this sweet ass pussy.”

My breathing increased, and images of three years ago slammed into me. Suddenly, I was dragged back to that awful spring night. *No, not again. This can't be happening again.*

Something clicked inside me. My dumb voice finally worked.

“G-g-g-g-g-et the h-h-h-hell a-w-w-w-ay from m-m-m-e-e-e!” I loudly stuttered out, and he laughed in my face. His buddy either heard me or caught on to the rapey vibe this jerk was giving off and pulled him away, which allowed Sloane to step in next to me.

“Fucking ugly ass, prude, fat bitch,” he spat out before walking away. Sloane threw her arm around my shoulders, and I wrung my hands in front of my body. One of my tells.

“Leave her alone, you big ol’ brute, ya hear?” Sloane yells while her arms tighten around me. Her eyes are full of fire watching him walk away, which is contradictory to her rubbing small circles on my shoulder to comfort me.

“Yeah, sorry about that. We rarely hang out with him. He just tagged along with us when he saw us coming up to you guys,” one of the other huge jocks offers from a few feet, giving me some much-needed space. He looks sincere, but the damage has been done.

“We’re just gonna hang here with you girls for a few in case he circles back, okay?” Another big guy states and Sloane beams at his offering. I just nod my head.

My breathing is out of control, and I tried counting backward to reel myself in. This is usually a full-proof coping skill my therapist encouraged me to use when I was drowning in a wave of anxiety. In this case, it was for good reason. *Stupid asshole.*

I’m internally kicking myself for not giving A and C a heads-up that I was coming. This is exactly why they wanted to know. I should have written them back.

A few moments later, I spot them walking towards Sloane and me. The football players are still here, talking to her about her brother, who’s a college quarterback. I’m not really listening to them. I’m still counting backward to get myself under control. Sloane has since looped our arms together, and it’s a welcoming grounding gesture. ...76, 75, 74, 73...

I’m interrupted by the sound of my brothers calling my name. *Uh oh.* I brace myself for the scolding I’m about to get from A and C for not letting them know I was here, but it doesn’t come. Both of their faces are etched with concern, not anger like I thought I would see.

Chase tells the footballers that he and Hunter have it from here, and they disperse. Sloane unhooks herself from me and talks with her hands as she explains what happened with that jerk. Both my brothers look like they want to punch something, or in this case, someone. If I could get my body to work the way I wanted it to, I would've opted to punch him, too. *Right in the freaking balls.*

Hunter steps close to me after Sloane lets me go and leans down. He places both of his hands on my shoulders, reassuring me that he's here.

"Breathe, B. You're safe. C, and I won't let anyone fucking hurt you, you hear me? We got you." *I'm okay, I'm okay, I'm okay.*

He takes my hands that I haven't stopped twisting and squeezes repeatedly to help steady me. He gives me time to calm down and I get my counting down to single digits before I feel steady enough. It all helps, but I just want to leave and go home now. I'm absolutely exhausted and my social battery is completely depleted.

We turn to head back to the dorms and leave Devils' Row. I notice Chase hasn't been able to leave Sloane's side. He kept his hand on the small of her back the entire way to campus. *I can already see the title of their book: A devil chasing after his sister's roommate. Can't wait to see how this plays out.*

"Are you going to be ok, B? Do you need anything?" A says with gentle eyes and sincerity, which is so uncharacteristic of him. I know he still harbors guilt and blames himself for what happened to me three years ago. They both do, but I don't blame either of them. I've worked through that part. It took some time, and it was hard as hell, but I got to a place where I could forgive them.

"I'm o-o-k-k-a-a-y, just e-e-embarrassed, and will p-p-probably avoid Devils' Row like the p-p-plague, but I'm o-o-k-k-a-a-y." They both frown, with an understanding of where my emotions are right now. Sloane gives them a polite send-off and I hug them both. They linger in my doorway for a few

extra moments, their eyes each roaming the hallway before returning their attention to me.

“Deep breaths B, in and out. You call me if you fucking need anything, you hear me?” A reminds me. C gives me a similar goodbye, complete with an “I love you,” and me pinky-promising to call or text our group if I need them. I lock the door behind them and turn to face Sloane who is changing out of her party clothes and into a silky set of pj’s.

“Honey bunny, are you okay? I’m so sorry that happened back there. I’m so upset about it all, I could just tear that bastard to pieces.” I change into my own pj’s and crawl into bed. We sit and talk for a while, processing the past few hours.

“I was so relieved when I saw your brothers, I truly was. I’m *so* sorry for insisting you didn’t text them. I feel just awful about that,” she states and clutches her hands to her chest. Honestly, I was relieved to see them, too. I shiver at the thought of what could have happened if they weren’t there.

Sensing that I’ve drifted off, I hear Sloane clear her throat and jump out of bed. She heads to the mini fridge and tries to change the subject by saying “Hey, why is it that y’all call each other letters of the alphabet?” She eyes me curiously while taking a sip of water. *How do I even begin to explain our screwed-up birth story?*

I decided to leave out the abandoned at birth part and explained that Chase started the nickname trend in honor of our birth order. She squeals in delight and tells me she is also the “Baby B” in her birth order with her twin brother, Davis.

She hops back into bed, and I remove my glasses and place them on my desk/nightstand next to my raised bed. I rub my eyes and curl further into my lavender sheets. Sloane is still talking, but I can’t keep up and begin to drift off. Before sleep pulls me under, I make a mental note to text Melanie in the morning and update her on how I barely survived my first day.

## Chapter Five

# Max



My. Head. Hurts. My mouth feels like I stuffed it with cotton balls and my head feels like it's stuck in a vice after day-drinking in the sun all afternoon. I still have my eyes shut as I reach over to my bedside table for my water bottle, chug some down, and gain instant relief. *Much better.*

I turn over on my side and instantly feel a body next to me. I suspiciously open one eye and see a mess of blonde hair, as well as some fuzzy eyelash thing sticking to her cheek.

I'm no stranger to one-night stands and I repeat, I don't do relationships. As fun as it was, it was time for blondie to go. What was her name? *Something with an L, I think.*

After popping two pain relievers in my mouth, I playfully smack her ass to wake her, give her the rest of



my water, and offer her some Advil. I mean, I'm not a *complete* dickhead. I'd bet money that the vodka shots we slammed down when we entered the house have given her the same headache that I have.

"Rise and shine, Blondie. Time to get up. I have a workout in thirty minutes that I can't be late for," I tell her while swinging my legs over the side of my bed. She pulls the sheet towards her, so it pulls away from my body knowing I'm butt-ass naked. I look over at her in question. She smiles back, attempting to look sexy.

It's the exact opposite. She looks ridiculous with that bushy caterpillar hanging off her face.

"We can get a lot done in thirty minutes," she purrs, stroking a tan finger up and down my arm as she positions herself behind me reaching for my dick. I jolted up and out of the bed. I don't hook up twice. It's just not my thing. Since arriving at Havenwood, it's been easy for me and most of us on the team to hook up with a shit ton of girls. I'm always upfront with my intentions and make sure my partner has a good time. After we're both satisfied, I send them right back where they came from. As fucked as that sounds.

I had one relationship in high school that ended badly, and I'm not putting my heart on the line again. It was junior year and I was head over heels for a senior on the cheerleading squad. She hit *all* the boxes. I was determined to make her mine and I did for a while. Until I found out she fucked the captain of our rival school at a party while I was at one of my sister's theater performances. That shit pissed me off so bad, that I almost lost my first line spot as captain after a couple of fuck ups during playoffs. I vowed to never let another girl mess with my game.

"No can do; I really gotta go," I say to the pouting blonde and throw her clothes on the bed. She mumbles something about seeing me soon. She definitely hasn't gotten the message that I don't redo hookups. *Oh well.*

I jump into Jake's SUV with the guys. The five of us have been tight since day one and gel well together on and off

the ice. We have big NHL dreams and Havenwood is going to help us get there.

We get to the gym and start our workouts. Everyone is looking a bit fucked up and moving slower than usual after yesterday. With my meds kicking in, sweating out the alcohol, and chugging a few more waters, I'm feeling good as new. Summer Sundays are quick, no team meetings, no tape review, and no ice time. We're in and out.

We leave and head over to the cafeteria for breakfast. Even though we live off campus, we all have meal plans since it's easier than having to worry about grocery shopping, cooking, and cleaning up our messes. Most of the team is here and we take up a few long tables in the back. I set my tray down and my omelet doesn't stand a chance. I finish that bad boy in three big bites.

"So, Max, who was that hot blonde you were with last night?" I hear Monroe ask from across the table.

"Exactly that: a hot blonde I spent some quality time with," I smirk and wink which lands me a few fist bumps, and listen as we all recount our night conquests. This is nothing new and by the time I get up and gather my things to head out, blondie is already forgotten.



I need a nap, a shower and to get myself ready for the beginning of classes tomorrow. I'm not the best student in the world and work hard to maintain my grades. Hunter and Chase are with me as we step out of the cafeteria. We decide to go over to the bookstore and grab some supplies before heading home.

A half-hour later we're in line to check out and I hear a southern accent that has Chase picking his head up that was bent over his phone as we waited for the line to move. He elbows his brother and they both lift their chin towards two ponytails, one red and one brown. *It's her.*

Chase shouts out “B!” and the brown ponytail whips around from the other checkout line and smiles at him. *Fuck. Me. That. Smile.*

Stepping out of line and coming up next to us, I take her in: black leggings that perfectly hug her plump ass and a baggy as fuck Westbrook High Hockey t-shirt that’s obviously meant to hide her curves. I sweep over her face and zero in on her pink mouth. She licks and nervously bites her lips. *Damn. She really has no clue how good she looks.*

“Hey, I was wondering where that shirt was!” Chase says while Hunter grunts. My boy’s voice hits me like a ton of bricks, and I dart my eyes away from her trying to compose myself. I last all of a second before I’m lured back to her after hearing her voice,

“I don’t know what you’re talking about!” She shrugs her shoulders and flashes a mischievous grin. There it is again, that smile. *What the fuck is happening right now?*

Fuck it. I want to be introduced to the girl with the brown ponytail and pretty smile. Right. Fucking. Now. I obnoxiously clear my throat to get Chase’s attention since I can already tell Hunter sure as hell won’t do it.

“Max, this is our sister Evie and her roommate Sloane,” Chase explains. *Evie, that’s a pretty name for a pretty girl.*

I shake Sloane’s hand, still calling her Red in my head, and notice her southern belle charms are getting Chase in a twist as she turns her body away from him to face me.

She smiles as she says, “Pleasure, sugar.” in a deep southern accent. I peep a look at Chase while I shake her hand. My boy’s face says it all: he’s pissed. I have to bite the inside of my cheek to keep my laugh from escaping. I catch Hunter doing the same thing. *Someone’s jealous that the hot redhead smiled at me.*

I turn to shake Evie’s hand and notice her eagerly waving hers instead. She’s fidgeting and nervously shifting her weight in the same checkered Vans she wore yesterday. *Ok? I*

just go with it. Sometimes meeting someone for the first time can be awkward and she's only been here on campus for two days.

"How are you liking Havenwood so far?" While I wait for her to reply, I realize how much I want to talk to her. *Weird.*

"It's g-g-good, t-t-thanks," she quietly answers with a stutter and a cherry-red smudge appears on her cheeks. *Ah, shit. Did I just embarrass her?* I didn't mean to make her feel like that. She has nothing to be embarrassed about.

She starts to twist her little hands together and avoids meeting my eye. I really don't like that. I may be a dick most of the time, but I clearly made her uncomfortable and I feel like a complete asshole for it.

Hunter's nostrils flare as he crosses his beefy arms over his chest. He looks like he wants to spit nails at me for making her anxious. He turns his attention to his sister, who is now stuttering and visibly flustered while she checks out with the cashier. Hunter looks like he's going to lose it. *What the hell is happening here?*

I keep stealing glances at her to see if she's okay while doing my best to avoid Hunter's death stare. They step to the side to wait for us to check out. Chase throws a bag of M&Ms on the counter, and I see that Evie smiles instantly. Her shoulders drop with what I assume is relief and I exhale the breath lodged in my chest that I didn't even realize I was holding in.

I don't usually give a damn about anything other than hockey, family, and friends, but at the same time, I can't deny the reality that something in me is confirming that I don't ever want to make her uncomfortable again.

## Chapter Six

Evie



The next day is the start of my Havenwood college career. I'm going to be one step closer to being a writer and my inner nerd can't wait to get started. Yesterday, Sloane and I did a dry run and walked around so we would know where to go today for classes.

I walk into my class and I'm the first one here. I take it all in: it's a lecture hall-style class with stadium seating with about sixty desks. I wish it was smaller, but I guess it's not too bad...*It could be worse, right?*

I pick a seat near the front at the end of the row. I always like to have an escape plan in case I need it. As I take a seat, I repeat to myself the little mantra I came up with Melanie: *I'm brave and can ride out this wave.*

I take my laptop out and get ready, pulling up the class syllabus and opening a fresh doc for notes. The fidget ring on my left-hand makes me feel at ease as I fiddle with it.

My eyes remain focused on my computer as I hear the classroom fill up around me. I feel my skin warm as I start to count the number of bigger guys walking into the class. My heart is picking up speed. I take in a breath and do my grounding exercises with my senses. *Okay, let's start with hearing. What do I hear?*

A deep masculine voice is greeting other students in the room. I hear the desk on the chair next to me squeak and someone sits into the seat. A backpack hits the hardwood by the legs of the bolted chair. My head is still down, and I shift my focus on what I'm smelling, which is the last of my hazelnut coffee. I use this for taste and touch as well since I was sipping it on my way here and clutched it in my hands. I guess it's time for me to look up and focus on what I see.

When I look up, my gaze lands on the handsome guy from the bookstore line. *Max*. My brothers' best friend, teammate, linemate, and housemate. *Yup, he's all of those things to A and C.*

I've heard his name in passing since Hunter and Chase started at Havenwood. I continue to watch him as he pulls items out of his backpack and moves around in his seat, attempting to get himself comfortable. Just my luck, he's in the seat right next to me. My heart is picking up the pace again and I consider moving to another seat. *There's no way I'm going to make it through this class sitting next to him!*

He's talking with two other guys who share a similar build. They are loud, laughing, and taking up so much room. Their overall presence is making my anxiety skyrocket. I feel my mouth dry up and I wish I didn't finish my coffee. I bend slightly to rummage through my bag, pull out a water bottle, close my eyes, and take a long pull. *That's better.*

Suddenly I hear a movement next to me. I open my eyes to see his big muscular body faced towards me. The two on the other side of him do the same. *Crap. I should've moved when I had the chance.*

"Hey Evie," he says as he leans in and smiles. "Good to see you again. Settling in okay?" He asks me with a genuine look on his face. I meet his gaze and melt at the sight of striking blue eyes. They remind me of one of my favorite gemstones: aquamarine. Not only do I have that as my worry stone, but they're also lined next to my favorite windowsill in the treehouse back home. The sun hits them, and they radiate flecks of golds, blues, and greens. *Who would have thought I'd ever get a chance to see Damon Salvatore's eyes in person?*

Before I can even muster up the courage to answer, one of the big guys next to him reaches across Max's desk with an extended hand.

“Hey, I'm Drew. I haven't seen you before... are you new here?”

“H-h-hey, I'm Ev-v-v-i-i-e-e,” I stammer out, complete with an awkward fast wave. *Ugh. Why am I like this?*

To my surprise, this monstrosity of a man turns his hand up and waves back at me with a grin on his face. I put my stupid hand in my lap and wring them together, my eyes staring down. I sense Max's gaze and I can't bring myself to look at the most gorgeous blue eyes I've ever seen after making a fool of myself.

I can't help but feel that everyone is looking at me. My armpits are sweating, my skin feels hot, and my cheeks are probably tomato red. *Breathe in and out, in and out.*

Are the girls behind us laughing? *Yeah, they're laughing at me. Greaaaaat.*

Max leans over slightly and whispers to me, “Hey, are you okay?” *Why is he being so nice to me?*

“Uh, um, y-y-y-yeah. I-I-I'm fine. Th-th-thanks.” I barely manage to stutter out in a whisper. I meet his gaze and see he has a soft expression on his face, void of judgment or humor. Our eyes hold a second longer than necessary and I force myself to pull away, looking back at my lap. My face is on fire and my heart flutters in my chest. *Don't even think about it. Besides, there's not a chance in hell he'd see you that way.*

Let's be real, will anyone ever see me in that light? I can't even shake hands with a guy. Why did I think I'd be ready for love or any type of romantic relationship when I can't even handle a stupid handshake? *What was I thinking?! I'm such an idiot.*

I wish I was able to shake hands or greet people without waving like a fool. It throws people off and gives them a weird first impression of me. Ever since the assault, I

don't like to be touched by men. It's as if my body is expecting some sort of physical blow, a kick, or a punch, like what I experienced that night. I feel my whole body tense up in anticipation of the incoming male touch and my brain translates it to pain, ramping up my anxiety.

I wish my initial reaction wasn't to avoid touch, but I haven't put myself in many opportunities to have it before coming to Havenwood. I can only really stomach male touch if it's from my dad, A, and C.

I feel my glasses falling down my nose and catch them before they crash into my laptop keyboard. The professor walks in, introduces herself, and my focus shifts from being embarrassed twice within a twenty-four-hour period in front of this hot-as-hell hockey player to my first class at Havenwood.

I don't dare look at him or Drew or the other large specimen for the rest of the class. When we're released, I run out of there, thankful that I chose a seat close to the exit, and ignore the sensation that beautiful ocean eyes are boring into the back of my head.



I meet Sloane for lunch in the cafeteria and listen as she goes over her first two classes and how she met a cute soccer player who asked for her number. Two of the football players that we met at the block party stopped at our table and say hello. I eat my chicken wrap and pop a few chips in my mouth and avoid eye contact with the two jocks who are talking to her about their game this weekend.

I notice how carefree she is and how she can make conversation flow so easily. I also notice what she doesn't do; her neck and cheeks don't deceive her and don't turn a shade of embarrassment. Her breathing remains even, and her words don't jam up on her. They flow freely, complete with witty comebacks and brilliant banter.

That surge of jealousy that used to plague me during my support group is all-consuming as it rears its ugly green



head. I crunch down on my chips, a little harsher than my poor lunch deserves, and try to focus on my food. I adore my new friend; I've waited to have a girl friend like her. The last thing I want to do is to be jealous of her.

I wish I could have some resemblance of a normal exchange with a guy if I came across one that seemed interested in me, whether romantically or platonically, not that I have found either yet. When I come face to face with guys, I have the exact opposite response that Sloane does.

I notice everyone has stopped talking and I look up at Sloane, who is raising a perfect eyebrow at me in question.

"We'll catch you later, Sloane. Bye, uh, Evie." I hear them say and watch them walk away. I'm surprised they remembered my name. The one time it would've been probably acceptable to wave, I don't. *Cool, cool, cool, cool, cool.*

"Everything okay? You started breathing heavily, and you have been munching on those chips like you're crunching on rocks," she says before returning to her panini. I roll my eyes, look up at the ceiling, and take a cleansing breath in. *She's not wrong.*

"Y-y-yeah, I'm okay. S-s-sorry about that. I-i-i hope I didn't e-e-embarrass you in front of them," I tell her, chin pointing toward their backs. She waves her hand in front of me, letting me know that no harm was done.

"They invited me to their game on Saturday! We should go get tickets at the student center after lunch." She bounces up and down excitedly in her seat.

There is absolutely *no* way I am going to that game. I haven't been to a sporting event since my brothers' state championship game, which was the reason my whole nightmare began. I have been avoiding them for years now.

Plus, that jerk from the block party will be on the field and I have zero intentions of seeing him again. It's been bad enough that I've been looking over my shoulder, wondering if

I'll have a surprise run-in. If I do, I'm hoping my foot can act fast this time and connect with his balls.

I'm flooded with a wave of anxiety over even discussing this dumb football game. *Do I tell her?* I'm not sure yet. I want to believe that she would understand. That she wouldn't judge me and be supportive. She has given me zero reasons to believe otherwise. I haven't had to tell my story to anyone new since it happened. But I can't help but wonder what she would think of me? Would she think I didn't defend myself enough? That I didn't fight harder? *Would she stop being my friend?*

There is a ringing in my ears, and I sway from side to side in my chair. I hear nothing else until my name is called at the same time that hands come down on my shoulders, giving me a firm shake. Snapping out of my own head, I meet two sets of worried eyes and furrowed brows. My own eyes darted around us, catching several people staring.

"I uh, have t-t-to g-g-go, I have um, um, uh, c-c-class." Dammit, my words feel caked in glue as I try to speak to my own brothers.

I rise quickly from my chair and my hands are so sweaty that my tray falls and shatters on the floor. *Of course it does. Real smooth Evie.*

My brothers bend down and gather the broken ceramic plates and place the garbage back on my tray.

"B, what happened? Are you okay?" I ignore A, grab my bag, and dart out of the cafeteria. As I walk to my next class, a bubble of anger rises inside of me. Pissed at myself for freaking out and furious over the realization of how much control these memories have over me. I know I have to do better. I know I have to get myself in control.

*That's it. No more.* I have to find a way to move forward and I will not have them take any more time and space in my head than they already have. They've already stolen so much from me; they do not get Havenwood.

I find a seat in the small classroom and take my things out. Forcing myself to get it together. I check my phone and I already have text messages from A, C, and Sloane. Mom and dad also messaged me, wishing me good luck on my first day. *Yeah, I guess I am going to need all the luck I can get.*

## Chapter Seven

# Hunter + Chase



## Hunter

After I drop B's tray off in the bin, I head back to Sloane's table and sit down across from her, taking B's vacant seat. My love-struck brother is sitting next to her, and I swear to God, he looks like he's sweating bullets being in such close proximity to her. *No way... did he just fucking sniff her?*

We have rules for a reason regarding hooking up or dating each other's friends. *God dammit C. Get your shit together.*

"Sloane, I know you don't know us very well, hell, you don't know Evie very well yet but, I'm hoping you can tell us what happened back there."

"First off, your sister is my roommate and we have become good friends already!" She crosses her arms over her chest while she huffs and puffs at me like this is the most obvious thing in the goddamn world.

Even more of a reason for C to stop sniffing her like a fucking creeper. Evie deserves to have friends who care about her, and clearly, this girl does.

“Okay...so what happened? Evie was clearly really upset when she left.” I have to figure out what’s going on in order to help. I hate feeling like I can’t do shit for her.

“The football boys from the block party invited me to their game on Saturday, and I told Evie we should go. That’s all that was said before she disappeared to another place in her head. She started to breathe awfully fast, and, well, you saw the rest...”

I can see the concern on Sloane’s face. Clearly, my sister has not shared with her what happened a few years ago and it’s fucking obvious she is not as okay as she lets on or wants to be.

I know she is still fighting some demons regarding the assault, but I wish she would talk to us more about it. C and I put in motion a series of events that ended up derailing our sister’s life. She was targeted to get back at us and I will never forgive myself for what those fucking bastards did to her. I feel my hands balling into fists and my nostrils flaring just thinking about it. I want to fucking hit something.

I catch Max’s eye across the cafeteria, and he comes right on over. He’s loyal as fuck, supportive, and a great friend. C and I are lucky to have him in our corner, which is why I feel like dog shit for lying to him about B even existing.

I know she hates attention and is easily intimidated by athletes. It was just easier to keep her under wraps. *Easier for me and C. God, we really are fucking assholes.*

# Chase

She smells like sunshine; I didn’t mean to sniff her, but when I sat down and our bodies briefly touched, her hair swayed across her shoulders, and I took in a whiff of her sweet smell and my dick instantly started to pulse. *Fuuuuuck.*

Since the moment I saw her, she has had me completely spellbound. I have never been so affected by a woman before and of course, she just has to be my sister’s roommate and evidently, per Sloane’s declaration, her new close friend. It sucks, but the goddess is off-limits.

I refuse to hurt Evie again. *Sloane belongs to B, not me.* Evie doesn't deserve anymore pain, especially by my hand. I wish I could take back my role in what happened, so she was never targeted. *I would have done a thousand things differently if I could.*

I want to help her heal. I want to help her move forward. I just don't know how. I don't know how to help put my sister back together after having to endure this nightmare.

Max eyes us from the cafeteria line and starts to make his way over. I silently watch the exchange between my brother, Max, and a redheaded beauty with witchy ways, who is starting to do all sorts of things to my heart.

## Chapter Eight

# Max



I have a sinking feeling something is going on with the Wiltons and Red as I approach their table. I eye Hunter's clenched fists and the scowl on his face and then take in the hearts that are basically exploding out of Chase's eyes as he gazes at Red. My own eyebrows feel so high on my face that they might as well touch my hairline.

"Soooo, what's going on?" I drag out.

"Nothing sugar, the boys and I were just chatting about our Evie."

I scan the table and see no evidence of her, and my curiosity grows. "She okay?" I ask, avoiding eye contact with her brothers and focusing on Red.

"She will be. Aren't you sweet for asking?" She smiles and her hair swooshes towards Chase. *Is the fucker sniffing her?*

I really don't know what to say to that. I'm a lot of things when it comes to girls, and sweet really isn't one of them. Although, I'm not usually curious either. *Especially about my best friends' sister...*

"I'm headed out to get a workout in before practice. You guys in?" Hunter breaks the awkward silence that I couldn't figure out how to fill.

"Chase... Chase... ?" What the hell is wrong with him?

"Earth to fucking Chase..." I wave my hand in front of his face. He's a goner for this girl and she doesn't even seem to notice how she's affecting him.

He finally snaps out of it and swats me away. Red looks at him funny as she lifts herself up from her chair and collects her things. She waves at some jackass on the soccer team who I knew back in high school. He was a dick then and is a dick now. Now it's time for Chase to scowl and clench his hands in a white-knuckled fist as he watches Red smile from ear to ear at another man. *The fucker has it baaaad.*

Hunter leads the way out of the cafeteria and, as I catch up to him, I ask him again if everything is okay with his sexy as hell sister. *What the fuck man. Drop it.*

"No, it's not, and I can't fucking talk about it. There is just a lot of shit we need to figure out." His usual pissed off at the world, steely-eyed expression is replaced with a face full of stress.

"Hey man, I get it. Let me know if there's anything I can do to help," I grip his shoulder in support, attempting to take off some of the weight he's clearly carrying. We have our pre-season opener in two weeks, and I want us to be ready. That means I need my boys' heads in the game and on the ice.

We get to the gym, spend a few hours in the weight room, and head back home. I think Hunter and Chase are in a better headspace and I see all our evenings looking up as we walk into a living room full of lounging teammates and pretty faces.



Pretty faces void of dimples, glasses, and a smile that fucking slays me. I sit on the couch, wondering how she is. I don't think she had a great first day of classes, from what I saw firsthand in English and then in the cafeteria. Hopefully, tomorrow is better for her. I don't like seeing her so upset. *I actually fucking hate it.*

In class today, I saw her sitting there all by herself, and before I could stop myself; I was sitting my ass down next to her. *I was just being friendly...right?*

I need to get her out of my head. I check out the options in the room. Maybe one of these girls can help distract me from brown ponytails, checkered Vans, and a sweet ass mouth that I want to do nasty shit to. Her lips are a deep rose color all on their own. They don't need any of that sticky artificial shit on them. *Let's be real, the only sticky shit that would look good on them is my cum.*

“Yo, Harmon, you with me?” Jake jabs me in the ribs with a video game controller.

“Huh? Uh, yeah, yeah, I'm in.” I try to recover from the Evie Wilton blow job daydream I just got lost in. I clear my throat and adjust my growing stiffy. *Fuck, I can't be doing that shit sitting in the same room as Hunter and Chase.* My fidgeting snags the attention of a brunette sitting next to me.

“If you don't feel like playing, we can always go upstairs,” she asks with hopeful big brown eyes and a wide, red-painted sultry smile. I hesitate while looking at her. *Wrong shade of brown eyes and no dimples.*

“Nah, I'm good sweetheart,” I say while picking up the controller and taking a seat next to Monroe. I realize for the first time in my life I chose video games over a chance of guaranteed pussy. Monroe looks at me like I've lost my fucking mind as his eyes are bulging out like a damn cartoon.

“You sure, bro?” as he points his chin to the brunette.

“Yeah, I'm good. Just shot after today...” *No, you dipshit, you said no because this girl isn't Evie Wilton. I'm so fucking fucked.*

## Chapter Nine

# Evie



I wake up and feel the warmth of the sun on my face from the light filtering in through the window. I didn't pull down the blinds last night before I went to bed. The moon was glowing in the sky; it was beautiful and haunting all at the same time. I have trouble falling asleep most nights, and looking out my window can be calming for my usual frayed nerves. *And after surviving my first week of classes, frayed definitely fits.*

I open my eyes and see Sloane stirring as well. It's Saturday, and she hasn't brought up the football game again. She went out last night with a girl who lives on our floor and I opted to stay in.

My support group was meeting virtually, and I had a lot to get off my chest. A night to myself was just what I needed; I caught up on journal writing, reflecting on the setbacks I dealt with this week. As I come across new situations, I know these are to be expected. I just need to keep pushing through and be a little more patient with myself.

"I could go for a cup of coffee the size of my head. How about you?" Her accent is always thicker in the morning when she first wakes up.

“Sure, let me get ready and we can go grab a cup.” I get dressed in a pair of yoga pants and a long-sleeved t-shirt and we’re out the door.

“Now Evie, I don’t mean any harm in askin’, but I want to talk about going to the game today. Do you not like football? Is that why you don’t want to go?” She sweetly asks me.

I stop walking and start wringing my hands. It’s not long before she gently leads me to a bench along the perimeter of the campus fountain. It’s early enough that the campus is quiet, and I take a deep breath.

“My issue isn’t with football, but with the actual football stadium, enormous crowds, and giant humans.” I don’t elaborate as we sit down, our hands still connected.

“You can talk to me, you know, I mean it when I say that I want us to be good friends...” She pauses and squeezes my hand. I decide to be brave and share my truth, trusting her with my ugliness and to continue to be my friend after she hears my story. I scan the landscape and there isn’t anyone within earshot. *Here goes nothing...*

“Our senior year, the hockey team made it to the state championship, and the rival team was actually from a neighboring town. My brothers played hockey with some of those guys since they were little, so they had some long-standing rivalries. My brothers’ team won and decided to celebrate their victory by sleeping with the girlfriends of the other team’s co-captains. It’s honestly so gross and cliché. I know it sounds like a trashy novel.

“That spring, there was a big party out at the football field the weekend before our final quarter as seniors. It’s tradition for all of the local seniors in the area to attend. The party scene wasn’t my thing, but I promised my two friends I would go.

“It seemed like there were hundreds of people there. Almost instantly I was separated from my two friends and went looking for them. I headed towards the bleachers near the restrooms where I thought they might have ended up. I came

face-to-face with Brandon Waterstone and Christopher Ellis, the co-captains of the rival team. They drunkenly bumped into me and when they steadied themselves and realized who I was, they became *enraged*. I've never seen so much fury and hate in someone's eyes. I had the urge to run.

"They looked at each other and looked around. I followed their darting eyes and realized we were completely alone. Before I knew it, they each grabbed one of my arms and took me behind the bleachers and into the dark woods that butted up against the field. I swear I tried yelling, but it was like my voice wouldn't work.

"I realized later on that they wanted to get back at my brothers for screwing their girlfriends and since my brothers didn't have any girls in their lives; they decided they would hurt me instead. Chris tied my hands with his belt behind my back and covered my mouth while Brandon ran back to his car."

I pause and take a deep breath and focus on my fidget ring for comfort. This next part is always the hardest, no matter how many times I've talked about it in therapy with Melanie.

"Brandon came back with a hockey stick. Chris shoved my pants down to my ankles and stuck it up my vagina. They took turns forcing it inside while the other held me down and covered my mouth." I look away from her and feel my stomach cringe at the memory, but I keep going.

"I tried to fight back. I really did. Every time I tried, they would hit me, kick me, whatever they could to keep me down.

"I bled and burned everywhere. They wouldn't stop. They threatened something worse would happen if I told anyone about it. I remember their cackles and laughs. The sick fucks were enjoying it. It felt like it went on forever and I eventually passed out.

"When I woke up on the ground, my pants were still around my ankles, and I felt like I couldn't walk. I somehow pulled my pants up and got myself to stand. By the time I

found my way back to the car, my jeans were completely covered with blood. I ended up passing out again by the driver's side door.

“Eventually, Hunter and Chase found me and called 911. When I finally came to, I woke up in the ER. I was questioned by my family and hospital staff, but I was so afraid that they would come back and make good on their threats that I refused to report anything. I actually couldn't speak at all. Not because my throat was damaged or anything, but the words literally couldn't come out. I felt frozen and trapped in my body.

“It took a full month to physically recover enough to go home. During that time, I was still silent. It was the most bizarre experience: I could hear and see everyone around me, but it was as if the world was passing by in front of me and I was just an observer. Watching it all unfold from a bird's view.

“When I was discharged home, I restarted therapy. I couldn't speak to her at first and she'd have me journal and draw instead. Eventually, something in me cracked and everything poured out, kind of like it is now. Somehow through all of my stuttering, I got my story out and told my parents and brothers what happened. I was so ashamed, so embarrassed, and so upset. Retelling it was like reliving it all over again. It was like no other pain I'd ever experienced.

“I begged and pleaded with them to not call the police, but they did anyway. Brandon and Chris were arrested and only did one year in juvie since they were still seventeen and one of their Dads is a big-time lawyer. It wasn't enough. Their punishment *did not* fit the crime. What they did to me, what they took from me, I'll never be the same.

“I heard they got out on good behavior but lost track of them. It was the single most horrific experience of my life. It completely broke me.”

I've told this story hundreds of times at this point and my words are clear of stutters and stammers. Retelling my truth doesn't trigger a panic attack and rarely sends me into a depressive episode anymore. It's taken a lot of work to get to

this point but unfortunately, I still struggle with crippling anxiety around jocks and large crowds. Not to mention the super embarrassing stuttering.

My eyes reach hers, and they are full of tears. A steady stream has already fallen and stained her cheeks. She throws herself into me and hugs me tightly. We don't need words. I know from her embrace how she feels about my assault. About my story. About me. We slowly pull apart and she wipes her face. I have no tears left. I can't cry anymore over this.

"I'm so sorry this happened to you...I can't even imagine what it must have been like to go through that," she wipes more tears from her eyes.

"I think you're incredibly strong for putting yourself back out there," she pulls me in for a hug and gives me a gentle squeeze. We sit for a while and see campus start to come alive. I rest my head on her shoulder, realizing a huge weight has been lifted off mine. Being able to confide in Sloane was huge! Senior year Evie would be shocked at how far we've come. *Maybe this isn't so bad after all.*

## Chapter Ten

# Max



We have our first preseason game tonight and my teammates, and I are fucking ready. I sit in between Hunter and Chase in the locker room as we suit up and get ready to take the ice. Monroe sits on the other side of Hunter and is talking a mile a minute about some girls he met in class who are down to come over after the game; he's already thinking about victory pussy.

I tune him out, shut my eyes, and visualize myself out on the ice, visualize the win, and visualize us taking the Frozen Four in the Spring. I believe in my team; I believe in our talent and know we have what it takes.

I'm in the zone and head out to play the game I was born to play. Hockey is fucking everything to me.

We play our hearts out and get the win. I get two assists as Hunter finds the back of the net in the first and third and I get one of my own in the second.

After a post-game shower, I throw on some clothes and meet the guys outside. I notice that flash of red hair again and wonder if I'll see that brown ponytail as well. *No such luck.*

Besides seeing her in class where she's quiet as a mouse, I haven't seen her around campus at all. *And I've been looking.*

My curiosity is usually superficial and lasts about a nanosecond when it comes to girls. I can already tell that Evie is different. The pretty girl has me thinking about her more than I should.

I nudge Chase when Red walks down the arena stairs with a group of girls and I watch both him and Monroe straighten up and smile.

"These are the girls I was telling you guys about," Monroe says as he squeezes my shoulders in anticipation of them arriving where we stand in our semi-circle.

When they come closer, I scan their faces and the only dimples I see are the ones popping out to greet an oblivious Red, as Chase takes a step toward her. *Damn, no brown ponytail.*

Monroe introduces us to the girls that he met in his stats class; they live on the same floor as Evie and Red, which is why Red is with them. I hear Hunter ask Red how Evie is and I wonder why she isn't here. *Alright dude, this is getting pathetic.*

"She's fine, darlin'! She's home in bed with a new book she recently got. She was so into it, I barely got her to leave the room to come to supper before the game. You know Evie, when she's with her books she's happier than a clam at high tide!" she smiles at him.

"Wait, *yoouuuuuuu* guys know *Evie*?" The brunette in the group asks Hunter. She exaggerates her name with a look on her face that I don't fucking like. "How did *thaaat* happen?" she scoffs.

"Yeah, seriously. Since when do our handsome Devils pay attention to the ugly fat peasants on campus?" The blonde



standing next to her says. Her words make both Chase and Hunter snarl. I feel anger rise from my fucking toes. I'm silently fuming, and a deep frown takes over my face. *Ugly? Fat? Is she fucking serious? Who the fuck does she think she is?*

She looks away from them and shifts her gaze to me. She comes up to me and trails her finger down my right arm and smiles at me. I think she thinks it's sexy, but it's just downright creepy. Something about her seems familiar though...*do I know her?* I mean, it's not entirely impossible. She fits the bill for my usual after-game hookup.

Before any of us can respond to her shitty comment, she takes it a step further, "I know you're not as delusional as they are, right, babe?" *Babe? Why the fuck is this bitch calling me that? WHO IS THIS CHICK?* Hunter and Chase look like they want to fucking murder me.

Then it fucking clicks. I knew this bitch looked fucking familiar and the high-pitched tone of her voice confirmed it. I hooked up with this girl. We fucked the night of the block party. Lexi. Bushy Caterpillar Girl. *I could kick my own ass.*

"Max, are you fucking serious? Who is this girl?" Chase asks through gritted teeth. I smack her hand off of me and before I even get a chance to respond to him, Red steps forward to Lexi with her pink-tipped finger wagging in her face.

"Lexi, I don't know what manners mamas in Massachusetts teach their kids, but in Georgia, my mama taught me to not say anything mean about anyone else. She isn't ugly or fat! What in God's name is wrong with you?" This girl. She's all fire. I swear Chase swoons hearing this pint-size dynamo stand up for his sister.

"Fine, whatever. Let's go Elena. I'll see you later, babe." She blows me a kiss before turning and walking away. It makes me cringe. *Good fucking riddance.*

Red intervening was almost enough to get him to back off. *Almost.* Monroe, Chase, and Hunter turn to me and Red looks at me questioningly.

“Guys, I swear. I don’t know what the fuck that was. I hooked up with her once at the block party. I have no fucking clue why she thinks we’re a thing.”

“She seems fucking nuts. Stay the hell away from her, Max and Red, keep her the fuck away from my sister.” Hunter says fuming before he stalks off. Chase shakes his head and follows him out the arena. *Great. How the fuck did this happen?*

Red says goodbye and looks at me with a confused look before leaving with the remaining girls from her floor that just watched that whole shitshow. *I get it, Red. I’m confused as fuck, too.*

I’m fucking pissed off at Lexi for spewing such hate about Evie and even more so that word will get back to her that I’m with Lexi. I clench my fists at just the thought of her thinking that I would tolerate anyone speaking shit about her. I feel surprisingly protective of a girl I barely know. *Where the fuck is this coming from?!*

It hits me square in the chest: I care what she thinks about me and I don’t even know that much about her. I find myself wanting to know more and not just as my best friend’s sister.

My mind jumps to thinking about what Red said and Evie tucked away in her bed: hair in a ponytail, glasses on, curled on her side while reading a book. Her tits bunched together and looking delectable as they’re barely contained in a strappy tank top and short shorts that show off her thick ass thighs. My hands trailing up and down, tracing all of her curves as she’s wrapped in my arms in front of me and my hard dick nestled between her plump cheeks. I start to sweat and feel my dick start to throb. *Fuuuuuck meeee.*

“Yo! You comin’ or what?” Monroe says, smacking the bill of my hat, interrupting another fantasy about fucking Evie Wilton.

“You good? You look fuckin’ out of it, man.” Jake says with a concerned look on his face. *When the hell did Jake get here?*

“Yeah, yeah, I’m good. That was fucking wild. Let’s get the hell out of here. Food?” I say and try to change the subject to drop all thoughts of Evie. I don’t need any distractions in the form of my best friends’ pretty sister, regardless of what my dick thinks. *What in the actual fuck is going on with me?*

## Chapter Eleven

Evie



I get to class first, per usual, and take my seat, take my things out and set up to settle in for the next hour. I scroll through social media when I hear the now familiar jostling of the desk to my left.

I know it's him. He's sat next to me in every class we've had so far. He hasn't spoken to me since the first day and I don't dare look over in his direction. I don't have to make eye contact or engage in a conversation with him for the flock of flutters to take off in my stomach.

You may be thinking I mean butterflies, but no, not a chance. That would be ideal compared to the large wing-spanned birds flapping around in there. He's so handsome. *He may be the hottest guy I've ever seen in real life.*

"Hey, Evie." I'm still focused on my phone when I hear his deep voice address me. I snap my head up and there are those beautiful aquamarine eyes of his.

I'm ninety-nine percent sure my insides just melted hearing him say my name. My unsteady vocal cords give out a squeak because clearly he has reduced me to mouse-like noises.

"H-h-h-i-i, hi" I stammered out in a hoarse voice. *Way to fucking go, Evie.* First the squeaking and now this? He's

going to think I'm the stuttering mouse, Gus Gus, from Cinderella. *Whyyyyy am I like this?!*

I give him an awkward wave. I squint my eyes shut after bending my chin to my chest. *Damn, am I always going to be this weird around guys? Around him?*

I sneak a peek back at him, expecting him to be getting up to switch his seat to avoid any more of my embarrassing behavior. I don't blame him. *Who wants to sit next to a rodent?*

To my surprise, he's smiling from ear to ear instead of running away. He turns his whole body toward me and keeps talking to me.

"We missed you at the game last weekend," he says genuinely. I just stare at him. He stares back. *Come on Evie, ANSWER HIM!*

"I uh, I d-don't, I m-mean, I uh, I d-don't g-go t-to h-hockey g-games," I stutter out. I'm so humiliated as I fight to get those words out in a stammer. *My face feels so hot and must be so red.*

He nods and smooths out the brim of his hat that sits on top of his head and rubs the scruff on his chin, "Damn, really? That's a shame. It would've been great seeing you out in the stands." He says with a look of disappointment on his face.

He looks at me like he's studying me; trying to see how I'll respond. I just know there is sweat pooling on my forehead and my glasses fog up. I take them off my face and wipe the lenses with the hem of my shirt. *I feel those ocean blue eyes on me.*

For whatever reason, he continues to try and talk to me, "Well if you ever change your mind, let us know so we can get you and Red tickets. Friends and family get the best seats in the house," he says with a charming smile and hopeful eyes. *Red?*

"...Red?"

“Uh, yeah, uh sorry I mean Sloane,” he responds awkwardly. *Of course he meant Sloane. Girls like her always get cute nicknames.*

I don't know what else to say to him so I nod my head and play with my ring. He watches my movements and keeps his thoughts to himself. If I could read his mind, it'd probably be full of regret for even trying to talk to me.

More students filter in and say hello to him. A couple of girls make it a point to stop in front of him to talk about his game; making sure he knows they went to see him play. He thanks them for showing the team support and flashes them a smile. It doesn't reach his eyes like the one he gave me. *I like that.*

The girls settle into their usual seats behind Max and the big guy I met on the first day of classes. *Big guy has a name, Evie. It's Drew.*

The professor walks in and announces the class may be fuller than usual today due the Add/Drop period being finalized. I take in all the new faces as they stroll in and stop to check in with the TA. Just my luck, a pair of giant football players come in and make their way towards Max and Drew. They rowdily greet the guys with fist bumps all around. I squirm and make myself small in my seat silently wishing I could disappear.

The girls invite the new football players to sit in the two open seats next to them. The guys make their way over and it dawns on me that I have two massive humans sitting directly behind me. I feel my breath quicken and my chest rises and falls faster and faster. I reach for my fidget ring and try to calm myself down. *They're just sitting, Evie. They probably won't even notice you.*

Max and Drew turn around to face them and I see the guys behind me lean toward our row. The group gets louder as they catch up about games and upcoming parties. I hear their voices booming and it feels like they're screaming in my ear. I try to take deep breaths and do the counting mantra Melanie taught me. *Inhale 2, 3, 4...Hold, 2, 3, 4...Exhale, 2, 3, 4.*

“And who do we have here?” One of them asks as he tugs on my ponytail from behind. I gasp and jerk away. My chest smashes into my open laptop and my coffee tumbler plunges to the floor.

It’s enough to render them all quiet for a moment. I feel panicky and just want to get the hell out of here. I quickly grab my things, stuffing them into my bag before bee-lining for the door. I hear girls laughing, which I’m sure is directed at me. It just makes me move faster.

“Miss Wilton?” The professor says when I pass her on my way toward the classroom’s doorway. I keep walking and feel my neck turning redder and redder. I’m so disappointed in myself. I went almost a full week with nothing like this happening to me. *Why did I think coming here was a good idea?*

I keep walking, push the building door open into the fresh air, and place my hands on my knees, folding my body over. I take in big breaths of the cool air and remind myself that they weren’t doing anything wrong and that every big-bodied male isn’t out to hurt me. But having them all around me like that made me feel intimidated and fearful. There was no way I was going to stay there for a minute longer. I hate to miss class, but honestly you couldn’t have paid me to stay and stick it out. *Well, Evie. Way to go. Taking another 10 steps back!* Ugh. No. I can’t do that to myself. I have to take care of myself first.

I’m still trying to talk myself off the ledge and get myself under control when I feel a hand on my back and I scream bloody murder. *Noooooope. Fuck this. That’s it. I’m done.*

I take off in a run all the way to my dorm, stealing a look over my shoulder and eyeing a very confused Max standing with my coffee tumbler in my wake. I don’t notice Hunter standing next to him until I look back one last time.

## Chapter Twelve

# Max



“What the fuck, man! What did you do to my sister!” Hunter is in my face yelling loud enough to wake the goddamn dead. This is the first time I’ve ever seen him unhinged like this with one of his friends. On the ice, the dude is a beast and a force to be reckoned with. Right now, he is fucking nuclear. I take a step back and hold my hands up in front of me.

“I don’t know what happened. I sat next to her in class and tried talking to her a little. A bunch of the guys on the football team came by and we were talking. She bolted out of the room, and I came outside to check on her. She was bent over trying to catch her breath and I put my hand on her back to help and she took off.”

He’s now pulling his hair and looks rabid. I don’t know what I said or did that is having two out of three Wiltons flipping out. I watch Hunter take his phone out and call Chase. *I have a feeling I’m about to be three for three.*



“C, yeah, I know you’re in class, but you gotta meet me at B’s...yes, fucking now... okay, I’ll meet you there.” He hangs up and pockets his phone.

I realize Evie is B, and I’m not really sure what it means. Living with them, I have heard Hunter and Chase call each other A and C daily, and never really paid that much attention to it. *A, B, C. Must have something to do with them being triplets.*

“Look man, you’re one of my best friends and I appreciate you looking out for Evie, but just leave her the fuck alone, ok? Besides being my sister, she’s not like the girls you usually go for.” His words hit me hard. He might as well have punched me in the fucking face.

He walks off toward what I’m assuming is Evie’s dorm. My feet follow as my brain replays what happened earlier. *Fuck leaving her alone. What could have possibly upset her?*

When I got to class, I took one look at her and wanted to talk to her again. I’ve been sitting next to her during every class but have said nothing since the first day. I thought I would just say hi and see how she was doing, maybe even try to start getting to know her. I even thought about passing her a note if it would make her more comfortable.

When I said hello and she squeaked, I thought it was cute as hell. I took a leap and let her know that she was missed at the game. I couldn’t help myself and had to let her know that I wanted her there.

Then she ran out of the classroom, and I saw the tomato red creep up her neck and onto her cheeks, my whole body coiled tight with unease. I had to make sure she was all right. I grabbed her coffee cup and took off after her.

She was outside and keeled over. I touched her back out of concern. I really didn’t mean to set her off. That’s the honest-to-God last thing I wanted to fucking do.

I was confused watching her run away like a bat out of hell and even more confused when Hunter thought I had done

something to her. *I'd never do anything to hurt her. How could he think that?*

By the time I'm done dissecting the last twenty minutes, I'm standing right behind Hunter and Chase. Chase turns and raises an eyebrow in question while looking at the purple coffee cup in my hand. Before he can ask me what I'm doing here, Hunter is knocking on Evie's door.

"B, we know you're in there. Open this door right fucking now. I need to see that you're okay." Hunter's voice carries all the way down the hall and a few girls pop their heads out of their rooms to see what's going on. He sends them a death stare and doors slam shut in response.

"Yeah, please B, open up!" Chase asks the closed door as he leans his left ear in, trying to hear what's going on behind it.

The door flies open, and Chase nearly topples over onto Red, who has one hand on her hip and the other still on the door handle. She steps into the hallway, shutting the door behind her.

"Boys, as nice as this unexpected visit is, I'm afraid I can't let y'all in. Evie is resting her head. A girl needs her beauty sleep you know, especially after barely sleeping at night with all the tossing and turning she does."

"What do you mean? She's not sleeping? I need to talk to her," Hunter asks Red. The softness that smooths out the edges of his usual tone of voice is full of concern for his sister. It has my own worries multiplying by the second.

"Not sure what to tell you, sugar. I came home a few minutes ago, and she was tucking herself into bed, telling me she had a headache and was skipping her classes today. I was getting ready to head to the cafeteria to grab us lunch when you started making all that racket."

Chase looks at Hunter and I see something pass between them. *They're doing that silent-speaking thing again.*

"Maybe we should call Mom. I feel like too many things are happening to her and now she's not sleeping again?"

Chase looks tense and weary all at once. *What the hell is going on with the three of them?*

“No. This is on us. We owe it to her to get her fucking through this.” I’m not sure what he is referring to, but it seems like Hunter is trying to convince himself more than anything that he can get her through whatever it is she is battling.

Red starts to rebuttal when the door across the hall opens and Lexi, the blonde bitch, walks out with a disheveled Monroe following.

“Hey, what’s up, guys?” He sticks his fist out for a round of bumps. He looks relieved to see us. Lexi doesn’t even try to mask the look of longing on her face when she gazes up at me.

Yeah, this girl is going to be fucking trouble. *What the hell is he doing with her?*

“It’s my lucky day. I was just going to ask Monroe to text you guys to meet us for a bite,” she asks as she licks her lips, still staring at me as she hangs all over him.

“Nah, we can’t. We have a workout soon.” He says sternly while pulling out of her tight hold. He turns his back to her and tightens the semi-circle we made around Evie’s door. He’s looking at us with crazy eyes pleading for us to play along. Something is definitely up with him.

Lexi huffs and mumbles something about wasting her time as she goes back into her room, slamming the door. “Maaaannn, do I have some shit to tell you,” he whispers as he looks at me with an uneasy expression. *What the fuck is happening today?*

“Right, well, as I was saying, she can’t come to the door right now. I’ll have her text y’all when she’s up and mov—” Red is interrupted by their room door opening. Evie sticks her head out. My eyes roam all over her face. She looks like she’s been crying and tear tracks staining her pink blotchy cheeks. *Don’t cry pretty girl, it’s ok.*

Her hair is piled in a knot on top of her head, and she swapped out her jeans for flannel baggy men’s pajama pants. I

don't fucking like that at all. *Does she have a boyfriend?*

Before I can think better of it, I'm taking a small step toward her. I just want to make sure she's ok. *And that no other guy is in there, giving her his fucking pajama pants.*

Once again, my protective instincts are screaming at me to make things better for her, "Evie, I'm so sorry that I freaked you out. I followed you to see if you were okay...and uh, bring you your coffee cup," I say hearing the level of concern in my voice. I can feel everyone staring at me, but I don't give a fuck. She's the only one I want to look at right now.

She freezes and turns bright red looking humiliated. Red leans in and grabs the coffee cup I had extended out to Evie. She rubs her back soothingly.

I realize she needs some space and take a step back next to Monroe. I find myself having the urge to pull her into my arms and comfort her. I cross my arms over my chest and tug at my hoodie strings instead.

"T-t-thanks...I'm, uh, s-s-sorry a-a-about that." *Damnit, I did it again.* She darts her eyes between both brothers, and they silently communicate with her. Hunter scowls and Chase breaks the awkwardness.

"I've been looking for those, B!" Chase exclaims pointing to her pants while giving his sister a wide smile. *Good, they're his. Not some jackass I need to rip apart.*

Hunter reaches for Evie and bends down to bring her in for a hug, asking the top of her head if she's okay. Her eyes are closed and nods yes over her brother's shoulders.

She pulls away from their embrace and says to the group, "I'm o-o-okay, guys. R-r-really. I-i-i-i just g-g-g-got overwhelmed in class. I-i-i-i just w-w-want to take a n-n-nap," Evie says shakily as she scans all of our worried eyes.

"Yeah, of course. We get it. We'll text you later to check-in. Love you, B." It's Chase's turn to pull her in for a hug and our eyes meet.

I hold her stare until she closes those pretty doe eyes, shutting me out. I will her to open them back up to me; she doesn't. I look away, deflated but relieved she seems somewhat okay.



Later that afternoon we're in the weight room and I walk over to Chase, who's spotting Monroe. I've been avoiding asking him about her, but she's in my goddamn head.

"Evie okay, man?" I ask him, thinking about those eyes boring into mine while she hugged Hunter. They fucking wrecked me; they were so damn sad. This never happens. I don't have girls take up space in my head or heart, and yet Evie is quickly taking up residence and making herself comfortable.

"Yup, all good. Hunter and I are having her come by tonight for dinner. We're going to order in and watch a movie or something," he says, shutting down the subject.

Monroe grunts as he finishes, and I hop on to do my own set. He exhales a long breath, "Maaaaannnnn, why the fuck didn't you warn me that Lexi was crazy?" I completely forgot he was with her earlier.

"Are you serious? Her batshit behavior after the pre-season game didn't make that clear enough for you?" I eye him like he's lost his fucking mind.

"She hit me up after statistics and promised me a good time and I was horny as fuck. Worst fucking decision. I don't know what you did to that girl, but let's just say you have a super fan."

"What are you even talking about?" I ask him as I'm churning out my reps.

"I'm not sure what magical powers your tiny dick had on her, but she's fucking obsessed with you. There were framed photoshopped pictures of you and her on her wall."

This has me coming to a dead ass stop and sitting up to face him.

“Dude, what the fuck?!” I exclaimed feeling like my head is going to burst. “I slept with her once and I couldn’t even tell you one thing about that night. That’s how fucked up I was. I hadn’t even met her prior to then,” I tell him, and mean every damn word. There was nothing memorable about that night or her. I know that makes me sound like an asshole, but whatever.

“Just telling you what I saw when I was there,” putting his hands up.

“She wouldn’t shut up about you. While we were getting into it, she kept asking me questions. I tried to roll with it, but at one point it just got fucking weird. I love you, man, but I don’t want to hear your damn name being moaned when my dick is in a girl’s mouth. When I opened my eyes, ready to end it and leave, that’s when I saw the photos around her side of the room.” *This girl is officially certifiable.*

“This is fucking wild. I don’t want to see her around the house, and we should warn the other guys. We don’t need any crazy distractions, literally.” I say and finish my set. We’ve got a game coming up this weekend and two weeks until our season officially starts.

I’m mostly done with my workout, but I’m too antsy to concentrate, “That shit fucked me up. I’m out. I’ll see you at home.” I head out to the locker room to get my things.

As I’m leaving the locker room, I run into Drew. He’s one of my closest friends on campus and lives across the street in one of the football houses.

“Hey man, how’s it going?” I hit his extended fist bump.

“Good, I thought I’d get a workout in before my next class. Speaking of...is everything ok? I saw you bolt after the new girl earlier.” A lightbulb goes off in my head: Drew is in my English class and so is the girl with the prettiest smile.

“Yeah, all good. Speaking of class, I was hoping you could send me the notes from today. I don’t want to fall behind, and I trust your notes over the rest of your crew.” I ask him and he lets out a light laugh.

“Yeah, no problem. I’ll email you what I have later,” he says and turns to take off to the weight room.

I can see that academics are important to Evie, and she already had a stressful day. I plan on printing out Drew’s notes and handing her a copy when she comes by the house tonight. This will guarantee a few moments with her.

It dawns on me that this quiet girl has captured my full attention, and I’m already planning ways to get some of hers.  
*Who the fuck am I right now?*

## Chapter Thirteen

# Hunter + Chase



## Hunter

Witnessing the aftermath of B's anxiety attack this morning had me fucking unnerved. I hate that she has to deal with this shit. I knew from our parents that things at home hadn't been easy for her, but I thought she was doing okay since she decided to transfer here.

It was stupid to assume. Maybe it was more wishful thinking. I want my sister to move forward; for her and selfishly for me. I need some of this gut-eating guilt that I feel to fucking go away. I also want us to be okay again.

Ever since that fucked up night, my relationship with my sister has been fracturing more and more. I know it's similar for C. The three of us just haven't been the same and our relationship has been significantly affected.

It makes my goddamn blood boil when I think about the role I played in my sister's pain. All because I couldn't keep my damn dick in my pants. C, too. I knew when Cassy approached me, she was dating Brandon, but that didn't stop me from getting my dick wet.



I only fucked her because I knew she was his girlfriend and I felt like I was getting another W over him after we beat his ass in states. We had a long history of both off and on-the-ice battles. He has always been a loose fucking cannon, but to think that he would take it to the level he did makes me want to kill him when I see him again. And I know I will see that shit stain all too soon, and this time, I'm declaring fucking war.

His daddy dearest sealed his and his literal partner in crime, Chris's criminal record. Word on the street is they are walk-ons for Coastal's hockey team. Coastal's program was elevated to D1 this year, and it looks like we'll be reunited on the ice again in an annual tournament. This year, we're hosting it here at Havenwood. *Game on, motherfuckers.*

I haven't told B yet, not sure if I even want to fill her head up with even more anxiety than she is already facing since coming here. What I want to do is protect her, not scare her and push her right back down the rabbit hole she's fought tooth and nail to crawl out of.

She deserves to live her life without looking over her damn shoulder and wondering about shithead one and two.

C and I need to make sure she's as far away from Havenwood that weekend as we can get her. I already have been texting my parents to set up a call so I can come up with a plan to keep her safe. I failed her once already. That shit is not happening again.

It's a part of my responsibility as her brother to protect her from assholes. If I'm being honest, that list of idiots includes the idiots who are just like me. Jock dickheads who plow through pussy, don't give a fuck, and don't let anyone or anything stand in the way of their professional dreams.

I'm a selfish prick on a good day, a mean and moody motherfucker on a typical day, and your worst fucking nightmare when I'm pissed off. Sure, I show my sister and our mom a softer version of myself, but that's as far as my warm and fuzzies go. I love my boys, my team, C, and our dad, but they get a watered-down version of my usual irritated attitude.

No one, not even me, is good enough for B, but it's time I do my part to really shield her from any more pain. She's too fragile, too goddamn sweet, and really special.

When she gets to a point where she wants to date and gets herself a boyfriend, he better be a goddamn choir boy. No jocks. No assholes. Not for my B. I won't fucking stand for it.

# Chase

When A demanded B come for dinner tonight, I felt like it was an opportunity for the three of us to talk and take the steps to get back to our normal. Since those assholes attacked her, we haven't been the same. The guilt that I feel for playing a role in my sister's assault is all-consuming. I knew Chris was always off and on again with Amber. I slept with her anyway.

She and I had skirted around each other for years. Whenever she would break up with Chris, she would pop up at my games with my number on her cheek but would eventually go back to him. I met her through her brother when he and I were in pee-wees and on the same team. Plenty of pasta parties, travel team events, and activities had put us in the same place at the same time. I developed a crush on her, but I didn't want things to change with her brother and my friendship off and on the ice. Even as a dumb teenager, I knew sisters were off-limits. The summer before junior year, her dad was transferred to the town over for work and they moved.

She met Chris when she went to her new high school, and I only saw her sporadically after that. Her brother pursued baseball full-time and dropped hockey. We kept up some but grew apart and I regretted not making a solid move on Amber.

Chris would make it known on the ice that she was his and that I would never have her as he checked me into the boards or stuck his stick in my side. I provoked him, taunting him about her over and over again. I fanned the flames of his rage.

When she came up to me at that party and took my hand, leading me to an empty room, I couldn't say no. I didn't care if they were on or off. She was in front of me and kissing me. I felt like I had won twice that night and was finally going to have a real chance with her. The next morning, she told me it was a mistake, and that she was caught up in the moment with me. My heart sank and the next time I saw her, she was at that goddamn football field party with him. She was back with Chris. The same night he raped my sister.

I knew what I was doing when I took off Amber's clothes. I knew what I was doing when I slept with her. She wasn't just a hook-up to me; I wanted to keep her. I knew it was going to set

Chris off and that I would have to deal with the fallout, but I was ready to fight for her. We clearly were not on the same page since she had no problem going back to that fucking waste of space.

I never imagined in my wildest dreams that he would take out his anger with me on B. When A and I found her, I didn't know that Brandon and Chris were behind her attack. When she finally told us and our parents, I cried right along with her and my mom.

She's worked hard to heal and to get here. I am so proud of her for making her way to Havenwood. B is the strongest person I know, and I will do whatever I can to protect her and help her.

I can't stand knowing that those two assholes are playing hockey, that their lives are back to normal, especially knowing how hard B's road to recovery has been. Now they are going to be here, at my school, playing against my team in this tournament. I'm going to beat them to a bloody fucking pulp on the ice.

They don't deserve to be here, much less breathing the same air as B. They deserve the exact opposite for what they did and shouldn't be breathing at all. A and I have to get her away from here that weekend. *We need a plan. Fuck them.*

I know that part of helping B is giving her space to grow as a person and to develop friendships and even romantic relationships if that's what she wants. She deserves love in all forms.

That doesn't mean I want her dating just anyone; no jerkoffs, no fuckboys, and no jocks who won't put her needs first.

As much as Sloane has captivated me, and yes, I can admit that I already have it bad for this red-headed beauty, I won't pursue her. B deserves to have it all and that includes her stunning roommate as her friend without me interfering, no matter how much my heart disagrees.

I don't deserve it. My actions led to my sister's trauma and pain. *I won't do that to her ever again.*

## Chapter Fourteen

# Evie



I haven't been back here since the night of the block party and even then, I never made my way inside before my brothers led me back to the dorm.

I'm actually looking forward to ordering some Chinese food and watching a movie with A and C. We haven't done that in ages.

When they would come home over their summer breaks, we would spend time retreating to the treehouse, but this feels different. This feels like a turning point for us, like an opportunity for us to move towards restoring what we have lost. *I hope it is, we haven't been "us" in a long time.*

We're finally all here at Havenwood, and I see it as an opportunity for us to restore our triplet-hood bond. Coming here tonight, even after the crappy day I had, is an excellent step in the right direction.

"B! I am so glad you're here," C says after opening the door before A can dig out his keys to let us in. He had a tutoring session on campus and came to get me so we could walk to their house together.

I get a tight squeeze from C, and we walk into their living room. Their hockey house is oddly quiet. "Where is the

rest of your team? Don't you live with a bunch of your teammates?"

