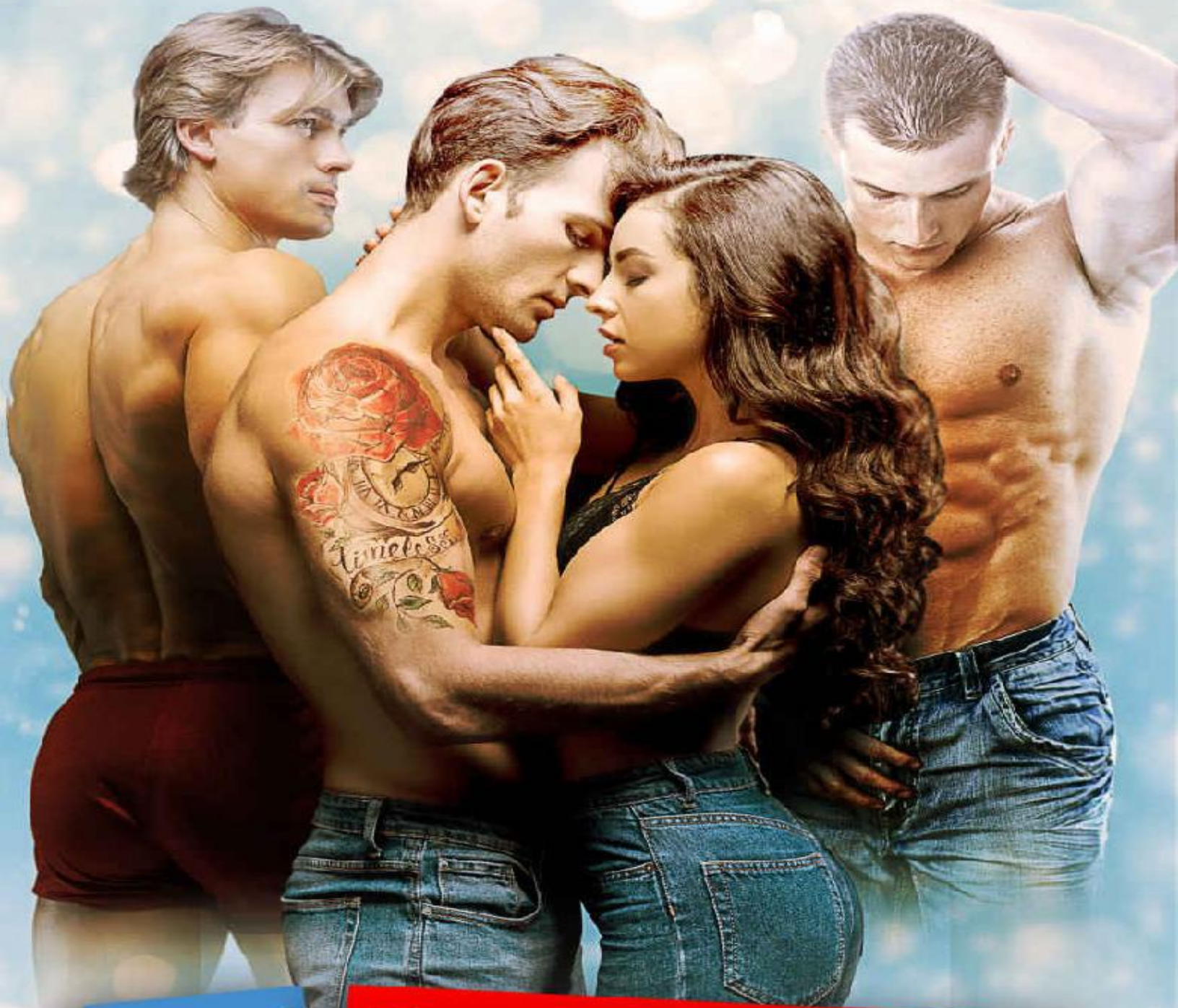


REBEL BLOOM



MY BROTHER'S

Best Friends

My Brother's Best Friends

Rebel Bloom

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1.

Reagan

“Do you think my boobies will be like Mom’s or Aunt Rea’s?” The sweet voice that woke me from a restless slumber belonged to Posie, my youngest niece.

Piper, her older sister, made a thinking sound, humming, and I could picture her tapping her chin. “I don’t think I want boobies. They just hang there. What if you close one in your sock drawer?”

“Aunt Rea’s wouldn’t get caught in anything.”

I scoffed and sat up, yanking my askew tank top back into place. I glanced at the small clock that Russ had hung on the basement wall in an attempt to make it feel less like a basement. It wasn’t even seven am yet. I rubbed at my gritty eyes and finally focused on my brother’s kids. “Go away. Come back in two hours with coffee and less comments on my boobs.”

Posie modeled for me and I realized that she was wearing one of my bras. “Aunt Rea! Now that you’re awake, can you play with us?”

“I’m not awake.” I eyed the expensive bra she was wearing and winced when I thought of how much I’d spent on the stupid thing in some ridiculous attempt to catch the attention of my ex. Little had I known, a woman named Stacey with an equally expensive bra but more expensive boobs had all his attention at the time. Rightfully so, considering she also had his giant diamond ring. “I’ll let you keep the bra if you go upstairs and come back after nine.”

Piper looked down at where she wore the matching underwear. “What about these?”

I thought of Russ’ face when he saw his kid wearing a thong over her pajamas and grinned. “Sure.”

They stared at me, considering my offer. After what felt like far too much time for a couple of kids to think anything through, they nodded in sync. Piper held the underwear up with one hand and pushed her sister towards the unfinished stairs with her other hand. “Let’s get out of here before she changes her mind!”

With matching ear-piercing squeals, they ran up the stairs. The door to the basement slammed and then I heard their little feet stomping overhead. I slumped back into my pillows and felt like I had barely closed my eyes when Russ’ voice boomed through my makeshift bedroom.

“Rise and shine, pumpkin! You’ve got a big day ahead of you!”

I dragged a pillow over my head and groaned. “Go away, please! For the love of everything good in this world, just let me sleep!”

My twin brother’s response was to reach under my blanket and grab my ankle. He yanked me down the bed, his big laugh almost enough to make me smile. Just before I could strangle him, he shoved a cup of coffee into my hand and ruffled my hair. “Has anyone ever told you that you’re a different person before your morning coffee? I saw your presents for the girls, by the way. Don’t think I won’t find a way to get back at you.”

“You don’t think your presence is payback enough? It’s so early, Russ.” I tried to see the clock, but he kept his head firmly in the way.

“You’re right. We’re even. Now that that’s settled, let’s get you up. You’ve got a full day with Lisa and she’s almost ready.”

I knocked back half of the coffee in one go and gritted my teeth as it burned all the way down my throat. As much as it hurt, my mood instantly started to lift with the first hit of caffeine. I pushed my hair out of my face and really looked at my brother. It’d been too long since I’d seen him and I’d

gotten in just late enough the night before that I'd been too tired to spend any real time with him.

We had the same dark brown hair that almost looked black in most lighting. His was kept short and styled, while mine was long and wild unless tamed into a braid for work. We had the same bright yellow-green eyes, but that was where the similarities ended. I had our mother's delicate nose and full lips and Russ had our father's more masculine features. I got Dad's dimples and Russ got Mom's bad eyesight. I got Mom's figure and mostly gentle personality; Russ got Dad's large build and ability to talk anyone into anything.

I already knew I was in trouble when Russ gave me his most charming smile and raised his eyebrows, waiting on me to inquire about what I was going to be doing with Lisa that day. Because I knew my brother well enough to know that he only needed an inch to take a mile, I ignored him and drained the rest of the coffee before attempting to crawl back up my bed.

"Oh, no, you don't. Lisa is really looking forward to hanging out with you today, Reagan. I'm paying for everything. I even bought your ticket for tonight and everything."

"Ticket..." It took a few seconds for my brain to catch up with where I was and when it was. I flicked my gaze back to Russ and shook my head. "Nope. Sorry. There's no way."

"You get one chance at a ten-year reunion, Reagan. I'm not letting you throw it away. You got here just in time. It was meant to be." He narrowed his eyes. "And if you won't give in to good reasoning, I'll just let you know now that the girls wake up at the crack of dawn every day. They really love their Aunt Reagan and I would love to sleep in a little longer."

I glared up at him. "Are you threatening me with your children?"

“I’m not *not* threatening you with them.”

“That’s low. Even for you.” I stood up and shoved past him. “I’m not going.”

“Fine. I’ll just tell Lisa that you don’t want to hang out with her. I’ll tell the girls to just come straight down here from now on. And I’ll tell Marcus Leary that you couldn’t make the reunion because you’re battling a debilitating case of athlete’s foot.”

I spun around and faced off with Russ. He was half a foot taller than me, but I figured with frustration and months of depression and anger, I could probably take him. “You wouldn’t.”

“Wouldn’t I?”

“Russ! He’s still the self-appointed local tabloid columnist. Mom used to send me his ranting posts weekly. If I end up in one of his posts, I’ll murder you.”

“You could just come to the reunion. Have a few drinks, cut loose on the dance floor, have a good time. You may even see an old friend that you want to reconnect with now that you’re back. I demand you come tonight, or I’ll have no choice but to ruin your reputation and sleep.”

“You’re a child, you know that?”

“Is that a yes?”

I squeezed my eyes shut as I nodded. With any luck, the people I wanted to avoid wouldn’t be there. If anything, the ten years I’d spent away from Lunar, New Mexico had taught me how to pretend like nothing bad was happening around me. Only positive things for me.

“You just made me the happiest big brother ever.” He pulled me into a tight hug and immediately shoved a wet finger into my ear. “I missed you.”

I shoved him away and wiped at my ear. “Get out. You’re disgusting.”

“Hurry up. Lisa is probably already ready and waiting in the car. She’s excited for a chance to dress up.”

I kicked his knee from behind as he took a step up the stairs and his leg collapsed forward. When he glared at me, I just grinned. “Tell her I’ll be up soon.”

“Pest.”

“Jerk.”

“Little bottle baby.”

“Big titty baby.”

He snorted and then left me to change, but with no time to orient myself. Just the morning before, I’d woken up in a loft apartment in LA with one of the most beautiful views I’d ever seen. How the mighty had fallen.

2.

Reagan

Lisa James, originally Fuller, was a Southern belle from an even tinier town in Georgia. She'd been dragged to Lunar with her family as a twenty-one-year-old, recently graduated and ready to find her place in the world. Her family came looking for the rumored alien sightings and the world's largest potato chip, and Lisa had just been looking for a way back to normal life. Her parents had found the potato chip, but no aliens. Lisa found my brother and never left.

She was five feet of Southern sass and would put anyone in their place, including my brother. She was always fun, and the times she'd come with Russ to see me in LA, she'd never failed to lead me right into a good time. And trouble. With her bright blonde hair always curled to the heavens and her face always painted to perfection, she was stunning and just sweet enough looking to fool everyone into thinking she'd never know how to find trouble. Maybe not even how to spell it. It was only once you got to know her that you realized she was the devil in an angel's body.

Unfortunately, she had a reputation around Lunar and she attracted attention everywhere she went. People watched her to see what she'd do next, and I didn't blame them. I just wished they'd look anywhere else when I was the person walking with her. I'd snuck into town under the cover of night and I wasn't exactly ready to make my big entrance back into Lunar life.

Lisa sat across from me at the two-seater metal table we were sharing outside of Landings, one of the two dueling local diners. Her hair was especially big that morning, but it still wasn't enough to hide me from prying eyes. Landings was winning the competition that day, it seems, because the tables, inside and out, were full.

Reading my mind, Lisa smiled, flashing perfect white teeth that she'd hopefully pass down to her kids. Russ and I had both gone through years of braces. "Landings posted on their Facebook that drinks are free with the purchase of a meal today. Kevin's uncle knows a guy who knows a guy who happened to find a Coca-Cola truck turned over, if you know what I mean. So, Kevin can afford to offer free drinks for months, from what I hear."

Even full of anxiety, I grinned at that. More than once, I'd reaped the rewards of a turned-over truck when I was growing up. My favorite had been the time a blackberry pie filling truck had met its untimely demise. Mom had made us blackberry cobbler all summer long. It'd been heaven.

"How was the bed last night?" Lisa winked at the passing waitress, gaining her attention. "Hey, will you go ahead and bring us a platter of pancakes with that new strawberry syrup Kevin got? With bacon. Sausage?"

I bit back a laugh and shook my head. "Bacon's fine with me."

"Oh, and can we get the Lunar omelet to share? With biscuits, of course. And that muscadine jelly. I'll take a water to drink. And a Coke." Lisa turned sweet eyes on me and smiled. "Anything else?"

The waitress didn't seem shocked by the amount of food Lisa had just ordered and I had a moment of culture shock. I definitely wasn't in LA anymore. As a chef, I couldn't say I was sad to be in a place where people loved to eat. "Coffee, please. Just like a large pitcher of it."

After the teen girl was off with our order, Lisa looked back at me and raised her eyebrows, waiting for an answer to a question I didn't even remember. When I didn't jump in fast enough, she went on for me. "The bed?"

"Oh! It was fine. Honestly, Lisa, you don't need to stress about it. I know that I'm crashing and that I was unexpected. Even still, you put together a

great setup for me.”

“Oh, please. Great? It’s a mattress in the basement of the house you grew up in. You deserve your own space. I’m going to make sure Russ gets all of his crap out of the den and we’ll set you up in there.”

“No way. The basement is fine. Plus, it has the private entrance, so I can come and go without bothering you guys. When I start my new job, I’ll be leaving the house at ungodly hours.”

She subtly looked around and, ignoring all the people glancing at us, leaned closer. “Russ didn’t tell me what happened in LA. Even when I threatened to stop having sex with him. Probably because he knows that I’d never be able to hold out.”

I faked a gag, focusing on the part of her words that didn’t send heat creeping up my neck. “No sex talk about my brother. That’s the rule.”

“So, you’re not going to tell me, either?”

I met her gaze and cursed her plainly expressive eyes. She was hurt that she wasn’t in the loop. I sank my teeth into my bottom lip and pushed out a loud exhale through my nose. “I found out that Ben was married. His wife confronted me in front of everyone at work. It was humiliating and it hurt. Then, I got fired. The other partners didn’t think it would be wise to keep me around because I was the source of a lot of stress for another of the partners. I lost my cushy personal chef gig and my boyfriend in a matter of hours. And let me tell you... If you think Lunar is a small world with fast gossips, it’s got nothing on the food scene in LA.”

Lisa opened her mouth to respond but our waitress cut her off. She put our drinks in front of us and dropped off a basket of hot, buttered biscuits. My mouth instantly watered, despite the fact that I hadn’t been hungry in a week.

As soon as we were alone, Lisa exploded. “That asshole! Does Russ

know? We can get some people together and pay that schmuck a visit! And to think I baked that butt-munch a pie! I'll kill him."

Her fury soothed a part of me that nothing else had been able to since I'd found out about Ben. Seeing someone feel that angry for me allowed me to let go of some of my own anger. I found myself smiling as I watched her hair bounce around as she struggled to stay still in her seat.

"Why are you smiling? Let's figure out who we're going to take to handle this jerk."

"This might be the first time I've felt a true moment of peace in the two weeks since I found out. It feels good to not be the only person so mad. It almost felt like no one else thought it was a big deal. Men cheat, so what? I should've known I could depend on you to show up for me."

Tears filled her eyes and she didn't hesitate to leave her seat and hurry around to me. Wrapping me in her arms, she pressed my head into her boobs and sighed. "I'm here for you, Reagan. Anything you need."

I hugged her back and tried not to notice everyone staring after she sat back down. "Get me out of going tonight?"

She dabbed at her eyes and grabbed a biscuit, tearing it open viciously. "Not a chance. You need to drink and forget yourself for a night. You also need to show up in a sexy dress and remind yourself that you've got it going on. No hiding in the basement while everyone else has a good time."

I groaned. "When you put it like that..."

She loaded her biscuit with jelly and waved it at me. "Exactly. I called Marjorie over at MJ's and she's got just the dress for you. You're going to be the hottest thing to walk through the doors of Lunar High tonight."

"MJ's? Doesn't she just sell—"

"Old ladies' burial dresses? No." She sent me a wicked grin. "MJ went to

Italy, met a man who rocked her world, and now she only sells dresses that would make my mother scream in Southern Baptist horror.”

Somehow, I got more nervous. Still, I found myself stuffing a biscuit into my face. It seemed that Lunar was giving me my appetite back, if not threatening to steal my sanity.

“We’re also getting waxes after this. Eat up. You’re going to need your energy!”

3.

Reagan

After spending most of the day being dragged around Lunar and being reintroduced to places I hadn't seen in a decade, I should've been exhausted. I'd been plucked, waxed, styled, and forced to parade around in six-heels until I didn't walk like a newborn deer. I'd visited memory lane with a tornado known as Lisa, and instead of spending the day reminiscing and thinking about things that could've left me feeling worse about myself, I blew through without even touching those sad thoughts. Lisa never allowed it.

I never had a chance to slow down and think. The first moment I had to myself to remember that I maybe should feel a little panic about my ten-year reunion, I was standing under a balloon archway in the high school gym. My eyes trailed over the crowd mulling around candlelit tables and to the wall on the other side. A giant sign welcomed everyone to the reunion and under it, I could see eight by ten photographs.

“Please don't tell me those are yearbook photos.”

Lisa linked her arm through mine, probably afraid I'd tuck tail and run. “Oh, I believe they are. I desperately need to see them all. I've seen Russ', of course, but I never saw yours. Oh, gosh. Were the three stooges as hot back then as they are now?”

Russ growled under his breath and stole his wife from me. “Do not call my friends hot, wife. It's awful for me to hear, but if they hear it, I'll never live it down.”

“Come on, Reagan! Let's go look!” Lisa grabbed my hand and pulled me into the lion's den. She had no clue that I was silently having a heart attack.

Lunar High School held good and bad memories for me, but, of course, I could only think of the bad ones when faced with it again. I couldn't help

thinking of the awkwardness I'd gone through, the teasing I'd faced, or the eventual bullying. I felt a wash of the same discomfort I'd felt in my body back then and my fight or flight response screamed for me to get away. My brain was screaming that I was close to danger. Unfortunately, I had no real reason to flee because the danger my brain was perceiving was just leftover embarrassment from being a normal high school student.

Lisa stopped in front of the wall and gripped my hand tight. "Look at you! Oh, my god. You were adorable. You still had braces! And your cute little cheeks were freaking cherub-level chubby."

I stared at my photo and had no trouble remembering what it was like being that girl. I was taller than the rest of the girls and I hadn't gotten used to my lanky limbs. Clumsy and awkward, I'd always felt like a freak. My braces were impossible to miss, my chubby cheeks made me look like a kid, and I'd let my mom dress me because I had no clue what I was doing. It turned out she didn't either. Pair that all with the fact that my mom insisted we stay loyal to Beverly, the aging hair stylist who thought I was rude because I was a teenager, and it was like I was looking at the before poster from every makeover show.

"That was taken the summer before senior year. Don't let it fool you into thinking Reagan stayed an awkward duckling." Russ stood just behind us and rested both hands on Lisa's shoulders. "I spent my senior year threatening guys to stay away from her."

I frowned and turned to him. "No, you didn't."

He rolled his eyes. "Yeah, I did."

Lisa grinned. "I've heard stories from Russ about how he nearly lost his spot on the football team for getting into a fight over some of the guys talking about you."

Russ grunted unhappily. “For the record, I’d still fight for you.”

“Then why didn’t you tell me about Ben and drive me straight to LA so we could handle him?”

“Are you kidding?”

Like an old married couple, they gradually walked away, so lost in bickering with each other that the rest of the world ceased to exist. It was fine with me because I was stuck on what Russ said. No one had wanted me senior year. I’d stayed the awkward, lonely kid. The loser who trailed along behind her brother and his best friends.

My eyes sought out their pictures like a fiend, my heart kicking up a bit as I spotted their faces stapled to the wall next to Russ’. I’d definitely trailed along behind them. I’d forever trailed along behind them, since before middle school, even. I couldn’t remember a time in my childhood that I didn’t have crushes on my brother’s best friends. Thinking about what Russ said, I wondered if he’d ever threatened *them* away from me senior year.

Never in a million years would I have ever thought they found me attractive at all that year until the night of prom. That night changed everything. That night was the first time I’d ever felt pretty, the night I’d lost my virginity, and the last night I’d ever felt happy in Lunar. Russ’ best friends had blown up every potential rule he’d ever given them about staying away from me. I’d begged them to. When the smoke settled, however, they denied ever starting the fire and I’d been left the lying slut. Somehow, I’d managed to be both a slut and a liar who made up the story that supposedly made me a slut. It didn’t take much in high school.

The aftermath of prom night was the real reason being back in Lunar made my skin feel like it was too tight. It wasn’t that I’d been a loser in high school who was mocked and teased. It was the bullying that came after, the way I

was suddenly desired by boys who thought I was easy and ridiculed by them a breath later. It was the way I couldn't face Russ because he'd been so angry at me for spreading a sick rumor about his best friends. It was the way my parents couldn't look me in the eye because they weren't sure. It was the fact that I went from invisible to infamous overnight.

I didn't know what Russ was talking about, saying that he'd had to threaten guys away from me. I remembered clearly being the ugly duckling, not the awkward duckling until I was the slutty duckling.

I turned away from the photos, desperately needing a drink. Reliving those memories was almost as bad as standing in front of the station of fresh rolls I'd just put out on the executive floor where I worked and having my boyfriend's wife scream at me before launching one of those fresh rolls at my head. Having hot butter splatter across my cheek tipped the scale in favor of my most recent shaming.

The scuffed wood floor was the original gym floor, the same one I'd tripped over my feet and fallen on a hundred times, and I was more than aware of that fact as I navigated my way to the bar in stilettos that I had no business wearing. I cleared the tables and stepped around a few scattered balloons, so close to the alcohol that I desperately wanted. When I glanced up, though, everything went to hell.

Standing at the bar with Russ and Lisa was August Lee, one of Russ' best friends. He'd changed in the ten years that had passed since I'd seen him, but he was one of the guys that I'd basically stalked for most of my childhood and teen years. I'd know his profile anywhere. The suit and bulk of his body were surprising, but I yanked my eyes away. No way was I going there. I couldn't face him. One glimpse and my heart was already pounding like a bad rock band.

I tried to spin around to change course, but the heels didn't agree with me. Time seemed to slow as I felt myself falling. Of course, I was going to fall down in front of everyone. Of course. I just had to remind my graduating class what an idiot I'd been and possibly still was. I sighed and waited for the pain.

Instead of hitting the wooden floor of the gym, though, I was gracefully caught and pulled into a hard, warm chest. The smell of warm cinnamon and engine oil filled my nose and my eyes popped open to stare into the almost black eyes of Theo White.

4.

Reagan

Theo's thick arms wrapped around me firmly and he easily helped me get my feet under me, all without letting me go. He towered over me, even in my heels, and I embarrassingly found myself tucked just under his chin. A million thoughts raced through my brain, most of them about how solid Theo's chest felt, but some of them about how I was seeing him again, and it was while I was falling over myself.

"Whoa, there. You okay?" Of course, his voice had gotten even deeper since the last time I'd talked to him. He was one chorus away from swoony country music star. "See something you didn't like?"

I pried myself off of Theo's chest and kept my eyes on my own body as I made sure I was still put together. "No. I'm just not used to these heels, I guess. I, um, should go. I think I'm supposed to be...somewhere else..."

Theo wrapped his hand around my bicep and gently pulled me closer to the edge of the gym, where things were quieter. His fingers were rough against my skin and left goosebumps trailing up and down my arm. "I can't let you get away from me that easily, Reagan. How've you been?"

I made the mistake of looking up at him and felt heat swarm my cheeks almost instantly. Theo had always been good-looking. I'd crushed on him for years and had spent way too much time considering every part of him. It would've taken a lot longer than a decade for me to forget the features of his face, but age had added something, made him sharper. I was too surprised by the subtle changes to remember that staring wasn't polite.

With his olive complexion and dark eyes, he'd always reminded me of an Italian actor from a teen show when I was growing up. The way his thick, dark hair curled back then had made him look almost innocent, but that curl

was gone. His hair was short and pushed back from his face. The bones in his face had gotten just that much sharper with time that he'd gone from teen star to sexy Bond villain. With a painfully attractive shadow of a beard on his jaw and full lips, he was a walking, talking wet dream. I hadn't watched the movie *Eat, Pray, Love*, but I was pretty sure Julia Roberts had gone looking for Theo.

It wasn't fair. He'd grown into the sexier, updated version of the Theo I remembered and I was pretty sure I was still the same loser I'd always been.

"Should I be concerned that you're not speaking?" One full eyebrow quirked higher and his lips tilted into a crooked grin. It made for a breathtaking effect that I was sure melted panties on the regular.

I forced my eyes out on the rest of the gym and shook my head. "No, sorry. I just got into town. Maybe I'm a little jetlagged."

"We didn't think you were coming. Russ said you weren't when we talked to him a couple of days ago."

I wrapped my arms around myself and watched as Russ and Lisa passed by without glancing over at us. "I wasn't sure I was. I was already in town, though, so Theo insisted I come."

Theo boldly tucked his finger under my chin and turned my face towards his. "I'm glad you came. You're a sight for sore eyes. You planning on staying around for a while?"

I swallowed and watched his eyes move to my throat and lower. The dress I'd purchased was daring up top and I imagined that from his taller viewpoint, he was getting an eyeful. Like ten years hadn't passed, my body reacted. "Uh-huh."

Turning into me, Theo's big frame gave us the façade of privacy. His hungry expression raked over me and then came back to meet my gaze.

“What are your plans while you’re here?”

The idiot kid inside me was still jumping for joy that her crush was paying attention to her. It was easy to give into her excitement for a moment, but I pulled myself back and reminded myself that Theo wasn’t my crush. He was one of the guys who’d helped make my life hell. Beyond that, I’d had enough of sexy men causing me trouble, which was what Theo was sure to bring.

Forever polite, I forced a smile and eased away from him. “I’d better go find Russ and Lisa. Maybe I’ll see you around.”

I was suddenly an Olympic athlete in my heels as I practically sprinted across the gym to find Russ and Lisa. They were already seated at a table and I threw myself in the chair next to Lisa and looked at the drink in front of her. “Is there alcohol in that?”

She looked at me with wide eyes and nodded. When I snatched the glass and drained it, her mouth fell open. “Well, hell, Reagan!”

I searched the table for more liquor and was just about to demand Russ go get more when my gaze slammed into August’s. I sucked in a sharp breath of shock and choked, doubling over into Lisa as the alcohol I’d just sucked down threatened to come back up.

“Jesus, Rea! You’re just about showing the entire gym your tits!” Russ, clearly scandalized, held a cloth napkin in front of me. “I knew that dress was a bad idea.”

Lisa snorted as she tried to hold in her laugh, but then it just exploded out of her anyway. She shoved another drink into my hand and told me to drink it through her giggles.

I did as she said and grabbed the napkin from Russ as I sat up again. My head felt a little wobbly as I put the empty glass down on the table. “What is that?”

Russ grunted. “That was my drink. And now that you’ve had two, you shouldn’t have more. The Lunar Eclipse could knock a grown man on his ass. You’ll probably need to be carried home.”

Lisa rubbed my shoulder. “Don’t worry. I’ve had two before. I was okay after a day or two.”

I looked back at the glass and then at them again. “You’re kidding, right?”

August made a sound that was suspiciously close to a laugh and rapped his knuckles on the table. “I need to get myself another beer. I’ll get everyone more drinks.”

“There are nuts at the bar. Maybe getting something in your stomach will help, Reagan.” Lisa didn’t realize she was putting me in another position that I didn’t need to be in. “Get some water, too. And maybe see if they have any of those hangover stoppers.”

I stood up and looked over at August. “Anything else?”

“Lemons. I would love some lemon wedges!”

I moved around the table and then fell into step with August as we crossed towards the bar. I didn’t know what to say. It wasn’t like we’d been friends when we parted ways in high school, not after what happened. I didn’t know if we had anything to talk about at all.

“I won’t lie. I was a little pissed Russ pulled that napkin shit. How else am I supposed to know if you’ve changed in the past ten years?”

5.

Reagan

I threw back my head and laughed out loud. Maybe I should've been offended, but I was just grateful the awkwardness had been broken. I looked up at August and grinned. "I've been okay, August. Thanks for asking. How about you?"

He rested his hand on my lower back as we sidestepped a couple of people talking. "Can't complain. I saw you nearly break your neck while trying to avoid me earlier. Should I be insulted?"

The warmth of his hand felt too nice, and it just grew worse when we got to the bar and he stepped into me to make space around us for other people. His body pressed into mine from shoulder to knee, with his arm practically wrapped around me. It was the stance of two people who were way more familiar than August and I were.

I cleared my throat and tried to remain calm. "I wasn't trying to avoid you."

Somehow, he got even closer. The scent of nature teased the air around us and when I made the mistake of looking up at him, his deep green eyes were all too intensely focused on me. "Liar."

My brain demanded I be pissed off, but my body melted. August had always been the bad boy of their friend group. Right then, with his unkept, too-long hair, full beard, and tattoo-covered arms, he looked like every bad boy in every book I'd ever read. His black dress shirt had the sleeves pushed up to his elbows and it was open at the neck, revealing tattoos that I'd never seen before but tattoos that my eyes were desperate to study. He fried my brain.

I felt the press of his fingers even firmer on my back as his eyes moved over my face, taking me in the same way I'd done him. When he met my eyes, his were heated.

Just as my entire being was screaming 'Danger!', the bartender moved into my peripheral and asked us what we wanted. While August ordered everything, even my water, I took the chance to look around and get my eyes away from him.

Instead of relief, I found myself looking up into the smiling face of Charlie, the third and final one of my brother's best friends. He looked me over as he closed the distance between us and then, without hesitation, pulled me away from August and into his arms.

I was pretty sure I'd stopped breathing. I hadn't expected to see any of them, and there I was, sandwiched between two of them. I could feel my face turning red and considered the consequences of kicking off my heels and running all the way back to LA.

"Damn, Reagan! It's good to see you. I didn't know you'd be here tonight." Charlie looked over my head at August. "Did you know?"

August grunted and rested a big hand on my hip. "Nope. It was a pleasant surprise for me, too."

It was too much. Looking up at Charlie, with his blonde hair and bright blue eyes, I felt like screaming. He had deep dimples on both sides of his mouth when he smiled and blonde stubble. With that and the tan and the muscles, he looked like the perfect all-American hero.

Of freaking course, they were all beautiful. Of freaking course, they'd all just gotten better with age. There were more muscles around me in that moment than I'd had around me in the previous year combined. And I'd been living in LA. And, *of course*, they were all towering over me. In less than half

an hour, the three men I'd crushed on for years had easily shown me that they were still better than any man I'd been with since them.

I stomped my foot and then stared down at it in shock. I hadn't meant to do that. I looked up at Charlie and then at August and found them staring at me, amusement clear on their faces. I crossed my arms over my chest and then uncrossed them. I felt like throwing a tantrum, clearly, but that wasn't me. I didn't do stuff like that.

