



# EXTRACURRICULAR

*with*  
*Mr. Abbot*

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR BROOKE SUMMERS WRITING AS

# STELLA BELLA

# EXTRACURRICULAR WITH MR. ABBOT

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CLASS IN SESSION

TABOO TEACHINGS

BOOK 2

STELLA BELLA

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Extracurricular with Mr. Abbot

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## BOOKS BY STELLA:

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ONE

ERIN

I stare at the apartment, boxes surrounding me, and I try not to cry. Gary's gone, and I'm alone. My big brother is the best person I know, and without him, I wouldn't be here. He's helped me so much and has continued to do so. When our mom died two years ago, it was Gary and me that was left. Our dad was long gone, already moved on, and started a new family. Losing mom was hard—probably the hardest thing I've ever gone through, will ever experience—but I had Gary to lean on.

Being sixteen when I lost her, it was such a fundamental age, that I found it really hard to break through the grief, there was so much that would happen, and I'd be so excited for, and then it would hit me. Mom wouldn't be around to see it.

Pain slices through me as I stare at the boxes in this empty room. I'm alone. For the first time in my life, I'm truly alone. Gary is already on his way home, a two-hour journey, and I'm here at Brightmore University, California. I should be happy, excited, and enjoying every bit of this experience, but I'm not. I feel as though I could cry. I'm scared that I'm going to be a failure and that I'll be a disappointment to not only my mom but also to Gary.

My cell buzzes, and I see that it's a message from my brother. I smile as I read the text.

***Gary: Stop it. No crying. You're going to have so much fun and anytime you need me. Just call. I love you, Erin. Never forget it.***

I laugh. God, how did he know that I needed that message, and how the hell did he know that I was crying?

He's right, it's a two-hour journey and a phone call away. It's not as though he's on the other side of the world. I start to unpack the boxes, a little less sad than before, but also a bit excited for what's to come. I hope I make friends.

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I WALK OUT of the pizza place with food. I'm starving, it's taken me all day and most of the evening to get the boxes unpacked. Thankfully, it's all done, and I don't have to worry about it anymore. I'm a neat freak. I like things in a certain way, and I can't deal with the mess. Having the boxes lying around for days was never an option. I thought I could leave them overnight, but I broke out in a sweat at the thought. It's done, and now I have a week before college starts to unwind and get used to the campus.

As I exit the store, I'm jarred backward as a hard body collides with mine, and I rock back on my feet, my pizza box goes flying in the air, and I'm so focused on trying not to fall on my face that I can't save it. It lands on the ground with a splat, completely ruined.

Hands reach out to steady me, managing to catch me before I fall to the ground. "Christ, I'm so sorry," a deep gravelly voice says as they pull me toward them.

I glance up and look into the palest blue eyes that I have ever seen. “I’m okay,” I whisper to assure him.

His lips thin as he shakes his head. His dark brown hair cut short into an almost buzz cut. He’s got a square jawline that’s chiseled, and he’s freaking gorgeous. I’ve never seen a man that looks as good as him. “I should have been watching where I was going, I’m so fucking sorry, let me get you another pizza.”

I glance at the ground to see where the pizza lies and back to the guy. “It’s fine,” I say. “It was an accident, there’s no need.”

He shakes his head and takes my breath away as he smiles. God, so damn hot, it should be illegal. “There is, come on, let’s get you a new one.”

I blink as he takes my hand and steers me back into the pizza store. He orders his own and then lets me order mine. I reach for money to pay him back, and he gives me a sharp look. “You paid once already, I ruined that one, I’m not an asshole, I’m paying, so please, put your money away.”

I sigh, but truly grateful. “Thank you,” I say and give him a smile. His gaze moves from my eyes down to my mouth and back up again. I shiver at the intensity of his eyes. God, they’re so beautiful.

“What’s your name, beautiful?” he asks, and I roll my eyes, the corny lines don’t work on me.

“Erin,” I reply as I stick out my hand. “And yours?”

The moment he takes my hand, electricity courses through me, the air crackles around us and thickens. I look at him and see that his eyes are heated and he’s staring at me as though he

wants me. “Jared,” he replies, his name rolls off his tongue smoothly.

“Well, Jared,” I begin, as I pull my hand away from his. “You really didn’t have to buy me dinner, I do appreciate it, though.”

“You’re not like most women, are you?” he comments.

My brows knit together. “What’s that supposed to mean?” I ask insulted for womankind.

“I mean, most women would jump at the chance for a free meal.”

I place my hands on my hips and glare at him. “It’s not a free meal, is it, Jared? I had already purchased my food, and some oaf knocked into me.”

His chuckle is husky and sends shivers down my spine. “You’re right. It’s not. So how about I take you out for dinner tomorrow night?”

I wrinkle my nose, unsure if I should.

“Cute,” he says as he presses a kiss against it. “What are you doing tonight? Do you have plans?”

I shake my head. “Nope, I’m going home and watching a movie.”

His grin makes my panties wet. It’s not fair that a man can look this damn good. “My daughter is with my parents for the weekend. Would you like to have dinner with me?”

He has a daughter? He doesn’t look old enough.

“Okay, but we’ll go back to my place,” I say, a little too breathy. God, I want him.

“You’re on,” he says. “Let’s get the pizza and go.”

My heart starts to pound, what the hell am I doing? I've never been with a guy before, and I'm not really sure that I should be bringing a man I don't know home with me. I really do want him, but I shouldn't. It's clear that he wants me.

He takes my hand once he has the pizzas, and we walk out of the store. "You're not from around here, are you?" he asks.

I shake my head. "That obvious, huh?"

He grins that sexy grin. "No," he replies a little too easily. "But I've not seen you around before."

I shrug. "What about you, are you from here?"

He nods. "Born and raised. I left for college and then came back with Megan. My daughter's four going on fourteen."

I laugh. "Aren't all girls like that?" I can remember my mom saying that I was full of sass the moment I could talk. I think us girls come into our own at an early age, and we grow stronger with who we are.

"Probably," he says. "But yeah, Brightmore is home for me."

"But you didn't go to college here?" I ask, glad that we're talking, it's putting me at ease.

He shakes his head. "No, I wanted to get away, see what the world had to offer me."

"A daughter," I quip.

His laughter is throaty. "That's what it had to offer, and I couldn't have asked for more."

My heart melts at the love he has for his daughter. It's amazing to see. I want to ask about Megan's mom, but I don't have the courage.

“What about you?” he asks. “Why Brightmore of all places?”

“I needed a fresh start. My mom died two years ago and living in our small town was a constant memory. I needed someplace new.”

His grip on my hand tightens. “I’m sorry about your mom,” he says softly.

I smile at him. “Thanks, it’s hard sometimes. But I’m getting there.”

We reach my apartment complex, and I see that he’s glancing around, taking everything in. “You’ve got good security,” he comments.

“Yeah, my brother chose the apartment for that reason alone.” I know that Gary was worried that something could happen to me so he did a lot of research into the safest place that I could stay, and this was one of two complexes that he could choose from.

“It’s just you and your brother?”

I nod. “Yeah, my dad was long gone. But Gary’s my best friend and my rock. I don’t know what I’d do without him.”

His hand moves to my lower back as we enter the complex. Heat runs through my blood. God. Why am I reacting this way to him? Especially when I’ve never had this much of a reaction to anyone before him. I pray that I don’t get attached, the last thing I need is a distraction when I should be focusing.

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MY HEART IS RACING, we've spent the night getting to know one another, it's been amazing, and I really like Jared. But his hand is currently on my thigh and slowly moving up. My breathing is ragged. God, I want him.

Everything in my body is screaming to let him in and do this, but my head is telling me to be wary. That this is too fast. He moves in closer to me, and I throw caution to the wind.

The moment our lips touch, I'm lost. There's no going back. The man has drove me wild all night as he sat beside me on the couch, I was aware of every movement he made. It was as if my senses were heightened, and I was in tune to every minute detail.

I couldn't stop watching him, there's something about him that makes me want to be with him. For him to be my first. It's crazy being this connected to someone after meeting them, but Jared has something about him that has me sunk.

His tongue sweeps into my mouth, and I moan long and hard. God, I love this. His hands move up my thigh, growing closer to the hem of my skirt. I don't stop him, in fact, I open my legs wider and give him better access.

The moment his finger pushes underneath my panties and into my pussy, I throw my head back and moan. God, it feels so good.

Jared's lips move to my neck, and he begins to kiss, the feel of his stubble against my soft skin only adds to the intensity of the moment. "Fuck," he growls as he pushes my skirt up to my hips. "So fucking beautiful, Erin."

His compliments are sweet, and I love that he thinks that. His blue eyes blazing with fire and need. "Please," I beg,



unsure as to what I'm begging for, but all I know is that I want more.

He pulls my panties from my body, moves back up my body, and kisses me again. I wrap my arms around his neck and kiss him back, his tongue sweeps into my mouth, and I'm so drunk on lust that I register the sound of his zipper being undone.

He positions himself at my entrance, I tense slightly, but he continues to kiss me. I'm so fucking lost in him that I can't pull back, I don't tell him that I'm a virgin.

He pushes his cock into me, and pain unlike anything I've ever experienced hits me as he thrusts past my hymen. I scream out in pain, and he stops, his body trembling above mine, his eyes wild and filled with worry.

"I'm sorry," I whisper as tears stream down my face.

"Why didn't you tell me?" he asks softly. "I'd have gone gently, made you come first. Christ. I'm an asshole."

I shake my head. "No, you're not." I wanted this, I wanted him. "Please," I beg. "I need you." I press a kiss to his lips, and within seconds, he's deepening it, his tongue sliding in again and caressing my own.

His cock withdraws slightly, and then he pushes it into me, feeding it inch by inch. There's a little pain of him stretching me, but the pleasure by far outweighs that.

He pulls back and looks down at me, his teeth bared, as he thrusts deep inside me. God, it feels so damn good. I'm clinging to him like a vine. I'm taking everything he's giving me.

"So fucking tight," he growls as he rotates his hips and thrusts harder.

Pleasure builds inside me. It's intense, and it's surging through me like an inferno. I'm burning up with need.

"Grind against my cock, Erin," he instructs.