"There was an off-campus athletes' dinner that Jake and Monroe went to. Max hung back. He's upstairs studying," A explains.

I already feel the blush on my cheeks at the mention of his name. He probably thought I was an absolute freak show this morning and then when he came to check on me with A and C, he just stared at me. I couldn't take it. There was pity in those sky eyes. No girl ever wants a hot guy to look at her like that.

"B? Are you ok? Why is your face all red?" C pokes his finger into my cheek. A is eyeing me carefully like he is trying to figure out what, or in this case, who is racing through my head. I need some excuse, as there is no way I'm telling them that the mention of their best friend makes me feel warm all over.

"I was t-t-thinking about the l-l-last t-t-time I was h-h-here, well outside. It was kind of e-e-embarrassing for m-m-me."

"Oh B, don't worry about that. Plus, I heard that asshole got a DUI later that night. He's long gone." C explains, and it's the best news I've heard in a long time. *Good riddance.*

"Ok, so what are we ordering? I told Mom we would FaceTime her before I leave here, so let's do it!" I change the subject and focus on their third favorite thing after hockey and females: food.

Our Chinese takeout feast was delicious and put me in a great mood, especially after we spoke to our mom.

The three of us sat and watched Netflix and I dozed off for a few minutes. His deep masculine voice wakes me up and I keep my eyes shut. If I see him, I'll totally give myself away in front of A and C. It's bad enough my heart has taken off in a sprint just from him entering the room. *Jeez, his voice is sexy. I bet he could narrate audiobooks.*

“Hey man, get all your studying done? There’s food left over in the fridge if you want some,” C offers.

“Yeah, that would be great. I ended up working through three classes’ worth of work and didn’t want to stop to go to the student-athlete dinner.” I hear Max walk away, his footsteps retreating, and feel C adjust a blanket over me as I have my head on his shoulder. I try to be sneaky and open one eye slightly and the coast is clear, meaning sky eyes must be in the kitchen.

When I hear him waltzing back into the living room, I shut my eyes but feel C shift. He must know I’m up and he confirms it with a quick pinch to my arm that is resting against his. *Clearly, my sneaky skills aren’t as refined as I thought. Shocker.*

“I, uh, didn’t want Evie to stress out over missing class today and asked Drew to forward me his notes since he’s in English with us. I thought I could email them to her. Can one of you send me her contact info?” I hear him ask. *Oh. My. God.*

Ok, I don’t have to worry about C giving it away that I’m secretly awake. My cheeks are doing a bang-up job of turning into tomatoes for the second time since I’ve been here.

“No need, just send it to me and I will pass it along or print it out for Evie.” A clearly does not like Max’s offer and I don’t have to open my eyes to know he is scowling.

“Really, Hunter?” I hear Mr. Sexy’s voice say. *Does he really want my contact info so badly that he’s questioning A?*

“Yeah, Max, fucking really. She doesn’t need any more shit.” A says and I can hear his teeth grinding from here. There’s a tenuous silence as the seconds creep by.

“No problem. I’ll send it over to you and grab a copy off my printer since she’s here. You can give it to her when she wakes up.” I feel eyes on me briefly and then the energy shifts before I “pretend” to wake up from my impromptu nap on my brother’s shoulder. This earns me another pinch from C.

When Max walks back into the living room, he makes my heart stop. He's that attractive. He looks like a book-boyfriend fantasy come to life wearing a white Havenwood Hockey t-shirt that stretches perfectly across his broad chest and hip-hugging, low-slung sweatpants. Gray sweatpants. I repeat, gray sweatpants. *And he's barefoot.*

His gorgeousness is worthy of the universal, hand fanning when one declares, "is it hot in here?" The answer? Yes, it's hot in here! It's scorching, with a backward hat-wearing Max Harmon in the room. *Holy cannoli. My whole body feels like a volcano.*

Did I mention that his chestnut curls wrap around the edge of his hat perfectly? He's almost too gorgeous to look at. *Almost.*

"Oh, hey Evie, I uh, asked Drew for the notes from class today. Here ya go." He sounds a little nervous and is smiling at me as he extends his muscular arm out, and our fingers brush as he hands off the notes. *Holy hot forearm.*

I feel a zing up my not-so-muscular arm and look up at him. *This beautiful man is smiling at me.*

He touched me and I didn't freak out like I did earlier. I didn't want to scream, and I didn't want to run. I actually don't want to move from this very spot for the rest of time. His touch sent a spark through me. Not anxiety. *A spark.*

"T-thanks, that was uh, really n-nice of y-you." Ok, not bad, I only stuttered three times. I smile back at him, and his eyes change ever so slightly. A, the jerk that he is, breaks my magical man moment. *Ugh, damnit Hunter!!*

"Well B, now that you're up, I'll walk you back. I'm sure Sloane is expecting you." Is he kicking me out? *Does he know I think his friend is Damon Salvatore level hot with those blue eyes and dark hair?*

"Uh, yeah, sure. I'll, uh, get my things then." I stand from the couch and begin packing up.

"I need B to look at something on my computer that I thought she could help me with. Can you stay a few minutes?"

C asks me.

“Uh, sure, I n-need to grab a s-sweatshirt, anyway. I f-forgot one.” Shoot, my words are choppy. *They’re definitely going to know.*

“I swear I’m going to open your closet and find half my shit in there,” C says with a warm smile. The exact opposite of moody mood-killer A. I get up and follow him into his room, leaving Max and A in the living room.

“When were you going to tell me you have a thing for one of my best friends?” C asks me. I’m not getting into this with him now. I don’t have a thing for anyone. I just think Max is devastatingly handsome, and that book covers should feature him, but nope, I don’t have a thing for anyone. That’s my story and I’m sticking to it. *Keep telling yourself that, Evie.*

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. Now show me your laptop so I can get back. You know, to Sloane,” I tell him with a devious grin. He narrows his stare at me and points his finger at me. *Gotcha.*

“Ooohh, okay. I see how it is. You fight dirty!” Yeah, I’ve noticed how he looks at my roommate. If he could shoot her with a cupid’s arrow himself, he would. But he won’t and I won’t let on even an inkling that I think his friend is male perfection.

“Look, in all seriousness, you’ve been through a lot and I know eventually you will want to date and even get into a relationship. I love Max like another brother, but he’s not your type. He doesn’t do relationships, plus, he’s an athlete.” He ducks his head and contorts his face like the word athlete is coated in filth.

“I appreciate your concern for me, but really, there is absolutely nothing going on. Think about it. Have any of your friends ever been interested in me? No. I doubt one of your teammates is going to even spare me a second glance.”

I may be new to campus, but I’ve heard a ton of rumors about the athletes here at Havenwood. They take their mascot



namesake to a whole new level, most girls lustfully referring to them as the Havenwood Handsome Devils. There's a knock on the door and A pops his head in.

“Did you get your shit on your computer sorted? I need to go, so if you're ready, I'll take you.” I grab the hoodie on the back of the desk chair, throw it over my head and look back at C, who doesn't say anything. There is nothing left to say. My brother has figured out that I'm not immune to his friend/roommate, just like he seems to have taken a liking to mine.

It's a moot point for two reasons: one, guys like Max don't go for girls like me, and two, it goes against our rule, which has remained in place for reasons just like this.

The three of us shuffle downstairs and I hug C goodbye. He gives me a squeeze.

“You know I love you, right?” I nod my response into his shoulder.

Max is standing behind us with his muscly arms crossed over his pecs, and he's just... staring at me. It's different from earlier. There's no pity this time. There's something else entirely reflecting in those bright blue eyes. *No, there's not Evie. You're losing it.*

I break away from C and dig deep, attempting to say something to him first for once.

“Thanks a-a-again f-f-for the n-notes,” I offer and manage a smile before I look away and hear the sharp intake of his breath.

“Sure thing, Evie, I'll see you soon,” he says with a soft smile as he removes his hat before running his hand through those beautiful curls and letting it rest on the nape of his neck. He has that same look in his eye. How does he make those simple words sound so hot? And him directing them at me? I can't help myself. I cave and before I realize what I was doing I was giving him a big cheesy smile. He gives me one right back. It's the same gorgeous grin he gave me earlier in English. *I can't wait for our next class.*

## Chapter Fifteen

# Max



She walks out of our house wearing a Havenwood Devils sweatshirt with her last name across her shoulders. Her brown ponytail moved with the sway of her sexy hips. Her pretty eyes are behind her signature black glasses and when her dimples popped out, goddamn, they did all sorts of things to me. *And to my dick.*

She looked hot as fuck in those tight ass jeans that highlighted her fantastic thighs and made her ass look devourable. I wanted to fucking bite it.

I know I was playing with fire coming downstairs multiple times tonight when I was supposed to be “studying,” but stealing a few glances at her wasn’t enough. I had to keep coming back for more. I wanted to see her again and again. Even when she was tucked into Chase’s side and sleeping looking all sweet and innocent. *Damn, what the hell? Since when do I notice shit like this?*

When I asked for her contact info, I knew I was taking an even bigger chance. Hunter shot that to shit real quick. *Asshole.*

I hope that Hunter and Chase both saw that my intentions were *mostly* in the right place. I really did want to make sure she had the notes from today's class.

When I brought them downstairs and handed them to her, our fingers brushed, and I swear to God I felt her touch all over my body. And I mean *all* over. My dick perked up from the electric jolt of her soft fingers. *I bet they would feel fucking fantastic wrapped around me.*

I've hooked up with a lot of attractive women and have had some absolutely model-like bodies underneath me, above me, and bent over in front of me.

Never once have I ever been so affected as I am right now from the slightest feather-like touch that hit me like a damn Mack truck. I can't help that my mind is now conjuring up a ton of filthy scenarios with all kinds of touching.

And that smile. That smile was just for me when our eyes met and damn, do I want more.

I'm fucking certain we shared a moment and I want more of those, too. *This girl.*

Something tells me that she has no idea how pretty she is. No idea how her smile is brighter than the damn sun and no idea how much I want to stick my fingers in her dimples and kiss her. Everywhere. *And I mean, every-fucking-where.*

I'm a hundred percent sure that Evie doesn't know, but equally sure that her brothers are aware of the ideas I'm having. Chase basically hauled her plump ass upstairs and then Hunter crossed his arms over his chest and glared at me. *Yeah, they totally fucking know.*

As much as I consider them both to be brothers, I definitely am not sharing the sisterly love they have for Evie.

I watched her walk out our door and I was cheesing, hard. She thanked me for the notes, and I got a smile full of dimples? *Fuck me.*

So here I am, staring at the closed door, knowing that she's somewhere on the other side of it. Chase comes up and stands shoulder-to-shoulder with me and I try to hide what I'm sure is an obnoxiously large grin. We're quiet for a moment and I know he knows something is up since he had a front-row seat to the obvious sparks that erupted between us.

“Listen, Max, Evie is special and one of the best people I know. I could say the same for you since you're one of my best friends and I would hate to hurt you for hurting her. Please, just leave it alone. She has been through enough and doesn't need a broken heart to add to her list of hurt.”

He squeezes my shoulder and walks upstairs, leaving me to sort that fucking statement out on my own.

I know I have a reputation. I know I've been vocal about not wanting anything more than a hookup from the girls in my bed, and I know I don't need any distractions right now. But that smile, those dimples, and those pretty eyes are all I can see, and dammit, I can't wait to see her again.

I thought I would have to wait until our next class in two days to see her, but lady luck is on my side. After Chase's parting words that definitely packed a fucking punch, Drew texts me, letting me know that one of his boys who is in a different section of our English class had a pop quiz today, meaning that we may have one next class. I appreciate the heads up and another plan takes hold in my head.

A very sweet and curvy brunette isn't aware of this information and would most likely appreciate a heads-up. *Fuck it.* I throw a hoodie on, grab my phone and keys, and am walking out the door, trekking toward campus and making my way to her dorm. *Dimples' dorm.*

There are several girls coming in and out along with some guys I recognize, and I slip in with the group. I remember where her room was from earlier and head that way. Before I know it, I'm taking two steps at a time to get to her room faster.

I stand in front of her door, and my hands start to sweat. Being able to handle stress is something I pride myself

on. I've taken down monsters on the ice, have been in shootouts that declared us Frozen Four champions last year, and helped lead one of the most recognized college hockey teams in the country, and here I am nervous as hell standing in front of a goddamn door.

A door that is vibrating with music and singing from two sets of voices. Nothing happens after I knock three times. I knock another three times, and nothing happens. I place the left side of my face on the wood for a better listen and hear voices singing the lyrics to a Taylor Swift song. One voice can really freaking sing.

When their American Idol moment is over, I take my chances and knock again. The door flings open and an out-of-breath, chest-heaving, beautiful girl in purple plaid flannel pajama shorts and a form-fitting V-neck purple t-shirt greets me. My hardening dick approves as I slowly take in the sight of shapely bare legs, thick strong thighs, wide hips, a dip on either side of her waist, more than a handful of creamy tits and cleavage that I want to lick all the way up her pretty neck and end at her bow-shaped cherry mouth. *Fuck, she's hot.*

"Hey, Dimples," I say and smile widely at her. The endearing nickname easily slides off my tongue.

I'm greeted with a screech before the door slams shut. I stick my hands in my pockets, rocking on the heels of my sneakers, and chuckle while shaking my head. *This girl.*

I wait all of ten seconds before I hear Red reprimand her for her lack of manners and the door opens again.

"Good evening sugar, what brings you by tonight?" Red's also wearing pajama shorts and a tank top. As attractive as she is, she does nothing for me compared to Evie.

"I, uh, wanted to talk to Evie if that's okay." My voice sounds all cut up. *Fuck, I'm nervous.*

"Oh sure, please hold," she tells me and then shuts the door again. *It's okay, I'll wait.*

I hear muffled protests and then the door opens and there she is, but she now has Chase's Havenwood Hockey

sweatshirt on that's so large it covers her shorts and gives the illusion that she has nothing underneath. She thinks she is covering herself up, but she's doing the exact opposite and now my dick is punching my jeans in its zippered face as he points towards her. Again, I repeat, this girl's fucking hot, and I don't think she even knows it.

"H-Hi, M-Max," she squeaks out softly.

"Hi, Dimples." Her doe eyes widen hearing my new nickname as I address her.

We just stare at each other for a beat, and I've momentarily forgotten why I'm standing here. *Fuck. This girl is going to make me lose my goddamn head.*

"I, uh, came by to tell you we might have a pop quiz next class, and I wanted you to know. I didn't have your number, so I thought I'd swing by and tell you."

"You-you c-came, to uh, t-to tell m-me, that?" I've heard her stutter every time she talks to me and can tell she's nervous. As she works through her words, I keep my eyes on her beautiful face. I don't mind. I like her. She's refreshing and genuine. *It's alright, take your time, sweetheart.*

"Well, yeah, I wanted to make sure you're prepared. Maybe if you give me your number, I could keep you in the loop if I get insider information again," I say with a wink. I slightly lean in, like I'm telling her state secrets and that this is a matter of national security. I also use the doorframe to hide my pulsating dick from making an appearance. I add a smile that has without fail always gotten me what I want, and right now, I want her damn number.

"Uh, yeah s-sure, I mean, if y-you really t-think, that's um, n-necessary." I can't help it; I lean in a little farther, and goddam, she smells like vanilla. I would bet my future NHL contract that she tastes just as sweet.

"Yeah, I really do." She's gone speechless but doesn't break our eye lock. Her eyelashes are naturally thick and free of gunk. *No fake caterpillar stickers for this pretty girl.*

Her trusty friend, and obviously the best wing woman on the planet, must sense this as she reaches around from the other side of Evie's curvy waist and hands me a folded piece of paper. I hold it up and Evie slowly nods her head, confirming her number. *Hell yes!*

"Night ladies," I offer and tip my head, grab the front bill of my hat showing that my mama taught me a thing or two about manners, and offer my goodbyes.

As I turn on my heel, I notice the open door across the hall. Lexi is standing there with a scowl on her face and her eyes are burning holes into me.

She looks pissed. I'm sure she heard every moment of my exchange with Evie.

"You taking on charity cases now, handsome?" She says and once again, she's taking every opportunity she can to talk shit about Evie. *Fuck that.*

"I thought you were the charity case, but if that's what Evie is, I'm Mother fucking Teresa," I tell her, shutting her up before she huffs and slams the door.

Nothing can wipe the smile off my face as I walk out of the residence hall. Nope, not a damn thing as I hold the folded piece of paper in my palm, knowing that I got her number.

## Chapter Sixteen

# Evie



What type of alternative universe am I living in? What is happening right now?

I thought my world had tilted from our earlier exchange. Then when our hands touched, and I was zapped with a zing; I was certain my world was spinning off its axis. Although, that has nothing on what is happening right now.

I might as well be living on another planet. The hottest man I've ever seen just asked for my number, and I'm pretty sure he was flirting with me. *He was, right?*

I'm in shock that he came to tell me about a quiz we may have in our next class. All because he knew it would be important for me to know that.

The cherry on top of this mind-blowing sundae? He called me "Dimples". Things like this happen to girls like Sloane, girls who I read about in my books, and girls who look the exact opposite of me. But tonight, the beautiful blue-eyed man came to see me.

"He sure did, honey bunny. He sure did," Sloane says while clapping her hands together. I must have said all of that out loud, but then I feel a wave of doubt and am absolutely defeated. *Oh no.*



Max came to see me. I was in my shorts and t-shirt pajamas with my thunder thighs, complete with cellulite, on display. He saw my soft stomach that hasn't been flat a day in my life. After dancing and singing in my dorm room, he saw me panting. *Great, just great.*

He heard me squeak, then stutter, and then lose my words completely.

I'm not the girl who gets the guy, especially not this kind of guy. As if this wasn't heartbreaking enough, I'm definitely not the girl who gets the guy who's best friends with her two brothers. And if that wasn't the worst of it, I'm without a doubt not the girl who gets the guy when he learns how fractured I am with cracks that run deep.

"Evie, that boy came all the way over here to tell you about a silly quiz. He liked what he saw, so stop with all this mumbo jumbo. You *are* that girl. If anything, you're a blind girl if you couldn't see the look on his face!" She throws a pillow from her bed at me trying to knock some sense into me.

I must have said all of that out loud, too. So much for inner monologues and secret self-loathing. *Not when Sloane's around, evidently.*

A few seconds later, my phone is vibrating on my desk. Sloane grabs it and tosses it to me before resuming her hand clapping.

"Is it him, is it him? Oh my, this is so romantic." She says dreamily.

There is no way it's him, aren't there rules about texting or calling? Aren't there wait times, and going through the whole "will he or won't he" dance? I don't know how any of that works.

I check my phone and it's a text from my dad letting me know he was sorry to have missed our FaceTime earlier and hopes to catch me tomorrow.

Sloane looks like I kicked a puppy when I tell her it wasn't Max. I begin telling her he probably won't ever even use my number, let alone text me tonight. I barely get to the

end of that sentence when my phone vibrates again. From an unknown number. *Oh my god.*

**Unknown:**

*Dimples, I got some more insider information...*

**Me:**

*Max?*

**Unknown:**

*Yes, it's me. How many people call you Dimples?*

**Me:**

*Uh, zero?*

**Max:**



*Well, then I'm the lucky one.*

**Me:**

*I'm not sure about that.*

*The only one, yes, lucky, not so sure.*

**Max:**

*I like being the only one who gets to call you that.*

**Me:**

*That's sweet of you...*

*So insider info?*

**Max:**

*Drew said two of his boys also had quizzes today, so that makes three confirmed sources.*

**Me:**

*Got it. I'll make sure to look over your notes.*

*Thanks again for making sure I got them.*

**Max:**

*No big deal, are you okay after today?*

I don't want to get into all the details regarding my triggers and what set me off today. I journaled about it, processed it, and will go over it with my therapist and in group later in the week.

**Me:**

*I'm okay. Just getting used to being here, that's all.*

**Max:**

*And how's that going for you?*

**Me:**

*Uhhmmmm. It's been an experience for sure.*

*I'm just getting my bearings.*

*I like being here with Hunter and Chase.*

*My classes are fine, I'm an English major and like our class and the professor's unique approach. It's my favorite class so far.*

**Max:**

*It's my favorite class, too.*

**Me:**

*Yeah, you seem to know a lot of people in there.*

**Max:**

*I do, but there's a cute new classmate I want to get to know.*



He wants to get to know me. Why? Isn't he deterred by my brothers? Or my awkwardness? Or my size?

I throw my phone to Sloane like it's on fire. Ok, maybe it's me that's on fire. *What do I say to that?*

“Oh my god. What do I say?” This is too much, I’m so nervous.

“What’s wrong? Let me see, let me see!” She frantically picks up my phone and reads through our brief exchange.

“He’s very flirty with you, honey bunny. Of course, he wants to get to know you. You’re amazing. What’s got you all twisted up over this?” She eyes me curiously.

My self-doubt and minimal self-confidence are rearing their ugly heads. I also can’t even fathom how angry both A and C would be if they knew about this.

“It’s silly. This whole t-t-thing is s-s-stupid.” I’m stressing out about this and point to my phone, which is still in her hand. I take a few deep breaths to settle myself.

He’s probably texting with several girls. He probably has nicknames for all of them, too. This means nothing. *I mean nothing to him.*

“And why’s that? Why is texting with a fine man silly and stupid?” She tosses the phone back to me, and it lands on my bed. The screen lights up with our text thread. Taunting me.

“First off, my brothers and I have a rule not to date each other’s friends. Max is not only their friend but their teammate, so that’s a big no-no. Second, I can’t believe he’s really interested. I’m not sure he’d like what he’d find underneath the surface. Or above it, quite frankly, I’m not a size two after all.”

“That’s a bunch of horseshit, and you know it. You’re beautiful inside and out. This is just nerves talking. Honey, listen to me and listen good. I know you and your brothers have shared everything, starting in the womb and all, but your heart is yours, Evie, it is yours and yours alone. This means you decide who you give it to, and if you want to get to know Max, then screw all of ‘em rules! You told me you’re on a path of self-discovery, right? Explore this then. If he wants to get to

know you a little, then talk to him.” I soak in her words. *She’s right.*

“You’re right, you’re right...” I sigh. We’re facing each other from our beds, and I catch another pillow that she’s throwing at me. Maybe I was overreacting before.

“I know I am. Now text that boy back before he comes knocking on our door again. I have a feeling he would, too.” *Again, I think she’s right.*

## Chapter Seventeen

# Max



Yesterday, I took a few big chances with Evie, and it paid off each time. *Each. Goddamn. Time.*

I'm hoping to continue this streak today when I text her and try to get to know her a little more. I'm walking into the arena for morning skate and humming that Taylor Swift song she and Red were singing last night. *Am I really humming this shit?!*

I start thinking about tiny purple plaid sleep shorts and tight purple t-shirts with mouth-watering cleavage. And now my dick is half hard. *Dimples, you hot little temptress.*

This is not the time or place for him, and I force myself to think of our family cat's litter box instead.

I refocus on the task at hand even though sweet Evie is much more pleasant to think about.

We have three big games coming up, and I want to win every single fucking one. I find my locker along the wall and suit up. Monroe and Jake are already lacing their skates, Hunter and Chase are taping their sticks and I'm clearly just making it here by the skin of my teeth. Coach narrows his eyes on me when he walks in and sees me half-dressed.

Shit, I'm never late for hockey. Class, yes, hockey, no. By the time I got back to the house last night, talked myself into texting her, and fell asleep, it was after midnight.

Okay correction, after I rubbed one out to thoughts of her in her bed in those damn shorts. I tried to keep my hands off my dick, but he was all kinds of angry and painfully hard. After all, he's not used to not getting what he wants when we come across beautiful women with curves for days who smell as sweet as she does. *Vanilla*.

I overslept and was late getting here, which never happens. I hustle and head out to the ice, joining the boys for drills.

“Harmon! Step inside my arena late again and you'll be sharpening skates after every game for the rest of the goddamn season! That goes for all of you knuckleheads!” Coach yells, pointing his stick at me. *Shit. Shit. Shit.*

“Won't happen again Coach, sorry, guys.” He sets up more drills to go over until my legs are jelly and sweat is pouring off every crevice of my body. When we skate off and head back to the locker room, it takes every ounce of energy I have to undress, shower, and redress. I can feel the angry stares from my teammates from all over the room.

“Max, what the hell man, you know how Coach feels about us being on time. That shit was brutal,” Monroe says. I'm not going to remind him of all the times he pulled the same shit last season, causing us to meet a similar fate.

“I couldn't sleep last night and got up later than usual this morning. One of you dickheads could've knocked on my door to get my ass up you know.” I know it's not their responsibility to wake me up to get to practice, but come on, a bunch of us live together after all. The last thing I want is

drama with the team, so I drop it and head off to find coffee and breakfast before class.

I'm not on the coffee quest alone for long. Hunter jogs over to catch up with me and I feel myself stiffen. Hunter isn't just rough around his edges; he's freaking sharp as a knife and has a "Don't fuck with me" expression on his face ninety-nine percent of the time. He's intimidating and can be brutal when he wants to be. His bullshit meter is always on, and he doesn't tolerate being lied to. He's always made it crystal clear that he means what he says and says what he means. I respect the ever-loving-shit out of him and appreciate his loyalty. He's been one hell of a friend, teammate, and roommate since I came to Havenwood freshman year.

That's why the guilt in my gut is churning, and my body is rigid. If he knew why I was really late this morning after the evening I unexpectedly had, he would lose his shit. *And I'd deserve it. Fuckin' bro code.*

So would Chase, who is equally tough as nails but has a heart bigger than Texas and wears that heart on his sleeve. He is authentic, and what you see is what you get. He is loyal, fierce, and, like Hunter, wildly protective of those he cares about.

Hunter and I walk silently toward the cafeteria, and Chase is already in line with Jake and Monroe. We're all too tired and hungry to speak, and I'm grateful for a few more minutes of silence. We get our breakfast sorted and sit down at a long table in the back. Drew and some of his boys come over to us and we exchange greetings amongst the various hockey and football players now assembled.

"Thanks again for the notes and for giving me the heads up about the quiz. I gotta stay above water this semester," I offer to Drew when our closed fists meet.

"Yeah, no problem. I figured after you and your girl left to play hooky that you would need the coverage." I visibly wince and find two sets of identical scowls eyeing me.

"She isn't my girl, and it wasn't like that," I defend myself. Not for nothing, but Hunter and Chase know what



happened yesterday after English and that there was clearly no hooking up happening.

“She’s definitely your something. You’ve been checking her out and sitting next to her in class since day one, bro. Yesterday I thought you sealed the deal when I walked in, and you were sitting next to her closer than usual.” *I am going to kill him. Or is it me that is going to end up dead?* Yeah, definitely me after he gave Hunter and Chase enough motive to pummel me into the damn ground.

“Wait, what girl is this? What does she look like? Do we know her?” Jake throws his two cents into the conversation.

“She’s cute in a quiet, girl-next-door kind of way. Wears glasses and everything. I think she’s new. I’ve never seen her before this semester,” Drew adds as he finishes his breakfast burrito.

I feel anger rise while my eyebrows pinch together, and my mouth takes on a tight frown. I don’t fucking like him calling Evie cute.

“I love quiet girls. They seem all innocent and sweet but love getting all dirtied up in bed.” Monroe is literally rubbing his hands together and licking his lips with a look in his eyes that makes me want to slap the shit out of him.

I catch Hunter and Chase exchanging a look. Clearly, a silent conversation is happening between them. Hunter scans all the faces at the table before he lets our corner of the world know who Evie is.

“You’re talking about our sister, so I suggest you shut the fuck up.” You could hear a pin drop at the table, which is usually full of loud ass banter.

“I didn’t realize you had a sister,” Drew states, breaking the silence. I feel his eyes burning into me.

“We do, and just to remind you fuckers, she’s off limits.” Chase sneers.

I’ve heard their warnings loud and clear, I just can’t bring myself to give a fuck.

The guilt I felt before is long gone. I would normally have no problem adhering to the rules and lines laid in the sand, honoring the bro code, and that sisters of teammates are to remain untouchable.

But the rules don't apply to this girl, not when she has got me feeling things I haven't felt in ages; if ever before.

I love my boys, but hearing Drew referring to her as cute and Monroe fantasizing about dirtying up quiet girls, had an unfamiliar upsurge of possessiveness slam into my chest and into my usually unaffected heart.

My heart that's now declaring the obvious: *I've got it bad for Evie Wilton.*



After a tense breakfast, I make my way to class and pull my phone out while the professor is going on and on about something or other. I'm not paying attention at all, I'm too distracted, and I want to talk to her. *Fuck it, I'm texting her.*

**Me:**

*Hey Dimples, how's it going?*

**Dimples:**

*Hi, did you mean to text me?*

I smile at the screen. She thinks she's invisible when she's starting to be all I see. I don't know how she's managed it after only a few interactions, but I'm ready to smash the sign over her head that declares her off-limits.

**Me:**

*Yeah, I meant to text you lol. Why do you sound surprised?*

**Dimples:**

*I thought maybe you meant to text someone else.*

Nope, no one else but you, pretty girl.

**Me:**

*Even though I called you by your nickname?  
You're the only person I call Dimples, Dimples.*



**Me:**

*Are you in class?*

Those three dots appear, disappear, appear, disappear over and over. I get the impression that she's second-guessing what to say. I'm going to have to go at her pace.

**Me:**

*I'm bored in art history. Keep me company?*

**Dimples:**

*I don't envy you lol. I'm actually reviewing your notes since my class was canceled. Hoping we don't have a quiz... Did you get a chance to study?*

**Me:**

*I'll do that later tonight after practice.*

*How are you doing today?*

I don't talk to girls like this. It's usually very superficial, and then there's not much talking at all. I don't ask how their days are. I frankly don't give a shit.

I definitely don't wait for them to answer like this. Before she finally responds, I check my phone over and over. *She's already turning me into a total simp.*

**Dimples:**

*I'm good, a little tired, but that's not new for me. How about you?*

**Me:**

*I overslept for morning skate.  
Coach was pisseedddd and he ran us harder than usual.*

**Dimples:**

*That sounds rough! Did your alarm not go off or did you sleep through it?*

**Me:**

*Slept through it.*

*That's what happens when you stay up late texting pretty girls.*



**Dimples:**

*Well hopefully they won't keep you up late again.*

**Me:**

*I meant you. YOU are the pretty girl.  
One with a killer smile I might add.*

**Dimples:**



*OH!*

**Me:**

*Tell me about my competition...*

**Dimples:**

*I assure you, there are no other guys texting me lol.*

*I fist pump the air above my head. I don't give one fuck when a few people notice.*

**Me:**

*Good to know,  
You going to come to see us play soon?*

**Dimples:**

*Going to games isn't really my thing tbh. I haven't been since high school.*

**Me:**

*I'm sure the boys would like to see you in the stands.*

*I know I would.*



I think the low-key flirting and my stupid comment about girls scared her off; she hasn't texted in over an hour. My mood shifted from being nervous and excited while we talked to now being complete shit since our conversation went cold.

My stupid winking face emoji is taunting me as I stare at my phone. *Dammit.*

I have one more class for the day, and I force myself to pay attention. I power through and meet up with the team for a late lunch.

“Who took a dump in your food, Harmon?” Hunter blurts out after scarfing down his lunch.

I scrub my hand over my face and will myself to relax. I'm obviously not going to talk to him about this. What the hell would I say? Your sister, the one you told us all to stay the fuck away from, the same one who I seem to have developed a massive crush on, blew me off and it hurt my damn feelings? *Hell no.*

“Just having an off day, it'll pass.” I'm fucking cranky. They all notice and give me some shit before they give me some space. Good. *Everyone can go fuck right off.*

I want to talk to one person, and she's not writing me back. Maybe she doesn't know what to say? *Maybe I fucking blew it.*

I gather my shit and head home. I want to nap before weights tonight. Maybe that will fix my mood.

I throw myself on my bed and shut my eyes. *And this is why we don't develop feelings.*

My phone vibrates, and of course, I lunge for it. When I see her name on my phone screen, a huge ass smile takes over my face. *There you are, Evie.*

**Dimples:**

*Sorry, Sloane and I ran some errands.*

*How was the rest of your day?*

**Me:**

*It just got better.*



**Dimples:**



We talk the rest of the afternoon and into the evening. I only put my phone down when I have weights later that evening and even then, my fingers are twitching to get back to our texting. I even charge it in the locker room to make sure I don't miss any messages from her when I'm done.

Facts about Evie; her favorite color is purple, and she tries to wear a little of it every day because it makes her happy. She loves the Twilight movies, and because of my sister, I know all about Team Jacob or Team Edward. *Jacob all the way.*

Her favorite thing to do is read romance books and her favorite MMC, which I had to google the shit out of, are vampires and werewolves from paranormal romance stories. I asked her if she ever read any hockey romance and she sent a winking emoji in response. *Fuck me.*

Her favorite place is the treehouse in her backyard at home. She loves M&M's, and according to her, the green ones

“taste better.” She’s addicted to hazelnut coffee and hates kale. She journals every day if she can, and she loves to listen to 90’s music.

There is more to her story than she’s shared today, and that’s fine. I’m not expecting every detail to be revealed, but she had me making mental notes. She went to community college before coming to Havenwood but didn’t elaborate on that when I asked her more. I still don’t know why she doesn’t go to our hockey games.

She doesn’t answer when I ask her about challenges and some of the harder parts of her life. She either avoids the questions or deflects them back to me. I drop it so I don’t make her uncomfortable. I’d already promised myself that I wouldn’t make her feel like that ever again, and I fucking meant it.

She’s fun to talk to and her authenticity comes through with each message she sends. She’s not interested in talking to me because of my position on the team, my future NHL prospects, or so she can brag to her girlfriends. She’s the exact opposite of a jersey-chaser or groupie. She could give a shit about any of that.

She asks me about my family, and I tell her about my sister Penny. We talk about school, our classes and majors, and life. She doesn’t bring up Hunter and Chase, and neither do I. Maybe I should feel bad about that. I wait for any feelings of guilt to emerge; they don’t.

**Me:**

*You still with me?*

**Dimples:**

*Sorry, I dozed off for a minute.*

**Me:**

*Go to sleep, pretty girl.*

**Dimples:**

*You’re giving me another nickname?*

**Me:**

*You make it easy, beautiful.*

**Dimples:**

*You're sweet Max.*



**Me:**

*Only to you.*



*Sweet dreams, Evie.*

**Dimples:**

*Goodnight Max, have sweet dreams too.*

I throw my phone to the side and have the biggest smile on my face. Can't even remember the last time I felt like this. My brain floods with the image of a sleepy Evie in her bed. *Damn.*

I'm a fucking steal pipe, imagining how hot she must look. I pump myself hard, thinking about her.

*Her wearing those little purple shorts. Stroke.*

*Her skin smelling like vanilla. Stroke.*

*Her pussy tasting just as sweet. Stroke. Fuck.*

*Her moaning for me as my hands roam every inch of her sexy body. Stroke.*

*Her begging me to keep going as I suck her nipples and finger her pussy. Stroke. Fuck, Evie, fuck.*

*Her chanting my name from her pretty little mouth over and over again. Stroke.*

*Her dropping to her knees. Stroke.*

*Her parting those lips for me. Stroke. That's it baby, open up.*



*Her looking up at me as she trails the inner part of my thighs. Stroke.*

*Her eagerly taking my dick into her wet and warm mouth. Stroke. Suck me, good girl.*

*Her sliding that tongue up and down my shaft, sucking the head over and over again. Stroke. Just like that.*

*Her gagging on my length as I push down her throat. Stroke. Take it all.*

*Her hand moving in rhythm with her mouth. Stroke. Stroke. Faster. Faster. Oh shit.*

My whole-body twitches when my orgasm hits. I can't fucking help but moan her name as I come. That was some fucking load. I roll over and shut my eyes. *Sweet dreams indeed.*

## Chapter Eighteen

Evie



“You keep smiling like that and your face is going to get stuck,” Sloane says. She pokes my cheek with her index finger, and I playfully swat her away. I put my phone down and return to our lunch. We’re meeting up with some girls on our floor between classes today and I’m texting more than eating.

“You’ve been like this for two weeks,” she points to my phone and grins.

I have. I’ve never been on my phone as much as I’ve been since we started talking. We’ve been texting non-stop. He’s taken getting to know me literally, taking the game of twenty questions to twenty thousand. *He’s so sweet.*

I’m still struggling to talk to him during our class but with texting, my words flow freely and without my usual hangups. I still feel my face burn up when he looks over at me in class, but I think that’s just something that we’re both expecting to happen at this point.

“I know. He’s so great, Sloane, and he’s so easy to talk to,” I tell her, clutching my phone to my chest.

“You like him, you really like him. It’s written all over your face!” She happily shouts and again, tries to poke my smiling cheeks. She leans in across the table between us this

time and whispers, “Have you told him? Has he told you how he feels about you?”

I do like him; I really like him. He’s sweet, funny, and makes me feel good. Both from our moments in class and from behind a screen. I can’t imagine what spending this much time with him face-to-face would be like.

He hasn’t asked to hang out and hasn’t brought up me going to one of his games since our initial conversations. Those girls in our class still make a big deal out of stopping by and making sure he knows that they’ve attended his last three pre-season games. He thanks them for their support and then turns his attention back on me.

As much positive progress as I’ve been making, I’m not sure I’m ready to go to a game just yet. Maybe by the end of the semester. I have to admit; it makes me a tiny bit jealous that they get to see a piece of him I haven’t yet. *Okay, fine, it makes me very jealous.*

“Who do you like, pretty girl?” Speak of the devil. The hot man himself appears out of thin air, and once again, I’m tongue-tied. He’s standing next to our table with Drew in tow. Sloane looks just as shocked as I feel.

“Uh, um, I, uh, uh, I.” I internally cringe. I could just die. Right freaking here. I’m such an idiot. No wonder he hasn’t asked to hang out with me. I can’t even speak to him without sounding like a fool.

My eyes fill with tears and now, I’m not only embarrassed and crippled with anxiety, but I’m also angry with myself. I take a deep breath and blink back the wetness.

He squats down and is now eye level with me, “Evie, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to upset you. I was just teasing you.” He searches my face, and ever so slowly brings his hand up. I’m holding my breath as he hesitates and puts it back down. I think he was going to touch my face and thought better of it. Maybe he’s remembering what happened the last time he put his hand on me. *How could I forget? I ran away like an Olympic track star.*

He clears his throat and looks at me softly. My anxiety and tension start to fade away the longer he sits here with me.

“Would it make you feel better if I told you who I like?” he smiles. He almost looks nervous.

“There’s this girl who I can’t stop thinking about and has me checking my damn phone nonstop to see if she’s texted me.”

I struggle to hold his gaze and look away before I drown in his ocean blues. He pauses and slowly lifts my chin up so I meet his eyes.

“It’s you, Dimples. I like you a whole hell of a lot.”  
*Oh. My. God.*

He winks and I literally sigh and melt on the spot. This is the single most romantic moment of my life and I want to actively take part in it, not be on the sidelines like I’ve always been.

Out of the three of us, I’m the one who easily gets overlooked. Not with Max, though. He sees me. I muster up some courage before I lose my nerve.

“I like y-y-you, t-t-too,” I tell him and feel a blush break out over my cheeks, not only from his words but his gentle touch.

I’m fidgeting with my ring trying to soothe away the last of my anxiety. He smiles as he brings his hand down from my face and gently nestles his way into my hand. Those enormous birds start flapping about in my stomach, giving me flutters. I feel electric energy moving between us as he rubs calming circles on my skin. *Is this really happening?!*

“Good, I’m glad we’re on the same page,” he says with a smile that sends my heart racing. I can’t help it. A laugh bubbles up, and it feels good. He lets out his own laugh and rubs his free hand over his jaw.

“I’ve got to go to weight training, but I’m going to text you as soon as I’m done.” He’s still holding my hand, stroking his thumb over my skin. This touch isn’t anxiety-provoking.

It's the kind of touch that warms your insides. It's comforting. *He's comforting.* He squeezes it before letting me go.

The guys say goodbye to Sloane and me. I bring the hand he was holding over my heart. It's still ramming around my ribcage.

“Well, if you were unsure of how he felt before, he sure made himself clear now.” *Did he ever.*

Before the moment passes, I pull up our text thread and send him a message.

**Me:**

*I can't stop thinking about you either. Or checking my phone.*



**Max:**

*Good to know, Dimples, good to know.*



That heart emoji stares at me all afternoon until he writes me back later that evening. I'm in bed with my kindle when my phone vibrates. I can't wait to talk to him.

**Max:**

*I really didn't mean to put you on the spot and make you upset earlier. I was already approaching you and Red when I heard her ask you who you like.*

**Max:**

*I'm glad it's me btw.*



**Me:**

*Of course, it's you! You have nothing to be sorry for. I'm the one who's sorry for always acting so weird.*

**Max:**

*You are a lot of things, but weird is not one of them. If you want to talk about it or fill me in a little, I'm here to listen.*

**Me:**

*I have a lot of anxiety (surprise, surprise!) and my emotions can get carried away sometimes. I know my triggers and am working on things in therapy. I was angry with myself for stuttering so badly when you asked me who I liked.*

**Max:**

*Why were you angry with yourself?*

**Me:**

*I thought the stutters and stammers were improving around you. I noticed I wasn't doing it as much in class since we've been texting. The more comfortable I am with the person, the less it happens. It's frustrating that I couldn't even*

*respond when you asked me a silly question today. It made me feel like I was taking a step back when, otherwise,*

*I was having a really great week.*

*I was just painfully embarrassed.*



**Max:**

*You don't have to be embarrassed if that's how you feel around me when we talk face-to-face. I'll always be patient and wait for your words. I want to hear everything you have to say.*

**Me:**

*That means more than you know. Thanks for not judging me. It's easy to do.*

**Max:**

*I'd never judge you like that.*



*I hope you come to learn that.*

He's making me feel things I've never felt before, belly flutters, heart-racing anticipation, and one other powerful emotion, trust. I trust him. *I trust Max Harmon.*

## Chapter Nineteen

# Max



“Dude, you told me nothing was going on between you and Evie Wilton. That was such bullshit!” Drew playfully punches me in the shoulder when we walk out of the cafeteria, away from her.

“We’re getting to know each other. I meant what I said, though. I really do like her...” I haven’t spoken to any of my other boys about this, or about her. How could I? Not yet, not until she and I talk more about all of this, about us.

It’s fucking crazy to me that I’m even thinking that after being determined to stay single for so long. But with her? How she makes me feel? Fuck being single. I want her. I want there to be an “us.”

“I know, I can tell. I see you with her in class. You’ve had your eye on her since day one. But that was some declaration in there, some real romantic shit.”



“She needed to hear it, needed to know where I stand. She’s worth those big declarations. And she feels the same way, so that’s a win in my fucking book.” A big, cheesy smile takes over my face. *She likes me too.*

“How the mighty fall,” he says while laughing his ass off, and shaking his head.

My phone buzzes and I pull it out of my jogger pocket to see who it is.

### **Dimples:**

*I can’t stop thinking about you either.*



*Or checking my phone.*

I feel like I’m ten feet tall reading her text. I fist pump the air because that’s apparently my new thing. That and Evie.

“Fucking sappy, simp.” Drew playfully punches me again as we walk through the Athletic Center’s doors.

“You better change your face before Hunter and Chase catch you smiling like a goddamn fool over their sister,” he jokingly warns. He’s right, but I can’t fucking help it.

“Man, at this point, I couldn’t hide my smile even if I fucking tried.” I chuckle. It’s true. Just seeing her name on my phone is enough to make me feel good. Sitting next to her in class? Fucking stomach flips. *I really am a sappy simp.*

“No, but seriously...what are you going to do about the fact that you’re into their sister?” His tone changes and he’s looking at me questioningly.

“I get that they want her off limits, but I really can’t help it. She’s pretty fucking incredible, man. I’ve never felt like this. Every time I talk to her, I feel happy. And for the first time, I give a shit about more than just hockey... I care about her.”

“Look man, don’t get me wrong, I’m happy for you. She’s cool people and I like her. You seem a lot happier, and I

can tell you're more committed to school. I think she's been a good influence on you, but I'm not gonna lie...I am worried."

I stop walking and give him a chance to continue before we enter the locker room.

"You're willing to break not only bro code, but your own 'No Distractions' rule. Have you thought about how this could fuck things up for not only your friendships, but your team? Your season? If things go south, I can't even imagine how her brothers will react if you play her or end up hurting her in any way."

"She's not a distraction, dude." I grit through my teeth.

"If anything, she's a motivation and an inspiration. I want to do better because of her. I have no intentions of ever fucking hurting her." I say defensively. Now I'm getting pissed. What the fuck is it with my friends thinking I would ever do something to hurt her?

"I'm glad she's not just another hookup for you, but I don't know, man. You're notorious for jumping from girl to girl on and off campus with the sole purpose of getting your dick wet. Wasn't the whole point of that to stay focused on hockey? Now all of a sudden, you're considering settling down? With none other than Evie fucking Wilton? Aren't you worried that shit could backfire? There's a lot on the line here. I just hope you know what you're doing, brother." He says and I can tell he wants to say more.

Before I can respond, I hear the boys start making their way toward us by the locker room entrance. I lift my chin to indicate this conversation is fucking done. My body is tense, and I'm riled up. I wouldn't be putting myself and all I've worked for on the goddamn line unless I was absolutely fucking sure it was worth the risk. *And she is.*

I grunt through set after set of free weights, and I'm not surprised that the team is staying away from me. I've been fucking pissed since my conversation with Drew.

Lifting didn't help my shitty mood, so I go for a run to clear my head. Drew's words bothered me more than I realized

and care to admit. Three different people in my circle have said in one way or another they doubt my intentions and my ability to be who Evie needs in a partner.

I get what he means, but I don't need him to point out the fucking obvious. I know that I've avoided relationships and steered clear of girls who wanted more from me. I didn't want to give them anything else besides a quick fuck. It's different with her. I want to give her everything and be the one to give her every dimple-popping smile that comes across her pretty face. What I'm feeling towards Evie is life changing. She's bringing out a side of me I didn't even think could exist. I know I have a tough road ahead and need to come clean to my best friends about my feelings, but I can't deny the fact: I want Evie Wilton and I need to man up and do something about it.



A few hours later, I'm in bed texting her. I reached out to let her know I didn't mean to put her on the spot about who she liked earlier today. She's open and honest about why she was thrown off. I realize that her transparency is really fucking important to me. So many girls have fed me bullshit line after bullshit line. Not my Evie. She's the real deal and isn't hiding or pretending to be anyone else than who she is.

We talk more about her anxiety and her triggers. I want to know more. I want to know when these challenges started and why. She has walls up and I want to tear each one down. I want to know all of her; even the parts of her she doesn't want anyone to see.

**Dimples:**

*You sure you want to meet my dark side? You've just decided you like me lol.*

**Me:**

*I want all the sides, pretty girl. Nothing you say or reveal would change how I already feel about you.*

**Dimples:**

*We'll see about that lol.*

*So...here it goes... I don't like unexpected male touch, that's a big trigger for me. I literally feel like I want to crawl out of my skin when it happens. I also don't like being in crowded places and not knowing how to leave a room or a situation. I always need to know where the exits are. Sometimes, guys who are really loud and rowdy can scare me, too.*

**Dimples:**

*Oh, and...Big people who tower over me. It's terrifying. A guaranteed panic attack would be encountering all three of those triggers in one situation. You saw one in action a couple weeks ago in English...*

**Dimples:**

*I'm sorry if that was a lot all at once...*

**Me:**

*I remember. It was really hard seeing you like that. We were being so fucking loud that day. I feel terrible that I added to it by touching your back outside.*

*I'm sorry about that, Evie.*



*But thank you for telling me.*

*I mean it, I want to know all of you.*

*I'm not going anywhere, Dimples.*

**Dimples:**

*That means more than you know.*

*I just don't want this to be a deal breaker for you...*

**Me:**

*I can't think of any deal breakers when it comes to*

*you.*



**Dimples:**

*Are ya sure about that?*



*Your best friends aka my brothers, aren't a deal breaker?*

**Me:**

*Not even remotely close to a deal breaker.*

*When you're ready to figure out what's going on between us, I'll tell the guys.*

**Dimples:**

*You sound like you have it figured out...*

**Me:**

*I know what I want.*

**Dimples:**

*Well, so do I...*

She does? I haven't wanted to rush her or to have her feel any pressure. I've been waiting for her heart to catch up to mine, but maybe we've been on the same wavelength this whole time. *Shoot your shot.*

**Me:**

*Care to share?*

**Dimples:**

*Let's do it together.*

*Count of three, tell me what you want, and I'll tell you.*

**Me:**

*Ok, on the count of three.*

Fuck, I'm nervous.

**Dimples:**

*1*

**Me:**

*2*

Why the fuck are my palms so fucking sweaty?

**Dimples:**

*3*

**Dimples:**

*I want you, Max. Just you.*



**Me:**

*I want you Dimples, all of you.*



I fist pump both arms in the air and grip my phone.  
This makes me so fucking happy. *This pretty girl is all mine.*

## Chapter Twenty

Evie



I like him a lot, more than I've liked anyone. I know it has the unfortunate potential to crash and burn around me when A and C find out. I'm in violation of our rule. Something I never thought would ever happen, but I can't help it! I like feeling this way. I like how happy he makes me. He's interested in everything I have to say. He doesn't judge me, and he isn't running for the hills every time I do something weird. He's also patient, which I've realized is important to me, right behind trust. Trusting him feels natural and safe.

Plus, he's seriously hot. I mean, how could anyone expect me to resist Max Harmon wearing a backwards hat while looking at me with those eyes? It's not possible.

His hockey season has officially started, and his schedule seems to have filled up overnight with hockey-related commitments. So, when he asked me to hang out, the only time we could find was this morning. I was going to be in the library anyway and he didn't even hesitate to offer to meet me here. It's not exactly a date, but it's better than nothing. *At least, that's what Sloane said.*

When I get to the library, I head upstairs to the tutoring rooms. I usually grab one when I'm here so I can be alone. *Hmmm, alone time with Max.* I'm feeling brave... and something else.

**Max:**

*Just got here, where do I find you, pretty girl?*

**Me:**

*The middle tutor room.*

**Max:**

*Trying to get me all alone?*



**Me:**

*LOL yes?*

*I'm kidding, this is my usual study spot.*

**Max:**

*On my way.*

He's on his way. *I'm nervous*. Not anxious, like I'm going to jump out of my skin; nervous like my heart is racing and I'm excited to see him. The nerves you get when you like someone. *Like, really like someone*.

A full smile takes over my face when I hear footsteps approaching the room. I busy myself with my economics book to give myself some sort of distraction from the anticipation of seeing him, of being with him. *Alone. Just us*.

"Hey," I raise my head and wow. Just wow. *Holy hotness*. The navy-blue t-shirt he has on makes those ocean eyes pop even more today. His hat is backward on his head, and that alone makes me drool.

His jaw is covered with scruff, and he looks so damn handsome. It triggers a foreign feeling deep inside of me. Lust. I bite down on my bottom lip so hard I feel my teeth imprinting on the soft flesh. I glide my tongue over the marks and watch his blue eyes track the movement across my mouth as he takes a seat next to me.

"Hey, uh, h-i-i, g-good m-m-morning," I stammer out. *That actually wasn't so bad*. He smiles and my heart beats wildly in my chest.



“It’s definitely a good morning now.” Oh boy, his eyes are all sparkly and mischievous and flirty. “What are you working on today?” *You. I want to work on you.*

“S-s-some Econ h-h-homework.” I take a deep breath to steady myself and try to relax. My nerves and lust are working themselves into a tizzy over this guy. Especially since he’s pushed his sleeves up and those holy hot forearms are on display. *So. Hot.*

He eyes my textbook and then turns to his own bag and takes out his spiral notebook that has English scribbled on the red cover. He’s old school with notetaking and I like that about him. I let out the breath I was holding, and he notices.

“What’s wrong?” He asks while staring at me.

“Just a little n-nervous.” Alright, only a slight stutter there. *Not bad, not bad.*

“Do I make you nervous, Dimples?” He eyes me curiously. *Ugh yeah you do!*

“A l-l-little, but I’m ok. I’m g-glad we’re h-h-hanging out,” I tell him honestly.

“Well, you make me nervous, too,” he says with a chuckle.

“Is it alright for us to chill here? I wanted to see you and wanted you to be comfortable. You mentioned you like coming here so I thought studying together would be okay?” *He’s nervous, too?*

“It’s a good start.” *Yessss! Finally! Zero stuttering!*

“A great start.” He flips through his red notebook and points out our next English assignment. He pats his jogger pockets and then checks behind his ears. I watch his every move, my eyes following his massive hands as they touch his trim hips and then the sides of his handsome face.

“I must have dropped my pen that I had tucked behind my ear when I jogged over here. Think I can borrow one of yours?” His chin points towards the pen sticking out of the bird’s nest on the top of my head. I feel my eyes go wide when

I remember I stuck my damp hair into a messy bun and had to use two pens to secure it when my hair band snapped.

I nod my head, and he reaches up and gently pulls them out. My still damp brown unruly hair falls behind my head and down my back. My front layers fall on the sides of my face, and I feel frozen. I'm too overcome to move.

"Wow, pretty girl." I feel my cheeks flame and my mouth instantly goes dry. His hand slowly comes up and gently pushes a piece of hair behind my ear and away from my face. I feel his finger graze my cheek and then feel it on the shell of my ear. Max's fingers feel gentle, warm, and kind on my skin. My heart is ready to explode in my chest, and my breathing quickens.

The stomach birds go crazy, flapping and fluttering around. His fingers travel down the length of hair in his hand before it falls free.

"You're so beautiful, Evie." *This can't be happening. Is this real?*

I take a quick inventory of myself and notice that I'm not anxious at all. I realize the uptick in nerves that I am feeling is not a response to my past trauma and his male touch. It's the exciting anticipation of what's coming next with this sweet blue-eyed man. I take in a few big pulls of air.

His eyes dip to my chest as he watches the band logo rise and fall with my breathing. His stare causes my nipples to tighten. I've never felt this turned on. *Does he feel it too? Is this all in my head? Am I stuck in the middle of a Taylor Swift song, or did I get lost in one of my smutty romance books?*

His thumb comes up and removes my bottom lip from my teeth's grasp. I didn't realize I was chewing it again. He holds my chin with his thumb and his index finger caresses my cheek. *I swear I'm floating.*

I can't help but stare at him. I'm not running away, I'm not scared of being here with him, and I'm not feeling a crushing wave of anxiety or crippling panic.

No, I feel like I'm levitating as the pad of his thumb moves across my jawline. I lean into his touch, and it feels good. *So, so good.*

"Evie, I want to kiss you. Can I please kiss you?" I swear if he doesn't kiss me in the next second, I'll die from cardiac arrest. Can he hear my heart? It's literally mimicking a stampede of horses. I've never craved touch so much in my life.

"Yes," is all I can say, and it's all he needs. My consent is crystal clear.

He ever so lightly presses his full lips to mine. I feel that gentle, but firm peck all the way to my toes. We linger for several seconds and then he pulls away and looks at me, assessing my face to make sure I'm ok. I'm more than ok. I can't help but smile, a big cheesy dimple showing smile.

His hands come up on either side of my face and his index fingers find my cheek indents and he kisses my forehead. I close my eyes and then his mouth is on mine again. He presses his lips against mine and they fit perfectly.

He licks the seam, and I open for him. His tongue touches mine and we go from zero to sixty. His hands are in my hair and my hands grip his shoulders. Our tongues are teasing one another, and I moan into his mouth. I freaking moan! I feel him smile against me and we pull away. He grins widely and stares at me with a sweet expression on his face.

A blush creeps up from my chest all the way to the tips of my ears. I pull the neckline of my Guns N' Roses t-shirt up over my nose, holding it there. I am smiling so hard underneath my entire face hurts.

My phone buzzes as the alarm goes off, alerting me that my time in the library is up. He starts shoving his things into his bag, turning his body away from me. The hint of his smile is still clear across his face.

That was hands down the best kiss of my life. Not that I've had many experiences, so you can imagine my absolute

shock when one of Havenwood's playboy hockey devils turns back around and states the same.

“That was the best kiss of my life, Dimples.” He had me nearly floating before, and now, with his admission, I swear I'm going to faint.

## Chapter Twenty-One

# Max



I take the library stairs two at a time and then head straight for the elevator to take me upstairs to her. The doors open and I scan the open floor; I'm looking for a brown ponytail and have yet to find the one I'm looking for amongst the sea of heads. I send her a text and she tells me she is in one of the tutor rooms and I head that way.

I don't get very far before fucking Lexi stops me in my tracks. *What does she want now?*

“Hiya handsome, what a nice surprise seeing you here,” Lexi purrs while stepping into my personal space. Her overly tan hand automatically lands on my chest, and she starts to trail her finger down my shirt towards my waistband. I grip her wrist to stop her descent. I let her go and take a step back which only seems to encourage her as she steps right back into me.

“I gotta go, Lexi. I need you to move.” This isn’t the first time I’ve slept with a girl and in the aftermath, she thinks she has some right to me. I try to be clear about my intentions, but there are always a few who don’t give a shit. Lexi is clearly in that category. Fuck, right now she’s the category president as her finger draws hearts on my arm and stares up at me like I hung the fucking moon. *And that I’m a big dollar sign.*

“You know, we can go back to my place, or yours. Have some fun, spend some time together,” she asks. *Fuck no.*

I’m losing my goddamn patience with her. I don’t like her touching me. I don’t like her being this close to me.

“Not gonna happen, Lexi. Now I really have to go,” I try to step away and she steps with me for the second time.

“Enough, Lexi, I fucking mean it. I’ll see you around.” I sternly tell her and this time, she doesn’t move. I don’t give her a second glance and begin walking away. I don’t get very far before I hear her say,

“Oh Max, you definitely will.”

I turn around to say something about that creepy comment, but she’s already gone. *Jersey-chaser-stage-five-clinger.*

I spot Evie sitting inside the open door of the tutor room. *Damn.* Just seeing her has my heart rate picking up.

She looks cute in a baggy army green t-shirt with the Guns N’ Roses logo sprawled across the center. She also has a thin, dark purple cardigan on. I have no doubt she’s wearing her checkered Vans, and some patterned socks.

Every other girl at Havenwood looks like carbon copies of each other with layers of makeup, trendy clothes, and hairstyles. They look superficial, and I always feel like they’re trying too hard.

Not Evie, though. She’s honest, sweet as hell and fucking gorgeous and there’s no way I’m the only asshole whose taken notice. If I don’t do something about it, some other jackass will. *And that’s not fucking happening.*

Boundaries, lines in the sand, and rules be damned. I want her, all of her. *I fucking want Evie Wilton.*

I'm staring at her pink mouth and all I can think about is kissing her even though we're here to hang out and study. I pull those pens out of the bun on her head and her hair falls around her face, and my heart stops beating. *God, she's so fucking beautiful.*

She seems nervous, which is the last thing I want her to be. I want her to trust me. I want her to be comfortable when we're together. So when her whole body relaxes and she leans into my hand, a fierce urge to cherish and protect her burrows inside of my skin.

Do you know what else roared to life inside of me? My fucking need for her. I've never wanted to kiss a girl as badly as I wanted to kiss her right then and there. I was ready to beg for it and I've never had to beg for anything in my goddamn life. When she nodded her head yes, I wasted no time, pressing my lips to hers.

I have to taste her. She lets me into her sweet mouth and goddamn; she gives me the best kiss of my entire fucking life.

After one taste of her, I'm addicted. This pretty girl ruined me with one fucking kiss.

I had to walk away from her, even though every cell in my body was screaming to stay and keep kissing her. If we kept making out, I'm not sure I could've stopped. Not when I pulled her into me while I twisted my fingers in her hair, not when her nipples were hard tips against my chest, even with two pieces of cotton between us.

I want to savor her and take my time; my Evie deserves much more than a library tutor room. *My Evie. Mine.*

I'm walking to class and checking my phone to see if she's already texted me, even though we've been apart for a few damn minutes. I'm trekking across Havenwood's picturesque campus when I see Drew. He jogs up to me and extends a fist out, which I bump as he says,

“We good, man? I don’t like how our conversation ended the other day,” he says to me. Hell, I didn’t like how shit ended between us either.

“Yeah man, all good, you gave me some shit to think about, but my mind is made up about her, I’m all in. She’s worth all of the risks. ” I tell him and lift my chin in his direction to let him know that there is nothing left to discuss when it comes to her. If he does, we’ll be having a very different conversation.

“Understood. Just know, I got your back if things blow up with her brothers.”

“Thanks man, I appreciate it. Honestly nothing is going to stand in my way. She deserves the world and I plan on giving it to her.”

We start walking across campus and he tells me about the latest football team drama. I’m half listening to him; I can’t get my girl and that out of this world kiss out of my head. My lips still feel all tingly and shit.

“Why are you smiling like that?” He asks. *Because I just kissed Evie Wilton in the library, that’s why.*

“Just having a great morning.” *I want to start every day with Evie kisses.*

“You saw her, didn’t you?” I smile to answer him, and he laughs before slapping me on my back.

“You’ve got it bad, bro.”

“Yeah man, I do.” *I really fucking do.*



## Chapter Twenty-Two

Evie



The next week is busy with classes and the on-campus events that Sloane and the girls from our floor attend. We go to on-campus movies, dinners, and dorm gatherings. I'm opening up more and making friends. I joined a book club on campus, and I'm making positive strides.

My self-esteem is also increasing the more I put myself out there. For the first time in my young adult life, I'm feeling good about myself.

For all my hang-ups, how I dress isn't one of them. I still wear my dad's old band and concert t-shirts with my slip-on sneakers most days, but that's me.

Unlike the female population here at Havenwood, I've never been into fashion, wearing a ton of makeup and all that. I think I own three dresses in total. Sometimes I think I stick out like a sore thumb with my casual style and black nail polish, but those are the parts of me that have always felt like me and I have no plans to change them.

As much as I'm enjoying my increased self-esteem, not seeing Max outside of class since we kissed is poking little holes in my newfound confidence.

It was earth-shakingly good. But maybe making out with his best friends' sister was too much of a risk for him.

He said it was a good kiss. *So doesn't he want to do it again?*

I mean, it's natural to want to do more kissing once you start. More Max kisses are all I can think about! *That and the fact that we haven't done it since.*

We still text nonstop and I know he has been busy with practice daily, weight training sessions, and their game schedule. I've noticed a big change in my ability to cope with my anxiety and have even been able to sit next to him in class without breaking out in a sweat, turning into a tomato, and thinking I'm going to pass out. I still stutter and stammer but it's less and less the more we talk. This is tremendous progress for me.

My heart still races when he walks into the classroom. My skin zaps and zings with awareness when our fingers brush against each other when I pass him a pen, or when he leans over to show me something he has written in his notebook, and he brushes his arm against mine. This is the most physical contact I've gotten, and I want more. *This is a giant step!*

I still smile wide when I catch him looking at me, and when he smiles back, my dimples make an appearance. I know when this happens because his own grin grows wider, and I think he even sighed outwardly once or twice. *I swear he can't be real sometimes.*

His friend Drew joins our conversations now. He plays football and is one of the largest humans I've ever seen. I was intimidated by him initially, but he's been nothing but kind and respectful toward me.

The three of us had to work on an in-class group assignment together and I became incredibly nervous and barely got a word out. Drew was patient, giving me the time I needed, and didn't bat an eye over my stuttering. He complimented me on my insight into the assignment and didn't make me feel less than for my obvious anxiety. My nerves faded away, and I was okay after that.