"Everything good, Reagan?" Charlie rested his hand on my side, his hand just above August's.

I straightened my dress and stood up straighter. "Everything is absolutely great. I'm going to need more alcohol, but it's a coincidence. It's not because this is incredibly strange for me, but not strange at all for any of you, apparently."

Both of their hands flexed in unison and then August leaned in so he could lower his voice and be heard. "What would make this so strange?"

I jerked around to face him and saw that he was grinning. Sighing, I saw the bartender push our drinks towards us and grabbed my water and a beer. "This one's mine."

I left them standing at the bar and rushed back to our table to find Theo in the seat next to my vacant one. I kept a straight face and sat down, doing my best to not explode.

"Where's the rest of the drinks?" Russ frowned as he saw that I didn't have anything for him.

I just nodded with the beer bottle in the direction of the bar, where August and Charlie were walking our way. I looked over at Lisa and had a moment of weakness. Maybe I could tell her about what happened and how the guys were acting. I knew that it wasn't a good idea as soon as it occurred to me,

though. I couldn't put her in a position to have to keep things from her husband.

She was staring back at me with a confused expression on her made-up face. "Do you need to go to the bathroom?"

"Oh, god." Russ groaned. "I told you that you made a mistake eating that milkshake earlier."

Just like that, my awkwardness with the guys was forgotten as I focused all of my energy on killing my brother with my mind. "You're an idiot, Russ."

August and Charlie sat down with us at the table and Charlie jumped right in. "Why is Russ an idiot? I mean, I don't disagree. I'm just curious."

"I was just checking in with Reagan about her irritable bowel syndrome."

Lisa smacked the back of his head. "Leave your sister alone!"

I narrowed my eyes at him and leaned closer. "Still in that awkward phase of being obsessed with feces, I see."

"And you stop it, too. We're out together at a nice event. This is the first time you two have been together like this in forever. Enjoy it."

"No, there was that time in LA when we all went out to Reagan's *lover's* restaurant. That wasn't too long ago. Although, I'm not sure how nice that event was, considering Marko wouldn't stop trying to eat the food out of your mouth all night."

I gasped. "I dated Marko two years ago, you fool. And I never called him that. He called himself my *lover* and you know I hated it. Plus, you punched him in the middle of dinner and beat your chest like a caveman!"

"I punched him in the arm! It's not my fault he went down like a baby learning to walk!" Russ, fully animated, leaned over Lisa and pointed his finger at me. "I saw what he was trying to do. That man was a pervert. He's lucky I didn't murder him."

“Wait. What did he try to do? I saw the kissing and the finger sucking. What else happened?” Lisa, suddenly unconcerned with stopping the sibling war, was curious to a fault. “Why didn’t you tell me something else happened?”

“Nothing else happened.” I said it too fast, I knew, as soon as Lisa’s eyes widened and her face filled with glee.

Just as Russ was opening his mouth to reveal the reason I’d dumped Marko right after that dinner, a mic was turned on somewhere in the room and a sickeningly sweet voice filled the room. Jenny Bokker. The devil herself.

6.

Reagan

“If everyone could grab a seat, we’re going to go through some ancient memories before dinner. Go easy on the Lunar Eclipses before you eat, by the way, guys. If we’re the first class to have to call an ambulance for alcohol poisoning, we’ll never live it down.”

I sat back in my seat, argument with Russ forgotten. Jenny Bokker was the woman who’d made my life hell. She was pure evil. I hadn’t considered the possibility of her being at the reunion, which was short-sighted, I realized.

“Don’t think you’re getting away with not telling me what happened that night with Marko.” Lisa frowned when she looked back at me and saw my face. “What’s wrong?”

“First, the superlatives! This should be fun.” Jenny and a woman I didn’t recognize stood at a small podium, working together to organize whatever Jenny was doing. “We’re just going to go in the order they’re in the yearbook. So, first! Most likely to lose all their hair went to Frank Gorman. Let’s see you, Frank. Were we right?”

I checked out of the ceremony, knowing that my name was nowhere in their plans. I hadn’t been voted anything in high school. I might’ve gotten most likely to be the biggest slut if the voting had taken place after prom, but thankfully, it hadn’t. I took a long pull of my beer and looked back at the bathrooms. If I stood up right then, I might draw attention to myself, but I was suddenly wondering why I’d ever agreed to come.

“Most likely to marry a cheerleader!” The crowd whistled as Jenny read my brother’s name. “Come on up here, Russy!”

Lisa looked at me and made a face. “Give me a pompom and I’ll shove it right up her ass.”

“Were you ever a cheerleader, Lisa?” Theo leaned into me, talking to Lisa with a teasing smile on his face.

“Well, yeah. Only because cheerleaders got to break dress code and wear short little skirts. How else was I going to get Brock Dellaway’s attention?”

I snorted. “I don’t know. Maybe your face, hair, boobs, or tiny waist?”

Lisa playfully swatted my arm. “This is why you’re my favorite person. You always say the sweetest things.”

Russ sat back down at the table and slung his arm around Lisa. “Never say I don’t live up to the hype, babe.”

I finished my beer and my water and bounced my leg under the table. I felt trapped. I even went as far as pulling my phone out of my clutch under the table and turning it on for the first time in days. It was a mistake, because it wasn’t on silent and it immediately started going crazy with notifications. I swore and clamped my thighs closed around the phone, trying to drown out any of the sound.

“Really?” Russ rolled his eyes at me. “Is that the asshole?”

“Shut up, *Russy*.” Lisa elbowed her husband and clutched my hand. “Bathroom?”

I nodded gratefully and managed to stand up with only a little bit of dizziness. I caught myself on Theo’s shoulder and grunted. “What the hell are they putting in Lunar Eclipses?”

Lisa wrapped her arm around my waist and we both leaned on each other as we made our way to the bathroom. By the time we got there, we were both giggling and I’d forgotten why I was angry.

“God. Dinner hasn’t even been served and you’re already plastered!” Lisa washed her hands after using the restroom and watched me through the mirror. “We’re going to have to roll you out of here.”

“This place makes me miserable. I was always so miserable here. I don’t know why I came.” I let my head fall back and found myself staring up at the water-stained ceiling tiles. “Huh. You’d think they’d fix that.”

Lisa caught my cheeks in her hands and pulled my face down to hers. Resting her forehead against mine, she narrowed her eyes at me. “You’re a grown-ass woman. You’re sexy, you’re smart, you’re talented. You are not a teenager who accepts shit from anyone. I saw your face when Jenny showed up. You’re going to go out there and have a good time and show her that she’s the only loser here.”

I scrunched up my nose. “I feel so awkward around the guys. I don’t know how to have a good time. I feel like I’m still a dorky kid again. It’s like the last ten years didn’t even happen.”

“You know they did. The phone ringing in your hand tells you they did. The guys probably don’t even remember whatever rumors went around all that time ago. You’re so hot, Reagan. I refuse to let you feel like a loser.”

I shook out my hands and ignored any mention of rumors. “You’re right. I shouldn’t hold back. I deserve a good night.”

She took my phone and winced when she saw the screen full of notifications. Turning it off, she stuck it in her purse. “You do. So, go out there and pretend like you don’t have history with anyone out there. Just have a good time. Let yourself go, Reagan.”

“Just like that?”

“Yeah! This is your fresh start. Do you want to be the awkward teenager too scared to speak her mind or do you want to be a badass woman who takes control of her life?”

I was getting really into her speech. “A badass!”

“Done! Now, you just get to show everyone.” She led me to the mirror and

touched up our makeup before slapping my ass. “Go, get ‘em, tiger!”

I strutted out of that bathroom like I owned the place. I was drunk enough to think that no one else would remember the past and that I could just pretend it never happened. I was also drunk enough to really buy into Lisa’s hype game. I was a badass. No one could make me feel like a loser.

When we got back to the table and sat down, the guys all looked at us, but I didn’t let it bother me. Instead, I sat up straighter and reveled in their attention.

“What is happening right now?” Russ’ voice was lowered as he whispered to Lisa, but I heard him.

I looked over at him and grinned. “I’m a badass, Russ. I’m a smart, sexy woman and I’m going to have a good time tonight. Maybe I’ll dance on a table or go home with someone. Who knows? The night is young and I’m a single, sexual woman with good underwear and an okay set of tits. They wouldn’t get caught in a sock drawer, but they’re cute. I’m starving. When is dinner coming?”

Lisa threw back her head and cackled while Russ stared at me in horror. I realized I was drunker than I thought, but I was drunker than I thought, so it didn’t matter that I’d just given a really embarrassing speech.

Lisa held up her glass and I grabbed Theo’s beer bottle. “Here’s to Reagan getting her groove back!”

Russ tried to block our toast but missed. I took a long pull of Theo’s beer and then passed it back to him with a wink. Russ, all the while, was sputtering negativity. “What the hell did you do to my sister in there? What is she talking about? Sock drawers? There will be no dancing on tables and definitely no going home with anyone. Jesus!”

Lisa grabbed Russ and pulled him close. She whispered something to him

that made his face go blank and then he settled in his chair and watched his wife with what his sister considered too much hunger on his face.

I looked over at Theo and smiled. If ten years ago never happened, I had nothing to feel weird about. “Your arms are huge. What do you do for your muscles?”

7.

Reagan

I threw my arm around Charlie's neck and jumped to the beat of the song. I didn't know it, but I liked how fun it was. Every time I moved, my breasts rubbed against Charlie's chest, and between the alcohol and the devil-may-care attitude I'd adopted, I quickly decided I really liked it. I leaned in closer and my lips brushed his ear while I tried to whisper to him.

"You're a really great dancer!"

Charlie, who'd thrown back a Lunar Eclipse after I'd started talking about his dimples, grinned at me. Those same dimples showed themselves and I realized that I wanted to stick my tongue in them. "I'm a shit dancer. You're just too drunk to notice."

I pressed my body fully against his and held his gaze. "I like the way you dance."

He gripped my waist and eased my hips away from his. "Your brother is pretty distracted but I don't think he'd respond well to me dancing that close to you."

At that moment, I saw Theo walking towards us and tapped Charlie on the tip of his nose. "Fine. You go worry about my brother. I'll dance with Theo."

Before he could object, I spun into Theo's chest. Theo's arm wrapped around my waist instantly and he dropped his mouth to my ear. "You're going to start a fight if you don't ease up, Reagan. Is that what you want?"

I twisted around and ground my ass against him, letting the bulge in his pants direct my aim. Leaning my head back on his chest, I lifted my arms and tangled my hands behind me in his hair. "I don't want to start a fight. I just want to have fun."

His body moved with mine, swaying in a way that filled my head with thoughts of stretching out under him and begging for more. “And are you? Having fun?”

I saw August watching us and a soft moan escaped my lips. I knew Theo heard it by the way his arm tightened around my stomach and his breath stuttered against my neck. I forced myself to pull away from Theo and face him, with more space between us. I wanted to let go and have fun, and no matter what my drunk brain said, sleeping with Theo was too much letting go.

I smiled up at him, dancing with an innocent amount of space between our bodies. “I am having fun. The only thing that would make it better is if there were ice cream and the DJ played ‘The Cupid Shuffle.’”

He laughed and caught my hand, easily spinning me out and then back into his chest. “Do you still like cookies and cream with gummy bears added in?”

I licked my lips and nodded. “I’m a chef now and I’m supposed to have a refined palette, but oh, my god, yes.”

“What if I told you that Bertha’s Creamery is open until eleven?”

“Are you serious?” I stopped dancing and planted my hands on his chest. I was too weak to not notice the muscles under my palms, but I did my best to pretend I wasn’t drooling over them. “If you’re messing with me, I’ll take you down, right here.”

August stepped up to us and stared down at me with a curious look on his face. “Can I cut in?”

“I was just telling Reagan about Bertha’s being open. She threatened to take me out if I wasn’t being honest. I suggest you watch your step with her.” Theo spun me into August’s arms and stepped in close behind me before moving away. Having their body heat on both my front and back short-

circuited my brain momentarily. “We’ll get ice cream later tonight if you still want.”

August smiled. “If you’re still standing.”

“I’ll be standing and wanting.” I didn’t stop to think about how it sounded. I didn’t care. “We should invite Charlie, too. Ice cream is meant to be shared.”

“We’ll invite Charlie, too.” August nodded to Theo, whose body heat faded away. “Should we invite Russ and Lisa?”

I giggled as he dipped me and then pulled me tighter into his chest. My heart raced and I stared into his deep green eyes, getting lost in them. I sank my teeth into my lip as I thought about what he was asking. It was rude to not invite them. I knew that I just didn’t want to, though. I selfishly wanted the guys to myself for a bit. “Um... I think they’re going home to do stuff.”

August’s normally stern face stretched into a broad grin as he laughed. A lock of his hair fell into his eyes and he absently pushed it back before resting that hand on my hip. “Of course. Stuff.”

The music changed to ‘The Cupid Shuffle’ suddenly and I screamed like the drunk woman I was. I caught August’s hand as he tried to leave the dance floor and pulled him with me to the front, where people were already lining up to dance.

“I don’t dance, Reagan.”

I held his hand tight and wiggled my hips at him. “You were just dancing. I’m not letting you escape this.”

He groaned and narrowed his eyes as he watched me. “That was swaying. This is synchronized. I don’t do synchronized unless it involves guns.”

I moved in front of him and gripped both of his arms. Forcing him to do the moves with me, I led him through the steps, laughing all the while. Our

bodies bumped together; I stepped on his feet; we even headbutted once. But by the time the song was over, we were both laughing and I was having a blast.

August pulled me into his side with his arm over my shoulders, a big grin on his face. “You’re a dictator. I think I saw Theo filming that and I’ve gotta tell you, Reagan, it wasn’t graceful, what we just did.”

I stretched up on my tip toes and kissed his cheek. “We can do plenty of other things gracefully. That was a beauty of its own style.”

Charlie joined us on the side of the dance floor and looked like he was struggling to hold back his laughter. “Russ and Lisa are about to leave. They’re asking for you.”

I shrugged, already having decided that I was getting ice cream. Halfway across the gym, I stumbled over a fallen streamer and was saved by August. When someone bumped into him, he lost his balance, too, and we both went down. Unconcerned, I laughed heartily while Theo appeared and pulled me to my feet.

“Jesus, little sis. You just took down a Navy SEAL. That’s a record, I’m sure.” Russ and Lisa appeared in front of us, Russ just as drunk as any of the rest of us.

Lisa clapped her hands over my cheeks and grinned. “You have two dance styles, I’ve decided. Stripper and wacky, wavey, inflatable tube man.”

“Hey! I’ve never been a stripper. There was that one time I considered selling feet pics for money to pay for school, but I talked myself out of that.” When the group remained silent, I rolled my eyes. “What? I could’ve been selling pics of my butthole. I knew a girl who did that. She made so much money that she retired within a year. With that kind of temptation, it’s a miracle that I’m still schlumping it in the working world. Although, I’m not

sure what quality of asshole is a top earning kind, you know? Bleached? Hairy? Hairless? There are just too many ways a asshole could be wrong.”

Russ covered his face. “Please, for the love of God, stop talking. You are my sister and I love you, but I want nothing more than to staple your lips closed right now.”

Lisa stared at my feet. “I bet you could’ve made good money selling feet pics. I think I could’ve sold pics of my ankles. I have great ankles.”

I looked down at them and nodded. “They didn’t even swell when you were pregnant!”

Russ glared at me. “Are you coming home with us?”

I shook my head. “We’re going to get ice cream!”

“Oh, I want ice cream!”

Russ shook his head at Lisa. “You’ve got ice cream at home. With whip cream. Remember?”

She blushed and giggled. “Oh, yeah. We have to go! Bye!”

Russ tried to ruffle my hair but I batted his hand away. “Be careful. Don’t stay out too late.”

I rolled my eyes at him. “Aren’t you going to tell me to eat my vegetables?”

He flipped me the bird before disappearing with Lisa.

I turned around to find that I was standing in the middle of the three men that I had no business being alone with. Instead of feeling worried about my behavior, I leaned into whatever bad decisions drunk Reagan might want to make. Just because I’d made a few little mistakes before didn’t mean I would make them again. “Ice cream?”

8.

Reagan

“I don’t think I’ve ever been happier.” I took another bite of my ice cream and sighed. “Nope. Now, I am.”

Theo finished his beer and tossed it into a trash can as we walked down the main street through town. He bit into his chocolate ice cream that he’d been double-fisting with his beer and groaned. “This is the life.”

Charlie stumbled over a crack in the sidewalk and barely saved his triple-stacked cone. “Shit. If my students could see me now. Pretty sure teachers aren’t supposed to be this drunk in public.”

“You’re a coach. It’s expected of coaches.” Theo dodged Charlie’s fist and bumped into me, making me drop a gummy bear.

“Hey! Careful with the bears!”

August wrapped his arm around me and pulled me farther from the guys. “I’ll protect the bears from these idiots.”

“Care to protect them straight into my mouth?” I was feeling cute until I tripped over my feet and went down hard. I saved my ice cream, but I wasn’t exactly feeling cute as I stared up at the guys from the street.

Theo shook his head. “Those heels are going to kill you.”

“I’m not used to them. It’s not their fault.”

He pulled me up and easily lifted me into his arms, holding me like a bride. “There. Now, you’ll be safer.”

“Until you trip and I fall even farther.”

“Where are we going, anyway?” Charlie looked around and raised his eyebrows. “Was anyone going to say anything about the fact that we walked the opposite way of the gym and our homes?”

August glanced at our surroundings and grunted. “Shit.”

“Okay, okay. Put me down. I’ll carry one of you now. We can do this.”

Theo snorted. “Do what?”

“Walk back the other way. We can make it.”

August saw me struggling to eat my ice cream with my arm wrapped around Theo’s neck, so he took it and absently started feeding it to me. “You’re not carrying us. We’ll just take a break for a few minutes and then go again. The ice cream will soak up the booze and we’ll be good as new.”

“There’s no benches. Where are we going to sit?” I took another bite of ice cream from him and looked around. Just down the street was the Lunar Motel. “There!”

Charlie scoffed. “Are you trying to have your way with us, woman?”

“Been there, done that, didn’t even get a commemorative shirt.” Rolling my eyes, I talked around another bite. “We can rest there. And then we can go back. There are no benches out here and I want to sit down. My feet hurt and I can’t eat my ice cream with Theo’s big head in the way.”

Theo growled. “Excuse me? My head is perfectly normal.”

None of us verbally decided or agreed to my idea, but we were walking towards the motel anyway. Then, August was inside the office, talking to the kid at the front desk and getting a key. Up the stairs, down the concrete walkway, into Room 210, we went.

It wasn’t until we were all standing inside the small room, crammed around the bed, that I started giggling and couldn’t stop. The room smelled like stale pot smoke and the blanket couldn’t have been washed in the past decade. I looked at each man around me and laughed even harder.

Theo crossed his arms over his chest, his eyes a little glossy and his smile goofy. “What’s so funny?”

Charlie tried to sit on the bed but stopped when I made a choked sound and

grabbed him, making his ice cream fall to the floor. He looked at me in shock and pouted. “Hey!”

Through tears of laughter, I pushed him away from the bed and made a big show of dragging the blanket off the bed. “I was trying to save you from whatever disease that blanket has!”

August kicked off his shoes and laid across the bed, his thick arm under his head. He stared at the ceiling and smiled. “I’ve slept on worse.”

Like kids, Charlie and Theo kicked off their shoes and jumped on the bed, nearly crushing August. Drunk and happy, they all took a minute to settle down. When they looked over at me, my stomach tightened. All three of them in bed, staring at me, was probably not a good party to walk into, but I didn’t care right then. I dropped my ice cream on the side table and kicked off my shoes before launching myself at the bed.

Someone grunted and complained about my elbow and I squealed when hands gripped my waist, tickling me. It was a mess of sloppy limbs until I was finally settled between Theo and August. With their warm bodies pressing against both sides of my body, I fought a stupid smile.

Looking up at the ceiling, I made a face. “Ew. What is that?”

August grunted. “Don’t know. Probably don’t want to know.”

I leaned up to look over at Charlie. “Do you have enough room?”

He grinned, flashing those sexy dimples my way. “Aren’t you the sweetest motel bed host ever.”

I reached over Theo to swat Charlie but he just caught my hand and held it against his chest. It sent my heart into overdrive and had me pressed fully against Theo’s side and half of his chest. I glanced up at Theo and my breath caught in my throat as I found his dark eyes on mine.

I licked my lips and watched as he watched me do it. He gripped my chin

and slowly lifted my face to his, giving me all the time to turn my head or move away. I didn't, though. His gaze flicked between my mouth and my eyes until our lips touched.

Too much alcohol and a decade of remembering the single night I spent with them fueled my need, or at least that's what I would tell myself later. The second Theo kissed me, I let out a moan that could've gotten me a job on the set of a porn. My hand clutched Charlie's as I angled my head to deepen the kiss.

Theo gripped the back of my head and ran his tongue over my lips, seeking entrance that I immediately gave him. He tasted of chocolate and beer, kissed me like he'd been waiting to do it for years, and gripped me tight against him. I was lost.

A hand trailed up the back of my thigh and under my dress, leaving heat in its wake. I broke apart from Theo to see August watching me, a silent question in his eyes. To my body, it was like the decade hadn't passed. Letting them touch me felt like a continuation of what we'd done like it was the most natural thing in the world. I arched my back and pressed my lower body against August's hand, letting him know I wanted him, before Theo pulled my mouth back to his.

Charlie ran his hand up my arm, heightening my awareness and making me feel that much hotter. He touched me everywhere, his fingertips always moving. Across my chest, over my back, down my legs.

August's big hand spread across my inner thigh, urging my legs farther apart. I grunted into Theo's mouth when he squeezed my thighs and then dragged just the tip of his finger over my panty covered core. Breaking the kiss, I pressed my forehead into Theo's chest and pushed my ass back as far as I could, silently begging August for more.

“Just as needy now as you were all those years ago, Rea.”

9.

Reagan

August cupped my sex and squeezed just enough to make me cry out in pleasure. I twisted and rocked my hips so I could use his hand to take my own pleasure, making him swear and yank my panties to the side. “Fucking hell.”

I wasn't prepared for him to bury his head between my legs and start eating me like a wild man. I gasped as he lifted my hips and held my legs in the air as he plowed his tongue in and out of my core before dropping to my clit and flicking it faster and faster until I came with a scream that should've had someone alerting the authorities.

He lowered my legs back to the bed, where I immediately collapsed, a happy smile on my face. Still, he wasn't finished. I felt his blunt fingers at my core and moaned loudly, uncaring of how I sounded.

“Do you need help keeping quiet, Rea?” Theo's voice was thick with arousal and he growled when I nodded eagerly. “Your mouth is still the best I've ever had. These lips, these eyes. Fucking gets me off every time.”

Charlie dragged his shirt over his head, revealing a beautiful set of abs. He ran his hands over them when he saw me watching and cupped himself through his pants. “Fucking beautiful, Rea.”

August pushed two fingers deep into me and bent forward to growl into my ear. “Still just as tight, Rea. Still dripping wet. I'm going to fuck you like you begged me to all those years ago. First, you're going to show Theo you're better than any memory he's ever had. Up on your hands and knees, baby.”

My heart hammered in my chest and it was the only sound reverberating in my head as all my thoughts vanished to the pleasure. I did as he said and looked up to see Theo pushing his pants and briefs down. His shirt was gone

and I barely had time to appreciate his dark chest hair before I focused on the star of the show. Long and thick, Theo's cock stood proudly against his stomach, revealing a pattern of dark veins on the underside. His balls hung heavily between his thighs, neatly trimmed.

I opened my mouth before he got close enough, but I was hungry to get him in my mouth. I wanted to please him. I wanted to make him lose control. I stuck out my tongue and waited, holding his gaze.

“Spread your legs wider, Rea.”

Theo gripped the base of his shaft and rubbed the tip over my tongue at the same moment that I felt something wet and hot against my back entrance. Even as I pushed my hips back and tried to beg for more, Theo slid his cock into my mouth and his loud groan filled the room.

“Shit.” Theo's hand tangled in my hair and he held my gaze as he shifted back and then thrust in deeper, testing my limits.

August's fingers curled and stroked a magical spot inside me while the tongue against my ass flicked back and forth, teasingly. It was Charlie, I knew. The all-American boy had a dark side and he'd been the one to take that cherry for me. My body tightened as I realized his intention and when August stroked his thumb over my clit, I climaxed again, gripping the bed tight as I made sure to keep my mouth loose for Theo.

Instead of slowing, August added another finger and I groaned when Charlie added his first. His tongue stayed there, flicking and teasing to ease the discomfort. I felt stretched too full, but it didn't matter. I still wanted more. Even as I took Theo's cock deeper than I thought possible, I pushed my ass back into Charlie and August.

“I need to be in you. Fuck, Rea. Tell me if that's too far.” August sounded broken as he pulled me away from Theo and dragged me up on my knees to

face him.

I shook my head and ran my hands over his chest. "I want it. Now."

He kissed me hard and then yanked my dress over my head, tossing it aside. My panties followed before he laid back on the bed and pulled me over him. He'd stripped, too, and I wanted to look at him more, but my drunk body said there'd be time for that later. He helped me line our bodies up and finally, I was sinking down on his cock, remembering exactly how much I'd taken my first time and how I'd thought I was going to break. August pressed his thumb into my clit and I watched the veins in his neck strain as he gritted his teeth and waited for me to adjust to his size.

I planted my hands on his chest and blew out a shaky breath, letting the fullness and the pleasure wash over me as I experienced August again. I wasn't sure how long we all stayed frozen like that, but no one rushed me. No one moved a muscle until I opened my eyes and looked to Theo while rocking my hips.

Like a dance we'd perfected, Theo stepped beside us on the bed and let me take him back into my mouth. He used his grip on my head to thrust as deep and as fast as he wanted to, but his eyes stayed on mine, watching me. I sucked harder even as I started grinding on August. He swore and gripped my thighs. Charlie gripped my ass cheeks and separated them so he could lower his mouth and tongue me harder and deeper. The sensation, paired with everything else, drove me higher than ever. I knew the next time I came, it was going to be huge.

August and Charlie communicated and August went still, holding my body down on his so I couldn't move. Theo even pulled almost all the way out of my mouth and held his breath. A beat later, I felt Charlie's dick pressing into my ass.

I gasped and would've clenched down, but August rubbed circles over my clit while Theo stroked my face and neck and lavished me with praise. I somehow managed to stay relaxed, even as Charlie eased his too big shaft into my ass. It seemed like no one breathed again until his thighs pressed into mine.

Charlie gave a shuddering groan and gripped my ass tight in his hands. "Okay?"

I took a second to check my body and realized that I was good. I let Theo's cock pop out of my mouth so I could look back at Charlie. I could see he was struggling to stay still, but he did. I nodded and reached back to hold his hand. With my other hand on August's chest, I was truly stretched everywhere, but it was what I wanted.

Theo slid back into my mouth, growling my name when I sucked harder. August slowly moved, inching out of me and slipping back inside. It was a tight fit, but I was so wet that it immediately got easier. When Charlie moved, I saw stars, but I never wanted it to stop.

It didn't take long for the pace to quicken as we all hurtled towards our orgasms. Theo gripped my breasts and played with my nipples as he thrust deep into my throat. August powered his hips upwards, filling me hard and fast, fucking me like he'd promised, like I'd begged for ten years earlier. Charlie took his time, but when my moans grew louder around Theo's dick, he started drilling me, too.

My moaning and muffled screams were too much for Theo. He swore and came like a freight train, filling my mouth and throat with come as his deep voice filled the room. I swallowed him down and kept sucking him until he pulled out and collapsed on the bed next to us.

With nothing to muffle my screams of pleasure, I let them go, digging my

nails into August's chest and Charlie's arm as the feeling inside me built higher and higher, into something I'd only experienced once before, with them. The pressure grew bigger and fuller in my core until I tried to fight it, almost scared of it. It was useless.

The moment Charlie's hand gripped the back of my neck and he shouted my name as he started filling my ass with his seed, I flew over my own edge, coming with a choked scream and a flood of pleasure that pushed out past August's thick erection. My body tightened so fully that August gave a mighty shout of his own and thrust into me once more before I felt his cock jerk and his orgasm splash against my inner walls.

I shook and moaned as aftershocks of pleasure struck me time and time again, even after I'd collapsed on top of August's sweaty chest. A set of dog tags pressed into my face, the metal cool, but I didn't have the energy to move them or ask him about them. I just panted and shuddered.

I was nearly asleep when Charlie eased out of me. August pulled out next and I felt a flood of fluid leak out of my body, but I was too exhausted to care. August wrapped his arms around me and Charlie and Theo stretched out on either side of us, their hands on me, too. It was the most at peace I could ever remember being.

August pressed a kiss to the top of my head and let one of his hands rest on my ass. "Perfect."

I smiled into his chest and sighed. "Can anyone reach my ice cream?"

Theo grunted. "You're drunk. Go to sleep."

"*You're drunk. You go to sleep.*"

"Okay."

I felt Charlie shift, and a second later, a shirt was pulled over my back. I found his hand and interlaced our fingers, happy and satisfied. "Nighty

night.”

I got three muffled goodnights back and finally gave in to the drunken exhaustion myself.

10.

Reagan

My stomach turned. I was so hot and sticky. I tried to stretch out, but I was trapped. Another roll of my stomach and my eyes flew open. I was going to be sick. The first thing I saw was a lot of naked chest. I didn't pay it any mind as I crawled out from between two sweaty bodies and slipped to the sticky carpet beside the bed. I gagged and barreled across the room to the only other door, praying it'd be a bathroom.

In the end, I made it to the toilet, but I wasn't sure if I got sick because of the hangover I clearly had or the sight of the toilet. It only took me standing in front of the mirror in the bathroom for everything to come crashing back into my brain. I was naked, mussed, and I looked like I'd been fucked thoroughly by three beefcakes.

I barely contained a scream as I stuck my head out of the bathroom and saw that August, Theo, and Charlie were all still passed out in bed. I slapped my hand over my mouth and thumped my head against the doorframe. I'd done it. I'd really just plowed into town and slept with my brother's three best friends on my second night there. What had been my three little mistakes from when I was eighteen had just been repeated in a glorious fashion at an age that I couldn't claim ignorance at.

Panic struck me all at once, washing over me like a shower of broken glass. I had to get out of there. I had no clue what time it was, no idea where my phone was, and no fucking thought of how I was getting back to Russ', but I just knew I had to be there before he noticed I was missing.

With a pounding head, a turning stomach, and muscle aches that I silently cursed, I crept into the room and tried to find my dress and underwear. I found something that ended up being a dress shirt, but when Charlie rolled

over on the bed and sighed, I decided I was wasting no more time. I yanked on the shirt, did up the buttons as best I could, and fumbled around for my shoes. Without bothering to put them on, I silently slipped out of the motel room and looked around.

The first thing I noticed was that the sun was just starting to crest over the mountains in the far distance, which meant I had time to make it home, if I ran. The second thing I noticed was Pearl Beerman watching me from a metal chair three doors down.