I do as he says and grind down on his thick cock, meeting him thrust for thrust.

"Come for me, baby." He nips at my lip, his eyes darkening with need.

"So close," I whimper. I can feel that pleasure swirling under the surface.

I continue to cling to him, unable to do anything but grind on his cock, needing my release to come.

"So fucking good," he praises. "You're so fucking good, Erin. Come for me. I need to feel you come."

I'm unable to control it, it tumbles into me like a freight train. My eyes shutter close, my back bows, my head flies backward, and my fingers claw at his shirt as I cum. Crying out his name, as my pussy contracts around his cock. I'm breathless, utterly spent.

"That's it, so fucking beautiful," he groans. His cock pistons into me.

His tongue sweeps into my mouth as he fucks me with abandonment. His cock swells, and he grunts low in his throat. He's close. His breathing is labored, a sheen of sweat covers his body and forehead. He thrusts into me once more and groans long and hard as he comes.

God, that was amazing.

TWO

I'm careful not to wake Jared as I reach for my clothes. I'm hungry. I woke up this morning, and was pleasantly surprised to find him still in bed with me. I thought he may have snuck out in the middle of the night without a trace.

I wince as I bend down, I'm still a little sore from last night's activities, but I can't deny how amazing it felt, and it's definitely something else that I'd want to do with Jared when I get back—if he's still here.

I dress quickly and leave the apartment. I'm in search of coffee and donuts. From what I've heard, Brightmore has an amazing bakery that has the best donuts in the country. It doesn't take me long to find Pure Indulgence, the queue is long but thankfully moves fast.

There's a beautiful blonde girl in front of me in the queue. "Who knew that there'd be people up this early wanting donuts," she says, she has a soft lilt to her words, she sounds almost European.

"Right?" I breathe. "I thought I would be the only one." It's not even seven in the morning, and there's got to be at least twenty people in this queue.

She beams at me, her blonde hair tied up in a knot on top of her head. "Are you in college?" she asks hopefully.

“I’ll be starting when the semester begins,” I say, and her eyes light up at my words. “And you?”

She nods. “The same. I’m so excited. I’ve not met anyone yet.”

“Me either, but it’s good to know that I’m not alone. I’m Erin.”

She grins. “I’m Anastasia,” she says regally, and there’s something about her that seems familiar, and I can’t quite put my finger on it.

We get to know each other as the line moves along. We both find out that we’re studying history, which is great. I want to be an editor, but I love history, and it’s something I’ve always loved, and I think taking that class will be beneficial in the end.

As we reach the counter, we exchange numbers. I’m so damn giddy. When my mom died, everyone began to feel sorry for me, and I’d hate interacting with people, and they’d have pity in their eyes as they spoke to me. It became too much for me to bear, so I withdrew and in doing so, lost all of my friends. Speaking with Anastasia, it’s easy. She doesn’t know my past, so she doesn’t see me as broken.

I order the coffee and donuts, and the smell from the box is delicious, and I can’t wait to tuck into them. I say my goodbye to Anastasia and head back to my apartment.

“There you are,” Jared says the moment I walk through the door. His voice thick with sleep, he must have just woken up and realized I was gone.

“I was hungry,” I tell him as I place the coffee and donuts on the table in the living room. “I didn’t want to wake you up.”

He reaches for me, pulling me into his body. “You should have, I’d have come with you.”

I place my hands against his chest. “It’s fine, you looked so peaceful, I didn’t want to wake you. Besides, you must be hungry?”

His eyes darken as he lifts me into his arms. “I am,” he growls. “But not for food.” I shiver at his tone. My entire body is alight with fire. God. I need him.

He walks us into the bedroom and pushes me onto the bed. I’m trembling, my body shaking with anticipation. God, I want him so badly. He straightens and pulls off the tee that he was wearing, the moment his hands go to the band of his pants, I strip out of my own clothes. I’m eager. I need him.

“Lie down, baby, show me your pretty pussy.”

I swallow hard as I lie back and open my legs.

His nostrils flare as he stalks toward me. “So fucking wet,” he growls as he buries his head between my thighs. I gasp when his tongue sweeps across my folds. My breath catches in my lungs as he does it again and again.

My body hums as pleasure takes over. I’m moaning and groaning, loving what he’s doing to me. I can’t help but reach out, my fingers tangling in his hair. My body has a mind of its own, and I grind my pussy against his face.

The long deep groan that he makes vibrates against my pussy and travels along my spine. Goosebumps break out at the deep guttural sound.

“Jared,” I beg, my orgasm building. “Oh, Jared,” I cry as he spears my pussy with his tongue. He’s without mercy. He’s tongue-fucking me hard and fast. My fingers in his hair

tighten, and I cry out, my eyes closing as I grind down against his mouth.

I'm so close. So so close.

His mouth closes around my clit, and he sucks hard. I practically come off the bed as my back bows. God. It feels amazing. So damn good.

The moment he pushes a finger inside me, I cry out his name. My body begins to shake, I'm tethering on the edge. He adds another finger as he nips at my clit. It's too much. I can't hold back any longer.

My orgasm builds until it reaches boiling point, my body on fire from his touch. I come, shouting his name as my body quakes with the force of the orgasm.

I hear the rustling of a condom wrapper as I come down from my amazing orgasm. Jared positions his cock at my entrance and slants his mouth against mine. I moan against him as our tongues caress each other. I taste myself on him, and it sends me into a frenzy. I wrap my arms around his neck and press closer to him.

He thrusts deep inside me, and I can't help but cry out. The thickness of his cock stretches me as he starts to move. With every thrust, I feel my pussy being stretched.

I cling to him, unable to stop myself from grinding against his cock. He thrusts hard and deep. Every single movement has me crying out in a mixture of pleasure and pain.

"Nothing is as good as this," he snarls, pulling his hips back and thrusting deep inside again. His thrusts are punishing but send my pleasure skyrocketing.

"God," I cry out as his mouth closes around my nipple. His tongue circles my nipple, and I close my eyes as I try to

breathe. It's impossible, the man is unrelenting.

He rotates his hips and fucks me into oblivion. I'm clinging to him, my fingers clawing at his back as I cry out, wanting more. Needing more. His thrusts are harder, faster, and more brutal than before.

I shatter. I come undone. I cry out his name as I throw my head back in pleasure.

He thrusts once more inside me, burying himself to the hilt before his cock pulses, and he unloads stream after stream of cum inside of the condom.

He pulls out of me, and I wince in pain. Will this always happen? Or will I eventually get used to it?

"The coffee is going to be cold," I tell him as he reaches for me.

He doesn't answer, but he presses his lips against mine, his hand tangling in my hair. He takes my breath away, God, the man has complete control over me. I've never felt this way before. I could see myself falling for him.

Hell, who am I kidding? I already am.

"You went to Pure Indulgence?" he says as we take a seat on the couch.

I nod as I take a bite out of one of the donuts. I release a moan as the flavor bursts into my mouth.

"Were you queuing for long?" he asks as he grabs one for himself.

I watch in fascination as he takes two bites, and the entire thing is gone.



“That good, huh?” I ask with a smile, and he nods, reaching for another. “There was a queue, it wasn’t too bad, I got talking to a girl there. She seems nice. We exchanged numbers.”

He raises his brow. “You’re good at making connections,” he says thickly, and my body shivers at the tone.

“You’ve got to stop it,” I hiss as I take another bite from my donut. “Don’t use that tone with me,” I whimper.

“What tone?” he questions, looking genuinely confused.

I bite my lip, glancing at him through my eyelashes. I’m wondering how to explain it. “When you use that tone that’s thick, it makes me wet,” I confess.

His nostrils flare, and his eyes darken. “You don’t bite your lip, and I won’t use the tone,” he promises me.

I immediately release my lip, not realizing that I had started to bite it again. “Deal. But to go back to the comment about connections. I don’t usually, I tend to keep to myself. But Anastasia is going to be in the same classes as I am for college, so it’ll be good to have someone with me.”

I watch as his entire body tenses. His eyes widen a fraction. “Erin,” he growls, his tone serious. “Please tell me that you’re not going to be a student at Brightmore.”

I nod, wondering what the hell is going on. One minute we’re happy, and the next, he’s looking at me as though he’s seen a ghost.

He gets to his feet, running his hands through his hair. “Fuck,” he snarls. “This can’t be fucking happening.”

I go to him, putting my hand to his chest, I feel the rapid beat of his heart. I swallow hard as I look up at him. “Christ,”

he growls, his hands framing my face. “Who’d have thought that I’d find the woman I’ve been searching for, but I can’t have her?”

I blink, so confused by what’s happening. “Jared?” I whisper. I’m fucking scared.

“Baby, this can’t continue. I’m a professor at the college. It’s against the school rules. I’m so fucking sorry, Erin. If I could, I would be with you, but I can’t.”

My heart shatters at his words. He’s a professor? This can’t be happening. Oh my god. How did this even happen?

He presses a chaste kiss against my lip, before turning and walking out of my door. The front door slams shut behind him, and the sound reverberates around the room.

Tears fall from my eyes as I stare at the door, how the hell did we get here?

He’s gone.

I crumble to the floor as sobs burst from me.

What am I going to do? I fell for him. I really fell for him, and now he’s gone.

THREE

JARED

Two weeks later

It's been over two weeks since I had the best night of my life, and I knew within minutes of meeting her that I wanted to be with her. I've never felt that way about anyone, but Erin captured me from the get-go. Walking away was hard, but there was no other choice, I had to walk away, I couldn't stay. I can't lose my job.

But fuck, every night, all I think about is Erin and how fucking amazing she felt beneath me. To know that I'm the one she wanted, that I'm the only man that she's been with. Fuck. My cock tightens at the memories. It's taken everything in me not to track her down and be with her again. I'm fighting against every instinct I have as much as I want her, and I want to build something with her. I can't.

When she's in my class, she sits at the back and doesn't make eye contact. I'm glad that she's there and present, I'd hate for her to lose everything that she's worked hard for. I'm not going to make it hard for her, I'm going to teach the class and pray that we can get through the next four years without a hiccup. I don't know how it's going to happen. I fucking pray that it does.

“Daddy, can we go to the park?” Megan asks as she pulls on my leg.