When I left our most recent class and Drew shouted, “See you later, Little Wilton,” and held out his meaty fist for a bump, I didn’t even hesitate before offering mine in return.

I waited for the usual wave to crash over me, but it didn’t come. I actually felt fine, and I smiled at myself. When my dimples clearly popped out, I watched the man of my affection smile, groan, and throw his head back. Drew smacked his stomach, and I heard him say, “I totally get why you call her Dimples.”

These are all enormous strides, and I can see the headway I’m making. My therapist and support group have also noticed which really validates things for me.

The only thorn in my side is Lexi. It’s like she’s going out of her way to be nasty to me. Her snotty comments range from my size, my clothes, my glasses, and my food choices. Whatever it is, she finds a need to point out her disgust with me.

I’m also 99% sure she was talking to her roommate Elena about having sex with Max, but I only caught a part of their conversation before she clicked her teeth at me, rolled her eyes, and shut her door. *Whatever.*

I don’t care if she hates me. I have no plans to cower and let her run me off. I’m going to keep attending residence hall functions, hanging out with the girls on our floor, and having fun. Mean girls are nothing new. *But I am.*



Sloane and I grab dinner before she heads to the arena for the boys’ hockey game with some girls from our floor.

Stupid Lexi sits down at our table, and I immediately notice she has #16 on her right cheek with a heart on her left. *This fucking little bitch!*

She stares me down, challenging me. I don’t care how she’s figured out that he and I are, well, whatever we are, but

this makes me full of rage that she thinks she has any right to have his number on her body.

I rarely ever get mad, but I can't help but have this visceral reaction to her. I want to spit on my hands and wipe them off her smug face. If only my eyeballs could shoot out laser beams and zap her into dust, then all would be right in my world.

"Ignore her, honey bunny. She looks desperate, and desperation doesn't look good on anybody," Sloane whispers to me.

"Plus, I'd bet my Nana's ribbon-winning cobbler recipe that you have a slew of new text messages from that boy, and she... does not. She's thirsty, and you are well-hydrated with Max's attention and affection. It'd be best to remember that. It'll do you good when she gets you all riled up," she says and her chin nods across the table to Lexi who's chatting with Elena who, *gross*, has A's number on her own cheeks.

"Thirsty as fuck," I mumble and cross my arms over my chest. *Thirsty for Max, my something or other.*

"Evie Wilton, did you just f-bomb at the dinner table?" She pretends to scold me in a mock reprimanding way.

"Seemed appropriate under the circumstances, don't ya think?" I ask her.

Sloane cocks her head to the side and follows my line of vision, which is still locked and loaded on Lexi. *Come on laser beams, let's blast her to smithereens!*

"What are you thinking?" I ask her.

"That she's not only desperate and thirsty but also jealous...as fuck." She says and I can't help but laugh out loud hearing my prim and proper roommate swear.

"Sloane Higgins, did you, Miss Manners, also just f-bomb at the dinner table?" I ask and feign a shocked expression.

“Like you said, it seemed appropriate under the circumstances.”

The girls talk nonstop about hot hockey players and the party that is happening on Devils’ Row afterward. I honestly tune out when a few mentions A and C. *Vomit.*

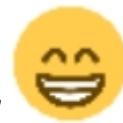
Sloane straightens her spine when C’s name is passed around. *Interesting.*

Until now, I’ve only contemplated returning to one of their hockey games. But after Lexi’s stunt, maybe concretely working up to going would be a logical next step for me. Especially if I’m kinda, sorta, something with #16. *He said he wanted me...and I want him...so that means we’re something, right? We just haven’t officially labeled it yet...*

After a tedious dinner, I head back to the dorm alone and text him. I’m feeling bold and send him a selfie:

**Me:**

*Good luck out there, handsome!*



*Sending you a big dimpled smile for good luck!*

I get a selfie back and my God, I can feel my heartbeat in my vagina. He’s all geared up.

**Max:**



*My Dimples*

*Now I know for a fact we’re going to win.*



*I’ll score you a goal, pretty girl.*

What would it take for me to get to a point where I can see him score a goal in person? *A goal for me. Not Lexi. Me!*

During our next virtual visit, I want to discuss this with Melanie. *I want to do this. I want to go to a game.*

I take a hot shower, crawl into bed with my kindle, and get lost in a paranormal romance novel full of vampire-biting and sexy times. *I mean, Damon Salvatore can bite me ANYWHERE.*

Sloane breaks my book bubble and sends me a text to tell me that Max scored a hat trick and that my brothers scored one each. Photo after photo of them celebrating and playing comes in and as much as I appreciate her text, it makes me sad to not be there. *I missed out on seeing this.*

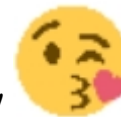
She reminds me about the party at their hockey house to celebrate the win and I decline, letting her know I'm staying in for the night. I know I'm not ready for that kind of scene. The block party in August was too overwhelming and I don't want to push it.

After sending a congratulatory message to my brothers on our group chat, I bring up the text thread with Max.

**Me:**

*Congratulations on your hat trick!* 

*I hope you enjoy celebrating your win!*



I stare at my phone for a few moments. No dots appear. No response comes in. This goes on for over an hour and I can't stop checking to see if he's texted me back. He doesn't.

Maybe he's doing exactly what I said. Maybe he's celebrating his win with sexy and slender girls at his house party. *I'm sure Lexi will be there.*

Ugh, I hate this. It won't be a good thing for me if I force myself to go. I'm making positive progress because I'm being smart about it, about what I need. I'm taking my time and listening to myself. My initial reaction towards the party was to not go and I need to trust my gut. *I need to trust Max.*

My brain is now the equivalent of a runaway train of negative self-talk, and I can't get off.

One kiss will not satisfy his sexual appetite. I doubt he's given our kiss or me a second thought tonight.

We have our English class, our daily texting, and I have feelings for him, but we've only hung out once.

He said he wants me but has done nothing about it. We haven't gone out on a date. We haven't talked about the kiss.

He flirts and I attempt to flirt back, but at the end of the day, he must still see me as his best friends' sister. *His teammates' sister.*

Especially with hockey underway, he may not want to mess with the team's dynamic by pushing for more with me.

His radio silence only exacerbates my racing thoughts as the minutes go by. Another hole poked in my self-confidence and self-esteem. *Maybe this isn't real after all.*

## Chapter Twenty-Three

# Max




Tonight, I played the game of my life. After each goal, I scanned the crowd, looking for a brown ponytail, a beautiful smile, and pretty doe eyes. I kept looking for Evie after my first, second, and then third goal of the night. *I scored a hat trick for you, Dimples.*

I even grazed over the females in the crowd looking for her when Hunter and Chase scored. She wasn't here, she never comes to the games. I know this, but I couldn't help but look for her, anyway.

After a ton of locker room celebrating and hearing that Monroe has already invited all of Havenwood back to our place for a party, I check my phone and see texts from my Evie.

**Dimples:**



*Congratulations on your hat trick!* 

*I hope you enjoy celebrating your win!*



I fucking love that she knows hockey; it's such a turn-on. I also love that she included three hockey sticks to represent my three goals.

**Me:**

*Each one was for you.*

*I told you I would score for you, pretty girl!*



Three heart emojis, one for each goal. She's the only girl I've ever sent goddamn heart emojis to, and now that I've started, I can't seem to stop. Evie Wilton has quickly turned me into a total sap. According to ball-busting Drew, I'm a sappy simp. I could give a shit, though. I like showing her how I feel.

I send my text to her right as my damn phone dies in my hand. *Fuck! Did my message go through?*

I curse at myself for not charging it while I was on the ice. I pocket the damn thing and as soon as Jake unlocks our front door, I'm running upstairs to my room to plug in my phone.

I want to celebrate with Evie and kiss her for every goal I scored tonight, and then some. We've talked every day but have spent zero time alone since the library. *It's been way too fucking long.*

I see her in English and it's like we're in our own bubble that's full of stolen glances, secret smiles, and tingly touches.

Drew has infiltrated our bubble a few times, and seeing her open up and work through her own challenges has been

wonderful to watch. She's so strong as she pushes herself outside of her comfort zone. These are positive changes. The baby steps she told me she wants to take each day. My Evie is making good on her goals, and I love that for her.

Drew knows how I feel and has been nothing but patient, nice, and cool to her. I see he respects her, and I appreciate him giving her the space she needs when she needs it.

When she offered her fist to bump Drew's outstretched hand, I was so damn proud of her; I know that was a big deal. I think she knew how my heart was bursting with pride when she flashed us a dazzling dimpled smile.

When Drew commented that he now got why I called her Dimples, I felt possessive over that smile. I want them all to myself. I don't want to share a single fucking one.

She was so damn stunning; I groaned as I felt my dick thicken in my pants. *I want her to smile like that when I make her come.*

I've been going slow, but I want to see if she's willing to pick up the pace with me. Evie Wilton is mine. I keep thinking about it and saying it, I just haven't done anything about it.

I need to come clean to Hunter and Chase and let them know I've caught deep feelings for their sister, but I want to tell her first, and not over text. I need to see her. *Tonight.*



I plug my phone in and head downstairs. I grab a water and welcome the outpouring of congratulations that are sent my way from partygoers filling our house. Hunter, Chase, and I are the men of the hour, and every girl in the jam-packed house is making their sexy intentions known.

I could give a shit about any of these girls. They mean nothing to me. I just want to see Evie and kiss her for the rest of the night. *Tomorrow morning, too.*

I nod to Hunter, who's sitting on the couch in our living room. He's got girls perched on either side of him with his arms resting on the top of the sofa. Hunter has got that whole angry brooding thing going for him and these girls are all lapping it up, trying to be the one to knock the scowl off his face.

He makes them all come to him, and they do in droves. He says the bare minimum and doesn't give away any of his attention besides tapping one or two on the shoulder, indicating that he wants to go somewhere to be blown or to fuck. They always eagerly agree and follow him upstairs to his room, to a bathroom, or a closet.

Chase is in the kitchen and he's scanning the crowd the same way I was at the arena, except he's probably looking for a redhead while I was, and still am, looking for a brunette. I know this isn't her scene but, like I was earlier at the game, I still look.

Lexi walks right up to me in our makeshift dining room, and slips her hands underneath my shirt, scrapping her neon pink nails down my abs. She's attempting to be sexy, but all she's doing is annoying the fuck out of me. *What is with this chick?*

Until I started talking to Evie about her triggers related to uninvited touch, I never really thought about all the casual touching that occurs. I don't want Lexi touching me. I push her hand off my body and step away from her.

"Want to go upstairs and celebrate your big win?" She asks me and bats her caterpillars at me.

I frown at her, and she tries again. This time she stands on her tippy toes to whisper in my ear.

"I've got a hole for you to fill for every goal you scored tonight, handsome. I was so proud of how you played out there. Come on, let me show you." I jump away from her like my ass is on fire. I nearly knock into two guys who are setting up beer pong as I scurry to get the fuck away from her. This only spurs her on. She doesn't take her eyes off me as she

corners me. She's nothing but persistent, that's for fucking sure.

"What the hell, Lexi!" I say to her and she's looking at me like I'm out of my mind for rejecting her.

"I don't know why you're resisting this happening again. We've already slept together. You're obviously attracted to me," she says.

"We're not happening again, Lexi. It was a one-time thing, I told you that. I'm going to walk away from you now and I do not want you following me." I'm firm with her and move around her.

"You're wrong, Max, we will happen again. I always get what I want!" She whines in frustration, and I don't give her a response. I'm not interested in her, I never was.

Fuck, I could really kick myself for doing that. *She's fucking nuts. It's official. I stuck my dick in crazy.*

Before Evie, girls like Lexi, who put their hands on my body, offering themselves for a hookup, were good enough for me. I didn't feel that I had anything else to offer them besides a one-night stand and a few orgasms. My heart wasn't available to them, and I closed myself off from striving for something more.

Then a brown-haired, curvy, sexy-as-hell girl looked my way, and damn, do I want to give her all I've got.

I haven't slept with anyone since the block party. I only want Evie.

I see that flash of red hair. Hope blooms in my chest that Red brought Evie here and that I can spend some time with her.

When I reach her, she tells me that Evie declined both invitations to the game, and to the party. She also tells me she sent her pics of me celebrating my hat trick. I'll say it again, Red's a great wing-woman.

I swear, whenever this girl talks, her voice is like a goddamn siren call to Chase. He lifts his head up from

arranging shots on our makeshift bar in the living room and makes his way over to us. He has a sixth sense for her. It's the only explanation for how he heard her amongst the music and elevated noise in the house.

He can't take his eyes off her, and I know that look on his face. She's wearing a dark green crop top and black high-waisted jeans. Chase looks ravenous; like he wants to fucking devour her.

With my newfound information that Evie is home alone tucked in her dorm room, I race up the stairs, snag my hoodie and phone and head out.

As I'm about to slide down the stair banister to save more time in my quest to see her, I catch Hunter coming up with a girl under each arm. I duck back into my room to avoid him questioning why I'm leaving. *Yeah, we're definitely not having that discussion tonight.*

When he's behind his bedroom door, I finally leave. I have twenty percent battery. *Fuck it, that's good enough.*

I see that my previous text made it to Evie before my stupid phone died. I also see that she wrote me back and I fist-pump the fucking air. It's still my thing. *Just like my Evie.*

**Dimples:**



*I'd love to see you tonight and kiss you for each goal you scored.*

I type out a new text letting her know I'm coming to see her.

**Me:**

*If I knew I'd get a kiss for each goal, I'd have gone for more.  
I'm coming over now. See you soon.*

I can't fucking wait.

I sprint all the way to her residence hall.

## Chapter Twenty-Four

# Evie



I was feeling discouraged and was questioning what was happening between us. Then my phone lit up with his message. His words and those three heart emojis set my world right side up again.

It hits me hard; I have deep feelings for Max Harmon.

**Max:**

*Each one was for you.*

*I told you I would score for you, pretty girl.*



I really want to see him. Maybe after his house party dies down, he would want to come over. I can read my book to stay awake until then.

**Me:**



**Me:**

*I'd love to see you tonight and kiss you for each goal you scored.*

Three dots appear before his reply.

**Max:**

*If I knew I'd get a kiss for each goal, I'd have gone for more. I'm coming over now. See you soon.*

I can't wait to see him and pick up my book to make the minutes go by faster. I get lost in a very hot and heavy chapter. It's some of the steamiest scenes I've ever read. It's making me imagine things. Dirty things. *Dirty things with Max.*

Thinking about him has me squeezing my legs together for relief underneath my lavender comforter. I've touched myself, and I've had a few self-love orgasms, but never one with a guy. Not before the assault and not afterward.

My hand lowers down my body. I think about what it would be like if Max's fingertips were grazing the sensitive skin at the apex of my thighs. I've never felt pleasure there with someone else. I bet he knows how to do all the sexy things I'm reading about. He's probably fantastic at it.

My nipples tighten, and I wonder how it would feel if he were to lick and bite them. I've never had a man take my breasts in his hands before and feel the weight of them. I hold them and squeeze. I lightly graze my nipples and groan. *He has massive hands.*

I imagine Max plucking them with his fingers and hardening them before sucking them into his eager mouth.

I drop my hand lower and feel wetness amongst my folds. My vagina is warm and wet. I find my clit and circle my fingers slowly, rhythmically. *God, that feels incredible.*

I wish they were his fingers. Before I can stop it, I'm moaning his name into my otherwise quiet room.

I pick up my pace, envisioning him and me in all the ways the vampire hero and human heroine were getting it on in my book.

My breathing catches in my throat the higher and tighter my orgasm builds. I need relief and add pressure to my clit. I detonate erupting from the inside out. My legs shake as I call out Max's name, unable to stop myself until I float back down from the most intense orgasm I've ever given myself.

I want more. I want more kisses, more of his touch. I want to feel his hands all over me. *And I want my hands all over him.*



## Chapter Twenty-Five

# Max



I sprint across campus and make it to her door, getting ready to knock when I hear it.

She's moaning and making sexy noises behind this door, and it sure as hell isn't with me since I'm out here. *Who the fuck is in there with my girl?*

She didn't reply to my last text and I'm becoming increasingly irritated thinking there's some fucker in there with her. I'm also getting turned the fuck on listening.

I put my left ear to the door and hear the hottest fucking thing come out of her mouth. My name. Clear as day, she called out for me while her sexy moans become frantic. *Goddamn, that's hot.*

If I wasn't standing like a damn creeper in the all-girls dorm hallway listening to her call out for me, I would have shoved my pants to my ankles to free my aching dick to stroke it from root to tip.

When she shouts my name again, drawing it out, I damn near come undone. It's quiet for a second and I'm smacking my hand against the door, desperate to be let in. *Wait, what if she's in there with another Max? I mean, it's possible I'm not the only Max here at Havenwood.* "Evie, open up now. I'm the only Max that should be in your bed!"

I'm ready to rip the door off its goddamn hinges at this point.

When the door finally opens, the sexiest girl I've ever seen stands before me. She looks like a fucking wet dream. Short silk eggplant-colored pajama shorts showing off legs that are strong enough to wrap around my waist, wide hips that I want to hold on to while I plow into her from behind smacking that plump ass while she moans my name like she was just shouting.

I see a matching spaghetti strap eggplant-colored tank top showing off tits that are large, round, and perky. They are downright perfect for sliding my dick in between while I pump into that sweet little mouth that I love so much. *Damn, that fuckable pink mouth.*

Her nipples are hard and look ready for me to suck them. I want to lick them until she unravels for me. Are they red, pink, or caramel? I need to find out right fucking now.

Her feminine shoulders lead to arms I want to feel clinging to me, and small hands I want all over my body. I want to gently bite her neck while I kiss both sides of her throat.

When I eye her mouth and her chewing on that bottom lip, I take a step closer and release it from her white teeth with my thumb. Her hair is wild and wavy, and she has her glasses on. *Fuck. Me.*

I must be dead because this vision in front of me is unlike anything I've ever seen on Earth. I outline her pink pout with the pad of my thumb and imagine what those perfect lips would look like wrapped around my hard dick that's currently trying to escape.

Her cheeks are flushed, and her pupils look blown as she smiles under my touch. *I like that look on her. I like it a whole hell of a lot.*

She takes a step back and I take a step forward until we're inside her room. I don't take my eyes off her. The door slams shut behind me, enclosing us in, keeping the rest of the world out, and locking us into our bubble.

It's just her and I, there's no one here, no other man named Max. *As it should be.*

This means only one other possibility. My girl was touching herself and thinking about me. I look over at her bed, eyeing the thrown-back matching lavender comforter and sheets complete with a wet spot about halfway down. She must be drenched. *You wet for me, baby?*

Rapid-fire images flood my brain of this beautiful girl arching her back in pleasure. Touching herself. Thinking dirty thoughts about me. Me and her. Doing all the dirty things. *Fuck.*

It's enough to knock me on my ass and bring me to my knees before her.

I've never felt this physical and emotional need to be with someone as I do right now. I'm consumed by it. I'm consumed by her. It only tightens the invisible thread that pulls me towards her, connecting us.

She's staring at me, and I realize we haven't spoken yet. We don't have to. Words wouldn't do this moment justice. I slowly take another step towards her and am hit with scents of vanilla and her cum. My mouth waters thinking about the taste of her. I'm fucking burning for her.

I feel dizzy with lust and when she takes a step toward me; I know she feels it. Feels our magnetism, our thread, our pull. Feels us.

My heartbeat is roaring in my ears when she takes another step and reaches for my hand, threading our fingers together, connecting us. It may seem like a simple and innocent gesture, but for her, I know it's a big step. She's

initiating touch, she's showing me she isn't afraid. She's choosing to touch me.

Mimicking her, I reach for her other hand and thread our fingers, our palms sealing together.

"Evie," it's all I manage, but it seems to be enough for her. She makes me feel that I'm enough for her.

"Max," fuck, the way she says my name. One syllable with three letters coming from her mouth packs a powerful punch. It hits me straight in my chest.

I can already see it happening. I'm on the edge of falling and falling hard for her. I'm never going to be the same. Evie Wilton is going to slay me.

I breathe her in and tell her how I feel,

"I'm feeling something deep in my heart for you, Evie. It's been brewing and now it's consuming me. I look for you everywhere I go. I look for glasses, brown ponytails, and checkered Vans.

"Evie, I want you to be my girl, officially. I know we're up against your brothers, but I don't give a shit. Having your heart, having you, fuck, that means more to me. Having your smiles means everything to me—"

She cuts me off as she steps on her tippy toes, wraps her arms around my neck and kisses me. I mean *really* kissing me. I can't help myself and I dive in.

My arms go around her waist as her hands find their way into my hair. My hands drop to her ass and as I squeeze her plump cheeks and she lets out a moan. *Fuck yeah, she likes that.*

I scoop her up into my arms and spin her round so her back is up against the door. I feel her thick thighs wrap around me. I feel the back of her heels dig into my lower back as she locks them together.

I break away and start trailing kisses towards her ear and whisper, "Fuck, I really fucking want you. I want to make

you moan for me.” I feel her shiver at my words, and she tightens her grip around my waist.

My dick is throbbing, begging to break free from my sweats. I work my way down her neck with kisses and she turns into me, and our lips find each other again. She bites my bottom lip and I groan. I can’t fucking take it and spin her away from the door and walk towards her bed.

I lay her down and lean forward to kiss her again when she turns her cheek to stop me. I freeze and pull back, giving her space. I can tell she’s nervous. I don’t hesitate for a fucking second to back off.

“C-c-can w-w-e-e sl-ow d-down for m-m-minute?” She sits up and pats the space next to her before situating herself to lay on her side. I instantly do as she asks.

I toe off my sneakers and take off my sweatshirt next to my already discarded hat on the floor. I keep my joggers on and my plain white T-shirt. She eyes the discarded pile of clothes and scoops up my sweatshirt and puts it on. I really like how she looks wearing it. She looks sexy as hell in my clothes.

I hop on the bed, and we lay on our sides, facing one another. She looks so damn pretty, and I have to remind my dick to calm the fuck down.

“I’m sorry if that was too much too soon. I don’t want to pressure you or make you feel uncomfortable. Are you okay?” I ask, worried that I might have overwhelmed her.

“I’m okay. Before we go any farther and trust me... I really want to. I s-should share something w-with you. You a-asked m-me to be your girl, but I think there’s s-s-something you n-n-need to know f-f-first.” She’s anxious again and I want to soothe her. I tuck a wild wave behind her ear and watch her close her eyes and take in a few deep breaths. I reach for her hand and give her a gentle squeeze to let her know I’m here.

When her eyes open, she finds her strong steady voice, and she shares a story that breaks my heart. It has me so

fucking angry my vision blurs and has me placing her in a protective hold that I refuse to break for anyone. *Absolutely fucking no one will tear me away from my Evie.*

## Chapter Twenty-Six

# Evie



As far as firsts go, I've never masturbated, called out a guy's name while having an orgasm, and then opened the door to having my real-life fantasy standing there. *Sorry, Damon, I'm talking about Max.*

Now, said fantasy is in my bed staring at me with such devotion in his eyes, it has me captivated. *I could float away in those aquamarine eyes.*

His sincere words found a cozy home in my heart. I wanted to hold them for safekeeping and cherish them. *I'm going to fall in love with you, Max Harmon, I just know it.*

His blue eyes were on fire as he took in my form and surveyed me from the tips of my toes to the top of my head.

I didn't hide by crossing my arms over my chest, sucking in my soft stomach, or tightening my thighs. I stood there, in my sexiest pajamas that Sloane insisted I buy a few weeks ago and felt completely in control as I allowed myself to be seen. This is me. He can have whatever girl he wants and if he wants me, this is what he's getting.

The same sentiment holds true as I steel myself and ready my racing heart to share with him my ugliness. It has the potential to change everything, but it is such a big part of me

that if I am going to move forward with or without him, then I need to be honest.

I want to have him in my bed, and I want to do more than sleep next to him. After experiencing sexual trauma, I want to experience every pleasure cell my body offers me and offer it to him as well.

I'm ready to give him my heart openly and honestly, but I have to say these words out loud to him first. *Stay brave.*

He is patient with me as I get through explaining my story, and just like when I told Sloane, I get through it without a single stutter or stammer.

He remains quiet the whole time and holds my hand, keeping us interlocked. It is like he is absorbing some of my pain as it flows from me to him through our connected grasp.

I don't cry when I recount the incident that shattered me to pieces.

I don't cry when I recount the trial and that my attackers would only do one year in a juvenile detention center that could easily be compared to a hotel; complete with a fitness center and daily counseling for them to talk about their anger issues.

He asks me if he can stay the night and then hugs me in an embrace that makes me feel safe and secure. It's then that I let my tears flow freely as I curl up into his chest.



## Chapter Twenty-Seven

# Max



She cried for a while and I rubbed her back underneath my sweatshirt, touching her soft skin in between her shoulder blades. I kept my arms wrapped around her; I want to protect her from all the evils of the world. I want her to know that she will always be safe with me and that I'll always respect and cherish her body, her heart, and her mind.

We're both quiet, but the pieces are loudly clicking into place in my head. During our texting, when she shared details of her anxiety, I knew there was a story underneath it all.

Recalling how Hunter and Chase react to her when she's upset and how they police anyone who goes near her.

Remembering our first few interactions and how she acted around me.

Recounting our texting about the triggers she lives with. Reflecting on the positive steps she's taking to move

forward in a direction she wants to fully embrace while here at Havenwood.

She survived a nightmare. My Evie is so goddamn strong.

“Is this, okay?” I ask her, not wanting to smother her. She nods her head yes. I kiss the top of her hair over and over again. *How could anyone hurt this precious girl?*

“You were trying to give me an out, weren’t you?” I sigh and hug her tightly.

“I just wanted y-you to know what you were g-getting.”

“I know what I’m getting, Dimples. I don’t want an out, I want in. So, I’m going to ask you again. I want to make it official with you, I want you to be my girl.” I maneuver us so we’re face to face. She answers me with a kiss that turns feverish.

Her hands land on my chest and her sweet little caresses feel so good. My hand travels to the curve of her waist and I give her hip a little squeeze. I like how she feels under my hands; all curvy, sexy, woman. She smiles against my lips.

“Max,” she pulls away slightly, and fuck do I like how my name sounds coming from her swollen kissed lips.

“I want...” she trails off and closes her eyes and takes in a breath of the air between us.

“Tell me, baby, tell me what you want,” I run my hand up and down her skin and she relaxes into me.

“I want you to t-touch m-me,” she asks me with those pretty brown doe eyes, all big and bright. Even with a slight stuttering, her voice sounds strong, telling me she wants this.

“Are you sure? I want to make you feel good and show you how good it’ll be between us, but we don’t have to rush anything. We were already moving fast before...I’m happy to just lay here until we fall asleep.” I nuzzle the tip of my nose against hers. She kisses me and her tongue dives into my

mouth. Her hands are tangled in my hair, and she gently tugs and goosebumps break out down my spine. *Fuck. Me.*

She pulls away and whispers, “Yes, I want m-m-more.” I kiss her and I palm her full breast under my sweatshirt, and she moans into my mouth. I’ve never loved making out with a hot girl more than right now.

“Earlier tonight, were you touching yourself? Do you do that often?” I pull away and ask, I have to know. Her cheeks turn a rosy red and she gets shy on me for a moment.

“I, I’ve read a lot about this s-s-stuff, but I’ve never, you know, I’ve never wanted to do it. But with you, with you Max, I want to, to, t-t-try it all.” She just knocked the breath right out of me. I know that was hard for her and that she is nervous as hell. I hear it in her voice, and it is not just the uptick in her stuttering. My hands go to her face, cupping her cheeks as my thumbs rake across her jawline. *It’s ok, Dimples.*

“That wasn’t my first-time t-t-touching m-m-myself. I was imagining this scene in my book. I was thinking of you, doing that to m-m-me.” My dick hears her words and is so fucking hard. He’s sticking straight out at her; literally pointing toward what we want.

“How did you touch yourself? Tell me what feels good,” I know I can figure it out myself, but I want to hear her say it.

“Can I s-s-show y-y-you?” *Okay, I was not expecting that.* My girl is showing me her sexual confidence and I’m fucking here for it.

“Fuck yeah, you can show me.” *This girl.*

She shifts up and pulls my sweatshirt off and lays down on her back and takes in a deep breath. Her right hand caresses her breasts. I watch her fingers graze over the silk material and find her nipple. She moans as she lightly runs her index finger over the stiff peak and circles once, twice, three times before she tugs on it. *That little nipple needs to be sucked.*

She runs her palm over her breast and squeezes it in her hand, causing her cleavage to swell underneath. *I want to run my tongue all over her tits.*

She moves on to the next breast and again runs her index finger over her nipple, circling once, twice, three times before gently tugging. This time, her back arches, and her eyes close.

She runs her hand down over her stomach and runs that index finger over the waistband of her purple sleep shorts. I'm dying to grab my dick and jack off to this fucking sexy sight. She sighs, opens her eyes and stares at me, and then damn near kills me with what she says next.

"I kept thinking about w-w-what it would be like for y-your mouth to be on my b-breasts, to be, to be sucking and k-kissing and l-licking me. I've never been touched like that. I wanted to know what y-your t-t-tongue would feel like h-h-here." She brings both hands to each one of her nipples and pinches them, causing me to groan. Loudly.

My hard dick is like fucking steel. I move my hand down south and squeeze it over my joggers, seeking my own relief.

"I kept t-t-thinking, you must know what to do, that you would know how to make me c-c-come." That lucky index finger disappears inside her shorts. Her knees fall wide, opening her center. I smell her delicious arousal and shut my eyes as I lick my lips. They fly back open when I hear her moan. Her eyes are shut tight, and I can see her hand moving underneath the purple silk. *Goddam.*

"I kept c-circling my clit over and over again. I kept, I kept moving f-f-faster, and f-f-faster. I needed more... more, I wanted it to be y-you, you M-Max." My self-control snaps as I shove my hand into my briefs and palm my rock-hard dick, pumping up and down. *This is the so fucking hot and I'm not even touching her.*

"Tell me, baby, what else?" I say with a hiss and fuck my fist faster.

“I then, ohhh M-M-Max.” She arches her back again and her eyelids tighten.

“I ad-ded pressure to my clit and I, and I, I oh my god Max please please please.”

“Tell me what you want, baby.” I squeeze my cockhead and it sends a shiver up my spine.

“Oh god! Maaaaaxx!” I watch my girl give herself over to her own pleasure and with the scent of her cum, the heat from her pussy radiating off her sinful body, it only takes a few more strokes before I’m coming in my hand right next to her as I call out to a goddess named Evie.

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

Evie



I send him a text letting him know I'm in the library in the same tutoring room where we had our first kiss.

**Me:**

*Just sat down in our tutoring room in the library. We have to review last week's notes for tomorrow's in-class writing assignment.*

**Max:**



*On my way, Dimples.*

A few minutes later, my feet are off the floor and I'm in his arms. He makes me feel light as a feather in his powerful embrace.

Before I can plant my feet down; he's kissing me as if his life depends on it. We are getting increasingly brazen with our hellos and goodbyes, and this greeting is no exception. He sits down in a desk chair and pulls me on top of his lap, so I am straddling him.

"I don't give a flying fuck about studying anymore," he says in between kissing my jaw and down my neck. *Yeah, me either.*

Thank God these rooms have doors, and the middle units are windowless. He licks the hollow of my throat and then moves his way to the other side of my neck, giving me a delicious bite. *Vampire book boyfriend vibes.*

I moan and shift, feeling his erection pressing into my legging-covered center. My hands shoot under his shirt and my fingers dig into the divots in between his toned ab muscles, making my way up his chest. *Holy cannoli, his body.*

I circle his tight nipple and then run the pad of my finger over it and feel him shiver. I try the other side and he shudders in response. *Ohhh, he likes that.*

I feel a smattering of chest hair on his breastbone and gently tug, and he inhales sharply. Thinking I hurt him and maybe pulled too hard, I look up and see his blue eyes dark with desire.

This is a new side of me, and I like it. Even before my assault, I would never consider myself to be bold and go after what I wanted. I felt more like an observer of the world around me than actively taking part.

Max has brought a part of me to the surface that was hidden away. When I first met him, I couldn't shake his hand and now I want nothing more than those hands to be on my body. I crave his touch. This beautiful blue-eyed man. He's changing everything.

"I felt that tug all the way to my dick. Do it again." I repeat the nipple rubs and the chest hair pulling, loving how he responds to me. He grabs my hips, so I feel his long length underneath me.

"I want to touch you." He always asks for permission the first time we do something, and it makes me feel incredibly safe.

"Where do you want to t-touch m-me?" I ask. My stuttering and stammering have decreased as I've grown comfortable with him. I guess pouring your guts out will do that. *Oh, and masturbating next to each other definitely loosened things up.*

“Here,” he reaches up under my Nirvana T-shirt and palms my lace-covered breast in his hand, and then tugs on my stiff nipple. He pulls the lace away and now is holding my breasts, squeezing, and caressing them.

I sigh at the tantalizing touch and reach up, playing with the hairs at the nape of his neck, and kiss him hard.

“I want to taste your tits, baby, can I?” He asks when we break apart. *Yes, please and thank you.*

I nod and reach for my shirt and fling it off my body. He smiles as his eyes take in my skin, and I feel my cheeks heat up under his eyes. He reaches around, unhooks my bra, and pushes the straps off my shoulders. I’m completely exposed to him, naked from the waist up. I breathe out some nerves before straightening my spine which has me sticking my boobs in his face.

“Fuck, these little nipples.” He says more to himself than to me I think, before he lowers his head and takes my right nipple into his mouth. He doesn’t let up and sucks, licks, and bites each one. He makes sure they both receive attention while I squirm in his lap over his hard dick. *Oh, God, that feels sooo freaking gooodddd.* My hips have a mind of their own, and I’m literally dry humping him as I chase down the orgasm that he sparked with that devilish mouth.

“Fuck, these tits are fucking amazing, I’m going to come in my pants if you don’t stop riding the hell out of me,” he warns. I don’t listen. Instead, I give into each thrust of his hips that are moving to meet my own. *I’m too close.*

“It feels too g-good to s-stop,” I pant out and add kisses down his neck. I can’t stop grinding down on his hardness. He’s squeezing my breasts, plucking my pointed nipples, and with one last tug, I throw my head back as my orgasm ripples through my half-clothed body.

“Oh, fuck, oh fuck.” He thrusts up into me and groans before coming in his pants. *I did that, I made him do that.*

“Fuck, Evie, you are just, wow, pretty girl.” He leans his forehead against mine, the minimal pressure of this



intimate touch feeling monumental. “Sorry about the mess,” I say before lifting myself off him. He grips my hips and keeps me in place.

“I’m not. I just blew my load in my fucking pants because of your sexy ass,” he says and smacks my butt.

“I fucking loved it and bet you can make me do it again.” He kisses me while his huge hands roam all over me. And he’s right, we both don’t leave the library until we climax for a second time in our tutor room. *Best study session ever.*

Max is quickly breaking off bricks that have been in place for years as he continues to tear down my walls. He’s helping to rebuild my confidence, and I feel brave when I’m with him. I feel safe. I feel like he’s helping me become the Evie I want to be.

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

# Max



It's been about a week since Evie filled me in on what happened to her in high school. As happy as I've been with her, I'm struggling to clear my head about the whole thing. I keep thinking about what she had to endure at the hands of two psychos who sought revenge on Hunter and Chase by assaulting her in an unimaginable way.

My heart still goes into overdrive when I think about her looking up at me and asking me if I still wanted to be with her after she showed so much courage and bravery by telling me her story.

No one will lay a fucking finger on her ever again and I won't allow her brothers, best friends or not, to stand in the fucking way of me being with their sister.

She came out of the blue and stirred up something fierce inside of me. I've never felt like this about a girl and will not allow anyone to fuck up what we are building. It is too special and too once in a lifetime. I feel that in my damn bones every time I look at her. *This girl is going to be mine forever.*

My gut was right. I didn't want a relationship before her. I was waiting for Evie Wilton all along.

Our conversations flow and have become deeper. I want to tell her everything and hear everything she has to say.

I think being able to communicate on her terms, at her pace, and giving her the space to control when and what she wanted to say opened us both up to sharing parts of ourselves that the rest of the world doesn't get to see.

It started off as text conversations and now she is opening up more and more when we're together. Her nerves aren't as raw, her anxiety is decreasing, and her stuttering is less and less.

We didn't have to spend a ton of time together for me to know from early on that this girl was wiggling her way into my heart. But now that we are on the same emotional page, I want to be with her all the damn time.

We told Red the morning after I spent the night with Evie that we were together. She was excited for us and started clapping her hands and bouncing up and down about it. It surprised me when Evie asked her to keep things quiet for now; she explained she wants to talk to her brothers first. I get that. They're siblings, but the boys and I will also have a discussion.

Red clearly adores Evie and is more than happy to keep things between us. She's also willing to give us some alone time when Evie is ready for that. It's not lost on me that I'm walking around with a heavy case of fucking blue balls, but we have some things to work out first. I'm in this for the long game so I can wait it out.

I have become accustomed to taking showers several times a day. I have enough spank bank material from our first

night when she masturbated in front of me to the several times-a-week make-out sessions we have in the library that hold me over.

She has me on a hairline trigger. I came in my damn pants twice the other day. I couldn't help it; my sexy girl was grinding her plump ass all over my dick while I played with her tits and sucked her nipples. I failed the quiz I was supposed to be studying for. *Fucking worth it.*

I can't see the color purple without getting a stiffy, and I swear when she sighs in class it sounds like a moan, and my dick hardens immediately, not giving a shit that we're in English class.

My plan was to go to her room, make it official between us, and then man-up and tell Hunter and Chase. I wanted to lay it all out and tell them that I have the best of intentions with their sister. I know there's a lot at stake here; our friendship, us as roommates, and us being teammates are all important dynamics that I want to keep intact. Evie being my girl adds layers to my life, and I fully fucking intend to keep my best friends and play great hockey with her by my side.

I've held back talking to them and it's fueled by jagged feelings of anger and a degree of understanding. Both feel conflicting, cumbersome, and complicated.

The fact that they targeted her because of Hunter and Chase ignites a rage in me I've never felt before. Evie has forgiven them, but I'm not there yet. I flip from this anger burning in my chest to mental clarity as to why they are so protective of her.

Knowing what I now know, I can understand why they kept her a secret from us, why they flank either side of her when the three of them walk anywhere on campus, and I can see why they ran to her dorm when she had a panic attack all those weeks ago. I can see why they buy a bag of M&Ms for her when we hit any store, and why they threaten bodily harm to any male that comes within ten feet of her. She's been through hell, and to deal with it, they've kicked their

overprotective brother role into overdrive. They love their sister. But I'm starting to as well and they are going to have to deal with that. *Fuck, I'm really falling for her, aren't I?*

Like I said, part of me understands, and the other part of me is so fucking pissed at them for the part they've played in her pain. Whenever I see them, all I want to fucking do is punch them both in their goddamn faces. It isn't rational, but it is what it is. I've been keeping my distance from them, and subsequently Jake and Monroe, as well.

I needed some space to figure out how to tease out this fucked up situation. When Jake approaches me after my run, I know times up. He keeps texting me and even slipped a note under my door asking if I'm okay when I didn't respond to his messages. He and Chase are the sensitive souls in our group, and they both wear their hearts on their damn sleeves.

"We're gonna head to the cafeteria for dinner before the team meeting. You coming tonight?" Jake asks and I tell him I'll go. I've been eating with Evie in her room, or we go out to grab something out for little date nights. I haven't had dinner with my boys in nearly a week.

I shoot her a text and let her know my plans and grab a quick shower before we head out. Monroe finds us on the walk over and things seem to be fine between the three of us despite my latest absence.

Monroe fills the silence, talking about his latest hookup who has, "perfect tits." I'm half listening, thinking about my Evie with her own set of fucking perfect tits.

"Uh oh, there goes nutter-butter," he says with a chin nod across the lawn to the blonde clinger in question, waving at us. Jake smacks him on the back of the head.

"Ow, what was that for?" He whines.

"Don't be a dickhead. She might be crazy, but she likes him. Haven't you ever liked someone, and they didn't like you back?" Jake asks. He's not wrong, we've all been there, but her clear infatuation is making me uncomfortable. I've tried to let her down gently and she's just not fucking getting it. Lexi

has lost it. Framed photoshopped pictures of me? Questioning my friends? All the propositioning? This shit has to stop.

“Yeah, each one of your smoking hot sisters,” Monroe laughs and earns himself another smack from Jake as we slip inside the cafeteria doors, dodging looney-tune Lexi. *That was close.*

“One other thing, last time I ran into Lexi she mentioned seeing you at her dorm a few times. She was all upset talking about you going in and out of Evie Wilton’s room. She wouldn’t shut the fuck up about it. I gotta ask man, are you into her hot redhead roommate? Because I thought Chase was into her.” I’m not getting into this with them right now and for the first time, I bite back the truth from my closest friends.

“Nah, man I’m not into her. She and I are cool, but it isn’t like that. Evie and I have class together and we’ve had some group assignments, that’s all.” I try to play it off and pull out my phone to show them some bullshit TikTok video I pull up on the app to distract them. It works and we gather trays for food. My heart takes off in my chest as a brown ponytail sticking out of a Havenwood Hockey Devils hat, glasses, and checkered Vans walks into the buffet line up ahead. *I see you, pretty girl.*

Crazy pants, Lexi, is permanently forgotten.

## Chapter Thirty

# Evie



I got a text from A and C asking if I could meet them for dinner in the cafeteria tonight before their team meeting. We've been grabbing a meal together every few days and we're falling back into the place we once were. The guilt of seeing them before or after I've spent time with Max is wearing on me.

At first, I wanted Max and me to lie low and have some time to ourselves, but now I feel like I am hiding something big from them. I've let it go on long enough now. I know he's headed to dinner too and I'm already smiling, knowing I'll see him.

As I'm walking in, I get a voice message from Sloane letting me know that she's going to be late with rehearsal and asks me to grab her a turkey spinach wrap so I add her sandwich to my tray and head to meet my brothers.

I spot them at their usual table in the back and keep my head held high as I make my way over.

"B, is that my hat?" C rushes over and places my tray down before giving me a big hug, nearly knocking his hat off my head.

"I have had this hat for years and that's all I'm saying about it," I say and smile at him. A comes around from his

spot at the table and I get a big hello from him, too. My guilt feels like heavy rocks in my stomach. *I have to tell them ASAP.*

The three of us continue to stand and catch up for a few moments, and I feel several sets of eyes on us. All three of us are wearing hats that have our last names stitched on the side. C had ordered another one after I stole this one. I had gotten an unforgiving haircut the summer after they came home freshman year, and this hat was the perfect coverup.

We all have our arms crossed over our chests and when we laugh, we all smile wide with dimples popping, eyes creasing, and the three of us throw our heads back in unison. It's moments like this where our triplet bond really shines through. *And I'm lying to them about being in a relationship with their best friend. Aren't I sister of the year?*

"Whoa, they really all look alike now that I see them like that." One of their teammates sitting towards the other end of the table states loud enough for us to hear. I feel my cheeks heat at his comment.

I've missed jovial moments like this with my brothers where we can laugh and joke around. My enjoyment is short-lived for two reasons. One is the boulder of guilt weighing me down when I spot my handsome "secret" boyfriend from across the room filling his dinner tray. The second reason is Lexi. She's made her way into the cafeteria and I'm getting agitated just looking at her. *I hate her.*

"So, B, what have you been up to? What's new with you?" C asks in between bites of chicken and pasta after we sat and dug into our dinners. *What's new with me? How about for the first time I have a boyfriend and I'm freaking out about it!*

A, eyes me curiously and I'm on high alert. Hunter Wilton has the uncanny ability to see right through people. Especially me. With his Spidey-senses plus our triplet-hood bond of intuitiveness, he can read me like a book. A book that is currently the equivalent of a college-hockey-brothers-best-friend-romance-novel.



“Just stuff you know, classes, homework, things like that,” I tell him, keeping it light in an attempt to throw A off any trail scent he’s picked up. *Oh, and fanny flutters galore with secret hot make out sessions.*

“How’s your season going?” I notice immediately that I’m not stuttering or stammering. I usually don’t around my brothers but with their teammates around, my voice is still strong and steady.

“We’ve only lost one game, but have a few tough games ahead of us,” A explains. He is stiffer than usual tonight. A has always been the most stoic out of the three of us.

I watch his eyes and he’s scanning the room intently. His jaw ticks and it seems he has found what he’s looking for. I would love nothing more than to turn around and follow his line of sight since he’s looking past my shoulder and into the rest of the cafeteria. He looks angry, flexing his hands into fists on top of the table. His stare is narrowing, and his mouth has tightened into a thin line. *Something or someone has got him all twisted up.*

C, who has now finished every morsel of food on his tray and part of mine, looks up from his seat next to A and sees the object of our brother’s scowl.

“Why are you sending your math tutor ‘I hate you’ vibes right now?” *Ok, so it is someone. Now I’m intrigued.*

I crane my neck around and see a super tiny girl with long, straight, jet-black hair wearing a black beanie hat, and a zipped-up hoodie that is at least three sizes too big for her. I can see from my seat that it’s faded. She has black leggings and combat boots with socks sticking out of the tops.

The weather is cool this time of year at Havenwood, but she must be warm with all the layers on. She has an overstuffed backpack and a messenger bag with her as well. She’s naturally pretty and has big dark eyes. When she sees the three of us looking at her, she scowls back in our direction. She’s striking when she returns A’s narrow-eyed stare and gives him the finger. *Well, isn’t this interesting?*

“She fucking told Coach I missed our last few sessions, and he threatened to bench me if I don’t make them up and attend all the scheduled tutoring from here on out. It’s not like I’m failing the damn class. I could do better, but I hate math. There is something about her that gets under my fucking skin.” Math has always been a difficult subject for all three of us, but more so for A.

“Just do what you have to do. We don’t need you fucking around, bro. We are going all the way again this year. If we’re going to draft, we need this. You know it’ll set us apart.” C pleads with him.

Our parents are supportive of my brother’s NHL dreams but made a deal with them. They must get their degree before drafting, even though they are eligible in June. A’s eyes narrow and are still trained on his tutor, complete with flaring nostrils and an angry glare.

“Man, where does she put all that food? She’s a tiny little thing,” C states while he assesses her. I turn around again and notice that her tray is full of hand fruit, three water bottles, a few wrapped sandwiches, and several bags of chips.

“Enough about fucking Edison. B are you planning to go home soon to see Mom and Dad? I know they miss you,” A turns his gaze to me and asks. I haven’t thought about it once, not when I was having high anxiety and even when I had those panic attacks. Our FaceTime calls and family group chat have kept me connected. I miss our parents but haven’t wanted to go home since arriving here. That’s another form of progress for me. I would go weeks without leaving the house last year. *Not anymore.*

“I would love to go home to sleep in my bed and have Mom make chicken pot pie and some mashed potatoes. Plus, I basically have no clean clothes, especially with someone stealing all of mine.” C has always been a Mama’s boy, and she eats that up.

“If you need me to help with your laundry, I can do it, but I’m going to bring mine over to you. You guys are lucky that you have your own washer and dryer in the house.”

I honestly wouldn't mind helping either of them with their laundry if it meant I could do mine and maybe have a few secret moments with Max. As if my mind conjured him up, he walks over to the table with Jake and Monroe, and they sit down around us.

Max sits down next to Chase, positioning him across from me at an angle. Jake takes a seat on my left and Monroe on the other side of him. I wait for the wave of anxiety to wash over me when Jake sits down, and it doesn't come. It hasn't actually crashed down on me in a few weeks, and I breathe a sigh of relief. C catches my eyes silently asking if I'm okay and I lift my chin in response. He reaches across the table and squeezes my hand, and it's like he's letting me know he sees my progress. Then he steals the cookie on my plate that was for Sloane.

My phone buzzes twice and I catch both A and C raise their eyebrows before they check their own devices.

**Max:**

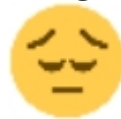
*You look hot in that hat, but I'm replacing it with one of mine. And then I want to see you wearing it with nothing else on.*

Is he for real right now? My brothers are right here!

**Max:**

*Being this close to you and not being able to touch you fucking*

*sucks. I didn't get my kiss hello.*



That sad face emoji does it for me and I chuckle at my phone.

**Me:**



I send my text and watch him intently. Our eyes collide and I smile like a damn lunatic. He smiles right back with a playful grin gracing his perfect face. He's looking at me with mischief in his eyes, and I know he's up to something.

**Max:**

*Those emojis are a piss-poor substitute for your kisses.*

*Your pretty mouth isn't the only part of you I want to taste...*

Is he really about to start this here? *Has he lost his mind?* I make sure no one else is paying attention to us before I slide my eyes over to meet his flirty glare and he sends me a wink. That wink spurs me on and I can't believe I'm about to do this but... if he wants to play, I'll play.

**Me:**

*Where else do you want to kiss me?*

**Max:**

*I'd start off by licking your tits, then I'd kiss down your body and feast on you. I bet you have the prettiest pussy and taste better than any fucking thing I've ever put in my mouth. Would you like that? Want me to lick every inch of your beautiful body?*

Is it hot in here? I swear I'm burning up from the top of my head down to my toes. Lava level heat. Do I want his mouth all over me? Yes, please!

**Me:**

*I want to touch you too.*

*Would you show me how?*

**Max:**

*Shit baby, I want to show you every fucking thing.*

*I'm hard as a rock thinking about it.*

**Me:**

*Now it's all I can think about.*

**Max:**

*Seeing you flushed and red in your seat right now and not being able to touch you...*

*Fuck it, let's go to our spot.*

*I need you.*

**Me:**

*Ugh, I wish. I have to meet Sloane. I have food for her.*

*You'll just have to wait until next time.*



**Max:**

*If you keep licking those lips and smiling like that, everyone in this goddamn room is going to find out real quick that you're mine. I don't give a fuck.*

**Me:**

*Don't even think about it!*

*Keep it together and I promise it'll be worth the wait...*

**Max:**

*You're killin' me right now!*



*Alright, alright. I'll take you up on that offer.*



*I can't fucking wait*

Before I can catch myself, I outwardly sigh at our steamy secret moment. C definitely notices and isn't subtle about it. He nudges me under the table with his leg and forces my attention and gives me a pointed look of curiosity. *Shit on a stick. We really need to come clean to my brothers.*

Like a rash that won't go away, Lexi appears behind the open seat next to Max. She doesn't even hesitate before

taking her seat. Next to Max, next to my boyfriend. Suddenly, I'm crashing back down from being on cloud nine.

Her perfectly straight blonde hair is aggravating the hell out of me, and I want to pull it out of her head while I drag her away from the table. I want to scream at her to get away from him. I want to tell her and the rest of the world that Max Harmon is mine. No other girl should write his number on their cheeks or sit down next to him. Those are things for me to do. *Not freaking Lexi.*

But I don't do any of those things. I don't make a scene. I don't blow up things between me and my brothers by admitting that I've been in a secret relationship with their best friend. I don't do anything but feel guilty for not being truthful. I have to hide how I feel right now because I've hidden our relationship since the beginning.

"Lexi, what are you doing?" Max glares at her.

"Having dinner with you, handsome," she says and pops a carrot into her pink lip stuck mouth.

"Don't call me that. I didn't ask you to have dinner with me. You need to go find Elena or some of your other friends. This is a team dinner." His voice is firm, and his words leave no room for interpretation.

"But sheeee's here." *Ugh, her voice is so annoying.*

"She's my sister, she stays. As Max said, you need to fucking go," A says with such authority, he's now captured the attention of all the hockey players at this table. You could hear a pin drop.

"Lexi, you're embarrassing yourself. You really need to leave," Max tells her again, and she starts to tantrum. She huffs while standing up abruptly, her chair falling back, and she stamps her feet.

"Me? I don't embarrass anyone, especially not myself. You're the one embarrassing yourself. I'm just trying to help you. You're ruining everything by being with—." The boom of C's voice cuts her rant off.

“Lexi, Max and Hunter told you to go. Get the hell out of here. Now.” C is standing and crosses his arms over his chest. She finally gets the message and storms off, leaving her dinner of naked romaine lettuce, carrots, and cucumbers behind. *What is she, a rabbit?*

I pick up my phone to send a text to Max. I’m really pissed about what just happened with Lexi. The minute of silence is short-lived when Drew and his teammates from our class walk over.

I abandon my phone when I look up and see both of my brothers eyeing me with concern streaking across their faces. They think I’m going to freak out over the football player convention that’s gathered. I’m not. Drew and his teammates from our class have thoroughly convinced me they are giant teddy bears. No freak outs necessary.

When Drew offers his fist to Max, A, C, Jake, Monroe, and finally me, I bump him back with ease.

“Hey Little Wilton, are we going to meet tomorrow after English? I need to squeeze in some running tomorrow, so if that works for you and Max, I can make that work on my end.” He smiles warmly at me, and I smile back at hearing Max’s name.

“Yeah, I’m good with that Drew, if Max is?” I look over at my handsome man, who has pulled the brim of his hat down over his blue eyes. All I can think about is having him make good on his promise, taking that hat from his head, and not wearing anything else for him. That sexy thought bursts all over my skin and I feel hot all over. *Get it together, Evie.*

“Yeah, that’s fine Evie. Whatever works for you I’m good with.” His eyes connect with mine and are full of a deep desire matching my own. We hold our gaze for another moment, and I have a feeling he’s thinking exactly what I’m thinking. *Us naked... in bed.* He turns away, slightly shaking his head, and clears his throat. I hate losing his eyes on me. I mean, I get it. My brothers are sitting next to him, and this dinner has already been a roller coaster ride, and now Drew is trying to make plans for us to work on our group assignment.

“Ok cool, see you guys, then,” Drew says to the guys and then turns back to me, “bye Little Wilton” and I offer a wave, sending him off with his football player friends. Both A and C are quizzically looking at me. *Oh, boy.*

“B, why don’t we walk you back to your dorm? I want to talk to you about something.” A gets up, signaling that dinner is over and that he’s ready to leave.

“Sure, we can do that. Let me go grab another bag of cookies since Chase ate the ones I was taking back for Sloane.” At the sound of her name, C darts up.

“Ah, shit, I didn’t know. Can you ask her if she wants anything else? I can grab it.” I can’t help but roll my eyes. C has it bad for my roomie.

I text Sloane and see if she wants anything else when a new text appears from my blue-eyed boyfriend.

**Max:**

*I’m sorry about Lexi, Dimples.*

*See you later, beautiful.*



He’s right, the kissing face emoji is a piss-poor substitute for the real thing. Especially when I now want those kisses all over me.



# Hunter + Chase



## Hunter

The three of us leave the cafeteria with C and I on either side of B. This is our natural order; how the three of us spent our time in our human incubator's womb, how we came out, and how we've remained. It is important to me that our sister knows that C and I will do whatever we need to do to protect her. I never want her to experience that kind of cruelty or any type of fucking pain ever again.

She deserves everything good that the world can offer, which is why I am going to let her know that if she wants to date Drew, she should. I don't want her to have any hangups about it.

Him and I have been friends since freshman year, and he's a stand-up guy. He doesn't hook up with random girls, he works hard both academically and on the field. No one ever says anything bad about the guy. I've never seen him drunk or high and I know he's a well-liked leader for his team which has earned him multiple awards every season he's played here.

I'm damn sure my sister likes him and that he likes her back which is why I think it's time we talk about the rules we made in high school. If one of us is looking for more than a quick hook up, we should be able to give each other the okay to date our friends if that's where things are heading. Part of this conversation is for C's sake as well. He's already so head over fucking heels for Red and he loves B so much that he'll continue to admire her from afar to honor our agreement.

"So, what's going on? Everything okay? You seem broodier than usual tonight," she says and sticks her finger in my side. I swat her hand away and go after her own ribs to terrorize. She breaks out laughing which is nice to hear.

"Dinner was kind of fucked up with Lexi, but I'm okay. I wanted to talk to you both about something, though. I think it's important that we clear the air on this now that we're older and shit." We come to a bench outside of B's dorm and sit. C and I angle ourselves towards our sister, forming a semi-circle so we can all see each other.

"What's going on? Does this have to do with that tutor girl going to Coach? I can talk to him and let him know that you're not fucking around," C offers, and I give him a chin nod, acknowledging his willingness to go to bat for me. I really fucking lucked out having these two as siblings.

"No, this has nothing to do with Edison. It's about both of you, actually." Shit, now every time something is wrong, C is going to think it has something to do with my damn math tutor. That girl is trouble, I can fucking tell. I catch B and C exchange a look before I continue.

"Ok, so spill it. Your face is getting all red." My sister pokes me in my cheek and I roll my eyes. I'm not getting red thinking about Edison. I'm not even thinking about fucking Edison. *Fucking hell.*

"Ok, so here's the deal. I want to revisit our agreement about dating each other's friends." B shoves C and he laughs. C and I spent many nights making out with our sister's friends who would sleep over. We would meet in the TV room or out in the treehouse when everyone was asleep and hookup. It became pretty clear that the girls in our school were only befriending B to get a chance with C and me, so that is a part of how the rule ended up sticking.

We thought we were being sneaky shits, but when dad caught us, he read us the fucking riot act. The next day, ground rules were set and have remained in place.

“You seem different lately, you seem happier, you seem more like your old self and you’re carrying yourself with more confidence. I know it is a very sensitive subject for you, but I noticed you didn’t stutter or clam up once around Jake when he sat next to you or when Drew came over to talk to you with his friends. You looked pretty damn calm, and I was really fucking proud of you.

“Listen, Drew is a great guy and even though we’re friends with him, I think he would be great for you. He seemed pretty interested in spending time with you tomorrow, and I know he would treat you right. He doesn’t hook up with the girls who hang all over his team. He cares about school and his team, and he’s responsible. I noticed he’s got a nickname for you already.”

Now it’s my turn to poke her when I mention the nickname he let slip. I thought this would make her happy, but she is staring at her feet and twisting her hands in her lap, which is one of her tells. Maybe she’s embarrassed that I figured out that she likes him. I need to smooth this shit over.

“It’s okay if you like him. I’m sure he likes you, too. You are pretty fucking great, after all.” She’s squeezing her hands together so tightly her knuckles are white. I reach for them and separate her hands, placing them on her legs. She’s gonna break her damn fingers one of these days if she doesn’t stop doing that.

“I also think that it would open up some doors for you, C.” He pops his head up and glares at me. We haven’t talked about his fascination with B’s roommate since I first caught him tongue-tied in her presence, but I see how he gets when she’s around. For fuck’s sake, he fucking smelled her hair. It’s like one of those romance movies our mom would watch unfolding in front of me when those two are in the same damn room.

“I don’t want any doors opening for me, I’m good thanks,” C responds and now both of my siblings are staring at their feet. Okay, I thought they would both be happy about this. *Now I’m pissed.*

“Okay, what the fuck, guys? You clearly are interested in Drew, and you are obsessed with fucking Sloane. I thought you would both be happy about dropping the rule. Honestly, guys, I’m confused as hell right now.”

“I appreciate you wanting to talk about the whole “No Dating Friends” rule, but I’m not interested in Drew like that. We know each other from English, that’s all. We’ve had a few assignments that we’ve worked on, but that’s it. I’m not sure what I did to give you the impression that I like him like that.” What gave me that impression? How about you speaking clearly, smiling, making plans, and your overall demeanor? To name a few fucking things. *Fuck, sisters are annoying sometimes.*

“I know we’ve been insanely protective of you the last couple of years, and don’t get me wrong, we’ll always fucking be, but don’t you want to date?” I just want her to feel normal again. I want her to have the same experiences as everyone else.

“What about you? Why am I in the hot seat here? Don’t you want to date?” Now it’s my turn to stare at my feet. *I don’t fucking date.*

Sometimes, okay, more often than not, I hook up with two women at the same time. I’m fucked up and honestly not proud of the body count I’ve raked up. It’s been like this for a long time now and has given me a reputation for having a threesome kink.

I plow through fucking women, and I don’t give a damn about any of them. I’ve been so fucking numb for so long, and none of these girls provoke anything in me but a damn hard-on, and even then, I need more than one to keep myself, and my cock, interested. I realize I sound like a prick, but it’s the goddamn truth. No one fucking does it for me and I’m fucking fine with that. I’ve never met a woman that could satisfy me emotionally or sexually. *Fuck feelings.* I hate to admit this, but I use fucking as an excuse to deal with my own demons. *My own fucked up bag of shit.*

“I don’t do that shit. But seriously, regarding the rule, I think we should trash it, and I promise I’ll be cool if you want to date him.” I look at my brother for some backup here and I get nothing, but a fucking head shake and a goddamn grunt. *Brothers are fucking annoying, too.*

“Ugh, you are so freaking frustrating! I don’t like Drew!” She shouts and springs up when she says this and starts walking toward the entrance to her building. She spins around and walks right back, wagging her finger in my face. *Shit, she’s mad as hell.*

“Maybe he isn’t the friend of yours I want to date. Maybe he isn’t the friend I like or want to be with. Have you ever thought about that?” *What the fuck?*

Ugh no, I haven't. She barely looked at anyone else at the table or spoke to anyone else. Except for Max. Yeah, she definitely spoke to Max. *Fucking hell, is that who she's talking about?*

# Chase

My brother is a goddamn idiot. Drew? No, our sister likes Max. It's fucking Max. *Even Lexi's figured it out.*

I first suspected it weeks and weeks ago when she came over for Chinese takeout. She all but confirmed it tonight at dinner when she was making googly eyes at him while clutching her phone.

I know my sister and I watched her cheeks change to a pink color when she watched Max pull the hat bill over his eyes. I heard it in her voice when she spoke to him. And her giveaway was her foot bouncing up and down under the table, knocking into mine when he sat on the other side of me. I knew she wasn't into Drew like that, even though I was mentally giving her a high five when she gave him a fist bump.

Fuck. My sister likes our best friend. She definitely has a crush and from the reaction she just had after being accused of liking Drew and from that soapbox statement about maybe there is someone else she likes, another friend she wants to date I can tell it is on the tip of her tongue to shout his name in our faces. As far as I know, this is new territory for us. She's never let on being into any of our friends before.

The second A figures it out, he's going to want that rule securely in place with a lock on the front door. As much as we love Max like another brother, he is a notorious player, way worse than I've ever been, although A and Monroe take the cake there. A, hooks up with so many women he needs to fuck more than one at the same time.

Max is always upfront with his hookups, letting them know that under no circumstance does he do relationships. That shit with Lexi tonight was another example of the string of broken hearts Max leaves in his wake. I'm glad I cut her off. She was making a scene about him. He's laser-focused on hockey and has time for nothing else. He considers everything else a distraction. I appreciate his dedication and determination to be an outstanding hockey player and

share his dream of playing in the NHL, so I get it, I do, but I want my sister to have more than that.

B deserves to be the center of someone's world and for someone to love her above all else. That is what she should have. Max can't give that to her, plus she isn't his type at all. He likes big-boobed, blonde, fake as fuck, thin chicks. Girls like Lexi. A total dime a dozen here at Havenwood. My sister is beautiful but doesn't fit that mold. I would hate for her to like him and for him to hurt her by not reciprocating her feelings. *Fuck, this isn't going to end well.*

I know that A thinks he is opening the door for me to approach Sloane, but truth be told, I'm not good for her. Sloane is the type of girl you hold on to, wife up, and have a happily ever after with. I don't deserve that. Not after my role in what happened to B.