I stared at her with wide eyes and took a deep breath. Pearl was the biggest gossip that side of the Mississippi. She would no doubt see the guys come out of the room later and put two and two together. I considered my options and finally decided that I'd deal with Pearl when I wasn't staring down the barrel of time.

I gave her a weak smile and a little wave before shoving my feet into my heels. "Good morning for a run!"

Before she could open her mouth, I was already sprinting away from the motel. Thankfully, I knew Lunar like the back of my hand from running around so much as a kid. I could avoid the main strip through town, which was more likely to have me spotted on my walk of shame. I nearly broke my ankle more than once, but the thought of Russ finding out about my night gave me the willpower to push through it. I probably could've run with a missing leg to keep my secret.

I considered my life choices as I dodged someone's fallen trash can and nearly took out a cat. After whispering an apology to the offended feline, I made sure to stay on the lookout for more pets. My brain felt like it was squeezing inside my skull, even as my stomach did cartwheels, so my

thoughts didn't get very far, but I still had the wherewithal to be disgusted with myself.

The sun was really doing its thing by the time I could see Russ' house. It was bright enough to hurt and warming up fast. I glanced up as I stepped into the yard and saw Russ in the upstairs window. He looked like he was moving towards the stairs. Panicking, I tried to jump over the fence into the backyard and ended up body slamming it. The sound was sure to draw Russ' attention, so I crawled the rest of the way to the basement door at the back of the house and thanked all the stars in the sky that I'd left it unlocked.

Pushing the door shut behind me, I kicked off my shoes and ripped off the shirt I was wearing, taking a second to jump into pajama bottoms and drag a T-shirt over my head before diving under my covers just as Russ opened the door at the top of the stairs.

"Reagan? Was that you?"

I tried to catch my breath and sound like I was just waking up. "Huh?"

"There was a loud thud. Was that you?"

"Oh, uh, yeah. I fell out of bed." I winced and tugged at my hair. "I'm okay."

"Still drunk, huh?" He sounded a little unsteady himself as he chuckled.

"Oh, yeah. Those Lunar Eclipses are no joke." I leaned over the side of the bed and grabbed the shirt I'd ripped off. I couldn't tell whose it was by looking at it, but with one inhale, I knew it was Charlie's. My stupid body clenched at the scent of him. Shoving the shirt under my pillow, I stared at the basement ceiling and chewed on my lip. "I think I'm going to sleep for a few more hours."

"Don't forget you're meeting the Stovalls tonight."

I shoved my balled fists into my eyes and quietly said every swear word I

knew. “I remember. Thanks, Russ.”

“Feel better, little sis.”

Guilt washed over me and I rolled over to bury my face in my pillow. I wasn't just a terrible sister, I was the worst. Sleeping with Russ' friends was wrong. He'd nearly lost his mind when the rumor spread the decade prior. The saving grace for him had been his friends' willingness to lie to him.

The ugly memories fought to free themselves from the box I kept them in, but I refused. I didn't want to go there. I could feel bad about myself plenty without adding anything else.

The night with the guys had just been a mistake. A drunken mistake. No one would have to know. It would be fine and I'd start my life over in Lunar without any huge secret hanging over my head, like nothing ever happened.

Even as I tried to convince myself that I could pull it off, I flopped over in bed and felt sore in places that reminded me of exactly what I'd done the night before.

Shame scorched my face as I reached under my pants and delicately touched myself, explicit images of the night before turning my anguish into something needier. I stroked my fingers through my lower lips and immediately sat straight up, a wave of shock washing over me. The anguish came slamming back as I realized without a single doubt that there had been no condoms used the night before.

How had I been dumber at twenty-eight than I'd been at eighteen? I stumbled out of bed and searched around for my purse. The need to take my daily birth control pill was overwhelming. Only after I found it and dry swallowed the pill did I start to calm down again.

Grabbing my robe, I hurried upstairs. Sleep and feeling bad for myself would have to wait. I knew I wasn't going to breathe normally again until

there wasn't come inside of me. I had to stop halfway up the stairs to silently scream. What a mess I was. If it wasn't me, I might've been able to find it amusing. As it was, I was going to spend at least an hour scrubbing at my skin, until some of the guilt started to fade.

11.

Reagan

Sitting across from Mary and Jim Stovall in a simple white dress, no one would've ever assumed that I'd done the things I'd done the night before. I was professional but dressed for the weather. With my hair pinned up in a bun and just a touch of makeup to hide my hangover, I was putting my best foot forward meeting my new employers. I was even relaxed and having a nice time.

It helped that Mary and Jim were sweethearts. They were just a bit older than my parents would've been and clearly over the moon for each other. They'd insisted on feeding me dinner and having wine at their massive kitchen island while talking about what I'd be required to handle.

As a personal chef in LA, I'd seen and done almost everything. Mary and Jim were going to be a cakewalk. Neither of them had any dietary restrictions, but they kept their granddaughter half the week and she was allergic to several things. We talked them over and I made notes, already planning meals in my head.

Their house was just outside of town, a new build that would've been pretentious if not for Mary's warmth. Their kitchen was a chef's dream. My fingers were twitching to touch everything and find out what was hidden in the drawers. The two subzero fridges and hidden walk-in pantry that had been professionally organized made my toes curl. I was beyond eager to get started.

Mary patted my hand, drawing me back to the conversation, and grinned. "You're practically vibrating. I've never seen anyone so excited about a kitchen before."

I looked around again and sighed. “It’s just so perfect. I worked as a personal chef for the executive suite in a company in LA and it was cushy, I won’t lie, but the kitchen was cramped. I can make magic in this kitchen.”

Jim’s laugh boomed through the kitchen, filling every nook and cranny with happiness. “We require much less than magic, I promise. I’m just so glad everything lined up the way it did. It’s not easy to find personal chefs in Lunar, New Mexico, believe it or not. You arrived right at the perfect time. Especially now that our little Iris will be here during the days now that school is out. She’s either with Mary or Kathy, her nanny, but if they don’t have to be responsible for feeding her, it’s so much easier.”

“What Jim isn’t telling you is that I nearly killed us all last year. I tried to make one of my mom’s recipes. Polk salad...apparently, there’s a method to cooking it or it’s not safe to eat.” She gave a dramatic sigh. “That’s not the only time, either.

I hid a giggle behind my hand. “Well, I’ll take care of everything. I’ll have breakfast ready before you head to work every morning, Jim, and I’ll prepare fresh meals whenever you and Iris are ready for them during the day, Mary.”

“And you can leave dinner with reheating instructions. I refuse to let you stay here all day long. You’re young; you need to be out living.”

I scrunched up my nose but didn’t say anything. They didn’t need to know that I’d gladly stay hidden in their kitchen day after day if it meant I could avoid the living I’d done the night before.

A beep sounded through the house and a childish giggle followed. Mary smiled brightly. “That’ll be Iris. We had Jenny bring her over so you could meet her.”

I stood up and put my wine down, eager to meet the little girl who seemed to own the hearts of the kind couple behind me. When she sprinted into the

kitchen, I immediately saw why they were wrapped around her finger. She was beautiful, with a smile so wide, it should've hurt.

Iris' dark, curly hair and dark eyes, combined with her olive skin, were familiar, but I couldn't place why. Not until I heard Theo's voice coming closer, the deep tenor lowered as he spoke to a person I couldn't see yet. And then I saw her. Jenny. Jim and Mary's Jenny was *my* Jenny. Not that I would, or could, really claim the woman, but as much as she'd filled my nightmares as a teenager, I felt like I had some claim on her.

Theo trailed in behind her, his head lowered as he finished what he was saying to her. His hand rested on her back, all traces of the man I'd spent the night with gone.

My stomach twisted painfully, but I somehow managed to keep my composure, despite the storm raging in my head. Was Theo married? Was he married to *Jenny*? That would've come up the night before, surely. Why was he there, touching her? The girl, the beautiful Iris, she was definitely his. He had a kid. He had a kid *with Jenny*.

"Come here, silly girl. Give Grandma a hug." Mary scooped the girl into her arms and then turned to face me. "This is Reagan, Iris. She's going to be working here from now on. She's going to make sure that Grandma doesn't burn any more dinners."

Iris, who was probably a year younger than Posie, lit up. "That's amazing!"

I kept my face turned away from Theo and smiled at his daughter. "I'm famous for my pancake towers, and Grandma says that pancakes are one of your favorites."

"Pancake tower?!"

I nodded, feeding into her excitement. "A whole tower. Taller than you!"

“Whoa!”

Jim moved around and drew my attention to Jenny, who was staring at me like she'd just stepped in something that wouldn't wash off anytime soon. Jim clasped her on the shoulder and smiled kindly at her. “Do you know Jenny? And Theo? They're Iris' parents. This is a small town, but I know you said you'd been gone for a while.”

Jenny smirked. “We know Reagan. We all graduated together.”

Jim seemed to think that was a great thing. “Look at that! Mary and I married after Jenny had already graduated, so I wasn't around for that time, unfortunately. It's amazing that you all already know each other. This will be seamless.”

I could feel Theo's eyes on me, but I wasn't looking at him. I didn't care if my life depended on it. I kept my eyes on Jim and smiled politely. “It'll be great. I promised my nieces I'd be home to read them bedtime stories tonight, so I should get going.”

“I'm sure they're ready to claim all your time now that you're back home. I understand. Do you want me to box up anything for you to take with you? You didn't get to try the pie.” Mary put Iris down and rushed towards the pie. “It's from Landings.”

I laughed easily like I wasn't freaking out inside. “Of course, thank you. Thank you both so much for dinner. It's been so nice meeting you. And you, Iris. I can already tell that we're going to have a lot of fun making pancake towers.”

Jenny made a disbelieving sound from behind me, and of course, Theo was silent. My blood slowly started boiling. Nothing was any different. It was like we were all in high school again. Only, I wasn't a dorky kid who was silly enough to think men were worth it at all costs.

“You’re sure you’ll be ready to start on Wednesday? If you need a few more days to settle in, I understand.”

I touched Jim’s arm, finding the older man’s thoughtfulness nearly enough to make me emotional. He was nothing like my father, but he was fatherly enough to hit me in my heart. “I’ll be good to start. Thank you. After not working for two weeks, I’m beyond ready. Plus, with this kitchen, you’re lucky I’m not begging to start right now.”

He laughed his big laugh and squeezed my hand. “Be careful what you wish for.”

12.

Reagan

It took another five minutes for me to get out of the Stovall's house, and when I finally did, I had leftovers and half a pie with me. I stopped myself from running because I didn't want to look insane to the people hiring me, but it took everything in me. I needed to be away from Jenny and Theo as fast as possible. My stomach was rolling painfully and I wasn't convinced that I wasn't going to throw up.

I carefully sat the food boxes down in the passenger seat and then walked around to my door, feeling slightly more unhinged the longer it took. When I grabbed the door handle and tried to open the door, just to find it held closed by a massive hand braced over my head, I nearly screamed.

"Can we talk?" Theo's voice was just as low as when he'd been talking to Jenny and it made me want to punch him in the throat.

Without looking at him, because I wasn't sure I could, I shook my head. "I've got to get home to the girls."

"I know for a fact that Piper and Posie will be awake for another three hours. Russ is shit at bedtimes." Theo blew out a heavy sigh that ruffled the hairs at the back of my neck. "I'm not with Jenny. I didn't cheat. I don't cheat. Last night wasn't that."

I cringed away from him, not wanting to hear anything. "It's fine. I just need to get home."

"We've been divorced for almost four years. Nearly all of Iris' life."

I swallowed the desire to vomit. "When did you get married?"

His hand balled into a fist in front of my face, where it rested on my car. "A few months after graduation."

I squeezed my eyes shut, not wanting to see any part of him. Whether it made sense or not, a heavy feeling of betrayal slammed through me. He'd married the girl who'd done everything in her power to ruin my life. Tears burned my eyes and I sank my teeth into my lip hard to stop them. I was not going to cry over milk that'd spilled ten years ago. No matter how much that spilled milk stung.

Jenny's voice called out from the front of the house. "Theo? Come in, hon."

He swore and lightly touched my back. "I want to talk, Rea."

The second he gave me space, I pulled the door open and slipped into the car. Shutting and locking the door, I didn't look back to see if he was still standing there as I drove away.

I sped on the highway back into town, desperate to get away from Theo and the weirdly happy divorced family I'd just been with. If I hadn't been feeling awful enough about sleeping with the guys, Theo had just put the final nail in the coffin. He'd married Jenny Bokker months after she'd spread vicious stories about me.

That night we'd spent together, the night I'd lost all of my virginites to them, I'd been hopeful. I'd thought maybe they liked me. When Jenny amped up her campaign against me, they hadn't spoken up for me. They'd denied that they'd ever touched me and made me feel like absolute shit, like I was a pathetic loser. Jenny had sent me running from Lunar as fast as possible, before I was supposed to go. I'd missed an entire summer with my parents that I was never able to get back.

The fact that Theo knew all of that and married her? It hurt. Russ not telling me hurt, too. He was so protective of his friends after that night. He didn't tell me anything about them. After the way he'd willingly left me with

them the night before, I assumed he was over his weirdness, but if I didn't get a hold on my anger, I was going to give him all the reasons in the world to be paranoid again.

A sudden image of my brother, Lisa, and the girls at the lake house Russ shared with the other guys struck me then and my brain included Theo with Jenny and Iris. I could so easily picture Jenny and Lisa hanging out on the dock while the girls played and the guys stood around drinking. I had no idea if that was something they did, but it was all too easy for my brain to assault me with it.

I couldn't believe I'd slept with him again. All of them! They all knew. The slow realization that I knew nothing about the guys settled over me and I nearly hyperventilated when I thought about who they might've married. Were they still married? Did they have kids? Was I repeating the same mistake that had sent me running from LA, in an even worse fashion?

Unfortunately, it was only the sound of a police siren and the bright flashing lights behind me that snapped me back to the present and kept me from completely coming unhinged. I glanced down at my speed and groaned as I slowed down and pulled over on the side of the highway. Swearing under my breath, I grabbed my license and registration and pressed my head back into the headrest, contemplating the fact that maybe I was just having such an emotional response because I was hungover and tired and coming out of a bad relationship. It was a lot.

When I saw movement at my window, I rolled it down and sat up straighter. "Sorry, officer. I didn't realize I was speeding until I saw your—"

Leaning down with one hand on my window, a snug uniform stretched across his chest and arms, August stared in at me with his eyebrows raised. "In a hurry, Rea?"

I opened my mouth and then snapped it shut because I didn't know what to say. It was whiplash to go from silently ranting about Theo to looking at August in a tight police uniform. My tongue felt heavy and way too wet for me to speak in that moment. I'd let him do really explicit things to me the night before and I hadn't prepared for what to say when I saw him next.

He reached in and took my license and registration from me before standing up and tapping the roof of my car. "Give me just a minute."

I frowned as I adjusted the rearview mirror so I could see him walk back to his Bronco and get inside. He did something for a couple of minutes and then slowly walked back towards me, his strut too powerful and sexy for anyone's good.

Back at my side, he bent over until we were eye to eye and handed me back my things. "Is there a reason you were driving like a bat out of hell?"

I noticed again how deep the green of his eyes was. Frustrated at myself, I looked away and sighed. "I didn't realize I was speeding that much. I'm just heading back to Russ'."

"I feel like I may need to keep an eye on you, Reagan. Speeding, stealing clothes in the middle of the night, sneaking out. You seem to have picked up some bad habits in the big city."

My face betrayed me, turning hot under his gaze. I gripped the steering wheel tighter and shook my head. Before I could think of what to say, his phone rang and he glanced down at it, a smirk twisting his mouth. I bit back the need to ask if it was his wife or girlfriend. I didn't want to sound insane, despite feeling that way.

August held my gaze as he brought the phone up to his ear. "What's up, Theo?"

I gritted my teeth and looked away.

“Funny. I’m looking at her right now. She’s in the middle of getting a speeding ticket.” August laughed, the sound giving the same sensation as a velvet blanket over freshly shaved legs. It felt indulgent. “Oh, yeah, like a fucking getaway driver.”

Forcing myself to meet his amused eyes, I frowned. “Can I go?”

He ripped a ticket out of a notepad and grinned while he handed it to me. “Now you can. Drive safe, Rea.”

I stared at the ticket and shook my head, shocked that he was really going to ticket me.

“You can come see me at the station if you want to talk about that.” With a wink, he straightened and walked back to his truck, still talking to Theo.

13.

Reagan

I managed to avoid the guys again until the next afternoon. I was the only adult in the household that wasn't busy yet, so Russ tasked me with picking up the girls from their summer program at the school. I'd spent the entire day wallowing around the basement, pretending to unpack while I mostly stared at the tens of texts on my phone from my married ex and thought about Theo being married to Jenny. Needless to say, I was glad to escape the house.

Since I was just picking the girls up and going straight back home, I didn't bother changing out of my pajamas. My hair was still in messy braids that hadn't ever ventured into cute messy territory. I was scrubbed free of makeup, but I was pretty sure my lips were stained red from the cupcake I'd eaten that definitely didn't belong to me.

I remembered the pickup line from when Russ and I had been young enough to be picked up by our mom. It was always backed up, no matter the fact that Lunar wasn't a big town. It always had at least one mother who was seconds from screaming her face off, and another mother eager and ready to put the first one in her place, at any cost. It was a mom eat mom world with a few terrified fathers thrown in. And me.

I waited patiently to pick up Piper and Posie because I wasn't a demon, and when I got to the front of the line in my small, eco-friendly car, I smiled politely at the teacher in charge of directing the students to their rides and told her I was picking up my nieces. She seemed stressed beyond measure and spoke into a headset that reminded me of a boyband singer from my childhood.

"You're not on the list." The fear in the woman's eyes told me she expected me to bite her head off.

I was a cool, calm aunt. I didn't freak out. I just kept smiling, not realizing that I probably looked like a crazed kidnapper trying to get kids of my own. My PJs and braids didn't read collected and mature aunt who would be put in charge of other human lives. "Is there a way you can check again? My brother, Russ James, told me he'd added me."

She started to shake her head but stopped when someone called her name from behind. She turned and I watched as her face relaxed into pure bliss as she watched what could've been a scene from *Baywatch*. Charlie, dressed in gym shorts and a sleeveless shirt that clung to his chest with sweat, jogged towards us in what had to be slow motion. It felt like the entire pickup line calmed down and grew more anxious all at once.

He even brushed his hair out of his face with a big grin that showed his deep dimples and made his eyes sparkle as he approached and looked at me. "I'm sorry, Ms. Gorman. Russ asked me to take care of it, but I got caught up with the kids. Reagan is cleared to pick up Piper and Posie whenever."

Seeing Charlie keep his eyes on me, Ms. Gorman suddenly seemed less afraid of getting shouted at. As she looked back at me, she frowned and then tapped her headset. "Send out Piper and Posie James, please."

"Thanks. Sorry, again. It slipped my mind completely." Charlie finally looked at her and smiled, though the charm was dimmer if I wasn't mistaken. "Don't let us get in your way. I'm going to chat with Reagan until the girls get out here."

Oh, it was official. Ms. Gorman fucking hated me. I watched as she promised death with her gaze and walked to the SUV behind me. Wincing, I gave a small shudder as I hoped to never find myself alone with the woman in a dark alley.

Charlie opened my car door and squeezed his big frame in. Without a

second of hesitation, he reached over and tugged at one of my braids. “You used to wear these things all the time. I don’t remember them being quite so wild, though.”

I batted his hand away and scoffed. Running my hands down my braids in an attempt to straighten them, I made the mistake of engaging with him. “I wasn’t expecting to see anyone. I don’t remember the pickup line being a social hour.”

He rested his head on the headrest and watched me. “Oh, it’s not. This thing could turn into a bloodbath any second. I’ve seen less violent professional football games.”

I bit my lip to stop a grin and looked away. “I don’t want to keep you from whatever you were doing.”

Seemingly unable to help himself, Charlie played with the end of my braid. “Forcing a bunch of teenagers to lift weights? I like it much better here. Smells so much nicer.”

I tried to bat his hand away again, but he caught my hand and held it against his hard thigh while tugging my braid with his other hand. I huffed out a sigh that made him grin. “What?”

“You’re still just as fucking cute as you’ve always been. I guess I just assumed life would’ve knocked some of the sweetness out of you by now, but I don’t think it has.” He glanced back at the school and squeezed my hand. “Girls are coming.”

My heart sped up as I searched his face. I hadn’t expected him to say anything like that. I wasn’t sure what to make of it.

Charlie leaned closer and ran his thumb over my lips before smiling. “You can keep my shirt if you’ll promise to wear it every so often.”

“Uncle Chip! Aunt Rea!” The girls’ excited squeals broke the moment.

Charlie left me stupefied in the car as he helped get the girls inside. I had to shake myself and spin in my seat as we both fought to figure out how to get both girls in their booster seats in my minuscule backseat. Every time our hands brushed against each other, I knew my face was going red.

“So, girls. Are you ready to lose your socks at poker night?” Charlie hesitated after we got the girls in safely.

Piper let out a growl. “You’re going down, Uncle Chip! Daddy’s been showing us how to win.”

I stared at them. “Should I be worried that my brother has started a child gambling ring?”

A car honked from behind us, making me jump and accidentally hit my own horn. The other car honked even longer in return.

Charlie laughed and watched my face as I tried to duck and hide from whatever scary parent that was honking at me. “They’re going to smell blood in the water.”

More honking followed and the girls started screaming back. Piper shook her fist. “You don’t honk at my Aunt Rea!”

Posie flipped the bird with both hands, proudly. “You wanna fight?!”

I stared at Charlie with my mouth hanging open and my eyes nearly popping out of my head. “Oh, my god.”

Charlie threw his head back and laughed like a mad man, even as the honking grew more furious. He slowly retreated from the car and shook his head. “Honestly, Ms. James, have you no control over your children?”

“Stop honking at us, you crazy bird!” Piper turned fire-filled eyes at me. “Honk back.”

I covered my mouth with my hand to hide an inappropriate laugh. I was pretty sure I wasn’t supposed to encourage their bad behavior. “Um...”

“You’d better get out of here before you find yourself in the middle of a war that your nieces are willing and eager to fight.” Charlie leaned back in to fist-bump both girls and growled. “Give ‘em hell, P-dogs.”

I stared in horror as my sweet little nieces started growling back, giving the occasional bark, before continuing their verbal assault at the honking moms behind us. I locked the car doors before pulling away, but I wasn’t sure what I was going to lock to save myself from the hellions in my backseat.

14.

Charlie

Looking out over the pond in my backyard, I slowly worked my arm over my head and stretched the stiff muscles of my shoulder. Sitting with my bare feet on the porch railing, I let my other hand drop down to stroke the soft fur of Jeremy, the stray cat who'd adopted me. I'd gotten a security notification a minute before, alerting me that August and Theo were at the gate and on their way in, but I didn't bother moving from my chair, knowing they'd come straight to the porch.

Jeremy jumped into my lap to demand more attention just before the guys rounded the side of the house. I rubbed his head and nodded to them. "Did the location of poker night change without anyone telling me?"

Theo patted Jeremy before settling next to me. "Nope. We just thought we should talk before heading to Russ'."

August leaned against the railing and crossed his arms over his chest. He'd lost his uniform for his other uniform, black tactical pants and a white T-shirt. "First poker night since the reunion. Seemed right to get a feel for where we are before heading into Russ' house."

"I saw you called me yesterday." I nodded to Theo. "I meant to call you back but I did a few hours of physical training and then passed out. Are y'all worried about me being weird about Reagan? I wasn't avoiding you, I promise."

He snorted. "I know that, asshole. I slept with your girlfriend in the tenth grade and you didn't avoid me even then. I don't think you've ever felt awkward or angry enough to avoid someone in your life."

I grinned. "Oh, yeah. Stacy, right? I was going to break up with her, anyway."

August hit the side of my leg. “We don’t have time for memory lane, idiots. We didn’t get time to talk about Reagan after we woke up and found her gone. Where are we at?”

Theo rubbed his eyes wearily. “Well. It’s abundantly clear that we’re all still attracted to her.”

I nodded. “She’s even prettier now, somehow. Seeing her again was like taking a tackle from the biggest fucker out there.”

“Knowing she’s walking around town makes me feel like I popped a fucking Viagra. I feel like a teenager again.” August looked disgusted with himself. “I’m going insane, I swear. I had a fucking erection the entire time I was writing her a ticket yesterday.”

“I’m pretty sure I already know the answer to my next question, but I have to ask. Have either of you ever done anything like that with anyone else?” Feeling awkward, I cleared my throat and forced a laugh. “And you said I’ve never felt awkward enough to avoid someone. Proved you wrong.”

Theo snorted. “God, no. The idea of sharing a woman with someone else has never appealed to me before or after Rea.”

“So, just Rea?”

“I don’t even know that the idea of sharing her is appealing. I can guarantee I’d never be okay with someone else touching her. Knowing it’s you two makes it okay, for some reason.” He scowled. “I don’t get it. All I know is that the two times we’ve fucked her have been the two best nights of sex of my life. Which is a hard pill to swallow if I think about it too much.”

August shook his head and shifted even farther away. “The idea of possibly brushing against some other dude’s dick during sex makes me want to throw myself into your pond. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t want you fuckers rubbing against me, either, but when Reagan’s between us, that’s the

last thing on my mind. I've known both of you my entire life. For some reason, the combination works."

"To be clear, though, none of us are interested in touching each other during any of this, right? I accept you as you are, but neither of you are my type."

August knocked my feet off the railing. "It's only Reagan for me."

Theo nodded. "I didn't even consider it a possibility. And now that I have, I'll be bleaching my eyes later, thanks."

I held up my hands and watched as Jeremy jumped down and strolled away. "Well, that's been clarified then. Now what?"

"I was serious. Being with Reagan is better than any sex I've ever had in my life. The fact that I'm going to say what I'm about to say makes me the biggest asshole ever, but I don't want it to be a one-off. Russ would murder us all, but she's an adult. I'm an adult. It's impossible to wrap my brain around finding that kind of chemistry and just ignoring it." Theo scrubbed his hands over his head and then laughed bitterly. "Though she hates me, so my declaration might be in vain."

Unfolding his arms and shoving his hands in his pockets, August cleared his throat. "I agree. It's wrong to pursue her, but it feels impossible not to."

I raised my eyebrows and chuckled. "So, we all want to pursue her?"

Laughing, August shrugged. "Seems that way."

"Despite how poorly Russ would react?"

Theo stood up and stretched. "Yes. I'd love it if we didn't dwell on that part, though. Makes me feel less like a piece of shit if I don't keep addressing how much our best friend would be against this."

"Agreed." I stood up and looked between them. "Are we all going for her, then?"

August nodded. "This is a first."

"And if she wants all of us again?"

Theo looked at me and blew out a deep sigh. "It wasn't like it was a hardship."

The thought of being inside Reagan had me swallowing audibly. "No, it was not."

"We can't let it get messy. Russ would murder us, and he'd have every right to do it. We're verbally deciding to try to fuck his sister again." August pinched the bridge of his nose as he considered that. "Jesus. I should listen to myself and put an end to the madness."

"Sure. Forgive me for not being upset if the ex-Navy SEAL drops out of the running. Let the normal guys have a fucking shot, yeah?" I shoved his shoulder, knowing he was feeling shitty and not liking it.

"You make it sound like a competition." Theo looked at us and silence settled over our little group for a few moments before he grinned. "It's been a while since we waged a bet on anything but poker night."

"You want to bet on Reagan?"

"Not like that. Just between us. Winner gets fucking heaven and maybe the shit beaten out of him by Russ and losers clean and stock the lake house for three months?"

I looked from August to Theo and found myself grinning back at them. It was dumb, but betting against my best friends had always been a weakness. I was a competitive asshole, and I liked winning. "Fine by me."

August shook his head and swore. "Fine. When this blows up in our faces, I just want it to be said that I wasn't in my right mind when I shook on this. I've had blood loss to the top half of my body for days."

15.

Reagan

I listened to the guys all arriving upstairs and sat on the edge of my bed, wishing for one of the infamous alien abductions that had been rumored to have happened in Lunar a few times before. Did I especially want to be probed by aliens? No, but I also didn't want to sit across from my brother and the three men I'd let screw my brains out just a few nights before. I knew the abductions that had supposedly happened in Lunar were really just acid-induced trips, but it didn't stop me from hoping. It also didn't stop the tourism committee of Lunar from hyping it up.

Torn between sneaking out of the back like a loser or calmly facing the guys like the mature adult I was, I was already walking towards the back door when Russ called down the stairs to me.

“Reagan! Come on up! It's poker night and Lisa made pizza!”

I cursed under my breath. “Yeah, okay! Be right up!”

With no other choice, I slowly climbed the stairs like I was climbing towards my death. I was terrified of facing all three men at the same time. I also wasn't sure if Russ would be able to take one look at my face and see the truth. I hesitated at the door, considering how weird it would look if I just sprinted back downstairs and out the back door.

Before I could finish calculating the risks, Lisa opened the door and jumped in surprise when she found me hovering just on the other side. I forced a laugh and found myself seconds away from going straight Ashley Simpson on that late-night show.

“I was coming to get you. Pizza's ready. It's not normally a big deal to eat at a certain time, but if poker night starts late, it goes late, and the girls refuse to sleep until it's finished.” She wrapped her arm around mine and pulled me

towards the dining room. “There are also brownies for dessert. Special ones for us girls, since we have to listen to them shout at each other for hours.”

My mouth fell open as I looked down at her. “Really?”

She giggled and patted my arm. “What Russ doesn’t know won’t hurt him.”

There was no way I was eating a special brownie because I was already freaking out. I didn’t need another reason to be paranoid, like being high around a cop who had no problem ticketing me.

“Aunt Rea! Sit by me!” Piper tugged at the chair next to hers, fighting the heavy wooden thing with adorable grunts and determination. When she got it out, she cheered and pointed to it. “I’ll help you with cards.”

I looked around the dining room and glued a polite smile to my face. Russ was at the head of the table, with Posie and Lisa sitting next to him. Next to Posie was Piper and on the other side of Lisa was Theo. Sitting next to Piper had me across from Theo and next to Charlie, with August next to Theo, never too far out of my sight. I wanted to cry as I wedged my way between Charlie’s chair and the wall behind it to get to my seat.

The second I sat down, Charlie leaned closer and grinned. “I won’t lie. I miss the braids.”

I told my hands to stay in my lap, but of course, one of them lifted straight to my hair. Knowing they were coming to the house for poker night, I’d curled my hair and applied makeup. I’d also dressed in a nice pair of jeans and a cute tank top that made my boobs look fantastic. I wanted to kick myself for getting all dolled up for them. It was embarrassing.

We passed around pizza and the men talked while Piper gave me a long version of all the rules of poker. I was thankful for the excuse for not having

to talk to anyone else. I was thinking I might even escape unscathed when I happened to glance up and catch eyes with Russ.

“I didn’t get to talk to you about the meeting with the Stovalls. How did it go? Did you get to meet Iris?”

Piper and Posie cheered loudly. Posie was fast to inform me that Iris was her best friend.

I kept my eyes on Russ and away from Theo. “It was great. Mary and Jim are so nice. Working for them is going to be a breeze. Honestly, cooking for a family instead of a bunch of execs will be a nice change of pace. And I did get to meet Iris. She seems like a sweetheart.”