I glance outside and see that darkness has settled. “Honey, it’s dark.”

My little monster shrugs. “I want to play.” She also has me wrapped around her finger, there’s no way that I can say no to her. Especially after the week that she’s had.

“Okay, Meg, go get your shoes, and we can go.”

She runs through the house laughing and screaming. She’s happy, and that’s all that matters to me.

Megan is a diabetic. Her medicine is expensive, and my job as a professor is what manages to pay for it. My insurance through the college is one of the main reasons that I came home to Brightmore. That and my parents were here, and they’re a huge help with Megan. Whenever I have work, they watch her for me.

“Daddy, I’m ready,” she tells me as she looks up at me. A bright toothy smile on her face, her pale blue eyes just like mine. They reflect so much happiness that it makes my heart clench. She’s been through hell in her short years. Between having her mom walk out on her to discovering that she’s a diabetic and the struggles that come along with that. It’s been awful, but you wouldn’t know it by looking at her. Megan is the happiest girl in the world, and I hope that she stays like that.

I help her put her jacket on, all the while she continues to smile, she’s not going to stop, she bounces back from her low sugar levels like it’s just another day. This week has been fucking shit, the levels have been jumping all over, too high, too low. It’s a fucker to get it stable, but once you do, it should

stay. Mom took her to a soft play area as my sister brought her kids. While they were there, Megan drank some juice, something that she shouldn't have—but she knows that now—and since then, it's been painstaking to get her sugar levels to where we need them. But thankfully, we're there right now, and I'm praying it stays level.

“What do you want for dinner?” I ask her as she skips beside me.

The park is only a fifteen-minute walk from our house, and it's usually a daily occurrence that we'll come here, especially when the weather is cool. I try to take her outside at least once a day, whether it's to the park or let her ride her bike.

“Ooh, daddy, there's no one here,” she cries as she rushes toward the swing. “I get to be alone.”

She doesn't like it if there's too many people around, she gets overwhelmed a lot and wants to leave. Thankfully, an empty park means a happy Megan.

I sit on the bench and keep an eye on her as she plays. There's enough streetlights around that it lights up the playground, making it easier to see. My mind once again goes back to Erin. I grit my teeth. I have to remove her from my memories. I can't lose my job, I can't put my child's health at risk, no matter who it's for. It's not something I'll ever do.

“Oh, daddy, I found a ball,” she cries as she runs over to me. “Can you play with me?”

I get to my feet and clap my hands for her to throw the ball to me. She's not yet quite mastered accuracy. She throws the ball to me, and it ends up flying back behind her. “I'll get it,” she says, her little feet running after it. I watch as she picks it up and gets ready to throw it, but as she releases the ball, it

flies in the air and hits someone who was minding their own business running.

I hear the husky laughter of Erin, and my cock tightens as she picks up the ball and hands it to my daughter. “Here you go, hunny, that was a great aim.”

Megan preens at her praise. “Thank you for the ball. I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to hit you. I was throwing it to my dad.”

Erin laughs again. She’s so fucking sweet with Megan that I’m rooted to the spot. She’s not seen me yet, and I’m not sure if I should make it known that I’m here or not. “That’s okay, it didn’t hurt. I think the ball’s okay, did I hurt it?”

Megan falls to the ground laughing, her tiny legs in the air as she howls with laughter. “You’re silly, the ball’s not hurt.”

Erin puts her hands on her hips. “No?” she questions. “Are you sure?” she asks as she helps Megan off the ground.

“I’m sure.”

Erin nods. “Okay then, sweetie, are you hurt?”

Megan shakes her head.

“That’s good, sweetie,” Erin says as she bends down so she’s at my daughter’s height. “You remind me of someone,” she says as she presses her finger against Megan’s nose.

“Who?” Megan breathes, enthralled by Erin. I don’t blame her. Erin is by far the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, she’s so easy to be around, and she has such a beautiful smile that it’s almost impossible not to be enamored by her.

“A princess,” Erin replies easily. “Do you know that I have now seen two princesses?”

Megan's mouth opens in surprise. Never have I seen my daughter interact so animatedly with anyone she didn't know before. Seeing how Erin is with her, it's making it harder for me to stay away.

"My best friend is a princess, and so are you. I'm so lucky to have met such a beautiful princess." She presses her finger against her nose once again, and Megan giggles. "Where's your mommy and daddy, Princess?" She asks. "Do you want me to help you find them?"

Megan giggles louder. "No, silly, my daddy's there," she tells her as she points to me.

Erin turns to me, that beautiful soft smile on her face, the second she sees me, I watch as it falls, and pain slashes through her eyes. "That's good, sweetie, you should go back to him now. Okay?"

Megan nods. "Okay, bye," she says and rushes toward me.

I take a step forward, but Erin shakes her head, tears filling her eyes. She backs away, her hands up, she's pleading with me not to go near her. My heart fucking hurts as I watch a tear fall down her cheek. She shakes her head again and turns on her heel. I watch with gritted teeth as she runs away, her feet heavy as she pounds against the ground.

"Daddy, that lady was so pretty," Megan tells me. "Why did she run away?"

My jaw clenches. How the fuck do I tell my daughter that I'm the reason she ran?

"Come on, honey" I say softly, hoping that she'll change the subject. "Let's play with the ball, we'll have to go home soon."



“Oh, no,” she whines, and I raise a brow at her. “Okay, Daddy.” She throws the ball at me, and she laughs when I don’t catch it.

We continue to play, and no matter how hard I try, I can’t take my mind off Erin. Fuck. I want to make sure that she’s okay. But I can’t. Not now.

---

I KNOCK on the door and wait. Fucking praying that she’s here. I barely slept last night. I kept tossing and turning. She’s all that I think about. All that I see. What the hell is wrong with me? I should be focusing on my career and my daughter. Instead, she’s all that I see.

The door opens, and I see a tired looking Erin wearing nothing but an oversized tee. Her hair mused, and her eyes heavy with sleep. The moment she realizes it’s me standing in her doorway, her eyes narrow.

“What the hell are you doing here?” she hisses at me.

“I wanted to check and see if you’re okay. I would have been here last night, but I’d had to have brought my daughter, and you’d have never got rid of her.”

She crosses her arms over her chest, the movement causing the hem of the tee to rise, it’s now mid-thigh, and I inwardly groan. Fuck. I need to have some fucking control. “As you can see, I’m fine.”

“Can I come in?” I ask. “I’d like to explain a few things to you.”

She sighs and takes a step backward, opening the door wider for me and letting me in.

“Megan’s four,” I begin, wanting her to know the truth as to why we can’t be together. “Her mom walked out on her when she was six months old. She said she wasn’t cut out to be a mom. I hate her for doing so, but I also know how hard it was for her. But Megan deserves better.”

She nods. “She does. I don’t know what your ex was like, but I can’t imagine walking away. It must have been hell for her to do so,” she whispers.

I don’t tell her that it wasn’t. Heather never formed an attachment to Megan. She wasn’t sure if she wanted her, but by the time she found out, it was too late for her to do anything. She was already in her fifth month of pregnancy. We were a one-night thing, it was never anything more. Heather went through with the pregnancy and then tried her hardest, but no matter what, the bond was never there. She gave Megan to me when my daughter was six weeks old, and I’ve had her ever since. Heather saw her around five times between the age of six weeks and six months. She told me one day that she was done and she was leaving. That was the last time I saw her.

“Megan has diabetes. The insurance, along with my salary from the college, is what makes me able to afford her medication, baby. If I could, I’d give it up for you. But my daughter comes first. Always.”

I watch as she swallows hard. Her eyes filled with tears, but she nods. “I get it. I really do. But I wish you had told me that instead of walking out without a proper explanation.”

“You’re right, you did deserve the truth, and I’m sorry that I didn’t give it to you.”

She nods. “So what happens now?”

My gut tightens. “Nothing,” I say, hating that I’m saying this. “We go on, there’s nothing we can do.”

“Okay,” she whispers, but I see the heartbreak in her eyes. She takes a deep breath and walks over to me. Her hand rests against my chest, her breath hot against my skin. “Be happy, Jared,” she whispers as she presses a kiss to the corner of my mouth. “I want you to be happy.”

Fuck. She’s killing me. I want nothing more than to lift her into my arms and take her to bed. To deepen the kiss and show her how much I want her. That she’s what makes me happy. But I can’t.

“You too, baby,” I whisper as I take a step backward. “Goodbye, Erin.”

I walk away, and I know that I’m losing someone important. I know that if I was given a chance, I’d fall hard for her. I’ve no doubt in my mind that she’ll be the one that got away.

FOUR

ERIN

### Seven Months Later

“Stasi,” I whisper at my best friend, who looks as though she’s not slept in days. “What’s going on?”

She shrugs. “I’m fine, just tired. I’ve been working on studying.”

She’s lying. God, she’s such a bad liar. “Ah, Stasi,” she sighs. “What am I going to do with you?”

She laughs. Anastasia Brynn is my best friend. Has been since I met her outside Pure Indulgence the morning everything changed in my life. I’m still not okay from what happened between Jared and I. I miss him, and that’s such a stupid thing, I only had one night with him, but I truly miss him.

Stasi has been a huge help in keeping me distracted from being sad. I’m not sure what I would have done without her.

“Love me?” she says with a big grin.

“That’s a given,” I reply with a smile as I link my arm through hers as we walk toward our first lecture of the day. “So, are you still going to lie? Tell me what happened? You study constantly, you’ve never looked like shit.”

Her eyes grow wide at my words, and she blinks slowly.  
“Okay...”

“I don’t mean it in a bad way, I mean that usually you’re so polished and put together. Today, it looks as though you haven’t slept at all this weekend. So tell me, what’s happened?”

We enter the class and take a seat at the back. I’m waiting for her to tell me what’s going on. Anastasia is the epitome of regal, the girls a freaking princess. A real-life princess, she never looks this rough.

She places her hands flat down against the table and takes a deep breath. “You know how I had got a tutor?”

I hum, where’s she going with this? “Yep, how did it go?”

“I learned loads. It seemed to be going well,” she says. “He helped me understand things in a way that I’ve never did before.”

“Oh my freaking god, that’s amazing. I grip her hand and try my hardest not to squeal loudly. I fail but thankfully no one pays us any attention. Oh that’s great, Stasi.”