She deserves to be loved and adored by someone who is everything I'm not. I'll only taint her with my past poor choices.

I deserve the pain I already feel knowing that she'll never be mine. I'll swallow the agony I already feel, knowing that she'll be a part of B's life, but not my own.

I have no doubt that my heart will turn black when she gives hers to another man. I already expect that I'll lose my ever-loving mind, knowing that the lucky bastard will touch and love her perfect body.

I deserve this fate. I was selfish and slept with a girl who also wasn't mine, but I wanted her anyway, and that selfishness put my sister in grave fucking danger.

It's just how it has to be. I'm drawn to her in ways that I don't fully understand. My feelings for her erupted the minute I saw her. It's like my heart and soul recognized her instantly or some shit. I never believed in that until that day. It's really fucking powerful though, I feel it move through my body whenever I'm near her. I can hear her voice anywhere; I swear I hear her talking in the damn hockey arena when she's been in the stands. But it doesn't matter; I'll never be good enough for Sloane Higgins.



A and I need to hustle if we're going to make our team meeting in time. We're silent for most of our walk and I can see the gears churning in his head.

“I think I was way off base thinking that there is something going on between B and Drew. I think I read that whole fucking exchange at dinner wrong. I got caught up in him coming over to talk to her, then asking when he could see her, her sounding so easy going around him and not clamming up. It’s not him, is it? He’s not why she blushed, now that I think about it, he isn’t who she was looking at with hearts in her fucking eyes.” He says and it’s like the light bulb is finally going off in his head.

“I can literally hear your thoughts. They’re so fucking loud in your head, bro,” I says.

“I hate to say it, but I think she likes Max. As great as she is, she just isn’t his type. She isn’t blonde, and she isn’t a fucking stick figure. I just don’t want her to get hurt and I’m afraid that she is going to if my suspicions are true that she’s into him.” *Yeah, no shit Sherlock.*

“Took you long enough, dipshit. The minute you mentioned her having a thing for Drew, her face twisted up and I knew it wasn’t fucking him. You were lost in your own head after you spotted Tutor Girl to notice that our sister was blushing big time when she spoke to Max. Not Drew. Max.”

“Well, what the fuck are we going to do? I can’t imagine him going after her and there is absolutely no way she would go after him. She isn’t like that. I just want to make sure that she doesn’t get hurt,” he huffs out as we walk up to the athletics building.

“Me too. Should we give him the heads up just so he isn’t a dick to her by accident? You know, so he can let her down gently if it comes down to that?” I ask and open the door for us. She isn’t his type and will just get hurt. He will slaughter her heart with his “love ‘em and leave ‘em” mentality. Fucking Lexi is a prime example of what can happen. At this point, I wish it was Drew. He is the exact opposite.

“Yeah, maybe we should. I don’t want to go behind her back, but we should protect her here, even if it is from some form of rejection.” He looks like he would rather have his toenails ripped out than talk about our sister being with Max and I’m right there with him.

“Okay, when we get home, let’s see if we can talk to him,” I offer, and he gives me a chin nod in agreement.

“Fuck, I did not see this shit coming,” is the last thing he says before we take our seats for this damn team meeting.

## Chapter Thirty-Two

Evie



I storm into the residence hall and rush up the stairs to my dorm room. I should have just told them. I should've worked through my fear and told them it was Max, not Drew, that I'm interested in. Not that the word even remotely covers what I feel for him. I love him. *I'm in love with Max Harmon.*

I've told Max over and over, I wanted to wait and tell them myself, respect our triplet-hood and tonight was an opportunity I didn't take. I just kept thinking about how mad they would be if they knew. I came here intending to put us back together, not to tear our bond further apart.

I obviously agree with A about demolishing the rule we established in high school. It was really to stop my hormonal brothers from hooking up with my friends, but I'm glad that we respected each other enough to keep it intact all this time. I hope they recognize that I still respect them, rule or not, and would never get involved with anyone behind their backs, let alone one of their best friends and teammates, if I wasn't putting my heart on the line. He's worth it.

Max has been the healing salve to my gaping emotional wounds. The way he cares has given me parts of



myself back I thought were gone forever. I'm not willing to give that up, and hope that my brothers can see and understand this. That they see me blooming into the person I'm meant to be. And that their best friend has been instrumental in these changes. That he's what I've been waiting for to truly move forward. Loving him is powerful, it's inspiring, its life changing.

I feel my phone vibrate in my pocket and pull it out and look at the text from Sloane letting me know that she's still caught up at rehearsal and expects to be there until at least ten or eleven. Sloane tried out and got a role in the performing arts winter showcase and she's very excited. The drama department is putting on a mini skit featuring Broadway shows Hamilton and Waitress. She is always humming or singing with or without music. I let her know I put her wrap in our mini fridge and got ready for a night of homework while Max has his team meeting.

My phone goes off again and I smile at the screen.

**Max:**

*Hey, pretty girl. I'm headed into the team meeting now. I told Monroe and Jake I would go over our history class assignment that's due tomorrow afterward. What are you up to later?*

I want to tell him what happened earlier with A and C. I don't want them casually saying anything about their stupid assumptions regarding Drew and me, or fishing for information since they know we're in the same English class. I also don't want Max to be put in a position to come clean to them without me being there or because my idiot brothers backed him into a corner over Drew. *Shit, shit, shit.*

**Me:**

*I just had a weird conversation with my brothers. Please ignore them if they insinuate that I'm interested in Drew. A, has it in his head that I like him. I told him I didn't, but he doesn't seem to get it.*

**Max:**

*Give me a little more to work with here...*

I tell him about A insisting we dissolve our rule and more details regarding our awkward discussion. *I swear, brothers can be so freaking aggravating sometimes.*

**Max:**

*I know you asked for some time, but I can't stand not being able to kiss you hello or goodbye or them thinking you like someone else. Can we tell them? Tomorrow?*

**Me:**

*Okay, tomorrow. I'm sorry I let it go on for this long.*

*I just wanted some time to get used to being in a relationship since I've never been in one before.*



**Max:**

*I know, I wanted some time too.*

*Don't be sorry, it's okay, it'll all be okay.*

*Fuck, I wish I was with you.*

**Me:**

*Me too. I'm in bed studying and would rather be with you. Are you going to come over afterward? Sloane is at rehearsal until late...*

**Max:**

*You missing me, baby?*

**Me:**

*Yes...*

**Max:**

*You're killin' me tonight.*

*How am I supposed to pay attention now knowing that you're lying in your bed looking all sexy and shit?*

**Me:**

*Well, whenever I lay in my bed, I miss you, not just at this moment. The difference is right now, I'm alone in my room for the next few hours. And wishing you were here...*

I bite my lip and keep going, I probably would never be able to say these words coherently and out loud to him, but over text? Yeah, I can let him know what I want... and I want that mouth of his and those hands on my body.

**Me:**

*Touching me...licking me...*

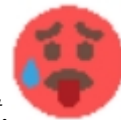
**Max:**

*Fuck, you have no idea how badly I want to get the hell out of here and lock myself in that room with you. I'm hard as hell thinking about you in bed with nothing but my damn hat on. I bet you're already wet, aren't you?*

**Me:**

*What's making me wet is thinking about you between my legs with your hat on... backwards.*

*You'd look so sexy like that.*



**Max:**

*All I can think about is eating your pretty pussy and licking every drop of cum I coax from your beautiful body. I want your thighs to squeeze my head so tightly, my damn hat falls off my head as I drink you down.*

**Max:**

*Fuck this meeting...I'm about to go take care of myself in the goddamn bathroom, I won't make it to your room...*

**Me:**

*I'm dying for us to be alone. I did promise you the wait*

*would be worth it!*



**Me:**

*Hurry and finish your history assignment and then come over.  
I'll be waiting.*

*Bye for now.*



**Max:**

*Evil woman. My gorgeous evil woman.*



I turn my phone over and take a deep breath. *Jeez, it's hot when we text like that.* I abandon my poli-sci reading and grab my kindle instead. I can't stop thinking about all the places I want his tongue. *All the places I want my tongue.* I love him and can't wait to show him how much.

I end up falling asleep, dreaming about that freaking hat. Not only do I miss Max coming over, but I also miss a text from a strange number.

**Unknown:**

*See you soon...*

## Chapter Thirty-Three

# Max



Our meeting goes on forever. Starting next Thursday with a banquet, Havenwood is hosting a six-team tournament spanning Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Regardless of which team hosts, it is a big draw with sold-out crowds, NHL scouts, on-campus events, booster club gatherings, and alumni dinners. Havenwood will be full of hockey players, family, and supporters. Not to mention the nonstop parties.

There are steep standards for the Havenwood Hockey Devils. We have to be on our best behavior off and on the ice. We're expected to take home the trophy and raise the banner in our home arena declaring us this year's champions. This tournament is second to the Frozen Four and this can make or break us.

After Coach goes over all of this, he tells us to settle in and get ready to watch some tape as he passes out rosters of the other five teams. I can't concentrate and keep squirming in my seat thinking about my sexy girl laying on lavender sheets in her bed waiting for me.

Her texting me like that? Goddamn, that shit was hot. My dirty-book reading girl has a spicy side I can't wait to explore. My dick is fucking tenting my pants and I can't sit still. I am so fucking fidgety. Coach calls me out and asks me if I have ants in my goddamn pants, causing the team to break out in a fit of laughter. *Assholes.*

No sir, no ants in my pants, just a raging hard-on for the sister of two of your star players. *Fuck.*

And fuck is all I want to do. I know we're taking things at her pace, but man, do I want it. That's all I can think about. I need to be inside her; I'm going to fucking die if I don't sink into her soon.

I want to feel every inch of her soft skin pressed to mine as I thrust into her over and over again. I want to make her see stars as I suck on her nipples, then move to her pussy, where I can lick her clit until that nub is pulsing under my tongue. *And I want to see her smile through it all.*

I want to smack that plump ass, and watch my handprint appear, kiss away the mark, and place soft bites on each cheek before I drive into her from behind. *God, I love her ass.*

I want to enjoy the view as she rides me; her round tits bouncing between us as I grip her hips and stare up into her pretty face. *Fuck, those tits.*

I also want to do something I've never done before. I want to make love to her. I want to go slow and show her how perfect we are. I want to show her how much she means to me. I want to show her I love her because I can't fucking deny it anymore, I'm so in love with Evie. She's my heart, she's my soul, she's my everything. I fell so fucking fast and I need to tell her. I don't want to go another fucking minute without her knowing, I just need this meeting to end first.

# Hunter + Chase



## Hunter

I knew they'd be here and now it's really fucking happening. I'm seeing fucking red. I'm seeing my goddamn world implode. I'm seeing every worst-case scenario play out in my mind before it inevitably ends up playing out on the ice. *I have to get B to leave campus next weekend.*

Two names. Brandon Waterstone and Christopher Ellis are playing for Coastal College. Their team just joined D1 this past season, which is why I haven't played either of them since the night that changed our lives forever and Coach is talking about them as if they're any other goddamn opponent.

I think about those fuckfaces daily, but seeing their names on a hockey team roster, seeing their stats, and seeing their pictures holding hockey sticks no less sends me into a fit of rage that is exploding in my head. I punch C in the arm, a little harder than I mean to, and point out these fucking criminals' names.

I glance over at C, who is looking just as murderous. His expression is strictly reserved for these two waste-of-space humans.

My brother is otherwise a lover, not a fighter, but I know he'll have no problem kicking their ass and ripping their pencil dicks off with me. I need this meeting to end so he and I can figure out how to get B the hell away from here.

## Chase

It's for real now. They'll be here. I see their fucking names and my vision clouds with images of a bloodbath. They don't deserve to walk around free as fucking birds and they sure as fuck don't deserve to ever touch a goddamn hockey stick again.

They've disgraced the game I love and caused unforgivable pain to the sister I love. This has my fingers itching to tear these two shit stains apart limb from fucking limb, sparing no remorse. I've gotten into my fair share of fights in my day, but I rarely provoke them. Until now, now I can't imagine not pouncing on these two fuckers the moment I see them, letting them know that when you fuck with one Wilton, you fuck with all of us. I look back at my brother and lift my chin, letting him know it's game on with these two motherfuckers.

When we finally walk out of the meeting, A and I get to work trying to figure out how to get B out of here for the weekend. Our original plan to ask Max to let our sister down gently is put on the back burner for now.

We call our parents, and they tell us that this tournament coincides with a medical conference that they are presenting at out of state. A isn't completely honest with them about our motives and doesn't mention Brandon or Chris by name, informing mom and dad that the campus will swarm with people and that it may be too much for B to handle. They seem reluctant to buy it.

They see the positive progress B is making as well but offer to put her up in a bed-and-breakfast a few towns over and even talk about Sloane joining her for a girls' weekend. I'm hoping this works. The last thing A and I want is for her to know that her attackers are here on campus.

As much as I miss her cheering us on in the stands, I am relieved that she doesn't go to our games anymore. I don't want to take any chances. This is exactly why I need to stay the fuck away



from Sloane. She would be my weakness that an enemy and could end me with.

## Chapter Thirty-Five

# Evie



Sloane and I are getting ready to grab breakfast as I gather my things in anticipation of a long day. I can't wait to see Max in class and then afterward while we work on our group assignment with Drew. I missed him last night. He didn't end up coming by after his mini-study group with Monroe and Jake.

"You've been awake for all of twenty minutes and are already grinning ear to ear. How you're already so happy before coffee, I just don't know." She waves a perfectly manicured hand my way.

I am happy, aren't I? This is the happiest I've been in years. "Love looks good on ya, honey bunny," she drawls and smiles at me. I would have to agree.

I take some extra time picking out my outfit and decide to wear my new plum purple lace underwear set. Sloane insisted I buy it the other day when we went shopping, along with a few additional wardrobe pieces to highlight my curves. I grab my high waisted black ripped jeans and tuck in my new deep V-neck lace lined silky tank. I top it off with a chunky knit sweater that surprisingly is the same color as my lingerie. My hair is extra wild today and I just go with it. I slide on leather boots instead of my checkered Vans, because why not!

I also opt for my contacts versus my glasses. He's never seen me without them.

I rarely dress like this, but I feel good today.

It is the second week of November, and fall is in full effect here at Havenwood. The trees are beautiful with multi-colored leaves and the crisp cool air lends itself to cozy sweaters.

"You look amazing, Evie. I'm sure a certain hockey player will be drooling over you in class today,"

"You look nice too," I compliment her on her outfit. She always looks so effortlessly put together.

We head out towards the cafe for breakfast, and she catches me up on the winter showcase rehearsals and the argument she had with Lexi last night over the solo she landed in the Hamilton skit.

"She is such a witch! Ugh, she was screaming bloody murder last night when the director announced I would sing the solo in one of the pieces." Sloane is getting all flustered recounting last night's events. I'd have to agree, that girl is a witch. *She's also a bitch.*

"She was nothing but hell on wheels all night. She came in from dinner locked and loaded," she explains.

Lexi must've gone to rehearsal after she stormed out of the cafeteria. She's got her eyes set on Max and I don't like it. I don't know what she thinks she's doing, but getting close to him isn't going to happen.

"Alright enough about my drama. Tell me all about you and your beau." Sloane has been so supportive of my relationship with Max. We chat while we walk, and I fill her in on our "study" sessions.

"Well, if you're ready for more to happen, then the library just won't do. Why don't you take him to our room later? I won't be back until late tonight. We have rehearsal and I'm going to meet with one of the vocal coaches they are bringing in." She winks at me, "You look like you're salivating to get that man alone." *I am.*

I'm ready for this and explored it both in therapy and group this week. We talked about my reservations and my excited anticipation. I listened to some of the other women share their experiences of sex after their assaults. I want this and I want it with him.

"I'm ready. I just don't know how to tell him. I don't want to make it awkward and for it to feel forced. I want it to just happen naturally," I tell her and start playing with my fidget ring as we get closer to the cafeteria.

"If you are ready, you bring that handsome man back to our room and let him take care of the rest. He'll know exactly what to do. It will happen the way it is supposed to. And then I want all the dirty details! Since I stepped foot on this campus, I haven't even kissed a man."

I'm ready to respond when my phone buzzes. I haven't checked it yet since I took extra steps with my morning routine. I dig it out of my bag's front pocket.

**Max:**

*Morning*



*It was sooo late when we finally finished up last night and I ended up passing out on the couch. I'm sorry I never made it over to you BUT I'm looking forward to seeing my pretty girl in class today. I thought about you and your dirty messages all*

*night long.*



**Me:**

*I missed you too. I fell asleep while reading so don't worry*

*about it. I'll see you soon.*



Right under his name is an unopened text. It's from a number that I don't have saved in my contacts.

**Unknown:**

*See you soon...*

*Huh, that's weird.* Must have been sent to me by mistake. It is innocent enough that I don't think twice about ignoring it.

Sloane and I fill our trays with coffee, fruit, and eggs. We find a two-person table along the floor-to-ceiling wall of windows that overlooks the campus and sit down and dig into our food.

Sloane fills me in on some upcoming campus events that coincide with a hockey tournament that Havenwood is holding. I tell her I will think about joining her at some and really consider attending a game. *I bet Max looks amazing on the ice.*

I look out the window and notice him walking past the cafeteria from the direction of the athletic building. *Look at that sexy hockey bubble butt.* I know he had weight training first thing this morning which means he probably only had a protein shake for breakfast.

I decide to walk back into the line to grab him something to eat and pack it into a bag for him. As I turn on my heels, I spin right into a tall, slender blonde who is the epitome of a mean girl. *Havenwood's own Regina George.*

"Watch it, chunky monkey. God, you can't seem to get out of my way lately," Lexi snarls, showing her disdain for me being in the same space as she is.

She always puts me down and points out her disgust with me wanting to stay into study, makes comments about my dad's old band t-shirts that I wear, and I once overheard her refer to me as "Sloane's weirdo freak of a roommate" to her friend Elena. Guess she has no problem saying it to my face today. I've been called worse, but I've done nothing to her to deserve her name-calling.

"No wonder your brothers hid you from their world here at school. You're an embarrassment," she says while eyeing me up and down. *Okay, that one stung a little.* I have

been subjected to mean girls my whole life and I won't stand for it for one more minute.

“Leave me a-a-alone, y-y-you're such a b-b-bitch.” That was definitely not as effective as I would've liked. Damn her for making me nervous. I've been so good with that lately. She steps into my space and is inches from my face. *Her foundation is the wrong shade and looks cakey on her fake tanned skin.*

“I'll leave you alone if you stop following around Max like a little lost puppy dog. You're pathetic.”

“Y-y-you're the p-p-pathetic o-n-n-e-e.” She laughs and her cackling catches the attention of several students. It wasn't the most original comeback in the world, but it kept her ugly mouth shut for once. She may have laughed at me, but she didn't snap back.

I feel my anxiety creep up and up. My throat feels tight, and I know I won't be able to get any more words out.

I take a deep breath and get the hell out of there. I shoulder through a small group of her friends that gathered and look like carbon copies of Lexi. *I bet they're a bunch of bitches, too.*

I count backward from 100 as I walk, and my anxiety morphs into anger. Who the hell does Lexi think she is? Why does she hate me so much? What did I ever do to her? This isn't high school anymore!

I find Sloane's head buried in her phone outside the building and as we walk to our classes; I fill her in and she high-fives me, shaking her booty and making me smile, lifting my lingering anger.

“It's going to be a good day, honey bunny. I can feel it. You put that witch in her place and looked good doing it!” She sends me a wink, adding, “I meant what I said before. I won't be home until later tonight, make good use of the time with your beau. Show him who's boss like you did that wench!” She squeals. *Maybe I'll do just that.*

## Chapter Thirty-Six

# Max



I make it to class early. I can't fucking wait to see her today. My knee is already bouncing up and down as I intently watch the damn doorway.

By the time we finished up last night with Coach, got home, and I worked on our history assignment with Monroe and Jake, it was after midnight. I knew she would be sleeping and didn't want to disturb her.

I'm the first one here and take my seat and start tapping my foot, awaiting her arrival. I don't have to wait long though, as a few moments later she walks in, and I do a damn double take. *Goddamn.*

She sees me sitting here and smiles wide with those two cute-as-hell dimples popping out to greet me. *I'm obsessed with them.*

I study her face and notice her pretty doe eyes. Pretty doe eyes that aren't behind black-framed glasses. *Holy shit, she doesn't have her glasses on.*

I take the rest of her in and notice shiny wild brown waves flowing down her back and around her shoulders. She has on a form-

fitting V-neck shirt that shows off the most mouth-watering cleavage and a long purple sweater that hits her mid-thigh. Thighs that are covered with skin-tight black jeans with little rips across the denim. The tight clothes hug every single perfect curve. *Fuck, she's hot.*

*I want to lick along that V-neck and then stick my dick between those soft and sexy tits.*

By the time my eyes reach hers, she is standing in front of my desk with her arm stretched out, holding a paper bag.

“Hi Dimples, you’re looking sexy as fuck this morning,” I smile and wink at my girl.

I can’t help myself and stand up to kiss her. She lets me steal a few more kisses since we’re alone and I revel in her soft and warm lips. I smile against her sweet mouth, and she does the same. I love how her body reacts to me.

“This is for you. I wasn’t sure if you had time for breakfast with the extra training you’re doing.” She hands me a bag that has an egg sandwich, fruit, and orange juice packed inside. She sits down and angles her beautiful body towards me, and I lean over the side of my desk to be as close to her as I can get.

*Fuck it, no one's in here yet.* I kiss the soft patch of skin right below her ear. She shivers but doesn’t pull away. “How was your meeting?” she asks, her voice shaky with my nose grazing her jaw before I whisper in her ear.

“Long and boring, I couldn’t pay attention. Kept thinking about your thighs around my head when I finally eat you out and then having those thighs wrapped around my waist when I take you up against that door in your room. Now you’re here looking sexy as hell, expecting me to focus in class?”

I look down and eye her creamy cleavage which is now taking on a pink color along with her throat and cheeks. Her tits bounce when she squirms in her seat, and I have to bite my tongue to keep from diving headfirst into them.

We’re locked in a heated stare, and I don’t notice anyone else coming in. The room is filling up around us, but no one else matters but her.

My sweet girl who hand-delivered me breakfast looking just as delicious. Drew breaks my gaze when he punches my arm as he sits down on the other side of me. *Dickhead.*



“Where did you get breakfast? I’m starving,” he asks.

“My girl brought it for me,” I tell him, and can’t help the grin from forming on my face as I take a swig of orange juice. My throat had gone dry taking in her rosy skin. *Just how red can I make her?*

Drew looks over my head and I watch him take Evie in as she bends down to pull her laptop out of her bag. I sure as fuck don’t like the look on his face as he licks his lips and his eyes travel down her chest.

I haven’t updated him on her and me. He doesn’t know we’re in a relationship. That’s about to change this fucking minute, though.

“Damn brother, she looks good today, and she brought you food?” He is rubbing his hands together now.

“Just so you know, she and I are official now. I’d appreciate you keeping it quiet and, you know, not checking her out so damn hard,” I lean over and tell him.

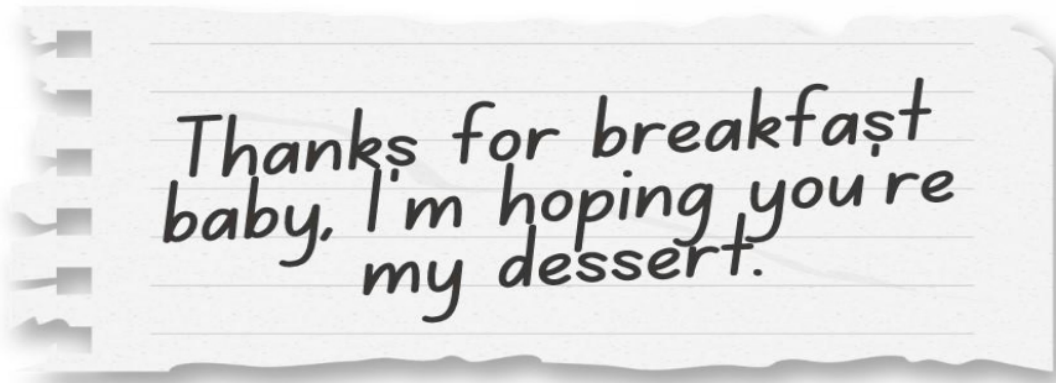
He’s my boy and all, but that doesn’t mean I won’t kick his ass if he keeps looking at her like she’s a damn snack. She’s gonna be my dessert later if I have anything to say about it.

“First off, you’re my boy and I would never do you dirty like that. Second, I like Little Wilton, she’s a good person and I consider her a friend. I’ll keep your secret, but I keep fucking telling you to man up to Hunter and Chase and let them know. You obviously feel strongly about her,” he sticks his fist out, and I bump it.

I pull apart half of my bacon and egg sandwich and hand it to him. The smile on his face makes me laugh.

I finish my breakfast just as class starts, and rip out a piece of notebook paper, scribbling a note to her. I want to watch her sexy hips move around in her seat again. It’s taking all of my goddamn willpower to not pull her out of class right fucking now. I want her that badly. *Especially after all the texting we’ve been doing...*

I fold it up and wait for the professor to turn around and then pass it to her.



Thanks for breakfast  
baby, I'm hoping you're  
my dessert.

She reads it, turns a red like a ripe cherry, and fans herself with it. *Oh Dimples, you have no idea how hot I want to make you.*



After class, Drew, Evie, and I make our way to the library to work on our group assignment. We spread out at a table that Drew reserved for us. My mind keeps drifting to the tutor room and the dirty things I want to do to her.

We have an outline hammered out and I watch my smart girl organize and delegate the workload. She communicates with Drew with ease and when she needs to take her time, when she stutters, he's patient with her and I appreciate the kindness and respect that he shows her.

I can't stop touching her; my arm is either slung over her shoulders and my fingers play with her hair or I'm rubbing her thigh underneath the table. We also can't stop smiling at each other like fools. *Damn, when can we get out of here?*

Drew throws a balled-up piece of notebook paper at us. I catch it and throw it back at him.

"She's good for you brother, you look damn happy," he tells me with sincerity. She blushes at his compliment and he's right; she is and I am.

Students are working all around us, and it's mostly quiet. When we hear the yelling coming from one of the tutor rooms, followed by a door flying open, our attention shoots toward the noise.

Out walks a tiny girl with jet black long straight hair, a beanie hat, a long-sleeved white t-shirt with a black fleece vest over

it, paint-splattered jeans, and black combat boots that have seen better days. She may be small, but she looks damn fierce with a scowl on her face.

Hot on her heels, yelling and pleading with her to slow the fuck down is an exacerbated and angry Hunter.

“Edison, I swear to God you better stop fucking walking and get your ass back here!” She spins around and walks right up to him, standing on her tippy toes sticking her finger in his face. *Holy shit, this girl has big balls.*

“You can swear to whoever the hell you want, I promise you though, if you mention me to God, he won’t give a shit. I told you not to waste my time, and you fucking did. I’m not tutoring you out of the goodness of my heart. It’s my job and I only get paid if you show up on time, *cabron*. You have no idea what you cost me when you pull this shit. Try to stop me from telling your coach, I don’t give a fuck if he benches you.”

I watch this play out, and every eye is on them as she turns around to leave. He grabs her arm and slams her into his body, grabs her face, and kisses the ever-loving shit out of her. I’ve seen Hunter kiss a lot of girls. This is different. I can tell by how he’s holding onto her for dear life, his fingers digging into arms. *Holy shit.*

She pulls away from him, touches her swollen lips, and then smacks him across his cheek.

“*Pendejo*,” she yells in his face before stomping her way out of the library.

Hunter’s hand clenches at his sides, and he watches her leave. He looks fucking pissed. He eyes us at the table a few feet from where he stands.

His eyes narrow as they connect with mine after landing on his sister. He doesn’t even look over at Drew. He lifts his chin to me in question and I lift mine back. Evie jumps up to check on him as he walks over to us.

“Just let me see, will you?” She asks and eventually wins out as she touches his red cheek before he removes her hands.

“I’m fine, stop fussing, I fucking deserved it and then some.” Hunter finally offers hellos to me and Drew, and we don’t question him about what just happened. That shit looked intense.

He stomps out of the library, no doubt to smooth things over with Coach, who won't be happy to hear that Hunter is skipping out on his mandated tutoring. Drew gathers his things and leaves as well, offering goodbyes.

Evie and I sit at the table alone and I move my chair closer to her, grabbing her hand that is resting in her lap, linking us together.

“Wanna take our study session into the room over there?” I nod to one of the unoccupied tutor rooms. *Say yes, I want to kiss you so badly.*

“I have a better idea. W-w-wanna come back to my r-r-room so I can show you what I was thinking about last night?” Her eyes are sparkling with mischief. I stand my ass up and reach for her hand. *Time to go.*

Yes. I. Do.

## Chapter Thirty-Seven

*Evie + Max*



*Evie*

I am going after what I want, and what I want is to have sex with Max. I think he can hear my thoughts since he is basically dragging me through the library and across campus. People are definitely noticing, and he refuses to drop my hand from his.

When we finally reach my door, I struggle with the key to open it as I'm hit with nerves. He steps as close to me as he can as his front is pressing against my back. He takes the key from my trembling hand, unlocks the door, and opens it. We step inside and I don't turn around, not yet. I need to calm my racing heart. *Can he hear it?* It is beating so loudly that I hear it roaring in my ears.

"We don't have to do anything you don't want to do or aren't ready for. You're always safe with me, I promise," he whispers in my ear after wrapping his arms around my waist and giving me a hug from behind. I turn into him and look up into clear blue eyes and feel my heart rate slow, my breathing even out and I feel it. *I'm ready.*

"Max, I'm never afraid when I'm with you. I always feel safe. It's one of the reasons I'm in love with you." He sucks in a breath and pulls me to his chest, wrapping his arms around me.

"Say it again," he says as his chin sits on the top of my head.

"I love you, Max." I feel his chest exhale the breath he took in, and he holds me tight.

"I love you too, Evie. I love you so fucking much." We stand there for a moment and it's like I'm dreaming. This handsome man is all mine. This kind, gentle, patient man loves me as much as I love him.

He places sweet kisses all over my face and pecks my lips over and over again. Our foreheads touch and we lean into one another.

"Evie, you changed the game on me with one sweet smile. Those dimples of yours completely own me."

I don't hesitate as I kiss him hard, pouring myself into the moment. We become a mess of lips, tongues, teeth, moans, and groans. I can't get enough of him. His tender words are repeating in my head. *You completely own me, too.*

He kisses my jaw, my chin, and down my throat. *Wow, that feels good.* He places a wet kiss at the bottom of my neck over my pulse, which is picking up speed.

"It's your eyes. I know you see all of me." My words are breathless and clear of stutters and stammers. He grins against my collarbone and gives me a sweet nip with his teeth, which has me

raking my nails over his scalp after I've threaded my fingers through his thick head of brown hair.

I gasp as he sucks on my sensitive skin, and he freezes.

"It's okay baby, you say the word and I'll stop. You're in control here." I believe him and nod in agreement, but I don't plan on stopping. We skipped a few steps to get here, but I don't care. I want this more than anything.

He yanks the material away from my shoulders and starts peppering my skin with open mouth kisses. We're still standing, and I instinctively squeeze my legs together as I enjoy his affection when it hits me.

My anxiety spikes, and not because I'm scared, or because I'm not ready. I am. I'm afraid of what it will be like for him. I have some internal scarring from my assault, and I'm now wondering if he'll notice. If it will feel good for him and for me.

"Where did you just go? You're a million miles away right now and I don't like it. Come back to me." He has so much concern in his eyes as he stares at me.

"I don't want to ruin the m-m-mood or this m-m-moment. I really want to do this with y-y-you. More than anything I really d-d-do, but I'm afraid it won't be g-g-good for you." I twist my hands together and attempt to step away from him. He isn't having that and grabs both of my hands and leads us to my bed where we sit down.

"Why do you think that? It will be amazing for both of us. I'll make sure of it." He places a piece of my hair behind my ear.

"What if, what if, what if." I can't get the words out.

"It's okay Evie, I promise it's okay." He's trying to reassure me. I can do this. I steady myself, close my eyes, and start again.

"What if the d-d-damage that was done to m-me, is so prevalent that it isn't g-g-good for you? My doctor said my s-s-caring may make things difficult. I've had physical t-t-therapy-y and I don't h-h-have pain there anymore..." I'm ruining this perfect moment between us with medical and clinical explanations, and I wouldn't blame Max if he turned around and ran out of the room.

I need to get the rest of this out. No matter how insecure it makes me sound.

"What if I f-f-feel different from all the other g-g-girls you've been with?" I frown at myself. I haven't stuttered with him

for a while and now I'm struggling again, like really struggling. *Stupid anxiety.*

"Dimples, it will be different for me. But it will be different because I love you. I'm so in love with you that sex with you will be amazing. You were made for me and so was your perfect pussy." He cups my center in his hand and I gasp. I tilt my head back and our eyes lock.

"I'm going to kiss you now." He grabs my chin and kisses me within an inch of my life. He kisses down my neck again and sticks his tongue down between my breasts when he reaches my cleavage. He kisses along the purple lace and gently bites at each swell as he cups them in his big hands.

His hands drop and I miss them immediately as he gathers the hem of my laced tank and pulls up. I stick my arms straight in the air and he flings the garment off of me. He looks at my purple push-up bra and growls peppering the tops of my breasts with wet, open-mouth kisses, not missing a single inch of skin. I feel goosebumps in the wake of his lips on my chest.

His hands go behind my back and he unhooks my bra and I slide the satin straps down my arms, and it falls to the floor. My hair is floating around my back, shoulders, and chest and my rose-tipped nipples harden under his heated stare.

"God Evie, you're so beautiful. You're the most gorgeous girl I've ever seen." I grab the hem of his sweatshirt and t-shirt and inch them up as we work together to rid them from his toned, chiseled, and flawless torso. I take him in and nearly come undone at the sight of his defined and solid chest, tight brown nipples, and hair that I'm itching to tug on.

My eyes lower and there they are, his muscular abs full of deep ridges and a belly button that lends itself to a happy trail. He has V muscles that I want to lick, and they clearly point south to what I can only imagine is a well-endowed dick.

His erection is pressing into me, and he is running his hands up and down my arms, giving me a moment to get my fill. His hands drop to my leggings, and he asks if he can remove them. I nod yes and he never breaks eye contact with me as I stand up to step out of them. He rises and rids himself of his pants in half a second and we're both standing in front of each other in our underwear. *Holy shit, my boyfriend looks like a damn demi-god.*



“Every inch of you is perfection and all mine. All fucking mine.” How he looks at me will be forever burned in my brain.

No one has ever looked at me with such adoration before. No one has ever made me feel how he does and I’m sure, with every fiber of my being, that no one ever will. No one will ever compare to Max Harmon.

“I’m yours, Max.” My anxiety is evaporating, my stutters are gone, my body is full of lust and my heart is bursting with love. And with that, he lifts me up and we tumble onto the bed.

# Max

She’s heaven on earth. Her body is beautiful, and she looks so fucking sexy. She had this naughty look in her eyes when I was standing in front of her half naked, and I knew she was okay for what’s coming next.

We fall into her bed, and I position us, so I’m on top of her. I look down at her and her soft and curvy body, a body that is built for sin, as she lay beneath me. *And sinning is all I want to fucking do.*

I tilt my head down and am face to face with the best set of tits I’ve ever seen. I plump them in my hands before I decide which pretty pink nipple I’m going to suck first.

I kiss my way down to her right breast and suck the peak into my mouth. I gently bite it and she arches her back, pressing them into my face. I’m rolling her left nipple with my fingers and kiss my way over to it for equal attention.

She is so damn responsive to my touch it has me wild with lust. My dick is fucking leaking as I continue to suck and lick as she runs her short nails down my back, leaving a trail of fire from her touch. She is making breathy hot as fuck noises that are spurring me on, letting me know what she likes.

My damn dick is the hardest it has ever fucking been, and he is sticking his wet head out of the front hole of my briefs, enjoying the view of a sexy squirming Evie.

“Touch me, Max, I need you to t-t-touch me.” She’s so perfect; I plan on touching every inch of her.

“Tell me what you need, baby. I’ll give you anything.” I mean it, too. This girl could ask for a star in the sky and I would do everything in my damn power to get her one.

“Please f-f-finger me. I need to f-f-feel you there.” I suck in a sharp breath. We haven’t taken this step yet and I know how big this is. Her stutter has returned, and I know she’s nervous, turned on, but nervous. I want to do everything I can to put her at ease.

“Fuck yes, I will. I can’t wait to touch you.” My voice is gravely. *I sound so desperate.*

I remove one hand from her perfect tit and slide it down her soft stomach, swirl the tip of my pointer finger around her adorable belly button, and head toward her perfect pussy.

Her underwear is still on and when I reach the waistband, she wiggles to help me, and I am one second away from ripping the fabric straight off her wide feminine hips.

If her tits made my mouth water, her pussy makes my mouth go dry. My dick literally aches for her when I see tight brown neatly trimmed curls covering her mound that show off bare pink pussy lips.

I am staring and she notices and fuck, I’m making her uncomfortable. She thinks her pussy isn’t good enough from the assault. Not one bit of her is damaged, and her pussy is perfect. I will say it again. Her pussy is fucking perfect, and I will tell her every day until I die if I have to.

“You’re s-s-staring at it, is it ok, d-d-does it look d-d-different from w-w-what you’re used t-t-to?” She turns her lower half away from me and I grab those hips and hold her still. It guts me that she’s vibrating with anxiety and her voice is shaky. I want to put her at ease. She’s always safe with me.

“It’s absolutely perfect. And it does look different from other ones I’ve seen before, because this one right here, this pussy is what I want to bury my fingers, tongue, and dick in until the end of time. Your pretty pussy is mine.”

I run my index finger down the center of her lips and her knees fall open. I stare into her big brown doe eyes while I circle her clit. It swells under my touch. I want to suck it in my mouth and make her come just like that.

“Fuck, you’re so wet, will you let me in, baby?” I know this is a big fucking moment, and it’s not lost on me that I get to be the

lucky fucker she shares it with. This is a tremendous step for her. For us. She's not only giving me her body, but she's also giving me her trust. There's nothing I want more. Not the NHL, not the life I thought I'd have. No, I want Evie and for her to feel safe with me above all else.

Her breath hitches while she nods her head yes before closing those pretty eyes.

"Evie, look at me. I want you to watch me give this back to you." She props herself up on her elbows and I show her my index finger before I slowly insert it into her hot, wet, soft pussy. *Fuck, she feels amazing.*

Her muscles clamp down on my finger... and goddamn it's a snug fit.

"Baby... your pussy is a masterpiece, there is absolutely nothing wrong with it, you hear me?" She nods her head, but I want her words. I want her to know that she's fucking perfection.

"Tell me you hear me," I urge her as I continue to pump my finger into her.

"More, Max, I need m-more," she pleads. I want to give her everything just as much as she wants me to, but only after she acknowledges how amazing she is.

"Do you hear me? Do you hear how wet you are against my finger? Do you see how fucking crazy I am about you and your body? You are perfect, I want you to know I think you and your pussy are fucking amazing," I don't let up, I add another finger and curl them inside her.

"Yes... I... hear... you," she moans out in between my kisses along her soft neck. *Fuck, she smells so good.*

"Good, because I want you to believe that, I want you to know that every inch of this gorgeous body is fucking heaven," I tell her before I crash my mouth down on hers, I swallow up her moan and continue to finger fuck her. She rides my hand, rolling her hips up and down as she chases her orgasm. She's panting and begging me not to stop between kisses. *As if I could or would.* I'm light-headed with lust for her. I can smell her arousal and I'm foaming at the mouth to eat her, to lick her most sensitive flesh, and to taste her cum.

"Can I eat your pussy, baby? I need to fucking taste you." She gives me consent and I kiss my way down her body before I dip

my head in between her open legs.

She pulls my hair, and I lose my damn mind. I feast on her pussy like it's my last meal. I use the tip of my tongue to outline her folds and then flatten it against her clit. She starts to move her hips and I know she's close. I'm not done with her or this perfect pussy yet. I want to fucking lick her down until she's a quaking mess.

"No-no-no I was so close, why did you stop?" She cries, and I flip myself on my back. *Because I want you to ride my tongue.*

"Come sit on my face," I tell her. Her breaths are coming out in quick pants, her skin a pretty shade of pink, and she starts to wring her hands. *Oh no, we aren't having any of that right now.* I reach for those hands and guide her over to me.

"I need you to drop that pretty pussy onto my mouth, and squeeze my head with those beautiful thighs," I tell her.

"No Max, I'll crush y-y-you," she protests, and I grab her hips, bringing her down where I want her.

"You won't, now where was I?" I don't give her a chance to fight me on this. I'm surrounded by her and I fucking love it. She starts rocking her hips and I grab on to them, encouraging her to ride my face as hard and fast as she needs. *Crush me? Baby, I hope you do.*

"Yes, Evie, you're doing so good, baby. You taste so fucking good," I praise my brave, strong, sexy girl and she rewards me with an explosion against my tongue.

"Oh, oh, oh, Max I'm g-g-gonna c-c-come," she moans, and I reach up and roll one of her hard nipples.

"Give it to me baby, fucking come for me," I tell her against her clit and drink every drop down and my tongue doesn't stop as a whole body detonates. Her thighs shake, she squeezes my head as tremors move through her. *Fucking beautiful.*

And the best part? She smiles the biggest damn smile I've ever seen, dimples and all, confirming what I already know, my girl's pussy isn't damaged, and she isn't broken. She's a goddess I plan on worshiping every damn day from here on out.

# Evie

If it felt that amazing with his fingers and tongue, I can't wait until he uses his dick I see peeking out of his briefs. I can't stop smiling as I dismount off his head and maneuver myself so I'm lying next to him while I catch my breath. I feel amazing... he made sure I felt taken care of not only physically, but mentally and emotionally, too. He's given me reassurance, praise, and his clear desire to make this special for me which is making this experience everything I've ever dreamed of for my first time under my circumstances.

I place a kiss on his right cheek, "thank you," his left cheek, "for making that," his lips, "incredible for me."

My words are clear, and my nerves are settled as I work my way down his strong neck, down his sternum, and use the tip of my tongue to tease his right nipple and then his left. *I want to make you feel good, too.*

He runs the pads of his fingers up and down my spine, grabs my butt, and squeezes each cheek while separating them in each of his hands. *My God.*

I run my fingers through his chest hair and gently tug, remembering how much he liked that. I run my fingers down his stomach and continue to place wet open mouth kisses down his abs. They clench underneath my attention, and I hear him groan. His hands are now on my breasts as he palms them and plucks my nipples. We're both breathing heavily, and our chests are equally heaving. I swirl my tongue in his belly button and can't help but smile against his skin.

I hear him hiss as I run my nose along his happy trail and when I kiss the skin above the waistband of his briefs, his thick cockhead hits my chin and I hear him say my name before he flips me on my back.

"If you get any lower, it's going to be over before the fun really starts." I pretend to pout and stick out my bottom lip. He leans down and sucks it in between his teeth.

"Then, by all means, let's get on with the fun." I reach around and lightly swat his bubble butt. I'm so ready for more.

“Are you one hundred percent sure? If you want us to stop, I’m fine with that.” I don’t want him to treat me like I am made of glass. I want this. I want him. I want us to take this step.

“Well, I’m not going to be fine with that. I want you, all of you, no s-s-stopping.”

I bring my hands between us and slide his black briefs down his body and when I pull the waistband over his hard dick, he shivers. He kicks them off and I reach for him and touch the sticky head, smearing his precum in circles with my thumb. *Thank goodness for romance books and my smut education.*

“Baby, please,” he groans as I gently wrap my palm and fingers around his impressive length and squeeze. He rocks into my hand and is suspended above me. He’s long, thick, and feels like velvet with smooth soft skin. I stroke him up and down, and I swear he grows another two inches.

It is a powerful, heady feeling to think I affect him like this. *I did that.*

“Condom, I’m going to get a condom.” He moves away with his erection still in my hand and I squeeze him hard, and he stills. He opens his eyes with concern, and I smile. I’ve thought a lot about this and it’s what I want, for me and for us.

“I’ve been on birth control for three years now. I don’t want anything in between us, I want to feel everything with you.” It’s not lost on me the significance of what I am suggesting.

“I want that too. I’m clean and I’ve never done it bare before. I don’t want anything between us either,” he says and brings his forehead down to mine and rubs our noses together.

I withdraw my hand, and he lines himself up at my entrance and looks into my eyes.

“I love you, Evie,” he tells me he loves me as he pushes inside, connecting us, heart, body, and soul.

“I love you too, Max.” *So, so much.*

# Max

I push into her slowly and feel so many emotions all at once.

Physically, I feel the softest, warmest, wettest, and tightest pussy I've ever touched. Fucking perfection.

Emotionally, I feel like my heart is exploding with love for this beauty below me.

Spiritually, I feel like I've found my other half, my soul's mate. That I'm home. Like I am where I am supposed to be with the person I am supposed to be with.

"I love you, Evie," I tell her as I fill her to the hilt.

"I love you too, Max," she says back to me, and I don't think I'll ever tire of hearing those words.

I watch her intently. I don't want her to feel any more pain from this than she has to. She is so damn tight and I'm not small. The smile on her face, those dimples popping, the grin that changed me forever, doesn't falter as I remain seated inside her for the first time.

I give her time for her body to adjust, and then I have to move.

"I'm gonna move now, you okay with that?" I ask her and nuzzle her nose.

"I'm more than okay with that," she says as she gives my ass cheek a squeeze. *This girl.*

I rock back and forth, picking up a pace and finding a rhythm. She meets me thrust for thrust and starts making those sexy as fuck noises again. I feel a tingling in my lower back, and my balls are ready to explode. *Fuck. Not yet.*

"You feel fucking incredible. You're doing so fucking good. So, so, good. Yes, Evie, just like that, fuck!" I grit out. I'm not going to last long, she's so wet, tight, and soft. *Goddamn, this perfect pussy is amazing.*

"More, I need m-m-more," she says, and I thrust into her, giving her what she needs. I lean down to suck her hard little nipple into my mouth.

"Oh God, Max, I'm going to, I'm going to... oh God, Max!"

"That's it, baby, come for me," I slam into her hard and urge her on. She's moaning and I bury my face in her neck and kiss her skin.

“Oh... my... God,” she breathlessly says between thrusts, arching her back.

“Come... for... your... man.”

“Max!” She shouts my name and I’m on sensory fucking overload. Her calling out for me, her looking sexy-as-hell under me, and feeling her hot cum all over my dick as her inner muscles squeeze the shit out of me, is enough to trigger my own orgasm.

“Fuck, Evie, fuck!” I roar out my release, coating her walls with my cum. *Mine. Mine. Mine.*

I collapse on top of her, and her arms and legs wrap around me. I shift us and lay us on our sides, hugging her tightly to me while I kiss the top of her head. A few minutes later, my dick is still buried inside of her while I catch my breath.

“Max?” Her voice is full of vulnerability, and I lean back to look at her before kissing the tip of her nose.

“Yeah, Dimples?” I rub her back, trying to ease her anxiety. She’s looking at me with those big brown eyes and I have a feeling I know what she’s about to ask me.

“Was that o-okay f-for y-you?” She starts to chew her bottom lip and I kiss it to stop her teeth from doing any damage to her pretty pink mouth. I knew this was on her mind.

“That was the best sex of my fucking life,” I tell her and kiss her again. She melts into me, and I roll her over to her back.

“I’m going to show you again, just how special you, and your pussy are. That sex with you is my new favorite thing.” I use my fingers, mouth, and dick to smash away any lingering thoughts of self-doubt and feelings of anxiety; proving to her that she really is fucking amazing.



## Chapter Thirty-Eight

Evie



He stayed with me until the last possible moment before he had to get up to go to practice. He kissed me, told me he loved me, swatted my butt, and promised to come back later tonight.

I snuggle into bed and relive every single second of my afternoon. I missed my last class of the day, but I don't care. I had ground-shaking sex with a man I want forever with. If that's not a reason to play hooky, I'm not sure what is. I'm exhausted and sleep pulls me under as I dream about blue eyes, curly brown hair, and the sexy man who loves me.

I wake up to my phone buzzing on my desk and reach for it, assuming it's Sloane. It's not, or anyone else I know for that matter, it's from the same unknown number that texted me yesterday.

**Unknown:**

*Did you really think you could hide? That you couldn't be found?*

Now that's strange, I can figure one miss-text being the equivalent of a miss-dial. But this doesn't feel right. Maybe they think they are still texting who they originally meant to talk to. Whatever.

My stomach growls and I decide to get up and find dinner since it's now close to 7:00 PM. Sloane and I were lucky to snag a room that is usually reserved for RAs, so we have our own bathroom. It's small, but I'm thankful for it. I quickly wash up and notice how wonderfully sore I am between my legs, a sexy reminder that I, Evie Wilton, slept with Max Harmon! And it was freaking amazing!

I make my way to the cafeteria and notice all the banners, posters, and information regarding the upcoming hockey tournament that Havenwood is hosting this weekend. Sloane was right, there are campus events jam-packed between Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We are hosting five other schools that are taking part in the tournament. Havenwood will be buzzing.

Melanie and I have discussed my return to sporting events, specifically to the tournament this weekend. I'm leaning toward attending and she and I will continue to talk about it during therapy tomorrow.

Sloane would go with me, and I bet some of the other girls that I am friendly with from our floor would go as well. I still have C's hockey sweatshirt with our name on the back and can wear that to show my support to the team. Until we talk to my brothers, I would feel awkward showing up wearing anything Max-related. *Cue the guilt.*

Feeling good about my new plan, I grab a tray and pick out a Cobb salad, grab a few pieces of hand fruit, and a few packaged cookies to bring back to the room. I stuff the extras in my bag and know that Sloane will appreciate the snacks. She's been missing dinner most nights with rehearsal and has been living off sandwiches and whatever I bring back.

I find a quiet table. There aren't a ton of people in here right now and I appreciate the low-key vibe. I read on my Kindle while I eat, and feel my cheeks burn hot when I read a scene like what I experienced today when Max's head was between my thighs. I squeeze mine in response and blow out a slow breath, remembering how his tongue felt on me and the deliciously dirty things he did to me. Dirty things I want more of.

“Hey, Little Wilton.” I look up and see Drew, whose tray is full of every offering the buffet had tonight. “Mind if I join you?” He asks. I like Drew. I think it’s safe to say he and I are friends at this point.

“S-s-sure,” I tell him, and he pulls out the chair across from me and I shove my Kindle into my bag. Maybe he didn’t catch my embarrassing tomato cheeks.

“Whatcha reading there? Something good, huh?” I nearly spit out my water across our small table. I cough, and he laughs.

“Sorry Little Wilton, I didn’t mean to embarrass you. My cousins are always reading stuff that turns their faces red, too. I used to steal their books, and some of that shit is better than porn.” He’s not wrong.

He smiles at me and laughs, clearly remembering some of what he’s read in the past. I clear my throat. I need to change the subject or evaporate.

“So, ugh, how was the rest of y-y-your day?” I stammer out. Drew has always been patient with me whenever this happens and now is no different.

“It was fine. After I left you guys at the library, I was pretty busy, which is why I’m eating so late today.” We make general small talk and I feel more and more comfortable and don’t stutter again. Progress.

“So, are you going to watch your brothers and boyfriend this weekend? The boys have a big tourney to get through, gonna need all the support we can give them.” I had a feeling that Max had told Drew about us. I don’t mind, I just feel guilty that I’m keeping this secret from A and C.

“I’m c-c-considering it, yes, I was going to talk to my roommate Sloane and see which g-g-games we can go to.”

“Well, let me know what you girls decide and maybe I’ll tag along. You’re good people, Little Wilton. I like hanging with you.”

“I like hanging with you too, D-drew.” We’re interrupted by a blonde witch bitch who keeps popping up in

an attempt to ruin my day.

“Well, well, well, haven’t you been a busy girl today, Chunky Monkey. First Max this afternoon and now dinner with Drew? You must give a good blow job, why else would these guys be spending even a second of their time with you if it wasn’t for what your mouth could do. Is that it, whore?!” This bitch. I am shaking with anger and rise to my feet. *How did she know about Max?*

“Listen, Lexi, I t-t-told you this morning and I’m t-t-telling you now to leave me the hell alone.” She rolls her eyes at me and now Drew stands up, but I send him a look and he sits right back down. This is my fight.

“And I told you to leave Max the hell alone, but you can’t seem to do that, can you?”

“Why w-would I leave h-h-him alone? Because y-y-o-o-u-u want h-him? Fuck off!” Okay so I struggled with that one, but I still raised my voice at the end there to enunciate that she is not getting her hands on Max. My Max. *She can’t have him, he’s my boyfriend!*

“I’ll give you a little incentive then…” She gives me a smile that definitely shows off her craziness and pulls her phone out of her jeans pocket.

She makes a big deal of pressing the volume button, making sure it’s on high blast. My anxiety blares a warning that something is very wrong. *Where are those damn eye laser beams when a girl needs them?*

I gasp so harshly that the onslaught of sucked-in air burns my lungs. I can’t speak. I can’t think. I can’t move. All I can do is listen to myself; my moans, my whimpers, and my stuttered plea for more fill nearby students’ ears as Lexi plays a recording of me and Max’s first time together. My first time ever. *What a bitch!*

“Lexi, what the fuck, stop that shit.” Drew grabs her phone and shuts the recording down.

“I fucking deleted it. What the fuck is wrong with you?” He asks with anger written all over his face.

“Don’t worry Chunky Monkey, I have more copies. It doesn’t matter if you deleted that one, Drew. And what’s wrong with me is that she’s sleeping with my man. That ends now.” She pockets her phone and crosses her arms over her chest. She looks menacing. Like Regina George on steroids. *Freaking mean girls.*

She’s staring down at me, and I feel an inch tall under her gaze. All my self-proclaimed new self-confidence and progress fly out the window along with my dignity. How is this happening?

Drew may have deleted that recording, but the damage is done. The only silver lining is that the cafeteria isn’t packed and that my brothers’ or Max aren’t nearby to hear this. I can’t even look at Drew. I’m so humiliated. She took my beautiful storybook moment and stomped all over it.

Tears stream down my face, and I don’t bother to wipe them. My hands are knotted together in my lap. I feel sick to my stomach.

“Y-y-y-o-o-u-u r-r-recorded us? H-h-how could y-y-you d-do that? Why would y-y-you do that?” My words are stuck in my throat and come out as weak and vulnerable as I feel.

“You’re not listening! For all that reading you do, you’re not the brightest bulb, are you? Max Harmon is mine, not yours, mine. You showed up and took him from me. Back off or I’ll send the recording to your brothers’ and blast it everywhere. Then you’ll really be an embarrassment.”

“Lexi, if I hear you ever threaten Evie again, I’ll make it my mission to make your life a living hell. Go ahead, I dare you.” She switches her glare from me to Drew and he doesn’t even blink. After a beat, she turns back to me.

“Stay away from him and I’ll give you every copy I have. If you don’t, well, it’s your funeral.” With a parting smirk, she turns and walks away, cool as a cucumber, as if she didn’t just blow up my world.

“Evie, I’m so sorry that just happened, I—.” I don’t give Drew a chance to finish his sentence. I grab my bag and run as fast as I can. I don’t stop until I’m safe and under my lavender comforter. I ugly cry into my pillow and keep the world away until I hear Max yelling in the hallway.

## Chapter Thirty-Nine

# Max



I missed nearly every pass, every shot, and was sloppy during every drill at practice. Coach is going to have my damn head. *Worth it.*

I can't pay attention, I can't focus, and I can't get her out of my head. It damn near killed me when I had to leave her earlier. We were in our bed bubble, which I like so much better than our English class bubble, when my alarm went off.

“What the fuck Max, Coach kept us an extra hour because of your dumbass. What the hell had you so distracted out there?” Chase angrily asks while ripping off his sweaty gear when we're back in the locker room. *Your sister and her beautiful body.*

“Just some shit on my mind, that's all,” I tell him, leaving out that “some shit” is equivalent to his sister's perfect pussy.

I have no doubt he would stake my head with his hockey skate before Coach even makes it in here if I said that out loud. Not

that I ever fucking would. Brothers present or not, my girl deserves the utmost respect.

“Well, get it fucking sorted before tomorrow,” he says, grabbing his shit and heading toward the showers. Oh, I plan to get my shit sorted alright. *With your pretty sister.*

Speaking of my girl, I send her a text to check in. I want nothing more than to go right back to her room, to our bed bubble.

**Max:**

*How are you feeling? I just finished practice.*



*I want to see you.*

I’m waiting in the locker room for Jake to finish getting his shoulder wrapped, and testing out the tape job I did to my stick. I feel around in my locker for the sharpie I always keep in there, and write out “Dimples 4Ever,” above the blade. I run my thumb over the letters and can’t fucking help but grin. Hunter, whose locker is next to mine, sits down in his seat and shoves me. *Fucker.*

“Why the fuck are you smiling like that after the bullshit you just put us through,” he asks and I just smirk at him, if he knew what I was thinking, he’d try to punch the smile off my goddamn face. *Your sister and the way her perfect pussy squeezed a fucking load out of me, that’s what I’m smiling about.*

“I know that goddamn look, stop thinking about pussy when we’re out there, my legs are fucking killing me because of you.” *Oh, I’m thinking about pussy that’s for fucking sure.* He’s not wrong, but I’m not about to tell him what made me so distracted. I just had the best fucking sex of my life. Of course, my head wasn’t where it was supposed to be. It rather be buried between her luscious thighs than be here right now.

Speaking of Evie, I haven’t heard back from her and text her again. Zero fucks if it was only thirty minutes ago.

**Max:**

*Haven’t heard from you, just wanted to make sure you’re ok. I’m assuming you’re reading and sucked into a vampire book (see what I did there?) lol*

I’m still admiring my clever text when Drew calls. Drew texts, he doesn’t ever call. *Something’s wrong.* I can fucking feel it.



“Max, where are you?” The sound of his voice is setting off alarms in my head and the hairs on my neck stand at the attention of the tone of his voice.

“Drew, what’s going on?”

“It’s Evie, man, some shit with her and Lexi just went down at dinner, and she ran out of here. You need to find her.” I spring up from the couch my ass is planted on, fight to put my damn sneakers back on, and I’m out the fucking door.

“Drew, tell me exactly what the fuck happened, and leave nothing out,” I tell him while running back to campus and hustling towards her residence hall. I nearly trip over my damn feet when I hear him say that fucking Lexi has a recording of me and my girl having sex. *What the actual fuck?!*

She’s officially gone from looney tune to the damn looney bin. Telling Evie that I’m hers? I’ve never been hers. Before I fucked her, I would see her around often, but there was never anything between us. I haven’t dated anyone at Havenwood prior to Evie. I’ve done nothing to perpetuate Lexi’s ass-backward thinking that she and I are anything more than a past hookup. A hookup I thoroughly regret.

I walk into the all-female residence hall with a group of students and don’t bother with the elevator. I take the stairs two at a time until I’m on her floor.

But it’s not Evie’s door I’m standing in front of, it’s Lexi’s. This shit needs to stop.

The door is wide open, and I see my biggest mistake prancing around in leggings and a sports bra. She beams when she sees me standing in the doorway. She pushes her plastic tits out and blows me a kiss. You’ve got to be kidding me with this shit.

“You have my attention, Lexi, and I garun-fucking-tee it’s not going to be the kind you want. You’ve gone too far this time. What the fuck were you thinking?” I watch her fake smile fade from her orangey-tan face. *Does she ever take those caterpillars off?*

I try to keep my goddamn composure, but it’s fucking hard, knowing what she did today. I could give a shit about myself and who hears me on that recording. Fucking no one goes after my Evie. I’m seething mad at this bitch knowing how badly she wanted to hurt, humiliate, and upset my girl. What she did tonight is inexcusable. Her behavior has become unhinged and out of control.

Her crush on me has escalated way beyond the realm of normalcy. I gotta be honest, I'm hanging on by a bare fucking thread with her and her antics.

“What was I thinking? I'm thinking we had an amazing night together, the best night of my life, and you're ruining it by going after that heifer! You won't even look at me anymore!” That bare thread? Fucking disintegrates hearing her refer to Evie in such a vile way.

I fucking snap and roar my rage like an angry wolf determined to protect its mate.

“Stop fucking talking about her like that! Don't you fucking dare mention her again! I don't want to hear you say her name or talk shit about her! You need to be a bitch to someone? You come after me. Leave Evie the fuck alone!”

I'm losing my shit and several girls on the floor are now watching us. I barely hear the door behind me open, but immediately feel her standing there. Lexi clearly loves drama, and the crowd doesn't deter her one fucking bit. If anything, Evie's appearance adds fuel to her fire.

“I'm not ending shit with Evie. She's my girlfriend, not you, her. You and I were never together, and we'll never be together. I'm sorry if this hurts you, but if you care about me like I think you do, you'll delete the recordings which you shouldn't fucking have to begin with.” I try to switch tactics and play on her feelings for me. A low blow, but I don't care. She came for my girl. *Shit, now I really have to tell Hunter and Chase that I'm with their sister.*

Evie slides her little hand in mine and is now standing with me. I watch Lexi's nostrils flare as she zeroes in on our locked hands. It's us against the world, baby. *Or in this case, one deranged mean girl.*

“You are h-h-hell b-b-bent on making a f-f-fool out of m-m-mee, but everyone can see that you're just j-j-jealous. G-g-go ahead and s-s-send it, if you think that's g-g-going to b-b-break me, you're w-w-wrong, I've been through w-w-worse than you could ever do to me.” I swear pride is bursting from my chest. She is so strong and so fucking fierce.

“Oh, shut up Evie. The adults in the room are speaking.” I'm ready to fucking lay into her with promises to cut her off from every Havenwood Devil dick on campus when the RD turns the corner.

“Lexi, you better not be causing any problems up here again. I don’t know what I’m walking in on, but the show’s over. Break it up.”

Evie pulls me into her room across the hall. She pounces on me the minute I walk inside, and I spin her around and push her up against the back of the door.

“I heard everything y-y-you said out t-there,” she says before kissing me passionately. *Fuck, my girl can kiss.* I hook her leg around my hip and grind my hard dick into her. I run my hand up and down under her thigh and squeeze her ass. She lets out a sexy whimper in response.

She takes control as she walks forward toward her bed, taking me along for the ride as I step back. I feel the mattress on the back of my knees and sit. She spins my hat so it’s backward on my head before she straddles me and takes off her shirt and bra.

“Hearing you stand up for, m-me, for us? God, Max, I love you.”

She keeps those doe eyes locked on mine, and I swear she sees through my lust-filled haze, right down into my heart and soul. My fate is fucking sealed. *I forever belong to Evie Wilton.*

“I’ll always fight for you, Dimples.” I nuzzle the tips of our noses together before running it along her pretty neck.

Her skin is so soft and smells like cookies with hints of sugar and vanilla. I bite the spot I smell and then suck, leaving a blooming red mark. She moans when I give her another one on the other side. I like seeing it there. *Mine.*

“Don’t stop, please, don’t stop. I want you,” she pleads. She never has to beg me to worship her. I’ll never deny her, and I’ll never stop trying to give her the goddamn world.

I lose my shirt and hat before placing her on her back and make quick work of both of our pants. *Too many fucking clothes.*

“Hat. On. Now. Please and thanks!” she says all sassy, and I scoop it up and put it back on my head thinking of our dirty texting the other day.