“Theo raised a good kid. I bet you didn’t know he had it in him. The same kid who used to shove toilet paper in the school toilets and flush until they flooded. Who’d have thought it?” Russ laughed at his best friend. “Let’s just hope that our kids don’t learn our tricks.”

I smiled and looked to Lisa. “For your sake, I hope the kids take after you. However, I had to stop them from fist-fighting a soccer mom in the car pickup line today, so…”

Lisa snorted and nearly choked on her wine. “No!”

Charlie laughed easily from beside me. “Yeah, I witnessed it. Pretty sure that mom left scared. Our girls showed her. No one honks at our Reagan and gets away with it.”

I felt a tingle at the way he put himself in that sentence but brushed it off. “I got to witness a lot of tense meetings at my last position and I can honestly say that I think Piper and Posie would’ve intimidated most of those men.”

“Speaking of.” Russ grunted and made an unhappy face, a clear indication that I should’ve left while I had the chance. “What the hell was up the other night?”

I froze. Pure panic washed over me as I glanced at the kids, wondering if I was really about to be exposed as a hussy in front of them. “What?”

“That asshole called your phone all night long, Reagan. Lisa accidentally took it with us when we left and I heard it ringing all night. I looked later and saw all the calls were from Ben. Is he bothering you?”

I melted into my chair with relief, but it was short-lived as I realized I had four sets of hard eyes on me, all waiting for a response. I opened my mouth to answer, but I didn’t really have an answer. He’d been calling a lot, and texting, but it wasn’t like he was harassing me.

“Who’s Ben?” August rested his elbows on the table and leaned forward. His eyes were intense as he watched me. “If he’s calling that much, it could be considered harassment.”

“Ben is her shitty ex-boyfriend. An exec from the place she used to work. He got her fired.” Russ had gone into overprotective big brother mode and I grew frustrated as I listened to him.

“Russ, stop.” Lisa must’ve read my face because she patted her husband’s hand and cast me an apologetic look. “Reagan is a big girl. If she’s having trouble, she’ll tell you.”

“I don’t want you trying to deal with that kind of bullshit by yourself, Reagan. That’s all.”

I nodded. “I appreciate that.”

After a few seconds, Russ groaned. “You’re not going to say anything else? Is he bothering you? Is he still calling that much? Does August need to file a report against him?”

Lisa sighed and sat back in her chair. “Brownies, anyone?”

I looked over at my nieces. “You two should help Mom, okay?”

Piper sighed. “Grown-ups always say that when they want to yell at each

other.”

Posie groaned and dragged her feet as she stood up and moved away. “They think we don’t know anything.”

As soon as they were gone, I leaned closer to my brother and spoke quietly. “While I appreciate your concern, I have been taking care of myself for ten years, Russ. There’s no need for you to bring Ben up in front of everyone and especially in front of the girls. What if you scared them? Ben is not an issue. He’s a sore loser who’s pissed that he can’t have his cake and eat it, too. Not a serial killer, coming for my skin. Take it easy on the chest-beating, would you?”

Russ scowled. “How about you don’t say things like serial killer and coming for your skin and I won’t panic?”

Lisa came back into the room and handed out brownies. She placed a plate in front of me and winked, but I was too focused on making Russ shut up to pay attention. I took a big bite and chewed, silently worried that Lisa wasn’t a great baker by the taste of things, before going back in on Russ.

“I love you, but you don’t need to panic. Or ever bring up my love life at dinner ever again. Okay?”

He rolled his eyes but I could see his shoulders sinking as he relaxed. “Just promise me that if he doesn’t let up, you’ll let me know.”

I nodded. “Sure.”

Lisa giggled as she watched me eating my brownie and winked again. “Poker night is the best.”

My brain finally caught up to my taste buds and I dropped my special brownie back on the plate, although it was just a few crumbs at that point. Staring at the brownie and then at Lisa, and then at August, I swore loud enough that everyone stopped what they were doing to stare at me.

“What is it?”

I cleared my throat and took a big gulp of water. “Nothing. Nothing, at all. Should we play poker now, or...”

I was going to murder Lisa. I’d consumed most of her special brownie without meaning to and I could only imagine how it was going to hit me when I was sitting next to Charlie and across from Theo and August.

I was screwed.

16.

Reagan

I wasn't proud of how I escaped poker night, but I'd been desperate. And under the influence. It was the only reason I could give for why I'd stood up at the table and announced that I had gas. Lisa had cackled like a mad woman, the girls had giggled because their aunt was talking about farts in public, and the men all just looked at me like I was insane. I felt like I was. I'd walked out of the dining room, feeling like I was moving normally, until Russ called me out for barely inching along.

By the time I got down the stairs to my bed, I felt like I'd been traveling for forty years and all I could do was lay down while the room wobbled around me. I considered looking at my phone for a while before deciding that was too much work. My entire body was tingling and I couldn't remember ever feeling exactly that way before in my life. I wasn't even sure if my body was still touching the bed, honestly.

I had no clue how much time had passed. I thought I'd heard vehicles leaving at some point, but it could've been the blood rushing in my ears. I was in the middle of trying to lift my hand so I could see if I still had all five fingers when I heard something move close by.

Lifting my head felt impossible, so I just sighed dramatically. If something had fallen over, I'd just pick it up later. If I didn't float away first.

It was a testament to how under the influence I was when Charlie's face appeared over me and I didn't scream. I just stared at him. "Hey."

He grinned, his dimples so cute that I couldn't help myself. When I reached up and poked one of them, he caught my fingers in his hand and pressed his lips to my palm before holding my hand at my side. "You're baked out of your mind."

I pouted. “Lisa drugged me.”

“Are you feeling okay?” He brushed my hair off my forehead and looked me over. “You look beautiful tonight, by the way. I wanted to tell you earlier, but, you know, I didn’t want to give your brother a stroke.”

I curled onto my side, around him, and rested my head on his knee. “I’ve never been so high in my life.”

“I accidentally had one of Lisa’s special brownies before, too. That woman is made of tougher stuff than any of us. I felt high for two days.”

I pouted even harder and made a pitiful whining sound. “I can’t be high for two days. I have stuff to do. How do I fix it?”

“Just try to relax. You’ll sleep it off.”

“How did you get in?” I glanced around the basement and then back at Charlie. “Does Russ know you’re down here?”

“Truth?”

I nodded. “Always.”

“I drove down the road, parked, and snuck back in through the basement door. Like a fucking lunatic.” He raked his hands through his hair and studied the top of my head. “Sneaking into your room to see you was something I had to stop myself from doing so many times when we were younger. I guess I figured there was no use stopping myself now.”

I buried my face against the rough denim of his jeans and grinned before giggling. Groaning afterward, I tossed my arm over my face and peaked out at him from under it. “Ignore that.”

He took my arm and moved it away from my face. “Not a chance.”

“I can’t believe you snuck in.” I shifted deeper into the bed and looked to the empty spot I’d made, hoping Charlie would take the hint. When he laid on his back next to me, the bed dipped and I rolled into his side. Moving

away was impossible as my body felt ten times heavier, thanks to Lisa.
“Sorry.”

Charlie tugged me on top of his chest and only grunted in pain when I dug my elbows into his chest while trying to adjust so I could see his face.
“That’s better.”

I was so close to him that I could see each blonde piece of stubble in his beard and a lighter blue starburst around his pupils. I got lost in noticing the details as my head buzzed. “Wait. Did you say you wanted to sneak into my room when we were younger?”

He nodded. “Yes. Starting junior year of high school. The summer before, really.”

I fought through a cloud of fog as I thought back. “That was the summer I —”

“You worked the summer camp out at Big Norm.” He folded his arms behind his head and I was pretty sure he flexed his arm muscles a little extra for me. “You were the best swimmer they had, so they assigned you lifeguard duty.”

“I didn’t want it. I had to wear a bathing suit and Jenny and her friends made fun of me nonstop.”

“They were idiots. I remember hanging out in the yard, playing football, watching you come home on your bike. You’d still be wet from the lake and you only ever put your shorts back on when you came home.” He smiled, his eyes moving over my face as he blew my mind. “It was torture to pretend not to stare and to hide the fact that I got a semi every single time you got off your bike and swung your hair around to look over at us.”

“That was the summer I grew boobs.”

“Yeah, I was aware.”

I rested my chin on his chest and felt my head swimming with a thousand thoughts. “I never knew. I was so awkward and ugly.”

Charlie rolled us over suddenly, giving me a second to adjust when my entire world spun. On top of me, he looked down at me and captured my chin in his hand. “You were not ugly. You were never ugly. You made being friends with Russ so hard at times because all I wanted to do was take a chance at kissing you.”

I swallowed my need to insist that I was ugly and held his gaze. My body buzzed all over, but I wasn’t sure it was just Lisa’s brownie anymore. “I would’ve blown up your friendship with Russ in a second back then for that chance.”

“And now?”

I flicked my gaze to his lips and back to his eyes quickly. My heart hammered in my chest, fighting to expose itself and all of its childhood crush goo. I wanted to kiss him. I wanted to be a teenager and careless again. Drunk, I could put aside my conscience. Apparently, high, I couldn’t. “And now, I know that your friendship is important and I should respect it.”

He closed his eyes and buried his face against my neck. “What if I don’t want you to worry about respecting it?”

My hands were gripping his sides desperately and I had to force myself to let go. Letting out a short sigh, I laughed awkwardly. “For the record, I was obsessed with you that summer, too. You stopped wearing shirts and started working out. I raced inside almost every day so I could go up to my room and watch you throwing the football from my window.”

Charlie lifted his head and grinned down at me. “What would you have done if I’d snuck into your room?”

No amount of special brownie could’ve dulled the heat in my veins as I

grabbed his face in my hands and captured his mouth in a hard kiss. Gripping his hair, I tugged his mouth away from mine and pushed him off me. “Lost my virginity a lot faster than I did. Now, go away. I’m going to be a good sister tonight, Charlie.”

He immediately stood up but he leaned down and pressed his lips next to my ear. “For tonight. I want you sober for the next time, anyway.”

I sat up with a spinning head and watched as he left through the back door; the only tell that he’d been in the basement was my pounding chest and the fading scent of him on the bed next to me.

17.

Reagan

“Ahem.”

I turned around to find Pearl Beerman standing behind me in line at the gas station. I instantly cursed my need for an energy drink that morning. Despite the odd brownie hangover I had and the turmoil going through my brain because of Charlie, I smiled politely. “Hi, Ms. Pearl. How are you?”

She gave me a knowing smile. “I saw the funniest thing the other day.”

It was my turn to check out so I stalled while I paid for my industrial-size caffeine fix and tried to figure out what she wanted. “Oh?”

Pearl slid some change over to Danny, the clerk, and waved a candy bar at him before following me out to my car. “Yeah, after you left the motel, I saw August Lee, Theo White, and Charlie Taylor leaving the same room.”

I leaned against my car and cracked open the can. After taking a long gulp of it, I let out an unladylike burp and excused myself before just going for broke. “What’s it going to take to keep that odd sighting to yourself?”

“Cheesecake. Cookies. A pie, here or there.”

I frowned. “You want me to bake for you?”

“Jonah Newberry likes baking. I told him I’m a blue-ribbon winner. If I take him desserts made by a professional, he’ll buy it.” She shrugged. “Jonah’s a little old, but he’s sitting on a huge payload.”

My frown turned even deeper. “You’re trying to get Mr. Newberry’s money?”

“His money?” Pearl snorted. “I’ve got my own money. He knows who’s been painting the chip. He won’t tell me, but if I get in good with him, he will. I just know it.”

I squinted in the bright morning sun. “Why don’t you just get in good with him without the lie?”

“Why don’t you just get in good with him without the lie?” She mimicked me in a voice that I was pretty sure was nothing like my own. “Because! I’m eighty-four. I don’t have time to get in good with people. I have to get what I need and get out. You should know a little something about that. Not that I’m judging. Those three... God outdid himself with them.”

I took another long drink and finally nodded. “Fine. I’ll bake for you. If you tell anyone about what you saw, though, I’ll go to Jonah Newberry and tell him that you couldn’t bake a cake if Betty Crocker herself was holding your hand and whispering in your ear.”

Pearl narrowed her eyes at me and then grinned. “I like you. I wasn’t sure before, but now I know. We’ve got a deal. I need a pecan pie to take Jonah tomorrow. It’s his favorite, so make it good.”

“Want me to drop it off at the motel?”

“Oh, my god. Have you never done this type of thing before? Of course, I don’t want you to drop it off at the motel. We’ll meet in secret. I’ve got your number. I’ll call you and let you know the drop-off location.”

“You have my number?”

“Yeah.” She made a face. “What?”

I shook my head. “Nothing. Fine. Call me.”

She looked me over once more before inching away. “How was it?”

I drained my drink, burped once more, and met her stare. “How do you think it was?”

She cackled loudly and shot me finger guns before scurrying away. Before I was buckled into my seat, I could see her cornering someone else already.

I left that interaction hoping the next one I wanted to have would go as

well. Driving across town to the city hall, I parked in front of the obnoxiously shaped building and stared up at it. Lunar really liked to draw in people with the alien hype. City hall had been built by a mayor before I was born to look like a large spaceship. It was pretty cool architecture for its time and a draw in itself, but the fact that our town's city hall was a spaceship had led to Lunar being mocked more than once.

I let myself into the front abduction hatch and looked around. Margaret Folly, a woman who'd babysat my mom, sat at a glass desk off to the side of the entrance, and as soon as she spotted me, she screamed and jumped out of her chair.

Six feet four inches of baby powder and blush, Margaret Folly was an anomaly. A sweet and innocent grandmother half the time. The other half of the time, she was a rockstar roller derby skater who screamed profanity and tried to crush the skulls of opposing teams. I'd followed her career avidly, even after moving away. How many other times was I going to get to say I knew a senior citizen derby girl?

"Reagan James! Get over here right now and give me those cheeks!"

I laughed happily and hurried over, hugging the older woman tight and barely grimacing when she kissed both of my cheeks, for sure leaving bright red lipstick marks. "Hi, Mrs. Folly. How are you?"

"Call me Margaret! I'm great, of course. How are you? Besides beautiful. You've grown into the spitting image of your mother. She was a stunner, too." Tears suddenly filled her eyes and she swore, drawing the lone security guard's eyes, who scowled at the language. Margaret scowled back. "Stuff it, Hank. Just because you found Jesus two weeks ago doesn't mean I have to stop swearing. Jesus doesn't mind a few dirty words."

I barely stopped myself from cackling at the horrified look on Hank's face.

Squeezing Margaret's hands, I drew her attention back to me. "Could I bring dinner over for you and Mr. Folly soon? I'd love to catch up and tell you all about how I've followed your skating career and how proud I am of you. Today, I was just hoping to catch Megan if she's in. I heard she was working for the park department."

"Oh! You're making an old woman's day. Of course, you have to come over for dinner. It'd probably be polite of me to insist on cooking, but I've heard all about your skills from your brother and Vince would murder me if I didn't let him taste your cooking." She hugged me tight again and then pointed to a rocket-shaped hallway. "Megan, who is the entire parks department, is the third door on the right. She's in."

"Thank you. I'll call you to work out dinner."

"You'd better."

I walked away from her feeling a warmth in my chest that I hadn't ever felt in LA. Being around people who knew my parents, people who loved them, people who still loved my brother, it made a difference. I wasn't sure I wanted to stay in Lunar because that seemed insane, but it felt like what I needed at that point in time.

The closer I got to Megan's door, however, the warmth was replaced with more nerves. Outside of her office, I studied her name on the planet-shaped plaque and then raised my hand to knock. I just had to face her and rip off the bandaid.

Before I could knock, the door opened and I found myself face to face with my childhood best friend, the girl who'd been there for me through everything, the girl I'd left behind when I ran away.

Her eyes narrowed when she spotted me and I watched her jaw harden. Her thick curly hair was the same bright orange shade it'd been through

childhood and her vibrant green eyes could still make me feel about an inch tall, apparently.

I lowered my hand and offered a slow smile. “Hey.”

She gritted her teeth and stepped around me. “Nice of you to stop by finally.”

18.

Reagan

Megan had run track in school and it was clear that she hadn't slowed down any. I stretched my legs and walked as fast as I could after her. She didn't bother looking over at me. "Do you know how many times I tried to call you after you left?"

I waved to Margaret as we practically ran out of the building. "It was a lot. I know. I'm sorry, Meg. Can we talk? I'd really like to—"

She unlocked a Jeep next to us and started climbing in, so I raced around and climbed in the passenger seat, earning a glare from her. "Hundreds of times, Reagan. I tried calling you hundreds of times. I could tell you the exact number if I was sad enough to look through the diary I kept back then because I wrote it down. The day I stopped calling, I counted the times I tried to call to assure myself that I'd given my best effort."

"Of course, you did. You were my best friend, Meg. You didn't deserve what I did. I want to apologize, but I feel like I'm racing through it right now and you deserve more than that. Can we just stop for a second?"

She started the Jeep and backed out of her spot. "You can talk while I drive or you can get out now."

"I'll talk while you drive." I stared over at her while she pulled onto the highway and couldn't help smiling. Her nose was pierced and I could see more than a few tattoos peaking out from under her clothes. "You look great."

"Fuck off." She glanced over at me and frowned. "Don't try to flatter me into forgetting how awful you were."

"I'm not. It's just an observation. You branched out. I like it."

“Thanks.” After a beat, she begrudgingly looked back over and nodded. “You look good, too. You didn’t grow warts and a third boob like I’d hoped.”

I laughed loudly and felt a small crack form in her wall as she smiled. “I was wrong. I knew it the moment you stopped calling. I knew it before you stopped, too, but I was stupid. I thought I needed to cut out Lunar completely. I didn’t talk to anyone that summer. Russ and my parents only got me to call them by threatening to call the cops.”

“I know. Russ came to me, begging me to tell him where you were. He didn’t believe that you hadn’t told me. You and I told each other everything. Why wouldn’t I know?” Megan sighed and parked on the side of the road. “I can’t pretend to know what you went through. Jenny was brutal to you. I would’ve gone with you in a second, though, Reagan.”

Tears filled my eyes and I stared out the window, embarrassed to still have tears to cry after a decade. “For a second that night, I thought everything I’d ever wanted was coming true. They liked me. I lost my virginity to the guys I was convinced I was in love with, I was convinced that meant they’d love me too soon, and that had to mean that we were going into real life together. I was delusional. To wake up and be slapped with reality was hard.

“No one believed they would’ve touched me. But I was also somehow a giant slut. I was so confused and things were bad at home. It was easier to believe that all of Lunar was bad and needed to be cut out. If I could get rid of it all, I could pretend like it’d never happened. As an adult, I know that’s dumb. I shouldn’t have left you. You were my best friend and you’d been there for me through everything. You deserved more than what I gave you and I really am sorry, Megan. I ended up being a really terrible friend in the end.”

She groaned and punched my arm. “Do not cry. If you cry, I’m going to

cry.”

“Ow.” I rubbed my arm and laughed. “I definitely might cry now.”

“I spent a night in jail that summer.”

I gasped. “What? No way. You were even more strait-laced than me.”

“I knocked Jenny’s front two teeth out when I found out she was marrying Theo. I overheard her smugly telling someone that Theo deserved someone like her, implying that you were beneath him. So, I punched her. Hard. I spent the night in jail, had to spend the rest of the year doing community service, but Jenny will never be able to show her wedding photos without thinking of me.”

I screamed, whether in shock or joy, I wasn’t sure, and punched her back. “I could kiss you. That is the best thing I’ve ever heard. Honestly, that takes the sting right out of the fact that he married her.”

“I was so worried about you. I almost hoped that Russ didn’t tell you.”

“He didn’t. I found out a few days ago when I was standing in Jenny’s parents’ kitchen, taking a job with them. I met his daughter and found out he was married to Jenny all in the same breath. Mind you, this was after...”

“After what?” Her eyes widened and she choked, taking a second to cough and clear her throat before grabbing me. “You slept with him?”

I looked around, feeling nervous to keep it quiet. “I got drunk at the reunion. We all did. And then we all... We repeated history.”

She clapped her hands around my head and screeched in my face. “No! You didn’t!”

I made a face. “I did.”

“Oh, my god. I don’t know whether to congratulate you or smack you for letting them touch you after all that shit.” She fell back into her seat and then

gaped. “Wait! You met his daughter and found out about him and Jenny after doing the dirty? What did you do?”

“What the hell was I supposed to do? I played it cool. He followed me out, did the whole ‘we need to talk’ thing, and I was all, ‘nope’. He stopped me from leaving, but then Jenny came outside and called him in, making sure to call him hon. I got out of there as fast as possible. I haven’t talked to him one on one since. If I can help it, I won’t.” I took a deep breath and scrunched up my nose. “Is it stupid that I feel hurt by it? Because I do. It happened a decade ago for everyone else, but I just found out and it sucks to know that he married her after how she treated me.”

Megan shook her head aggressively. “No! It’s not stupid. He was an asshole for marrying her.”

I nodded along. “Yeah, he was!”

“We should egg his house.”

I met her eyes and we both burst into laughter. When I finally got ahold of myself, I leaned my head against the seat and looked over at her. Reaching over, I took her hand. “Forgive me?”

She rolled her eyes. “Duh.”

I caught a flash from her hand and gasped when I saw a diamond glistening from her ring finger. “You’re married?!”

She blushed, something I’d only ever seen her do once or twice, and nodded. “For a couple of years now.”

“Who? Someone from town?”

“No.” She took a deep breath in and met my eyes. “She’s from Oklahoma. We met at college.”

My smile stretched my face until it hurt and I undid my seatbelt to stretch across the seat and hug her. “That’s amazing, Meg. You’re happy?”

“More than I thought possible.”

“Can I meet her?” I caught her hand and studied the ring. “And her jeweler?”

Megan pushed me away, grinning. “She is the jeweler, so it’ll be easy for you to meet both. Also, part of me forgiving you is that you’re helping me today.”

Before I could gush about her wife being an amazing jeweler, I hesitated at her expression. “What are we doing?”

“Cleaning penises off the potato chip.”

19.

Theo

My shop had been located across a field from the giant potato chip in Lunar since I'd opened it and I'd never once appreciated it. The World's Largest Potato Chip wasn't exactly something that I cared about. Until Reagan visited it, apparently. I'd spent some time there as a kid, getting drunk and fucking off, but I hadn't been there in a decade. It seemed like I was repeating a lot of things I hadn't done in a decade where Reagan was involved.

Just as I was dropping a wrench and wiping my hands on one of the hundreds of shop towels lying around, getting as clean as I was going to get in the middle of a work day, a truck pulled up in front of one of the bays. I was seconds away from marching across the field and joining Reagan at the potato chip, so I didn't appreciate the interruption. When I looked over and saw it was two of my best friends, the two who happened to also be vying for Reagan's attention, I swore.

Charlie grinned in his easy way. "What kind of greeting is that for your best friends?"

I looked across the field and debated the odds. If I didn't go at all, I stood no chance of getting time with Reagan. If I took the idiots along with me, there was at least a chance. Groaning, I motioned for them to follow me. "Reagan's at the potato chip. You coming?"

August grunted. "No wonder you're not happy to see us. I won't take it personal, then."

Charlie was already walking across the parking lot. "We came to take you to lunch, but food can wait."

I considered grabbing a shirt but decided to use everything I had to try to get Reagan to hate me a little less. I fell into step with the guys and watched

as Reagan bent over ahead of us. Even with a field between us, I nearly tripped over my feet.

“Jesus.” Charlie adjusted his pants and shook his head. “That ass kills me. She didn’t have all that back in the day. I liked what she had back then, more than enough, but this just isn’t fair.”

August whistled under his breath. “When I’m not looking right at her, it’s easy for me to feel like shit for going against Russ’ wishes, but the moment I see her, my conscious takes a long hike. She’s fucking stunning.”

I kept my mouth shut because I was afraid of how poetic I was going to start sounding if I started talking about her beauty. I wasn’t trying to embarrass myself. “Lunch, huh?”

“We were going to talk about how Charlie snuck into Reagan’s bedroom like a creep the other night, but I’m busy now.” Without waiting for us, August jogged off, getting to Reagan just in time to catch her as she stumbled off of a ladder.

Charlie swore like a sailor under his voice and looked over at me. “We could’ve been SEALS, too.”

I laughed and shoved him. “Your parents would’ve had to buy the Navy if you’d joined and I don’t take too kindly to being told what to do. Neither of us was cut out for it.”

As we closed the gap between us, I saw Megan Shaw come around the potato chip and roll her eyes as she spotted us. I also watched as Reagan pushed out of August’s arms and went right back up the ladder.

“You gave me a ticket. I don’t want to talk to you.” Reagan looked back as she noticed me and Charlie. “No.”

I moved around the ladder and gripped it while holding her unsure gaze. “No? That’s harsh. You haven’t even heard what we were going to say.”

She climbed up another foot and my heart clenched with a panic close to what I felt when I watched Iris being daring. Her face was stubborn as she stretched out with a rag that dripped on me. “I don’t need to hear what you have to say, Theo. If there’s anything pertinent that you think someone should know, you should tell Jenny. Hon.”

I gritted my teeth, but there was nothing I could do to change the fact that I’d married Jenny. The stupid teenage mistake had given me Iris, so I couldn’t be sorry for it. “Sounds like you might want to talk about it.”

“Nope.” She scrubbed at a particularly well-drawn penis and then stopped to glare down at me. “It just really shows me how little you cared about me, even as a person. That’s okay, though. It doesn’t matter. We’re just parts of Russ’ life to each other.”

She jumped off the ladder, scaring the hell out of me, and disappeared around the side of it. I braced my hands on the ladder and scowled down at my boots. I’d been inside her less than a week ago and she’d really just called me nothing more than an acquaintance.

Frustration built in me, but I stomped it down. My entire life was a practice in stomping my feelings down. Racing had helped before Iris had come along, but I didn’t take chances with my life anymore, not when there was a little girl who needed me. Without that outlet, though, things were harder. The first time I’d felt truly relaxed had been when I was with Reagan.

She came back around the chip and stopped in front of the ladder, just a foot away from me. With her eyes on her own feet, she spoke quietly. “I’m sorry. That was rude. Whether you ever considered me a friend or not, I thought of you as a friend.”

Before I could respond, she was gone again, the scent of her strawberry shampoo lingering. Feeling like I’d just been punched in the gut, I dragged in

a shaky breath and scrubbed my face. I wasn't sure what got to me more, her pure heart and kindness or the fact that she thought she'd never mattered to me.

Charlie walked over to me from where he'd been talking to Megan and clapped a hand on my shoulder. "All good?"

I met his concerned eyes and took a second to shake my moroseness off before nodding and grinning. "Guess we're cleaning a potato chip?"

August appeared next to us with a rag and a frown on his face. "This is pathetic."

Reagan walked around him and sent me a shy smile before grinning back at Megan. "And you were worried that this would take up your whole day. This is going to take no time at all."

Megan scoffed and thrust a wet rag at Charlie. "Well, normally the dream team doesn't show up to help me. If I'd known that I just needed to get a cute, single woman around to attract help, I'd have done this ages ago."

I gripped the ladder harder to keep from reaching out to touch the sexy blush on Reagan's cheeks. When she stepped up again, it put us face to face and I watched as her eyes searched my face, hesitating on my mouth before she looked away. More of my darkness faded with the knowledge that she wasn't immune to me. I had a chance.

Charlie started scrubbing a spot a few feet away, his grin permanent. "I don't think any woman would've worked, Megan. Any future plans will need to include Rea, unless there's another dream team you'd like to have show up."

Reagan made a sound of embarrassment from above but kept her lips sealed.

Megan tossed me a rag that I barely caught and raised her eyebrows. "Less

gawking at my best friend and more cleaning, bike boy.”

I walked around to the other side of the ladder, placed a solid hand on Reagan’s waist so I’d be able to stop her if she wobbled, and started cleaning.

“Good thing that I can multi-task.”

20.

Reagan

“I’ve got to meet with Kara. That was her on the phone. Apparently, the contractor who’s handling the work on our bathroom isn’t understanding what she wants.” Megan rolled her neck and looked to the guys. “I’m assuming that the three of you will fight to the death over who will drive Rea home.”

I groaned. “Go. You’ve done enough. Dinner soon?”

“Once Kara hears about today, she’ll probably have the wedding china out tomorrow morning.”

I hugged her tight and held on. “Thank you.”

She gagged and pushed me away. “Too much emotion. If you make me cry, I’ll be forced to make things awkward.”

Charlie wrapped his arm around my shoulders and pulled me into his side. “We’ll take care of her. Tell Kara I said hi.”

After Megan was gone and I found myself alone with Charlie, August, and Theo, I didn’t know what to do with myself. The potato chip was clean, the area around it was picked up, there was nothing else to do.

“We were going to grab lunch before we decided to help clean. Want to come along?” Charlie looked down at me and those dimples showed as his eyes roamed my face. “Breathe, Rea. It’s just us.”

“I’m breathing.”

August pulled me out of Charlie’s arms and easily lifted me over his shoulder. When I let out a surprised yelp, he just chuckled and patted my ass. “There. Now you don’t have to panic and fret for the next ten minutes about what you should or shouldn’t do.”

I hung down his back with his ass in my face and decided that even though it was ridiculous of him to toss me over his shoulder like I was a sack of potatoes at the potato chip factory, the view was pretty nice. “What if I’m not hungry?”

“Everyone’s always hungry for a piece of pie from Sophie’s.” Sophie’s being Landings’ only competitor.

I cursed at the mention of pie. I’d forgotten all about Pearl’s pie. “I just remembered I need to get home and bake. I’m being blackmailed.”

I suddenly found myself upright, pinned against August’s chest, with three angry faces surrounding me. August had a handful of my ass and his other arm across my back like a steel bar. Even if I’d wanted to, I wasn’t going anywhere. I wiggled with the knowledge that anyone could’ve spotted us in that moment.

“Who’s blackmailing you?”

I shivered as August’s deep voice washed over me, all intense and serious. “Pearl. She saw me leaving the motel and then you three leaving. She just wants baked goods to convince Jonah that she’s a blue-ribbon baker.”

Theo growled. “No. I’ll talk to her. She can’t blackmail you.”

“Not happening. We’ll handle it.” Charlie sounded furious for the first time in all the time I’d known him.

“It’s okay. It’s just Pearl. I’d rather just bake for her and keep her happy.” I wiggled in August’s arms again and felt him harden against me. My eyes widened and I knew my entire face went cherry red. “Um... Anyone could see us.”

August grunted and gripped my ass tighter before tossing me back over his shoulder. “We’ll handle Pearl.”

I crossed my arms and hung upside down silently for the rest of the walk.

When he finally put me down, I distanced myself from them and narrowed my eyes. “I’m only going to say this once. I don’t need protecting from Pearl Bearman. You three had better leave her alone. She’s a sweet old lady. Sure, she’s blackmailing me and lying to Jonah in the process, but she’s not bad. If I hear about any one of you being rude to her, I’m going to be so angry.”