She makes a non-committal sound. And I look at her, she’s staring down at her hands. “Oh no,” I hiss, as I lean in closer. “Spill, girl, what happened?”

“I read the email, saw that my tutor’s name was Jacob, and emailed back, letting him know that I was good with the time, then he replied with his address, I didn’t think much of it. Turned up to his house, excited, and then when he opened the door, I was so damn shocked.”

What the hell? “What, who was it?” I ask, needing to know what the hell happened.

The door opens behind us, and she turns and looks in the direction. “Him,” she whispers as she turns back to me.

I look up, and my stomach drops as I see that she’s talking about our History professor. Professor Peterson. “Nooooo,” I gasp. “No freaking way. Spill girl, what the hell happened?”

The lecture begins, and I know that she won’t say another word. The moment it’s over, we go back to her apartment, and she tells me everything. How they kissed and how she’s confused. I lie to her, telling her that I have no idea how she’s feeling, but the truth is, I do. I know how hard it is to be so consumed by someone. Have something you want so badly that you can’t breathe without it. But at the end of the day, there’s nothing we can do.

I leave her to sleep, she’s not had any this entire weekend, her mind is muddled, and she needs rest. I hate that she’s dealing with this, but I’m glad that it was only a kiss. I’d hate for her to fall headfirst with a guy who she’ll never be able to have like I did.

---

IT’S LATE, and I’m beyond tired, but I need to study. The exams are coming up in a few short weeks, and there’s nothing more for it but to study as hard as I can. I’m not the only one that had that idea, the library was filled with students getting their last few weeks of study lessons.

I have my keys in my hands, something that I do whenever I’m out late at night alone. It’s an instinctive thing. It doesn’t make me feel safe, but it’s better than nothing. The keys are between my fingers—as a just in case—I’ve heard to many

horror stories about girls going home late at night alone only for them to be raped or killed.

“Erin,” I hear that deep gravelly tone and my heart races.

God, what is he doing here?

I stop and turn. My heart aches as he stands before me, he always looks so damn handsome, always looks as though nothing affects him. Whereas I feel as though I’m broken. It’s so stupid. I mean, how can I be? We only had one night, but God, it was the best night of my life.

“Hey, Jared, is everything okay?” I ask, trying to sound as nonchalant as possible.

His jaw clenches. “Are you walking home?” I nod. “Alone?” he asks, this time his voice is a little harder than before.

“Yes,” I reply. “What do you want me to do? I don’t have a car.” I also don’t feel safe in a taxi alone either.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out his keys. “Come on, baby, I’ll take you home.”

I swallow hard at him calling me baby. I know that I should say no and continue walking, but I can’t. I’ve missed him. “That would be great, thank you.”

I step toward him. “Don’t thank me, baby, not for taking care of you,” he says low, and my body breaks out in goosebumps.

I climb into the car, and the moment he closes the door and starts the engine, the air between us crackles. God, will it always be this way between us? My breathing deepens and I turn to look out the window, not wanting to look in his face. If I do that, I know I’ll break.



We're doing this for a reason. No matter how much we want one another, there's no way in hell that I'd ever stand in the way of him and his daughter. She's relying on him, and I'd hate for him to lose his job because I was selfish.

The car ride home is quiet, and I'm thankful for it. I can't deal with his sexiness.

He pulls into the parking lot of my complex. "Thank you," I say softly as I reach for the door handle. I want to make a quick exit. If I linger, I know I'll only end up trying to kiss him, and I'm trying real hard not to make a fool of myself.

I exit the car and start to walk toward the apartment building. The sound of the car door closing has my breathing deepening. Why is he coming?

"Let me make sure you get home okay," he says, and I would say no, except he has that pleading tone, and I can't deny him.

It's agonizing waiting for the elevator, but the moment we step inside, I realize my mistake. I should have taken the stairs. Anytime we're in enclosed space, the air crackles as electricity flows through us. God. I want him. I want him so badly that I can't breathe.

I bite my lip, trying to stop the whimper. I stupidly glance over at him, and see those hooded eyes of his staring at me. I swallow hard. God, I fucking love that look.

The elevator doors open, and I hurry out of them. My keys in hand, ready to open the apartment door.

"Thank you," I say a little too breathlessly as I enter my apartment. "I really appreciate the ride home."

He steps into the apartment and closes the door behind us. Before I can ask him to leave, his mouth descends on mine.

Within seconds, I'm lost in this kiss. God, I've missed his lips on mine. My fingers clench around his shirt as our tongues caress one another. There's absolutely no finesse about this at all. He reaches for my pants and doesn't waste a second and rips them off me.

God. We shouldn't be doing this. We need to stop.

But I can't. I need him. I'm aching for him.

He lifts me into his arms and walks me toward the door. The moment my back hits it, he deepens our kiss. Within seconds my panties are torn from my body, I whimper at the sound of them tearing. God, what is he doing to me? The sound of a condom wrapper has my body alight.

Is this really going to happen? We can't be doing this. We both have so much to lose.

But the moment he presses his cock against my folds. Can't form a coherent thought. It's only him and me. I need him. I've missed him. He slides into me, his thrust hard and deep. I tear my lips away from his, gasping at the sheer size of him. God, it's been months since I've been with him, and it feels so good to have him inside me again.

He thrusts deep inside me, over and over again. His pace is relentless, he's not going to stop. I can't help but fucking him back, grinding down on his cock, loving the way he stretches me.

"Have you fucked anyone else?" he growls.

"No," I cry out as he hits deep inside once again. "You?"

"Oh, baby, don't you know," he hisses, pistoning his hips and thrusting hard. "You're all I'll ever want."

“More,” I cry out as he picks up his pace. I’m on the edge, and it’s only going to take a little more for me to detonate.

“Fuck,” he growls as his hands on my hips tighten. “I’ve missed you,” he confesses. “So fucking much.”

“I’ve missed you too.” I cry as his cock slides into me.

He slams harder and faster, his hips rotating as he drives into me.

“Come,” he growls, his lips pulled back into a snarl as he thrusts deeper and deeper into me. “Come for me, baby.”

I detonate, my body shuddering as my orgasm washes over me, my pussy squeezing his cock as I come.

“Yes,” he growls as he thrusts into me once more before he grunts out his release.

“So beautiful, baby, so fucking beautiful.”

I rest my head against his. Our breathing ragged. “We shouldn’t have done this,” I whisper. “It’s taken me forever to try to get over you, and this is going to set me back.”

“I know, baby,” he says softly, his hands still on my hips. “I know. But it’s impossible to not be with you.”

“We have too,” I whisper. “It’s for the best.”

He pulls out of me, and I wince. He continues to hold me, not willing to let me go, I don’t take my arms from around his shoulders, I can’t. This is where I’m supposed to be. In his arms.

I’m not sure how long we stand like this, but as each minute passes my heart bleeds a little more. I hate saying goodbye, and this is exactly what this is.

He fixes his pants and gives me another small kiss, this one filled with so much emotion that tears spring to my eyes. “Bye, Erin,” he whispers.

I close my eyes, hating that we’re saying goodbye, but I know it’s the right thing to do. “Goodbye, Jared.”

The door closes, and once again, my heart shatters. God. I hate when he walks away.

But I love him. I really fucking love him.

I’m such a mess.

FIVE

JARED

### One year Later

I grit my teeth as I watch the stupid jock lean forward and speak to Erin. It's been a fucking year since I last held her. That I last had her. Even though the days have passed, I miss her. There's no one else for me but her. I see her every day, I always find a way to seek her out, even if it's just to watch her.

She spends the majority of her time at the library, she's working her ass off, and I'm proud as fuck that she's doing well in her classes. The woman is not only beautiful but also smart.

Having her in my class is torture, but I wouldn't have it any other way. Erin and I may not be together, but that pull between us is still there. No matter how much time passes us by, we're always going to have that connection.

I hear her husky laugh, and my gut tightens. Christ. I love that sound. But Christ, why is Danny constantly around her? Why is he always making her laugh? Are they together now?

I haven't heard the rumors, and there's plenty of them circulating about students and faculty members. Like when Anastasia and Professor Peterson got together, it was a shit

show, but the man left that summer, and the two of them are happy and have a child together. Anastasia is back in classes and is working her ass off just as Erin is.

As the students begin to fill the room, ready for my lesson, my cell rings. I know immediately that something is wrong as it's my mom calling me. "What's happened?" I ask the moment I answer.

"It's Megan, she had a fall at the playground. We're taking her to the hospital."

My heart seizes, and my palms begin to sweat. "I'm on my way," I say through clenched teeth. "Is she okay?" I start to pack up my things, needing to get the hell out of here and see my daughter.

She releases a whimper. "She's awake, but she's got a really bad wound on her head, and her arm is broken." She begins to sob. "I'm so sorry, Jared. I should have taken better care of her."

"Accidents happen," I assure her. Knowing how easy things can happen. You could be paying attention, and children would still hurt themselves. "I'm on my way, stay with her mom, yeah?"

"I will, darling, I will. Can you call your father for me?"

I continue to throw everything into my bag, as I wait for my laptop to power down. "As soon as I'm in the car, I'll call him." I know that she'll want someone with her to comfort her. I can't imagine the shock she's in right now, my dad will help her through it while I'm with Megan.

I end the call and look up at the students who are watching me, waiting for me. "I have to go," I tell them. "You know that the exams are in two weeks. You know what to revise."

I start to walk out of the room, I feel Erin's gaze on me. When I look at her, I see her face is pale, and worry etched all over it. She's worried about me. I fucking love that, and as much as I'd like to reassure her that I'm fine, I can't. I need to get to Megan.

---

I SIT in the creaky chair as Megan sleeps. They're keeping her in overnight for observations. She fell off the slide and landed on her forehead and arm. Mom was right, her arm is broken, and her head is a mess. It's got an open wound that needed sixteen stitches to close. They gave her a brain scan wanting to ensure that there was no bleeding on the brain.

She's okay, she was shaken up and hurt, but she's okay. We're staying here tonight for observation. I'm fucking relieved, I was so fucking worried that I couldn't think straight. Christ. I'm going to have gray hair before I'm forty.