“You were so fucking fierce out there, my brave girl,” I praise her courageous efforts to stand up for herself as I kiss down her breastbone.

I grab her tits, pushing them together. I lick her nipples and then blow a cooling breath, watching them stiffen and turn a deep pink. Her hands dig into my shoulders, and she sighs. She likes her nipples being played with and I fucking love playing with them. I suck and suck until they darken in color. I admire them, shaking my head in appreciation, before moving down her body.

I press my nose to her tightly trimmed curls and inhale. I love her scent. I like that she has hair here too, and it tickles my nose as I venture lower. I run my index finger through her folds and open them wide, revealing her wet center.

I lick and suck her clit into my mouth while I stick my two fingers inside her. Her hips buck off the bed and I hold her in place as I curl them up deep inside. She rides my hand and is relentless as she grinds down on my face, chasing her release. When she catches it and comes, I lick her through her orgasm.

“Told you I was going to kiss it better,” I tell her and smile, admiring how gorgeous she is.

She hauls me up and kisses me and tastes herself for the first time.

“I love how you taste,” I tell her as I kiss her.

“And I like you doing that with this on your head, you look sexy,” she says and runs her hand over my hat while her cheeks turn the same deep shade of pink as her little taunt nipples.

My hands are traveling up and down her curvy body and her hands get brave and reach for my weeping dick. It is so hard it hurts as it springs free. I kick away my briefs and move us, so I’m sitting up against her headboard and pull her into my lap to straddle me.

We’re lined up perfectly: face to face, chest to chest, dick to pussy. I know she’s sore and wait for her cues on how far she wants to take this, but I would love nothing more than to have this beautiful girl ride the shit out of me.

My steel dick agrees and sticks straight up against her pussy lips. I thrust my hips up and feel her juices on my shaft. It’s divine fucking torture. I hold the back of her neck with one hand and kiss her. I gently suck on her juicy bottom lip as we kiss and she gently bites mine in response, which makes me wild.

Her tongue battles for dominance with mine, and I let her win. I’ll always let her win. I bring my hand from the back of her neck to the front and run it up and down the column of her throat

gently. She likes that as she squirms and whimpers in my lap. Her pussy is hot and releases more wetness that drips towards my heavy nut sack.

“What do you want, baby? Tell me.” I caress her tits and get close enough to her nipples to tease her to where she is pushing them into my hands for friction. *Greedy girl.*

“I want you inside of me.” I lift her hips, and she allows me to guide her down my erection. *Holy shit.* When I fill her up, she crosses her arms over the back of my shoulders and rests her forehead on mine as her tight pussy adjusts to me. I swear my dick has never been thicker than it is right now. Our breaths mingle as we sit there for a minute, just enjoying being one.

“Show me how y-you l-l-like it, Max,” she stutters while whispering the words and I kiss the corner of her mouth. Everything that comes from these lips is perfection to me. I grab a handful of her hips and rock her back and forth.

“Grab the headboard, baby, just like that. That’s good, pretty girl. That’s real fucking good,” I grit out as she moves on her own and finds an agonizingly pleasurable rhythm that has my eyes rolling back into my fucking head.

I smack her ass and she moans, throwing her head back, which allows her hair to intermingle with my hands. I grab the strands and fist them, keeping her head tilted upwards as I kiss her neck and suck on that spot I like so much. We’re both panting and I’m about to explode. I try to stop the freight train orgasm that’s ready to blast out of my body and into her warm and awaiting pussy, but I can’t.

“Come for me, pretty girl, give it to me, baby, I fucking need it,” I tell her as I groan into her ear, and she explodes. *Goddamn, the way this pussy squeezes me.* I follow her over the edge and yell her name when I fucking blow. I hope everyone on this goddamn campus hears me.



She’s draped over me and her fingers glide over my chest tangling with the hair there. Our toes run up each other’s calves underneath her lavender comforter. I feel completely relaxed laying here with her. Before her, I’ve never snuggled like this. It’s nice and it’s a “first” I get to give her, which I like.

I allow my eyes to close and sink deeper into our bubble. Practice and weight room training have had me running ragged the past few days and my mind has been racing with thoughts of NHL scouts coming to campus this weekend to watch us in the tourney.

I want it so badly and I've worked so hard to get to this point. I want it all and I don't give a fuck if that makes me selfish. I want the NHL dream, my dream girl, and the dream life. I want to give that to her and make sure she never suffers again.

I've been so ripping mad at Hunter and Chase for being such dumbasses that in my head it justifies me sneaking behind their backs to be with their sister.

I'm going to come clean, though. We all need to move on and if I'm being honest, those two assholes are a part of the dream life I want so badly. I fucking love those guys and I don't want any issues between us.

When she tells me she is thinking of checking out some games this weekend, my heart soars. I'd love to have my girl in the stands cheering me on with my number and name on her back.

"I'd love for you to come to see me play, I'll get you tickets for whatever games you want." There are some seats that I have available. My folks won't be able to make the drive-in, but I think my sister Penny is going to come.

She and I are a year apart and have always been close. She stayed home and helped build up our hometown's community theater program and tried her hand at producing. I was thrilled when she was accepted into Havenwood's Performing Arts Program. I can't wait to have her here next semester.

"Why did you stop going to see your brothers?" With how close those three are, it's surprising to me she isn't at our games. They even have a number space in between their jersey numbers for her. She still wears Chase's Havenwood hockey sweatshirt with their name on the back. Even though she looks cute as hell in it, I always feel a pang of jealousy when she wears it. I want my name across her shoulders.

"The last game I saw them play was States when they won. It was the same night that A and C hooked up with Brandon and Chris's girlfriends at some of the celebration parties. The four of them have had a crazy rivalry for years and that night when A and C's team beat there's and then sleeping with their girlfriends just put in motion the series of unfortunate events. I don't know, but I just

couldn't bring myself to go see them play after that. I think I'm ready, though. Melanie thinks it's an important step for me to take. Sloane and Drew will go with me, so I'll have some support."

I feel my face scowl and feel an eruption of possessiveness as I pull her closer to me. Fucking Hunter and Chase, I want to kick both of their asses for what they did.

"I like that Drew and I are friends. Everyone was always trying to get to A and C through me, so I've always had a hard time trusting people's intentions. I immediately knew that Sloane wasn't like that, and Drew made me feel comfortable. He never says anything when I get nervous and is always patient with me."

"He's a good friend to have, you can trust him, he's solid like that. He called to tell me what happened with Lexi at dinner because he knew you were upset." She distracts me as the pads of her fingers make heart shapes down my abdomen. Then she scrambles my brain when her fingers slip farther down and circle around my shaft, moving her hand up and down. *Guess we're done talking.*

My dick grows hard in her soft hand, and she squeezes the base, applying pressure that makes my balls tingle. She brings her hand up over my slit and wipes away the ball of pre-cum that immediately gathers there.

"You taste good too, by the way." She brings her hand up and licks her thumb that's coated with the salty liquid. *Fuck. Me.*

My whole-body shakes when she licks my slit and then runs the tip of her tongue along the underside of my shaft and uses her thumb and index finger to form a circle around my base, mimicking a cock ring. I sit up to watch her, and bring my hand to cover hers and start sliding up and down while the tip of my dick hits her lips.

"Are you gonna open up that pretty mouth for me?" She grins and those fucking dimples pop, as I tap my dick against her smile. She sticks her tongue out and sucks me in until I hit the back of her throat. She gags and, fuck, it feels fucking good.

She moves me up and down and uses her devilish tongue to swirl around the ridges on my crown. She keeps a tantalizing pressure at my base, and it holds back my orgasm that is already gearing up to blow like a goddamn geyser.

My hands got lost in her hair as she picked up her pace. She hums against my shaft and the vibrations have me involuntarily jerking my hips back and forth.

She likes seeing me come undone by her touch and smiles with my dick in her mouth. I groan at the sight of the hottest girl on the planet giving me head.

I let out a strangled moan when she wraps her lips around my swollen head and gently sinks her front teeth in. The pressure is too much. I can't fucking take it. She moves her head back down until her lips hit her fingers.

She's making all sorts of noises and I watch her hand move towards her pussy and she presses down on her clit. I gnash my teeth together and barely manage to spit out a warning. Watching her touch herself while she gives me the blow job of my fucking life has me on sensory overload.

"Baby, I can't hold it any longer. You gotta move, or I'm gonna come in your mouth." She whimpers and I watch her fingers move faster as she works her clit with one hand and squeezes my dick with the other at the same time.

I bring my hands to her cheeks and feel them working me over and I lose my ever-loving mind, thrusting my dick in her mouth as far as she can take me. I come as I throw my head back and squeeze my eyes shut. This girl swallows every drop of my cum, releases my sated dick with a pop, and I open my eyes in time to watch her lick her swollen lips. *Fucking. Goddess.*

Her fingers are still buried in her perfect pussy, and I swat them away and replace them with my own until she soaks my hand.



We fall asleep sweaty, sticky, and satisfied. I wake up hearing my phone going off; I check it and see a text from Hunter asking me where the fuck I am and telling me we need to talk. *Asshole.*

I shoot him a message telling him I'm not coming home tonight and that we'll talk tomorrow, throw my phone on the floor, and wrap my arms around my Evie.

I'm about to surrender to sleep when I hear another message come in. But it's not my phone, it's hers. I meant to silence it but see the message light up the screen. It's from Hunter or A as she and Chase call him.

**A:**



*B, please consider Mom and Dad's offer to put you and Sloane up for the weekend. Campus is going to be crazy with the tournament and all the people coming to Havenwood. I just want to make sure that you'll be ok.*

This must be their group chat because Chase fires off a text next. I know she and Hunter call him C and she's B, right in the middle.

**C:**

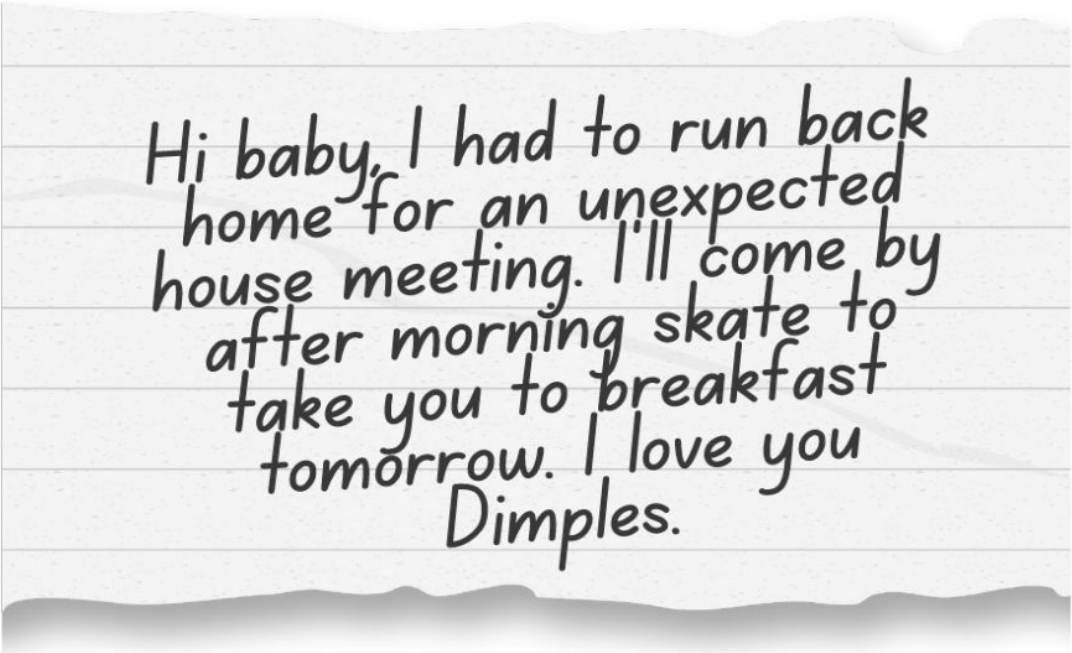
*I agree with A, I think you should reconsider. It's not like you're coming to the tournament anyway, so a nice weekend away could be really relaxing for you and Sloane.*

I don't fucking like this. I'm not sure what is going on, but it is not sitting well with me. Why do they want her and Sloane to go away for the weekend? Obviously, I know she is challenged with anxiety, especially regarding athletics and sporting events, but she has come a long way and is doing so well.

She isn't hiding; she walks with a newfound sense of confidence and she's making friends. She's welcoming touch and open to new experiences. She wants to move forward and needs to be supported in her efforts to heal. Not hidden away. That's what they have always done with Evie. They hid her damn existence until she showed up here at Havenwood. *Now I'm fucking pissed.*

I hug her tight to my chest and kiss her head. I have the gut-sinking feeling that something else is going on and that it's about to blow up in our faces.

I can't shake this feeling and as much as it pains me to do this, I get up, get dressed and write my sleeping beauty a note that I leave for her to see first thing when she wakes up.



Hi baby, I had to run back home for an unexpected house meeting. I'll come by after morning skate to take you to breakfast tomorrow. I love you  
Dimples.

I need to talk to her brothers and plan on doing it right fucking now. I send Hunter another text, letting him know I'm on my way. He and Chase better be ready for what I have to fucking say. I don't give one flying fuck if Lexi spreads the news that me and Evie are together. If she dares to send out that recording, I'll face the Wiltons and whoever else I need to. I'm headed to talk to her brothers right now. Fuck waiting, I'm claiming my girl, right fucking now.

## Chapter Forty

# Hunter



It's been a fucked-up day. I was late to my tutoring session with Edison, and she went ballistic on me. This petite woman put me in my fucking place so fast my head is still spinning. I don't know what came over me but when she challenged me, making it known that she wasn't taking my shit, something clicked into place deep inside of me.

That kiss? I felt it to my goddamn toes. Every hair on my body was standing straight up and every inch of me was aware of us being connected by our lips, tongues, and with my hands gripping her rail-thin arms. My cock was instantly hard and pulsing in my pants with need. I heard a voice in my head chanting, "mine, mine, mine."

Then she slapped me, and my cock blew a shot all over my briefs. *Fucking hell.*

She doesn't clear five feet and is maybe a hundred pounds. She's teeny tiny and rough around the edges. She's

cold and relentless with me. She's guarded and always playing defense. Sometimes she reminds me of a caged animal. She's skittish and doesn't trust anyone.

Her glare would make Hades cower. Just the thought of her going head-to-head with the devil himself makes me grin like a fucking fool because Edison... she'd fucking win.

She has this weird, twisted power over me, and I don't fucking like it. I crave control and she takes that from me the instant I'm near her. It's why I blow off tutoring and when I go, it's why I'm late. I can't stand feeling so overpowered. She makes me feel vulnerable, and I hate that shit.

She's hauntingly beautiful with jet black long hair that's so dark, it looks navy sometimes. Her round black eyes are framed with thick long lashes that curl up. She doesn't use any of that mascara shit on them or wear any makeup at all. She doesn't need it.

Her heart-shaped face shows off a delicate bone structure, and she has a dimple in her chin that I want to stick the tip of my tongue in. Her lips are full and when they were defying me, I kissed them, and they kissed me back. *Fuck.*

She is very thin; I can see her bones through her flesh and she's always sticking food from the cafeteria into a bag that looks so full that it may rip at the goddamn seams. She chews her fingers when she's nervous. She always looks like she is going to gnaw her damn hand off while waiting in line to swipe her meal card.

My eyes become hooked on her when she's in the room and I can't fucking turn away. She's like a goddamn magnet.

This tiny creature has rendered me powerless. *I fucking hate her for it.*

I hate that I can't turn away. I hate that I'm drawn to her. I really hate that she kissed me back. Because now I've gotten a taste of her... I'm burning for more. She set me on fire when our tongues touched. I felt it when her fingers seared

my skin. This girl, this tiny girl, is a fucking bolt of lightning and I'm struck.

I smoothed things over with Coach and took my verbal lashing from him for my attempts to blow off tutoring. I went for a run to clear my head of Edison. *Yeah, that didn't fucking work.*

When I got in the shower, I jacked off to that defiant mouth and all the ways I want to stuff it. With my tongue while I kiss her within an inch of her goddamn life. With my fingers after they've been buried in her little cunt. And with my cock while I fuck her throat.

Thinking about Edison on her knees had me picking up speed as I beat my dick. When I thought about that smack, she gave me? Well, I came so hard I had to hold myself up on the goddamn wall that I coated with thick ropes of cum. *I fucking hate her.*

When I made my way downstairs, everyone was home but Max. Monroe, Jake, C, and I made pasta for dinner using a jar of homemade sauce that one of Jake's sisters sent him. Their mom passed away when he was in high school, and his five older sisters baby the hell out of him. *They're also hot as fuck.*

My mind is on overdrive, and I'm distracted. I barely remember shoveling dinner into my mouth. C and I need to talk to Max about our sister. If he knows she likes him, then he's gonna have to let her down gently. I don't want her getting hurt. I also need to check in with my parents and see if they got her to agree to the out-of-town girls' weekend with Sloane.

*Where the fuck is he?* Maybe he's across the street at Drew's house. They hang out a lot, especially since he's been distant from me, and C. *Something's been up his ass lately.*

The boys snap me back to dinner and we talk about the upcoming tourney and the teams that are coming in. We want to win this year and with scouts being in attendance I need to play well, and I need to play smart, especially if I'm going to face off against fucking Waterstone and Ellis. *Those pricks.*

When we watched the game tape and I saw those two fuckers with sticks in their hands, I almost stood up and threw the chair I was sitting in at the screen. C looked just as angry. He and I have become obsessed with thinking of ways to finally get revenge for what those fuckers did to B. Part of me wants to tell our teammates so we can brawl, but I can't do that to her. I was considering telling Coach, but I can't do that either. This is up to C and me to finally handle our shit.

We're going to be gunning for them on the ice, but we also need to get to them off of it. They deserve the wrath of what's coming; it's been years in the making. We didn't protect her before, but we will now.

I need to start by protecting her heart from Max. My best friend likes his ladies a certain way, and that's fine. We all have a type. I just want to make sure if she gets ballsy and approaches him, which I really can't imagine her doing, that Max knows where we're coming from and what's expected.

**Me:**

*Where the fuck are you? We need to talk.*

**Max:**

*I'm out for the night. Be home tomorrow.*

I frown at the message. See what I mean? He can be a total fuck boy.

I grab the video game controller from Jake as he makes his way upstairs and sit down next to C. I give him the heads up that I want to sit down with Max when he gets home, and he agrees. We play some war game, blowing shit up on the screen. We pause the game when his hungry ass gets up and heads to the kitchen for his second dinner. My phone rings and it's our Mom.

*"Hey sweet boy, I wanted to catch you before I start my shift. I only have a few minutes."* My mother is the only person on this fucking planet that thinks I'm sweet. I reserve it for her and B only.

*"Hi, Ma, what's up? You, okay?"*

*“Just wanted to hear your voice, sweetheart. I spoke to your sister and Evie declined our offer for her and Sloane to have a girls’ weekend. I have to say, honey, I know you worry about her, but she actually sounded really happy. She seems to be in a good place. Maybe this weekend will be good for her.”*

If only my mother knew who was due to arrive at Havenwood, she would not be thinking this, but I refuse to share this information with our parents. They deserve to sleep at night, and it is up to Chase and me to fix this.

*“I’ll touch base with her and see what she says. Thanks for calling Ma. Love you.”*

Out of the two of us, Chase is more of a mama’s boy than I am. She and I are close, and she has always encouraged my independence as the eldest, just like she leans into Chase’s dependency on her as the baby.

Evie is the apple of our parents’ eye and is a daddy’s girl through and through. She wears all his old concert and band t-shirts.

It’s always been harder for her to make friends, another thing that is my and C’s fault. Man, we’ve been shitty brothers now that I’m really thinking about it.

I found C in the kitchen eating another plate of pasta and let him know B declined Mom’s offer. His jaw ticks when I tell him that B and Sloane will be on campus this weekend.

“How are we gonna keep them safe, A? What if they run into them on campus and something happens? We have hockey around the fucking clock. I know Coastal has a tight schedule too, but there is going to be some downtime. There could be an opportunity for them to run into B and Sloane. I don’t know if those assholes have put it together that she may be here as well.”

My brother is obviously concerned not only for our sister but for Sloane’s safety as well. I get it; I am too since they are always together.

“I know. I think we should try B again and see if we can convince her. If that doesn’t work, maybe we can offer her

to sleep here so we can have a closer eye on her? I don't want her to know those shit stains are here, either. I don't want her to ever fucking worry about them again."

We pull our phones out and send her a text through our group chat. After a few minutes, she doesn't respond. Maybe she's sleeping. C finishes his plate, and we sit there in silence, thinking and overthinking how this is going to fucking go.

My phone buzzes with a new message and I'm hoping maybe it's B. I'm surprised to see Max's name and him letting me know he's headed home. I guess he's done getting his fucking dick wet.

I'm on fucking edge and feel like I'm going to crawl out of my goddamn skin. This weekend can make or break us in so many fucking ways. It can lead to future NHL contracts and a winning season for our team. It is also going to mean us coming face to face with our sister's attackers and doing our best to make sure that they never come face to face with her again.

The front door opens and shuts a few minutes later, and Max walks into the kitchen.

"Look, guys, I need to talk to you." He looks nervous. *Why the fuck would he be nervous?*

"That's good because we actually need to talk to you, too," C tells him. We all take a seat at the kitchen table and are quiet for a minute. I guess I'll start.

"So, I'm asking that you keep this between the three of us, I don't want to embarrass my sister any more than this conversation will if it ever gets back to her and I'm expecting you to be the stand-up guy I know you are." Max's eyes narrow and he folds his arms over his chest.

"Okay, what's up, Hunter? Spit it out." I watch his jaw tighten up. Something is going on; I can fucking tell.

"Chase and I think that Evie may have a thing for you. It may run deeper than that, but we were hoping that if she gets any brave ideas, you'll let her down gently." His face



hardens, and he looks like he wants to rip my goddamn head off.

“Yeah, that’s not fucking happening. I’d never let your sister down gently because I have no plans to ever let Evie go. She and I are together, she’s my girl, and I came here to tell you both that I’m in love with her. I’m sorry for keeping it a secret from you two since you’re my best friends, but I’m not sorry it fucking happened.” My nostrils flare, my fists tighten, and my body goes rigid. *I’m going to fucking murder him.*

“What the fuck did you just say?” I question as I grind my molars together, rising from my seat with C following.

“I said that I love your sister and that Evie, and I are together. We’ve been talking most of the semester,” he says and as he stands.

“MOST OF THE FUCKING SEMESTER?!” I yell out before slamming both fists down on the table. What the actual fuck?!

“Why the fuck has it taken you this long to tell us? Why hasn’t she mentioned this to us?” C barks at him as his own fist crashes down on the table separating us.

“We wanted to take things slow, and things progressed from there. I know you’re both pissed and it’s going to take you some time to wrap your brains around this, but I suggest you do because we’re in it for the long haul.” He’s not backing down. Fuck, he’s not backing down. *Fucking hell.*

“You broke the fucking code man, she’s our sister which means she’s off-fucking-limits! She isn’t even your type. You fuck anything with legs, and she isn’t like that. You have no fucking idea what she’s been through. You’re gonna end up hurting her. You’re drawing a goddamn line in the sand between us, don’t you see that?” I snarl at him.

Max walks out from behind the table to meet me man-to-man. He and I are standing chest to chest now with fists tight at both of our sides. C stands next to me in an equal stance.

“She’s your sister, but she’s my girlfriend and I fucking love her. I’d never do anything to hurt my Dimples. I would never cheat on her and have no intention of ever straying from her. She’s it for me. As far as your fucking lines, if you can’t trust me to take care of her, to respect and honor her, then we weren’t fucking friends to begin with. You were just calling me a stand-up guy a minute ago when you wanted me to let her down gently, but when you find out I’m with her you think the fucking worst of me. She isn’t some quick fuck. I’ll say it again so you assholes can understand, I fucking love her and she’s my goddamn end game.”

Max is shouting in my face and when it sinks in that he mentioned him, B, and “quick fuck,” in the same sentence. I snap and punch him in his motherfucking face.

Monroe and Jake must hear the commotion as they come flying into the kitchen. Max stumbles back from the quick blow to his chin and rights himself.

“You get one fucking punch. I’ll take one fucking punch for keeping it from you, but that’s all you get. You come at me again or make her feel less than for being with me, and I’ll kick your fucking ass, Hunter.”

He points his finger at C, “You too, Chase.” He’s always had a soft spot for C. Me and Max are more headstrong and stubborn than my brother.

“And just so you know asshole,” he’s in my face and we’re nose to nose again. Neither of us are stepping down from this.

“Your sister is definitely my type. She is everything to me. She is my whole fucking heart.” He pounds his fist over his chest. *How the fuck did this happen?!* “She’s beautiful, smart, sweet, kind, and has come so fucking far. She’s the strongest person I know.” The last part has me taking a step back. *He knows what happened to her.* She fucking told him. They must be fucking serious. *God dammit!*

“She told you, didn’t she? You know what happened, don’t you?” C asks, forcing Max to break the stare-down he and I are locked in.

“Yeah, she told me, Chase. I’ve been so fucking pissed at both of you for weeks now. You’re also not giving her enough credit. She has come so fucking far and is healing. Have you not noticed her confidence? Have you not noticed how she is carrying herself? Don’t you dare take that away from her by trying to hide her again. I won’t fucking stand for it.” My mind starts putting things together. *Is he a part of the reason she’s doing so well? Are we not giving her enough credit?*

“What do you mean by that? Why do you think we’re trying to hide her?” C asks.

“I saw the texts you sent her tonight about having her and Red go away for the weekend. She can handle the crowds. She wants to go to the tourney this weekend. She told me she wants to see you both play again.” He doesn’t know why we really want her away from campus.

“Were you with her tonight?” If he laid a hand on my sister, I’m fucking punching him again.

“Yeah, asshole I was. She’s my fucking girlfriend and I spend time with her.” That cocky son of a bitch smiles like a man who just got fucking laid. I get ready to hit him again, but C beats me to it.

He punches Max in the face, and he stumbles back into Jake and Monroe, who keep him from falling flat on his smug ass. C’s punch definitely packed more power than mine did. I raise my chin to C. That was a hell of a swing.

“You fucking hurt her, and I swear I will end you, Max. You touch her in any way that she doesn’t want or push her too fast or too far and I will fucking kill you!” C growls and now I’m holding him back from pouncing on Max as both Monroe and Jake hold their arms out.

“That’s your one punch, dickhead. I would never ever lay a hand on her if she didn’t want me to and I would never force her to do anything.” Max is pointing in C’s face and his face is red from the hits he’s taking.

“Hey guys, let’s go in the living room, take a breath and talk, okay? Let’s figure this out,” Jake offers, breaking some of the tension. Monroe nods in agreement. Jake is sensitive, just like C. He hates it when we all argue.

“Are we good?” Max sticks his hand out to C, who is still chest-to-chest with him.

“You really love Evie?” He asks. I watch Max’s eyes soften at the sound of her name. *Fucking hell, I believe him.*

“Yeah Chase, I really fucking love your sister.” I watch C sigh and deflate his puffed-out chest.

“I believe you. I’m not happy that either of you hid this from me. I’m just asking that you don’t hurt her. If you know what happened, then you know she doesn’t deserve any more pain in her life.” C and Max shake hands and Max pulls him in for a bro hug and smacks him on the back and says, “You have my word.”

He pulls apart from C and I look at one of my best friends. I believe he loves my sister and that he won’t hurt her. He’s right, I was asking him to be a stand-up guy if was going to reject her and I should trust him to do right by her now that he is with her. Max turns to me and sticks out his hand. “We good?”

“Yeah, we’re good.” We hug and smack each other on the back. We walk into the living room and Monroe and Jake re-start our forgotten war game.

“I was going to tell you both after the tourney, but some shit with Lexi happened tonight, and I didn’t want to wait any longer.”

“What shit?” I ask. That girl is the ringleader of the jersey chasers. She blew me after a game at a party while her roommate sat on my face. She wanted to fuck, but there was no way I was sticking my dick in her. I didn’t have a condom on me and she’s the type to poke holes in a rubber before handing one over.

“Let’s just say she has her sights set on making Evie’s life hell for being with me. I had to put her ass in check

tonight.” Max looks fucking uncomfortable. *What else is going on?*

“You take care of it?” I ask him, and he nods in agreement, and I hold his stare for a beat. He’s not telling me something. I can fucking smell it. I’ll find out eventually though, I always do.

I listen to Jake and Monroe ask Max how things developed with B. The way he talks about her has his whole fucking face lighting up. It will take some getting used to, but I want B to be happy and I want my best friend to be happy too, even if that means them being fucking happy together.

C clears his throat, getting the boys’ attention, and I know what he wants to talk about. Fucking Waterstone and Ellis and what our plan’s going to be to keep B and Red safe.

If Max knows about B’s past, then he needs to know who is arriving in the morning and how big of a problem we really have. Lexi is a small potato compared to those two motherfuckers.

## Chapter Forty-One

# Max



Once words were exchanged, punches were thrown, and the news that Evie and I were together settled in, we were all fine. I'm glad it's all out there now. I claimed Evie as my girl, and I don't give a fuck who knows. It's been weighing on us and I know she has been feeling guilty about not being honest with her brothers.

Chase clears his throat and throws a look at Hunter. *They're doing it again.* Something passes between them, and Hunter lifts his chin, acknowledging whatever they've silently agreed to.

“Okay, what's going on now?” Monroe asks and Jake shuts off the tv. The three of us give the Wiltons our undivided attention.

“Yeah, no more secrets, assholes. We’re brothers, right? Family? No secrets then,” Jake adds.

“What we’re about to tell you isn’t just our secret to share. And we’re only fucking telling you because it comes down to her safety. So, this doesn’t leave this room, and you don’t act fucking weird around her, alright?” Hunter pins us each with an individual stare-down before continuing.

For the fucking second time tonight, my whole body is on alert at the mention of that simple word: *her*. I am one hundred percent certain that little word pertains to the most important person in my life.

“Some shit is about to go down when we play Coastal in the tourney and you three need to be prepared. There are two players that we have a fucked-up history with and who we need to keep away from our sister,” Chase states. I jump out of my fucking seat. *What the fuck is going on?*

“You better fucking explain to me what is happening,” I grit out and start pacing back and forth.

When Hunter explains the history he and Chase have with Christopher Ellis and Brandon Waterstone, Coastal’s right and left-wingers, I fucking lose my shit. When he explains the horrific attack that my Evie had to endure at those criminals’ hands, I flip our coffee table and start punching the back of the recliner chair I was previously sitting in. I think about punching the mother fucking wall but if I break my hand, I can’t break their fucking faces.

I don’t stop until both Chase and Hunter wrap their big ass arms around me in bear hugs. I wipe away the tears pooling in my eyes. My precious girl. *Those assholes aren’t getting anywhere near her.*

“I’ve been so fucking pissed at you both over what happened to Evie. I’m working through it.” Chase looks just as gutted as he wipes his face with his sleeve.

Jake looks angry as fuck, and I know her horrific experience has him thinking of his own sisters and the lengths he would go to protect them. Monroe looks pissed and

questions Hunter and Chase relentlessly about their actions that led to Evie getting attacked. He doesn't give them an inch and Chase's eyes are wet when he talks about his role in all of this.

Hunter looks like he is on the warpath when he recounts his actions and doesn't hesitate taking a few swings at the wall before Monroe holds him back.

Their guilt is front and center for them and even though I don't want those degenerates anywhere near my Evie, Waterstone, and Ellis coming to Havenwood gives my boys their chance to make things right. *I'm getting my shots in, too.*

"Not a day goes by that I don't think about it. If I could go back and change things, I would take B's place. It should've been us they went after, but Waterstone and Ellis are fucking pussies." Chase sighs and looks at his brother. Hunter looks fucking homicidal right now.

"How the fuck are they allowed to be fucking playing college hockey?" Monroe asks with balled-up fists. *Great fucking question.*

"Waterstone's daddy got their case to go before a juvenile court and then got their records sealed. I doubt that Coastal or the NCAA know they were in juvie or what happened," Hunter explains. I'm fucking speechless. *No. Fucking. Way.*

"Are you fucking telling me that those assholes are going to be here in the morning, at Havenwood, where Evie is? And then we'll be playing them all weekend on the fucking ice?" I can't believe what I'm hearing.

The water bottle Jake had handed me doesn't stand a chance when I chuck it across the room, exploding on impact against the back of the front door. I feel every muscle in my body seize and all my bones lock. I don't think I've ever felt so angry in my whole fucking life.

"That's exactly what I'm saying. That's why we wanted B out of town for the weekend. We didn't want to take



any fucking chances of them running into her here. We aren't sure if they have connected the dots yet.

I'm sure they know we're playing for Havenwood, but I don't know if they know B goes here as well." Chase's facial expression mirrors his brother's scowl as he gets out the words.

"That's not going to fucking happen. Those shitheads aren't going anywhere near her. I'm going to haul her ass out of bed right now and bring her here. She can stay in my room until the tourney is done. Fuck, she doesn't know, does she? She would have mentioned it to me if she did." I'm ready to lose my fucking mind and start pulling the hair from my head to relieve the pressure building between my ears.

"No, she doesn't know. We didn't want to tell her. This is our chance to get those bastards back for what they did," Hunter states while pacing back and forth in front of the TV.

I'm going to annihilate those assholes on and off the ice. *They won't fucking see me coming.* We're on the same page with kicking those fuckers' asses.

"She doesn't go anywhere alone. One of us is with her at all times. I can even have Drew hang with her. He was going to go with her and Red to the games, anyway. Fuck." I run my hand down my face and my skin is on fire as my rage boils my blood.

"You trust him? I like Drew. We're boys and I know you guys are close. Do you think you could trust him with this? We're going to need some fucking backup here. If he's friends with B, then he could help keep her safe. You should give him a heads-up," Hunter says as he eyes Chase.

"I trust Drew. He has a soft spot for Evie. He's great with her, and she trusts him." I know she does, and he would want to help keep her safe.

I need to know that she's protected, even if it means sharing her story. I trust my boys to keep their mouths shut. *Fuck, I hate this.*

“What about Red? Should I ask her to come here too? They’re always together. I want to make sure she is safe in case those dicks end up crossing paths with Evie.” I watch Chase roll his neck at the mention of Sloane. He cracks his knuckles and stares at his hands.

“Now that your relationship with Evie is out in the open, it would make sense for her to be here with you. Even though I don’t want to even think about you two getting up to anything. But Sloane? She has no reason to be here.” Chase grinds out his words like they’re leaving a nasty taste in his mouth.

“So, give her a damn reason already. I don’t know what the fuck you’re waiting for. If you don’t make your move, I guarantee someone else will. It’s not like the girl doesn’t turn fucking heads wherever she goes. This is like Amber all over again.” Hunter glares at his brother as he states the obvious.

“You’re fucking kidding, right? Why the fuck would I put a target on her back for Waterstone and Ellis? Look at the shitstorm we’ve been in since that fucking night. It’s been a goddam disaster. I can’t fucking get over it.” Chase is gripping his head in his hands and looks freaking distraught.

“All I’m saying is if you like Sloane, if you really are into her for more than getting laid, then make a move. Your sister won’t care. She would root for you to be happy, man,” I tell him. Chase is the only one standing in his own way regarding Red.

“You don’t understand. We would hook up with all of her friends when we were younger. She deserves to have a friend who isn’t using her to get to one of us,” Chase explains with a face full of regret.

“She isn’t like that. There’s never a guy in their room and she never mentions going out with anyone. I think you should shoot your shot.” If he makes a move on her and can get her here, that will keep the girls safe, and Chase would finally get his chance. He’s had it bad for her since day one.

Hunter is right, some fucker will scoop her up if he doesn’t make a move.

We're all quiet for a minute, letting all the details of this impromptu house meeting marinate. *This has been a long fucking day.*

"So, you call my sister Dimples?" Chase asks, and my fucking closest friends in the goddamn world all laugh at me. *Fuckers.*

"Yeah, I do. That smile fucking wrecked me, man. I didn't stand a goddamn chance," I tell them, shaking my head and smirking to myself, thinking about my pretty girl.

We talked for a while, coming up with ideas to keep the girls safe over the weekend. I'm not taking any chances now that I know those assholes are going to be here on campus. They are not getting anywhere near her.

It's almost three when we go to bed. After practice, I plan to go straight to Evie and take her to breakfast. I'll have her pack a bag and make sure she's in my bed safe and sound by the end of the day. *Right where she belongs.*

## Chapter Forty-Two

Evie



I wake up to a knock on my door. *What time is it?*

“Who is it?” I shout. I feel around for my glasses. My eyes are on fire after wearing my contacts all day yesterday. *Never again.*

“Evie, open up, pretty girl.” Max? He was next to me when we fell asleep. Why is he outside my door?

I open the door and he looks yummy dressed in dark jeans, his Havenwood Hockey Devils sweatshirt, and his hat backward. *Why does his hotness increase by a million when he wears his hat like that?!*

He has extra scruff on his jaw and on his upper lip this morning. I want to rub up on it with various parts of my body.

“Damn, you have to stop answering the door in your pajamas. You look all sexy and sleepy. Makes me want to get back in bed with you.” He stalks towards me, picks me up in his arms, and I’m back in my happy place with my blue-eyed man.

“Why were you outside the door instead of in here with me?” I kiss that scruff along his jaw, and it tickles my lips.

“We had an unexpected house meeting last night and then morning skate. I left you a note though, see?” He picks up

a ripped piece of paper and shows me a note before he stuffs it in his hoodie pocket. I eye him curiously.

“House meeting? What’s wrong? Something’s up with you.”

“I promise to tell you, but first, I came to take you to breakfast. I’m starving,” he says while he trails kisses down my body. His thumbs are hooked into my sleep shorts when the door flies open and Sloane walks in.

“Oh, my word! I’m so sorry!” She slams the door shut and squeals. He chuckles and places a kiss over my silk-covered center. “You and I have a date later.”

“Are you really talking to my vagina right now?” I eye him suspiciously.

“Yes, she and I have plans for tonight.” He winks at me as his chin rests on my pubic bone. He sits up and pulls me with him, swatting my butt.

“Ok Dimples, go get dressed. I’ll send Sloane in. Then we’ll all go to breakfast.” He lets Sloane slip by, and quickly shuts the door.

“I thought the coast would have been clear, honey bunny. I’m sorry I interrupted,” she says.

“He came back after early morning practice to go to breakfast. Do you want to come?” I ask her.

“Yeah, let me just get changed.” She agrees and starts to quickly get ready.

“Thank you again for the privacy yesterday and again last night. It was perfect.”

Sloane hugs me. “I’m glad it was perfect for ya. You deserve it after what you had to go through.” She squeezes me hard and I’m so thankful that this Georgia beauty queen walked into this room and into my life. She truly is the best friend I’ve been waiting for.

Max grabs my hand as we make our way out of the residence hall and onto the busy walkways of Havenwood. I look up at him and raise my eyebrows as I bring up our

connected hands. He brings my hand to his mouth and kisses my knuckles.

“I wanted to let you know that last night I told your brothers about us. Everything is just fine. Don’t worry about anything.” He stops walking and leans to give me a kiss on my lips.

“Wait, tell me what h-h-happened. I haven’t heard from them besides a few texts last n-n-night. What did they say? Were they u-u-upset? Are they m-m-mad I didn’t tell t-t-them? Oh God, m-m- maybe I should c-c-call t-t-t-them.” I ramble and stutter as my anxiety climbs. *I should have told them. Why did he tell them without me?*

“Everything’s fine, I promise. I told them I loved you, that you’re my girlfriend, and that we’re in it for the long haul.” He rubs my arms up and down and I instantly feel better. His hand travels down to my hand and he gives me a reassuring squeeze. It’s grounding and I feel myself settle with his words and touch.

“Okay, but what did they say?” I need to know exactly how A and C reacted.

“I gave them each a free punch for keeping it from them and that was it. They told me they would kill me if I hurt you and I assured them that won’t happen. All good, I promise,” he says with a kiss.

“Ok love birds, I need coffee. Let’s pick up the pace!” Sloane grabs my other arm and starts dragging me and Max down the path toward the cafeteria.

I’m wondering if my brothers are already there. I’m nervous to see A and C. I obviously knew I would have to talk to them about it, but now that it’s that time, I’m nervous. *I should’ve been the one to tell them.*

I broke the rule; our “Don’t Date Our Friends” pact. The rule can go to hell as far as I’m concerned, but I broke it all the same. We’re all adults now and I trust them to make good choices, just like I hope they trust me to do.

With my tray in hand, I scan the wide-open room and don't see either brother. We take a seat in the back of the cafeteria, and I dig into a veggie omelet and listen to Sloane talk about rehearsal last night. I tell her about Lexi and my dinner with Drew before she has to leave for her history class. Max and I finish our meal in comfortable silence before he clears his throat.

“So, I have curfew tonight, Friday, and Saturday. How do you feel about packing a bag and staying at the house with me?” He lifts my hand and kisses the inside of my wrist and I shiver at the contact of his mouth on my sensitive skin. He's being very lovey-dovey today. I like it.

“I think that sounds amazing, but won't my brothers freak out? Is it too soon for sleepovers in your house?”

“Not at all, I asked them, and they're cool with it. I told you it's all good. You don't have to worry.” I really need to clear the air with them. I don't want any issues for us for our triplet-hood or for them as friends and teammates.

“Okay, I think I'd like that,” I tell him.

“Good, me too.” He leans in and I'm expecting a brief peck. Instead, he kisses me fiercely in the middle of the cafeteria, and we're met by some whistles. I turn bright red and hide in his neck. He kisses the top of my head and laughs in my hair.

A strangled scream from a nearby table has me looking around. My eyes collide with a furious Lexi. She looks like a volcano ready to blow. I wave at her to let her know I see her in all her angry glory. I don't give a crap if she's mad. I feel loved and I feel brave in Max's arms. She's not running me off again. Max lifts my chin for another tomato-cheek-inducing kiss. I sneak a peek just in time to see her retreating as she stomps out of the cafeteria. *Bye, bitch.*



Max and I separate at the last possible moment before I have to run into class. With a few moments to spare, I send A and C a text to address Max. I love my brothers and it is important to me that everything is good between us.

**Me:**

*Hey. I know Max spoke to you guys already, but I wanted to apologize for keeping our relationship from you both. I never set out to break our rule, but I'm honestly the happiest I've ever been. Our relationship has been really great for me, and I love Max. I'm sorry for how I went about it and hope you can be happy for me, too.*

**C:**

*As long as you're happy, then I'm happy for you. No worries.*

**A:**

*I second that. Just let us know if we have to kick his ass for you.*

**A:**

*But no more keeping secrets from us.*

**Me:**

*Fair enough. No more secrets from each other.*

**Me:**

*Good luck this weekend in your tournament. I was thinking about coming to see you guys play.... what do you think?*

**A:**

*Which games? Just make sure to bring Sloane along. Campus is already filling up with people and I would feel better if you were with someone.*

**Me:**



*Sloane and I have already spoken about it and Drew wants to come along too. You know C, since I'm now dating your best friend, mine is fair game.*



**A:**

*I'll send you a screenshot of the schedule. Just let me know, ok? Don't forget, Evie.*

I frown at the screen when I see him using my first name. He must be serious, and I'm not sure why.

**C:**

*Looking forward to seeing you in the stands again. Go with Sloane and make sure you stay close to her and Drew.*

**Me:**



*I will. I'm glad everything is okay between us.*

**A:**

*Always B. We got you.*

**C:**

*Love you, B.*

I'm kind of surprised they let me off the hook so easily. We text for a few more minutes and they let me know that they are slammed with practice, weight room training, team meetings, as well as a tournament kick off dinner.

I've heard the buzz that NHL scouts will be in the arena for a chance to see potential talent play their hearts out during the various games. The NHL is all A and C have talked about since they were in peewees. I know Max shares their dream and I hope this weekend goes well for all of them.

After having two back-to-back classes, I head to the library to get some work done and see A's tutor curled up in an

oversized stuffed chair. She's sleeping and is clutching her bag to her chest with her jacket draped over her legs like a blanket.

I get to work on some assignments that are due next week. A couple of hours pass and every so often I look up, and Tutor Girl is still sleeping soundly. She eventually stirs and instantly hugs her bag and looks relieved when she feels it in place on her lap.

She catches me staring and I immediately look down at my laptop's keyboard. I look up again and her round, dark eyes stare back at me and she full on scowls. She's intimidating as hell, and I look away.

She moves over to my table and sits down. I can feel her still looking at me.

"Do I know you? You look very familiar," she asks me.

"I uh, um, I-I-I." I take a deep breath and she waits for me to gather myself. She's making me nervous. *Get it together, Evie.*

"No, you d-don't know m-m-me. I think you're my b-b-brother's t-t-tutor though." Shit, I've been doing so much better with my stuttering. I sigh, feeling a little defeated right now. Her eyes narrow in on me.

"Who's your brother? I tutor four dickheads this semester." Whoa, that's a lot of work, plus her own course load. *No wonder she's taking a nap in the library.*

"Hunter Wilton." She inhales sharply and her eyes roam my face.

"Well, that's why you look familiar to me. You look just like that *pendejo*." She points at me and seems to want further explanation.

"We're a part of a triplet," I tell her and feel myself relax.

"There are more of you?!" she asks. This makes me smile and laugh.

"Yeah, we have a brother named Chase. He goes here too. He plays hockey with Hunter." She makes a funny face

and seems to relax as well.

“Shit, you seem nice, but your brother is the bane of my damn existence. This pay period alone cost me eight hours of my tutoring paycheck. He doesn’t give a shit how much that fucks with me. He’s a real fucking asshole.” She rolls her eyes. She’s right, my brother can be an asshole when he wants to be.

“Yes, sometimes he can be. If you tell me when your sessions are, I can remind him. I can be an annoying little sister when it suits me.” I smile and she does, too. She’s rough around the edges, but I see a sweet side to her as well. *I like her already.*

“Yup, you both have the same smile, not that he shows it often or that I even notice. Forget it. Anyway, we’re supposed to meet four times a week, one hour each session for math and his math lab.” I frown at this. A has always been a decent student. I know we all struggle with math, but he has an opportunity to not only pass but to do well with his tutor’s help, and he’s not taking advantage of this opportunity.

“Yeah, he makes that same face, too. That’s mostly how he freaking looks at me.” I tear out a piece of notebook paper and write my number down for her.

“If he gives you a hard time, text, or call. I have to run but it was nice to meet you...” I wait for her to fill in her name. I remember it from when A mentioned it, but I want to be properly introduced to her.

“Edison, but people I like can call me Edi.” She smirks and smiles at me. *She’s really pretty when she smiles.*

“What can I call you?”

“Edi,” she says and sticks out her hand for me to shake.

“Nice to meet you Edi, I’m Evie.” We shake hands firmly, gaining respect from each other.

“Your brother only gets to call me Edison.” She points out with both her words and her finger. Her pointer finger turns into a full hand wave, and I wave back.

“Good to know.” I smile at her and wave, walking out of the library. My phone buzzes in my pocket and I feel the hairs on my neck rise when I read the message.

**Unknown:**

*Told you shit would go down if you didn't listen. Consider yourself warned.*

I scan the immediate area and don't notice anyone looking at me. Is someone pranking me? Is Lexi messing with me?

I take C's hat out of my bag and throw it on, duck my head down, and pick up the pace as I walk back toward my residence hall. My anxiety is picking up its pace too and my breathing escalates. I get the same hair-raising feeling from this message that I got last time. *Something doesn't feel right.*

Once inside my dorm room, I lay down on my bed and feel safe under my comforter. I try to calm myself and smell Max on my pillowcase as I burrow in. *I wish he was here.*

My overactive imagination conjures up scenes in my head that these dumb messages provoke. Lexi is the only person I'm having issues with. *She's just trying to scare me.*

I throw my earbuds in, log into my mindfulness app, and take a few breaths to steady myself.

Besides, bitchy Lexi, I don't have any issues with anyone here. I've only kept up with my two friends from high school, so I can't imagine anyone from our hometown would mess with me.

Maybe it's really a wrong number. I decided I need a distraction and open HBO Max on my laptop. I convince myself that these text messages are nothing to be concerned about and instead, get lost in *The Vampire Diaries* and the gorgeous Damon Salvatore.

## Chapter Forty-Three

# Max



We're sitting at our team table in a large banquet hall for a dinner to kick off the tourney and welcome the other teams, school administrators, supporters, and alumni to Havenwood. When the Athletic Director announces the names of each player for each team, I watch as each man stands when Coastal is called.

I'm sitting here fantasizing about throwing my steak knife into the chest of Brandon Waterstone and then stabbing my fork into Christopher Ellis's eyeballs. *What a beautiful bloodbath that would be.*

I feel murderous as I stare at these two fuckers. I watch them rise from their seats and notice how tall and broad they are, thinking of a much smaller and defenseless Evie being tortured at their hands.

I glance at my table and see my boys are equally angry. Hunter's nostrils are flaring, and his eyes are tight as he clenches his fists on top of the table. Chase's mouth is pulled into a tight line as his jaw ticks. Jake's scowl is full of rage and Monroe cracks his neck while staring them down. I grip the handle of my steak knife and dig the point into the tablecloth and slice through the material, imagining cutting through those dickhead's throats. Our team is announced last since we are hosting, and I watch as the moment of reckoning unfolds.

With the announcement of Hunter and Chase Wilton, I see Waterstone and Ellis's expressions change to demonic smiles as they turn their bodies toward my best friends. The four of them make eye contact and they're locked in a tenuous stare. I add my own seething leer.

Any other person in the room right now would assume that the exchange is rooted in athletic competition and the quest for the tournament trophy. *Fuck the trophy.* Now that I've seen their ugly faces, I want their blood. That's the only prize I care about.

Now that I've seen these pieces of shit, I can't stop replaying what they did in my head. How they hurt my sweet girl.

I'm supposed to pick Evie up at her dorm room after dinner and bring her back to the house. The last time I checked in, she was tucked safely inside streaming a show and working on some homework. I can't wait to get to her. My need to keep her safe is overwhelming.

We somehow stay seated throughout the presentation, speeches, and dinner without lunging toward the Coastal table. The five of us don't take our eyes off Waterstone and Ellis as they laugh, fist bump, and talk with their teammates and coaches.

They don't look like they give a fuck or are remorseful at all for what they did. To think that my Evie has hidden away, has had debilitating anxiety and panic attacks, stutters her words out, has been fearful of athletic men, and has shied away from touch because of these pussies who are eating their

steaks without a care in the fucking world makes me see red. I can't fucking take it.

“Harmon, save it for tomorrow. Keep that shit locked up for the ice,” Coach says after I slam my fists on the table and grunt out my frustration. *If he only fucking knew.*

Each team is keeping to themselves and staying focused on the games ahead. Tomorrow, we start bright and early and play Coventry. Should be an easy win. It is a single-game elimination and we've beaten Coventry already this season. There are no classes tomorrow and campus has a boatload of student events to keep the school spirit flying high. At least with Evie and Red coming to the game tomorrow, I can at least keep an eye on her in the stands.

I text Drew confirming that he is going to take them and give him the details. I had him come over earlier and sat him down while I explained to him what Evie had gone through, that her attackers were here for the tourney, and that I needed him to step up and help me keep her safe. He was just as upset as the rest of my boys and told me he considers Evie to be a little sister and would throw down for her if it came down to it. I appreciate him looking out for both girls.

I know Chase does too, stubborn fucker that he is. Speaking of little sisters, I've been distracted and forgot that mine is coming tomorrow night. Penny is due to arrive around 8:00 PM. She will be sitting with Evie and Red, so I guess Drew will have his hands full with the three of them.

I'm asking a lot of him, but we're boys and he has my back like I have his. I owe him one and appreciate him keeping Evie's story a secret. I feel awful that we've shared her story with three other people, but it's for her safety.

I know it would mortify her to know that Monroe, Jake, and now Drew know what happened to her, but they see her as the strong survivor that she is. I keep justifying telling her story by telling myself I did it to help protect her and keep her safe. I just hope she will see it like that if she gets wind that they know.

My knee is bouncing under the table in anticipation of getting the fuck out of here. I pull my tie knot away from my neck and loosen it. When Coach gives us the high sign, I'm out of my chair and sprinting towards the door to go get my girl. I hear shouts from behind me, but don't slow my pace for Hunter and Chase. They can hustle. *Hurry the fuck up.*

"Yo, you going to get Evie?" Hunter asks when catching up with me.

"Yeah man, I'm headed there now. I gotta get her settled before we're on lockdown for curfew." I pick up speed towards her building with her brothers right behind me. I can't get there fast enough.

An RA greets us in the lobby of her residence hall and the three of us make our way up to her room. When the elevator doors open, we hear shouting, screeching, and squealing. *What the fuck is happening now?*

A loud southern drawl booms over the other voices and Chase's whole body reacts to the sound of Red's voice. He breaks out into a jog as he follows her voice around the corner into the common area. He stops short and I nearly run into him.

I steady myself and see Lexi towering over Red. She's a tiny little thing, but that doesn't stop her from wagging her finger in Lexi's face. She's not backing down from whatever this is about. Of course, Lexi is starting more drama. *This girl is the fucking worst.*

Evie is at her friend's side and is squaring off with Elena, who stands next to Lexi. I can't make out what they are saying amongst all the high-pitched noises these girls are making.

Now usually a girl fight would get a guy hard as a rock. We've all had teenage fantasies about hair pulling, girly grunting, boob grabbing, and eventually them falling on top of one another in a tangled hot mess that eventually leads to making out and touching. That's not what this is, though.



When Lexi eyes Hunter, Chase, and me, she shifts her focus from Red to Evie. She has a maniacal look on her face, and I already know what's coming when her fingers fly across her phone screen. The recording. *She's about to blow shit up.*

I can't believe I found this girl attractive and slept with her after seeing Evie for the first time. *I'm such a fucking tool.*

Hunter also hooked up with her and her roommate. This is all kinds of fucked up.

"Now it's really a party. I was waiting for the perfect opportunity for Hunter and Chase to hear this and look, here you both are," she says and starts to laugh like a damn lunatic.

I stand on the other side of Evie and pull her to me while Chase grabs Red, pulling her to his side. Hunter stands in between the girls and stares down at Lexi.

"What the fuck is going on here?" Hunter yells out.

"This..." I make a grab for her phone, but she yanks it away as Evie's moans fill the air. I have to hold her up when her knees buckle in response to our lovemaking being blasted in front of her brothers and best friend. I hear my own grunts and wince in response to having our private moment broadcasted like this.

If I could rip her apart, I fucking would for putting us through this, but I would never lay a finger on a female; no matter how rage-y I feel.

"You, good for nothing, piece of trash, give that here!" Red yells and lunges for Lexi knocking her phone out of her grasp as they tumble to the carpeted floor.

Now Lexi is the one grunting and groaning as Red pulls her blonde hair and is attempting to restrict her hands at her side while straddling her chest.

My Evie is a fucking badass as she dives for the phone. She wastes no time and starts stomping the shit out of it while she fends off Elena.

I try to grab Evie around the waist to get her out of the mix, but she's like a goddamn ninja and slips away from me.

*Slippery little thing.*

“I have to say, your sister is quite the little slut, having Max here in her bed, having dinner with Drew. Being a whore must run in the family, doesn’t it, Hunter!” Lexi spits out while her eyes dart between two of the three Wiltons.

“Leave my b-b-brother a-a-alone!” Evie shouts just as I throw her up on my shoulder. *Gotcha!* I’ve got her in a fireman’s hold and she’s yelling at Lexi to never call her brother a whore again, which, under different circumstances, would be hilarious. *Because he’s a total fucking man whore.*

Lexi gets the best of Red and out of her hold, sending her falling back on her ass. Chase helps her up and stands protectively in front of her as Lexi gets herself up on two feet.

“What the fuck is this shit, Lexi? Why do you have that shit on your phone?” Hunter yells out. I swear even the couch cowers as his damn voice carries throughout the common room.

“Because your slutty sister stole my man, that’s why!” She smiles when she says the word slut and Red, who I’m going to start calling hellraiser, snaps forward just as I start to fucking put Lexi in her place.

“Lexi, I’m not your man, I’m not your anything, we had one—,” That’s as far as I get as a blur of red hair bolts out from behind Chase. *Come on! Not again!*

She jumps on Lexi like a damn spider monkey and takes her down for the second time. They wrestle on the floor, and I have to hold Evie tight as she tries to wiggle out of my arms to get to Red.

Chase grabs our resident streetfighter around the middle and finally pulls her back with her tiny fists of fury, still punching the air. Lexi stands with Elena’s help and a sardonic laugh. She looks over at Red and says,

“I hope you choke on stage, you thief. That part was mine! Oh, and Sloane, tell Davis hi for me.” Red tries to make a break for it and is carrying on, yelling at Lexi. *This shit is fucking bananas.*

Chase turns her away, keeping her in his own fireman's hold, and walks towards the girl's room. I follow with Evie in my arms, when Lexi gets her last dig in, hot on our trail,

“Oh, and Evie, when Max gets bored and tires of you, which he will, I'll take good care of him... again. He likes this swirly thing I do with my tongue on the head of his dick... it made him come instantly. I'll be waiting, handsome.” I feel my girl flinch in my arms and that one movement guts me.

“Fuck off Lexi!” I yell back at that fucking trouble-making bitch. *Man, I hate her.*

Evie starts smacking my ass to get me to put her down and when I do, she jumps out of my arms, and looks me straight in the eye when she asks,

“Did you s-s-sleep w-w-with h-h-her? Is t-t-that why she h-h-hates me? I-I-I t-t-thought y-y-you weren't w-with anyone e-else.” Fuck. The upset look on her beautiful face, the sadness in her pretty eyes, and the stutter in her voice are because of me. *I did this to her.*

Before I met her, I couldn't keep my dick in my pants, and that shit is now biting me in the ass. I'm such a goddamn asshole.

“Yeah, baby, I did. Not when we were together or even when we were getting to know each other. It was the night of the block party back in August, it was right after you and Red left. If I could go back, I would've never fucking touched her or anyone else. If I could go back, I would've introduced myself to you and walked you back with your brothers instead of doing what I did. I'm so fucking sorry. She meant and means nothing to me. There has been no one else since that day in the bookstore when we were introduced and there never will be again. Just you. You're all I want. I fucking love you, Evie.”

She holds my stare and that plump bottom lip quivers. She takes off her glasses to wipe her eyes. *I'm so sorry, baby. I was so fucking stupid.*

I know I need to do more groveling when we get back to the house. But we've got to get there first. She walks towards her room and shakes off my hand when I try to grab hers. *I deserve that, and I fucking hate it.*

Upon entering their room, the girls hug and make sure the other is okay. I make eye contact over their heads with Chase. He looks flustered as fuck. I guess hearing your best friend having sex with your sister would do that.

“Evie, are you ready? We really have to go. Red, you coming?” I ask after checking my phone for the time. I'm not leaving her here with out-to-lunch Lexi across the hall. Chase needs to man up and claim his girl and he needs this nudge. *He can add it to the list of shit he's pissed at me about.*

“My word, I don't know what came over me, but when she played that recording, invaded your privacy, and called you that despicable name, I just saw red. No one calls my best friend a slut or a whore!” Red says. Her accent is the thickest I've ever heard it and it must be because she's so upset.

“I can't believe she wanted to fight you over the role in the showcase,” Evie asks, sounding exasperated.

“Oh sugar, if she thinks by putting her hands on me, she is going to put me out of commission and steal my part, then she has another thing coming. And I swear on sweet Jesus she is not getting her hands on Davis.” With the mention of Davis, whoever the fuck he is, Chase stands ramrod straight and scowls. He better get his shit sorted if he wants this girl. Sounds like this Davis guy is already in.

“He wouldn't do that to you, would he? Tell him what's going on. I'm sure he'd have your back. You are twins, after all.” In support of my boy, I even breathed out the breath I was holding, thinking that Sloane was seeing someone.

“You're a twin?” Chase asks her curiously.

“Yeah, my twin brother plays football at Southern and is coming here next semester before playing ball in the fall. I'm sure you've heard about their scandal. Poor Davis is just up in arms about it.”

Southern is going through an entire overhaul of their athletics programs. Their D1 football team is under investigation for illegal and unethical recruitment that has led to them having to give up their season and the firing of their coach. It's been all over ESPN. That sucks for her brother.

“Ok Red, now that we're all caught up, get your bag, and let's go. We have curfew to make.” I reach for Evie's coat, and she lets me help her with it. Thank fuck she is still coming, and I didn't completely ruin things because of my past mistakes. That's exactly what that Lexi was to me, a big fucking mistake.

“I appreciate the offer, but I'll be fine here.” Nope, not happening. I shake my head at her. I turn towards Chase and give him another look, telling him to man the fuck up.

“Chase, I'll leave you to it. You've got five minutes, brother.” Hunter shoots Chase a similar look, silently telling him to get it done, and I lift my chin to him in support. Their sister beats them to it though as she grabs Red's hands. Hunter decides this is the perfect time to murder me with his eyes. *Fuck. He's still mad about hearing us have sex. Got it.*

“I would feel better if you came. I won't sleep at all knowing that they are right across the hall. She threatened to hurt you, Sloane, saying she would make sure you were speechless. Those are actual threats. Please?” She pleads with Red. Red turns towards Chase, and I swear when their eyes connect, the sexual tension between them makes the room feel like it is a thousand degrees.

“If you're sure I won't be putting you out, sugar, then I would welcome your hospitality.” He just stares at her with big red beating hearts in his eyes. Neither of them moves. Fuck, neither do we.

Hunter has run out of patience though and interrupts their moment, the cold-hearted fucker that he is. One day, this dickhead is going to fall so damn hard for a girl that he is going to have a concussion.

“Yup, we don't mind. Now hurry it up, Red,” Hunter says, stealing my nickname for her. Fifteen minutes later, the

five of us are walking through the hockey house door one minute shy of our 9:00 PM curfew.

Time for me to beg my girl for forgiveness and let her brothers get their hits in.

## Chapter Forty-Four

# Chase



She's sleeping in my bed wearing dark green silk lace-trimmed pajamas with her hair in some sort of bun on top of her head. She looked stunning as she opened the door to my bedroom when I knocked to check on her. I almost swallowed my fucking tongue seeing her in all her beautiful glory.

I brought her a water bottle and when I handed it over to her, our fingers grazed and that same electric current I felt when I had her in my arms was so strong, I gripped the door frame to steady myself. It ran through me from our point of contact, warming my chest and raising my dick.

I drink her in from the red hair on her head to the deep red nail polish on her toes. She is five feet six inches of snow-white skin, and whiskey-colored eyes framed by thick auburn eyelashes. She has plump lips that are a pretty pink shade, and her nose is slender and curls up slightly at the end. *I want to kiss it.*

A delicate neck leads to feminine shoulders, and medium-sized perky breasts with amble nipples I can see through their silk coverings. She has a lean stomach with a slight curve leading down to rounded hips, long legs that look soft, and an ass that is round and tight.

She's my dream girl fantasy come to life, and she is standing in my bedroom smelling like sunshine, smiling at me after handing her a water bottle that she politely thanks me for in that accent that calls to me like the siren she is. *Fuck. Me.*

"How thoughtful of you, sugar. Thank you kindly. I have to say, I think coming here was a smart choice. Give us ladies a chance to calm down after all that commotion earlier. Although I felt awful that I have put you out on the couch for the night." She smiles and her teeth bite into that bottom lip of hers that I'm now transfixed on.