August was the first to break. He let out a loud bark of laughter and then doubled over as more poured out of him. If the sound wasn’t so alluring, I would’ve been tempted to punch him. Charlie and Theo joined him, their friendship shining in the way they leaned against each other and egged each other’s laughter on.

I crossed my arms again and narrowed my eyes, trying to look serious, even though I was fighting my own laughter. “I’m not kidding.”

August grinned at me with tear-filled eyes. “Fine. You scared us straight, Rea.”

“I’m walking back to my car. You three are terrible.”

Charlie caught my arm and pulled me into his chest. “What about lunch?”

I made a face. “I’ll starve before eating with you guys. Jerks.”

Theo pulled me away from Charlie and planted a soft kiss on the corner of my mouth, shocking me silent. “I’ve got to get back to work, anyway. Stay sweet, Rea.”

August glanced at his watch and groaned. “Shit. I need to get home and get ready for my shift. Come here.”

I gasped when August swung me into his chest and tangled his hands in my hair before holding my gaze and leaning closer. Just when I thought he was going to kiss me full on, he turned slightly and kissed the other corner of my mouth. I felt a brush of tongue and saw him wink at me before backing away.

“Looks like you’re the lucky one, Charlie.”

Charlie took my hand and nodded. “Thank god for my day off.”

Even though I was there as it happened, I was somehow still surprised when I found myself walking alone with Charlie, grabbing a picnic lunch from Sophie’s, and letting him talk me into taking a hike with him. I had things to do, pies to bake, work to get ready for, but the trail Charlie showed me was one I’d never taken. The picnic area we stopped at was beautiful.

I lost track of time as I enjoyed the hot summer sun and Charlie’s playful side. He told me stories about his time playing football and I filled him in on my time at college. We laughed, and it was fun, hanging out like old friends. Charlie even kept his hands to himself most of the time. The most he did was hold my hand and it gave me butterflies each time.

When we grew hungry again, we grabbed burgers from Landings and sat on the hood of my car in the city hall parking lot. We were the only ones there and despite the activity of town just a street away, our little space felt secluded and secretive. The sun set while we each shared stories about Russ that would’ve embarrassed him to no end.

My heart felt full in a way that only came after spending a day having fun. I couldn’t stop smiling as I talked animatedly about my first time flambéing something. Charlie leaned in, his dimples so deep as he laughed. It was light and innocent, but it didn’t feel that way when a truck pulled up beside us and I looked over to see Russ getting out.

“What the fuck are you two doing? I’ve been trying to call you for hours, Reagan!”

I patted my pockets, unsure of where my phone was. “I’m—”

“She got lost hiking one of the new trails around Bray Canyon. Thankfully, I was up there today. I found her and walked her back here. She’s okay,

though.” Charlie lied while refusing to look at me. “As for her phone, I don’t have an answer for that one.”

Anger and hurt hit me. We hadn’t done anything wrong. We’d just been friends that day, but apparently, Charlie didn’t even want to admit that. I scooted off the car and grabbed my trash. “Thankfully, he fed me, too, because I was too stupid to take food with me on my hike today. You know how I am.”

Russ frowned. “Why didn’t you tell me you were hiking? You could’ve gotten hurt, Reagan.”

I gestured towards Charlie without looking back at him. “Your buddy saved the day. Don’t worry. I learned my lesson. I won’t be hiking again.”

Russ sighed and ruffled my hair. “Good. You worried me. Thanks, Charlie. I owe you one, man.”

I couldn’t believe how easily he could pretend like I was nothing but an idiot he’d needed to rescue. I wanted to punch him in the dick more than anything. “I should get home.”

Charlie cleared his throat from behind me. “Goodnight, Reagan. Be careful next time.”

I tried not to yank my car door open. “Don’t worry! There won’t be a next time. See you at home, Russ.”

He nodded and looked over at Charlie. “Hey, I wanted to talk to you about us heading to the lake house in a couple of weeks.”

I didn’t hear anything else they said because I started my car and cranked my radio up, desperate to block out Charlie’s voice. It was either that or run him over. I left the parking lot but I didn’t head home. I was too angry to just settle in my basement hole.

Maybe subconsciously, I knew where I was going. Consciously, I was still

shocked when blue lights flicked on behind me.

21.

Reagan

I was fuming when August got to my window and was ready for a fight. It wasn't like me to go straight for a fight, but when I finally got to that point, I let it all out. Unfortunately, August was getting a fight that wasn't entirely his. The second my window was down and his face was in sight, I let out a frustrated scream and basically exploded out of the car, lowered window forgotten.

“Do you understand how infuriating you three are?!” I stomped past him and into the road. “Do you understand how damning it is for someone to be wanted in the dark and denied in the light? I seriously doubt any of you do. Allow me to enlighten you!”

August grabbed my shoulders and pulled me out of the road. “I don't know what pissed you off, but stay out of the fucking road.”

“What pissed me off? What pissed me off is that I left and lived my life for a decade! I was fine. I dated men who were happy to claim me. I dated men who were proud of me. I got over how hurt I was by you and the other two stooges! Then, I come back here, stumble into the same thing with you three, and find myself being treated like a dirty little secret again! It hasn't slipped my attention that the man I dated who ended up being *married* denied my existence less than you three.”

“Okay, I'm sensing one of the guys pissed you off.”

“Charlie! We spent the day hiking as friends. *Friends!* And when Russ asked what we were doing, Charlie made up a lie about me being some dumbass that he had to rescue. Of course, we're not friends, Russ. Of course, I just had to save your idiot sister, Russ. No, Russ, I'm way too much of a fucking boy scout to ever fuck your sister behind your back.”

“Shit.”

“And it doesn’t matter that it’s Charlie today. It’ll be you or Theo tomorrow. You can fuck me like a whore, but the idea that you might be my friend? God, no. I’m sick of it. I didn’t come back here to do the same thing. I’m not going to be that girl. I’m not going to obsess over you guys and accept whatever scraps you send my way. I don’t need you. I don’t need any of you. Do you not see how fucked up it is that you’ll flirt and touch me and then act like I’m no one as soon as Russ comes along?”

“Get in the truck, Reagan.” August took my arm and pulled me over to the passenger side of his truck, opening the door and looking down at me. “Now.”

“You’re going to arrest me for yelling at you?”

He growled and lifted me into the truck. “No, woman. I’m going to have a civilized conversation with you while sitting in an air-conditioned truck in the hopes that you’ll cool off a little.”

I frowned as my anger fizzled out, leaving nothing but sadness. I groaned when tears pricked the backs of my eyes. “I don’t think I want to talk anymore.”

“Too bad. Watch your legs.”

I turned to face the driver’s side of the truck as August got in and slammed his door closed. He adjusted the air vents so they’d blow on me, and I realized that I was pretty hot.

He turned off the flashing lights and pitched up into darkness for a moment before he reached up and punched the overhead lights on. “First of all, no one fucked you like a whore. You’re not a whore. Never were. Second of all, do you want us to claim you to Russ? By the way you snuck out of the room the other night, I got the impression you didn’t want Russ finding out, either.”

I wrapped my arms around myself and shrugged. “No, I don’t want him to know. I have no interest in hurting your relationship with my brother.”

“But?”

I met his eyes. “I could be your friend.”

He swallowed and his hands balled into fists on his knees. “It’s really hard not to grab you and hold you when you say things like that with the sweetest voice, Rea.”

A car sped past us but August didn’t even look at it. I bit my lip and studied the dashboard. “It’s both easier and harder than I thought it would be, being around you guys. I never would’ve imagined coming back to town and falling straight into bed like that. I also couldn’t have imagined that I would still have so much hurt leftover. Being friends with you would be so easy, too easy. I have fun with you. All of you. I don’t trust you, though. What you guys did, I can’t see you without thinking about it.”

“When we lied about sleeping with you, it was all self-preservation, Rea. It was shitty and I hate that it hurt you, but we didn’t know it would. We didn’t talk to anyone besides Russ about it. He’s our best friend and we knew that what we did would’ve killed any chance at a future friendship. I’m sorry it hurt you, though, Reagan. Looking back, I think—”

Growing frustrated again, I cut him off. “Come on, August. I’m talking about telling Jenny it happened in the first place.”

He frowned and shook his head. “What are you talking about?”

“You guys told Jenny. One of you did, anyway. She spread it around and let everyone know that I was a whore. Then, she had fun spreading around that you guys said you never would’ve touched me in a million years and that I was delusional. People called me Single White Female.”

August shook his head. “No. None of us talked to Jenny. We thought

you'd told someone."

"Me?" I laughed. "You clearly don't understand the optics of a woman sleeping with three men. It wasn't a brag. I was instantly a slut. Not even a cute one."

"You didn't tell anyone?" August scowled and rubbed his beard. "None of us talked. Believe it or not, we were pretty worried about blowing up our relationship with your brother."

My pulse raced and I kicked off my shoes and curled my feet under me without thinking. "I didn't talk. If you guys didn't, who did? Maybe it was Theo. He did marry the devil, after all."

Snorting, August flipped up the console and held out his hand. "Theo didn't talk. Neither did Charlie. Foot."

I frowned at his hand. "You want my foot?"

"I'm willing to bet your feet ache after hiking." He impatiently gestured with his hand again. "I need to do something with my hands."

"What do you normally do while sitting here?"

He nodded to a rainbow-colored fidget spinner and scowled when I giggled. "Iris gave it to me."

I finally stuck my foot out for him and immediately melted into the seat as he gripped it with both hands and started digging in. "Oh, okay. Wow. What were we talking about?"

"The fact that you're angry at us for something that we didn't do." August worked his thumb up the middle of my foot and watched as I shivered at the sensation. "We were dumb kids. We should've been better, but we didn't do what you think we did. We only denied it happened to Russ. If we make dumb decisions as men, now, it's just because it's uncharted territory, Rea."

You're not a dirty little secret. You're our friend. You're *my* friend. A friend that I'm exploring things with, hopefully."

I licked my lips and tried to remind myself that I'd been furious just minutes earlier. "I'll have to think about things."

He worked his hands up to my sore calves and I moaned, too far gone in the pleasure. His eyes were hot enough to melt steel as they landed on mine. "Rea?"

22.

August

Reagan's voice was breathy as she answered me. "Yes?"

"Come here."

She jerked towards me even as I dragged her forward by her leg. I told myself to slow down and relax even as I yanked her into my lap and honked the horn with her ass. I crashed my mouth against hers in a graceless kiss that was more hunger than finesse. Our teeth bumped together as we both tried to get even deeper in the kiss. She nipped my lip and apologized, I knocked my forehead against hers and tried to apologize, too, but I was too busy sucking her tongue into my mouth.

Reagan twisted until her knees hit the seat on either side of my thighs and our cores lined up perfectly. Already hard, she broke our kiss as she rocked against my dick feverishly. Her broken moan nearly killed me.

I kissed her neck, biting and sucking all the way down her chest until I got to her tank top. Cupping her tits and pushing them up, I buried my face in her cleavage and growled. She smelled fucking delicious.

Dragging her top down roughly, I swore as her pretty pink nipples were exposed. Ducking my head, I sucked one and then the other into my mouth. I sucked until she whimpered and rocked harder, her fists balled in my hair.

Reagan gasped as a car flew by but never stopped rocking, searching out her orgasm. "S-speeding."

I reached between us and forced my hand into her jeans. Cupping her sex and finding it soaked, I wasted no time in thrusting two fingers into her tight pussy. "Fucking."

She swore my name and dragged my mouth back to hers. The kiss was less bumpy but just as hungry. We were racing towards the end, but I knew it

wouldn't be our last time. I'd be slow later. She rode my fingers and cried out against my mouth as I added a third finger.

"That's it, Rea. Let me stretch this sweet little pussy. Can you take another?" I growled against her ear, lost in a decade of desire. "You know I'm not small. I need you ready. This angle is going to make you take me even deeper."

She nodded roughly, her fists so tight in my hair that I counted on being bald when we were done, but I didn't give a fuck. "Another, please."

I worked my thumb over her clit as I added my last finger and curled them in. She was tight, but she dripped with her need, so I pushed into her without much resistance. Her moans and cries urged me on, driving me to fuck her senseless. I didn't care where we were or who might see us. I was lost in the sound of her pleasure.

"Ride my fingers, baby. Let me in. Show me that you can handle me." I cupped her breast and sucked her nipple again, harder than before, feeling the answering pulse in her walls.

Reagan shook violently and screamed as she had her first orgasm, her body clenching down on my fingers hard, fluttering in time with her heartbeat. "August, please. I want you in me. I *need* you in me."

In a frenzy, I lifted her and we worked together to get her jeans off and my pants undone enough to get my dick out. She tore at my uniform top, popping a few buttons off before I gave up and just ripped the rest of them off so I could give her what she wanted. Her tank top was thrown off and my undershirt followed. Then, finally, I lined our bodies up and Reagan sank down onto my rock-hard cock, taking it all into her tight heat.

I dropped my head back and growled as her walls squeezed me. The feeling was beyond heaven. She leaned forward, pressing her naked chest to

mine, and let out the sexiest moan.

“August, so good. Feels so good.” She raked her teeth over my shoulder and then ran her tongue up my neck until her mouth was on my ear. “There’s been no one else who feels like you.”

I gripped her ass tight and bared my teeth as she lifted her head to look at me. She was speaking to every animalistic part of me. “Say it again.”

She gasped when I lifted her until just my tip was still inside. “There’s never been anyone else who feels like you. You’re so big. I love your cock.”

I yanked her back down, filling her fast and hard, making her scream out. Her words spurred me on, demanding that I give her everything. I wanted to ruin her for anyone else, make her come back to me alone for her orgasms. In that moment, I was crazed enough to want to fuck her so wildly that she’d walk with a me-sized limp to her walk. I set a brutal pace, dragging her up and down my dick harder and faster.

Her nails dug into my shoulders as her head fell back and she thrust her tits into my face. I devoured them as I fucked her like I’d never fucked anyone. My knuckles slammed against the steering wheel, her head knocked against the ceiling every few thrusts, and I was sure I was bleeding from her nails, but I couldn’t stop. Her screams of pleasure and demands that I never stop wouldn’t allow it.

I felt my balls tighten and my spine tingle and knew I was close. Thankfully, Reagan went off like a fucking rocket, screaming my name, just before I lost all control and slammed my release into her perfect pussy.

I dragged her mouth down to mine and kissed her languidly after coming harder than I’d ever come with anyone else in my life. It was different with her. I explored her mouth and took my time tasting her while we both caught our breath and slowly came back down to earth.

Reagan dropped her head to my shoulder after a while and sighed when I wrapped my arms around her and held her tight. “Well, color me surprised by the way this day is ending.”

I chuckled and watched a car fly by. “I’ve had hope since seeing that you were back in town, but I’m a little surprised myself. I’m pretty sure you were yelling at me a few minutes ago.”

She groaned and sat back enough to look me in the eye. Her teeth sank into her lip as she shifted. “I was going to apologize, but I’m not sure I can have a conversation while you’re still in me. Pretty sure you’re big enough to hit something important in my brain.”

“Do you have to go?”

My question seemed to catch her off guard. Her eyes dropped to where my dick was still hard inside her. When she spoke again, her voice was lower. “I guess I could stay for a bit longer.”

I realized the overhead light was still on for the first time and slapped it off before dropping my seat back. Pulling Reagan down on top of me, I brushed her hair out of her face and kissed her bruised lips. “You were saying something about apologizing.”

She sat back up and braced her hands on my chest, most of her face lost in the dark. I could make out her smile as she rolled her hips against me, though. “I can apologize, or I can do this. Your choice.”

I leaned up and took her mouth in a heated kiss before stretching out again and letting her work. “Apologies are overrated.”

By the time I walked Reagan back to her car that night, she was indeed walking with a me-sized limp and was covered in the evidence of our sex. I’d pulled my least effective shift ever but felt like a superhero when I clocked out and went home.

23.

Reagan

I was running on fumes by the time I pulled up in front of the girls' school to drop them off the next morning. I'd gotten home so late after my highway tryst with August and then remembered that I needed to bake pies. After getting two hours of sleep, I'd woken up and used about a pound of makeup to cover up the marks that August had left, marks that I was going to kick his ass for. Then, I'd met Pearl, dropped off the pie, gone to my first ever day of work, made breakfast for Jim, Mary, and Iris, and finally I'd had to run back to the house to pick up the girls since Russ and Lisa were busy.

My eyes felt gritty and I ached all over, but the girls were happily singing in the backseat and the drop-off line was moving smoothly, so I felt like I was going to make it. Things were going okay until I pulled up next to the curb and looked over to see Jenny walking toward us.

I considered stepping on the gas and speeding out of there, but I figured that would be hard to explain to the girls. So, instead, I put the car in park and turned to face the girls. "Have fun today, okay? Try to be good."

Jenny opened the back door and leaned in. "Good morning, girls. Out you go."

Piper made a face at me and then sprinted out of the car, not addressing Jenny. Posie at least muttered good morning before chasing after her sister.

"Reagan." Jenny looked at me and her face pinched together. "Are you feeling okay? You look sick."

I forced my face into something that could be called a smile. "Just adjusting to life in Lunar again. Do you work here?"

"No, they just let anyone bring the kids into school. Honestly, Reagan, you were always so ridiculous. Of course, I work here. I'm the vice-principal."

She tilted her nose higher as she said it like she expected me to bend forward and kiss her ring.

“Congrats. I heard the vice-principal here last year won some big award. Russ told me all about it.” He just hadn’t mentioned it was her.

Jenny frowned. “That was our previous vice-principal. I plan on doing more than Sheila ever could, though.”

Oops. I glanced at the line of cars behind me and cleared my throat. “I should get out of your way.”

“Hey, Reagan?”

I stiffened at the sickeningly sweet tone she used. It’d always preceded something harsh in high school. “Yeah?”

“You’re building a life here in Lunar, it seems, and you’re putting my family in the middle of it with your new job.” She leaned in a little farther and smiled. “It’d really stink if you lost that job, seeing as how there’s no other position like it here.”

I gritted my teeth and nodded. “It would.”

“So, maybe stay away from my husband.” She dropped the smile and put her hand on the seat, showing that she was still wearing an impressive diamond on her left ring finger. “Things aren’t over between us and if you get in the way, I’ll happily put you on a bus myself this time.”

I stared at her, positive that I had nothing to say to her.

“Have a great day!” She stepped back and closed the car door, her face as pleasant as ever.

I put the car in gear and quietly drove back to her parents’ house, my head a war of fury and disbelief. I couldn’t believe that Jenny hadn’t grown up. How had she made it into adulthood just as mean as ever?

I was cleaning up after getting dinner prepped, still wondering what the

hell was the matter with Jenny, when the object of her desire strolled into the kitchen, all grins as he settled on a barstool across from me. My anger at the guys had shifted, thanks to August, but Theo was different. He'd married the enemy.

"I heard you made the best French dip sandwiches that Jim has ever had." Theo wagged his eyebrows. "Could I convince you to give me a few scraps?"

Leaning against the counter across from him, I studied him, wondering what kind of relationship he had with Jenny and her family that he would just stop by in the middle of the day after chatting with Jim. I didn't like the answer I arrived at, so I sighed and grabbed the leftovers out of the fridge. "You're in luck. There was one left. You'll have to explain to Jim why his midnight snack is missing."

Theo picked at the wrapping and frowned. "What's with the sigh?"

Reminding myself that I was a professional at work, I straightened my shoulders and pasted a friendly smile on my face. "Nothing. Should I warm that up for you?"

Some of his good-old-boy charm slipped as he narrowed his eyes at me. "Stop it."

"Stop what?" Still smiling, I gestured to the dip. "It's not super cold yet, but warming it up is going to make it better. It won't take long."

Theo moved fast for such a big man. He was on my side of the island in seconds and had me pinned to the counter even faster. "Cut the shit. What's wrong?"

I pushed against him, but he didn't budge. When his eyes trailed down to my neck, I jerked away, afraid he'd see the marks that August left. "Nothing's wrong. I'm just trying to serve my employer's son-in-law a fucking sandwich."

Grunting, Theo caught my chin and forced my face up to his. “So, that’s what this is about. You’re still intent on hating me because I married Jenny a decade ago.”

“You have a lot of nerve touching me when another woman is still wearing your ring.” I pushed past him when he froze in shock. I grabbed the sandwich and put it back in the fridge, intent on punishing him. “And just because you say it like it’s nothing doesn’t make it nothing to me, Theo. You married the woman who made my life hell, months after she tortured me so bad I left town to escape it. You married the woman who is still happy to threaten me ten years later. No matter how nonchalantly you say it, it’s big to me.”

“She threatened you?”

I braced myself on the counter and looked over at him, disappointed in him. “My job. If I came between her and her husband. Her words, not mine. I have no intention of touching someone who isn’t free, so she has nothing to worry about.”

Theo pressed against me from behind, locking me in with his arms around me. “I won’t apologize for marrying her because Iris came from it. I wouldn’t change anything if it meant changing a hair on my daughter’s head. Let me make one other thing clear, Rea. Jenny and I are finished. We have been for years.”

I spun around and slapped his chest, shocking us both. “Do you really think I want you to apologize for marrying her? You think I don’t respect and appreciate the life you two created, no matter how I feel about Jenny? You don’t get it, Theo, and I think that’s what drives me the craziest. I want you to apologize for not standing up for me, for not caring enough to be my friend. I’m angry that the way she treated me didn’t matter to you. I want you to

apologize for confirming the fears I had ten years ago that I didn't mean a thing, that I was nothing more than an easy, experimental fuck, were valid.

“God, Theo, you don't know me at all. You're chasing after me for a piece of ass, and I can assure you that you can find it easier, and probably better, in about a hundred other places. Just in Lunar. Save us both the drama.” I slipped under his arm and walked to the other side of the kitchen. “I don't want to lose this job. Jenny made herself clear.”

“Would you just let me talk?”

With perfect timing, Jenny strolled into the kitchen, wearing a minuscule bikini that showed off everything and then some. “What are we talking about?”

I shook my head. “Nothing at all. I was just leaving, actually.”

“I'm glad you came over to swim with me, Theo.” Jenny leaned in closer to Theo and trailed her hand down his stomach. “You know how I hate swimming alone.”

With a quick look around the kitchen, I saw it was perfectly clean and I could escape. Without looking back at them, I hurried out of the house and to my car, running away for the second time. Theo didn't stop me that time and I drove away without interruption.

24.

Reagan

Somehow, I made it to the weekend without anything blowing up in my face. Theo hadn't shown back up at my work, I hadn't given August a reason to pull me over, and Lisa had cleared up her schedule so she was in charge of the pickups and drop-offs again. My phone still buzzed all the time with calls from Ben, but they'd even lessened in frequency. I considered things to be leveling out, even though I was still being blackmailed for baked goods.

When Megan invited me to come along with her on a guided tour of Lunar that Saturday afternoon, I was actually excited to get out of the house and do something. That excitement almost crashed and burned when I got to the parking lot where the bus would pick up the tour and found Megan announcing that I was going to be in charge of leading it.

Her laugh was evil when I glared at her, but when the old tour bus pulled up, a monstrosity that was a school bus turned convertible, I decided I was going to have fun with it. Lunar Tours were just weird enough that no matter what I said, it wouldn't stand out.

As we all loaded onto the psychedelically painted, wannabe double-decker bus, I elbowed Megan and shook my head at her. "You asked for whatever comes out of my mouth."

She rubbed her hands together and took the seat at the very front, right next to where I'd be standing. "Can't wait."

With Lunar being home to the World's Largest Potato Chip, previously cleaned by our little gang of goons, and the supposed abduction sites, the tour attracted a weird lot. I looked out over the group of twenty and spotted a few senior citizens with shirts boasting their trip to the chip, along with a few

guys around my age who looked like they were already baked out of their minds.

“Ready?”

I looked back at the bus driver and saw that it was Johnny G, a guy that graduated a year before the rest of us. He’d always been kind to me, probably because he was also always baked out of his mind. I grinned and high-fived him when he offered his hand to me. “Johnny! Hey!”

“Reagan James! Is your brother around. I’d hug you, but Russ still gives me threatening looks.” He winked. “After. We’ll catch up after these alien lovers get their fix.”

I nodded along and looked back at Megan, who was grinning as wide as ever. “Did Russ threaten people? For real?”

One of the older people started complaining. “The paper said the tour starts at nine. It’s two after!”

Johnny laughed and looked to me for the go-ahead. I took over my new position of power and nodded to him before looking over at Megan again. Shaking my head at her, I just jumped in, pointing out whatever we drove past, including things that made no sense.

“The house with the blue door on your left is the house where our co-guide, Megan, got drunk for the first time. There were no aliens involved, but the projectile vomiting was something otherworldly.”

I let go of the need to stay polite and had fun. Megan had to step in and talk about the actual stops on tour because it turned out that I couldn’t say more than someone thought they were abducted by aliens here. It was closer to the end of the tour when we were driving past Landings and I looked over at made eye contact with August. He was sitting with Charlie and Theo at a table outside, each of them lost in conversation.

Feeling slap happy, I turned up the microphone and gestured towards them. “If you’ll look to your left, you’ll see three men sitting at a table outside of Landings. While completely average looking, they are three of the abductees from town. They alleged that during a night like any other, while hanging out in their hot tub, big green men showed up and plied them with beer and tasty snacks, like beef jerky and Little Debbie cakes, luring them back to their ship.”

I giggled as August crossed his arms over his chest, looking unamused. He shook his head as someone snapped a photo of them. “Not funny, Rea.”

Johnny stopped the bus and opened the door, despite the missing roof. “Wanna ride? It’ll be our own reunion.”

Megan grinned and took the mic. “Yes, let’s get three of Lunar’s abductees on this tour. You all can ask them all the questions you’d like. Just be sensitive about probing.”

I bit my lip and failed at stopping a grin as the guys left money on the table for their food and climbed on board. August gripped my hip as he moved past, his eyes full of reluctant humor. Charlie was full-on laughing, his smile easy as he wrapped his arms around me, seemingly forgetting our last awkward encounter. Theo stopped right in front of me and stared down at me, refusing to move until I met his gaze.

“Hostess.”

I scrunched my nose in confusion. “What?”

He sighed. “They were Hostess cakes. And it wasn’t beer. It was wine.”

My grin stretched wide and stayed on my face for the rest of the tour. I watched as the guys played along with whatever I said, and by the time it was over, even the elderly couple were cheering for the act they were putting on.

Johnny parked and stood next to me as Megan and I stared in amusement

as the guys reenacted how the aliens made them play Twister, a game they couldn't win because the aliens apparently had six legs and four arms.

"I can honestly say I never expected to see this. Serious August and Grumpy Theo acting out scenes of an abduction? What did you do to them?"

I cursed my blush as I looked over at Johnny. "Me? Nothing!"

He wrapped me in a hug that smelled like patchouli and mint. "Call me if you ever find yourself bored and lonely, Reagan James."

Megan and I got off the bus first and stood off to the side, waving goodbye to everyone between gossiping. She'd slapped my arm no less than thirty times in her excitement.

"I can't believe Johnny just asked you out. He's cute." She bumped me with her hip. "Come out with me and Kara tonight? I can't wait to fill her in on today. She's going to be pissed she missed the tour."

I glanced over at where August was talking to some of the stoned guys, who definitely didn't realize he was a cop. "I'd love that. And he didn't really ask me out, per se."

"Watch this." Megan waved Theo and Charlie over, ignoring my look for her to shut up. "We're debating whether Johnny G just asked Reagan out or not. He very sexily said for her to call him if she was ever bored or lonely. I'm a married lesbian, but I think I can still tell when a man is asking a woman out."

Theo lifted one eyebrow as he looked at me. "Sounds like he was asking for a hook-up."

"Asshole." Charlie scowled at the bus as it pulled away and then nodded to August, who'd just joined us. "Johnny G just propositioned Rea."

Ignoring Megan's quiet laughter, I raised my voice to be heard over the stupid amount of testosterone pumping out of them right then. "Johnny didn't

proposition me. He was just being nice. He knows I'm newly back in town, so it's logical that I might find myself lonely. He was being a friend."

"Just like high school." August put his hands on his hips and looked after the bus. "Hipster mother—"

"Okay! This was fun! You guys made the tour for everyone." I grinned broadly, doing my best to change the subject. "Thank you. I had fun."

Charlie still looked annoyed, but he was the first to move on. "Want to hang out tonight? We're drinking with my cat."

Megan snorted. "I beat you to the punch, kids."

I nodded and hooked my elbow through hers. "I'm going out with Megan and I'm meeting her wife tonight. Finally."

"It's been like two minutes." Megan rolled her eyes and pushed me away. "Get a grip, woman."

I took her elbow again and motioned to Megan's much larger car. "Megan will give you a ride back to Landings. Since it was her tour that kidnapped you, by the way. I've got a stop to make before I meet Kara for the first time."

It was clear the guys were frustrated, but I didn't wait around to hear them out. The less time I spent alone with them, the better. I practically ran out of there, desperate to get away.

If only I'd kept that same mindset later that night.

25.

Theo

Alone in my apartment over the garage, I was in a shit mood. I'd been in a shit mood for days. Since my fight with Reagan. I'd fought with Jenny right after Reagan left that day, but I didn't give a shit about that. I was used to fighting with Jenny. Just because we didn't fight anymore didn't mean I'd ever be out of practice. We'd perfected the art of hating each other during our short marriage.

I felt like the fight with Reagan had left me jagged on the inside and the pieces kept catching on shit. I felt volatile. I'd broken multiple parts at work and snapped at people too many times to count. It ate me up to know that she thought I'd never given a shit about her. It ate me up to know that I'd done things to make her feel that way.

I looked around the apartment and felt restless. Iris should've been there, distracting me with her hearts and butterflies personality, but the girls had all been invited to a sleepover with another friend at school. It just made my mood worse to not have my daughter around when she should've been.

I paced over to the window and looked out. The moon was bright with no clouds in the sky, casting long shadows everywhere I looked. I knew I should've gone with the guys to Charlie's to drink myself stupid, but I wasn't good company. There was no reason to drag them down. Especially not when August was flying high after spending time with Reagan a few nights ago.

I swallowed hard at the thought of the marks on her neck. I was jealous of my best friend. Of course, I couldn't even be mad at August. He didn't breathe a word about their encounter, but I knew it wasn't Charlie who'd left the marks because he'd pissed her off, too. We seemed to be great at that.

Movement behind my truck caught my attention and I shifted forward. Lunar wasn't without its crime, though it was rare. I was not in the mood to have my truck messed with and I felt sorry for whoever tried that night. As I watched, though, I saw that it was Reagan.

She moved back and forth, talking to herself. She walked towards the door to my apartment and then turned away, just to repeat the process over and over again. In a dress small enough to make my blood boil and heels that wobbled dangerously on the uneven pavement of the lot, she was a vision of creamy skin and dark hair. Even as she clearly debated with herself, having all the potential to look insane, I thought she was the prettiest woman I'd ever seen.

Opening the window, unwilling to let her leave if the debate ended poorly for me, I stuck my head out and whistled. "It's too late now. I've already seen you. Might as well come on up."

Reagan jumped at the sound of my voice and slapped her hand over her chest. "You scared me!"

"I'll let you up." I wasn't giving her an out. I wanted to see her, even if it meant that she was just going to yell at me.