A knock at the door has me getting to my feet and walking over to it. My heart clenches when I see who's standing there. Erin.

"Hey," she whispers. "I don't want to interrupt, but I knew something happened to Megan. Is she okay?"

Christ. She's so fucking sweet. So damn beautiful. It hurts when she's so close, and there's nothing I can do. If she were mine, I'd pull her into my arms and kiss her. That's what I want to do. That's what I'm craving. I need her like I need air, but my daughter needs me more.

"She is," I reply. "She took a fall while in the playground, but she's okay. She's going to have a cast on her arm, and we're hoping that the scar on her head won't be too visible."



Erin gives me a sad smile. “I’m glad she’s okay, Jared. You looked so scared that it broke my heart I couldn’t help.”

“How are you feeling about the exams?” I ask, wanting to know if there’s anything she needs help with.

She shakes her head. “I’m fine,” she glances down at her hands, where she’s holding a gift bag. “Oh, I got these for Megan, I wanted her to have something to cheer her up. It’s not much, a teddy and some arts and crafts that she can do.” She passes it to me, and it’s taken every ounce of control that I have not to kiss her. Christ. It’s what I want to do. I want to pull her into my arms and kiss her until neither of us can see.

“She’ll love them,” I say thickly and watch as her eyes widen and her breath deepens.

She’s still affected. Fuck. She still wants me.

“I have to go,” she whispers as she takes a step backward. “I’m really glad that Megan’s okay, Jared. I hope she feels better soon.” She takes two more steps away from me and gives me one last smile before she turns and leaves.

Christ. Why the hell does it hurt to watch her walk away?

---

“DADDY,” Megan cries, waking me up. “I have presents?” she asks, her eyes wide as she stares at the teddy and gifts that Erin brought last night.

“You do,” I say as I stretch. God, the sooner we’re home, the better. I fucking hate hospitals, and Megan has been in and out of them far too much for my liking. The girl is five, and she’s been in enough to last a lifetime, thanks to her diabetes.

Her entire face lights up, and then she winces. “Your head hurting, honey?” I ask.

“When I move my face,” she says with a scowl.

I reach for the gift bag and place it on the bed beside her. She wastes no time reaching for it and pulling out the teddy bear. I smile when I see it. It’s bright pink and has a crown on its head.

“It’s a princess,” she whispers in awe. My daughter is obsessed with anything princess or unicorn. She wants it all.

“It is,” I say. “What else do you have in your bag?”

Her smile brightens even more when she reaches into the bag and pulls out a coloring book, princess coloring pencils, stickers, and a card. “Oh, daddy, they’re amazing. Thank you.”

I shake my head. “They’re not from me, honey,” I say, and realize that I need to up my game. My woman is so fucking sweet and so pure that she came all the way here to check in on my daughter because she knew something had happened.

I open the card and help her read it.

*To Princess Megan,*

*I hope that you’re okay.*

*Wishing you a speedy recovery.*

*From*

*Your friend.*

She didn’t sign it, but she did draw a ball. I can’t help but chuckle at the picture she drew. It’s a princess, Erin, and a ball.

“Oh, daddy, it’s my friend,” Megan cries in awe. “The silly one who thought I hurt the ball.”

“That’s right honey, yes, it’s Erin.”

She pauses for a moment. “Why didn’t she come in? I want to see her.”

I smile at my sweet girl. “You were asleep, honey.”

Megan pouts as the door opens, and my parents walk in, they say their hellos, and Megan tells them all about her present from her friend. She’s so excited as she shows them every single thing that Erin bought her.

I’ve not told anyone about mine and Erin’s relationship. Hell, I have no fucking idea what it is that we have. It’s not a normal or conventional one, but it’s the only one we can have right now.

Two more years, and then she graduates.

Two more years of hell and suffering, but I can do it.

SIX

ERIN

Eight months later

I sigh as I walk out of the library, praying that Danny doesn't follow behind me. The man is annoying as hell and won't take no for an answer. It's been almost three years, and he's still trying to get me to date him. I won't. I haven't dated anyone. I haven't been with anyone other than Jared.

I love the man. I really love him. Every day I wake up, I pray that I can see him. That I'll be able to get a glimpse of him so that it'll be enough for me to get through my day. In the time that we've had to be apart, it's been hellish, but I respect him for it. He's got priorities, one that matter a fuck of a lot more than anything in this world. I love that he puts his daughter above everything else. I think that's one of the reasons that I love him.

I start to walk home, glad that it's not completely dark outside. There's still a little daylight left. I try my hardest to get out of the library at a decent hour so that when I'm walking home, I'm not constantly afraid of what could be hiding in the shadows.

I start to walk through the park, it's a shortcut to my home. Usually, I'd walk around the long way, but I'm tired, and I'd

rather get home, shower, and curl up in bed and watch a movie.

My spine tingles as I walk through the wooded park. I regret coming this way. Fuck. It's starting to darken quickly. I hurry my steps, I should be able to get out before it gets any darker.

I hear footsteps behind me, and my heart starts to race. I glance behind me, but no one is there. What the hell? Am I going crazy? I continue on, keeping my eyes open and glancing around. I'm all alone. Why the hell did I come this way?

My footsteps are heavy against the ground as I walk hard and fast. I need to get the hell out of here and get home.

A hand clamps around my mouth and stomach and starts to pull me backward. I jolt against it, trying to claw at the hands that have me in a vice grip, but he's too strong. He lifts me into the air and carries me toward the trees.

The smell of leather and sweat mixed with a spicy mint makes my stomach roll. I know that smell, I know who it belongs to. Nausea rises through my throat, and I swallow it down, I'm so fucking scared right now. My entire body is trembling as I try to fight against him.

I try to scream, but it's muffled, his hand quieting the scream.

He throws me to the floor, and I know that he's going to rape me, I know that he's going to hurt me.

"Stop it," I scream as loud as I can. "Nooooo," I cry out, wanting to be as loud as I can, hoping and praying that someone can hear me. "I hate you," I snarl at Danny. "I hate you."

He grins at me, the sadistic look on his face has my heart hurting. He acted so nice, he pretended to be my friend. “I’ll finally have what I want,” he snarls at me. “You shouldn’t have denied me, Erin.”

“No,” I shout once again, raising my leg and kicking him in his knee. He grunts as he goes down on it, his hands reaching for my throat, pressing hard against my windpipe. He’s blocking my air supply.

I try my hardest, I use every piece of strength that I possess to fight him off me, but he’s too heavy, he’s too strong. My vision starts to blur as his hands on my throat tighten.

It’s no use, I can’t breathe, my body starts to lose its fight as the darkness takes me.

---

I WAKE up to the sound of Gary’s voice. My brother is angry, he’s bossing someone around. But why is he here?

“Gary?” I say as I open my eyes. The sound of my voice is hoarse, and I wince in pain. It feels as though I’ve swallowed sandpaper.

“Fucking Christ,” he growls. “Oh, Erin,” he whispers as he frames my face.

Pain erupts at his touch. “Ow,” I cry. “Gary, what’s going on?” Why the hell do I hurt so much?

“Ms. Chandler,” I hear a woman say, she sounds nice and sweet. “I’m Detective Mason. I was wondering if you would be up to speaking with me?”

I glance at my brother, he’s staring down at me with such sadness and worry that my heart hurts just looking at him. My

gaze darts around the room, and I realize that I'm in a hospital room.

“What happened?” I ask.

“Ms. Chandler, that's what I'd like to speak to you about. Do you remember what happened?”

I stare at her blankly.

She gives me a reassuring smile. “That's okay, let's go back. What did you do yesterday?”

I close my eyes and think back, trying to remember what happened. My mind fills with memories. I was speaking to Stasi, then I saw Jared. God, the happiness I feel when I'm with those two is by far the best thing I can feel. Then it hits me. Danny.

My breathing starts to deepen, and I'm clawing at my throat as the memories hit me, it's like a movie reel, everything replaying in my mind over and over again.

“What's going on?” Gary growls.

“She's remembering,” Detective Mason tells him. “Erin,” she says a little louder than before. “Open your eyes and look at me.”

I listen to her voice and do as she asks. I open my eyes and see that they're both staring at me.

“That's it. You're doing amazing. Can you walk me through what happened?”

My gut tightens as bile crawls up my throat. I don't want to, but I know that I have to. If I don't, he could hurt someone else. I retell everything that happened, my body bucking with sobs. Gary reaches for me and holds me tight, my tears soaking through his tee.



“Thank you,” Detective Mason says, her voice thick with emotion. “I know it must have been really hard to tell us, but you’ve done a great job, Erin.”

I glance up at my big brother. The man who’s been my shoulder to lean on forever. “Did he rape me?” I ask, needing to know. I begin to sob again, unable to hear the truth, but I need to know.

“No,” he says vehemently. “Someone heard your screams. They got help; they stopped him before he could. But he beat the fucking shit out of you.”

Relief courses through me. He didn’t do it. He wasn’t able to hurt me. My screams were heard. “Thank God,” I sob. “Please tell me you’ve found him?” I ask the detective.

She nods. “The people that helped you, they detained him until we arrived on the scene. He’s currently in lock-up at the moment. His parents are pitching a fit, but he’s not going to be able to hurt you again.”

Gary nods, a growl rumbling in his chest. “He’s not going to get away with this. You’re safe, Erin.”

I nod against my brother’s chest, so damn relieved that he’s here and that I’m safe. My eyes begin to droop as I listen to Gary and the Detective talk.

“Hey,” Gary whispers when I wake up. The detective is gone, and it’s dark outside. “How are you feeling?”

“Like I was hit by a bus,” I croak. My throat feels rough and sore.

“You will for the next few weeks,” he says. He sighs and runs a hand through his hair. “I want you to come home, Erin. I want to know that you’re safe.”

“No,” I say, a little louder than I had expected. “I get that you’re scared, and I am too, but I’ve worked so hard to be here, Gary. I’m not being chased away because someone hurt me. Danny can’t get to me again.”

It’s going to take me a lot of time to get to a place where I can feel safe, but I know that if I leave, I’ll be scared to return, and I’m not going to throw everything I have worked my ass off for because a man didn’t like being told no.

Gary’s jaw is tight, but he nods. “I want you to speak to someone and go to self-defense classes.”