"N-n-no trouble," is all I'm able to get out. My voice sounds weird as hell. This girl steals my words and my breath whenever she's near me. Sloane talks with her hands and when her slender fingers move to express herself, it's like they are little magic wands casting spells on me. I'm literally cemented into the floor. *Witchy woman.*

After an awkward moment, where she clearly notices I'm staring at her, *because that's also what happens when she's near me*, she takes a step back into the threshold of my room and palms the door to close it before telling me goodnight.

"Well then, if there is nothing else, I'm going to bed. A girl needs her beauty sleep, after all." This is absolutely true because every day that I see her, I can't help but think she is more beautiful than she was the day before.

"Night," I tell her and continue to stand in front of my closed bedroom door, imagining her sliding into my bed, her fire hair splayed out on my pillow and her dynamite body under my blankets.

I huff out a breath and lift my head towards the ceiling and squeeze my eyes as tight as they can go, attempting to burn the images into my brain for safekeeping. *God, she's gorgeous.*



I adjust the raging hard-on in my pants. Continuing to stand there like the creeper I clearly am, Monroe walks out of his bedroom towards the bathroom and sees me battling myself in front of the barrier between me and my red-headed wet dream.

“What are you doing, bro?” He questions me. Good, someone needs to question my goddamn sanity.

“Nothing man, I’m taking the couch for the night,” I tell him. This gets me moving, and I head toward the staircase.

“What a sec, hold up.” He walks behind me and follows me to the couch downstairs in the living room.

“Why are you sleeping on the couch?” Jake said that Monroe was finishing up some homework in his room when we slipped in before Coach called to confirm we were all abiding by curfew. Coach took Jake’s word that Monroe was doing work up in his room with the door closed, so he didn’t come down to join us on the call or he would have seen the girls as well.

Not only does Monroe have the highest GPA on the team, but in the whole athletics program. He’s won student-athlete of the year two years in a row and I’m sure will clinch it this year as well.

“Sloane’s in my bed.” Saying those words out loud along with the mental images I now have of her has my body humming.

Monroe’s eyebrows hit his hairline. “And why the ever-loving fuck are you out here when the girl you’ve had a thing for since day one is in your bed. Alone.” I sigh. My hard dick sighs. My whole-body fucking sighs.

“We’ve been through this, man. She’s my sister’s roommate and friend. She’s literally one of three friends that she’s ever had who isn’t trying to get to me or Hunter. I’ve already taken away so much from her. I want her to be happy and not ruin anything more than I already have. I refuse to be selfish when it comes to Evie.” Monroe frowns and rolls his eyes at me.

“Look, your guilt is understandable, but I think it’s also clouding your vision. Your sister loves you and would want you to be happy. I don’t know her very well, but from what I see, I doubt she would stand in your way if you wanted to pursue her friend. Not for nothing, but she’s dating one of yours.”

I let his words marinate, and he isn’t wrong. I’m just not there yet. It’s not just about my sister’s approval or permission or whatever. *I don’t deserve Sloane.*

She deserves someone who is a better man than I’ve proven to be. She deserves someone who won’t inadvertently put her in danger as I did with B. Monroe slaps me on the back and gives me a shoulder squeeze, leaving me on the couch. I lay back and stare at the ceiling, bombarded with thoughts of fire hair, whiskey eyes, and dark green silk.

## Chapter Forty-Five

# Max



After we speak to Coach and he confirms we made it into the house by curfew, I go upstairs to find a very aggravated Evie getting ready to take a shower.

“I need to wash this day away and then you are going to tell me exactly what happened between you and her,” she sternly tells me and slams my bathroom door in my face. *I deserve that, too.*

I need reinforcements to sweeten up my apology and head downstairs in search of my backpack. I bought her M&M’s the other day and stashed them in there. I had planned to give them to her during our next class, but since I’m a goddamn idiot and activated Operation Grovel and Beg, chocolate is necessary.

Chase is laying on the couch staring at the ceiling. He hasn't noticed me standing at the bottom of the staircase. I'm hesitating to venture any further into the living room. I know I need to talk to him and Hunter about that damn recording. *That's going to be a weird-ass conversation.*

"Why are you just standing there? Don't make this shit more awkward than it already fucking is, Max. I can't fucking take much more tonight," he says. *Guess I wasn't blending into the banister as much as I thought I was.*

"I wanted to make sure we're cool after, you know, that shit with Lexi." I make my way over to the recliner and take a seat.

"What shit with Lexi?" Monroe asks, and Jake hands Chase a plated sandwich. We've all learned to just make double peanut butter and jelly otherwise he whines until you either get up to make him one, or you split your own.

"Lexi played a recording of Max and my sister doing shit that can never be unheard," he says before taking a big ass bite of his snack. Jake visibly winces as they both take a seat on the couch next to Chase.

"What I wouldn't give to hear one of your sisters making sexy ass noises," Monroe says to goad Jake. Jake punches him in the arm and Chase gets him in the other.

A door slams upstairs and I already know what's coming. Hunter comes down the stairs with loud and heavy stomps. *Here we go. Ding round one.*

"I'm going to kick your fucking ass, Max. Within twenty-four fucking hours, I've learned you're dating my sister and now have had to fucking hear you doing... fuck, I can't even say it," he howls in my face. He lands a softer-than-expected punch to my gut. I tighten up at the last second, so he doesn't knock the wind out of me. *Fucker, that's your one hit.*

"You think I wanted that shit to happen? Evie has been so fucking embarrassed by that fucking recording. Lexi is out of her damn tree. She's holding it over her head to get to me,"

I tell them. I start from the beginning and give them the whole run down so they're up to speed.

"I could give a shit about me. This is about Evie. I don't want her to feel any shame, especially since she's feeling so good about herself and where she is right now." *My fierce girl.*

"This shit is so fucked up. Coach warned us about girls like her. She's fucking fixated on you, man. And now she's going after B? And Sloane?" Chase shakes his head and squeezes his eyes shut before leaning back against the couch.

"I don't know what to do. I'm not ending things with Evie. That's what she wants." I hang my head in my hands. The stress of the last few days finally caught up to me.

"That's not an option. I just got you. She doesn't g-g-get to take y-y-you away from me." I snap my head up and see her walking down the staircase. I'm up and out of my seat and rushing toward her. I meet her at the last step and wrap my arms around her, hugging her close. She smells like me after showering and I love it. I love her. *So fucking much.*

"Never, Dimples. She never had me and she never will," I tell her and kiss her head. *Please believe me.*

"I'm so fucking sorry. I wish I had a damn time machine." I'd give my left nut to go back in time to the block party. I'd get my ass up out of that lawn chair and walk over to the pretty, curvy, doe-eyed brunette in the sundress and sneakers with the million-dollar smile.

"I know you have a past. I just hate that she's a part of our present," she says with tear-filled eyes. *Fuck if that's not the damn truth.*

"Me too, baby, me too." I nuzzle her nose before kissing the tip, trying to reassure her.

Hunter, aka Mr. Mood-Killer, clears his throat and gets her attention. I almost forgot we were making up in front of a living room full of hockey players.

"You ok, B?" He asks her.

“She’s a bitch, B. What she did tonight was beyond fucked up,” Chase says, and she gives them each a smile.

“Go hug your brothers, you’ll feel better,” I softly tell her, and swat her fine ass as she walks towards them. They immediately and in perfect unison, stand up and the three of them hug. She needed that; Lexi humiliated her in front of them earlier. *Fucking bitch.*

“So, anyone going to tell me why Sloane is sleeping in Chase’s bed right now?” Jake asks and I let the boys fill him in on Red aka hellraiser aka Mike Tyson Jr.

I pick up my backpack and retrieve the M&M’s I originally came down here for. Operation Grovel and Beg is now Operation Kiss and Make-up. I grab Evie’s hand and lead her upstairs. I plan on feeding her chocolates in bed and eating them off her beautiful body for the rest of the night. And that’s exactly what I do.

## Chapter Forty-Six

Evie



My alarm is blaring, and I snooze three times before finally waking up. I feel like I just went to bed. Well, that's not true. I've been in bed; I just wasn't sleeping. Instead, I was having wild-monkey-makeup sex, and honestly, I don't care who heard us. We needed that. *I needed that.*

I turn over and notice a travel coffee cup on the nightstand with a blueberry muffin and a banana.

There is a folded piece of spiral notebook paper with my name on it. I love that he writes me little notes. I quickly grab it and read it.

Morning Dimples,  
Waking up next to you is the best way to start my day. I ran out to get you and Red coffee and breakfast. I left hers in the kitchen. Me and the boys have a team meeting and then our first game at 10. Drew will be by the house around 9:15 to pick you up. I left my hoodie on my desk chair for you and can't wait to see you in the stands today wearing my name. You're my forever pretty girl, so get used to wearing Harmon over those sexy shoulders. I plugged your phone in and left it charging. Remember to grab it, ok?  
Love you,  
Max  
P.S. - Every goal I score equals an orgasm that I'm giving you later.

I read the note repeatedly and hold it to my chest. I feel the flapping wings in my stomach take flight as I take in his words.

I'm excited to see him play today and to see my brothers' out there doing what they love. I'll be cheering for Monroe and Jake too, who have been friendly and nice, welcoming, and warm to me as well.

I throw on dark wash jeans, layering up a tank top, a long-sleeve shirt, and Max's hoodie. I enjoy wearing it and a warm



feeling passes through me at the thought of being his forever. *Evie Harmon has a nice ring to it.*

I slip my love note into my jean pocket before I knock on C's door. When it opens, my roomie is already dressed. She's wearing a bright smile and hands me a folded piece of spiral notebook paper, identical to the one I was just holding.

"He's a good one, Evie," she tells me as I scan his words. My heart swells at his kindness. He didn't have to go out of his way to do this, but he did because he knows how important Sloane is to me.

Hey Red,

I hope you got some rest after your boxing match last night.

You have a coffee and breakfast in the kitchen waiting for you. I also grabbed some for Drew.

Can you make sure he gets it when he comes to pick you and Evie up at 9:15? Our game starts at 10.

Thanks for coming and cheering us on. I know a certain someone will be happy to see you in the stands. You're a good friend to my Dimples and becoming a good one to me too, Red.

Max

“You’ve caught yourself a real nice guy. I’m over the moon for y’all! Now let’s hop to it and go see what these boys can do.” Sloane links her arm with mine and we head downstairs. She grabs her breakfast and then clears her throat, grabbing my attention.

“Honey bunny, who do you think Max was referring to in his note? Who will be happy to see me today in the stands?” She looks a little bashful, almost as if she doesn’t want to draw any conclusions. *These two need a push.*

It makes me think she is oblivious to the extent that her southern belle charms have on C. I keep thinking he needs a push and maybe playing cupid is exactly the nudge he needs.

“I’m pretty sure Chase has had a thing for you since the beginning of the semester.” Her eyes go wide as saucers, and she fans herself with her hand as if a heat wave has infiltrated the hockey house.

“My word, that man does not have a thing for me. It is cruel to get a girl’s hopes up. He barely says more than two words to me and goes stiff as a board whenever I’m around.” Her hands are animating her words and flying around just as fast.

Now, this is true. C is usually tongue-tied around her, and he does usually look stuck in place, as if being in such proximity to her has rendered him immobile.

I catch her comment about not getting her hopes up, which makes me think that C would have a chance if he just would take it already.

“I think you just make him nervous, that’s all.” I smile at her and watch as she thinks about what I said.

“He is one fine-looking man, but he is your brother. I wouldn’t do that to you, even if I was interested.” If these two have a chance at being together, I want to ensure that nothing stands in their way.

“If you like him and if he likes you, then you guys should go for it.” I can’t be any clearer with either of them at this point. They have to figure it out now.

When the doorbell rings, I’m just finished packing my bag. I answer it and Drew gives me a big bear hug and a warm greeting.

“Morning Little Wilton, you ready to watch these guys kick some ass?” Drew hugged me, and I didn’t have a meltdown. I didn’t freak out over the closeness.

I give myself a second and it hits me; I’m feeling totally comfortable and trusting with him. Today is going to be fine, and I send a hopeful thought out into the universe that it stays that way. I

really want to do this. It's another part of me I want to have back. *I can do this.*

“Yes! I'm so ready to see them all play today. Come in. Max bought you breakfast.” He follows me in and greets Sloane, who is doctoring up her coffee. We grab our things and were off. *Positive thoughts and good vibes today, Evie.*

I meant what I said about being ready to go see the boys play, but a feeling of anxiety settles in when we take our seats in the arena. I take a few cleansing breaths to push it out of my system before it can root in my head. *Breathe in and out. You got this!*

This is a big deal for me, and with my friends' support, I know I'll be okay and revel in knowing what a delightful feeling that is. *I'm here and I'm doing this. Another goal checked off my list.*

## Chapter Forty-Seven

# Max



Waking up to a naked Evie is something me and my morning wood definitely want until the end of time. I nestled her juicy ass in between my hips, and she felt so warm around my hard dick that was pressed against her plump cheeks. If I had more time, I would be sliding right back inside of her.

The only reason to leave my Evie bed bubble was to grab the girls some breakfast in an effort to keep them away from the cafeteria and avoid any unsuspected run-ins with fuckhead one and fuckhead two.

After our morning team meeting, I shot Drew a text to make sure everything was a go, and he told me he was on his way to go get the girls. This momentarily settled my nerves.

We stepped out on the ice to warm up and I kept looking at the spot where she, Red, and Drew would be sitting.

I can't wait to see her here. I got them tickets for every game of the tournament that we have the potential to play in. I take some shots at our goalie to loosen him up and stretch out next to the boys.

We're going over some plays, and out of the corner of my eye, I see Chase lift his head and I follow his line of vision. I see a brown ponytail, a red ponytail, and a literal giant leading them down the stairs. *She's here.*

My heart bursts in my chest with pride seeing her here in the Devil's hockey arena. It's a tremendous step for her. My brave girl.

Seeing her wearing my name and number on her back as she swims in my hockey hoodie makes me feel all gooey inside.

"Hey Chase, now you can give Red your hoodie since Evie's wearing mine," I tease him, and he frowns.

Hunter is scanning the crowd and taking in the different faces. Coastal has weight room training right now, followed by their own team meeting, so I know they won't be here, which makes me wonder who he's looking for.

I find Lexi and Elena in the stands. They are sitting close enough that I see #16 on Lexi's fake tanned cheek and #3 on Elena. *Goddammit.* At least they aren't anywhere near my girl and Red. *Drew would really have his hands full then.*

I skate towards their seats and get her attention. I smack my hand to my heart, letting her know I'm playing for her and lift my stick so she can see the "Dimples 4Ever," that I had sharpied on. She blows me a kiss and I'm already thinking of all the places I want those kisses when we're back in our bed bubble later.

"Man, cut that shit out. She's still my fucking sister," Hunter says while smacking me in the stomach. *Your pretty sister, who I plan on doing dirty things to later.*

He waves at her and holds up four gloved fingers. Chase comes up on the other side and does the same. They had

told us in the locker room that they had always been numbers three and five, holding number four for her.

I know she appreciates their acknowledgment of her efforts to be here. It's a big fucking deal for her to return to the stands to watch them play. This is a big moment for all three of them.

Red's eyes are locked on Chase, and she waves at him timidly. He just stares at her like a goddamn idiot. She breaks their connection, looking at her hand as if it did something wrong by saying hello to him since he didn't wave back. *Dumbass.*

"Dude, you're a fucking moron," I tell him, lifting my chin to a sad-looking Red.

"Yeah, I know," he responds, shaking his head as he skates off towards Coach's whistle, never lifting his hand to say hello to her.

We skate towards the bench and listen to last minute play changes before breaking apart to go lineup for the national anthem. Then, it's go time.



We won and snuffed out Coventry 4-1. I scored in the second and got an assist from Hunter in the third.

I played hard and left it all out on the ice. I have to assume that there are going to be scouts at every game all weekend and want to do everything I can to secure my future in the NHL. *Our future.*

Chase was on fucking fire. He scored twice and kept going back for his hat trick. He skated faster than I've ever seen him.

Coventry was getting desperate to stop him and tried to take him out. Jake and Monroe were not having that shit. Neither was Red. When he was knocked into the boards, I saw

her stand up and those tiny fists of fury punch the air in his defense. *Hellraiser.*

Chase must have heard her yells as I watched him snap up at the sound of her voice as if his bell hadn't just been rung. He's always said that he could hear her voice anywhere, and that certainly proved it.

Coventry took their loss like the men they are, and we all knocked gloves with no incident after the final buzzer. I gave my girl a chin lift and a wink after celebrating our win on the ice with my team.

Seeing her tits bounce under my sweatshirt and those dimples pop when I scored gave me a stiffy in my hockey pants, which isn't comfortable with a cup over my dick. Nothing to do about it now, though. *Later.*

Coach is mandating that we stick around until our next game. We have lunch brought in and move into another room to spread out and watch tape before suiting up for our next game. I can't kick my nerves. I know Evie is with Drew, but I hate that I'm stuck in here.

Coastal plays tomorrow and with their practice and meeting now done, those assholes are probably roaming our campus. I send Drew a text and he lets me know they are going to Red's rehearsal to watch her sing before coming back here for tonight's game. I lean over to Hunter and Chase to let them know, and they nod in approval.

Chase has been quiet since getting off the ice. Hunter is getting his shoulder looked at by one of the team's physical therapists. He wrecked a guy when he threw his entire body weight into a check. We wait it out until it's time to get back out on the ice for game two.

I'm tired and sore but dig deep when the first period gets underway. I get an assist from Chase's goal and celebrate with him on the ice. When I release him from my bear hug, I see him lift his chin to where Red is jumping up and down, cheering him on.

"That one for her, brother?" I ask him.



He responds with a wide-ass grin before skating away. *Fucking finally.*

Hunter gets a pair in the third and I grab one as well.

“You Wilton boys are fucking after it tonight,” I tell Hunter, hitting his helmet when we switch lines and are resting on the bench.

“A lot at stake, man.” He holds out his fist for me to bump. He’s not wrong. The arena is jammed with fans and the building is blistering with energy.

“You’re skating hard, too. We gotta pull this off.” We’re tied four to four with two minutes left. Coach calls out our line and we’re off again. Hunter’s right, we have to pull this off and get the win.

I push through my screaming legs and skate towards the net and see Monroe and Jake clear the way for Chase. He fakes the guy that’s riding him and sends the puck my way. I flick the biscuit into the net, and it effortlessly slides by the goalie with two seconds to spare.

The arena explodes and shakes with every Havenwood fan jumping up and down in the stands when I make the game-winning goal. I skate past my girl and tap my heart for her. The look of love on her face hits me harder than any body check, penalty shot, or game-winning goal ever could.

That game was tight from start to finish, and sweat is pouring off me, stinging my eyes and making my whole-body slick. My team celebrates and we know we played our hearts out today. Brighton was tough, matching us goal-for-goal all game.

“How are we celebrating, boys?” Chase screams into the locker room. *I’m celebrating with your sister’s pretty pink mouth.*

“Like the fucking devils we are!” Monroe hollers back and we all yell in agreement. *Oh, I plan on being devilish. All night long.*

## Chapter Forty-Eight

Evie



We're walking out of the arena and the whole campus is going crazy after the Devils' won both their games. The entire team played well and should be proud of themselves. *I'm definitely proud of my handsome devil.*

Any trace of anxiety I was having was quickly replaced with adrenaline and excitement. I screamed my head off and was on the edge of my seat every minute of both games. Drew was great and by the end of the second game had declared Sloane and me his honorary little sisters. The two of them got on great and she told him all about Davis once he realized he was the quarterback his coach was salivating over for their next season.

Max had texted me that he had some press to take care of and would meet me back at the house. We wait a few minutes for the arena to empty out. I'm pretty pleased with myself. I did okay with the sold-out crowd and kept myself in check for both games. We sat in the front row, and I felt safe sitting in-between Sloane and Drew. I sent my parents and Melanie texts to let them know I was having a great time and was freak-out-free.

We finally make it outside and my phone buzzes in my pocket. It's Penny, Max's sister. She's coming in tonight and letting me know she's leaving now to get on the road. I know

Max is excited to have her here. He introduced us when they were FaceTiming one night, and we immediately hit it off. I'm excited to meet her face-to-face and spend some time with her.

Within seconds of me slipping my phone back in my pocket, it vibrates again. I get that same hair-raising sensation that I'm being watched and look around while walking with Sloane and Drew. Nothing looks out of the ordinary, and I look at the message.

**Unknown:**

*Hope to see you at one of the parties this weekend. It's been way too long.*

Ok, this is getting creepier and creepier. Someone is seriously messing with me. I trip over my feet and Drew steadies me. "Whoa there, you, okay?"

"I'm-I'm-I'm ok-k-k," I stammer out as Sloane bends down and picks up my phone that I didn't even realize I'd dropped.

Her eyes narrow while she reads the screen. I watch her finger scroll through the messages that "Unknown" has been sending me.

"How long has this been going on?" She holds up the offending text messages.

"Let me see. Give it here, Sloane." She hands my phone to him, and his face tightens in response to what he's reading.

"What the hell is this? Who's texting you this crap?" He takes out his phone and takes a photo of the text thread. His eyebrows knit together, and his mouth tightens up.

"I honestly d-d-don't k-k-know. I think it's someone p-p-pranking m-m-m-e or someone has the w-w-wrong n-n-number." My thoughts are jumbled, and my words are sticking together as I try to get them out.

I'm feeling the anxiety churn in my stomach, whirlpooling around and around as I watch my friend's faces lace with concern. This couldn't be anything more than some jerk

messing around, right? Or Lexi being more of a mega bitch than usual. *Right?*

I'm hoping they agree with me and that my overactive imagination can stop playing tricks on me. I tell them my theory and they mull it over.

"Yeah, maybe, the things they text you seem pretty generic, like he or she is pursuing someone," Drew states, and I'm feeling better already, exhaling a breath I was holding in.

I explain to them that I think it started off with someone texting me by mistake and since I never responded, they must think that they are honestly talking to whoever they intended.

"Yeah, that could be," Sloane agrees.

"I sent it to Max just in case. Let's not take any chances," Drew says, and I offer a smile and nod my head in agreement. Sloane insists on staying in the dorm tonight, saying she's tired but promises to go to the game tomorrow with us.

We drop her off at the door and walk back to the hockey house. Devils' Row is filling up towards the side of the street where the baseball players live. *Those guys are nuts.*

Drew fends off some girls that try to follow us in. Three whine that they want to wait for Hunter while one explains she's Monroe's good luck charm. *Gross.*

"Why does she get to go inside, and we can't?" One of them complains and questions while huffing and puffing. I swear if I roll my eyes any harder, they'd get stuck.

"Because my boyfriend lives here," I tell her, and she smirks while inspecting me from head to toe. I can tell she doesn't believe me. I hold her gaze, daring her to challenge me.

I give her my own smirk before slamming the door in their faces. *Buh-bye, bitches.*

Drew flicks the lights on and even though I tell him I'm okay, he's adamant about staying until Max gets back,

taking his honorary brother role seriously. He waves me off after I let him know I'm going to lie down for a while. As I make my way up the stairs, I hear him turn on the TV with ESPN blaring.

I change into comfy pants and get cozy in his bed. My anxiety from an hour ago is gone and I feel silly for making more of that text than is necessary. Everyone agrees it was probably just a mistaken message.

Max played so well today. He looked every bit like the handsome hockey devil he is. I didn't expect to get so turned on watching him out there, but every time he scored, I thought about the sexy promise he made to me in his love note.

My fingers graze my skin as I play with the hem of his hoodie that rests on my thighs. I'm feeling a bit brazen and kick off my pants, exposing more of my skin.

I trail my index finger through my folds and rub my clit. I'm already wet. I need him home now. *I'm aching for him. Where is he?* I send him a text and he writes back, letting me know he's just getting in Jake's car.

I raise my hands above my head and snap a few photos of myself on his bed in his sweatshirt with some major leg showing. I flip through the pics, and I decide to send him the best one before chickening out.

**Me:**

*I miss you, hurry home...*

A second later, my phone buzzes.

**Max:**

*Fuck, you look sexy in my bed.*

**Max:**

*I'm getting fucking hard thinking about you spread out, patiently waiting for me to get home. I'm going to be there in fifteen minutes. Be ready for me, baby.*

My breath hitches, thinking about him reacting to the photo. I run my index finger up and down my bare center. The light pressure feels so good. I continue to run light circles over my clit, thinking how much I want his tongue there.

My phone buzzes again, breaking my trance.

**Max:**

*What are you doing? Where did you go?*

**Me:**

*I'm doing what you asked and getting ready for you.*

*I can't stop thinking about how good you looked out on the ice. I'm already so wet thinking about you...*

**Max:**

*Are you touching your perfect pussy?*

*Are you thinking about me licking on your clit while my fingers fuck you? Or am I sucking your nipples while you ride me? Fuck, I love when you ride me and your tits bounce in my face.*

Yes...all of that.

I take a photo of my index and middle finger which are wet and glisten in the camera's flash. He makes me feel so confident and sexy.

**Max:**

*Holy shit, you're going to make me lose my fucking mind in the back of Jake's car.*

**Me:**

*I want all that...and...*

**Max:**

*And what baby, what do you want...*

*You can have fucking anything.*

**Me:**

*I want you to fuck me up against your door while you wear  
your jersey...*

**Max:**

*When I get home, I'm gonna blow that door off its fucking hinges with how hard I'm about to fuck you.*

**Me:**

*I need you inside of me.*

*Baby, hurry, I need you.*

I shut my eyes, remembering last night and all the ways he showed me he was sorry. *I swear I'm going to jump his bones when he finally gets here.*

I insert my fingers inside of myself and alternate between thrusting them vigorously and circling my clit. I only meant to get myself wet for him, and now my orgasm is building as I think about us screwing up against his door like sex-crazed maniacs. *I'm so close. Oh, God.*

I can't wait, I can't hold back. I'm riding my hand as my hips frantically buck upwards. *Max, Oh, God.*

Seconds later, the door opens and then shuts as he runs inside. He's standing there in nothing but a gray tie, a backward baseball hat, and his jersey crumpled in his hand. *So. Hot.*

His hard dick is on full display, and he pumps himself while he stalks toward me. I can't hold back for one more second. At the sight of him looking at me, *looking like that*, my orgasm shutters through me, and I come all over my hand.

## Chapter Forty-Nine

# Max



“You boys ready to go home? I’m starving and need to eat, shower, and get my dick sucked before curfew,” Monroe nonchalantly says to me, Jake, Chase, and Hunter in the locker room after we finish up with press.

This is his usual spiel after a game and the fucker makes good on it more times than not. We’ve all had our fair share of puck bunnies and the jersey chasers of Havenwood. Now I just want to go home to my Evie. The boys can have the groupies if they want them.

We buckle up and head out. My phone buzzes in my hand and it’s a photo from Drew. It looks like he took a pic of Evie’s phone. I zoom in and it looks like she’s gotten some random-ass text messages from an unknown number. Not sure what that’s about, but I’m not taking any fucking chances



especially with those two assholes being on campus. I'll have to ask her more about it when I get home.

My phone buzzes again and it's Evie wanting to know when I'm going to be home. I write her back and a second later, a pic comes through illuminating the screen inside the dark car. *Holy shit.*

She's in bed with nothing but my sweatshirt on. Those soft thighs that I love so much are on display in all their glory. I love how thick and strong they are. I especially love them wrapped around my head when I'm buried in her pussy. *I fucking love eating her out.*

I hide the phone in my chest and Monroe asks me what I'm looking at. *No way, asshole.* No one sees my girl like this but me. A knowing grin crosses his face and I shake my head, hiding my shit-eating grin.

I write her back some dirty thoughts that run through my head as I bite my bottom lip thinking about her touching herself. I'm getting harder with each of her sexy messages. *Goddamn, she's really gotten into dirty texting.* My phone buzzes again as I adjust myself in my pants.

I open the message and see two fingers coated with her wetness. I feel my dick grow and my sensitive head rubs up against the inside of the zipper of my suit pants. Fucker escaped out of the front hole of my briefs.

I'm squirming and Monroe eyes me and my phone goes off again. I'm biting down my lip so hard I'm one more message away from puncturing my skin.

I try to swallow the moan that is trying to escape my throat as I read her words that have me nearly coming undone in my buddy's car, *"I want you to fuck me up against your door while you wear your jersey..."*

Without giving it a fucking thought, I rip open my bag and search for my spare jersey.

I firmly believe this girl is going to be the fucking death of me as I contemplate jumping out of a moving vehicle

when I read her last text, “*I need you inside of me. Baby, hurry, I need you.*”

When Jack finally pulls into our driveway, I’m jumping out like my ass is on fire. My hand is shaking as I try to get the keys out of my pocket and unlock the damn door.

“What the fuck man, you okay?” Jake asks me. I spin around and level with them all.

“I will order everything off of Nick’s takeout menu if you motherfuckers stay downstairs for the next twenty minutes.” I am begging these pricks. My girl is upstairs in my bed with her fingers buried deep in her perfect pussy. I am going to die if I don’t get inside of her in the next thirty seconds.

“Fine, but I want a double order of chicken wings... sister-fucker.” Monroe laughs at his own dumb joke. Three fists hit his arm.

“Oooowww, what the fuck was that?” He whines and shakes them off.

“Don’t fucking talk about my sister like that!” Chase wails as he adds a kick to Monroe’s shin.

“I get why these two dipshits hit me, but why’d you have to punch me, Jake? And why the fuck aren’t you hitting him?” He rubs the spot that Jake landed a good one on and then points to me.

“Fuck face, I have five sisters if you haven’t forgotten.” Jake rolls his eyes and crosses his arms over his chest.

“Oh, how could I ever forget? I’d gladly be a sister-fucker and fuck each one of them.” Monroe cheeses at Jake. Jake kicks him in the same spot Chase caught him.

We are wasting time here. Fuck this, I don’t even want them downstairs; they need to stay out of the fucking house.

“What the fuck Max, you are not going upstairs to sleep with my sister!” Hunter roars out his words.

“Uh huh, whatever you need to tell yourself. Why don’t you guys head next door and I’ll order the food, okay?” Yeah, there will definitely be no sleeping between me and his sister. *Please start walking, please start walking.*

Monroe and Jake shrug their shoulders while Chase looks like he might puke. Hunter stares at me with pointy eyes.

“I swear to God fuckface, you hurt my sister and I will end you, best friend or not, and I promise you, I will sleep just fine at night after pummeling you into the goddamn ground,” he snarls. *Hurt her? I plan on making her see fucking stars.*

Jake and Monroe slap the Wiltons on the back and push them towards the hockey house next door that the seniors live in. Two SUVs full of our teammates pour out of the doors along with a few cars full of girls who are walking up their short driveway.

Lexi and Elena spot us and I’m not fucking dealing with her shit right now as she changes her path toward our house. *Oh, fuck no.*

I make good on the lock and burst into the house. Drew is snoring away on the couch and ESPN is blaring. He’s out like a light.

I kick my dress shoes off, drop my suit pants where I stand in the entryway, and run up the stairs two at a time. I struggle to get my button-up shirt undone with my jersey in my hand and tear it open, sending buttons flying all over. I don’t give a fuck. I throw the garment on the hallway floor and drop my briefs outside of my door and rip my socks off.

I open and quickly shut my door, standing there with my hat still on my head and my tie around my neck that never made it off. I fist the jersey in one hand and my hard dick in the other when I see her.

Our eyes meet and her hips buck off the bed, and she arches her back. Oh fuck, she’s coming. *Goddamn. That. Is. So. Fucking. Hot.*

She comes so hard that her head thrashes on my pillow and her toes curl. I feel the pre-cum on my dick tip drip down

my hard shaft, and if I don't get inside of her, I'll go fucking insane.

I jump on the bed, kneeling back on my haunches and hook my arms around her back, which is still arched, and thrust inside of her. She groans as I fill her to the hilt and my eyes roll back in my head. I hitch her ass up on my thighs and she looks sexy as fuck like this. *Fucking heaven.*

All she's wearing is my sweatshirt and her glasses. Her hips are higher than her shoulders at this angle, and I bend over her to push the sweatshirt up so it pools at her neck. I can see the underside of her satin-clad round tits and those delicious nipples are sticking straight up through her purple bra, begging for me to suck them. I want to stay here forever. *That's it. We're never leaving this room again.*

My dick pulses inside of her at the thought of never leaving her perfect pussy. I maneuver us so I'm now laying in between her sweet thighs.

"Hi, baby," she says with a smile. She's only called me Max and because I'm a goddamn sappy simp, I sigh and nuzzle her neck, hearing her call me that. Her endearment sends my hips into a frenzy, and I fuck her hard and fast.

"I missed you, pretty girl," I tell her as she meets me thrust for thrust. *Fuck, I missed her so goddamn much today.*

As hot as she looks in my clothes, I want this sweatshirt gone. I want to see all of her fantastic body and pull it off her along with her bra.

"I missed y-y-you t-t-too," she says in a breathless moan as she pinches her nipples. I drop my head between her tits, sucking the skin there. Her hands move to hold my head to her chest; her fingers knock the hat off my head, and she not-so-gently pulls at my hair, getting my attention.

"Yes, baby?" I ask her before I take a sweet nipple into my mouth, sucking so hard her pretty mouth forms an O.

"Us... door... please..." she moans as I slam into her over and over again. I did tell her I'd bang the hinges right off and a promise is a promise. *Whatever you want, pretty girl.*

I move us off the bed and her legs wrap around my waist, her ankles locking behind me. I push her back up against the door and bury myself as far as I can. *Goddamn.*

“Oh fuck, I forgot the jersey. Want me to put you down and get it?” I ask her while pumping into her.

“Fuck... the jersey... the tie is better...” she pants and grabs the tie around my neck, pulling me even closer and kissing me hard until she breaks away, “Baby... you... feel... soooo... good.” that fucking term of endearment sends me fucking soaring.

She’s bucking back and forth up against the door and riding my dick so hard; we very well might break the goddamn hinges. Her pussy is strangling my dick, and I swear her muscles are only tightening around me.

“Fuck, Evie, your tight pussy is fucking heaven, you feel so fucking good... don’t stop,” I tell her, as the base of my spine starts to tingle.

“Your dick is hitting the spot...I can’t take it... I’m going to come...please, oh God, please.” With one hard thrust, she cries out and comes, digging her little fingers into my skin and shaking in my arms. I shoot my load and paint her pussy, shuddering as I pulse inside of her. *Goddamn, that shit was intense.*

We catch our breath and before my legs give out, I quickly put us on my bed. She has her head on my chest and pops her pretty head up. I push her glasses back up her cute little nose.

“You know what I wanted to say when you came, but I was so caught up in the moment that I didn’t get the words out?” She says and smiles.

“What’s that?” I brush the hair out of her gorgeous face.

“He shoots, he scores!” I laugh at her silliness, and push her head back into my chest, right over my heart, still laughing out loud.

Our love bubble bursts when we hear Mr. Mood-Killer's voice screaming my name through the house as he stomps up the stairs.

His bullshit doesn't bother Evie, and she snuggles into my chest while tightening the blanket I threw over us close around her neck.

"You motherfucker, Max, I'm going to fucking kill you!" Hunter shouts and then we hear what I assume are my pants, shirt, and shoes hit the outside of my closed door and we break out in laughter all over again.



She's fast asleep in my bed, our bed, as I am now calling it, *because she is never fucking leaving it*, and I get up to go in search of something to eat. My stomach is growling and I'm sure she's going to wake up hungry, too.

I was what she calls "a sex-crazed maniac," when I got home and hadn't eaten a thing since my protein shake before our second game. I throw on sweats and quietly shut the door to not disturb my sleeping beauty.

I step into the hallway and smell the garlic and other spices that are distinctly Italian. I let my nose lead me and start down the stairs.

I stop at the third step when I see my baby sister sitting *too close for my own comfort* next to Drew on the couch. *When did Penny get here?*

She texted me she would be here closer to ten since there was traffic. *That orgasm Evie gave me must have short-circuited my brain.*

Hunter comes down the second-floor hallway where our five bedrooms are and is standing at the top of the stairs. He takes the two down, so he is directly behind me and follows my line of sight, and chuckles.

“Isn’t so fun when some prick is looking at your sister like he wants to lick her all over, is it?” he asks and my jaw ticks while my hands ball up at my sides.

“Looks like you have your own sister-fucker to worry about,” he says, and his kill shot hits just like he wants it to, getting me back for the shit I pulled earlier.

“Come on bro, I found your wallet in your pants that you left on the fucking floor and made good on your offer, ordering every takeout item that Nick’s had. Even got Monroe his double order of wings,” he laughs and then smacks me on the back.

“Worth it,” I say loud enough so my best friend can hear me and walk down the stairs.

I clear my throat to get the attention of Penny along with Drew and have to do it two more times before they even realize I’m in the damn room. *Oh, hell no, this is not happening.*

Hunter can’t keep his laughter in and the jerkoff that he is, squeezes my shoulders and whispers, “You’re so fucked,” as he walks off towards the kitchen.

They both jump away from the other, putting more space between them on the couch before rising to greet me.

“Hey Pen, it is so good to see you,” I say, picking Penny up in a big bear hug and spinning her around.

We’ve always been close, and I’m thrilled she’s going to be at Havenwood in the fall.

I eye Drew over my sister’s shoulder and lift my chin, letting him silently know, *I see you dude, watch yourself and keep your fucking huge ass hands to yourself.*

Drew is a big boy, a beast of a man, but also a gentle giant. He has a heart of gold and when he cares about you; he’s loyal as fuck. He took good care of Evie today and made sure she and Red’s day went off without incident. I owe him one or two if you count tomorrow, but repayment will not be in the form of my baby sister.

Penny wants to be a Broadway producer and loves anything performing arts related. When Hamilton came out, she entered every contest she could that offered free tickets. That soundtrack still plays on a loop in our house, and I know every word to every musical that has been released in the past ten years because of her, from the classics to the most recent.

She's crazy talented and sees the world through a different lens with her creative artsy eye. She is who she is and doesn't make apologies for it.

She has naturally brown hair like me, but she is constantly dying it. Currently, there are some pink and turquoise streaks. Hers is also crazy curly, and it is attempting to break out of the hair band she has it in.

She has on a pair of jeans with holes in the knees that I'm sure she put there and multi-colored stitches randomly throughout the denim; a Penny trademark.

I smile when I see her sneakers. They are a pair of Chuck Taylors with lyrics to her favorite songs sharpied on. She has been doing that since middle school. Her skin has more of an olive complexion than mine, but we have the same blue eyes.

"Did you guys eat? I'm starving," I ask her and Drew. Drew looks a little nervous when looking back at me. *Good.* Penny is off-limits. I see his gaze drift back to her when he thinks I'm not looking.

"No, I drove straight through after rehearsal. I got here about a half hour ago." Fucking hell, I know that look. She has a damn twinkle in her eye. My sister is many things, and predictable is definitely one of them.

"I woke up when I heard her knocking on the door. I thought you and Little Wilton had passed out," Drew adds.

"No worries, man, let's see what's in the kitchen so we can eat. I treated everyone in the house to a feast." Drew follows behind my sister as we head into the kitchen. *Damn, they really ordered the whole takeout menu.*



I make myself a plate and one for Evie for later. Hunter and Chase are in the kitchen, hunched over their plates. No doubt Chase's second or third helping, and I introduce them to Penny. I pass out some water and as I take a swig. I stare at my sister for a moment and then narrow my eyes at her.

"When did you get your nose pierced?" She has a tiny silver stud in her nostril that I've never seen before.

"Right after I got both my nipples pierced," she says without missing a goddamn beat.

I start coughing uncontrollably, Drew sprays water out of his mouth, and my two traitorous best friends laugh so hard they both are wiping tears from the corners of their eyes. *Assholes.*

Right on cue, Monroe and Jake walk in, *and because you can't make this shit up if you tried*, Monroe walks right over to Penny, throws his arm around her shoulders, and says, "Did I hear someone say something about pierced nipples?"

Drew throws his now empty water bottle at him, and it bounces off his head. I get myself under control and look at my sister.

"Pen, what the actual fuck?! You did what?!" She laughs at me, and I tighten my glare at her. *Little sisters are the goddamn worst.*

"Should probably refrain from telling you about the four tattoos I recently got then, huh?" *Is there smoke coming out of my ears?*

"You got four more? Mom's going to fucking kill you!" That must bring her total up to eight or nine.

"Oh my God, payback walked in as Penny Harmon and I'm fucking here for it." Chase laughs out loud, getting high fives from my asshole friends.

My baby sister has been here for thirty minutes, and I've found her sitting way too close to one of my friends. I've learned that she has her nose and nipples pierced, and more tattoos than every guy in the room. *Fuck my life.*

“Anything else, Pen? Since you’re in a sharing mood?” I squeeze the bridge of my nose and ask her. I’m honestly waiting for her to drop another bomb on me.

“Hey, I’m just answering your questions. I’ve never lied to you and I’m not ashamed about anything having to do with my body.” She sends Drew a wink that has his eyes falling out of his head, and she gives me a steely glare.

“Oh, sweetheart, you have nothing to be ashamed of,” Monroe tells her and takes his time giving her a once over. Jake punches him in the arm for me. *Good man.*

“I’ve always wanted a tattoo,” I hear a sweet voice and turn to see my Evie standing in the kitchen doorway. She looks adorable and all sleepy in a pair of flannel pajama pants and one of my old long-sleeved hockey t-shirts that reads Harmon in big letters across her chest with my old number right below it. *Yup, those tits look damn good with my name and number across them.*

“Are those my pants?” Chase asks her. She rolls her eyes, not admitting a thing. She is always stealing his clothes.

“No, those are mine!” Hunter points at her, “Stick to C’s closet.”

My girl and my baby sister hug next and squeal when officially meeting each other and something settles in my chest. The most important people in my life here at Havenwood are in this room and eating pizza that I bought to bribe my boys to have some alone time with my Evie.

To top it off, there was no sign of dick face one or dick face two today. Although, tomorrow is judgment day when I come face to face with those ass cracks on the ice... and I will make them pay. *I just have to figure out how to keep my girl from noticing.*

## Chapter Fifty

# Evie



The guys left early for weight training, a team meeting, and a luncheon hosted by alumni, leaving Penny, Drew, and I to meet Sloane for brunch.

Penny and I are walking with our arms linked and I'm enjoying getting to know her better. I really think Penny and Sloane will hit it off as well. They both love the stage, and it seems like they'll be fast friends.

Want to know who else is hitting it off? Penny and Drew. He is blushing with every flirty remark she sends his way. She lays it on thick and he is redder than a bowl of cherries. *And I thought I was the only one who gets red like a tomato.*

Drew's team has a bye week, so no game, but he has practice later, which will have him missing the guys' next tournament game. If they win, he will join us for the final match-up.

I see Edi in line, waiting to swipe her card to pay for her meal. She's balancing a tray that is piled high, and her overstuffed backpack is on her back, along with a messenger bag slung over her front.

I watch her as she growls at a guy who unapologetically bumps into her.

She senses me staring and narrows her eyes at me until recognition hits. She lifts her chin towards me, and I wave back.

As she steps up to the cashier and hands over her card, I watch intently as the cashier gives it back and tries to take her tray from her. They scuffle and the tray drops, with food flying to the floor.

Edi's hands fly to her bags, and she runs toward the exit. I've put enough pieces together now to see that she didn't have enough to cover her meal, and that is most likely A's fault for blowing off her tutoring sessions, resulting in her not getting paid. *I swear, my brother can be such an asshole.*

I want to help and start moving toward her. I catch up and can already tell how pissed off she is.

"Edi, wait up," I yell out, and she stops. The large messenger bag slides off her shoulder into the crook of her elbow, knocking her off balance.

She topples over, unable to right herself with the weight of two bags that probably weigh more than she does. Her dark eyes fill with tears, but she doesn't let them fall.

"*Hijo de su puta madre!*" I hear her Spanish curse words fly from her mouth as she picks herself up.

"Leave me the hell alone Evie, this is all his fault, and I don't want to take it out on you just because you share DNA with that fucking *pendejo!*" She's vibrating with rage, and I don't blame her one bit. My brother's actions have consequences and I understand that more than she knows.

I feel my own anger rise with the connection I'm having with her over A's self-serving choices.

"I get it, believe me, I get it. Let me get you something to eat. It doesn't have to be in the cafeteria. We can go to the coffee place on campus, if you want," I tell her, and by the look she's giving me, I don't think she's going to take me up on my offer.

"No thanks, I don't need your pity. I earn my keep and will just have to make do until I get paid again." She collects

herself, waving me off.

“See you around Evie.” With that, she walks away and doesn’t glance back.

I’m spitting mad at A. His selfish actions have repercussions for his math tutor, affecting her ability to have her basic needs met. *Not ok, A.*

I’ve buried my anger with my brothers regarding that traumatic night and have always told them it wasn’t their fault. They weren’t the ones who attacked me after all, but I’m furious right now as I walk back toward the cafeteria. Their selfish actions led to the worst night of my life. A knows better than this, why is he doing this to her?

My phone goes off, breaking my runaway thoughts.

**Unknown:**

*Missed you last night over at the frats. You Havenwood girls sure know how to party. Don’t worry, we’ll find you for our own happy reunion.*

I’m so angry with A on Edi’s behalf that there’s literally no room in my head for any anxiety to take hold after I read the bogus text. I’m over it though and fire off a message to end this nonsense once and for all.

**Me:**

*Just letting you know you’ve been texting the wrong person.*

I shove my phone into my pocket and walk back into the cafeteria. I take my seat back at the table and finish my food in silence.

Drew walks us to the front of the arena before he goes off to his own practice. Sloane, Penny, and I take our seats and I see the guys skating, stretching, and getting ready to take on Newington. We have the same seats as yesterday and are right behind the glass in the first row. Max sends me a wink before dropping down to the ice on his knees, spreading them wide and pushing them in and out, over and over again as his bubble butt pops out. I swear watching Max stretch his groin and

basically hump the ice is making both my brain and vagina crazy. *No wonder every girl in the arena is screaming.*

When the sexy stretching stops, and every girl in the arena stops fanning herself, I text my parents some updates about the tournament. If the Devils win this game, they will play Coastal in the finals tonight. I've heard that Devils' Row will have a big party either way.

Sloane starts talking to some girls behind us. One of them is dating a senior on the team and is singing in the showcase with her, which grabs Penny's attention. My ears perk up when I hear the girls mention Lexi and Max's names...together.

"Oh, we got these seats because Evie here is dating Max Harmon, her brothers' Hunter and Chase are also on the team," I hear her explain how we snagged family section seats as she nudges me to join in their conversation. I turn around slightly and smile at them, attempting to be friendly. Sloane makes introductions and I try to keep my eyes trained on the girls versus looking back at the sold-out crowd.

It worked for me yesterday, and I was implementing the same strategy today. It's not that I didn't want to talk to them, but I was trying to keep myself in check. But now that I've looked, I'm feeling uneasy. *You've got this, Evie. Deep, even breaths.*

"Oh, that's interesting. I thought Lexi was dating Max. That's what she said last night at the house. She kept going on about how tired he was and that he had gone home to shower and sleep to rest up for today," the girl tells us. *He was home alright. With me. In bed. Up against the door. In bed again.*

I'm not in the mood for Lexi's rumors or bullshit. It's getting under my skin thinking that other people will believe her and that's motivation enough for me to shut it down.

"She's ly-ly-lying, she's not d-dating Max, I am," I tell her. Okay, that wasn't as bold as I intended, but still, even with some stuttering, I was pretty clear.

We chat about Max and me for a few more minutes. She's nice and my stuttering calms down. She has been dating the goalie since their freshman year and fills me in on Lexi and her friends' attempts to date their own hockey player. *She needs to stay away from mine!*

"That girl needs to give it a rest already. You've been dating for a while now and she just doesn't get the message, and now she's spreading her own. She's a dang thirsty turtle. Popping her head in and out to spread lies about being with a man who's in a relationship with someone else," Sloane adds with a southern twang. My roomie is the best. I can't help but laugh at what she said. *Thirsty turtle.*

"She sounds obsessed with my brother," Penny says, and I'd have to agree. She is obsessed with Max and doesn't seem to be letting it go.

"She seemed desperate for us to believe her now that I think about it. Well, it's nice to meet another girlfriend. There aren't many of us. Welcome to the club," she says with a smile.

The guys are now skating over. They all wave and Sloane keeps her hands stationed in her lap today. I think C embarrassed her when he didn't acknowledge her greeting. She smiles at the guys, but her eyes don't stay on C like they did yesterday.

"Chase is an idiot," I offer while patting her knee, and she gives me a tight smile.

Penny playfully sticks her tongue out at Max and Monroe suggestively wags his own tongue at her in response, earning him a jab to the gut from Jake.

Max pats his chest over his heart and points to me, and I blow him a kiss before he skates off again. A and C give me a chin lift and I smile at them, but it's forced. My run-in with Edi had some anger I have with them resurface unexpectedly.

I remind myself that what happened is in the past and I'm moving on. I've been doing a great job of that this semester, and I refuse to go backward. I'm here at

Havenwood, sitting in a hockey arena next to my friends, ready to watch a game and cheer on my brothers and boyfriend. There's nothing to be angry or anxious about. *Just let it go.*

We stand for the national anthem, and my hot hockey player sends me a wink. He and his team kick ass on the ice and take home a win, edging out Newington and securing their spot to play Coastal for the championship game of the tournament.



## Chapter Fifty-One

# Max



### *Tournament Championship Game*

#### **Havenwood Devils vs. Coastal Sharks**

My skin is crawling knowing that she's in the same building as these two shit-stains and that she doesn't know. There was no keeping her away and the boys and I went back and forth trying to figure out if we should tell her before the game that her attackers were on the ice.

Every scenario we brainstormed sucked and eventually, we all agreed that her being here gives us eyes on her. It also gives asshole one and asshole two eyes on her, but I'll have no problem gauging them out of their skulls.

Drew is standing next to her and some of his football buddies from our class are also sitting in their row, beside Pen

and Red. Hunter and Chase look like a pair of the grim reapers, and I'm eagerly excited for the expected blood bath. Monroe and Jake are ready with their stony expressions, warning our opponents to fuck right off.

We're out on the ice warming up and, like the magnets our hearts are, my Evie's pretty doe eyes immediately find mine. *Hi, pretty girl.*

She looks so goddamn gorgeous with her brown hair down in wild waves falling all over my Havenwood Hockey windbreaker, complete with my name proudly stitched on the front and back. *Mine.* She has my number painted on her cheeks and is wearing black skinny jeans and I'm assuming her checkered Vans. She has her glasses on and I love how she scrunches her nose when they slide down.

I break eye contact with her and look around before I zero in on Waterstone and Ellis. They're at their bench listening to their coach. When they stretch and warm up, I see that they've wasted no time.

They skate over to the Wiltons, and me, Jake and Monroe immediately follow. Some of their boys flank the fuckfaces in response. Hunter and Waterstone are already helmet-to-helmet, spewing taunts and spitting in each other's faces. *This is going to be one fucking ugly game.*

"Look who it is, Ellis. Been a long time, boys. You miss me?" Waterstone provokes Hunter.

"I'm coming for you, motherfucker," Hunter growls out.

"Daddy must have sealed up those juvie records tight for you two criminals," Chase grits out.

"How's Evie? Heard she's here at Havenwood. I can't wait to see her again," Ellis says as he leans his helmet into Chase. I see fucking red. *Oh, fuck no.*

Before either Wilton can react, I'm connecting my fist with this asshole's face and he laughs, a villainous laugh that shows just how deranged this fucker really is. My arms are being held behind my back by Monroe and Ellis's are being

held back by one of his boys. The ref is blowing his whistle to get things under control, but it's too late.

“Who the fuck are you?” Ellis, the fucker asks while grinning back at me like the psycho he is.

“I'm the asshole that's going to shred you limb from fucking limb for breathing around my girl, and then I'm gonna send you straight to hell for putting your hands on her,” I spit out at him.

“She loved our hands on her and she really loved what we –,” Waterstone doesn't finish his vile thought, as I break out Monroe's hold and start beating the shit out of him. *I'm going to fucking kill him.*

Hunter and Chase throw off their gloves and start wailing on Ellis. My gloves come off and I'm bare-knuckle fighting Waterstone until his face is a bloody mess. Monroe and Jake are fighting some of their teammates and the refs are blowing whistles, screaming, and attempting to break it up as both benches clear out and take to the ice. We're all led off the ice before the game even officially started.

I look over and see Waterstone and Ellis pointing at Evie. Hunter and Chase are screaming at them to stop looking at their sister as Jake and Monroe try to pull them back into the locker room. I fucking panic. I've never felt air leave my body like it does in that moment when I know they see her.

I try to move through the team to get back out on the ice to skate over to her, to block her from them. I'm yelling for them to move, yelling her name, but I'm being pushed farther and farther away from her. *Don't look, baby, please don't look.*

All I can do is watch and what feels like is in slow motion, when her past and present collide.

“Get the fuck off of me! I need to go to her, get the fuck off!” I'm screaming and trying my fucking hardest but it's no use.

“EEVVVVIIEEEEEEE!” I bellow out and try to get her to look at me, not them, me. The sheer look of horror takes over her face when she recognizes them, and her screams

drown out every other noise in the arena, ripping my heart out of my chest as I hear nothing but fear in my girl's voice.

I'm forced back into the locker room. Monroe is holding Hunter down by his shoulders to keep him on his stool. Jake is doing the same to Chase. I'm fucking distraught and pulling the hair out of my head by the fistful. Coach looks like he is going to take a skate and spike it into Hunter's skull when he gets in his face about what just happened.

"What the fuck was that about?" He screams in his face, and I can see spit and even some mucus flying out of his nose.

"About my sister, Coach," he says, keeping my eye contact tight with him. No room for bullshit.

"Your sister? Your goddamn sister?" He roars.

"You have five minutes to give me more than that or I will make sure the name Wilton never shows up on the back of an NHL jersey, that goes for both of you dipshits!" He points at Chase. The brothers exchange a look, their eyes hardening.

"Yes sir, our sister." Hunter stands up and Chase joins.

"My girl, Coach." I stand, joining the guys.

"My friend, Coach." Jake stands.

"My friend too, Coach." Monroe stands.

We all lift our chins in solidarity and the rest of our team stands too. They may not know what the fuck this is about, but the loyalty in this room will bond us forever.

"And those assholes out there, Coach, they fucked with my girl for the last time," I tell him.

Coach eyes me and takes in the resolve that coats all of our faces before he says, "Then let's bury those fuckers."

With Coach's battle cry to kick some ass, we skate out and the fans go nuts. I don't care though. I'm foaming at the mouth to get to her. I don't give one flying fuck if every eye in the place is on me; she's the only one I see. After skating over to her, my eyes meet hers and I can momentarily breathe.

I mouth, “I love you,” and she starts to cry, causing her glasses to fog up. I want to wipe away every tear she’s ever had to shed because of these fuckers. I see her tucked into Sloane’s armpit and her face is whiter than a ghost and it makes my blood boil. Drew has his arms folded over his chest and is ready to slam his beefy clenched fists through the glass to get to the ice and beat some ass if it comes down to it.

I rest my helmet-covered forehead on the glass to absorb some of her hurt. My team skates up behind me and offers her their unwavering support, unknown to the masses of how deep this pain goes that those two ball sacks have caused. I feel an overwhelming sense of pride for both my team, and my strong girl who stayed despite being terrified. She stayed. *My brave and beautiful girl stayed.*

The buzzer blares, signaling the start of the game. I’m fucking rabid and take it out on every single Coastal player that gets in my goddamn way. I’m not the only one. Me, Hunter, and Chase each score twice showing off our skill. We also spend the most time in the sin bin than any other game we’ve played at Havenwood. Do. Not. Fuck. With. Me.

When I score both my first and second goals, I tap my heart with my fist and point to my Evie and am rewarded with her heart-stealing smile. *There’s my Dimples.*

She isn’t cheering or jumping up and down celebrating as she had previously, but then again, this game is different. We square off again and fucking Waterstone sticks me and says,

“Hey lover boy, see the handle of this—” I cross check this sick fuck and push his body so hard into the boards, that his helmet flies off his head. Unfortunately, the psycho hits the boards not too far from her seat. He extends his arm and smacks the glass where she’s sitting. Drew and his boys jump to their feet, and they all pound it back in response. Evie has a set on her as she lifts both middle fingers and looks him dead in the eye.

“Don’t you dare fucking look at her or say another fucking word about her, motherfucker!” The whistle blows for

me to take my penalty. *Fucking worth it.* I spit on this asshole before I'm led off.

He laughs at her while I'm led away to take my two minutes and my body floods with maddening thoughts of decapitating that fucker with the blade of my skate the second I'm back out on the ice. No one laughs at my girl.

Chapter Fifty-Two

# Hunter + Chase



*Tournament Championship Game*

**Havenwood Devils vs. Coastal Sharks**

## Hunter

I skate hard all game and use every dirty fucking trick I know to unnerve Waterstone and Ellis. I trip them, elbow them and even get a few stick hooks in behind the backs of the refs. Motherfuckers do the same to me but I'm fast, unpredictable, and aggressive all game and it has Coastal fucking up trying to anticipate what I'm going to do. I'm a loose cannon, which isn't my usual style, but I get my job done and score twice.

My eyes don't linger on a girl in the stands after I celebrate my two goals like C's do when he scores having tunnel vision for Red, and like Max does with B.

No, the girl who's taken fucking residence up in my goddam head is also the girl who I loathe and who despises me back. She

would never come to a game. *She would rather have her fingernails ripped out.*

I can't believe my sister is still here, and as proud of her as I am for facing those lunatics, I can't look at her again. If I do, I might not recover from the emotional onslaught that streaks her face.

She is going to figure out if she hasn't already, that C and I knew that Waterstone and Ellis were going to be here and that we didn't tell her. Then she is going to ask me if Max knew and I won't be able to lie to her, and that's going to cause issues between them. That asshole loves my sister with every cell in his goddamn body, and I don't want any problems for them, especially now.

I get a hold of my run-away thoughts, but not before fucking Ellis throws his weight on top of me after a few of us fall to the ice in a heap.

"When she begged me to stop—," The thought of B having to endure such torture from this soulless asshole causes me to scream. I clench my abs, lift, and headbutt the shit out of him.

"Shut the fuck up!" I yell out.

Jake is on the way and when he reaches us, he immediately chucks his gloves and gets in a dozen punches before the ref throws him in the box.

I offer my fist to him, and he takes it. My boy held it down for me while one of the other Coastal guys in the heap went after me. Monroe lifts his chin and offers Jake the respect he fucking deserves as he gathers his own fallen gloves and flexes his hands from his own one-on-one with a fucking Coastal goon.

# Chase

A, Max, and I skated as fast as we could to where B was sitting when we came back out on the ice. I'm absolutely fucking flabbergasted that she's still there. *My sister is a goddamn warrior.*

I see her tucked into Sloane's armpit and her face is whiter than a ghost and it makes my blood boil. I'm gutted looking at her so upset. I haven't seen her look this defeated in three years. She is a remarkable woman who has pushed herself out of her comfort zone to embrace her survivorship. One combined menacing stare from



these two jerkoffs is causing her to question everything, and I refuse to have them take anything else from her. I need to be strong for her; I need to fight for her and I need to show her I'm in her corner.

I take my glove off, hold up four fingers, and point at her. She gives me a less-than-genuine smile and looks at A, who is skating over. He does the same with his hand. The three of us have survived so much together, and this will just be another bullet point on that list. *We'll get her through this.*

I look over at my best friend, who I know will play a big part in that as well. He has proven that his heart only beats for B; he loves the shit out of my sister, and he doesn't give a fuck who knows.

He has his helmet and gloved hands pressed on the glass as if he's trying to get as close to her as possible. She's looking at him like he's her lifeline, and I guess he now is.

I feel Sloane's eyes on me, and I look up because I'm powerless when it comes to her. We hold our stare for a moment before she looks away, breaking our connection, and I instantly miss having her gaze.

Monroe and Jake skate over and raise their heads at my sister. B's teary eyes go wide, and when I turn my head to make sure those fuckfaces aren't near her, I see the rest of my team behind us raising their heads to her, showing their support.

They don't know the root cause of tonight and the truth is, they don't need to. We're a team and teammates support one another, and this one, the Havenwood Hockey Devils, are badass motherfuckers who are about to raise hell and then drop it down on Brandon Waterstone and Christopher Ellis.

With the puck drop, fury pumps through me as I focus on Ellis and hit him so hard up against the boards, he lifts a good foot off the ice. *Take that motherfucker.*

I get the jump on these dipshits and make my way to the net. I'm full of fucking anger and play the most aggressive game of my life. I slap shot the puck into the net, and it hits so hard it physically moves the basket off its pegs.

I lift my head up from under the celebratory helmet slaps for my second goal and see Sloane still comforting my sister.

When our eyes collide, I wave to her before I can think twice about what the hell I'm doing. That one little wave earns me the

biggest smile I've ever seen grace her gorgeous face, and per usual, with this witchy woman, I'm momentarily frozen in place before returning to reality.

I face off against Waterstone and I know I fucked up when he says like the pompous piece of shit he is,

“The redhead, huh? Can't wait to find out if her pussy hair is red, too” He smirks. *You're a dead man, Waterstone.*

I don't give a shit about the puck or the next play. He falls back when I land a punch to his fucking smug face. I straddle his hips and punch his head once, twice, three times before A and some of my team are pulling me off.

This fucking nutcase spits his mouth guard out to smile a bloody grin at me. His eyes are entirely void of any emotion. *Soulless psycho.*

The refs have had enough, and I'm ejected from the game for unsportsmanlike conduct. I don't give a fuck if every NHL team has a scout here and they bear witness to me beating his ass. I hear Waterstone shout to A,

“Tell your brother I'm going to wreck that red-haired pussy later.” I turn to give his ass another beating, but the ref shoves me off the ice. *Over my fucking dead body are you touching her.*

## Chapter Fifty-Three

# Max



After Chase skates off the ice and takes his ejection from the game with his head held high, my line gets a break and is on the bench. Every muscle in my body is working on overdrive. Hunter tells me what Waterstone said about Red. I look over at her, my Evie, Drew, and Penny.

My sister looks back at me and I see angry blue eyes as she shakes her head. This is a dirty fucking game and not how I play hockey. I usually play with the respect the game deserves, but I don't have an ounce of that for Coastal today.

There are two minutes left of play and we're up 6-5. I'm sent back out and want to finish this and get to her. Ellis and I fight for the puck and Monroe slows him down in my defense. I take a shot and their goalie blocks it easily.

We run down the clock and with twenty seconds left, Waterstone comes up from behind and delivers a hit so hard, I fly into the goddamn boards. Motherfucker that he is, holds me there for a second and whispers,

“Tonight, I’m gonna stick my dick so far up Evie’s—,” this asshole needs to be put fucking down.

His depraved words sink into my brain, and I rip myself from his hold and push him back onto the ice. I throw my leg over his chest and hold my bladed foot to his neck, watching the color of his skin change with the pressure I’m applying. *I can end him right here. Avenge her and make this all go away.*

My blood lust takes over, and I really like the idea of ending his miserable fucking life. I press hard and watch his vein pulse under my skate. If I dig deep, I can rupture it with one slice, making good on my promise to send this fucker to face the Devil in hell.