I unlocked the downstairs door with my phone and opened the top door to wait for her. My heart raced painfully until I heard the door downstairs opening. Relieved, I locked the door behind her and stepped aside.

The closer she got, the more I could see how little she wore. The dress was barely more than a dish towel, highlighting her mile-long legs and small but sexy chest. When she moved past me, I saw that the entire back was missing.

"Jesus."

Reagan turned around and looked so damn innocent as she questioningly raised her eyebrows. "What?"

I ran my hands through my hair and forced myself to be calm. “Nothing. You look beautiful. Did you have fun with Megan and Kara?”

Her eyes brightened and she nodded. “Kara is amazing. She’s a jewelry designer. She’s going to design me a few pieces.”

I motioned for her to sit on the couch and sank into the chair across from her. I nearly bit through my fist as the dress showed even more of her thighs as she sat. “I’ve never met her. Megan isn’t really a fan.”

Dropping her eyes to her hands, she seemed to be debating with herself again. Finally, she looked up at me and blew out a deep breath. “She saw what Jenny did to me and heard the things she said, even after I was gone. She drew a very clear line in the sand, even when I wasn’t a good friend to her. You were on the other side, with Jenny.”

I sat forward and rested my elbows on my knees. “I was.”

“You said you wanted to talk. I don’t really know what I’m doing here. I was walking home and I saw your lights on, so I detoured. I’m not even sure there’s anything to talk about. I just thought... I thought I’d try.”

My heart beat faster again. A chance. She was giving me a chance. “Can I get you something to drink?”

Nodding, she ran her palms down her thighs and laughed awkwardly. “An entire bottle, if you don’t mind.”

I grabbed us both bottles of beer and sat across from her again, even though I wanted to sit next to her. “Unfortunately, I don’t keep anything harder than beer around.”

“This is probably best. Last time I got hammered, I slept with three guys.” She met my gaze and we both laughed, breaking some of the tension.

When the silence stretched on again, I groaned. “I guess this is where I start.”

She nodded. "Please."

"I don't know if you remember much about my family, but it's massive. Tons of uncles, aunts, cousins, brothers, and sisters. It's almost scary how fast they reproduce. I grew up in that, knowing that I would just do the same thing. There wasn't money to go around so no one even encouraged the kids to dream of leaving. What would be the point?" I gripped the bottle hard and shook my head. "This shit always feels like a pity party, but I don't mean it like that."

"Just talk, Theo. I'm not judging you."

"It's just that the guys all had something. They had plans. Charlie had football. Russ had college. August had the Navy. They were all leaving and they knew they were from early on. I just knew that I was staying around and that I'd start a family because that's what the family does." I shifted in my seat, uncomfortable. "Then, everyone left. I was aimless. I liked racing cars and bikes at the dirt tracks and I was good at it, but no one thought that was a real job."

"I was lost after just a month of being here alone and Jenny had always been around. She never strayed far away and I latched onto her. I did what I was supposed to do. I didn't love her, but she was there for me, I thought. I proposed, we got married, and we had Iris."

"Who is adorable." Smiling, Reagan sat forward in her seat, her eyes warm. "You made a cute fucking kid."

"She's the best thing that's ever happened to me. I tried to stay with Jenny because I was afraid I'd lose Iris, but eventually, I couldn't do it anymore. She made me miserable. She hated the racing, hated that I wasn't at college like the other guys. When they came home, it was clear that she hated you so much out of jealousy."

Reagan's eyes widened. "Do you mean...?"

"She wanted the full team." I laughed at the expression on her face, finding humor in a situation that usually just left me feeling embarrassed. "Divorcing Jenny is the second-best thing that's ever happened to me. I pissed my entire family off, but it was worth it. Thankfully, Jim and Mary are great and wouldn't let Jenny cut me off from Iris. That's why I'm close with them and go over to see them. They keep Iris during Jenny's time usually and they welcome me over to be with them, no Jenny, whenever I want."

"They seem like amazing people. I truly don't understand how Mary made Jenny." Making a face, Reagan stuck her tongue out like she'd tasted something bad. "Demon spawn, maybe?"

I laughed. "Maybe."

She grew serious as she stood up and moved to stand in front of me. "It's over for you and Jenny? No chance of reconciliation?"

I gripped the sides of the chair to keep from grabbing her. "Not a chance in hell."

"She's just wearing your ring and you're stopping by for swims because...?"

"Can't tell you why she's wearing the ring. Probably just to establish some sort of bullshit dominance over you in her head. And I didn't stop by for a swim. I stopped by to see you and eat a sandwich. A sandwich that you didn't let me have in the end. That was all just more of Jenny's games. The same with her calling me hon like she's referred to me as anything other than asshole in the last few years."

"I can trust you?" The vulnerability in Reagan's face cost me my battle with my self-control.

I stood up and pulled her into my arms, holding her face against my chest.

“You can trust me.”

She slowly wrapped her arms around my waist. “Your heart is racing.”

I grunted. “It’s the dress. Definitely just the dress.”

“Theo?”

“Reagan?”

“Will you take me to bed now?”

26.

Reagan

I was a stupid woman who didn't have a clue what she was doing in the big scheme of things, but I knew that when I'd seen Theo's light on, I'd been drawn to his apartment. In another time and place, I would've ignored my desires and kept walking home, but there was something about being back in Lunar that made me feel a little wilder. I'd already done the craziest thing I could; a little more wouldn't hurt.

Maybe I was even dumber for trusting Theo, but I did. Whatever he'd had with Jenny was over. I could stay angry about a choice he'd made a decade earlier, or I could enjoy the way he made me feel.

The way Theo looked at me never would've allowed me to deny him. He had bedroom eyes on a muggy Monday morning in traffic. Alone in his apartment? They were lethal. Somehow, they weren't the main reason I was standing in his bedroom, watching as he reached over his head and yanked his shirt off. It wasn't even just the wide expanse of tan muscles that begged to be licked. The outside package of Theo was delicious looking and it helped, but I was standing in his bedroom because of the way his heart raced when he held me against his chest. It was because of the way he'd given me a part of himself with his story. It was even because of the way he'd smiled when he saw me coming up his stairs.

It would've been safer if I was there purely for his looks. It'd never been that easy with the guys, though. Each moment I spent with them, I was playing with fire. As I looked at Theo, though, I wanted to burn.

"I can't believe you wore this dress out to a bar." Moving around me, Theo kept his hands at his sides, just looking. "How many men hit on you?"

A wave of need stroked over me and I looked over my shoulder at him. “None.”

“Bullshit.” He moved to stand in front of me and ran his eyes over my face. “I know that every man in Lunar hasn’t suddenly gone blind, so tell me, Rea. How many assholes brushed against you and tried to take you home tonight?”

I licked my lips and stood still as he circled me again. I’d never seen that side of Theo and I didn’t know the rules to whatever game he was initiating, but I could feel his energy, his need to control. My body responded to it like a match to gasoline. “I don’t know. It was crowded. I didn’t pay attention to anyone.”

Theo made an unhappy noise. “I can see it in my head and it’s making me crazy. Anyone could’ve taken advantage of this dress in a crowded bar.”

I gasped when he pressed into me from behind. He was only there for a second, and then he was gone, leaving me longing for more contact. Before I could say anything, though, he was back, walking me forward until I was pressed into the wall next to his door with his strong body pinning me to it.

“I would’ve lost my mind seeing you in this dress in the bar tonight. I would’ve needed to take you before anyone else could try. I would’ve been tempted to pin you to the wall like this, where anyone could see us, and make you scream my name so those other assholes would know not to come near you. It would be so easy in this dress, Rea.”

I shuddered and braced my hands on the wall, lost in Theo’s picture. “You want to fuck me in front of them, Theo?”

He growled against my neck and thrust his hips against me, pushing my thighs into the wall harder. “Not fuck. Ravage. I want to make you scream.”

I moaned, being taken on a trip I never would’ve imagined liking, but

Theo's words were spurring my desire to burn even hotter. "Please, Theo."

He gripped my wrists and dragged them higher, planting my hands together firmly over my head. Dragging his fingers down my arms, he cupped both breasts firmly and pinched my nipples just hard enough to make my back arch. "Don't move your hands. I want them all to see how well you listen to me."

I pressed my forehead into the wall and bit my lip. When Theo slowly pulled my dress higher on my thighs, I felt like there was a room full of people watching him do it. His words were intoxicating and luring me into a scene unlike any I'd ever known.

Theo saw that I was wearing a tiny thong and nipped my shoulder. He very slowly worked the panties off me and when I stepped out of them, I heard them inhale deeply and groan. "You're soaking wet, Reagan. Does showing all of these people that you're mine turn you on?"

I whined out my affirmative, embarrassed.

Theo pressed into my bare ass, letting me feel the steel rod in his pants. "It fucking makes me hot, too, Reagan. I want them to see how wet you are for me. If I wasn't such a jealous bastard, I'd spread you out and let them look closer, let them see how your thighs are slick with your need."

Squeezing my thighs together, I worked my hips back against him. I felt like I was going to explode any moment. Somehow, what he was doing felt filthier than what I'd done with the three of the guys altogether. It was taking me to another level.

Theo stepped away from me and pressed on my upper back until I bent forward as much as I could. He pulled my hips back farther and patted my thighs until I was bent over and spread wide with my hands still clasping the

wall. It felt vulgar and when he touched me from behind, finding my clit and stroking it, I cried out.

“You’re going to come on my fingers, Reagan, in front of everyone. They’re going to watch your juices leak down my arm and they’re going to hear how wet you are when I fuck you with my fingers. It’s going to be messy and they’re going to see everything. After you come hard enough to please them, I’m going to fuck you hard enough that every man in here will know that this pussy is mine. Got it?”

I was almost crying with need. I nodded and swayed my hips, silently begging him to start. I felt like I would die if he didn’t. And when he shoved two of his thick fingers deep into me, I immediately came. I shook and gasped as the orgasm hit me fast and hard. Shocked, I pressed my head into the wall and could only ride it out in silence.

Theo grunted and curled his fingers. “Not good enough. The people need to see you come harder than that or it’s just going to keep going.”

I dug my fingers into his drywall and arched my back, preparing for more. He didn’t disappoint. He thrust his fingers in and out at a furious pace, making me scream his name. The sounds of my wetness filled the room and I could feel it dripping down my thighs. Before I could think about it being embarrassing, a second, stronger orgasm hit me when Theo pinched my clit and I lost my head, screaming and pushing my hips back against his thrusts until my knees nearly collapsed.

Theo stroked his hand over my ass and up my back, practically purring at me. “That was beautiful, baby. They want more, though.”

I didn’t think I could take another orgasm but when I twisted my hips away, Theo pinned me to the wall and worked his fingers into me from the new angle, his mouth against the side of my face.

“One more, Rea. Give them one more. Let everyone in this bar watch you come on my fingers one more time before I bend you over and fuck you.”

My body was sensitive and I didn't think I had another one, but Theo curled his fingers and rubbed his thumb over my ass, hooking it inside me. Something about the sensation and the way my mound was being bumped into the wall over and over again sent me over the edge for a third time that one different and nearly painful as my core squeezed down on Theo's fingers.

He turned my face to his and kissed me, stroking his tongue over my lips and then delving deeper when I opened for him. He shifted back enough to turn me around and lifted me into his arms, never breaking the kiss. Deeper and deeper, we kissed, not parting until we were both gasping for breath. Holding my gaze, he shook his head and smiled. “I need to see your face the first time I feel you come around me.”

27.

Reagan

I nodded and stroked his hair out of his face, happy to slip out of our game and into something more personal. I wrapped my arms around his neck and kissed him again as he walked us towards the bed. He undressed us both and then settled on the bed with me under him, my thighs spread around his.

“I’ve wanted to feel you around me for a very long time, Rea. The fact that we’ve had sex twice before and I’d never been inside you is criminal.” He brushed my hair out of my face and kissed me as he slowly pushed his length into me.

I broke the kiss and moaned as he stretched me and filled me perfectly. I squeezed my thighs around his waist and watched his face twist in pleasure as he finally seated his entire length in me. My heart raced wildly as his bedroom eyes met mine and rolled shut.

“Fucking hell.” Theo braced himself with one arm beside my head and reached down to grip my ass with the other. “I can promise you that if I’d felt your magical pussy milking my cock when I was eighteen, I would’ve stalked you across the country. Don’t move a muscle, Rea.”

I pushed up on my elbows to kiss him and then looked down at where our bodies were joined. The sight of my lower lips stretched open around his engorged cock made me moan and squeeze my walls tighter, apparently, as Theo cursed.

“That’s moving a muscle. Do you work out? With just your—”

“No!” I laughed and then decided to tease him. “Theo, are you going to fuck me? All these men are watching and I’m sure if you need a minute, one of them would step in.”

His face hardened and he clicked his tongue at me. “Watch that tongue, Rea. I know a few men who’d love to help keep you quiet if we need it.”

My body responded to the idea, knowing that he meant Charlie and August. When Theo’s lips quirked up, revealing he was all but reading my mind, I blushed. “Shut up.”

He went up on his knees and pulled me with him so my hips were raised and my top half was still flat on the bed, staring up at him. In that position, he felt even bigger and deeper. His eyes focused on my core as he slowly withdrew his cock and then pushed back in just as slowly. His hand rested just over my sex with his thumb lightly bumping into my clit. He kept up his slow pace for almost two whole minutes before I snapped.

“Dammit, Theo, fuck me!”

His wicked grin told me that he’d been waiting for me to break. He widened his knees and pulled my legs up his chest, so my ankles hung by his head. My own knees pressed into my chest as he folded himself over me, bending me how he wanted me. I almost shouted when he pulled out just as slowly, but the words were stolen from my mouth when he thrust into me fast and hard, hitting deep and jarring my entire body up the bed.

I grabbed his arms where they were braced on the bed around me and opened my mouth in a silent scream as he set a brutal pace, pounding his shaft into me. Theo watched my face, his own twisted in pleasure.

“Fucking beautiful.” His voice was pure gravel as he slammed in and out of me. He shifted, grabbing both of my breasts and squeezing before pulling out and flipping me over. “Grab the headboard and don’t let go.”

I did as he said, gripping his wooden headboard for dear life and moaned when I felt his mouth on me. His tongue worked my clit hungrily before he

moved and drove his cock back into me. The new angle had him rubbing my g-spot with every thrust and I knew that I wasn't going to last long.

Theo gripped my hips hard and trailed his mouth up my spine and over my shoulder. "Give me your mouth."

I turned my head and kissed him, delirious as one of his hands moved around to cup my sex. His fingers rubbed and patted my clit in time with his hard thrusts. I moaned helplessly into his mouth, so close to coming that my thighs shook.

He pulled back enough to watch my face. "Where do you want me to come, Rea? In this sweet pussy or in your hot little mouth?"

Pressure built in my core as my limbs stiffened. The feeling of his thighs slapping against mine, his stomach on my back, the sound of his cock fucking me, it was all so dirty. I couldn't speak, couldn't function as my orgasm grew closer, so close it hurt.

Theo wrapped his hand around my neck from behind and pushed my head lower, using the leverage to pound into me even harder and faster. His fingers slapped my clit once more and when I let out a wild scream, he growled and raked his teeth over my shoulder. "Too late, baby. I couldn't pull out if I wanted to. Your walls are squeezing me so good. I'm going to fuck my come right into you, Rea. Tell me you want my come in your pussy. Say it."

As my orgasm slammed into me, I threw my head back and screamed for him. "I want your come in my pussy, Theo!"

His big hand slapped my ass hard once before he let out a feral sound and came like a fire hose. His hot seed filled me and leaked out around us, even as my orgasm milked more out of him. My body pulsed and shook as pleasure washed over me in strong waves that didn't feel like they'd ever

stop. I lost myself in the feeling of it and collapsed to the bed, still riding out one of the best orgasms I'd ever had.

Theo followed me down and wrapped me in his arms, holding me tight as his seed leaked out and made a mess of his bed and both of our bodies. He ignored it and pressed open mouthed kisses all over my neck and shoulders, focusing on one area that felt bruised.

"I'm sorry, baby. I was rough with you." He stroked my hair and down my side, touching certain spots more as he went. I noticed later they were spots that bore red marks and bruises from his hands.

My face was buried in a pillow that smelled strongly like him, a pillow I didn't want to leave, but I forced my face up and tried to speak, but my voice was hoarse from all the screaming. I cleared my throat and tried again. "I'm really glad you don't have neighbors."

He rolled me into his chest so he could see my face. "Are you okay?"

"I think I'm dead." I saw the worry on his face and smiled what I knew was a goofy smile. "Don't worry. It was a great way to go."

"What I said about stalking you before?"

I nodded absently, so relaxed and limp that I could barely keep my eyes open. "Yeah?"

"I'm going to need you to stay in the New Mexico area. It'll be awfully hard to stalk you if you move out of state now that I have Iris." He pressed gentle kisses to my forehead and held me tighter to his chest. "You can sleep, Rea. There's no way I'm letting you go tonight."

I curled my thigh over his and mumbled. "Should shower."

"Sleep, baby. We'll clean you up later."

Unfortunately, when the sun rose and someone pounded on the door before letting themselves in, I was still just as filthy as when I'd passed out, with

Theo plastered to me in every way.

28.

Charlie

I pulled into Theo's parking lot, noticing Russ' truck already there. It was odd that Theo wasn't already open for the day, but after the mood he'd been in the night before, I figured he was nursing a hangover. I didn't start worrying until I saw a set of long legs climb out of Theo's window upstairs. Recognizing the mile-long legs immediately, I swore and raced out of my truck and over to the fire escape that had to be over fifty years old. Rusted and barely standing, I was terrified I was going to watch Reagan fall to her death.

She stepped fully onto the metal death trap and wobbled unsteadily on sky-high heels. Dressed in the tiniest dress I'd ever seen on her, she was a fucking sight in the morning sun. Her eyes were pinched in worry until she finally looked down and saw me.

"Help!" She glanced down, working out how she'd get to me, and then grunted quietly. "Don't look up right now, okay?"

I couldn't help the smile that twisted my lips. "And why not?"

She glared for a second and then sighed before turning and starting her journey down the small ladder. "I really don't want to be seen by anyone in the shape I'm in right now, Charlie. Least of all, you."

I kept my eyes on her feet and watched her closely, making sure she wasn't going to plunge to her death. "You're always beautiful to me, Rea."

She stopped moving, and when I finally looked up at her face, she was staring down at me with tears in her eyes. "I'm sorry. That was just really sweet."

"Get down here already, woman. I'm guessing Russ came in and you had to sneak out. Unless you'd like for him to catch you like this, I suggest you

hurry.”

She made it almost all the way down the ladder before her heel caught on the narrow step and she slipped. Her top half fell back into my arms as her legs stayed tangled on the steps. Her dress rode up her thighs, nearly giving me an eyeful before she grabbed it and held it down.

I helped her down the rest of the way, biting my tongue against the urge to lecture her for how dangerous she'd been. I motioned towards my truck. “Get in. I'll drive you home.”

She nodded hurriedly and cast one last worried look back at Theo's apartment before racing to climb into my truck. She stayed low and silent until I pulled away from the garage and onto the highway. “Thank you.”

I stole another glance at her and took in the whole picture. Jealousy clawed its ugly nails up my throat at the sight of her. Theo had clearly had his way with her the night before. Her hair was wild, makeup smeared, and I could see beard burn all over her neck. There was also the fact that it hadn't just been the heels that'd made her walk funny.

I shifted in my seat as my dick hardened. Annoyance bit at me. What was wrong with me? I was getting hard at the idea of the woman I wanted getting fucked by my best friend.

“Charlie?”

I grunted in response, not trusting myself to speak. I didn't trust myself at all when it came to Reagan. I kept my eyes on the road and gripped the steering wheel harder.

“I'm sorry.” She lightly touched my arm and then withdrew into her side of the truck. “This is weird. I... It's not okay that you were forced into being my getaway driver from that.”

I parked on the side of the road a few houses down from hers and turned to

face her. “Don’t apologize, Reagan. You didn’t do anything wrong.”

She chewed on her full bottom lip and met my eyes after a while of looking anywhere else. “I don’t really know what I’m doing. It feels like I’m doing a lot wrong. Especially when I’m looking at you right now after staying over at Theo’s.”

“Why?”

She tugged at her dress and shifted. Her cheeks reddened and she was back to looking at anything but my face. “I want things. Things that I have no business wanting.”

Yep, my dick was trying to honk the horn. “With Theo?”

She nodded. “And…”

“August?”

She nodded again and I watched her fingernails dig into her thighs. “And you.”

I reached over and grabbed the back of her neck, dragging her closer to me. Looking down at her big green eyes, I saw them flare with need. Sinking into the kiss, I held her face and stroked my thumb over her jaw, fascinated with her soft skin. When I pulled away after a beat, I kissed the tip of her nose and smiled.

“Good.”

She straightened and scrunched her nose up at me. “Good?”

“Go out with me tonight.” I brushed her hair behind her ears and wiped away a black smear under her eyes. “I’ll pick you up at nine if that’s okay. Where I want to take you, it needs to be dark first.”

Nodding instantly, she leaned forward and pressed her forehead into my shoulder. “My first date in Lunar. What will I wear?”

I cupped the back of her head and did my best to ignore the way my chest

tightened with her in my arms. “We’ve been fucking idiots. You deserve way better than any of us.”

“I don’t want better. I want you.” She stretched up and kissed my chin. “I’m glad it’ll be with you.”

Feeling ten feet tall, I pulled her head back so I could see her eyes. “You’ve forgiven me for being an asshole the other night then?”

“Of course.” She scooted back to her seat and sighed. “I know this is a hard position for you to be in. All of you. I can’t expect too much.”

“Being honest about being friends isn’t too much, Reagan.”

“Is that what we are? Friends?”

I grinned. “It’s part of it. Definitely not all of it.”

“Good enough. I should go. I heard Russ asking Theo if he’d heard from me. Apparently, my not coming home last night has turned Russ into my father. I need to go think of something to tell him.”

“I’ll pick you up tonight. Wear another dress like that.” I groaned at the way it pulled tight over her ass as she got out. I was going to have to go home and jerk off all day just so I didn’t jump her as soon as I picked her up.

She blew me a kiss before closing the door and hurrying away. She ran, still awkwardly, until she got to the sideyard. Then, I watched while laughing as she threw herself over the fence without an ounce of self-preservation.

After sitting there for a bit longer, I headed toward August’s house. I’d been planning on making Theo feed me breakfast, but I wasn’t sure I could sit at his table, not knowing if he’d spread Reagan out on it the night before.

29.

Reagan

“Thankfully, he hadn’t called Megan until after I’d talked to her and asked her to cover for me. He still gave me shit for worrying him. He threatened to give me a curfew.” I followed Charlie up the stairs of the school, wondering where he was taking me. “Lisa threatened to gut-punch him for being a dick and he eventually apologized for the curfew bit.”

Charlie squeezed my hand and shoved open a door that I’d never been through before. It led to a small room with a set of narrow steps that led up to another door. “He’s just worried about you. The shit with your ex really threw him for a loop.”

“Ben?” I scoffed. “If only he knew that I haven’t had time to think about Ben for a second since arriving back in Lunar.”

“Do you think that’s something you’ll do when you do get time?” Charlie paused at the second door, his eyes searching mine. “Think about your ex, I mean.”

The light in the small stairwell was dim, just an emergency light over our heads, but I could still see every bit of desire and feeling in Charlie’s eyes. “No. How could I?”

He nodded once before pushing open the door and leading me out onto the roof of the school. There was already a small blanket set out with a picnic basket and a lantern sitting on it. He let go of my hand to light the lantern and then stepped back to watch me take it in.

My heart fluttered as I did, both touched by his thoughtfulness and excited for the night with him. “Oh, Charlie.”

He stood still as I walked closer, until I was standing right in front of him. A sweet song I remembered so clearly from high school started playing and

butterflies fluttered like crazy in my entire body.

“You deserve to be dated, Rea. You deserve a lot more than that.” He swallowed, looking away, and when he looked back down at me, there was so much warmth there, I wanted to drown in it. “Come on. My sister made snacks.”

I giggled, remembering his older sister. She’d always seemed like a ballbuster to me, which made her both majorly respectable and scary. “Bailey made snacks for your picnic?”

“Yeah, but only after I told her it was a picnic with you.” He saw my eyes widen and shook his head. “Bailey’s a vault. She’ll never breathe a word to anyone. Mostly because she’d rather cut out her tongue than talk to people.”

He sat on the blanket and pulled me down into his lap, his big body wrapping around mine. I sank into his embrace and sighed happily. “I heard about people going to the roof of the school back in the day, but I was never cool enough to be invited up. It was *the* make out spot, but no one wanted to make out with me. Not that I blame them. The braces would’ve scared anyone off.”

“You were beautiful. Even with the braces, the headgear, and the weird, slightly off-putting haircut.”

I barked out a laugh and smacked his chest, instantly interested in the solid muscle there. “One, no one was supposed to know about the headgear. I only wore it to bed. And two, you just called my haircut off-putting!”

“I did.”

“And you’re not taking it back?” When he said nothing, I grinned up at him and rolled my eyes. “Fine. It wasn’t great. You’re just making my point, though.”

“I still thought you were beautiful. Imagine my surprise when you showed

up at the reunion, somehow more beautiful. I didn't think it was possible, not after the image of you I had in my head from prom night. You floored me. It took everything I had not to react in a way that would've made Russ choke me."

I wrapped my arms around his neck and played with his hair. "To my original point, you brought me somewhere special. As pitiful as it sounds, my teenage heart is soaring at the fact that Charlie Taylor brought me to the roof of the school and is holding me in his lap."

"Oh? You say my name like it's a big deal."

I laughed, basically scoffing at the idea that he didn't know he was a big deal. When he just stared back, I stopped laughing. "Wait. You're serious?"

"I was just a stupid kid back then. And I'm just a stupid man now." He looked away, something sad in his eyes. "Anyway, I think Bailey made her famous lemon bars."

He tried to reach around me, but I shifted so I was straddling him, facing him full on. Capturing his face in my hands, I stared into his eyes and searched them, for what, I wasn't sure.

"What?" He tried to look away but sighed and held still when I didn't let his face go.

"You don't think you were a big deal back then? And now?"

"Beyond being the rich quarterback in high school and the guy who almost went pro now?"

I stroked his cheek and shook my head, shocked at what I was hearing. "Charlie, you're the picture of why football is dangerous and how head injuries add up over time if you truly don't see why you're special."

He laughed and wrapped his arms around me, caressing my back. "I think there was a compliment in there."

“I had the biggest crush on you in high school. I’m sure you knew that. All of you had to know I had crushes on all of you. You, though, Charlie Taylor, were the name I scribbled on my notebook the most. And not just because I thought Reagan Taylor had a really great ring to it.”

His eyebrows furrowed. “You’re serious?”

“God, yes. It’s humiliating. If you ever utter a word of this, I’ll cut *your* tongue out. You were so sweet. You smiled at me, even when Jenny and her friends were being cruel and everyone else, including my own brother, ignored me. You always smiled, always offered to help me if I was struggling with stuff. Not just that, Charlie. You were funny and smart. Sure, the football thing was cool, but it ranked like number seven on the list of reasons why I liked you.

“And the man I see now isn’t somehow less than that boy. You’re great.” I gestured around us at the setup and smiled. “Look what you did for me. No one else has ever done anything like this for me. Just you.”

He kissed me then and it was a kiss that shifted worlds. Deep, determined, and devastating in that I’d never had it before. His big hands grasped my face and head, holding me close and I could feel his heart hammering against mine through his thin cotton T-shirt. He made love to me with his mouth, stroking my tongue with slow, steady strokes that made my brain buzz.

I collapsed against his chest when he finally pulled back, my heart pounding out a rhythm that matched Charlie’s. “Wow.”

He reached around me and brought the basket closer. “You stay here from now on.”

30.

Reagan

“And then what happened?” Megan’s wife, Kara, leaned in, even more interested in what I was saying than Megan.

“He fed me. He kissed me like a damn god between bites of some of the best lemon bars I’ve ever eaten. I was straddling him, so I could feel everything if you know what I mean. I know it makes me a giant skank, probably, but I was ready and willing to be screwed on the roof of the school. Charlie is so hot and when that’s paired with intent and thoughtfulness? Just take my panties, already.”

“Charlie is really fucking hot. I can say it because I’m a married lesbian, but if I wasn’t... I’d fight you for Charlie.”

Megan scowled. “Nice. I’m starting to think that Reagan might be a bad influence on you.”

“Oh, really? You’re acting like you don’t reap the rewards of Reagan’s stories?” Kara looked at me sheepishly. “I practically maul her every time you tell us about your sex life. I can’t help it.”

I cackled at the look on Megan’s face. “I never thought being back in Lunar would be more exciting than LA, but it is.”

Kara waved her hands. “Back to the story!”

“That’s the thing.” I shifted in my seat because I was still in a heightened state of arousal, an entire day after my date with Charlie. “We made out like teenagers, basically dry humped for hours, but he never went farther. I practically drew an arrow on the school roof, pointing straight to my vagina, but he just packed up the picnic and drove me home. Like a gentleman!”

“God! The worst!”

Megan shook her head as she looked between me and her wife. “Do you hear yourselves?”

“I know!” I pulled my hands down my face as I groaned. “I really do know. He planned a sweet date, spent the night talking to me and giving me all of his attention, and I’m complaining because he didn’t try to fuck me. I’m awful.”

“No, you’re horny. There’s a difference.”

“I really am. I am having more sex than I’ve ever had in my life, with a caliber of men that I’ve only ever dreamt of beyond prom night, and I am still going crazy. I had to stop myself from speeding through town to find August last night.”

“I’m just impressed, honestly.” Kara nodded to the center of my thighs. “You’ve been walking a little funny, but you’re still running back for more.”

“I’m not walking funny!”

Megan laughed and nodded. “Yeah, you are.”

“Oh, god. That’s embarrassing.” I sank back into their couch and stared at their ceiling. They’d made a point of telling me they were removing the popcorn overlay as soon as possible, but I found it gave me something to study as I admitted what I did next. “I want all three of them. What happened prom night should’ve felt dirty and awkward, but it didn’t. The night of the reunion, even while we were all wasted, it wasn’t awkward. I’ve never felt a connection with anyone else the way I do with them. What does that say about me?”

“It doesn’t say anything about you, Rea. Don’t make yourself sick trying to analyze why you feel a sexual connection with three men. What does it matter?”

I looked back at Megan and frowned. “Why do they have to be Russ’ best

friends? When I slow down, I start to feel so guilty. Russ would murder me.”

“Russ can be an idiot.” Kara shrugged, not caring that she might’ve offended me. “He’s nice and all, but you’re a grown-ass woman, with grown-ass woman needs. You can’t help who you’re attracted to and no one is forcing his best friends to fuck around with you. Don’t you dare feel guilty for living your best life.”

Megan stroked her wife’s hair and grinned. “Okay, bring it back a bit. You are doing something that you know would upset Russ. He’s overbearing, but he has his reasons, I’m sure. I’m not saying beat yourself up over it. I’m just saying to keep it in mind while making decisions. I wouldn’t let the cat out of the bag unless I knew I was adopting that fucking cat and already had papers and a litter box if you know what I mean.”