I smile up at him. “That I can do,” I reply. “I love you,” I whisper. So glad that he’s here and that he cares about me. I’ve missed him, and I know that he’s going to be even more protective of me now, and I’m okay with that.

“You’re going to be okay,” he promises me.

I nod. I believe him, he’s never lied to me before, and he’s never made me feel as though everything wouldn’t be okay. As long as I have Gary in my life, I’m going to be fine.

SEVEN

## JARED

The entire campus is abuzz with talk about the attack that happened on Friday. I had no idea about it until I walked into campus this morning and saw how frightened some of the women were. It was only when I approached my classroom that I heard the details of what happened.

A female student was on her way home and was attacked by a male student. She's alive, thankfully, someone heard her screams, and they were able to help. Had she not been heard, it's anyone's guess what could have happened. The police have the male in their custody, and thank fuck they do, it means he'll not be able to prey on any more women.

Everyone is walking together in pairs or groups, none of the women are wanting to be alone, and no one can blame them. When things like this happen, everyone bands together and looks out for one another.

As the day has gone on, I've become anxious. I've yet to see Erin. I'm sure she's fine, and that I haven't seen her because she's in groups whereas she's usually alone or with Anastasia—whom I also haven't seen.

I'm in my last class of the day, I'm counting down the minutes until it's over so I can get the hell out of here. I want to go home and chill with Megan. My little girl is a

kindergartener. She's thriving. She loves it, I was worried, with her diabetes I was scared that she wouldn't be in a place that she could be cared for if something were to happen. But her school is great, and they know all about her illness and how to care for her if or when she needs it.

She loves being in school, and she's made lots of friends. Every day after school, she tells me about her day and what she did. It's become the best part of my day. She's so animated and excited, she loves telling me stories of what happened during the day.

As soon as I dismiss the class, they're hurrying out the door, dying to get out and go home. But I still see the turmoil in some of their features, they're scared about what could happen when they leave here.

My brows knit together when I notice Anastasia standing in the doorway, a blank look on her face. Over the past year she's fallen behind—it must be hard going through college while having a baby at home—but Anastasia will get a tutor and then catch up. She's never behind in a way that she's failing, she just needs some extra help in learning the curriculum. It's not uncommon for her to be standing there.

The moment the classroom is empty, she walks in, her footsteps hesitant. "Professor Abbot," she says softly as she reaches me.

I raise an eyebrow wondering what's going on. "Is everything okay, Anastasia?"

She shakes her head, tears forming in her eyes. "It's Erin," she cries, and my heart sinks.

"What's Erin?" I say a little angrier than I should.

“It was her that was attacked,” she cries, and my heart fucking shatters. “She’s okay,” she says quickly. “She’s at home. I just wanted you to know. I didn’t want you to hear the rumors, or to see her and get blindsided, because she looks bad. I wanted you to hear it from me.”

I stare at her in shock, my heart pounding. “What the fuck?” I say through gritted teeth. “How the fuck did this happen?” I demand, needing to know what exactly happened to her.

She shakes her head and swallows hard, her tears falling down her face. “She was coming home from the library,” she says as he pulls in a ragged breath. “She cut through the park. She was pulled into the wooded area by a guy. She screamed as she tried to fight him. Thankfully, people who were leaving the library heard her screaming and managed to stop him before he ra—” She stops, unable to say the word.

I run a hand through my hair. Fuck. I’m so fucking glad that people were there to hear her screams. I’m so fucking angry that someone did this to her. To my Erin. God. I want to throw up. I want to fucking hit something. The anger I have is unlike anything I’ve ever felt before. That animal tried to rape her. God, I’d fucking kill him if I ever get my hands on him.

“Is she really okay?” I ask, wondering how she’s dealing with it.

She nods. “She’s putting on a brave face,” she sighs. “Her brother returned home, Erin was about ready to kill him, and he had work to do. He was hovering too much over her, driving her crazy. He’s made her take some self-defense lessons as well as speaking to someone about what happened. It’s going to take time, but she’s going to be okay.”

She glances around. “Erin told me about what happened between you both. I know that if it were Jacob, I’d want to know, that’s why I’m telling you.” She turns on her heel and walks away.

I watch as she leaves me breathing hard, my fists clenched, and I have tears in my eyes. Erin, Christ. I need to go and see her.

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“DADDY, WHAT’S WRONG?” Megan asks me a little while later. “You’re sad.”

I nod. “You know your friend?” I say, trying to explain this to her is hard. “The silly one with the ball?” Even after all this time, she remembers Erin. She talks about the silly lady who thought the ball was hurt.

She nods. “Yes, she calls me a princess.”

I smile at her. “Yeah, her, she was in an accident,” I lie, not wanting to scare her about what truly happened. “I’m sad that she’s been hurt.”

Her face falls, her lip trembles, and tears form in her eyes. “She’s hurt?” she whispers. “You need to get her a teddy bear, daddy, that helped me.”

“It did,” I say through a cough, trying my best not to cry. The princess teddy bear that Erin bought for Megan when she had her fall has a permanent place in her bed. She can’t sleep without it. “I’ll get one in the morning, we’ll do it before you go to school.”

She smiles as she gets to her feet. “Okay, daddy, I’m going to make her a card. What’s her name?”

“Erin, honey.”

Her eyes widen. “I love her name. It’s so pretty.”

Just like she is, I think to myself, not wanting to say it out loud and confuse my child.

“Okay, honey, it’s almost bedtime, why don’t you go and get your teeth brushed and get ready for bed?”

She nods and climbs onto my lap. “I’m sorry our friend got hurt, daddy,” she whispers as she wraps her tiny arms around my neck and holds me tight. “She’ll feel better when you see her. You can hug her, I always feel better after you give me one.”

God, the innocence of a child. Nothing can ever be as pure as this.

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I KNOCK ON THE DOOR, my hand filled with gifts. Megan went a little overboard this morning when we went shopping for a teddy bear before I dropped her off at school. She found loads of little trinkets that she thought Erin would love, including a teddy that’s yellow and pink, something Megan thought Erin would like as it was similar to hers. Crown and all.

The door opens, and my heart fucking shatters when I see Erin’s bruised face. Her eyes are black and blue, and she’s got a bruised cheek. “Oh baby,” I whisper.

She crumples into me, her body shaking, and she sobs. I don’t hesitate, I lift her into my arms and carry her into her apartment. I hold her through the sobs. I can’t let go. I’m



shaking too much. The son of a bitch could have killed her. He could have fucking killed her.

“I’m sorry,” she whispers as she lifts her head off my chest.

“You have nothing to be sorry about, Christ, Erin, are you okay?”

“I think so,” she replies. “I’m okay now that I’ve seen you again. I’m so sorry, I shouldn’t have cried on you.”

I frame her face, pressing a kiss against her bruises. “Don’t apologize. He could have killed you, Erin, that fucking bastard could have fucking killed you, and I would never have had any idea.”

Her lip trembles, her eyes wide. “It was Danny,” she says through her tears. “I thought he was my friend,” she gasps. “I knew that he liked me. I kept saying no every time he asked me out for a date, I didn’t think he’d do this. I’m so stupid.”

I close my eyes. God, that fucking bastard did this to her. He hurt her. She was his friend, and he hurt her. “It’s not your fault,” I tell her, needing her to hear me. “You were friends, baby, you didn’t owe him anything. He should never have touched you.” I take a deep breath. My anger isn’t helping anyone. “I want you to come stay with me.”

She shakes her head, those gorgeous eyes of hers flashing with fire. “No, we’re not doing this. We’ve gotten this far. I’m not losing everything we’ve worked so fucking hard for. I’m not going to live with you. I’m safe here. This building is secure, I’m safe here,” she reiterates.

I fucking hate this. I hate that we’re so far apart. She’s so understanding about the reason. The thought of leaving her

here kills me. I need her safe. She's the only woman I want. That I'll ever want.

I look at her, seething that she's bruised because a motherfucker couldn't take no for an answer. "I love you." I've hidden it for so long. I needed to tell her. I need her to know exactly what I feel.

Her smile is blinding as she looks up at me. Her eyes brimming with tears once again. "I love you too." She presses her hand against my chest. "We only have sixteen months, Jared. Sixteen months and then we can be together."

I can't fucking wait. I'm counting down the days.

EIGHT

I'm so content at being in his arms again. It feels amazing. I have craved this for so long. There's nothing better than his arms around me as he holds me. It feels as though I'm home. I swallow hard, knowing that he'll walk away from me again after tonight, and I'll have to hold on for another year and a half, praying that nothing changes in the meantime. He could find a woman that he doesn't have to wait for. That plays a lot on my mind, I have to push through it and pray for the best.

As much as I dread that he's here, knowing that I'm going to have my heart broken all over again when he leaves. I really need it. I need him. I don't know how he found out about what happened to me, but I'm so glad that he's here. I feel safe in his arms. It's a place that I don't ever want to leave.

"Hey baby," he says as he lifts me slightly so that I'm sitting up, but I'm still on his lap. "Megan wanted me to give you something."

My brows knit together as he passes me a gift bag. My heart fills with so much warmth and love. God, she's such a cutie. "You really didn't have to do this," I tell him, but I'm so very glad and grateful he did.

I still can't believe that he's here. God, he has been on my mind a lot this past weekend. He's all I thought about while I

was laying in my hospital bed. He's all I wanted. I know it's stupid, but I really had hoped that he would come and see me. It's stupid, and I'll never tell anyone that's what I had secretly hoped because I'd hate for them to tell me how crazy I am.

I know the reasons we can't be together. And I know that when I graduate, we can be together. Hearing him tell me that he loves me is the best thing in the world. It solidified everything that I was feeling. I've known I've loved him since that very first night, the way he treated me, the way he made me feel, it was unlike anything I'd ever experienced before.

I fell head over heels, and that feeling only intensified as the days turned into months and the months turned into years. He's all I want, and he's worth waiting for. The next sixteen months are going to be hard, but they'll be worth it. God, they'll be so worth it.