He looks scared and is now shaking under me. I have him pinned and want to put him down for good. *No one would miss this sack of shit.*

“How does it feel, asshole? To be scared out of your fucking mind and held down against your will? You sick fuck, I could kill you for what you did to her,” I snarl down at him. I clear my throat and send a snot-filled spitball right on this motherfucker’s ugly ass face.

Monroe knocks me off him just as the buzzer blares out our victory.

“Bro, if you kill him, you’ll never see Evie again. Come on man, come on.” He keeps me tackled beneath him. He’s right, I know he is. I also plan to find those assholes tonight. *This devil wants to fucking burn him alive.*

No doubt all the teams will be out partying with the rest of Havenwood. There is no curfew, and they all don’t leave until after a luncheon that is being hosted tomorrow to close out the weekend.

There is no celebration on the ice for taking the tourney. Both teams pissed off the refs with how we played. The game was so rough, that each team is brought back to the locker rooms per the directive of both coaches; the order coming down from the refs from their heated exchange.

Before I'm pushed off the ice, I look over at where she was and notice that she isn't there. *What the fuck?*

I notice Drew, Pen, and Red are gone as well. Most of the arena is being cleared out by security. I have to trust and believe that Drew and his boys will look after her until I can get the fuck out of here. I just want to get to her and keep her tucked safely in my arms.

I make my way to my locker and rummage around for my phone, which is dead with no battery. I angrily squeeze it in my hand so fucking hard, mad at myself for not charging it. I just want to talk to her, hear her voice and make sure she's ok.

"Fuuuccckkk! Who has a fucking charger?" I shout over the noise before one is thrown at me. I plug it in and I'm about to ask Hunter and Chase to use one of their phones to call Evie when the Director of Athletics walks in along with Coach and the Dean of Havenwood. *Here we go.*

All three men shoot us looks that quiet the room and have us taking our seats. I'm ready to pay the piper for my actions out on the ice today. I'll take the fucking fall for the team if it comes down to it. Defending her tonight was worth it. *Evie Wilton is worth everything.*

## Chapter Fifty-Four

Evie



I never imagined a scenario where my two attackers would play in a championship hockey tournament game against my boyfriend and brothers, right here at Havenwood, and me sitting in the front row, but that is exactly what happened. I watched A and C, along with Max, take them on before the game even started. The refs cleared both teams off the ice, and I heard Max yell my name before being dragged back to the locker rooms.

The recognition of Brandon Waterstone and Christopher Ellis caused me to feel white-hot terror and all I could do was scream it out of my body. When our eyes locked, when I saw their villainous faces staring back at me and eyed hockey sticks in their gloved hands, I was immediately thrown back in time to when I was assaulted.

I couldn't breathe through it, I couldn't reframe the situation and spin it with positive self-talk, and I couldn't ground myself with my fidget ring. Nothing could have prepared me for this. How could this have happened?

Sloane's arms wrapped around me in a protective hug, and I tucked in close. She holds me as tight as she can.

"S-S-Sloane, t-t-that's t-t-them," I struggled to tell her and stammered out my words while sobs racked my body.

Adrenaline kicked in and I couldn't stop shaking in her arms.

She had her chin resting on the top of my head and nodded in recognition of my words. Drew placed his big hand on my shoulder and squeezed. He obviously doesn't know why I'm upset but can put two and two together and I'm sure has figured out that those two disgusting men are the reason for my breakdown.

That's where I am now; paralyzed with fear, weakened with anxiety, and incapable of moving.

"Breathe, Evie, in and out, breathe with me, honey bunny," Sloane whispers into the top of my hair. *My poor roommate is doubling as a Lamaze coach right now.*

Penny is frantically trying to figure out the cause of my anguish, but I'm not able to get any more words out. They are stickier than usual and caught in my throat. Sloane leans over my body and tells her something which appeases her. I hear her mention the word bully, which doesn't even come close to what those two assholes are, but Penny accepts her answer.

I watch the arena explode with pulsing energy as the fans assume that the pregame brawl is about testosterone-fueled competition over a damn gold-colored metal trophy.

But it's not, it's about the long-standing resentment over another championship hockey game played by four of the same men who are meeting again. It's about A and C screwing the girlfriends of their opponents and rubbing bruised egos raw. It's about me being the collateral damage.

I'm starting to panic. I can't get myself in check; the deep breathing isn't working. My breathing increases, my skin sweats and I feel tight all over. My anxiety is spiking and, understandably so. I can't even consider this to be an overreaction, which sometimes my anxiety can be.

But this? This is my worst nightmare. The rowdy crowd, the fighting players who think this is MMA instead of college hockey, and the most obvious; Brandon Waterstone and Christopher Ellis being in the same space as me again.

“You’re safe, they can’t hurt you now, you hear me, they can’t hurt you,” Sloane offers and moves her hand from my shoulder to my back and rubs circles along my shoulder blades.

I mentally go through my coping strategy toolbox and go through my five senses calming strategy and it helps me refocus and push through my anxiety. My fight-or-flight reflexes kick in and I remind myself that I can walk out of here with my friends, or I can sit, stay and face Brandon and Chris head-on.

I can stay and show them that they haven’t broken me.  
*I’m still standing.*

That they tried but failed. *I’m healing every day.*

That regardless of feeling fragile right now, I’m the strongest I have ever been, and they don’t get to tarnish that.  
*I’ve worked hard to be here.*

They don’t get to mess with my survivorship, they don’t get to take anything else away from me. *I’m Evie Wilton and I’m brave. I’m Evie Wilton and I am fierce.*

I decide to fight. I keep my butt planted in my seat and Drew must notice I’m psyching myself up.

“You got this Little Wilton, we got your back,” Drew says to me and waves his hand over to a few of the other guys from our English class who play ball with him.

Sloane and Penny reach for me in solidarity as well and I feel safe and strong enough to stay. *I can do this.*

When Max, A, and C skate over to us I can’t help but wonder if they knew. Did A and C know that Brandon and Chris were playing for Coastal?

If so, why didn’t they tell me and give me a warning that this would be what I would have to face? *Don’t they see the progress I’ve made?*

Did they tell Max? *Why wouldn’t he tell me, I still would have come. I would have just known what to expect. I*



*could have prepared with Melanie and with my group. I'm courageous enough to face this, aren't I?*

If Max knew, did he tell Drew to watch over me? Is that why he has been stuck to my side for two days since Max couldn't be? *Only one way to find out.* I look at Drew; I take a deep breath before I ask him what I'm thinking.

"D-Did he tell y-you, d-d-do you k-know?" I await his answer and pity is written all over his face. I hate that he's looking at me like this. I don't want his pity. I don't want an ounce of pity from anyone. *Big burly football player or not.*

"Yea, he told me, and I'm gonna do whatever I need to do to keep you safe from those motherfuckers," he tells me with a steely look on his face. His scowl is scary, but his eyes are now full of empathy as I hold his stare.

"And for what it's worth Little Wilton, I think you're fucking badass for standing your ground," he tells me with a stiff chin nod. I give him one right back. *I'm Evie Wilton and I am fierce.*

I'm trying to keep my gutsy bravado firmly in place. I'm still pissed that he knows; I have so many questions that I will be demanding answers to. *Max, you're in so much trouble.*

I'm stewing in my seat curled into Sloane's shoulder. My emotions are ping-ponging between anger and anxiety. My thoughts are swirling around and fueling my fucked-up feelings. *This moment definitely calls for f-bombs.*

Penny elbow nudges me, and I see that my brothers throw the number four up with their fingers in reference to our sibling bond. I hear a thud as Max leans his helmet-covered forehead on the glass and pleads for me to look at him. *I'm so fucking mad at you, at all of you.*

I see sincere blue eyes look at me and I can't help but feel the invisible thread that connects his heart to mine tighten. I can make out the I love you he mouths to me and that's all it takes. Those fucked-up feelings form tears in my eyes, and they fall down my face as I look at him. *This beautiful man*

*breaks down all my barriers no matter if I'm quickly constructing them or if they've been cemented in place.*

I see movement behind him, and Monroe and Jake raise their heads to me and then I feel my tear-filled eyes go wide when I see the rest of the Havenwood Hockey Devils skate up and raise their heads in my direction as well.

I feel like they are sending a message that they are going to fight for me, that they understand that there is much more at stake than a trophy and title, and that they are showing everyone in this arena that I'm one of their own.

I feel a sense of relief and their loyalty to me at this moment has me recognizing my own bravery and courage as I wipe my tear-stained cheeks and lift my chin back to them.

"I'm safe, I'm okay, I'm a survivor," I say over and over to myself until I believe every word. *I'm Evie Wilton and I'm a fucking badass (who swears a lot apparently).*

The game gets underway and it's not the type of hockey that showcases a player's skills, athleticism, and dedication to their sport. Instead, the game highlights aggressive play full of fighting, high sticking, cross-checking, players flying into the boards, and every other dirty trick in the book is being laid out on the ice.

Max cross-checks Brandon into the boards not far from where we are sitting and his helmet flies off his head. The ref sends Max to the penalty box and Brandon slams his hand into the glass right in front of me. I yelp and jump back in my seat. Drew and his friends stand up and start slamming the glass with their own fists in response.

It's the drum roll I need before sticking both middle fingers in Brandon's ugly face. He smiles and laughs like the psychopath he is, but it feels good to fight back even in this small way.

"That was badass, Wilton," one of the guys from class says and lifts a closed fist to me for a bump.

"I am a badass," I say stutter-free as I bump his fist. I smile at myself for being able to speak clearly to a guy that's

as big as a house, especially under the current circumstances.

I try to harness that energy and keep it as present as possible. I also try to keep my heart from beating out of my chest when words are exchanged between Max, A, C, Brandon, and Chris.

C gets himself ejected from the game after he punches Brandon, straddles his waist, and goes to town on his face with his fists. Every fan is on their feet cheering for the carnage taking place instead of the face-off that was expected.

I don't know what exactly was said but I do see Brandon look over in our direction, but his beady eyes don't land on me this time, no they are hooked into Sloane. *No wonder, C tried to kill him.*

I am trying to maintain the brave face the support around me has encouraged, but I can't bear to think that this shit storm is going to spill over and have Sloane get hurt as Brandon has clearly connected her to me.

I've never had a best friend before her; her friendship means the world to me, and I want to protect her. She has rehearsal tonight and Penny is going with her which will separate them from me; this is probably a good thing. *I don't want them getting wrapped up in this.*

There are two minutes left of play and then I'm getting the hell out of here. My anger and anxiety are now morphing into sadness. I'm upset and want to go to my dorm room and shut the world out until Monday.

I know there will be parties all over the place tonight and I want to avoid that whole scene and any chance of running into Brandon and Chris. I also need space. I love Max, and I love my brothers, but I can't see them right now. I just want to be alone.

I'm chewing my bottom lip and bouncing my knee in anticipation of this game ending. I can feel my bravery and courage dwindling and my anxiety taking over again. *Jeez Louise, I'm an emotional hurricane. Hurricane Evie.*

The boys are holding their 6-5 lead and Max tries to get another goal in. The Coastal goalie stops his efforts and smacks his puck away with his stick.

There are only twenty seconds left and Max is slammed from behind by Brandon. I watch my boyfriend fly into the boards and my already shallow breath whooshes out of me watching him get hurt. *Use your elbows, baby! Get him in the gut!*

I watch Brandon hold Max captive with his body and he is clearly saying something to him that ignites an eruption of fury in Max. He pushes back into him and sends him falling. Brandon is on his back and Max has his skate to his throat causing my heart to jump in mine.

I'm frozen with fear that Max's resolve is going to snap. He looks like a raging bull who finally caught the red flag. He's ready to rip that flag, or in this case Brandon's neck, to shreds. It's written all over his face, he's highly considering slicing Brandon's neck wide open. *Don't do it, baby, he isn't worth it.*

Max's lips are moving but I can't make out what he's saying. I do see him spit a loogie in his face that has Sloane inhaling a sharp breath. She's been gripping my arm so hard this whole game. I'm surprised it's still attached to my body.

Monroe is skating so fast that it looks like he is floating as he tackles Max to the ice and away from Brandon. He keeps him in a stronghold on the ice away from Brandon and any chance of resuming his murderous position. *Holy cannoli that was too close.*

The buzzer goes off crowning the Havenwood Hockey Devils as the winners of the tournament. There's no on-ice celebration though, the refs are having words with both team coaches and the tension on the ice amongst the players is rising now that there is no more hockey to play. *If you could have even called it that.*

I've had enough. I've reached my limit. I faced my demons and watched my devils battle. I also went to battle and won my own war tonight; I dug into the trenches of my

strength and stayed. I didn't let fear win. I didn't allow those jerks to win either.

Drew, along with campus security, must sense that this powder keg is going to explode and motions for me, Penny, and Sloane to get going with his football buddies flanking us as we leave the arena.

The campus is submerged in students and there are throngs of people everywhere. I know a lot of students from the other schools were coming up today to party regardless if their team won or lost.

Devils' Row will be flooded with both house parties and a block party, the frats will have their doors open and even some of the apartment-style dorms will have some sort of gathering. I just want a quiet place to curl up, sort my head, and process everything that has happened.

We drop Sloane and Penny off at the Performing Arts Center for Sloane's rehearsal. I tell Drew I am going back to my dorm for the night. I still don't want to see my brothers or Max right now. They knew that Brandon and Chris, my freaking attackers, would be here at Havenwood, and they left me to figure it out for myself.

I know they defended me out there tonight but that's not what I asked them to do. I feel caught off guard and like they underestimated me. Sure, I got upset when I saw them, but I was in shock. Instead of my anxiety morphing into a full-blown panic attack, I used my coping skills to manage my feelings and worked through my escalation. *I even gave that dickhead the finger!*

It's apparent that Max, A, and C don't see me at all. They don't see the survivor I've become and only the victim that I was. Their attempts and excuses to shield me from being upset only fuel my conclusions.

Drew protests as he dutifully follows me back to my dorm room. I'm starting to get pissed off at him for not listening to my reasoning and its evidence enough that he has officially crossed over into big-brother territory.

“Drew, I’m an adult and the truth of the matter is, you, A, C, and Max aren’t my k-k-keepers. I want to go into my r-r-room and try to make sense of this mindfuck. If I want to g-g-get out of here l-l-later, I’ll t-t-text you, okay?” I spit that out with some stammering or stuttering. I may be upset but I’m still freaking strong.

He huffs and puffs and looks unhappy with my decision and not going along with his offering to go back to his house and hang out or go to the cafeteria or even the diner. I don’t want to do any of those things. I am uncomfortable that he knows the most intimate details of my attack and I need to make peace with that before I can share a plate of mozzarella sticks with him at dinner.

“Drew, I appreciate our friendship more than you know. I have felt comfortable with you and know you are looking out for me, but now that you know what happened to me, I am feeling exposed and I need some time to make sense of that, too. I know why Max told you, you’re close friends and like another brother to me, but I need some space from everyone. I’m upset that A, C, Max, and subsequently you, all hid this from me. Even if you think it was the right thing, it wasn’t.” He winces at my crystal-clear stutter-free words before responding.

“I’m sorry Evie, if it makes for a softer blow, Max did tell me to give me some context about the significance of his concerns with Coastal coming to campus. He knew I would keep you safe, it was no one’s intention to embarrass you or to make you feel uncomfortable by sharing your story. I thought you were really brave tonight. I wanted to tell you when we got to the arena for the second game, but I was hoping that one of them had already done so since you had wanted to go. I made a poor assumption.”

“I hear you, but I just need some time, okay? I just want to be alone and have a quiet night. If I feel like grabbing dinner, I’ll let you know.” I wave him off not giving him a chance to respond or follow as I check into the dorm with one of the RAs manning the lobby. Since there are so many new faces on campus for the tournament the Residence Directors

are having each resident show their ID to get in so unless I give Drew permission, he can't get in. I leave him on the other side of the glass doors and walk in and head to my room. I get a text message from that damn unknown number as I dig my keys out to open my door.

**Unknown:**

*No Evie, you're exactly who we've been wanting to contact. Like we said last time...we'll find you.*

It all snaps into place. "Unknown" isn't unknown at all. Brandon and Chris have been planning on seeing me since they sent that first message. They knew I would be here just like A, C, and Max knew they were coming. I lock myself inside and slide down the door.

That hurricane of emotions hits me again and I start to feel a panic attack brewing inside of me.

"They don't know where you are, you're safe in your room, everything is going to be okay," I say out loud to myself in between taking in big breaths of air. I breathe in and out, focusing on what I can control. My breathing evens out and the panic passes. I shoot these dickheads a text back,

**Me:**

*FUCK OFF ASSHOLES!!*

I block their number and throw my phone on my desk. I get rid of my clothes, put on a big t-shirt, sweats, and get under my blankets. I throw the comforter over my head blocking the world out. I replay everything over the past few days and identify tons of opportunities for the men in my life to have told me.

Is this why Mom and Dad wanted me out of town this weekend? Did they know, too? I squash that idea, they would have come to campus and taken me home if they knew that I would come face to face with Brandon and Chris again. They wouldn't have allowed it if they knew.

I hear my phone vibrate and I have text messages from A, C, and Max. I read through them and don't respond. I don't want to talk to any of them right now. My phone goes off

again and Max is calling me. I pick up with the intention of shutting his efforts down.

*“H-h-hello?”*

*“Evie, what the hell I’ve been texting you and so have your brothers. Where are you, baby? I want to see you; I need to see you.”*

*“I’m n-n-not up for c-c-company right now Max. I w-w-want to be left alone. Go c-c-celebrate your w-w-win with your t-t-team and I’ll see you t-t-tomorrow if I’m up f-f-for it.”*

*“Fuck that, not an option. Are you back at the house with Drew? I just walked out of the arena. I need to see you and make sure you’re okay, please, Dimples.”*

*“N-N-N-o-o-o.”*

*“No to what? No to being at the house with Drew? Or no to seeing you and making sure you’re okay?”*

*“No t-to all of t-t-that.”*

*“I know there’s a lot going on but I can explain everything once I get to you and see your beautiful face – ”*

I hang up before he can finish his thought. I don’t want to hear it. I silence my phone completely and throw the cover over my head once more. I’m emotionally exhausted and after a while I fall asleep, tuning out the world around me.



## Chapter Fifty-Five

# Max



She hung up on me. She fucking hung up on me. I again find myself holding my phone in a goddamn death grip.

“What did she say?” Chase eagerly asks me. He and Hunter have been texting her since Coach released us. We got an ass chewing and a half by the Dean, Director, and Coach for our display of unsportsmanlike playing during the game. I don’t think Coach thought we’d take it as far as we did when he told us to bury them. *Zero fucking regrets.*

We all have to pick up weekly shifts of community service for the rest of the school year at the local soup kitchen and homeless shelter Havenwood supports as penance for our behavior tonight. Havenwood donates leftover food from the cafeteria to the soup kitchen and there are always campus-

wide fundraisers for the homeless shelter connecting them with the resources that they need.

I know that sometimes the baseball team has to wash linens at the shelter as a part of their “volunteer hours” aka punishment for the shenanigans they pull. They are the rowdiest Devils team on campus and constantly getting into shit.

“She said she doesn’t want to see me and wouldn’t tell me where she is.” I’m pissed. Why is she mad at me? I’ve been trying to keep her safe for days.

I call Drew and he picks up on the first ring. I want to know what the fuck happened and why the fuck he isn’t with her.

*“Hey man, I’m glad you’re calling me back. You’re not going to like what I’m about to tell you.”* My body reacts to his words. I feel tight all over.

*“This have anything to do with Evie not being with you right now?”* I’m grinding my teeth together and I feel like they’re about to pulverize to dust.

*“Yeah, she read me the damn riot act and sent me packing after the game. I dropped her off at her dorm alone. She was adamant about being by herself. She wants space from everyone. She didn’t even want the girls with her. She is really upset that you told me what happened to her, but she is even more hurt that you, Hunter, and Chase didn’t tell her that those assholes were going to be here.”* And there it is.

*“And why the fuck did you let her be all alone if you knew she was this upset?”* I’m taking my guilt out on him and I know it.

*“Don’t give me shit, man. I tried to keep her with me. I offered other options instead of her being alone, but she wasn’t having it. She can be just as hard-headed as her brothers. There was nothing I could do. The RA in the lobby was requiring all guests to be signed in by an accompanying resident. She wasn’t having it, man. I’m sorry I tried and tried*

*speaking to the RAs to let me through, but they refused, even threatened to call campus security on me.” Well, fuck.*

*“What do you mean? I never get stopped when I come and go from her dorm. Now they want a resident to sign you in?”*

*“Yeah, with the tournament going on and so many other students on campus, they were keeping her dorm tight.”*

*“Damn, okay. I mean, I guess that’s a good thing, but not what I want to hear right now. Especially since she’s in there and doesn’t want to fucking see me, so I’m guessing she isn’t going to sign me in.” Fuck.*

*“She said she would get in touch if she wanted to go grab food later. If she does, I’ll text you. I dropped your sister and Sloane off at the Performing Arts Center for rehearsal. Penny was really excited about checking it out, by the way.” Yeah, I don’t miss him calling me out for taking this long to ask where Pen was.*

*“I was getting to that, how were my sister and Red?”*

*“They were fine. They hit it off and Red was going to take her to meet some people in the department who were helping with the show. She’s interested in staying a few more days to get a feel for things here.” His voice sounds funny talking about my sister, and I don’t fucking like it.*

*“Sounds like you were very attentive to the girls today.” I’m being a jackass on purpose.*

*“Don’t do that, man. You asked me to keep them safe, and I did. I listened when Penny talked because one, she does a lot of it, and two, I’m interested in what she has to say.” I’m sure you are, buddy.*

*“Fine, you’re right. Thanks for keeping the girls safe. What’s the plan then?”*

*“If I hear from Evie, I’ll let you know. Sloane said rehearsal should be awhile so I’m not sure what her and Penny’s plans are, but I’m sure they want to get back to Evie after she has had some space. I know that there are parties happening everywhere on campus tonight, including our*

*block. I'm sure your hockey houses are already getting into it.*" The last damn thing I want to do is fucking party.

*"Okay, if you hear from her, let me know, and thanks again for looking out. I'll be in touch soon."*

*"Bro, one more thing. Evie handled herself tonight. She was brave and pretty badass."* This makes my heart and chest swell with pride. She's a warrior. *My strong girl.*

We hang up and I literally run right into Lexi. Why is she always in my damn path? *It's like she's my damn shadow or something.*

"You scored so many goals for me, handsome, I was so proud." She's like a damn cat; she's literally purring while she rubs her body up against my side. Her hand snakes its way under my sweatshirt. I don't care if coach adds on extra volunteering hours, there was no way I was wasting time with a fucking suit to get out of there. I gently grab her wrist and I swear her eyes darkened with lust. I remove her grabby hand away from my body and deposit it at her side. I take a step away from her and she pouts.

"Lexi, stop with your shit, not tonight, not ever. Got it?" I go to sidestep her, and just like the night of our house party, she fucking steps with me. I'm over her shit. I've made it fucking crystal clear to her, and she refuses to listen.

"What are you not getting? I said stop with your shit, Lexi. Stop calling me fucking handsome, stop thinking I'm doing shit for you, and stop fucking touching me. I'm not your boyfriend, I don't like you, and I'm never going to fucking date you or fuck you again. I'm not your anything and the only thing you are to me is my biggest fucking regret. Now, get out of my fucking way and go jump on another dick because you're not getting anywhere near mine," I tell her and hear one of the boys whistle in response.

Her bottom lip starts to quiver, and I feel bad for a whole nanosecond before she opens her damn mouth.

"Just wait. I'm going to find a way for us to be together, Max. Chunky Monkey won't be around forever," she

says with venom glazing over every word. Her eyes have gone from a heated lust to an icy glare. Her face, which was just trembling, is now void of any emotion at all. *Her crazy is showing.*

“What the fuck did you call Evie?” I stare her down and she doesn’t even blink. She’s gone from looking at me like I hung the moon, to trying to gut me with her razor-sharp glare.

“Stay the fuck away from my sister, Lexi. I mean it, don’t say shit about her, again,” Chase says and pulls me away from her. He smacks me on the back and tells me not to worry about her and her garbage. I don’t look back and hope she heeds my advice and jumps on another dude tonight. *As long as she stays away from me and my girl.*

“Now where the fuck is B?” he asks, and I refocus from the scum on the bottom of my shoe to my entire universe. I tell the boys what Drew said, and that Evie is mad as hell.

The only sliver of fucking peace I have is knowing that she is safe in her dorm room and that her RA is running a tighter ship tonight.

I’ve used their lackadaisical check-in system to my advantage, being able to come and go to see her, but with those two fuckers on campus, I’m fucking happy that the RAs are stepping it up.

She wants space from me, and I am dying to see her. I fucking hate this. She is alone and upset and angry with me, and it’s clawing at my heart. I’m trying to respect the time she wants and give it to her, but I cave and call her again. Straight to voicemail. *Fuck.*

I send her a text in another effort to make things right.

**Me:**

*I love you and I'm so fucking sorry. I know you're angry with me and even if I deserve it; I fucking hate it. I just want to talk to you and see you, make sure you're okay, and explain things. Please talk to me.*

*Don't shut me out, pretty girl.*

She doesn't call or text me back. I don't hear from her and when I do finally lay eyes on her... she's far from being safe in her dorm room like I thought she was.

## Chapter Fifty-Six

# Edison



I hang out in the library a lot when I'm on campus. It's warm, clean, quiet, and safe. I can stay here as long as I need to and no one questions me. Doesn't matter what day of the week, what time of the day, I can come here and seek out one of the private tutor rooms and breathe out a sigh of relief.

I can set my things down and not worry about them being stolen. I can take a nap and not worry about being groped by unwanted hands. I can study in peace and get my work done, chipping away at a degree that I hope will lead to a goddamn better life than what I've fucking lived so far.

I also like that during midterms and finals, the librarians arrange study snack packs for students. There are apples, bananas, cookies, carrots, chips, coffee, and water for the taking, and take I do. Any chance I have to eat, I take it because I truly never know when my next meal is coming my

way. I take nothing for granted and have learned to survive on the bare minimum. *Now is not the time for my story, though.*

The library is about to close, and I've stayed until the librarian does her final walk-through. I sometimes sneak past her and stay overnight, but the timing was off tonight. I step out onto the cobblestone paths and there are a million more people here on campus than there usually are. It's been like this since yesterday, but today it seems to have doubled. I bet it has to do with the hockey tournament that the school is hosting. I've seen some posters hanging around campus.

Posters that feature a smug face with chocolate brown wavy hair that curls at the ends, a chiseled jaw, and a mouth that when pressed to mine, made me feel on fucking fire. Hunter Wilton. *Cabron.*

An unapologetic selfish prick who's entitled and only cares about himself and has cost me a huge chunk of my already flimsy paycheck. I haven't had a damn real meal in two days because he blew me off. I'm feeding my stomach with stolen bodega peanuts and the free fruit sitting in a bowl on the welcome desk inside the health center. He's a star player on the stupid hockey team and a huge pain in my fucking ass.

He sucks at math and needs my help to stay eligible to play, which is why I was assigned as his tutor. He misses or shows up late to our required appointments and gets off with a hand slap. Meanwhile, I can't refill my meal card and I don't get paid if the asshole doesn't do the work.

He's also the brother to a nice girl named Evie who's only one of a handful of people I've met in my entire life who I didn't want to gut with my switchblade. There's something about Evie that I identify with and I'm not sure what it is, but it is comforting to me all the same.

I make my way through the groups of people who are in way too good of a mood for my liking. I've never been that happy a day in my miserable fucking life. I fight like hell for everything I have and will bark, bite, crawl, claw, and stab someone to defend it. I've been dealt a shit hand since I



entered the world and can count the number of times something has happened to me worth smiling about.

I'm walking through campus towards the homeless shelter I have to live in. I'm here at Havenwood on a scholarship that I worked my ass off for. It covers my academic program only. Havenwood had overextended its acceptance letters and ended up having to double and triple up on rooms for students who have mommies and daddies who will pay for room and board. *Rich pricks.*

This means us scholarship students got the short end of the stick. I was looking forward to having something that was mine, my own space. Instead, I stay off and on at the homeless shelter and have been doing this since I was a freshman. I'm a junior now and Havenwood still hasn't offered me fucking housing, even though I apply every damn semester. Anyway, it beats the alternative, which is living out on the streets. *Been there, done that, no thanks.*

I'm walking towards the edge of campus towards the frat houses and can already hear loud music, can smell cigarettes mixed with pot smoke and can see a ton of bodies crushed together, partying it up in the near distance. I have to cut through here to get to the shelter before the Director closes the doors for the night. They are strict as hell about that and it's too late for me to sneak back into the library to sleep in a tutor room since it's locked up. I take inventory of my backpack, messenger bag, phone, and switchblade. I pull my black beanie down on my head and walk through the assholes, partying it up without a care in the fucking world. *Must be nice.*

I'm minding my own business, as usual, making my way through when I'm pushed from behind and then flying into a blonde girl standing in front of me. She sneers her face up at me as if I'm gum on the bottom of her designer shoes. *Put a.*

She makes a big deal out of grabbing onto the muscled biceps of one of the two large guys she is talking to. One steadies her, the other pretends to remove dirt from her skirt to

run his hand over her ass. She doesn't mind and giggles at the gesture. *Asqueroso.*

Some of my things have rolled out of my bag when I fell and I'm on the ground collecting them when I hear one guy ask her if she knows, "their sister Evie." My ears listen in, and I feel my skin burst with goosebumps.

I sneak a peek up and eye both men. They both are muscular looking like the guys I tutor, and at least six feet tall. I take in their hair and eye color and notice they are both wearing identical Coastal College Hockey sweatshirts, but with different numbers and last names stitched on the front. Waterstone and Ellis. *Pretentious fucking names.*

I've seen Evie around campus with another hockey player and assume that they are a couple. *Why are these guys asking about her?* I pretend to keep stuffing things into my bag and remain crouched down on the ground below them.

"She's an old friend from high school. We'd really like to reconnect with her if you know what I mean," Ellis says and the way he licks his lips is fucking foul.

"What is it with that slut getting all the hot guys lately?" Blondie whines.

Seems she's put out about not being their chosen one. *I wouldn't let these two assholes touch me a ten-foot fucking pole.*

"No baby, we're not interested in her like you think we are. We're just hoping to get a little payback," the other guy says and his eyes narrow. It doesn't sit well with me. *I don't like it at all.*

"Well, boys I'd love to help, but what's in it for me?" Bimbo blondie runs her hands down each of these creeps' arms, and they look down at her like they want to screw her right here on the fucking ground.

"Once we take care of that bitch and put her in her place once and for all, I'd love to take care of that fine ass of yours. My boy here can take care of your hot pussy. What do you say gorgeous, tell us where to find Evie, and then we'll

fuck you so hard you'll be coming to our campus to get your fill from now on," Ellis says while squeezing her ass cheek over her skirt. *Holy shit, did this asshole just say that?* She smiles, spurring him on.

"You boys are in luck tonight, then. That stupid bitch lives across the hall from me in our dorm. Why don't we head over there now? You can have your wicked ways with me and then take care of Evie. I refuse to be second to her." Blondie grabs the crotches of both guys when she says this and they both grunt in response. *What the actual fuck is happening here?*

"Lead the way, sexy Lexi. I'm gonna fuck you so hard you won't be able to sit for a week. And then I'm going to tear open little miss Evie. Yeah, your right blondie, we are in luck tonight."

Nothing about this feels fucking right. This doesn't sound like a friendly visit for Evie and this bitch, Lexi, seems all too eager to play a part in whatever fucked up shit that's about to go down.

If I don't start walking toward the shelter right now, I won't make it and will be shit out of luck with sleeping arrangements for the night.

I make my decision as I hear what these two goons say next while I walk behind them. Waterstone leans down and says to Ellis,

"Those fucking Wiltons will finally get what's coming to them. The only thing they fucking care about is their cunt sister. After we fuck her up, we grab our shit and leave. This bitch, Lexi, can be our alibi. Use a condom on Evie but fuck this bitch raw to leave evidence that we were there."

"Yeah man, I got it. We've been over this how many fucking times in the past few weeks? I want those fuckers to pay, especially after tonight. That fucking boyfriend of hers had his goddam skate on my neck, he could've fucking killed me."

“What are you boys plotting back there?” Lexi calls from up ahead.

“Just wondering if you like having two cocks in you at the same time,” One fucker yells to her, not caring who hears him.

I turn my head in disgust at what I’m hearing. I’ve heard some nasty shit in my life, especially growing up how I did. This though? Overhearing a plan to rape and hurt an unsuspecting girl who is probably in her room is throwing my morality compass into overdrive.

Fuck it, I’ll find a dry corner of campus to sleep in tonight. I slink my way back to Havenwood behind them and no one suspects me to be in on their plan as we come to a residence hall and Lexi signs in these two assholes. I think on my feet and ask the RA to speak to the Residence Director about the room and board options for winter break and the RA heads to the office to get an application and grab the director. I skip out even though I’d love that fucking opportunity and continue following them to Lexi’s floor.

I duck into a common area and peer around the corner to see them go into a room and assume that Evie is across from it. I see both assholes nod to the door across from the one they enter and figure out what to do next with the limited time I know I have.

I take out my phone to scroll for Evie’s contact info. When I call her, it goes straight to voicemail. I assess who I should call next. I don’t fucking trust the police or campus security, so they aren’t an option. They wouldn’t believe me if I told them the shit that I had just heard. Law enforcement doesn’t trust anyone who looks like me, anyway. Doesn’t matter that I carry a fucking 4.0 GPA at this prissy private school. *No one ever believes the skinny gang tatted Latina, do they?*

Her dipshit brother can come and sort this shit out. *Those two guys said they knew him, right?* I find Hunter Wilton’s number that the Tutoring Center gave me and call

him. He doesn't pick up. *Shocker*. He hates me as much as I hate him, so I leave a message,

*“Hunter, it’s Edison. I know this is going to sound fucking crazy, but I think your sister is in trouble. Two guys at a party were talking about going after her. I don’t have time to explain how I know this, but I think you need to come to her dorm and make sure she’s okay. They said that they knew you and Evie from high school or something. They’re in this girl Lexi’s room right now, buying time before they go after Evie. I’m going to give her a heads-up, just get here, okay? This shit is fucked up.”*

I shoot him a text telling him to check his fucking voicemail. I drop my bags and slide them under the couches in the common area and then make my way to Evie’s door. If there was ever a time to channel my shitty past, now’s the time. These motherfuckers don’t scare me.

## Chapter Fifty-Seven

# Evie



My eyes fly open, and I wake up to female screams. The intrusive and unexpected shouting is frightening for a moment before I hear, “harder, faster, just like that, more, more, more.” I think it’s safe to assume the screams are of the pleasure variety.

My heart rate is elevated from my jarring wake-up call, and I take a moment to calm myself down. It’s all I’ve been doing all fucking day; trying to get myself under control. I need to talk to my therapist. I need to talk to her about seeing Brandon and Chris. About their creepy text messages.

My anxiety won’t settle. I can’t hold it back any longer. My eyes fill with tears. I’m so over this crap. A full-blown panic attack is on the horizon. I can feel it brewing inside of me as sweat rakes over my skin. My heart takes off at marathon speed. *I can’t believe they’re here. That they’ve been contacting me.*

My fingers are trembling as I shoot Melanie a text and ask for an emergency session. As I await her response, I see texts from my brothers, Sloane, and Max. I scroll past A and C, *fuck them for keeping this from me*, and read messages from my best friend and boyfriend,

**Sloane:**

*You ok, honey bunny? I know you wanted some alone time, but we're worried about you, considering the day you've had. Penny and I are going to grab some food. Do you want me to bring you back anything?*

**Max:**

*I love you and I'm so fucking sorry. I know you're angry with me and even if I deserve it; I fucking hate it. I just want to talk to you and see you, make sure you're ok, and explain things. Please talk to me. Don't shut me out, pretty girl.*

I don't respond to either of them. Some tears escape and hit my phone screen. I wipe my eyes and will myself to get some control. I place one hand over my heart and one on my belly to focus on my coping skills.

My breathing. *In and out. In and out.*

Counting backward. *100-99-98-97-96-95...*

Reminding myself of my reality. *Brandon and Chris don't know where I am. They will leave campus soon now that the tournament is over. They can't hurt me anymore.*

Reminding myself of what I can control. *I can control how I react to them. I've survived them before and will survive today.*

Convinced I've staved off my pending panic, I get up out of my lavender cocoon and grab some water. There's a knock on my door and I ask who it is since I'm not expecting anyone. Max, Drew, A, and C can't get in the building unless I go to sign them in, and I still don't want to see them.

"It's Edi, Evie. Open up." I hear a whisper yell on the other side of the door. *Edi? That's weird.*

I open my door and see Edi standing there and even though I see her lips moving a mile a minute; I don't hear a single word she says over the male voice yelling, "Take it all bitch, fucking take it."

I freeze. *No. No. No.*

I know that voice and I know those words that the particular voice is saying. The female voice is screaming that she's coming and then it's quiet.

I can't move from my open doorway. I'm staring over Edi's shoulder, my eyes glued to the door behind her. Lexi's door. Those exact words from that exact voice are coming from Lexi's room. *How could that be?*

Those words and his voice trigger a video reel of my attack; I'm reliving that heinous night, trapped inside the exact moment when those words were said to me by him as he jammed the blunt stick handle inside of me. When his friend held me down. When they changed my life forever.

I think Edi is still talking. I can't make out her words. They sound like she is a hundred miles away, even though she is standing two feet away from me.

"Evie!" she shouts in my face just as Lexi's door opens. And then the world I've worked so hard to rebuild shatters as I stand face-to-face with Brandon Waterstone and Christopher Ellis.

They shook me to my core when I saw them on the ice during the game earlier. But this time, there isn't a protective glass and hockey team full of my brothers and boyfriend in between us.

No, oddly enough, all that stands between them, and I is a girl I've had two conversations with, who is barely five feet tall and weighs maybe a hundred pounds.

"I'll leave you to it," Lexi says and runs her fingers over the shoulders of both Brandon and Chris. "Oh, and Evie, I would tell you to enjoy my sloppy seconds, but you've been doing that with Max for long enough," she sneers at me before shutting her door.

My brain is trying to put these random pieces together and I'm momentarily distracted when Edi pushes me inside as Brandon lunges at the same time. Chris follows and shuts us inside and my brain is now officially caught up to the situation in front of me and I try to scream, but nothing comes out.



For the second time, I'm being attacked by these two men, and I can't get my voice to work.

Edi and I are being pushed back into the room and I instinctively reach for whatever I can get my hands on to protect myself, which happens to be Sloane's hair straightener. Edi is already holding out a switchblade in front of her chest. All I want to do is melt into the floor and seep out of this damn room.

"Told you we'd find you, Evie. Imagine how excited we got when we found out that we were going to be playing your fucking asshole brothers?" Brandon is the first to speak. He was always the leader of the two of them. I'm so far past a panic attack, my feelings of anxiety have never been higher and I'm afraid I'm going to pass out and won't be able to fight them off.

"G-G-Get the h-h-hell out of m-m-my r-r-room, just just fucking leave m-me a-a-alone," is all I can get out as I keep backing up, not letting go of their gaze. I lift the hair straightener higher up in front of me like a bat. I'm sure these predators can smell the fear seeping from my pores, but I'm not about to back down.

"Oh Evie, this is just like old times, don't you think?" Chris is rubbing his hands together as he approaches me. I want to throw up when I see his predatory gaze roam all over me.

"And who the fuck are you?" Chris turns to Edi and questions her presence.

"I'm the bitch that's going to slice your dick clear off your body, *pendejo*," Edi says, pointing her blade at Chris.

"I do love them feisty; my cock is already hard thinking about breaking you in." Brandon licks his lips as he takes steps towards Edi and she's now pointing her knife at him instead.

They've managed to push us up against the two desks and my butt hits the back of my chair. *Fuck, there's nowhere to go.*

“Okay that’s enough talking,” Chris grits out as reaches for me, and I swing the hair straightener so hard it connects with his nose. Blood shoots out of his nostrils, and he grabs his ugly face in his hands. *I hope it’s fucking broken!* I don’t let up. I hit him over and over again until both of his forearms are on either side of his ears, in a protective hold.

“You bitch! I think you broke my fucking nose!” He yells, and his hand reaches out and tangles with the dangling cord. He pulls on it and my impromptu weapon goes flying out of my hands. *Keep fighting, don’t stop!* I grab whatever books I can reach and start smacking him with them. They are flimsy paperbacks and don’t do much but catch him off guard.

His arms come off his face and he restrains my hands. I start kicking him wherever I can and make contact with his shins, his knees, and even stomp on his foot. He momentarily let’s go of my limp wrists, and hits me so hard in my stomach, I crumple to the floor and try to recover from having the wind knocked out of me.

“Stop fucking fighting me!” He yells in my face as he straddles my body.

“NO! STOP!” I scream and continue to thrash on the floor. I try to buck him off me and use whatever strength I have to lift my thighs enough to knee him in his tiny dick. All he ends up doing is pressing down on me harder.

“You like it rough, Evie. That boyfriend of yours gives it to you soft like the pussy he is?” I’m still thrashing about, resisting his efforts to pull my t-shirt up. His ugly face is turning red with anger.

He transfers both of my wrists into one hand, locking them together, and his other hand tries to move the waistband of my sweats down my hips. *No. Fucking. Way. Is. That. Happening.*

I start shouting and his traveling hand comes back up to cover my mouth, and I bite his fingers as hard as I can.

“Owww, stop fucking biting me, bitch!” He cries out and releases me. I try to get away, looking for anything to

defend myself with.

“You want me to bite you back, Evie?” He snaps his teeth and attempts to grab me. I reach under my bed and grab a forgotten sneaker and hit him over the head as many times as I can before he grabs it from me.

He re-tackles me and has me pinned down harder this time. He doesn't hesitate to pull apart the neckline of my t-shirt, ripping it down the middle and exposing my purple bra. He bites the tops of my breasts, and I scream as loud as I can.

“If you don't make her stop fucking screaming like a fucking banshee, I fucking will,” Brandon sneers, and before I can scream again, Chris slaps me in my face so hard, I'm momentarily disoriented, and my head falls to the side.

When I come to, Edi is still fighting Brandon. Her shirt is shredded, and all you can see is her blood-soaked white bra. He's trying to force her to touch his erection, and she squeezes his crotch to the point where she's visibly shaking. He stumbles back grabbing his dick.

Edi quickly scrambles to her feet, picks up her fallen switchblade, and stabs Brandon in the back as he's hunched over. She doesn't stop. He screams out again and topples forward. “CHRIS!” he yells. Chris abandons his failed attempt to remove my sweatpants and shifts off me. He yells when he sees the knife in Brandon's back.

Chris roars and throws Edi airborne like a ragdoll. She hits the wall and after I see her forehead hit the cinderblock, I let out a scream. I grab my desk lamp and jump on his back and try to hit him on the head. He quickly is out of my grasp. I meet the same fate as Edi. I'm thrown into the wall and hit my head hard. I groan as I hit my bed and roll off of it onto the floor with a loud thump.

I hear my door being kicked along with shouting from the hallway. The last thing I hear before my world goes dark is Max screaming my name. *He's here.*

## Chapter Fifty-Eight

# Max



We're back at the house and there is a raging party happening outside, starting with the hockey house next door. All the frats and Devils' Row are ablaze with partygoers celebrating our tourney win. Our doors are closed, though. I could give a shit about any of that. I told the boys I wasn't in the mood and from the looks on Hunter's and Chase's faces; they aren't either. Monroe and Jake are loyal brothers and stay in, too. There is a knock on the door and Drew comes in with a bunch of pizzas and a case of beer.

"This is from me and the guys at the house. Congrats on your tourney guys. I know it was a bloodbath out there, but you guys held it down, regardless."

We're all in the living room, spread out on the couches, and the boys dig into the pizza offering after thanking Drew.

I'm too on edge to eat and pound a beer. I'm about to fucking blow as I check my phone for the millionth time. *Come on, Evie, give me something.*

She hasn't responded to me, to Red, or to her brothers. I hate that she's mad at me. *Today has been beyond fucked up.* This isn't good. I feel it in my goddamn bones.

"You hear from her yet?" Drew asks and I shake my head and run my hand through my hair and tug on it. *I fucking miss her.* She wanted some space between us tonight and it feels wrong. I'm antsy as fuck, trying to respect her wishes.

I call my sister and she tells me she and Red are going to grab dinner at the cafe. They still haven't heard from Evie. She mentions Red wanting to skip rehearsal, and that Evie dug her heels in and forbade it, demanding time alone. I sigh, thinking of her pushing her friends away, her family away, pushing me away. *You're not alone, Evie, I'm right here.*

We hang up, promising she'll text me if she hears anything. I relay my conversation to the group. My knee is bouncing up and down as I sit on the couch, staring at the unanswered text thread. *Fuck, I'm so sorry, baby.*

I don't like the idea of Pen and Red walking out and about with so many drunk dicks out there. I'm also just about fucking done with the space between me and my girl. Red can sign me in. I'm getting to my Evie now. *Fuck this.*

"I'm going to make sure Pen and Red are alright, and then I'm going to sit outside her door until she lets me in. I'm fucking done waiting." They all stand, we grab our shit, and we're out the door.

## Chapter Fifty-Nine

# Hunter



The guys and I walk across Devils' Row and get slowed down when people offer us their congratulations, along with beers, shots, and whatever else they have on them.

The jersey chasers and puck bunnies surround us and offer nights to remember to include fucking, blow jobs, and as much pussy as we want. We keep it moving and some girl leaps into Monroe's arms and kisses the shit out of him.

"Dude, you coming or going?" I yell back at him as the group keeps moving forward without him. I know he'll drop the girl and rejoin us in a second, anyway. Monroe loves girls and pussy just like the rest of us, but he's a loyal son of a bitch. He's an only child and has found brothers amongst us. Sure enough, he strolls up to me and rubs the Jersey chaser's kiss off his mouth with the back of his hand.

"What not your type, bro?" I eye him.

“Nah, saw her coming out of the house next to Drews. Her pussy is still warm from that romp.” He makes me laugh, and it takes me by surprise considering I’m fucking tired, irritated, and still out for Waterstone and Ellis’s blood. *Those worthless fucks.*

Max is checking his phone nonstop, and I know he’s making sure to not miss B reaching out. I want to make sure she’s okay too. She didn’t respond to our group chat when C and I were messaging her earlier. I know today sucked for her and I can already tell she’s fucking pissed at us for not telling her that those bastards would be here. *Everything is so fucking fucked right now.*

We make it to campus and head toward the cafe. I see Red and Penny talking to a group of guys and already can tell how this shit is going to play out when some jackass puts his arm around Penny’s waist and grips her close to him. Drew starts power walking, taking long strides toward her with his meaty fists at his side. *Max is so fucking screwed.*

I have no doubt those two girls can handle themselves. They have a backbone and can show their teeth when they need to. I realize B is like that too and that she has sprouted a pair in the past three years. The thought makes me feel proud of her, especially after she stayed in the arena today. Watching her flip those two shit stains off was fucking badass.

C has taken off in a full-blown sprint to reach Red, who is swatting away some douche’s grabby hands who won’t stop touching her.

I can hear her southern accent drawl out her polite decline of this asshole’s advances. He’s not fucking listening and goes for her again. She shows that backbone I know she has and smacks him across his face and yells out,

“You, mister, need to learn some manners! I asked you to remove your hands from my backside and since you didn’t listen, I’m knocking some sense into ya since your mama did a piss-poor job of it!” This girl takes no shit and I like her for C.

I take off after C and the rest of our group follows. I watch as C grabs the creep by his collar and lifts him off the

ground and slams him up against the cafe building wall. *C's going to fucking kill him.*

“The lady asked you to keep your hands to yourself. Stay the fuck away from her or I’ll make sure you never fucking touch anything again.” C drops the asshat from his grip, and he lands on the ground with a thud. He gets to his feet and looks right at Red and calls her a bitch.

C punches him so hard in the face that he falls to the ground again from the impact. He cries out while he scurries backward before he gets to his feet. His buddy, who was too close to Penny for Drew’s comfort, runs off. *Pussy.*

C turns to Red, and I think he is expecting her to grasp her hands together to her chest and call him her goddamn hero. That isn’t what happens.

“Chase Wilton, I can defend and take care of myself like a big girl. I’m not some damsel in distress. My daddy and Davis taught me how to fend for myself.” She has her finger in C’s face and then her southern manners take over and she composes herself,

“But I thank you for your efforts.” Per usual, C is just staring at her and appears hypnotized by her. He needs to make a goddamn move. Their song and dance is getting fucking annoying.

My phone rings and I pull it out of my pocket. *Edison? Why the fuck is my math tutor calling me on a Saturday night? I doubt it’s to congratulate me on the win.*

I don’t have a tutoring session until Monday, which I’m already planning to get out of. I haven’t seen her since I kissed her and then was on the receiving end of a hard as fuck smack. A smack I deserved for putting my own hands on her when she didn’t want me to. *Lesson fucking learned.*

I pocket my phone, not wanting to deal with whatever she fucking wants. Max is interrogating Penny about the guy who had his arm around her waist, and she is ignoring his efforts to be a protective big brother. Drew is scowling at her, clearly unhappy that another man was touching her. *I called*



*that shit.* Max definitely has his own sister-fucker to worry about. *Serves you right, asshole.*

My phone goes off again and I now have a damn text message from her. *What the fuck does this woman want?! I open it and she's asking me to listen to my voicemail. What the hell is so goddamn important?*

I follow the directive and step away from the group and press play. My blood boils to lava as I listen to her voice hitch in concern for B's safety. I feel as if the ground beneath me bottoms out when she pleads with me, "Just get here okay?" I scream out for C and Max, and everyone comes over to me and I replay the voicemail.

"We need to go now. Those fuckers found B."

We all take off running and Max is flying across campus and screaming for people to move out of his way. We get to the residence hall doors and Max runs past the RAs gathered in the lobby who are checking people in. I don't give a fuck and follow right behind him with C and the rest of the boys behind him. I hear the RA question Red and hear her say that there is an urgent matter upstairs and that they should call campus security immediately. *You better call the fucking coroner's office, too. They are fucking dead!*

We are running up the stairs and the door to the floor flies open and we pass the common room. For some odd fucking reason, I look back and eye Edison's overstuffed backpack and messenger bag under the couch. My heartbeat is fucking hammering against my ribcage. She never leaves those bags alone. They are always within her grasp. *Where is she?*

## Chapter Sixty

# Max



I'm standing in front of her door, and I hear screaming and then something hard hits the wall. I'm losing my fucking mind and screaming her name as loud as I can, "EEEVVVIEEE!!!," as I jiggle the door handle and kick the wood, trying like hell to open it. Hunter and I kick the door three times and it flies open. I'm on overdrive as I survey the scene and let out a blood-curling sound that comes straight from my soul.

Ellis looks fucking shocked by our presence and is standing over Evie's motionless body. I take two giant steps before I'm on this bastard and throw his ass on the floor. "You motherfucker! What did you do to her?!" I scream and don't stop punching him until there's fresh blood flowing from his already swollen nose and face. "I'm going to fucking kill you!" I yell before knocking this asshole out cold.

I drop to the floor and cradle my precious girl in my arms. *Oh, God, Evie, oh, God.* My shaky hands hold her close to my chest. *I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry I didn't protect you.*

“Get me something to wipe off this blood!” I hear Chase shout into the room. He's handed a t-shirt and falls to his knees beside her. He hesitates while looking at her and begins to shake uncontrollably. “Why the fuck would they do this to her again?” I take it from his hand and try to wipe away some of the blood from her exposed and bruised chest.

Waterstone is on the floor, moaning and bleeding from his back. There's a knife sticking out of his side. Hunter, who has a blanket in his hands, immediately walks over to that sack of shit, and knocks his ass out with one punch.

“Jesus, fuck. How the fuck did this happen? Here, cover her, keep her warm,” Hunter gently drapes the blanket over her body and looks like he is going to explode.

“Monroe,” my voice cracks and I've never been so fucking afraid in all my life. I know she's breathing but it's not good enough. She's not here. She's not awake. He comes right over to us. “Please check her pulse.”

“She's unconscious but breathing, her pulse is strong,” Monroe tells me, and grips my shoulder tight after he removes his two fingers from her neck. “She's breathing man, she's alive, you got her, you hear me, Max? You got here in time.”

Tears are streaming down my face. *I didn't get here in time, she's hurt, she's not opening up those pretty doe eyes, she's not here with me.* I place kisses all over the crown of her head.

“I love you, Evie. Please hold on for me. It's going to be ok. I'm here now. I'm never leaving you, so you better not leave me. Please, baby,” I say into her hair.

“Get her glasses. She needs her glasses!” I call out and run my fingers over her closed eyes. *Fuck, I'm so sorry Evie. I'm so fucking sorry; I didn't keep you safe.*

## Chapter Sixty-One

# Hunter + Chase



## Hunter

C and I are kneeling next to our sister and he's trying to comfort her. He's rubbing the back of her head and looks fucking sick to his stomach when his hand has streaks of blood on it. He wipes his tears away from his cheek with his blood-stained hand and when he hears Red gasp in horror from the doorway.

He bolts up, he's taking a few steps toward her, reaching her just in time as she faints. He attempts to stir her and she's out cold. *This shit can't be really happening.*

Drew is at Penny's side while she's been on the phone with 911 since we opened the door. I can hear her relaying the scene in front of her to the dispatcher. I can see it, but I can't fucking believe it.

I turn away to hide the goddamn water in my eyes. I scan the room and see jet-black hair. *Edison*. She's wedged between B's bed and the wall. She is so fucking small; her body is mostly hidden beside her long hair sticking out. No wonder nobody saw her until now.

The burst of energy, anger and fucking pain that rips through me is unlike any shit I've ever felt seeing her like that. It's such a fucking foreign and unexpected feeling. Fucking feelings, I hate feelings. *I don't want any.*

But looking at her like this? I'd fucking give anything to have those dark and soulful eyes look at me. I want them on me, oozing with the mutual hate we share for each other. I want them on me, plotting my murder.

But that's not happening. Because she's hurt. Because she's really fucking hurt. *Because these two motherfuckers attacked my fucking sister and my goddamn math tutor.*

My inner demon is fucking pissed, and I roar into the room. I push a knocked-out Ellis out of the way so I can get to her. I'd move a fucking mountain if I had to and that thought nearly knocks me out.

The room is cramped with furniture and all of us inside. I kneel on the bed and pick her up bridal style and hold her to my chest. My heart hasn't stopped hammering against my ribs since I saw her bags, but now having her in my arms. I feel like my heart is going to break out of my chest.

I sit down on the floor with her to assess her injuries. When I pull her away from me to look, I see her bloody white bra; I see blood caked on her ears, neck, and chest. She is unconscious and her breathing is shallow, unlike B's. *What the fuck did they do to her?*

"Monroe, please check her pulse," I ask him, and I don't recognize my goddamn voice. He comes over and takes her vital sign and his eyes go wide.

"Her pulse is thready and weak. She needs to go to the hospital, like now, man." I cradle her back into my chest, keeping her little body close to me.

I don't fucking understand why she's here, and why she's in the same predicament as B. *How did she get mixed up with Waterstone and Ellis?* I feel myself rock back and forth, trying to comfort her, keeping her safe in my embrace. *Fucking wake up and look at me!*

"Get me something to cover her up, would you?" I yell out. I see Jake rummage in a closet and pull down one of B's zip-up hoodies. He gingerly places it around her and asks me why the girl from the cafeteria is in my arms, in my sister's dorm room, with

similar injuries to B. I have zero answers for him. *I wish I fucking knew.*

After what feels like a goddamn hour, police officers are apprehending Waterstone and Ellis and work with the paramedics to assess their injuries. When a paramedic tries to take Edison from me, I possessively hold her tighter to me and tell the woman that I will bring her out to the gurney that they have set up in the common room.

I have a really hard time letting her go. Both my brain and heart are screaming at me to not let her out of my fucking sight. I grab her bags that are still tucked under the couch and hold on to them for her. They are heavy and it's like she keeps everything she owns inside these old ass bags.

They run lines and are talking in a medical language I don't understand. Monroe does though, the smart asshole that he is, and he tells me what is going on. I look over at my sister, who is still in Max's arms. He's fighting with them about putting her down on a gurney and a police officer is now getting involved.

He's got a wild look in his eyes when the paramedic, who is a man, tries to appease him and begins checking over B while she remains in his grasp. He looks goddamn feral when the paramedic attempts to listen to B's heart with a stethoscope on her bare chest. Max growls out his disapproval and I'm positive he fucking showed his teeth.

Jake and Drew are trying to reason with him to let them do their jobs to help B. I've seen enough. He's got to work with them on this.

"Max, what the fuck! I swear to fucking God, let them help my sister!" I yell out, not giving a fuck if a man or woman helps B as long as someone fucking helps her.

A young female officer comes over and places her hand on Max's arm and tells him she will make sure that Evie is okay and that no one hurts her. She must sense that Max doesn't want another male near B, and I see his tension release slightly.

He looks at the young female officer, and she gives him a reassuring smile. They must come to some silent understanding as he gently places B on the gurney. The two female paramedics who were checking over a now handcuffed Waterstone and Ellis switch out their gloves and go to work on my sister with the directive of the young female officer.

“Fuck me, that shit was hot as hell, her taking control like that,” Monroe says as he watches the exchange between the blonde cop and Max. *He’s always thinking with his damn dick.* After he gets fucking control of himself, he interprets what the paramedics are doing to both B and Edison for me, and his eyes keep flitting over to the blonde who meets his gaze a few times. She blushes and turns away to continue taking statements from all of us.

I see Chase kneeling in front of Red, who is sitting with a paramedic who was checking her out after her fainting spell. I hear him tell her what happened in her dorm room from what we can gather. Her eyes are full of tears and when they fall, C wipes them away with his thumbs.

Some police officers are pulling out yellow tape and I hear one tell the other to seal off the room as he deems it a crime scene. *How the fuck did they find her?*

Those two words hit me in the gut. Crime scene. They attacked B in her own dorm room tonight. They attacked Edison. They hurt my sister. Again. I failed her a second time. I didn’t protect her. What if I didn’t ignore Edison’s phone call? Could I have gotten here in time? *I’m so fucking sorry.*

I feel the well of emotion take over and my eyes scan over my sister and my math tutor on gurneys, Waterstone and Ellis in handcuffs, the tear-stricken emotional faces of Max, C, Red, and Penny, the somber expressions of Drew, Jake, and Monroe, and I can’t fight it a second longer. My own eyes spill tears that drip down my face and I cry like a fucking baby.

# Chase

I’m the emotional one out of the three of us; always have been. Maybe it’s because I’m the youngest even if it is only by mere minutes. So, when I see A cry, I deposit Sloane to Jake to watch over and hug my big brother in a bear hug. He’s stiff as a damn board, but I don’t let up. I hug him until he slumps into me.

“It’s okay man, it’s over, it’s really over. Those fuckers aren’t getting out this time. No one is going to hurt her again,” I tell him and try to swallow up some of his pain.

“We didn’t protect her. They fucking got to her again. They hurt her. We didn’t stop them,” I hear him murmur into my shoulder. His whole body is shaking as I hold him up. He gets a hold of himself, and we pull apart. His sweatshirt is stained with his math tutor’s blood and it’s a reminder that there is so much about tonight that we don’t know.

“We gotta call Mom and Dad. They are going to go ape shit,” he says as he wipes his face with his sweatshirt sleeve. He’s right, they are going to go freaking crazy.

“We can do it together. Let’s get an update so we can tell them when we call.” I walk over to the paramedics and Max, who are next to B’s gurney.

“We are going to call our parents. Can you tell us what’s going on with her?” I ask the two female paramedics.

“Are you family?” she asks.

“Yes, we’re her brothers,” I tell her as she looks at B and then A and me over.

“And what about this guy? He keeps saying he’s her fiancé, but I don’t see a ring on her finger. If you want him to be aware of her medical status, then you need to confirm he’s family to your sister before I release any information.” She points her finger at Max. *Fiancé? What the hell?* I eye Max and his eyes plead with me to play along.

“I already told you, she’s my fiancé. Now tell me what the fuck is going on with her,” Max yells.

“It’s ok, you can share what you need to about our sister in front of us and her fiancé,” Hunter tells her, and she nods her head in agreement.

“We’re taking her to General to be looked over. Her vitals are stable, and we’ve started a line of antibiotics to get ahead of any infection that may be brewing from the bites she sustained to her breasts. She has a concussion, but we won’t know the extent of her trauma until we run some tests back at the hospital. I can take one family member in the rig and the rest of you can follow behind,” She says. *What the fuck did they do to you, B? I’m so sorry, I’m so fucking sorry.*

“I’m going with her. See you guys there.” Max is jumping in the elevator with the gurney and a still unconscious B. We all take the stairs down to the lobby and walk out towards the rigs and police



cars. I pull out my phone and grab A to call our parents, but he isn't moving. He's staring at Edison on the gurney as it comes flying out of the lobby doors.

The paramedics are talking about her flatlining, and they place pads on her bare chest and yell clear. We all watch her frail, bloody, and battered body jump up and down with each shock they administer. *It's like something out of my mom's Grey's Anatomy episodes that she watches.*

A's whole body is trembling, and he's moving towards her, but I pull him back, "Let them do what they need to do for her, brother."

He breaks out of my grasp and when the paramedics seem satisfied with Edison's status, they load her into the rig.

"What the fuck is going on? Is she going to be okay?" I hear him ask.

"Are you family?" they shout back as they hook her up to machines inside the ambulance.

"No, I'm not," he spits out as if the words are painful for him to send out into the world.

"Then I can't share anything with you." He looks pissed that they won't tell him anything and I eye his fists raising to smash into the back of the ambulance. *Sure, she's only your tutor, let's keep going with that BS line.*

"Wait, these are her bags. She'll want them." He hands the overstuffed backpack and messenger bag to the paramedics before they shut the door and drive off.

"Come on, we have to run to get Jake's SUV and get to the hospital. We can call Mom and Dad on the way." I push A into motion and see Sloane rushing toward me.

"Come on, y'all can ride with me," she says, and we follow her toward her white Volkswagen SUV in the residence hall parking lot. I sit next to her upfront, A, Jake, and Monroe take the back, and Drew and Penny huddle in the hatchback.

"Ok hold on tight y'all, traffic laws don't apply right now, got it?" she states and we're off. She's not kidding, she's ignoring every traffic sign and literally going double the speed limit. I send my parents a text telling them to call me when they can. They are still at the medical conference and were presenting tonight. When

they do, I ask everyone to quiet down in the car and I call my mother.

As soon as I hear her voice, I start to tear up again. *I can't fucking believe this has happened tonight.* That I have to call my parents to tell them that B's hurt by these assholes for the second time. I relay to her and Dad what happened, giving them the cliff notes version for now.

When I struggle to tell them about her injuries, A takes the phone. He talks to them about travel arrangements and Jake agrees to pick them up from the local airport when they land and bring them straight to General. He hangs up and reaches forward and grips my shoulder with his hand. I feel hands from the others' grip on me and A, showing their unwavering support.

My heart stops beating when Sloane grabs my left hand with her right and squeezes it tightly as she drives us the rest of the way. She doesn't drop my hand and I don't let go either. I don't deserve her, but I'll soak up any bit of her I'm given.