“Papers and a litter box?”

She raised her hands. “A proposal and a house? I don’t know. It just worked.”

“You expect me to get a proposal and a house? Are you out of your mind?” My stomach flipped just thinking about it.

“I expect you to be serious about them before letting Russ find out. That way, the trouble would be worth it.”

I looked back up at the ceiling and thought of the men. Frustratingly, my body instantly responded. I was going to jump Charlie when I saw him.

“Go on. You’re vibrating like a dog in heat. Go and find your men.” Megan rolled her eyes but stood up to hug me. “Have fun.”

“My dad used to tell my brothers to not be silly and wrap their willy. So. I’ll pass that to you. Don’t be silly; wrap the willy.” Kara saw the look on my face and shook her head, even as a devious smile stretched across her face. “You little hussy.”

“I’m on the pill!” I groaned and backed away. “Don’t judge me. Or maybe do judge me. I need something to snap me out of my male induced stupor.”

“How about the fact that the pill isn’t one hundred percent affective? Do you want a little Charlie, Theo, or August?”

I shuddered and flicked Megan’s forehead before rushing away. “How dare you even say those words to me.”

“Get out of here so I can jump my wife now.” Kara sighed. “Tell Charlie he needs to step up his game, though. I need fucking.”

Megan put her hand over Kara’s mouth and waved at me. “Bye, now.”

I hurried out to my car and sat in their driveway for a second, considering what I was about to do. I didn’t even know if August was on duty, but a drive sounded nice. A fast drive sounded even better.

A thrill went through me as I pulled out of Megan’s driveway and headed towards the main highway through town. It took less than five minutes for lights to flash on behind me.

31.

Reagan

I pulled over on the side of the road and jumped out of my car as soon as I saw it was August. I rushed back towards his truck as he slammed his door closed and rushed towards me.

“If you don’t slow the hell down, woman, I’m going to take your fucking —” He grunted as I jumped into his arms and wrapped my body around his. As soon as I kissed him, his hands went to my ass and he held me tight.

I tugged at his hair and sucked his tongue into my mouth before biting his lip. I stroked my tongue over it and gasped when I felt my back land against the side of his truck, the metal warm.

August roughly kissed down the side of my chin and jaw, pressing his lips to my ear as his fingers dipped low on my ass and teased over the seam of my jeans. “Did you realize you were giving Charlie a show?”

Moaning as his fingers pressed harder and his teeth trailed down my neck, I made a sound that meant absolutely nothing. I had no idea what he was saying. I was too horny and too eager to orgasm.

“Hey, Charlie? You picked a hell of a night to hang out.”

My head snapped up as I finally put together what August was saying. Looking over, I saw Charlie sitting in the passenger seat, his face pinched as he watched me throw myself at August. Instantly feeling guilty, I pushed August away and inched back towards my car.

Charlie, seeing my face, got out of the truck and ate up the distance between us with his long legs. I found myself being yanked into his chest and kissed with enough frustration and longing to bruise my lips and leave me panting and confused.

When he pulled back, he spun me around and walked me backwards until my back bumped into August's chest. "You're a needy little thing, aren't you?"

I whimpered and nodded. "Your fault."

August ran his hands up my sides and kissed the back of my neck. "Trying to say that I wasn't the source of your need, Rea?"

I stammered. "I just need... This is insane."

Charlie cupped my jaw and lifted my face. "I thought I was being a gentleman by not having my way with you last night, but that's not what you need, is it? You don't need a gentleman. You need to be fucked."

"I think we could handle that." August's heat was gone in an instant. "Charlie and I are going to finish my shift. You're going to let yourself into my house and get ready for us."

Charlie growled before shifting away from me, too. "I'll send you the address."

"The door isn't locked." August nodded towards my car. "Slow the fuck down. And don't let the dog in the house. He'll try to convince you that he can come in. He can't."

I stumbled backward and bit my lip. "How long?"

"An hour tops. Be ready, Reagan." August moved forward and gripped the back of my head to kiss me hard. "Once more. Slow down."

Charlie nodded and flashed me his dimples. "You go slow. We won't."

There was no chance of me going slow. Instead of going straight to August's house, I called Megan and profusely apologized for interrupting her and Kara before asking her to be prepared to cover for me if Russ called. Then, I raced home and stuffed a bag with necessities before going upstairs and leaving a note for Russ and Lisa, telling them I'd be at Megan's.

I felt bad for lying, but I was also laser-focused. I wanted to be at August's. I followed the directions to his house and found that he lived just outside of town, on the opposite side of the Stovalls. I drove down a driveway that was over a mile long, worried the entire way that I was lost before the dark night finally opened up and I saw a well-lit house up ahead.

Parking in front of the two-story home, I climbed out and stared at it in surprise. It was much more domestic than I ever imagined August to be. There were flower beds and up-lighting, for god's sake. I was immediately enamored with the wraparound porch and the wide front door.

Grabbing my bag, I shut my car door and then almost had a heart attack when I saw the largest dog I'd ever seen in my life sitting just on the other side, watching me with its tongue rolled out. I clasped my hand to my heart and kept a close eye on it, sure that August wouldn't have sent me in to get mauled, but still nervous.

"Hey, puppies. Your daddy didn't mention just how large you were going to be."

The big dog tilted its head to the side, and paired with the ears, I saw that it was some sort of German Shepard mix. It sniffed me and then licked my hand before turning and walking towards the porch. It stopped after a few feet and looked back at me like it was seeing if I was following.

"How many women does your daddy have you show to the door, pup? I'm starting to feel a little weird."

It led me all the way to the door and then pawed at it. In the porch light, I saw its tag read Hunter. Hunter looked up at me with his eyes all big and round and nuzzled his nose into my hand.

I swallowed, trying to remember that August said not to let him inside. I inched closer to the door and slowly opened the door, stepping inside. Hunter

didn't try to force his way in, but he whined and went down on his belly, covering his eyes with his paws.

"I'm sorry! Your daddy said not to let you in. What am I supposed to do? Just ignore him? I'm trying to get something from him. If I blatantly ignore his one order, he might not want to put out."

"Hey, Reagan?"

I screamed at the sound of August's voice and jumped about a mile in the air. Outside the door, Hunter sat at attention and stared around, looking for danger.

"The doorbell records video and audio when it senses movement." August was definitely laughing at me. "Charlie and I just thought we should let you know that we're a sure thing. We're putting out."

I covered my face in my hands and groaned. "That was a private conversation between me and Hunter."

"Ignore his pouting. He's fine outside."

"Just fine? He really wants to come inside with me. He's giving me eyes." I reached out to scratch his ears and smiled when his tongue fell out again. "Is there a big, serious reason for him not coming in?"

August sighed. "He's a guard dog."

"Not a very good one."

"I'm aware." August grunted and then gave a command in another language that had Hunter scrambling to get inside, panting happily. "Happy?"

I stepped out of the house to spot the camera and smile into it. "Yes! Thank you very much."

He swore. "You're lucky you're fucking beautiful. And tolerable."

Charlie raised his voice in the background. "Want to just cut August out and come over to my house?"

I bit my lip. “Do you have a dog named Hunter?”

“I have a cat named Jeremy.”

Hunter barked once from inside and I shook my head at the camera.

“Sorry. Hunter says no. Bye-bye, now. I have a dog to spoil.”

“That’s not what you’re supposed to be—” August cut himself off. “Fuck it. His treats are in the cabinet above the fridge.”

32.

August

On the drive up to the house, I looked over at Charlie and grunted. “Ever stop and wonder what the hell we’re doing?”

He popped his knuckles, something he did when he was antsy. “All the fucking time. Pretty much every fucking day of my life until I saw Rea again.”

Hearing him confirm that he was feeling just as strongly as I was, I smiled as I parked next to Reagan’s car. The car I was going to tow if she didn’t slow down in it. “How deep do we get before we talk about Russ?”

“Deeper than this.” Looking over at me, he shook his head and then shrugged. “She’s waiting inside your house right now. Not just for you, but for both of us. She’s fucking special, Aug. You and I both know it. Theo knows it. Is your conscious going to have you walk away for the second time?”

I shoved open my door and laughed. “Fuck, no. I tried. I really did. That’ll have to be good enough.”

It was easy to tell myself that when I was walking toward Reagan. I would’ve told myself anything to get to her. I knew there was a chance that I was burning bridges with one of my best friends, but my feet moved towards my front door without slowing.

Hunter gave the first warning bark I’d ever heard him give and stood at the door, looking as scary as the goofy dog could look, when I opened it. As soon as he saw it was me and Charlie, his tongue lolled out and he went straight back to the couch.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen him pretend to guard the house before.” Charlie chuckled. “Looks like Reagan put a spell on him, too.”

I watched as Hunter jumped onto the couch and then heard Reagan's muffled voice talking to him. I walked closer to see her stretched out, half squished by Hunter, in a small silk robe that left almost all of her legs bare. Seeing her legs and bare feet on my couch sent fire coursing through my veins.

"Ouch, Hunter. Scoot over, you big horse." Reagan pushed at Hunter, but he just rolled onto his back and took up even more of her space. She'd clearly been asleep and hadn't noticed that we'd arrived. "Is this why your daddy keeps you outside? You're heavy and you've farted on me three times already. I'm counting because that's how many treats I'm not giving you later."

I laughed and sat on the coffee table in front of the couch. Reagan jumped as much as she could with Hunter on top of her.

"When did you get here? You scared the crap out of me!"

Charlie leaned over the back of the couch and lifted a strand of her hair. "It didn't take you long to replace us."

"I'm only offended because I know for a fact that I've never farted on you." I patted my thigh and Hunter begrudgingly climbed off the couch and sat in front of my legs. I watched as Reagan sat up and took in a deep breath. "Better?"

She nodded and readjusted the ties of her robe. Her eyes moved back and forth between me and Charlie, nerves clearly getting to her. "I nodded off, I guess."

Charlie skirted the couch and sat down next to her. "Tired?"

Reagan quickly shook her head and scooted closer to him. Her hands stayed clasped in her lap. "Nervous. I was all worked up earlier and now I've been sleeping and I'm afraid I talked too big of a game."

I scooted forward and rested my hand on her knee. “Nothing has to happen, Rea.”

Her eyes flashed. “Something has to happen. I might be nervous right now, but it’ll fade. I’ve been walking around in a constant state of arousal. I would rather slam my fingers in the door than willingly decide I don’t want this.”

Charlie threw his head back and laughed while I did the same. He recovered first and pulled Reagan into his lap, still grinning. “We can take it slow, ease our way into things.”

“We could play a game.” She rolled her eyes. “In honor of the teenage shenanigans we never got to do together.”

“Strip poker?” Charlie and I said it in unison, making Reagan laugh.

“Truth or dare.” She climbed off of Charlie’s lap and stood up. “Let me go get freshened up and I’ll be ready to play.”

“I’ll grab a few beers.” I nodded to Charlie. “Turn some music on?”

When I joined Charlie again a minute later, he accepted the beer I handed him and sank back into the couch. He’d turned an old rock station to play low in the background and bounced his knee to the beat. He met my gaze and I could tell that he was feeling anxious to get his hands on Reagan, the same as me.

“I’m about to come out of my skin. Do you have anything stronger?” He stood up and walked around behind the couch just as the bathroom door opened and Reagan walked out.

Her dark hair was down and curling softly over her chest. She’d scrubbed her face clean of any makeup and looked soft and touchable. The robe was pulled closed but when she walked closer, the slit up the middle showed that she wasn’t wearing much under it. Her wide eyes settled on Charlie and then

me. Her smile was shy. “Turns out it’s a lot easier to do this sort of thing when you’re eighteen and horny, drunk and horny, or just ragingly horny.”

I nodded to the couch. “Sit. Enjoy Hunter while he still has access to the house.”

Charlie sat in one of the chairs facing the couch and I took the other. All separate, the tension somehow climbed even higher. Taking a long drag from his beer, Charlie smiled at Reagan and followed her movements with his eyes until she was sitting across from us, her body barely covered. “Truth or dare, Rea.”

Her cheeks reddened and she rested her hand on Hunter, absently petting him. “Truth.”

“What’s under the robe?”

My teeth involuntarily sank into my lip at the way Reagan’s lashes lowered and her smile turned playful. Watching her cross her legs, I groaned under my breath and drained my beer.

“Not a lot.” She looked at me. “August. Truth or dare.”

“Dare.” I sat forward to put my empty bottle on the coffee table and saw her eyes linger on my arms.

“Lose the shirt.”

It did wonders for my ego to see her hold her breath when I stood up and pulled my shirt off. Tossing my uniform top to the floor, I sat back down, still in my undershirt, and grinned. “Truth or dare, Rea.”

She scrunched up her nose and pouted at me before answering. “Truth.”

“Have you ever been with multiple men at the same time, other than us?”

She shook her head. “Never.”

Charlie shifted in his seat and I knew he was just as affected by the admission as I was.

“Truth or dare, Charlie.”

“Dare.”

“Lose *all* your shirts.” Reagan cut her eyes at me and then watched as Charlie stripped his shirt off. Licking her lips, she blew out a shaky breath and nodded. “Yeah, okay. Alcohol not required, apparently.”

33.

Reagan

My heart rate was probably nearing dangerous levels as I traced the contours of Charlie's muscles with my eyes. My nerves were quickly fading.

"Your turn, Rea." Charlie ran his hands down his abs and rested them on his thighs. "Want to be a little bold?"

I already knew what came next. I'd started it by demanding they undress. Sitting up straighter, I nodded. "Dare."

"The robe has to go."

August leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees, those forest green eyes intense as they watched me. "You're my best friend for a reason, man."

I slipped the silky material off of one shoulder first and then the other, letting the robe catch on my elbows and revealing only the top curves of my breasts. Calling on confidence that I didn't have, I stood up and let the robe fall to the floor. In the smallest lingerie set I owned, I stood before them basically naked and let them look their fill. I managed to stay still for a few seconds before dropping back to the couch and crossing my legs, even if I felt like hiding behind Hunter's giant body.

Neither of them made a sound and when I finally forced myself to look up at them, I saw pure heat in their gazes. It was enough to force a blush over nearly my entire body, which they could of course see.

Clearing my throat, I grabbed a strand of my hair and tugged at it absently. "August. Truth or dare."

"Dare." His deep voice was lower than usual and when I met his eyes, he was issuing his own dare.

"Down to your underwear." I licked my lips. "Please."

Standing again, he never broke eye contact as he ripped his shirt off and then shoved his pants, boots, and socks off in one go. In just a pair of black briefs, he towered over the room looking like the cover of an erotic novel. His dog tags caught the light and shimmered against his strong chest. When he settled back in his chair, the tip of his powerful shaft stuck out of the waistband of his briefs, refusing to be kept hidden.

My mouth watered and I had a hard time dragging my eyes away from him. It wasn't easy.

“Truth or dare, Reagan.”

Helplessly, I looked back at him and melted. “Dare.”

“Come and sit on the coffee table in between us. Legs open.”

I moved embarrassingly fast to comply with his command, even if I was burning from embarrassment at being so open and exposed. Settling my ass on the hardwood, I gasped at how cold it was. Sucking in a deep breath, I spread my thighs and tipped my head back in an attempt to regain some sense of control. “Charlie. Strip. Please.”

He stood up, his body so close to mine as he did as I asked. He didn't wear underwear, apparently. He was suddenly naked in front of me, in all of his hard glory. Without touching me, he settled in his chair and dug his fingers into the arms. “What are the rules, Rea? How far is too far?”

I shook my head. “No rules.”

“Truth or dare?”

“Dare.”

“I dare you to come on my face.” Going to his knees in front of me, he braced his hands on the table on either side of my thighs, still not touching me. “I dare you to spread these perfect fucking thighs and feed me what I've been craving for too long.”

My body reacted like lava had been flushed through my veins. I clamped my teeth down on my lip and nodded. Unsure of what to do, feeling too turned on to even move, I sat still until Charlie hooked his thumbs in my panties and started pulling them down. I lifted my ass and closed my legs so he could take them off and then he settled his wide shoulders between my thighs and looked up at me.

His dimples flashed momentarily before he pressed his hand to my chest, encouraging me to lie back. Then, he hooked my knees over his shoulders and growled. “Shit.”

I pressed my hands to the table and waited, pulse racing. I didn’t have to wait long. The moment Charlie leaned forward and licked the entire line of my core, I gasped. When he pressed his tongue deeper and stroked me from top to bottom, I gripped his hair and forgot that I’d ever felt self-conscious.

Charlie stiffened his tongue and drove it deep into me, fucking me with it. His groans of pleasure vibrated through me and when he centered his hot mouth over my clit and sucked, I screamed and yanked at his hair. He ignored me and went back to licking me like I was his favorite ice cream. His tongue dipped lower and he paid special attention to the puckered skin farther south before going back to my clit and twirling his tongue over it.

I came up on my elbows when he sucked down on my clit again, flicking his tongue over it at the same time. The sight of his head between my thighs was too much, paired with the pleasure, and I screamed my release. Legs shaking, core clenching, I went flat on my back as my orgasm released some of the tension I’d been carrying.

Charlie stroked me with his tongue several more times before moving back to his chair, leaving me sprawled out. When I finally sat up, I saw that

August had a death grip on his chair and Charlie's naked cock looked painfully hard.

I brushed my hair out of my face and sucked in air. "August."

He sat forward. "Dare."

"Can I..." I licked my lips and looked at his erection. "Can I suck you?"

He swore and nodded once, shoving his briefs down his thick thighs before I could move. I watched as he glanced over at Charlie and they both seemed to communicate silently before August focused on me. "Come here, Rea."

I stripped off my bra and went to my knees, crawling the few feet to him. Pressing my lips to his chins and then his knees, I worked my way up to his thighs, giggling as the coarse hair that dusted his legs tickled me.

"Jesus. I'm going to come like a fucking teenager at this rate." Charlie's muffled groan came from behind his fist pressed to his mouth.

I settled in front of August and looked up at him, any nervousness completely forgotten. Trailing my eyes down his chest and stomach, I finally settled on the monster between his thighs and a moan escaped me. Scooting even closer, I took him into my hand and stroked my hand down his thick length. Repeating that a few times, I watched in fascination as a pearl of precum beaded at his tip. Flicking my tongue out, I dragged his tip over it and tasted him.

"Fucking hell, Rea."

Enjoying how broken August sounded, I opened my mouth wide and took as much of him into my mouth as I could. Forming my lips around him, I sucked hard as I pulled back and then bobbed my head down again. The feeling of his thick veins on my tongue urged me on and I moved faster, taking more of his length with each quick stroke.

His thick head hit the back of my throat and I gagged lightly, letting his

cock slip out of my mouth with an audible *pop*. I looked up at him with wide eyes and what had to be red and swollen lips. “Oops.”

He swore wildly and gripped my hair in his fist. “You’re done. I can’t last much longer without coming and I’m not going out like that.”

“I want it.”

He gritted his teeth. “I dare you to show Charlie just how fucking well you suck cock.”

34.

Charlie

I had a tight grip on the base of my dick already, the affect of seeing Reagan on her knees in front of August too strong. Hearing him command her to suck me made me groan. I could've kicked his ass while thanking him with my life, all at the same time. My stomach tightened as Reagan crawled my way, her eyes heavy with lust. I still had the taste of her orgasm on my lips, but it wasn't enough.

She knelt in front of me and smiled sweetly. "Hey, Charlie."

I shook my head and cupped her face, running my thumb over her swollen lips. "Hey, baby."

"Can I suck your cock?"

My dick jumped at hearing her sweet voice ask for something dirty. I had no self-control, so I nodded. If I came down her throat too fast, I'd be embarrassed, but I knew August would fucking get it. Seeing Reagan naked and asking for cock was just too fucking much.

Her soft hands gripped my length, twisting and stroking while watching with eagerness. Her mouth opened and her tongue stroked out over her lips, her desire evident.

Just when I thought I was going to lose my mind, she leaned forward and swallowed most of my dick. I felt the back of her throat tighten around my head and jerked. "Fuck!"

Reagan leaned back and flicked her tongue over my slit before taking me deep again. Her answering gag just heightened my desire. When she lifted her mouth again, she stroked me and her eyes moved between me and August, wide. "I'm not sure if I'm super lucky that you both have big dicks, or if I'm begging to lose function of my legs."

My laugh was cut off by a groan when she took me deep again, without gagging, and stroked her tongue all over the underside of me. Her head bobbed up and down fast and then slow; she took my entire length and then just the head. Her blow job skills made me want to start going to church to show my gratitude while also making me slightly insane with the idea of how she'd learned them.

When she moved her lips down my shaft and flicked her tongue over my balls, I was too close to let it continue. I grabbed her and lifted her, breath heaving out as I fought for control.

August easily took her from me and turned her around so she was bent over the coffee table, ass in the air. He spread her cheeks and buried his face in her core, eating her out like a starving man. I watched as he focused on her clit and teased her core with two fingers before thrusting them deep. Reagan's cries of pleasure and the way she pushed her hips back into his mouth showed just how eager she was for another orgasm.

Unable to sit back and watch any longer, I moved around to the other side of the table and lifted her face so she was watching me as August fucked her with his mouth and fingers. The pure ecstasy that I saw there was its own version of a drug. I needed more.

I reached under her and gripped her breasts, flicking her hard nipples and watching the way her mouth dropped open when I pinched them. Leaning over, I used one of my hands to lightly slap her ass and then rub my fingertip over her asshole.

August lifted his head and watched me, only stopping me to pull his fingers from her core and run the soaked digits over her ass, wetting it for me. His fingers thrust deep again as he watched my finger slid deeper. He worked

his fingers harder as more of my finger slipped in. The sound of her wet pussy had precum dripping from my dick.

Reagan lifted her head from the table and I nearly choked when her wet mouth suddenly wrapped around my dick and sucked me deep. She moaned in pleasure and kept me deep, just holding me there.

I looked up and met August's eyes, both of us amazed at the woman between us. I eased my finger out and he rubbed more of her wetness over her ass, slipping one of his own fingers deep before fucking her steadily again. I would've been worried about the brutal pace if I wasn't feeling her steady moans all along my dick.

I worked two fingers into her ass then, stopping to let August work his dripping fingers in every few strokes. We were finger fucking her ass together, taking turns, and something about that nearly pushed me over the edge. I had to pull my dick free of Reagan's mouth and grip it tight to keep from coming.

August pushed three soaking fingers into her ass and pumped them fast while his other hand dropped to rub her clit. Barely a moment passed before our girl screamed her release and a rush of her juices leaked down her thighs and pooled under her on the coffee table and floor. She collapsed on the table, her body spread out and fucking beautiful.

With a glance, I saw August motion to the dog while he lifted Reagan's limp body in his arms. I hurriedly put Hunter out and then met August in his bedroom. He settled Reagan on the bed and we climbed in on either side of her, with her facing me. She moaned and I saw that August was still stroking her clit gently.

Feeling damn near insane with need for her, I lifted her face to mine and kissed her deep. Her sweet mouth met mine hungrily, even as she lifted her

thigh, opening herself for us.

I felt August grip her thigh and then felt her stiffen slightly before letting out a whine and grunting his name. Looking down, I watched as his dick inched out of her ass and then slid back in until he was completely buried in her barely used back hole.

Reagan dug her nails into my back and when she focused enough to meet my gaze, she spoke through gritted teeth. “Fuck me, Charlie. I want you both in me.”

With her body between us, her thigh stretched high by August, I felt like I’d died and gone to fucking heaven. Hooking my hands under her arms and over her shoulders, I held her gaze. “If you want it, take it.”

She whimpered and desperately gripped me, stroking me before lining me up with her core. Her chest heaved as she bore down on me even as August stretched her ass. When my dick head pushed in, she swallowed and twisted her head to take August’s kiss while I pushed the rest of my length in deep.

August cursed and looked at me over Reagan’s head. “Never in my life.”

I gritted my teeth and jerkily nodded. “Perfect.”

Reagan, trapped between us, impaled on two large dicks, wrapped one arm over me and another over August. Her body clenched down on us and she screamed as an orgasm hit her without either of us moving. The moment her body loosened, both August and I gave into the need to fuck her.

Thrusting into her tight body, I pulled out while August thrust into her ass. We set a fast rhythm and slowly drove Reagan towards another orgasm. Her nipples rubbed against my chest and her teeth latched onto my arm when the need to rut drove us harder and harder until we were both thrusting into her at the same time, fucking her hard and fast.

August growled and hiked her leg even higher, letting us fuck even deeper.

We drove into her with abandon, driving her just as high as we were. I shifted just enough so that her clit rubbed against my stomach with every brutal stroke, shoving her into another orgasm and what seemed like the strongest one she'd had. Her teeth scraped over my arm as she jerked her head back and screamed our names. Her walls tightened until it was almost painful and then more of her sweet wetness sprayed out with each thrust of my dick.

It was more than I could take, feeling her body shake with so much pleasure and feeling her come coating my shaft and balls. I thrust deep and buried myself there, coming with a wild shout. Not even a second later, I felt Reagan's thighs shake as August slammed deep one more time and came in her ass.

My dick shot jet after jet of come inside of Reagan, filling her with it until it spilled out. I saw it and groaned her name, feeling like an animal because the sight of her marked with my seed made me want to do it all over again.

August slowly lowered her thigh and hooked his hand over, finding her clit easily and stroking her to another, smaller orgasm before collapsing onto his back. I slowly pulled out of Reagan and followed suit, falling back on my back, chest still heaving. I kept my hand on her back and felt August stroking her shoulders a minute later.

I tried to gather the energy to check in with Reagan but when her breathing deepened and leveled out, I couldn't help but smile. She was out hard.

August chuckled quietly and lifted his head to look over at me. "This is what they mean when they talk about marriage material, right?"

I grunted and fist bumped him. Respectfully. "Fuck, yes. Call the judge. I'll do it right now."

He rolled onto his side and carefully pulled Reagan into his chest. "Been thinking about this for a long time."

He didn't have to clarify that he meant holding her and not fucking her. Within seconds of getting his arm around her, he was snoring softly into her hair.

I rolled over and wrapped my arm around her, careful not to hit August. Leaning forward, I pressed a kiss to Reagan's forehead and smiled when she reached out and wrapped her arm around me. With a little grunt, she was out again. Feeling content in more ways than sexual, I rested my head next to hers and found myself falling asleep faster than ever.

35.

Reagan

“You’ve been spending a lot of time with Megan lately.” Lisa’s back was to me as she filled the girls’ cups with water. “Like a lot of time.”

I looked around the Stovalls’ massive kitchen and nodded. Lisa had brought Piper and Posie over to play with Iris while she and Mary talked about a Girl Scout troop they were thinking of starting. While Mary was taking a phone call, Lisa had cornered me.

“Yeah, it’s been really great reconnecting with her and getting to know Kara.” I looked up from the meat I was seasoning for dinner. “You and Russ told me nothing about anyone when I was gone. I was always grateful to not have to get a play-by-play about what was happening in everyone’s lives, but I feel like I get a new surprise daily.”

“It wasn’t easy to not gush about things. I wasn’t even raised with these people and I still want to gossip like I was. When Megan and Kara got married, it was the talk of the town for a while. Lunar was forced to move into the twenty-first century finally.”

I set the meat back in the fridge to marinate and washed my hands before shifting back to the cake I was making. The two cakes I was making, technically, because I couldn’t make Pearl a cake and not leave one for Mary and Jim.

“Why two cakes?”

I looked up from my Swiss buttercream and just stared blankly while trying to come up with a reason I’d be making two cakes. Contrary to what I was doing, sneaking around with the guys, I wasn’t great at lying.

“I knew it! You’re seeing someone. You’ve been baking things at home and then slipping out with them, without sharing them, might I add. You’ve

been sneaking around, staying out all night. Don't think I can't tell that you're walking like you've been horseback riding for three weeks." Lisa moved closer and narrowed her eyes. "Who is it?"

My heart sank to my feet while my stomach threatened to evacuate itself everywhere. I shook my head too fast and got dizzy. Gripping the island for stability, I started muttering words that my brain didn't approve of, by my mouth was in panic mode. "No. Dating? Never. Cake for me. Dating? Who? Hilarious. God!"

Lisa's eyes widened and she moved even closer. "You sneaky little minx. Who are you messing around with that is making you so secretive?"

I wielded my spatula of buttercream between us and forced her back with it. Thankfully, Mary strolled back into the kitchen at that moment, looking graceful and like she'd never threaten anyone with a spatula full of buttercream.

"What in the world?"

Lisa planted her hands on her hips. "Reagan is seeing someone and won't tell me who, so we're in a battle."

I choked and dropped my weapon in the sink. "We're not in a battle because I'm not seeing anyone."

"I thought you were seeing Theo. The way that boy looks at you and the way he keeps hanging around here? It's clear that he's got the hots for you." Mary shrugged and looked at the cakes. "You're going to make me gain fifty pounds if you keep making these delicious sweets. Don't ever stop."

"You're seeing *Theo*?" Lisa's unshakeable attitude seemed to take a hit as she moved back to sit on one of the barstools across from me. "Oh, no."

"What? Is that a bad thing? Theo's an amazing man. He's got some baggage, but seeing how that baggage is my daughter, I can't say anything

too bad about it.” Mary moved over to me and wrapped her arm around me. “Jenny is a terror at times, I know, but she’ll get over it when Theo shows up with a new woman.”

“I’m, um, not seeing Theo. I’m not seeing anyone.” My face was bright red, and I knew how I sounded. I sounded like a liar and I knew both women could read straight through me. “Shit.”

Lisa groaned and dropped her head to the island. “Yeah, *shit*. Russ is going to lose his mind.”

Mary swiped a finger of buttercream and patted my hand. “I’m going to go check on the girls. Your secret is safe with me, Reagan.”

I turned desperate eyes to Lisa. “Russ can’t know.”

She groaned even louder. “I’m going to sneak into the basement and murder you. You really are asking me to keep this huge secret from my husband?”

I rushed around the island and grabbed her hands. “Please, Lisa. I’m so sorry that you found out and that I have to ask you not to say anything, but I don’t want to ruin Russ’ relationships with his friends.”

Her eyes narrowed. “Reagan. You said friends. Plural.”

Tears filled my eyes and I quickly wiped them away. I needed to get a grip on myself before I accidentally revealed anything else. “I just meant it would cause...”

“You’re sleeping with more than one of them. The rumors from way back when? They were true?”

I nodded and wiped away more tears. “I’m sorry. I don’t know what’s wrong with me. It just happened. I know that I’m an awful person for doing it and I should just go back to LA. If I leave, no one will have to know. Russ and the guys can just go on, pretending it never happened.”

Lisa grabbed my face and forced me to look at her. “You’re not leaving. That’s ridiculous. You’re not an awful person and there’s nothing wrong with you. Do you hear me? You’re almost thirty and you’re living your best sexual life. There’s nothing wrong with that. I just wish you would’ve ventured a little farther out to find your men. Not that I can even really blame you. Russ has fine ass friends.”

Her acceptance of me just made me cry harder. “I’m an awful sister. To Russ and to you. I’m so sorry for telling you this.”