I lean against him as I open presents, smiling as I see the pretty teddy bear. So much like the one I bought for Megan when she was in hospital after hurting herself. God, she's the sweetest kid, and I love the fact that she thought of me and wanted to do this for me. It means a lot. There's a few little trinkets in the little mini figurine of a princess, some stickers, new pens for school, a few notebooks. They're all princess and unicorn inspired, which is fabulous. I reach into the bag and pull out the homemade card. It's a drawing of me and her on the day we met. She's wearing a princess dress and crown, and I'm wearing one too. We look so adorable that I can't keep the smile from my face. She hasn't forgotten about that day, even though I've only met her once. I take a deep breath and read the card.

*To Erin*

*I'm very sad that you were hurt, and I hope that you feel better soon.*

*I can't wait to see you again.*

*Maybe we can play when I do.*

*Love Megan*

I look up from the card and up at Jared. “Your daughter is amazing,” I whisper. God, she’s the freaking sweetest.

His arms tighten around me even more. “She learned that from you. You showed her kindness twice, Erin, and the first time you didn’t even know who she was. I think that was the day I knew I was going to spend the rest of my life with you.”

I swallow hard at his words. God, I needed this conversation. I needed to hear how much he wanted me. “I fell for you the first night we met,” I confess, feeling a little giddy.

His grin is cocky, as it was that first night. “That’s good, baby, because I did too.”

I lie against him, content to be here with him now. “Is Megan with your parents?” I ask.

“No baby, she’s at school, she started Kindergarten. When school’s over, she’ll go to my parents until I finish work. I have about two hours before I have to be back.”

I love that he has a support network around him. That he and Megan have his parents to help if they need it. “What’s going to happen once I graduate?” I need to have a plan, I want something to look forward to. I need to focus on something other than what happened.

“I want you, Erin, that’s not ever going to change. I want you in my bed, and in my life. I know that Megan is going to

be fucking excited to have you in our lives. But we've got to go slow."

She grins. "That I can do. As long as I'm with you and Megan, I'm happy."

His lips slant across mine, and he kisses me. I moan as I press my breast against his chest and lean into the kiss, my arms wrapping around his neck. His tongue slides into my mouth, and the kiss becomes frantic, frenzied, and passionate. It's conveying everything that we both feel.

I pull back, needing some oxygen. "As much as I'd love to stay with you, baby, I'm going to have to leave. I've got classes, and if I don't, I won't be leaving until morning, and right now, that's not the best thing for either of us."

I smile, I know the feeling, if he stays, we're going to have sex, and as much as I love him, I'm not in the right frame of mind for that, not to mention, it'll make the absence even harder. He also has to go home and see his daughter. I'll never be the reason that he's not around her. That's not something I'll ever feel good about. It's one of the reasons that I love him, the way he loves his daughter. "Go," I tell him, making no move to get off his lap. "Get some rest and enjoy your day, and give Megan a big hug when you see her from me."

He presses a chaste kiss to my lips, and lifts me off his lap. "Love you, baby," he whispers before he walks toward the door.

My stomach clenches as I watch him leave. God, this is the part that I hate. I never want to say goodbye, and the day I stop doing it will be the happiest day of my life.

*Sixteen months.*

We can do this. It's only sixteen months.

God, it's going to be a long year and a half. I have to look at the end goal. When it's over, I'll have the man that I love and a future that I have craved.



NINE

ERIN

Sixteen months later

I'm giddy with excitement. Today is *the* freaking day. I'm graduating today. I'm actually graduating. The past sixteen months have been crazy and not in a good way. Going back to college was hard, the stares and gawking was almost enough to send me back home. If it wasn't for Stasi, I would have. She's been a huge support for me over the months.

I have a counselor, one that encouraged me to go to a group meeting. It was an eye opener. The women at the group meeting have all been through something similar, some were lucky like me, and the attack was stopped before we were raped, and other women weren't so lucky. We're all on a journey to healing, and mine has taken longer than I thought.

It's being alone while outside that sent me into anxiety and panic attacks. The first one I had, led to me being bedridden for two days as I tried to figure out what happened. Thankfully, my counselor was on hand to guide me through some techniques to help.

"Anastasia Brynn," I hear Stasi's name called out. I can't help but smile as I see her family along with Jacob cheering her on. She and Professor Peterson are so happy together, and

their daughter—my god daughter—are a beautiful family. Having them in my life is a blessing.

I cheer along with everyone else as she makes her way toward the dean to receive her diploma. My gaze firmly on the man that I love, he's standing on the stage, smiling and clapping with everyone else.

Today, we finally get to be together without any repercussions.

We never exchanged cell numbers, and I'm glad. I'd have caved and called him on numerous occasions, so today, I'm giving him my number.

"Erin Chandler," the Dean calls my name.

I reach for the note that's in my hand. I hold my head up high and smile. I'm so freaking happy, I don't think anything could ruin this day. I peer out onto the crowd and see Gary sitting not far from Stasi's family, he's proud as fuck of me. He's been so worried about me, I may have kept the worst of my recovery from him, along with my meltdowns. I didn't want to worry him. But seeing him here and so proud makes my heart fill with happiness.

I shake the Dean's hand as he congratulates me and hands me my diploma. I thank him and move on, stopping at Jared. I pass him the note. "Call me," I say loud and huskily.

My man doesn't bat a fucking eye. He smirks at me, pockets the note and gives me a wink as I walk off the stage.

My heart is beating a mile a minute. That went better than expected.

"Erin," Stasi squeals as I reach her. "You are impossible."

“Girl, you taught me to go after what I want, and he’s exactly that.” I’m going after what I want, and it’s always been Jared.

She beams at me. “Well fingers crossed he calls you. Now, let’s go, we’ve got a party to go to.”

We do have a party to go to, but first there’s something special happening for her, and I’m so glad that I get to watch.

Once the ceremony is finished, we congregate outside while Stasi’s mom and the photographer get everyone to pose for pictures. They even have some of me and Gary together, my brother is looking every inch of the proud father, and I’m so damn lucky to have him in my life.

I stand with Gary as Stasi and Theresa take photos together. Her little girl is the complete double of her mom with a few bits of her dad. She’s such an amazing child that you can’t help but smile whenever you’re around her.

My heart is in my mouth as Jacob gets down on one knee and proposes to my best friend. Stasi’s crying before she can even say yes.

“Want to tell me what that was about on stage?” Gary asks while everyone is congratulating the happy couple.

I sigh. I should have known that he would have been asking me about it. I don’t lie to him. I tell him everything from the moment I met Jared until today.

“I can’t say that I’m happy,” he murmurs. “But I appreciate that the man put his daughter first and wanted you to graduate before you moved your relationship any further. But did you have to say it in front of the entire school?”

I laugh. “What? I gave him my number, Gary, it wasn’t as if I kissed him on stage.” Although, that would have been

freaking cool.

He shakes his head. “I’m staying in Brightmore this weekend, I’ll be at the hotel. If you need a ride, call me. You’re not to go anywhere alone, Erin. I mean it.”

“I know,” I say softly. “I’ll be having one drink, Gary, just one. I’m not going to go off the rails, and I’ll message you when I’m at the bar and if we’re leaving and where we’re going.”

I’ve learned a lot since that night with Danny. It’s shit that I had to learn these things. That night changed my life in a big way, I’m no longer carefree, everything I do when alone is carefully planned out, and every scenario has been played out in my head. He’s awaiting trial, I hate that it’s been dragged out, but more women have come forward, as of today, there’s twelve of us.

He pulls me into his body and hugs me tight. “Enjoy tonight, Erin, you worked your ass off for it.”

“I love you,” I whisper, feeling my eyes sting with tears. “I can’t ever thank you enough for everything that you’ve done for me. Mom would be so proud of the man you’ve become; I know that I am.”

“She’ll be proud of both of us,” he says hoarsely. “Now, go, enjoy your night. I’ll see you in the morning for breakfast?”

I nod. “Sounds perfect. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Remember, call me if you need me.”

“I will,” I kiss his cheek and walk over to Stasi and Jacob.

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THE PARTY IS in full swing, and we've moved from bar to bar. Both Stasi and I have only had one drink. We want to keep our wits about us and make sure that nothing happens.

“Still nothing?” she asks.

I swallow hard. It's been hours, and Jared hasn't called, nor has he texted me. I thought for sure that he would have, he was so adamant that we'd be together once I'd graduate, and yet, I've not heard from him, and that is killing me.

“No, but I'm not going to let it ruin our night. We're celebrating. We worked our asses off, Stasi. We've overcome a lot, and look at us now.”

She laughs. “Yeah, who'd have thought we'd be here?”

Both of us came close to pulling out of college, Stasi because she felt guilty for Jacob not working while she was getting her degree as well as the guilt of leaving her daughter while she was at school. She's a badass, I can't imagine how tough it's been for her to do it all, and I'm so damn proud of her. She's achieved her dream and done it by kicking ass. She's a fucking role model to Theresa, and I'm going to let my goddaughter know how amazing her mom is.

I came close to pulling out after what happened with Danny. I was adamant in the hospital that I would be fine and that I could continue, but it was tough, and it took me a while to pull through the dark times, but I'm here, and I'm proud of myself for carrying on and achieving what I set out to do.

“Oh wow,” I hear Stasi breathe.

I turn to her and see that she's staring toward the door, her eyes wide and her lips curved into a smile. My breath hitches as I see who she's staring at. My heart begins to pound as

Jared stalks toward me, his strides determined and his gaze solely on me.

“Wow, is right,” I breathe.

“Go get him, Erin, you’ve waited for this,” she whispers.

My heart constricts. “I don’t want to leave you,” I reply softly.

She shakes her head. “Jacob’s already on his way,” she informs me. “He’ll be here in minutes. Go, go and get your man.”

I laugh as I slide off my seat. My feet take me toward him, I can’t stop smiling, I’m so freaking happy that he’s here. The second I’m close to him, he reaches for me, dragging me into his body and sliding his hand into my hair. His mouth slants against mine, and he kisses me. I cling to him, loving the way he’s claiming me, it’s so much better than I could have ever imagined.

Cheers and jeers go out around the bar, and I laugh as I pull back from Jared. “How did you know that I was here?”

His grin is cocky. God, I love that stupid grin. “I spoke to your brother, he let me know where you were.”

“You spoke to Gary?” I ask, wondering how the hell that happened.