## Chapter Sixty-Two

# Max



My whole heart is in the hands of paramedics, nurses, and doctors as they wheel my Evie on a gurney into General Hospital's Emergency Room.

The doctors are asking if she is allergic to anything, what her blood type is, if she's on any medications, and if there is any possibility of her being pregnant. I only know that she is on the pill and offer that information and that she could be pregnant. It's a possibility since we've never used condoms. Nothing is foolproof. This earns me glares from Hunter and Chase. They can fuck right off with that.

That's why when they asked if I was her family, I, of course, said yes. She may not be my fiancé officially, but she will be, eventually.

I learn that the three Wiltons are all allergic to shrimp and that they are all A-positive blood types, which is rare for fraternal triplets. I also learn that they were in the NICU and suffered extensive withdrawals as premature newborns.

The most shocking thing is learning that they are adopted. I've been best friends with Hunter and Chase since freshman year and have been dating Evie for a while now. I can't believe none of them mentioned that they were abandoned by their birth mother hours after she delivered them while high.

They have no idea who she is or who their biological father is. They were referred to as baby A, Hunter, baby B, Evie, and baby C, Chase, hence their nicknames for one another. They weren't named until their adoptive parents, doctors who worked in the same hospital that they were born in, adopted them.

The doctors ask questions about her medical and family histories. Hunter keeps reiterating that he has nothing else to offer regarding this information. He looks pissed about having to bring up this part of their past.

Chase has an equally pained expression on his face. *No wonder they've never spoken about it.*

When they ask about any past hospitalizations, both Hunter and Chase provide details of her past attack by the same fucks that are being treated a few beds down from her and Edison. My face must show my surprise at the news that I've learned about my friends who I consider family.

"We don't talk about it, ever. It is not up for discussion. You got me?" Hunter meets all our astonished faces, and we all offer a nod of understanding. I am holding Evie's broken glasses in my hands, and I feel so fucking sad looking at them. My sister is sitting next to me and leans her head on my shoulder, and I lean my head on hers.

"She's going to be okay big brother, you'll see," Pen offers, and I want so badly to believe her.

“I didn’t keep her safe. Right after the game, I should have gone to see her. I thought I was doing the right thing by giving her space.” I croak out around a frog that’s lodged in my throat.

We’re sitting for hours waiting for information. There are several police officers here, with one stationed outside of the curtains enclosing the hospital beds that Waterstone and Ellis are in. The RA Director came a few moments after we arrived. She wanted to make sure that Red had a place to stay tonight since the dorm room was closed off until evidence can be collected.

I’m not sure where Edison lives or what her actual connection is to all of this. There are a lot of questions about her involvement, and until I know she didn’t lure those motherfuckers to my girl, I don’t trust her. I don’t give a fuck if she called Hunter to warn him. It could have been a trap for Waterstone and Ellis to attack him and Chase as well.

The young female officer and her partner who were at the scene walk in with Coastal’s Hockey Coach. He looks like he is ready to blow a goddamn gasket. They lead him to the back, where those dickheads are receiving medical attention before they are hauled off to the police station.

Monroe stands when he sees the blonde cop emerge and stop at one of the vending machines. He walks right over to her and strikes up a conversation. She is fucking blushing at whatever he is saying, and it pisses me off. This is no time for flirting or trying to get laid. I want the fucking evidence collected, and the book thrown at Waterstone and Ellis for what they did to Evie.

Her partner calls her over and they go over some paperwork. When Monroe takes his seat next to me, I let him have it.

“Man, what the fuck? Do you have to get your dick wet right now?” I chastise him and, per usual, Monroe, he lets that shit roll off his back.

“Dude, it isn’t like that. Izzy was at Havenwood and graduated last year. She just finished up at the police academy

and is a rookie for the police department in town. She and I had some gen ed classes together. Plus, she's hot as fuck in her uniform and I wasn't gonna not go talk to her." He says and grins. *Dick.*

"Family for Edison Santos?" A doctor calls out and Hunter stands up and the doctor approaches.

"Are you a relative, son?" Hunter hesitates and shakes his head no. I can see from here that he's grinding his damn teeth together. The doctor lets out a sigh and apologizes for not being able to share any information with him. Hunter explains that there is no family here for her, and the doctor lets us know that his hands are tied then.

"Can you at least let me know if she's okay?" Hunter asks.

"She is in intensive care. Unfortunately, that's all I can tell you if you aren't family to the poor girl." Hunter's head falls back, and he squeezes his eyes shut. His fists are tightly balled at his side.

Before the doctor leaves, I ask if there is any information on Evie and he lets me know that someone will be out shortly to talk to us. *What's taking so fucking long?!*

Jake walks in with Evie's parents, and they rush to embrace their sons. I stand and greet them. I get the feeling that Evie hasn't shared with them that we're dating, and that's confirmed when a little while later a doctor comes out, asks to speak to Evie Wilton's fiancé, and when I stand from my seat, her father levels me with a stare and asks,

"Something you want to tell me about my daughter, Max?" I go to speak but the doctor starts talking and explains that Evie is in stable condition, has a concussion, bruised ribs, and is being moved to a private room and that she needs to rest.

They don't think she was vaginally assaulted but observed a half a dozen bite marks on her chest. She has swelling and bruising on her face, chest and torso. The doctor says that groups of two can visit her once she is settled.

I can't fucking breathe. My throat tightens and I feel the room spinning. My poor Evie had to endure an overwhelming amount of pain and suffering. And for what? A grudge over a lost hockey game and bruised egos? Or was it about their loss tonight and the beatdown we gave them on the ice?

I swear I'm about to fucking pass out when a big-ass arm encircles my waist. My upper half is shoved forward, and Drew tells me to put my hands on my knees and to take a deep breath.

"Get it together, man. Take some big breaths for her. You're okay, that's it, you're okay. I'm not gonna let you fall, I got you, brother," he's a fucking brick house whose soft soothing voice brings me back to reality. He's fucking right. I've got to breathe for her, I have to be strong for her.

He settles me in a chair, and I hear both Dr. Wiltons talking to the doctor, who updated us on Evie. Her mom embraces her sons, one under each arm, and her dad takes a seat next to me.

"I'm going to ask you again, Max. Anything you want to say to me, son?" He asks. I'm going to put it all out there for him. I've always liked their parents and they deserve to know what their daughter means to me. She's my fucking heart. She's my fucking everything.

"Yes sir, I do. We've been together for a couple of months, and I love your daughter very much. I treat her right, respect her, care deeply for her, and even though I lied about being her fiancé so I could have access to her tonight, I do plan on asking you properly in the future." I stand my ground and keep my face firm.

"Are the boys okay with all of this? They are protective of her," he motions to Hunter and Chase.

"They each got their punches in and we're good now. Evie's worth it, sir." I take a deep breath before continuing, my guilt heavy in the pit of my stomach.

“I’m sorry I didn’t protect her tonight. That’s on me. I told her I’d always keep her safe, and I didn’t keep that promise.” I don’t break eye contact with him. My girl is in terrible shape, and I feel responsible for that.

“It’s not on you, Max, it’s on those two criminals who are handcuffed to their beds right now.”

“Even so.”

“We’re going to make sure those bastards don’t get off so easily this time.”

“They better not, or I’ll be the one arrested.”

“Don’t talk like that son, who’s going to love my baby girl if you’re locked up?” He grabs my shoulder and squeezes. “Treat her right, you hear me?”

“Always, sir, always.”



I’m the last to go in and see my Evie. Everyone wanted to get a few minutes in, but I know once I step inside that room I’m not leaving until she does, so I let her friends and family have their time with her. The sight of her laying in that bed, bandaged, bruised, with wires and tubes coming out of her beautiful body is my undoing. I sit in a chair closest to her and grab her hand. I thread our fingers and kiss her knuckles. My eyes fill and I blink away the pooling tears.

“Hi Dimples, I’m right here and I’m not moving from this spot, so take all the time you need to rest, okay? I’ll be here when you open those pretty eyes. I love you and I’m so sorry this happened, baby.” I kiss her hand and rub my thumb over her knuckles.

It takes three days before she fully wakes up and, true to my word, I don’t move. I sponge-bathe myself in the bathroom and the boys bring me food and clothes. While she remained unconscious, she had several visitors. Red comes every day before rehearsal and warms up her voice by singing



to Evie while she holds her hand. She hasn't returned to the dorm room now that it has been cleared. She's staying in Chase's room while he stays in mine.

Pen came to say goodbye and told her she'll take her to get a tattoo the next time she visits. I'm sure my free-spirited baby sister will make good on that promise.

Drew, Jake, and Monroe have come every day and brought her flowers. Her brothers and parents are here around the clock as well. I've heard a ton of stories about her growing up and have learned a lot about her including their rough start.

Coach heard what happened and came by to see her, too. When he had questioned what the pregame fighting was about and Hunter stood up and said that it was about his sister, he didn't know what he was referring to. When her parents explained the background story and Hunter, Chase, and I brought him up to speed, his jaw was clenched tight, and his mouth took on a thin line. But his eyes? They softened when he looked over at her. When he stepped out into the hallway, we all heard him raise hell when he angrily informed the NCAA about Waterstone and Ellis's background that had been sealed and what had happened.

He excused me, Hunter, and Chase from practice until Evie is released, and he let me know several NHL team scouts had reached out to him about me. Well, not only me, but he also told us he got calls about Hunter, Chase, Jake, and Monroe, too. This is what Coach does; he makes college players into NHL stars. *I'm going to give us a good life. You just have to wake up and come back to me first.*

Some of the football players from our English class who also sat with Evie at the game, stopped by with Drew to see her. One linebacker told me what a badass she was flipping the double bird to Waterstone with no fear in her eyes. *He's right, she is a badass.*

The doctor told us she fucking fought like hell against Ellis, who was assaulting her. He's covered with his own set of black and blue bruises on his face, legs, torso, and back. She also broke his nose. Edison fought like hell too and fucked up

Waterstone. He needed surgery for one of his stab wounds and is still recovering here in the hospital. Ellis was discharged into police custody two days ago. *Good fucking riddance, asshole.*

We still have a lot of unanswered questions, but Izzy, the police officer Monroe is *too* friendly with, came to question us about Lexi and Evie's relationship. Waterstone and Ellis are using her as an alibi. I told the police about the recording, which was really fucking awkward in front of her parents. I also told them about Lexi's borderline obsession with me. Izzy thinks that may be what's been fueling her beef with Evie all semester. *I swear someone needs to fucking kick me in the goddamn balls for sleeping with that trash bag.*

Red was here, and she went into a whole rant about that fucking mean girl. Evidently, there have been a lot more run-ins between the two of them since the semester started than any of us knew about. We're still piecing it all together. Why Ellis and Waterstone were in Lexi's room to begin with, how she knows them, and how Edison fits in are all still big question marks.

When I finally see the prettiest eyes in the world flutter open, I finally feel like my heart can beat again. It's missed its mate and has gone from dormant to beating like crazy. *That's what she does to me.*

"Hi pretty girl, fuck I've missed you, Dimples," I tell her, along with a thousand I love yous. I plant kisses all over her beautiful face and nuzzle her cute little nose.

Mr. Mood-Killer yanks me away by my shoulder and wraps her in his arms. Chase is squeezing his way in for one of their triplet hugs. Their dad has moved to the top of her hospital bed and kisses her head while their mom holds onto her hands and cries in her lap.

I step out and give her some time with her family. I blink away the tears that won't stop falling as I stand up against the hallway wall outside of her door. *She's awake and is going to be okay.*

I'm distraught, thinking that she is still angry with me for keeping Waterstone and Ellis's presence on campus a secret from her. I vowed to keep her safe and told her that no one would ever lay a finger on her again, and I didn't keep that promise.

I had plenty of chances to warn her, to intervene, to fucking step up and I didn't take that either. That fucking photo Drew sent of those goddamn text messages. Those fuckers had been texting her and she had no idea. I got fucking distracted and it could of cost her her life tonight. I'm so fucking upset about this. I should have stayed focused on her safety, instead I was focused on fucking sex. I should've remembered to talk to her about it.

Not only did I not take advantage of the opportunities to warn her, I forced her out of her comfort zone; giving her no choice but to come face-to-face with her attackers when she sat down to watch me take the ice during that championship game. She would see them, and they would see her. I knew all of this when she first sat down in that arena. *I'm so fucking sorry, baby.*

The role that I've played in my Evie being attacked and assaulted in her own room here at Havenwood overwhelms me and rocks me to my fucking core. I feel lightheaded and grip the wall to hold my sorry ass up. *This is my fault. I went after Waterstone and Ellis on the ice. I taunted them. I helped to fuel their fire to go after her.* I brought this to her doorstep. If I had been honest with Coach and told him who they were from the minute Hunter and Chase told me, I could have protected her.

*I should have told her. I should have told her. I should have told her.*

This damn guilt is eating me alive and I'm so goddamn irritated with myself. I fucking hate myself for letting her down. I didn't take care of her. I didn't treat her with respect. I didn't treat her like the partner she is. *I don't deserve her.* I love her with every fiber of my being. She deserves better than me and I love her enough to walk away.

Her Mom, who's been nothing but kind to me, walks out and tells me to come back inside, that Evie is asking for me. I know what I need to do. *I don't deserve her.*

I say the words that will break not my own fucking heart, but my Evie's too. I detest myself for adding to her hurt, but she is so special and should be with a man who is deserving of all the love that pours out of her. I'm not worthy. *No, you're a piece of shit for letting this happen to her.*

"Please tell her I love her, that I'm so damn sorry. I don't deserve her. She is perfect and precious, and I let her down. She deserves someone who would never do that. The biggest regret of my life will always be that I'm not that someone for her." I ignore the river of tears that won't fucking stop, as well as Dr. Wilton's gasp.

I push myself off the wall and walk out of the hospital, leaving my heart and soul with Evie Wilton. She deserves better than me and I love her enough to let her go to go find him, even if it means shredding my own heart to ensure that I never hurt hers again.

## Chapter Sixty-Three

Evie



I heard laughter, storytelling, singing, updates on my progress, talking, and snoring. I heard it all. My exhaustion kept pulling me to sleep, but there were times that I felt as if I was conscious but not able to fully wake up, if that makes sense. When I finally feel that I can open my eyes, I am bombarded with pain. Pain in my head, pain in my face, pain in my torso, arms, and legs. I'm sore all over and my muscles feel stiff.

I open my eyes, and everything is blurry. *Where are my glasses?* I need my glasses.

“Hi pretty girl, fuck I missed you, Dimples,” I hear my beautiful blue-eyed man. He tells me he loves me over and over again, in between lots of kisses. My eyes are still unfocused when he nuzzles my nose with his.

Then he's gone, and I rub my eyes to get them to freaking work. I try to protest Max's absence, but my throat is raw, and my voice comes out all weird. I'm being squeezed to death by A, whose grip tightens with each word of his apology.

“B, I'm so fucking sorry. Fuck, you're really okay,” he says into my shoulder.

I nod my head to acknowledge him before C is now hugging me. *I'm so mad at you, Hunter.*

“Thank fuck, you’re okay. God, B, I’m so sorry for what happened. I love you so much,” he chokes out. *How could you keep this from me, Chase?*

They release me from our triplet hug, and my dad is kissing the top of my head, while my mom is holding my hands and crying into my lap. *What’s happening? Where’s Edi? Oh, God, where are Chris and Brandon? And the bitchiest of bitches, Lexi?*

“I’m going to step out for a minute. Give you guys a family moment.” I hear his words but want him to stay. I want to be near him, I want more of the kisses he was just peppering on my face. *Don’t go.*

My throat feels like it’s been through a five-alarm fire. It’s burning, and it takes me three attempts to ask for my glasses. My dad pours me a glass of water and helps me take a much-needed drink. He pulls out a pair of glasses and places them on my face, “There you go pumpkin,” and he kisses my cheek, “I missed you, sweetheart.”

Our mother is now sitting on my bed with her arms cradled around my shoulders. I relax in her hold. My emotions are all over the place. *Hurricane Evie is back and making landfall.* How could they have kept this from me? I can’t even look at them. My mother senses my hurt and offers words of wisdom, just loud enough to get the attention of both of my idiot brothers.

“Give them hell. They deserve it but hear them out. Forgive them when you’re ready. They haven’t been able to function without you. You’re very special to them.”

My brothers slowly approach me, and they each take one of my hands. They both look devastated. C’s eyes are wet, and A’s cheeks show tear tracks that have already fallen. We’re quiet for a long moment. A’s the first to speak. His strong, stoic voice cracks over his words.

“Again B, I’m so fucking sorry. There aren’t words that can describe how sorry I am for what happened.”

“Me too, B. We should have told you they were coming. If I could go back in time, I would do so many things differently. I’m so sorry,” C tells me, his voice also laced with emotion.

I let the silence linger for a few minutes. It causes both A and C to anxiously wait for my response. I don’t care if it causes them to shift their weight, run their hands through their hair, and stew about my response.

I hope they’re nervous about what I’m going to say.  
*Mom’s right, they do deserve my wrath!*

What the quiet really gives me is a moment of peace to reflect and prepare for what I need to say to them. If we are going to grow as siblings, strengthen our triplet-hood, and settle into our bond as adults, then I need to do this. We need to do this together. I have to get this out and they need to listen.

I clear away the lingering ache in my throat, find my voice and let my crystal-clear words out.

“One of the main reasons I joined you here at Havenwood is to mend our relationship and move forward. I know the work that I’ve done to get to a place where I see myself as a survivor and not a victim, and I’m not going back. I refuse to retreat. I refuse to be weak, and I refuse to be seen as anything less than a strong and capable woman.

“You need to trust me to take care of myself. You need to trust me to make good decisions for myself and to do what’s best for me. You don’t get to dictate what that is and how that looks. Just because your lack of judgment led to my attack doesn’t mean you can’t trust mine.

“I know there have been challenges since I’ve been here, but I’ve worked through them and now they are happening less and less. I’m not made of glass, I promise even after this, I won’t break. Please stop treating me like I will.

“If you both are going to treat me like I’m fragile, like I’m a victim instead of the survivor I’m working hard at trying to be, then our relationship will never heal, and we will never be us again. I hate that you both didn’t give me a choice and I really hate that you both don’t see me.”

My mom leans over and kisses the side of my head. My dad has his hand on my shoulder and squeezes in a reassuring grip. My brothers look stunned, but I don’t care.

Triplets are three pieces of a whole. If they won’t treat me as an equal part, then our triplet-hood will never be stable and steady.

“I’ll do better B, I promise to try to do better,” C offers and holds out his arms for me to lean into a hug which I accept.

“I’m your big brother, even if it is by two damn minutes. I’ll always protect you just because of that reason alone. I’m having a hard fucking time accepting that what I did was wrong when my intentions were to keep you safe. I wasn’t trying to take anything away from you. When I apologized earlier, it was for this shit happening to you again, not because I fucked up,” A tells me.

He crosses his arms over his chest and scowls at me. I do the exact same from my hospital bed. The tension brewing between us is thick and our father waits all of ten seconds before intervening.

“Hunter, outside, now. Let’s take a walk and clear that hot head of yours,” our dad demands and leads my aggravating brother out of the room. *Good, I can’t look at him any longer.*

“Mom, can you go get Max? I want to see him,” I ask, and she goes out into the hallway. After a few moments, I hear her gasp and when she comes back in, she’s alone. *What just happened?*

“Where is he?” I ask her curiously.

“Where did he go?” C asks. She sits down on the bed and cups my cheek.



“He just needs some time, sweetheart. He adores you, I truly believe that.” She says and I feel my heart tighten in my chest. Alarms are going off in my head that something is wrong.

“What did he say, what just happened?” I ask and she lets out a sigh before taking my hand.

“He wanted me to tell you he loves you, he’s sorry, and that he doesn’t deserve you. He walked out, sweetheart, but I think he just needs to take a breather and sort things out in his head.”

“I’m going to fucking kill him,” I hear C grit out next to me.

“Give it time, he has to reconcile what’s happened and how he’s feeling. Since they wheeled you in here, he hasn’t moved from that spot next to you. He isn’t walking away from you honey, he’s trying to figure out how to face you and be worthy.” My mom does her best to explain male logic to me, but I’m overcome with emotion.

“Why don’t we have some girl time, your dad can take the boys to get a bite and we can talk, ok?” I nod my head in agreement. My mother is right, some girl time is probably best.

“I’ll go catch up with dad and update him and A,” C offers and kisses my head before leaving.

I watch C close the door and turn to my mother. “How could he do this; how could he leave?” I blink away the sting in my eyes and wipe away tears that fall. I’m hit with a wave of exhaustion and my head throbs.

“He loves you. Right now, he’s upset with himself and has to process what’s happened, honey.” She says and rubs circles on my back.

“I hope you’re right.” *Please be right.*

“I am sweetheart, I am.” I cling to that hope for dear life.

When I wake up again, I ask the nurse who is tending to me how Edi is. She tells me what she can, but since I'm not family and Edi is still unconscious, she hasn't given permission to the hospital to speak to anyone about her medical status. I'm not going to lie, I totally guilt-tripped her into giving me some details.

I find out that she's in the ICU after her heart stopped twice. Her wounds are like mine and superficial enough that they should heal without surgery. She has a severe concussion, broken ribs, and a broken wrist.

Because she has suffered years of malnourishment and poor living conditions, she's also dehydrated and vitamin deficient. Her body is weak, and her recovery time is taking longer because of it. She has an infection they are trying to get under control and hopeful that she will move out of the ICU when the antibiotics run their course.

My Dad brought me back some food, and the three of us talked about what happened. I explained to them how Edi showed up at my door and went over all the details with them.

I learn she had called Hunter and left him a voicemail giving him a heads-up that something was wrong. I've had two conversations with Edi. We are newly acquainted and even so; I like her a lot. For her to put herself in danger that she did to help me is something I will be forever grateful for.

I tell my parents about my suspicions that she is struggling with basic needs. Because I'm angry with A, and his selfish behavior has affected Edi to the degree that it has, I tell our parents about him skipping out on tutoring and that it had cost her enough of a paycheck from the tutoring center that she couldn't pay for her breakfast in the cafe.

"Your brother is doing what now?" My dad frowns. *A's at the top of his shit list today.*

"Yeah, that's how Edi knows A, it's from math tutoring. That's how she had his number to call him, I guess." I see my father's wheels turning and he tells me A asks the nurses every day how she is doing, but they wouldn't share

any information with him. He doesn't know the extent of her injuries.

“Let's see if the hospital social worker can help Edi and if she is agreeable to that. We can go from there. I'd like to help her, too.” My mom says with dad nodding his head in agreement. I hope they are right about this. *And right about Max.*

I miss him. My heart is aching. I keep checking my phone and have zero messages from him. *How did he go from kissing me telling me how much he loved me, to walking away from us?* I may be upset with him for keeping a critical piece of information away from me, but I love him and want to be with him. I hope he wants the same from me too. *Please come back, baby, I love you.*

I give in and doze off. When I open my eyes again, I'm greeted by those beautiful aquamarine eyes and his handsome face. He's sitting in the chair next to the hospital bed and weaves our fingers together.

“Hi, Dimples, I'm here pretty girl, and I mean it this time... I'm not going anywhere.” I roll my eyes. I pull my hand away when he attempts to hold my hand. *He's going to have to do better than that.*

## Chapter Sixty-Four

# Max



My heart, head, and body are screaming at me for different reasons, but all angry just the same. I took an uber from the hospital to the athletics center and hit the weight room to put myself through a grueling workout.

I need to punish myself and welcome the physical pain and the hurt. I push myself hard and spend ninety minutes running on the treadmill, lifting, and doing abdominal work. I'm pouring with sweat and exhausted. My screaming muscles and pounding headache are no match for the ache I feel in my chest.

I walked out of that hospital, leaving her. I've never felt more destroyed. She deserves better than how I treated her this past week. *I don't deserve her.*

I assumed she wouldn't be able to handle things on her own. I undermined her strength and undercut her ability to face challenges head-on. She hasn't given me a reason to doubt her.

If anything, she's shown me the power of her determination to overcome her past and pave her own way on her own terms. I took something away from her by not being honest with her. I thought I was protecting her, but I ended up doing the exact opposite. *I should've fucking told her.*

I love her enough to give her the chance to move on from my sorry ass and meet a man who can see all of her when it really counts. I failed her in that regard. I didn't see my fierce, strong girl when I needed to. I didn't trust her badassery enough to handle it. *I'm such an asshole.*

I walk back to the house with my head low, my eyes rimmed red, and don't see the right hook from Hunter coming at me when I step onto our front lawn. *A right hook I deserve.*

“What the actual fuck, Max! You camp out for five fucking days, you don't leave her fucking side, and the minute she opens her eyes you fucking leave?!” Hunter screams after he comes flying out of the house with Chase, Monroe, and Jake right behind him. He lays into me with more than just his words as he lands a right hook to my jaw. I stumble back and land on my ass.

“Hit me again. I fucking deserve it.” Maybe if Hunter and Chase each get their licks in, I will feel something besides the dull gnaw in my chest cavity where my heart used to be.

“What the fuck you pussy, get the fuck up and explain what the fuck you were thinking!” Chase extends his hand to me and lifts me up off the grass.

“I thought that I fucking let my girl down, that I don't deserve her, and that I love her enough to let her go and find someone who can love her the way she deserves,” I tell my four closest friends who are standing in a semi-circle in front of me. I see my fifth closest friend make his way from his football house across the street. He must have heard the roar of the pissed-off lion that is Hunter Wilton when he's upset.

“You are so full of shit, man. Get off your fucking high horse. We all fucked up here. But you are fucking breaking my sister’s heart right now by pulling this bullshit.” Hunter is in my face, and I feel the spit both literally and figuratively of his words as they leave his mouth.

“What the fuck is going on?” Drew asks, obviously late to my pity party.

“Fucking Max here left my sister the second she woke up and broke up with her through our mother!” Chase pushes Hunter out of the way and now it’s his turn to spit in my face. He could literally do it and I’d fucking deserve it.

“That’s all kinds of fucked up, bro. Little Wilton has been through enough. Why the fuck would you pull this? You fucking love that girl.” Drew asks and is just as exacerbated with me as the Wiltons are.

“You’re right, I fucking love that girl so much I ripped my own fucking heart out to give her a chance to be with someone who won’t treat her like shit like I just did. I handled this whole situation wrong. I don’t fucking deserve her.” I shoulder past them, pushing through the semi-circle they’ve formed around me, and stalk toward the front door of the house. *Fuck, I’m gonna have a goddamn breakdown if I don’t get my ass inside.*

“Don’t even think about it, sit your ass down right now,” Jake yells from behind me, and because he’s literally our group’s dad, I listen. Feeling like I just ripped my heart out and shoved it through a meat grinder, I sink to the doorstep and hang my head. I grip my hair and threaten to pull out every goddamn strand.

“Don’t do that, man, your hair’s your best feature, you sad-looking-son-of-a-bitch,” Monroe says and untangles my hands away from my curls.

He takes a seat on the grassy side of our front path and faces me. Jake, who’s now convinced I’m not going to flee the scene, takes a seat next to him.

“You pulling this shit proves you don’t fucking deserve her. You need to man the fuck up instead of what? Fucking running away from your relationship? Go take care of your girl man, she’s the one who has been through fucking hell, not you,” Monroe tells me and I nod in agreement. I rub the spot on my chest that fucking throbs for her. Drew, Hunter, and Chase now stand around me.

“The hard part comes next dipshit. She needs you now. Go beg Evie to take your sorry ass back and be better. Be better than this. You’re being a total fucking pussy and I won’t let you do this to yourself or to her.” Jake smacks me in the back of the head, his signature move that is usually reserved for Monroe.

“Make this fucking right, asshat. She’s been laying in a fucking hospital bed for days. You... breaking her heart? I’d bet money she is thinking that what you’re doing to her is fucking worse,” Chase says before walking past me and into the house. I wipe my wet cheeks with a shaky hand. *Fuck, I swear, I’m ready to cry my fucking eyes out.*

“I told you I would fucking end you if you hurt my sister and I will fucking put your ass in your own hospital bed if you don’t do right by her. She fucking loves your dumbass, and I know you fucking love her. You told me you would fight for her. So go fucking fight.” Hunter kicks my seated ass when he follows Chase into the house.

“What’s really going on man, this isn’t like you? You don’t give up and you’re cutting yourself at your fucking knees with this.” Drew sits down next to me. I rub my ass where Hunter kicked me. *That shit fucking stings.*

“I should’ve told her when I found out that those fucks were going to be here. I kept it from her. I didn’t give her enough credit. I didn’t give her a choice. I took something from her man. I didn’t see her strength and treated her like she was weak.” Hearing myself admit what an asshole I was to her has me crying like a baby. *Cue the goddamn waterworks.*

“Your intention was to protect her. You wanted to keep her safe. You did what you thought was right. You, Hunter,

and Chase should have all been honest with her and yeah, you all treated her with kid gloves but that's not because you didn't think she could handle it, it's because you love her enough to want to shield her from any amount of unnecessary pain. Stand with her and honor her because her fucking fight isn't over yet. You're so lucky you know that? You have the love of a good woman and you're literally throwing it away because your own ego is bruised. A bruise you fucking gave yourself. Don't break your heart and hers over that bullshit." Drew's words hit harder than the ass-kicking Hunter just gave me and something inside of me locks into place.

"Fuck, man. You're right." *He's right.*

"Yeah, I know I'm right. You're going to fucking grovel, get on your fucking knees, and beg her for forgiveness. I'll drive you myself to make sure you do right by her." Drew pulls me up, gives me a bro hug, a smack on the back, and one to the back of my head before he walks across the street to retrieve his car.

"Dude, go get your fucking girl back," Monroe says before he and Jake head inside. I raise my chin to them and wipe my face clean. *Fuck, I'm a mess.*



An hour later, I'm back in the hospital and standing in the doorway of her room. I take a seat next to her hospital bed and thread our fingers together. I wait for her to wake up and think about what I want to say. *Please forgive me, I'm a goddamn moron, but I'm your moron.*

Her parents walk in, and her dad immediately narrows his eyes at me while he makes his way over to where I'm sitting. *Oh, fuck, this is how I die.* I stand up, ready to explain to him all the reasons I'm a damn dumbass, when *the nice* Dr. Wilton pulls him back. She yanks *the scary* Dr. Wilton out of the room and yells over her shoulder that they are going to grab another cup of coffee from the hospital cafeteria and will



be back later. I think I legit saw my life flash before my eyes when he looked at me.

When I turn to settle back in my chair, I see her pretty doe eyes staring at me. I'm one hundred percent sure my heart just skipped a beat. Or maybe it's my soul's way of nudging me to start with the begging I need to do.

"Hi, Dimples, I'm here pretty girl, and I mean it this time... I'm not going anywhere," I tell her tenderly. She rolls her eyes at me. I switch gears and reach for her hand to reconnect us.

She pulls her entire arm away. Before I can swallow it down, a pain-filled noise comes out of me.

She says nothing and has an exasperated look on her beautiful face. It's now become abundantly clear to me that I have the floor, and this is definitely the part where I fucking get on my knees and grovel for her to take my sorry ass back.

"I'm a fucking idiot, Evie. You opened your pretty eyes, and I saw the grit, strength, and determination swirling in them and I realized I had taken that and you for granted. I took the parts of you I love and didn't trust them to carry you through, knowing that you would have to come face-to-face with Waterstone and Ellis.

"You meet your challenges head-on, and I love how strong you are. You have paved your path by pushing yourself, and I love that. I love how you carry yourself and stand tall. I should have been honest with you. I should have given you the opportunity to choose how to handle the situation instead of dictating how it would play out for you.

"I'm so damn sorry for all of it. I don't deserve you, but I'm going to fight like hell to be who you need me to be. I shouldn't have fucking walked out of here earlier. I was being a fucking coward. I've handled this all wrong. I see that now and most importantly, Evie; I see you, all of you, and I love everything I see. I love you so much. Please give me another chance to prove it to you." *Please.*

## Chapter Sixty-Five

Evie



He hurt me deeply today, but I can see in his face and hear it in his voice, that he is hurting too. I love him, but if his love is blind to see who I am, who I have fought to be, then our love isn't going to be enough. I appreciate his honesty, but I need to give him mine as well. I stay quiet throughout his monologue and digest his words before giving up my own thoughts, and I can high-five myself for them coming out strong and stutter-free,

“I expect my brothers to always see me as a version of the bloody and broken girl I was three years ago. I expect them to see me as a nervous, socially awkward, stuttering, and stammering girl who believes in fairy tales and still blushes at the most inopportune times. I expect them to see me as their sister who they have to protect from school bullies, mean girls, and embarrassing situations. No matter how much I want this to change, the reality is, most of it won't.

“What I expect from you is to see me as a woman who is a work in progress with strong bones, a sharp mind, and a hopeful heart. I expect you to see me as a woman who had been broken down and is putting herself back together with bonds so strong that she will never break again. I expect you to see me as a woman who works through the challenges of anxiety, trauma, and works through nerves that are so

paralyzing they steal the steadiness from my voice. I expect you to see me as a woman who, after feeling like a shell, after merely existing, has worked really hard to heal and to embrace all these different layers as my own.”

My voice doesn’t break or struggle with my words, my eye contact doesn’t falter, and my armpits don’t sweat. I feel strong even if my body looks weak with its bruising, swelling, and scars.

“Evie, I love the woman you are. I’m proud of the woman you are. What I’m not proud of is me,” he murmurs and runs his big hands down his handsome face. *He looks like he’s been crying.*

“I’m not giving my brothers a free pass here. I’m just saying that they have proven over and over that they see me as a sparrow with broken wings. I want you to see me as a bird who flies.” I hope he understands. I’m not comparing him to A or C. Maybe it’s unfair to hold Max to a higher standard, but if we’re going to build a life together, then I need to.

“I want to fly with you, Evie. I don’t want to keep you grounded; I don’t want to keep you caged. I want to be right by your side and I’m going to keep fighting to be there.”

“I want that too Max; I want us to fly together.”



The next day, Sloane stops in for a visit and I’m so happy to see her.

“Oh, honey bunny, did you give me a scare! I fainted on the spot!” she says while giving me a hug.

“I’m so glad to see you on the mend and brought all the essentials for my visit today.” She pulls out M&M’s, my checkered Vans, my kindle completely charged, cool ranch Doritos, ginger ales, my laptop, and my throw blanket that was hanging on my desk chair.

“How did you get my stuff?!” I’m so touched that she brought some of my favorite things to me.

“I asked the RA to go in and pluck it for you when an officer was there. They looked over everything before giving it to her and I picked it up in the lobby this morning.”

As she brings me up to speed, she and I lay out the junk food and she drapes my cozy blanket around my shoulders. While our dorm room was off-limits, she stayed in C’s room for the first two nights. She told me that things with C were awkward with him ignoring her or giving her one-word answers in response to her questions or attempts at conversation and that the tension in the house was thick.

She has tried to clarify that she is open to things with C and he keeps shutting her down or sending mixed messages. *He’s an idiot.*

“I was hesitant at first, don’t get me wrong, the boy is dreamy and all but his hot and cold act is just exhausting and proves that he is just that, a boy. I want a man who isn’t wishy-washy, a man who goes after what he wants and takes what I’m offering.” I don’t blame her one bit when she packed it up and stayed with her friend from the winter showcase. *Boys are dumb.*

She informed me that the Residence Director is looking for a more permanent housing option for her and me as there is no way in hell I’m going back to that room. Sloane is on it and pestering the RD daily.

She tells me some details of that night; how the boys had run into her and Penny outside of the cafe and how C punched a guy who put his hands on her, the voicemail that A had played from Edi informing him she suspected something was about to go down with me, and everyone running towards the residence hall.

She fills me in on her fainting, waking up in C’s arms, and how right then and there she gave him a part of her heart. She has a far-off look in her eyes talking about C and I love it. I want them both to be happy. My brother needs to get his shit together.

She talked about A cradling Edi and Max being physically unable to release me into the hands of the

paramedics until a police officer that Monroe somehow knows helped him let me go into their care.

I tell her all about my anger with A, C, and Max. How they undercut me. How treating me like I'm made of glass is hurtful and stunts the strides I've made this semester.

I tell her how Max left the hospital after I opened my eyes and reiterated to her what he had said to my mother. I tell her about him coming back and us being open and honest about where we need to go from here. She is the friend I always wanted and I'm lucky to have her as she attentively listens.

She asks about Edi, and I tell her what I know. I wanted to go up to the ICU to see her earlier this morning, but her infection is causing hell on her body, and she went into kidney failure. I feel so bad; she came to help me and is now fighting for her life not once but twice because of her valiant effort. The nurse who is keeping me posted feels bad that she has no one calling to check on her and has no family visitors.

When I originally asked how Edi was, I explained she saved my life and that I was worried about her. I know she's risking a lot feeding me information and I appreciate her sharing it with me. It breaks my heart that I've had an outpouring of support and Edi has had none. Well, that's changing now, I'm going to be in Edison Santos' corner from here on out, just like she was for me.

## Chapter Sixty-Six

# Max



Evie and I's heart-to-heart was exactly that. She gave me mine back and opened my eyes further to the amazing woman she is. When her parents came back into the room, her father pulled me outside into the hallway and asked me if I sorted my shit and I told him I had. He also told me that Evie will always be his baby girl, but she was now a woman who he demanded to be treated as such, and if I wanted her to be my woman, then I needed to man the fuck up. *Message received.*

Hunter and Chase also got versions of that conversation within the context that their sister deserved their respect and that they needed to treat her as an equal in their triplet-hood. Things aren't perfect among them, but they're better. They have dinner at least once a week, just the three of them, and I know Evie hopes they can build a better relationship built on mutual respect and honesty.

After the tournament, the NCAA had an absolute field day with Coastal's hockey program and halted their season to further investigate. Last we heard, Waterstone and Ellis were taking a plea deal and headed to big boy prison this time around. Our hockey team returned to our regularly scheduled practices, weight training, and games. Evie hasn't missed a home game and Drew accompanies her when his own schedule allows. *She also looks damn good wearing my jersey in the front row while cheering me on.*

I thought I was laser focused before her, but when she is in the stands, I play with a ferocity that pours out of me every time my skates hit the ice. Red hasn't returned for a game, and I think she's fed up with the mixed messages that Chase sends her. I've overheard the girls alluding to this, and I want to kick his ass for screwing that up. Anyone can see that their attraction toward one another runs deep. *He's such a dumbass sometimes.*

Evie and Red moved into one of the three-bedroom apartment units that are usually reserved for seniors. Red was adamant with the Resident Director that they would not be returning to their crime-scene dorm-room, and that they wanted better accommodations under the circumstances. The RD had all their things packed up and moved into their new space the day that Evie came home. I've stayed with her every night since, hence me overhearing some of the shit that Red has said about Chase. That was six weeks ago.

Evie started visiting Edison when she was moved to a different floor at General. She was in rough shape and battled for her life more than once while in the hospital. Her health was poor before their attack and her body kept threatening to shut down on her.

When she stabilized and had the strength to have visitors, she told the police, campus officials, and Evie about her overhearing Lexi, Waterstone, and Ellis's conversations the night of the attack providing incriminating details for all three. She shared her story of following them back to the residence hall, sneaking past the RAs, calling Hunter to give him the heads up when her gut told her that something was

going down that would put Evie in danger, and going to warn her.

The pieces all fit now, and we now have answers to a lot of our previous questions. Lexi was arrested as an accessory and expelled from Havenwood. *Good riddance, psycho bitch.*

Last week, Edison was discharged from the hospital to a state rehab facility for intense physical therapy, nutritional support, and nursing care since she is pretty much on her own with nowhere to go for a home care plan.

She has a long road to recovery and Evie desperately wants her to take the third bedroom in the apartment with her and Red when she's released in three weeks. Edison hasn't given the girls an answer yet. She's guarded and untrusting of people, from what I can tell. She and Evie experienced a life-changing event and have forged a bond over it. They both feel connected to one another on a cellular level based on what they went through.

I will forever be indebted to the brave Edison Santos, a tiny girl with brass fucking balls who tried to protect my girl and sacrificed her own well-being for Evie.

Evie connected with her therapist immediately after she came home and doubled her virtual therapy and group time. We've done a few sessions together as well, and it feels good to process what went down. She continues to explore her anxiety, her healing, and her day-to-day feelings as it connects to what has happened and where she wants to go from here. I listen and validate how she feels, and I'm doing my best to keep a smile on her pretty face. We take small steps and are on a good path forward. She refuses to go backward, and I love watching her thrive every day.

She had a follow-up doctor's appointment earlier and got the all-clear to resume all activity considering her injuries. I for one, am excited to reconnect with her and have a whole date night planned. I'm itching to feel her soft skin, hear her sexy moans, and bury myself deep inside her perfect pussy. Tonight is about us.



Red has a dress rehearsal tonight and will be out. She is staying at her friend's apartment tonight to give Evie and me some time alone. I'm in our kitchen in the hockey house spreading out ingredients and the recipes I printed for the dinner I plan on making, roasted chicken with potatoes, a chopped salad, and M&M cookie bars for dessert. *I hope she likes it.*

I'm feeling like I bit off more than I can chew here, but I'm going to try to get this done. Surely, I can follow a damn recipe. I get to work on the dessert since it requires the least amount of oven time when the boys walk in.

"What are we eating tonight?" Jake asks as he inspects the spread I laid out on the kitchen table.

"Don't freaking touch anything. I'm trying to make Evie a nice dinner. She got an excellent report from her doctor today, and I want to celebrate." I swat Monroe away from the recipes he scans over.

"How are you going to pull off a fucking roast chicken? You can barely make eggs." Monroe ribs on me. *He's not wrong.* I overcook eggs every damn time.

"Then stop bitching and help me out, bro. I want it to be perfect for her."

"Hoping to get lucky tonight, are ya?" He jabs me in the side in jest.

"Are you wining and dining my sister, fuckface?" Hunter asks as I finish pouring the cookie bar batter into a pan and wait for the oven to finish preheating. I hold it up to show him I made a dessert with her favorite candy to get him off my back a bit.

"Yeah, that's exactly what I'm doing. Evie and I are having a date night. Got a problem with that?" He's got a fucking problem with everything lately. Hunter has been in a weird place for weeks now. He's defensive, more aggressive than usual, and picks fights over everything with all of us. He won't talk about what's eating him and his current reaction to me doing something nice for his sister is along the lines of

how he has been fucking day in and day out. It doesn't matter what it is, he's a first-class dick about it. His expression softens after I show him what I'm making her.

"I think she'll like those. M&Ms are her favorite. Just, I don't know man... be careful with her, she may not be ready for all this yet." Ok, now he is just pissing me off. He does not know what she is ready for and what she isn't. He's backsliding into old habits, thinking she's made of fucking glass.

"Hunter, not for nothing, bro, but you're the asshole who got in my face and told me to fight for her, and I'm doing exactly that. I'm manning up and treating her like she deserves." I fold my arms over my chest and wait for him to grumble like he usually does.

"Lay off him. He is doing a nice thing for B. He's been doing nothing but stepping up for her. Maybe you should try it." Chase jumps in and has taken on the role of being the voice of reason for Evie and Hunter. Those two are not in a good place. The three of them go to dinner, but Evie tells me that Hunter barely talks or eats when they do. That he seems like his mind is always somewhere else.

"Back the fuck up C, I'm just saying that she may not be ready for all of this yet and I don't want her getting pushed to do something she's not ready for just because her doc and boyfriend think she is." I'm in Hunter's face now. I'm going to fucking punch him in his mouth if he keeps this shit up.

"There you go again, dipshit, not giving her the credit she deserves and assuming you know better when it comes to her. I'd never push her to do anything she didn't want to do. It's fucking dinner. What the fuck is this really about? You're being more of an asshole than usual, and it's pissing me the fuck off." I glare at him as we stand chest to chest. He's not getting away from this discussion this time.

"Nothing, I'm fine, just forget it. It's none of my goddamn business. Have a nice time." He shoulders past me and walks out of the kitchen. I eye Chase, who is shaking his head at his brother's retreating form. The front door slams a

few seconds later. He's doing that all the damn time; slamming doors after he storms out. Punching walls, kicking shit. He's fucking hurting and won't talk to us.

"You know this has nothing to do with you, right? He's just taking his anger out on you since you're the one stepping up for her and he isn't. He's in a terrible place, man." Chase offers.

I know this shit isn't about me. Hunter has made it known that he's happy that Evie and I sorted our shit out, that we are in a better place, and that she is recovering well. I shake it off and look back at the whole chicken and potatoes. I need to get back on track. Hunter can go fuck himself. I feel bad that he's in pain, but we're his brothers and he's shitting on all of us lately.

"I know, man, but I'm not going to take his shit anymore, either. One minute he's telling me he's happy that Evie and I are together and now I get this shit because I'm making her dinner? Fuck it, I'm going to do exactly that. Are you guys helping me or what?" I chin point to Monroe, Jake, and Chase. Monroe and Jake get up from their seats at the kitchen table where they sat for the showdown.

"Anything for Evie, let's do this," Monroe says as he claps his hands together and we get to work.



Three hours later, I'm packing up our feast and sliding it into Jake's trunk next to his two guitar cases. He drops me off at Evie's apartment before he heads to dress rehearsal for the winter showcase that he's been asked to play in at the last minute. I climb out and he shouts out the window.

"Woo the shit out of her man, that girl deserves all the romantic bells and whistles." I smile and nod. He's right, she does. Having so many sisters, Jake knows way more than the rest of us when it comes to women.

I hit the elevator button up to the girls' apartment and knocked on the door. I had sent her a text letting her know I would be over after a history study session with Monroe and

Jake. I wanted to keep the home-cooked dinner a surprise. When she answers, she is wearing those fucking purple sleep shorts and tank set that make me fucking crazy. *Goddamn.*

Her little nipples are poking through, and her creamy skin looks so soft I want to kiss every damn inch of her. We eye each other and she smiles a dimple-popping grin just for me and I feel like a goddamn king.

I hold up the bags of food. “It’s date night, Evie. I brought dinner, dessert, and entertainment.” I thrust my hips at the last word, and she laughs at my joke. *I love that sound.*

We’ve been talking about this for weeks now. She has been insistent that she’s ready for us to take this step and, from the look in her eye, her wearing the silk pajama set, and the way she is licking those juicy lips, I know she is. *Me too, baby, me too.*

“I can smell the food from here and it smells delicious. Thank you, baby.” She ushers me in and gives me a kiss on my cheek as she takes the bags from me. She places them on the kitchen island and then lifts herself up to sit on it, crossing one leg over the other.

She looks so fucking sexy, and my rising dick agrees as he pops up to greet her. The meal I worked on all afternoon is forgotten as I stalk towards her and take her in. Wavy wild brown hair dances around her shoulders and upper back, her glasses showcase her pretty doe eyes, there’s a slight pink on her cheeks and her teeth sink into her plump bottom lip. As her taut nipples point at me, her increased breathing sends her breasts up and down. Her thick thighs are strong like the rest of her. Her feet show off her dark purple nail polish. She’s my personal pin-up girl with bountiful curves, femininity, and the prettiest face I’ve ever seen. Drew hit the nail on the head. I am one lucky son of a bitch. *And she’s all mine.*

She uncrosses her legs so that I can stand in between them. I can already feel the heat radiating from her perfect pussy and my stiff dick is punching through the hole in my briefs to get to her. I bring my hands to her face and my

fingers fill her dimple holes as she smiles at me. I place my forehead on hers,

“I love you, Evie,” I tell her as my heart gallops in my chest.

“I love you, too, Max. I love you so much, baby, and I can’t wait for another second for you to make love to me.” As she says the last word, she presses her mouth to mine and I’m a goner. *I’m so fucking gone for Evie Wilton.*

## Chapter Sixty-Seven

Evie



My body is craving his and I'm taking lick after lick of what I want as I dominate our kiss. That is all we've done for six weeks. Kiss. I live for his kisses, but right now I need to feel his skin; I need to feel his body move with mine and feel us connected in the most intimate of ways. I tug his chocolate brown hair and tilt his head and trail kisses from the corner of his yummy mouth to his stubbled jaw and down his muscled neck. I run my nose up and down toward the sensitive skin underneath his ear and he shivers. I gently bite his earlobe and he growls.

I'm airborne in his arms; I wrap my legs around his waist as he possessively grips my ass. He walks down the hall towards my bedroom, smacking my right ass cheek, and I jerk in his arms as a moan escapes.

"That was for answering the door in your sexy pajamas, pretty girl." His hand comes down on my left butt cheek and I jerk again, squeezing my legs around him.

"That one was for you since you like it so much." And man, do I like it. *More, please.*

He deposits me on the bed and toes off his shoes, drops his joggers and boxers, and I reach for his shirt to help him. When it flies over his head, his hat joins the garment on the

floor. I take him in and wow, just wow. He's been weightlifting and running more than ever, and every muscle is on display. That irresistible V muscle leads to his long, thick dick which is pulsing as it stares at me, and I swear it winks hello. *I want it in my mouth.*

"You want this, baby?" he asks as I pull him onto the bed, crawl on top of him, and lick at the precum pool over his slit. I run my tongue up and down the underside of his heavy shaft before taking him in my mouth. I hollow out my cheeks as I move up and down on him. I sit up on my knees and pop off, only for him to pull my silk tank over my head forcing me to release him.

"Take your shorts off, you're not going to need clothes anyway." I shimmy out of my shorts and throw them on his pile, and he gives me a megawatt smile when his eyes travel up and down my body.

"Good girl. Now come sit on my face. I want to lick your perfect pussy while you open that pretty mouth for me."

I don't hesitate, I love it when we do this and straddle him. He doesn't give me a chance to get myself in the sixty-nine position before he's licking at me like he hasn't eaten in days. *And I guess he hasn't...it's been weeks.*

"I missed this," he says while he kneads my cheeks and runs his tongue over the outline of my folds. I'm getting wetter by the second.

"Yes, right there," I moan out when the tip of his tongue laps at my clit. *Wow, I missed this, too.*

I kiss the tops of his thighs and run my mouth along that unbelievable V before I suck him into my mouth. His hips start thrusting and his hard length hits the back of my throat. I make a circle with my thumb and pointer finger and jerk him into my mouth with steady strokes. "Goddamn, Evie, that feels too good," he mumbles against my sensitive skin. I smile widely at his praise, and he groans.

"I know what you're doing, I can feel it. If you smile like that with my dick in your mouth, I'm going to come down

your throat.”

“I want that, you know I do,” I tell him while licking his salty tip. He responds with a strangled sigh and by moving his tongue at lightning speed against me. I moan around a mouthful of him and gag when his hips pick up speed.

“Fuck...this delicious pussy...this juicy ass,” he says while spearing my vagina with his tongue. He smacks my butt with each hand coming down on each cheek and pulling them apart. I feel his pinky finger slip between, and he rubs my hole back and forth, applying a bit of pressure. I’ve never been touched there, and I feel warm all over. He continues to draw circles along the rim, and I pick up my pace, moving my hips back and forth.

“You like that baby? Want some more?” His other hand squeezes my cheek while he gives me a long lick.

“Yes, more. Oh, God, yes, I want you everywhere.” I was not expecting it to feel this good. He maneuvers his hand, thrusting a finger into me from behind while his magic pinky finger continues to rub me. I rock into his fingers and ride his mouth, I’m so close and feel what’s coming.

“I bet you look so fucking sexy with your lips wrapped around my dick while my tongue’s buried in your pussy. All I can fucking think about is you filling my mouth with your cum while I blow down your throat.” His words are always my undoing and I come apart, with a whole-body shaking orgasm that has me vibrating around him. He doesn’t let up on me until I’m calling out his name.

“I can’t fucking hold it... the way you suck my dick... goddamn... that tongue... and that warm and wet... FUCK!” He doesn’t finish his thought as my lips glide down his shaft until my nose is buried at his base. I suck as hard as I can before he explodes.

“Goddamn, where did you learn that new trick? Which book?” he teases and pulls me to him between taking in big gulps of air. I’m laying down next to him now trying to catch my own breath.



“All of them! Don’t you know that girls who read romance do it better?”

“Oh, I believe that, because every time it’s the fucking best. You literally melt my brain.” I lean over and kiss his forehead before settling into his side. We lay there for a while and drift in and out of sleep. I wake up to kisses on my face before he moves to my mouth. He’s holding me close as our bodies press together. I roll to my back, and he follows, positioning himself on top of me.

“You ready?” He is looking at me with love and adoration in his ocean-blue eyes. *God, I’m so ready.*

“Make love to me, Max.” With that, he kisses me while pushing inside until he’s fully seated.

He moves slowly for a while and whispers how much he loves me in my ear. I roll my hips the way I know he likes, running my hands over his hard chest. I gently pull his chest hair and he shivers like he always does.

He picks up his pace and buries his face in the crook of my neck, giving me his weight as his arms wrap around me. I dig my fingertips into his back as his powerful hips pound into me.

I feel my wetness run down my body as his pubic bone rubs against my exposed clit. We are clinging to one another and still try to hold each other tighter, closer. I feel my orgasm swirling and picking up speed and when it detonates; I come so hard I see stars.

When we finally move and unhook from each other, my arms instinctively go out to him and he wraps me up around his body, anchoring me to him. *Mine.*

I pull the comforter up around us and listen to his breathing even out as I draw hearts on his chest with my finger. We stay like that for over an hour until the ache between my legs is palpable from running my hands all over his muscular torso. I’m a goner. *I am so gone for Max Harmon.*

## Chapter Sixty-Eight

# Max



I feed her M&M cookie bars for breakfast as we lay in bed before we have to face the day. I lick the crumbs that fall on her bare chest. It ignites the sex kitten in her, and she pounces on me. It pains me to leave her, but I have to get ready for weight training before I'll see her again in English class.

Tonight, is the winter showcase and we're all going to support Red and some of the other performers that we know. There is a skit from the drama department that Red is singing in and then she is singing some songs on her own. She's great. I hear her singing more than talking lately since I'm here every day.

Jake is playing guitar to make up a set of musicians that are supporting a duet. I've heard him play as much as I've

seen him skate over the past three years. He's good and he always says that both hockey and music are the loves of his life. I'm used to seeing him playing in the living room, hearing his music from his room, or outside around a bonfire in the house's backyard, so seeing him up on the stage will be exciting for me and the rest of the boys.

I peel myself away from her soft sweat skimmed skin after our fourth go at it and kiss her goodbye.

"I love you, Evie. Stop tempting me. I've gotta go," I tell her, giving her another kiss. Little temptress that she is tries to further our kiss. I quickly grab my clothes off the floor to get dressed otherwise I'll end up back in bed with her. *Coach will have my ass if I miss weights.*

I reluctantly look back at her withering on her bed and groan out, "Evil woman," as I adjust my raging hard-on and walk out the door.

I sprint my way to weight training with one minute to spare. I find an empty bench and get to work.

"Hey man, how was dinner?" Jake comes up to spot me. "Don't know, didn't eat it," I tell him with a grin. His face temporarily falls.

"Are you kidding? I had soggy cereal for dinner after dress rehearsal and you let that roasted chicken go to waste?" He puts it together and adds, "sounds like you had the better night though," and playfully punches me in the arm. *And morning.*

I grin and shake my head.

"For real man, I'm happy to see you like this, she brings out the best in you, it's like you're a changed man," he says and that hits me right in the gut. These fucking guys man. *Brothers.*

I couldn't fucking agree more. I am a changed man. I had kept myself closed off and was only focused on one thing. I was limiting myself; my focus might have been laser focused on hockey, but it also gave me blinders to being the best version of myself that I can be right now. As much as I love

hockey, it's not the love of my life anymore. It's my future, but so is she.

The girl with the million-dollar smile that is worth more to me than any NHL contract. I wasn't expecting her, I wasn't even sure I was ready for her, but I couldn't deny the way I felt; the way my heart knew her. She's taught me how to love unconditionally, how to care about someone more than myself, and how to put someone else's needs first. This girl shows more strength, perseverance, grit, and determination than any Havenwood Devil combined. Her ability to push forward and pave her own path is fucking inspiring and I can't wait to walk right alongside her.

I meant what I said to Hunter and Chase that night, I didn't stand a chance when I saw her that night at the block party. It wasn't just her pretty face that captivated me, it was her fighting spirit. She fights for herself every damn day and has made me want to fight for me, too. To fight for us.

I had shut down the possibility of love and being a part of a relationship before I met her. No one else came close to breaking down the fortress I had built around myself. Then, a dimple-popping smile blew the gates wide open, and my Evie walked in. And I couldn't be happier that she did.

## Epilogue

Evie



I'm meeting with Melanie, my therapist, and we've been spending my virtual session reflecting on my first semester at Havenwood. She and I are reviewing the goals I had set for myself back in August and exploring my progress.

"A lot has happened since we laid out your goals and reviewed why you were taking this step to transfer to Havenwood, even with our weekly sessions, I still think it's important to reflect on and unpack the experiences you've had this semester," she states and starts us off. I completely agree with her, a lot has happened.

"Yeah, a lot has happened. There has been good stuff, bad stuff, and unexpected stuff. I dealt with a bunch of new challenges and am kind of shocked I am where I am now, shocked in a good way." I smile at myself.

"It sounds like you surprised yourself. Tell me about that," she asks before taking a sip of her tea.

"I'm surprised at myself, but in a good way, I rose above a lot this semester. I faced my fears, battled my an-anxiety, and I stood up for myself. I w-w-went after what I wanted."

"Do you mean pursuing your relationship with Max?" she asks.

“Yes, it may sound silly, but I truly believe that love heals us, and his heart has helped to heal mine.”

“I’ve also been open to developing friendships, especially finding a best friend in Sloane, an additional brother in Drew, and Jake and Monroe. I was open and now even crave touch. Even if it’s just a hug from Sloane or a fist bump from the guys, it feels good to not be scared anymore. I feel more confident than I ever have before. I feel good about myself and who I am now.”

“And moving forward with your survivorship?” I take a deep breath before I share my thoughts.

“My survivorship was rocked, but even with the second attack, I don’t feel like it was ripped away from me. I feel, if anything, that it was rooted deeper and stronger inside of me. I feel seen, and I’m not embarrassed about who I am. Even when Lexi tried to humiliate me. I know what I’m challenged with and what I have to continue to work on, but I’m not stopping. They didn’t break me, they never could.”

“I’m so glad to hear you say all of this, Evie. You look happy and healthy.” I give her a smile and take a deep breath.

“That’s because I am: I’m the happiest I’ve ever been and the healthiest I’ve ever been. I know my anxiety will always be there, but it’s getting better. I feel healthy emotionally, physically, and sexually. I’ve discovered a version of myself that I want to continue to be.”

“Tell me what has given you the most joy?” I give myself a minute to think about my answer.

At the beginning of the semester, right from move-in day, I felt like I was merely existing. My healing was moving at a snail’s pace at home, and I truly felt I was a shell of the person I was and the person I wanted to be seemed unattainable. My challenge was to step up and fight for myself, walk over the threshold of comfortable and uncomfortable, and smash through my own insecurities.

I had a lot of unforeseen help from new people in my life, starting with Sloane. Her friendship is a gift that keeps on

giving. Drew, Monroe, and Jake are also new friends whose respect, patience, and kindness proved to me that not every large male who plays a sport was to be feared.

Edi showed me I'm worth fighting for and our bond will forever be cemented in the courage and bravery she showed.

Max broke down my walls and opened my heart to love, my body to pleasure, and empowered me to feel confident with every moment we share.

My daily abundance of anxiety, fear, embarrassment, and low self-esteem has been replaced with laughter, happiness, pride, and holding my head up high.

My relationships with my brothers were embedded in our past. A and C were thriving, and I had clipped my own wings. Joining them at Havenwood, developing these new relationships, and putting myself in daily positions to explore who I am, forced our triplet-hood to change. It morphed and is changing into relationships filled with mutual respect for the adults we now are. I believe they now see me as a woman whose feet show scars from the hot coals I've had to walk over, but these feet also are walking forward and show the depths of the healing I've done.

My words flow easily, and I have happy tears in my eyes when I tell her,

“I now see myself as the survivor I am and not the victim that Brandon and Chris tried twice to make me. I'm not going to be bullied by mean girls, like Lexi. Before coming here, I felt I wasn't surviving anything, now I feel that I'm living each day to the fullest and will continue to push myself, continue to fight for myself, and continue to challenge myself to be the best version of myself that I can be.

I have no intention of burying my head in the sand again. I have good friends in my life who are here to walk beside me and me beside them, I have the soul-connecting love of a man whose heart beats with mine, and I'm a part of a triplet-hood where my brothers' hugs not only hold me up, but

I now have the strength to hold them up as well... I've definitely found my joy."

The End.



Thank you so much for reading Evie and Max's story. This book is near and dear to my heart, and I hope it made you feel all the feels! If you enjoyed this book and have a moment, consider leaving a review on Goodreads or Amazon. It's greatly appreciated!



Evie's brothers are up next! You can expect Chase and Hunter's books to be released in the very near future!



## Acknowledgements & Gratitude

A LOVING thank you to my husband and Ls, your unconditional love and unwavering support made this possible.

A GRACIOUS thank you to my parents and brothers who have always pushed me forward.

A COLOSSAL thank you to my family for all your love and support.

A HUGE thank you to Melanie who spent countless hours reading, rereading, and editing my manuscript. You saw the potential in me as a writer, and Evie as a story. You've been instrumental in making my dream come true. I couldn't of done this without you!

An IMMENSE thank you to my cousin Jennifer who encouraged and believed in me.

A BIG thank you to Esthephanie who helped get my social media off the ground and into the universe.

A TREMENDOUS thank you to Cristina who stayed by my side every step of the way like best friends do.

A GINORMOUS thank you to Nikki who helped to push me

through the homestretch, smoothed out the edges of my self-doubt, and whose annotations always made me smile.

A MASSIVE thank you to Jenny for always telling me that I could do this.

A GRANDE thank you to Adriana, Anelisse, Judy, and Monica for answering every frantic text I sent regarding this book.

A TEARY-EYED thank you to Ilona who helped me format my story into a real book and for being there to give me octopus hugs.

A GREAT BIG thank you to my Kentucky girls Cara and Michele, for all your supportive texts and words of encouragement.

A HEARTFELT thank you to my beta readers, Jennifer, Anelisse, Monica, Melanie, Cristina, Jenny, Adriana, Dayana, Jesenia, Veronique, Nathalie, and Judy, for all your insight and suggestions.

A GRACIOUS thank you to my ARC readers, for both your positive and constructive criticism. You pushed me to edit Evie to be the best she can be.

## About The Author

**Hi, I'm Rose Cedar! I'm so glad you're here!**

The logo for Rose Cedar features the name "Rose Cedar" in a black, cursive script font. The text is set against a light pink, watercolor-style splash background. There are several small, dark pink dots scattered around the splash, resembling ink splatters or decorative elements.

NEW ADULT  
CONTEMPORARY  
ROMANCE

“And one day, the girl with the books became the woman writing them.”

I love a good story. I spend my time working my day job, drinking way too much coffee, being with my family, watering my houseplants, and reading well into the wee hours of the night. I've always had a thing for vampires, fictional hockey players, a swoon-worthy romance, and white chocolate pretzels.

I hope you enjoyed visiting Havenwood University as much as I loved creating it. The characters in this story will all be making future appearances as well as getting their own HEA!

Thanks for being here with me!

I would love to hear from you!

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Coming Soon



**Chase: A Devil & his Birdie**

***Havenwood University Book Two***

A Sisters' Best Friend/Roommate Romance

Rose Cedar