His thumb caresses against my lips. “I did, I met him after the ceremony. We got to talking, and he had a few things to say to me. He wasn’t happy, and I get it. But he’s happy that you’re happy, Erin. That’s all we want for you.”

My tongue swipes along my lip. “I thought you had changed your mind.”

His eyes darken. “Never.”

“Let’s go home,” I say a little breathlessly. It’s been too long since we’ve been together, and I need him.

“Yeah, baby, let’s go home.” He takes my hand and waves Stasi over to us. “We’ll wait outside with you until Jacob arrives,” he says, his tone brooks no arguments.

Thirty minutes later, we’ve said our goodbyes to Stasi and Jacob and are walking into his house. My heart is racing, I can’t believe that I’m here.

There’s no calmness in either of us. We’ve waited too long for this reunion. We’ve longed for each other. He pulls me down toward his bedroom, not giving me a chance to look around—I don’t mind, there’s always tomorrow.

“Strip for me, baby,” he says thickly.

I whimper at his tone. He knows exactly what he’s doing to me. I reach for the zipper behind me and slowly pull it down. I keep my eyes on him, loving the way he’s watching me. His gaze greedy, soaking me in.

I let the material pool around my feet as I loop my fingers through the band of my panties. He’s not moved, watching as I strip down. “What do you want now?” I ask, my voice breathy.

“Onto the bed, let me see you.”

God, I love how bossy he is.

I do as he asks and lie on the bed. He watches me, his hunger clear to see.

“Do you have any idea how much I’ve missed you?” he growls.

“I’ve missed you too,” I gasp as he sinks to the floor and buries his head between my thighs. I practically come off the bed when his tongue swipes against my folds.



God, I've missed him.

"Fucking delicious," he groans low in his throat.

He feasts on my pussy, like he's a starved man. My entire body is alight with fire. He pushes a finger inside me. I gasp. He's stretching me. I forgot how good it feels. How much I loved when he touched me. It doesn't take long for the pleasure to start rising, I'm so needy, so damn horny. It's not going to take much until I detonate.

"I can feel your body tensing, baby, I want you to come for me."

My back bows, my fingers clench the sheets, and I cry out as my orgasm hits me like a tsunami.

The bed dips beneath me, and Jared positions himself between my legs, his cock rubbing against my folds, getting himself ready. "Fucking love you, baby," he snarls as he thrusts deep inside me.

I cry out as he bottoms out inside me. His cock thick and stretching me, it's been so long since we've been together that there's a slight pain to it. "Jared, I love you. God, I love you so much," I cry as he moves, his movements slow and steady. He's keeping an agonizingly slow rhythm.

He grinds his hips against my pubis, hitting my clit, and I moan. "More," I beg.

He smiles and doesn't make me beg again. His thrusts get deeper, faster, harder, I can feel my orgasm rising yet again. God. It feels so amazing to have him inside me again. The distance, the waiting, it was all worth it.

His lips descend on mine, and he kisses the breath from me, his tongue tangling with mine. It's filled with such passion

and promise. Tears spring to my eyes. God, I can't believe that I'm finally here. That we're here.

He pivots his hips and fucks me even harder, he deepens the kiss, it's harder and more demanding than before, I can't hold back any longer. My orgasm hits me like a tornado, sweeping through my body, and I cry out, my fingernails digging into his shoulders as my legs shake around his hips. I stare into his eyes, and all the love I feel for this man consumes me.

He grits his teeth, his eyes on me, and he pistons into me a few more times before burying himself deep, shoving his head into my neck and groaning long and hard.

“Fuck, it's so good to have you back in my arms, baby. This is where you belong.”

I smile at him. “I don't want to be anywhere else. I love you, Jared.”

He presses a chaste kiss against my lips. “And I love you, baby. Sleep, we'll be doing a fuck of a lot more of that tonight.”

I grin, it sounds like a perfect night to me.

I'm so damn lucky. I have everything I have ever wanted, and I have a feeling that my future is going to be amazing.

TEN

JARED

Ten months later

I watch as Megan and Theresa run toward the water laughing and giggling. Even though there's under a five-year age gap between the two of them, they've become fast friends. "Mommy," Theresa squeals as the water touches her feet. She runs back toward where Erin and Anastasia are seated.

In the past ten months, things have changed dramatically for us all. Erin is now living with Megan and me, my daughter absolutely adores Erin, and vice versa. The two of them have girl days every Saturday and spend the day shopping, going to the movies, or just having fun. It was amazing to watch how quickly Erin blended into our lives. She fits effortlessly into our family, and I should have known she would have, she's an amazing woman. My parents adore her.

It's a good thing she did fit in because she's heavily pregnant, in fact, she's due to give birth any day now. The night we got back together, I forgot to wear a condom. I was so obsessed with having her again that I didn't think twice about taking her bare. When she mentioned it to me the next morning, it was as if something switched in my head. I wanted

her pregnant with my baby. I wanted her tethered to me forever, and she is.

I watch as she places her hand on her swollen stomach and gently caresses it. I've never been a man that's really thought about a pregnant woman. Heather was a one-night stand, and I didn't see her that way at all. But watching Erin grow our baby, I've become obsessed with her pregnancy body, and I fully intend to knock her up constantly.

Erin's not the only one pregnant, Anastasia is too, both women are due any day. Seems as though graduation was a good time all around.

Erin and Anastasia get to their feet and start to chase the girls around. I'm moving toward them, wanting her to stop, she's ready to have our baby at any moment and running around isn't going to be helping her.

"Don't," Jacob says. "Honestly, don't. Not unless you want to face the wrath of two pregnant ladies."

I turn and raise a brow at him, wondering what the hell he's talking about.

"Last week, I came home and found the girls dancing in the living room with both Ana and Erin. I asked the ladies to take it easy and wished I hadn't. Both women turned on me and read me the riot act. They're able to do whatever the hell they like, just because they're pregnant doesn't mean that they're incapable of playing with their daughters. It's best to leave it be, brother, the women won't push themselves too hard."

I grit my teeth, he's right, I may not like it, but he's right. If I say something, I'll only end up upsetting Erin, and that's the last thing I want to do.

I keep a close eye on her throughout the day, she's smiling while she has fun playing with Megan and Theresa. She's happy, and so is Megan, and that's all that I can ask for.

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"SHE'S ALL SETTLED," I say to Erin as I climb into the car. I've dropped Megan at my parents, and I'm looking forward to enjoying some alone time with my wife before the baby comes.

"That's good," she says, her eyes wide with happiness. "We should probably go to the hospital now."

I frown. "What? Why?"

She expels a harsh breath. "I think I'm in labor," she pants.

My heart starts to pound, and I look at her, she's pale, sweat beads across her forehead, and she's gripping the seat like her life depends on it. Shit.

It takes us twenty minutes to get to the hospital, in that time, Erin has had too many contractions for me to count and hearing her cry out in pain is horrific, I feel utterly useless.

"Ms. Chandler, when did the contractions start?" the nurse asks her.

Erin grips the bed as she's rocked with another contraction. "I don't know, a while. We were at the beach."

I glare at the woman I love. What the hell was she playing at?

"Don't be angry," she pants. "Megan was having so much fun, I didn't want to spoil it. We're fine, and we're here now. Our baby's coming, Jared."

I push her hair from her face and lean forward to press a kiss against her cheek. “I know, baby, but you have to take it easy.”

She grips my hand as another contraction hits.

“The baby’s crowning,” I hear someone say, and it’s utter chaos from then on out. Everyone gathers around as Erin pushes and pants through her contractions. She’s fucking amazing as she powers through it all.

The most beautiful sound fills the air as our baby cries.

“Oh my god,” Erin breathes. “Jared, our baby is here.”

I kiss her, it’s chaste, but fuck, it’s filled with everything I’m too choked up to say.

“It’s a girl,” the nurse says.

“Thank you,” I whisper hoarsely to her. “You did amazing, baby. So fucking good.”

Our daughter is placed onto Erin’s chest, and I swear to fuck, I shed a tear at the love that shines in my woman’s eyes. She’s so beautiful, and yet, nothing compares to this moment right here.

It doesn’t take long until the baby roots for Erin’s breast, and it takes a few minutes, but with the help of the nurse, she’s able to breast feed.

“I wish Megan was here,” she says as she runs a finger along our daughter’s face.

“She’s outside,” I announce, and Erin’s eyes widen. “Want me to get her?”

She nods, her eyes so wide and bright. “Yes, this is family time.”

Megan is practically jumping on the spot as I walk out and get her. My mom's waiting, but she knows that she'll be in as soon as we let Megan have some time with her.

"Is the baby here?" Megan asks.

"She is, are you ready to meet your sister?"

She nods and rushes into the room and bursts into tears when Erin holds the baby for her to see. "She's so pretty," she cries. "What's her name?"

"Well, sweetie," Erin begins. "Your dad and I thought you'd like to help us name her. Would you like that?"

Megan nods. "I like Morgan."

Erin looks down at the baby and then to me, her lips curved into a smile. She likes the name too. I nod, letting her know that I agree.

"Princess Megan and Princess Morgan. I like that."

Even after all this time, neither Megan or Erin forgot about their first meeting, they still laugh about it and make jokes about how silly Erin is for thinking the ball can hurt.

I reach for Morgan and hold her close, the moment I do, she snuggles closer, fast asleep.

"I love you," Erin whispers to Megan. "Thank you for letting me be a part of your family."

Megan bursts into tears again and throws herself into Erin's arms. "I love you too."

I stare at them, my heart fucking bursting with so much love and happiness. Never did I think I'd have this, but it took time to get here, and now I have two amazing daughters and a woman that I love more than life itself.



It was worth the wait.

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A Love So Wrong

## ABOUT STELLA

Stella Bella is USA Today Bestselling Author Brooke Summers. Brooke is best known as a Mafia Romance author and the Made Series is her most popular work. Brooke loves pushing the boundaries and wanted to venture into taboo novellas. And so Stella was born.

Brooke Summers was born and raised in South London. She lives with her daughter and hubby. Brooke has been an avid reader for many years. She's a huge fan of Colleen Hoover and Kristen Ashley. Brooke has been dreaming of writing for such a long time. When she was little, she would make up stories just for fun. Seems as though she was destined to become an author.