“Hey, I guessed it. That’s on me.” She pulled me in for a hug. “You’re not an awful sister, either. You’re not the best sister in the world at the moment, but the vagina wants what the vagina wants.”

“I don’t know what to do. I’ve always cared about them and ten years away did nothing to stop my feelings. Should I just cut off everything? How do I fix this?”

She stroked my hair out of my face and wiped more tears away. “I can’t tell you what to do. You need to figure that out on your own.”

Heavy footsteps sounded on the stone floor, and without even looking up, I knew it was Theo. His voice was a growl when he spoke. “What’s wrong? What happened?”

I found myself being pulled from Lisa and into his chest. With his arms wrapped around me, I cried harder. It was ridiculous. Being faced with what I was doing was making me panic, though. If Russ found out, I was going to chance my brother hating me.

Lisa snorted. “Yeah, I don’t think you’re going to be able to stop anything.”

Theo rubbed my back. “What happened?”

“You and your buddies happened, you big oaf.” Lisa smacked him and

sighed. “There is no chance in hell that anyone would look at you two right now and think friends. If Russ sees even a hint of this, he’s going to flip his shit. Maybe if you three had been honest a decade ago when you swore nothing happened, he would’ve gotten over it by now. Instead, he’s going to have to get over the fact that you’re screwing his sister and the ten-year-old lie. Idiots. Each and every one of you. Except Reagan. She’s just a victim of hormones and hot men. Some things can’t be helped.”

36.

Reagan

I did what I thought was the right thing after Lisa found out. I went straight to work and straight home every day. I didn't speed, I didn't go out at night, and I didn't sleep anywhere but my own bed. I couldn't change the fact that I'd done what I'd done with the guys, but I could not repeat it. At least, that's what I kept telling myself.

I knew the guys knew I was avoiding them. I was sure they even knew why. Theo had undoubtedly told them that Lisa knew and was upset about it. I stayed downstairs during their poker night, no matter how much I wanted to venture up to see them. When Russ announced they were having drinks in his office, I locked myself in the bathroom and pretended to shower for two hours. I did what I had to do.

Sure, my mood was terrible and I missed the guys like crazy, but I didn't want to mess anything up for Russ or for them. I could suffer for a while if it meant that things would move along for the better. It wasn't like I'd never get over them. Surely.

All of that brooding was why when Megan asked if I wanted to go out with her and Kara on Friday night, I jumped at the opportunity. I needed to drink and have a little fun. I even made sure to tell Russ that I'd be home after drinks to ensure that I couldn't sneak away to spend the night somewhere I had no business being.

Everything was going fine until someone—me—ordered a Lunar Eclipse. Feeling fun and free, I ordered a second one with a round for Megan and Kara as well. Within the hour, I was dancing by myself on a mostly empty dance floor. Within two hours, there were two guys at our table with us, each of them a few years younger than us, laughing and having a good time.

Within three hours and a couple more Lunar Eclipses, we were standing at the potato chip, staring up at it, as one of our new best friends dared me to climb it.

I leaned against Kara and nodded. “I’ve got this. I went indoor rock climbing once in LA.”

Megan stumbled over her feet and landed on the grass with Kara tumbling into her lap right after. “This is not an indoor rock wall in LA, Rea.”

New best friend number one wrapped his arm around my neck and pulled me in close. “I could give you a boost.”

I pushed him away, not liking that he didn’t smell like my men. “Don’t need a boost. You see these thighs? They were meant for climbing. They’re strong as hell.”

Kara cackled. “What are you even talking about?”

New best friend number two pretended to bow to my thighs and winked at me. “Climb this chip and we’ll all be forced to worship those thighs.”

I shot Megan and Kara a weirded-out face, but I was drunk and able to ignore the fact that our new best friends were weird and pervy. Walking around the chip, I stopped back in front of them and slipped my heels off. “Nobody let my shoes get away.”

Deciding a running start would be most beneficial, I walked back several yards and then took off running at the chip. When I was close, I leaped into the air and splattered against the side of it like a bug on a windshield. Sliding all the way down to the ground, I grunted and looked over at Megan, who was crying from laughing so hard.

“Well, plan A was a failure.” I pulled myself up and jumped up to get a handhold on the giant thing and actually succeeded. Screaming out a cheer, I

hoisted my other hand up and then hung there, my feet barely off the ground.
“Now what?”

Number one came up behind me, grabbed a whole lot of my ass, and pushed me up. I ended up hanging half over the chip, flailing as I rocked back and forth. I was at a severe angle and starting to slide down the side when I somehow balanced out and went perfectly still. I was feeling pretty impressed with myself until I looked down to cheer with everyone and found myself staring into the angry eyes of August.

I gulped and nearly choked on my scream as he easily yanked me off of the chip and tossed me over his shoulder. My head bounced into his ass and I couldn't fight the urge to bite it.

He flipped me back over his shoulder and leaned down into my space. “You're seconds from me losing my shit right here in front of your friends, Reagan James. I suggest you behave or you're going to find yourself bent over my knee right here.”

A flash of warmth hit me hard and I shivered. My brain was slower to process his words, but when it did, I pouted and crossed my arms over my chest. “Mean.”

He growled and pushed me into a hard chest that had been hovering behind me. “Take her to the truck.”

I looked up and saw Charlie, his dimples gone as he glared at something off to the side. When I tried to look at where he was glaring, he lifted me into his arms and carried me away from everyone. I looked back and saw August and Theo helping Megan and Kara up while our other two best friends sat nearby, looking scolded.

“I was about to climb the chip.” I realized my words were slurred and tried again. “Was going to climb a ship. Nope. That's not right. Climb the blimp.”

Charlie tucked me into the backseat of August's truck, his frown still firmly in place as he buckled me in. "We saw you trying to climb the fucking chip, Reagan. You could've broken your neck. What were you thinking?"

Before I could answer, August opened the other back door and in came Megan and Kara. They looked properly scolded, as well. When the back door of the Bronco opened and Theo ushered the two guys in, I panicked.

"Are you arresting us?" I fanned my face as it grew hot. "I can't go to jail. I think I'm getting menopause. I'm having hot flashes. Not to mention mood swings. Oh, god. I'm going to be rude to the wrong lady in jail and end up beaten. What kind of time do you get for climbing a potato chip? Is there a criminal precedent for this?"

August got behind the wheel and glared back at me. "I am not arresting you. I'm taking your drunk asses home."

I sighed in relief. "That's so nice of you. If my brother wasn't my brother, I'd really find a way to thank—"

"Be quiet, Reagan." Charlie pressed his finger to my lips and shook his head. "Understand?"

I scrunched up my nose in annoyance, but nodded. When he stayed put with raised eyebrows, I just scowled back at him.

"Do you understand, Rea?"

"Sorry, I'm being quiet."

He shut the door with a growl and then crowded into the front bench seat with Theo and August. "When you're chief of police, how about banning Lunar Eclipses?"

Megan leaned over Kara and whispered. "I think not getting laid is making them angry. They seem pretty high strung."

One of our friends from the back leaned forward. "I can also get pretty

cranky when I'm not getting laid. How about I give you a call, Reagan?"

August tapped the gas hard, throwing the guys around in the back. "I suggest you shut the hell up, Jimmy."

"Come on, Officer Lee. I'm just trying to get a date."

"Not with her, you're not."

37.

Theo

I glared at the retreating backs of Jimmy and Greg Durn. “Are you sure there’s not anything you can lock them up for?”

August grunted and stalked back towards the truck. “Unfortunately, being pieces of shit isn’t against the law.”

As soon as I opened the door to get in the front seat, I heard Charlie’s raised voice and looked back at where he’d moved back to sit next to Reagan. He looked like his head was going to pop off and Reagan was all smiles.

“You think they’re cute? Those two fucking idiots? Jesus, Reagan. Were you planning on going home with them?”

Reagan snorted and stretched out, shoving her legs into his lap. “Nope. They were my new best friends for the night, I think. Can’t really remember now. And I didn’t say they were cute, you turd. I said they weren’t all that unfortunate looking.”

I had to bite back a laugh when Charlie instantly started rubbing her feet. He didn’t even seem to notice that he was doing it.

“They had their hands all over you. Jimmy pushed you over the potato chip. You could’ve been hurt. He was not your friend.”

“I told him I didn’t need a boost. I don’t know why you’re mad at me.” Reagan crossed her arms and arched her back when he dug into the arch of her foot. “You think I wanted to go home with them? That’s insane. I have more dicks in my life right now than almost ever before. I’m drowning in dicks. Big dicks. Dicks attached to pretty, pretty bodies and faces. Lisa told me I’m walking like I’ve been riding a horse. The last thing in the world I would want is *more* dicks. Where am I even supposed to put them?”

I bit my knuckles and turned around to face the front of the truck. I heard August's frustrated chuckle and had to fight to keep my own in. Charlie, who was taking the brunt of her attention, made a choking sound.

"Yeah, just like that." Reagan sighed and leaned forward, catching a handful of my hair and tugging. "Do you think I wanted to go home with them?"

I cleared my throat and shook my head. "No. I think they wanted to go home with you."

"To Russ' basement?" She giggled. "My bachelorette pad is highly lacking. The basement is where Dad used to keep the chemicals for the yard and where Mom hid to smoke so Dad wouldn't find out. Maybe that's why I'm so horny all the time now. Maybe the chemicals leaked and are affecting me. Like the ninja turtles, but instead of fighting skills, I have the ability to take all three of you. More than the ability. The need to take all three of you."

August swerved as he nearly drove off the road. Glancing over at me, he gestured for me to do something, but what the fuck was I supposed to do? I was just as affected by what she was saying as they were. My dick was a steel rod in my pants.

"Are we going to one of your houses now?" Reagan shifted her foot, idly rubbing Charlie's dick with it. "I've been good all week. I tried. I really tried. I kept my hands to myself and I didn't give in to my desires. I didn't even masturbate because I was afraid I would wake up naked at one of your doors, having sleepwalked across town for your touch."

"That's what you were doing? Trying to be good?" I frowned. "You think being with us is bad?"

She cupped her breasts through her shirt and moaned. "Being with you is too good. It's bad, though. Lying to Russ is bad. I'm a terrible sister. The

worst.”

August swore and barked at Charlie. “Catch her hands or something. Jesus.”

Charlie grunted, clearly in pain. “Excuse me for not having the fastest reflexes when she’s stroking my dick with her feet.”

“Oh, no. It’s already happening. You’re fighting!” Reagan curled into her side of the seat and gave a dramatic sigh. “I’ve been thinking that I should go back to LA, but Ben is still calling and I do not want to get slapped by his wife again. I didn’t even know he was married. I wish I had gotten some fighting skills. Or even a backbone. I would’ve punched Ben in the nuts for making me hurt another woman. And I would’ve corrected Slappy Sally when she called me a homewrecking whore.”

I narrowed my eyes and turned to face her. “Give me their names and numbers, baby. I’ll handle it.”

“I’m a fucking cop, Theo. Maybe don’t say shit like that in my squad car.” He hesitated. “Maybe go ahead and get that information, though. So I can make sure you don’t do anything crazy with it.”

“You’re not leaving, Reagan. You belong here.” Charlie pulled her foot back into his grip and massaged. “You also need to be nicer to yourself. You have a backbone. A sexy one. What you don’t have are shoes or an ability to handle your Lunar Eclipses.”

“I think Megan took your shoes.” August turned down his driveway and frowned. “Don’t get out until one of us helps you. The rocks will hurt your feet.”

“Where are we?” Out of her seatbelt and leaning forward between August and me, Reagan spotted his house in the distance and a wide smile stretched

across her lips. “Auggie’s house! I love your house. And I love Hunter. Can Hunter come inside?”

I raised my eyebrows. “You’ve been to *Auggie*’s house, huh?”

Reagan tilted her head to study me and her lips pursed. “Um...”

“Spit it out.”

“I came with Auggie and Charlie and we played truth or dare.” Her eyes widened and her cheeks burned bright, even in the dark truck interior. “And then we had really, really good sex and cuddled. I didn’t spit it out. The next morning, I swallowed.”

August parked a little too quickly, making Reagan lose her balance. She stumbled forward and August easily caught her and dragged her out of the truck. Tossing her over his shoulder, he looked in at me as he gripped the top of the truck. “We good?”

I laughed as shock washed over me. Fuck if I knew. I shrugged and climbed out of the truck, running my hands through my hair as I climbed the steps of his porch. They’d shared her without me. I was jealous as hell but also turned on at the idea of her between them. The only thing hotter would be having been there, too. I wasn’t sure what it said about me that I had those complex feelings about a woman I cared for.

Reagan bit her lip as she coyly closed the distance between us. Wrapping her arms around my neck, she hooked one leg around my thighs and I had no choice but to catch her as she tossed the other one up carelessly. Gripping her thighs as I held her, I looked down at her and saw the concern in her eyes. Even drunk as shit, she was worried about my feelings.

She ran her hands down my head and neck, stroking my tense muscles. “The only thing that would’ve made it better is if you’d been there, too.”

My hands tightened on her thighs and she whimpered as she rocked her

core into my stomach. I pressed a kiss to her forehead and put her down, unwilling to start anything when she was so drunk. “Feel free to invite me next time.”

Resting her hands on my chest, she smiled up at me and then looked over at August and Charlie. “You’re all always invited. Alone or all together, you three make me come like I never even thought possible. Plus, I like you. All of you. I like having all three of you. Even when I was a teenager and didn’t know a damn thing, had never even kissed a boy, I imagined all three of you. I’m selfish. I want each of you. I don’t want to share.”

I swallowed around my racing heart and stroked her hair. “Alright. How about we get you to bed before the hangover hits?”

She pouted and spun away from me. “I want to play with Hunter.”

August whistled for his dog, but Hunter was already sprinting towards the porch. He saw Reagan and they both met on the wide planks of the porch decking. Hunter wiggled like mad and went onto his back while Reagan giggled and scratched his belly, obsessing over him.

“Inside. Both of you.” August sighed and pushed the door open, allowing Hunter and Reagan to run in together. He looked over at me and glared. “Not a word.”

I laughed. “What would I possibly say?”

Charlie slapped our best friend on the shoulder and chuckled. “Maybe that Auggie is already whipped.”

August slapped the back of Charlie’s head and looked to me. “And you?”

I held up my hands as I walked in and spotted Hunter and Reagan on the couch, cuddling together. Glancing back at August, I watched his eyes soften as he saw them, too. Smiling, I cleared my throat. “Looks like we’re all whipped.”

Not a single one of us bothered denying it.

38.

Reagan

I woke up on August's couch the next morning, with Hunter on one side of me and Theo on the other. Charlie and August were stretched out in the chairs across from us. I had a pounding headache and wasn't sure that my head was in one piece, but my chest was a mess of emotion as I saw them surrounding me. I remembered bits and pieces of the night at first and the rest came barreling in the longer I was conscious.

My stomach turned and my mouth soured. I knew what was coming and tried to get up as fast and as quietly as possible, but I tripped over the blanket that had been draped over me and hit my knee on the coffee table hard enough to knock a few beer bottles over.

August jerked upright, his eyes alert and his body tight like he was ready for a fight. When he saw me clutching my knee and my stomach, tears in my eyes from the pain, he jumped up and scooped me into his arms without hesitation. I groaned and felt chills erupt all over my body just as August kicked open his bathroom door and lowered me to it, grabbing my hair and holding it back as I immediately threw up.

"There you go, baby. Let it out." He rubbed my back and then looked at my knee, swearing when he ran his fingers over it and I whimpered. "We'll get you some ice as soon as you're finished here."

Shame settled heavily on my shoulders. I'd been a drunken fool the night before and there August was, taking care of me like I hadn't embarrassed myself thoroughly.

"What does she need?"

I groaned into the toilet as Theo's voice joined us. "Go away. No one should help me right now. Or see me."

“An ice pack and water.”

“Tylenol,” I added weakly. “Done.”

August flushed the toilet and helped me stand up. At the sink, he stood behind me, letting me lean against him, while he got a washcloth damp and gently wiped my face before handing me a cup of mouthwash. “Rinse.”

I avoided my reflection as I followed his orders and pouted even harder when he picked me up and carried me to his bedroom. “I was terrible. Leave me to die in my misery.”

He moved us into his attached bathroom and slowly undressed me. He got another washcloth and warmed it before running it over my body. “Never going to happen. And you weren’t terrible. Mostly. You were cute.”

I shivered as the cold air touched me everywhere. Before I could even start to complain, August pulled one of his T-shirts over my head and carried me to his bed. I let him take care of me because I was a selfish woman. I watched him move as he tucked me in and then turned to grab an extra blanket from his closet.

He froze at my gasp and stood perfectly still for a moment before carrying on like it’d never happened. I couldn’t, though. My chest tightened and I sat up without realizing it. My eyes filled with tears as I stared at his retreating back.

Theo walked in with ice and water but stopped cold when he saw me. “What is it?”

August walked out of the closet, his face blank. I couldn’t tell what he was thinking, but I got the message. He didn’t want to talk about the scars that marred his back.

I wiped my eyes and cleared my throat. “Hangover. Sorry.”

Theo frowned but walked closer, handing me the pain medicine and water

while tossing the ice to August. “Sure. A few more hours of sleep and you’ll be as good as new.”

Hunter strolled into the room and jumped into bed without any hesitation, settling at my side. I absently scratched his head and studied August as he growled at his dog and leaned over me to prop up my knee.

“Dammit.” August sat back and tugged at his beard. “Give us a few minutes, Theo? Rea just saw my back.”

Theo nodded instantly. “Of course.”

I waited until the door closed to look at August again. He was staring at his hands, both tattooed, like the rest of his body. Except his back. “I’m sorry I upset you.”

He shook his head and met my gaze. “You didn’t do anything wrong. It’s been a long time since someone saw the scars. I’ve been careful to keep them hidden, without even thinking about it, I guess. It hadn’t even occurred to me that you haven’t seen them.”

I moved even closer to him. “They weren’t there ten years ago.”

He frowned. “Russ didn’t tell you about what happened?”

“We had a don’t ask, don’t tell policy about Lunar. I couldn’t stand the thought of hearing about you three living your lives and starting families and Russ had no interest in telling his stalker little sister about her supposed victims.”

“Fuck.” August moved up the bed until his back was against the headboard and I was against his side. “Fuck us for letting Russ treat you like that.”

“I literally couldn’t care less about that right now, Aug. What happened?” My heart was in my throat, my mind imaging the worst. It didn’t matter that I was in his arms at that moment. I needed to hear what happened to convince myself that he was okay.

“My retirement from the SEALs.” He held me tighter. “A mission went wrong. The long and short of it is that I took the brunt of a blast. I made it out with burns, but I made it out.”

I pressed my face to his chest as I heard what he wasn't saying. Others hadn't made it out. He could've so easily been one of them. Without even thinking, I crawled into his lap and wrapped my arms around him. Knowing that he bore scars down most of his back, I could feel them under my fingertips and make out the rigid lines of angry skin. How I hadn't felt them before, I had no clue.

“I had no idea. I would've been here. As stupid as that sounds, I would've come back.” Tears spilled from my eyes onto his chest. “I can't believe I didn't know. If something had happened to you, August...”

He stroked his big hands down my head and back. “Would you have shown up in a cute little nurse uniform?”

I smiled and lifted my head to look at him. “I would be a shit nurse. I would've made all your jello, though.”

“God, you're fucking adorable.” He sat forward and kissed me. “I'm okay. My back looks like shit, but everything functions the way it should. The idea of you running home to take care of me makes me want to go out and break something, though.”

I narrowed my eyes. “Don't you dare. Even if I can't have you, I still want you in perfect working order.”

The energy shifted in the room and he stilled. “Who said you couldn't have me?”

I held his gaze and felt so many emotions bubbling up, threatening to spill over. In the end, I swallowed them down and looked away. “Life? Russ? I think I will sleep for a few more hours if you're willing to share your bed.”

August sighed and started to move away, but I stopped him with my hand on his arm.

“Stay?”

He brushed my hair out of my face and kissed me. “I’m just going to get you a better ice pack and then I’ll be back. Theo’s ice is already leaking.”

I curled up with Hunter and smiled at August’s fussing. Theo’s ice pack was fine, but I’d made things weird by mentioning my brother. I didn’t blame him for leaving.

39.

Reagan

Landings was swamped. I sat in a booth across from Lisa with Piper and Posie on either side of me. Russ was supposed to be there any minute. He'd gone to have a drink with the guys first. I had to ignore the icky feeling that I got at the thought of him showing up at August's just a few hours after I left. I'd made August and Charlie promise to clean the coffee table after what we'd done on it before, but they didn't seem all that worried.

Lisa studied me with a scary amount of focus and the girls mimicked her. It instantly felt like everyone in Landings knew my secrets and was thinking about them.

"So. You didn't come home last night, but it doesn't look like you went horseback riding."

"You went horseback riding?!" Piper scowled at me. "Without me?"

I glared at Lisa. "What is wrong with you?"

"I wanna ride a horse, too." Posie sighed dramatically and even added a snuffle. "Did you not want us to come with you?"

"No one went horseback riding." I shook my head at Lisa, who seemed thoroughly amused. "Got it? No one rode any horses?"

"You sound mad, Aunt Rea. Did you want to ride the horses?"

Lisa threw her head back and laughed, drawing attention to our table. She dabbed at her eyes and nodded at Posie. "You can bet your bottom dollar that Aunt Rea wanted to ride the horses."

A shadow fell over our table before I could strangle my sister-in-law and I looked up to see Pearl frowning at me. "Jonah doesn't believe your cake was homemade. He thinks I'm pulling a fast one on him."

I frowned. "You are."

“Yeah, but he doesn’t know that. Bake a little worse!” She put her hands on her hips and looked over at Lisa. “Saw that you’re doing a little baking of your own.”

Lisa’s mouth fell open. “How in the world...?”

I looked between the two of them and focused on Lisa. “So, you have your own secrets, do you?”

Pearl flicked me on the shoulder and rolled her eyes. “She has a secret, but you have three. Mind your business.”

“Oh, that’s rich.” I saw her eyes narrow and held up my hands. “I’ll bake a little crappier.”

The old woman studied me for a beat longer and then looked back at Lisa. “Looks like you’re not going to be alone.”

Lisa’s eyes just about popped out of her head but before she could say anything and before I could demand to know her secret since she knew mine, the door to Landings opened in what felt like slow motion and I watched as my ex walked in with the most focused look I’d ever seen on his face.

“Oh, god, no.” It was like my whispered words drew his gaze. I tried to slink lower in the booth, but with both girls glued to my hips, there was no way. It was too late. I’d been spotted.

“What is it?” Lisa twisted around in the booth and saw Ben striding towards us. “Who...? *Oh*. Oh, no.”

Ben stopped next to our table and braced his hands on it, leaning forward until he was invading my space. “I have been calling you nonstop. I even called your brother.”

“You called Russ?”

Ben kept right on going. “I left her, Reagan. I need a chance to explain and talk to you. Please.”

People were starting to stare and I was damn near dying from the embarrassment. “Ben, please go away.”

“Not until you let me talk to you.” He stood up straight and put his hands on his hips. “I’m not leaving until you let me explain and tell you that I love you, Reagan.”

I dropped my elbows to the table and covered my mouth. He’d never uttered those words. I had because I’d thought they were real, but Ben never had. I’d waited for him to say them, thinking that they would make everything feel more perfect between us, more right, but hearing him say the words finally just felt awkward and flat.

Lisa met my gaze and shrugged. “He’s hotter in person than I assumed he’d be with the cheating and the stalking.”

Ben was LA beautiful; she was right. If his loud declaration of love hadn’t drawn everyone’s attention, his looks would’ve. They were doing nothing for me, though. I’d spent the morning cuddling with three of the sexiest men to ever walk the face of the earth. I’d been to heaven and Ben just wasn’t adding up.

“Daddy’s mad.” Piper scooted out of the booth and skirted around Ben to join Lisa on her side of the table. “He’s real mad.”

My body flashed with panic. I looked up in horror to see my brother storming across the restaurant, heaven at his heels. Only August, Charlie, and Theo didn’t look like heaven in that moment. They looked much closer to hell as they moved closer to our table, their moods as clear as the thunderstorm brewing outside.

“Reagan? I mean what I said. I’m not...” Ben dropped to his knees next to me, unaware of his impending doom, and grabbed for my hands. “I’m sorry for what I did. You know me, though, baby. You know that I’m not that guy.

I messed up and I'll spend the rest of my life making it up to you if that's what you need."

Russ grabbed Ben by the back of his shirt and tugged him to his feet. "I thought I made it clear that you needed to stay away from my sister."

Lisa hissed out a warning for Russ to keep his shit together in front of the girls and it helped in making Russ let Ben go. Russ still hovered there, standing toe to toe with my very pacifist ex.

Ben, to my utter surprise, glared back at Russ. "You barked a bunch, but I didn't understand it. Reagan and I are adults with a relationship to work on. You have no business in it. It's nice that you care for your sister, but she's a woman, not a little girl. She can make up her own mind."

I sat back, shocked. They were words that I wanted to hear spoken, but just not by Ben. Still, it hit me that my cheating ex was boldly claiming me in front of God and man alike, while the men I desperately wanted would never do the same.

As if they could sense my thought process, the guys seemed to grow even larger as they fumed. August was the first to step forward. "You're making a scene. I suggest you leave. Now. If Reagan wanted to talk to you, she would've answered your calls."

Theo, always the wildcard, moved around Ben and all but shoved him out of the way to slide into the booth next to me. He threw his arm around me and pulled me close while glaring up at Ben. "She's busy."

"Reagan, just come with me. I'm renting a house in town. We can talk. I don't know what all this is, but I love you. I know you love me. That doesn't change in just a matter of weeks. Let me explain what happened and make it right. I can fix it all. Your job is yours when you want it. I bought a house in

the hills for us. We can start over. If you just give me a chance, I can make it all better.”

Charlie grabbed Ben’s arm and tugged him away, saying something against his ear that had Ben’s body stiffening before he allowed Charlie to tug him out of the restaurant.

I stared at the closed door, terrified of what Charlie was doing. I’d never seen him so angry. It wasn’t until I realized that everyone in Landings was staring at me that I shook off my stupor and looked up to see Russ staring at his friends, the two who were still there, with a suspicious look on his face. Panic clawed at me and I gripped the table as air seemed to escape me.

Lisa kicked me from under the table and I gasped, sucking in air and coughing. It thankfully drew Russ’ attention to me and away from the guys, but when he looked at me, I realized I was so close to tears that I knew it wouldn’t take much for me to cry.

“Well, that was interesting.” Lisa clapped her hands together and grinned. “It’s not every day we get to have such a dramatic start to dinner.”

Piper was still not over her earlier bad mood. She looked up at her dad and then back at me, sensing a chance to get one over on her old Aunt Rea. “Daddy, Aunt Rea has been horseback riding and she won’t let me come with her.”

Lisa spit out the water she’d just taken a sip of. I went as still as possible, praying I’d just fade to invisible. Theo let out a bark of laughter next to me and then coughed like that would cover it up.

August knocked his knuckles on the table a little roughly and nodded to Russ. “I’m going to go make sure Charlie isn’t murdering that dipshit.”

Posie cackled. “Uncle Aug said dipshit!”

Piper glared at her sister. “You can’t say dipshit, dummy.”

“Don’t call me names, dipshit!”

Russ growled and pointed to the door. “Everyone out. We’ll have dinner at home. This is a shitshow.”

Theo slid out of the booth and offered me his hand to help me out, but with Russ glaring at me, I pretended not to see it. Once I was standing, I hurried outside like my ass was on fire and looked around quickly to see Charlie walking back towards me.

He reached for me but I shook my head as the door opened behind me and Russ stomped out. Dropping his hands, Charlie frowned and ran his hands through his hair, mussing it up. His perfect dimples were out of sight with his bad mood. “He’s gone for now.”

“Thank you.” I flashed him a quick smile and then looked out at the road. “I think I’m going to walk home.”

“No, you’re not.” Russ glared at me, his own mood in the toilet. “Not with that nut out there.”

I squeezed my eyes shut and counted to ten, but it was useless. I opened my eyes, met my twin brother’s glare with one of my own, and did my best. “That nut had one thing right. I am an adult. What I do isn’t always your business, Russ. I just need some air and space to think. Thank you for always caring, but back off.”

With that, I walked off down the street, guilt already plaguing me.

40.

Charlie

The mood in my truck was dark as I drove us all towards August's house. I had a feeling we all wanted to go our separate ways and spend some time to ourselves, but Theo's truck was still parked at August's and I'd driven, so I needed to drop them both off. We'd tried drinking a few beers at my house, but we were too down for that to keep. It was more of a drinking-alone kind of night. None of us had said a word since getting in the truck and with the silence stretching on, I felt my anger growing on itself.

"He bought her a house in the hills? What kind of bullshit is that?" Theo sat in the back and his fist made a dull *thud* as he slammed it into the seat next to him. "That's not the kind of shit Reagan wants."

August kept his face turned away from us. "How do we fucking know? She was gone for ten years. Maybe she wants a man who can give her stability."

"And we can't give her that?" I gripped the wheel tighter. "He hurt her. He cost her the job she liked and embarrassed her. He made her the other woman. That's not stability."

"We can't even claim her in public."

The air in the truck turned dangerous as August's words settled over us. The way Ben had claimed Reagan in public, standing up to Russ, had left us all feeling like shit. The asshole had been able to find more backbone than any of us. He'd faced off with a furious Russ and didn't back down. Because he wanted Reagan that much.

"I thought I had it bad when she was eighteen and off-limits." Theo spoke quietly from the backseat. "I'm fucking ruined already."

“I just promised that asshole ex of hers that I would spend my entire fortune to make sure his body would never be found if he touched her again. It didn’t even occur to me that it was extreme until right now. What does it say about me that it was easier to stay away from her when we were kids because no one was allowed near her? Now that she’s not off-limits to other assholes, I can’t handle it.”

“Still a cop, Charlie.”

“Lock me up, then, Aug, because that little shit is safer if I can’t get my hands on him.”

“And if she picks him?” August slammed his fist into the dashboard, leaving a crack, and turned a fierce glare on me. “What then? What the fuck do we do if she decides that a man who can give her everything is better than three who can’t?”

“She’s not going to pick him. How can you even sit there and say that without it eating you alive?” I pointed at my dash and scowled at him. “You’re fixing that.”

“You don’t think it’s eating me alive? Not knowing where she is throughout the day is hard enough, but knowing that she could be talking to her ex right now? I feel like my insides are crawling. Fuck! I shoved this shit away for a decade. All just for it to come slamming back into my head the second I see her.”

“What if she doesn’t pick her ex? Does it really matter? What’s the next step? We keep sneaking her around?”

I looked back at Theo and then over at August. “Is anyone going to fucking point out that we’re all obsessing over the same woman? This shit isn’t normal.”

“I’m not backing off.” August shook his head and looked at us. “Neither

are you, I can tell.”

Theo grunted. “Not a chance in hell. More than that, she doesn’t seem to want us to.”

“That was before Hollywood showed up.” I turned into August’s drive and rubbed the bridge of my nose. “Looks like we know nothing, have no plans, and are fucking shit out of luck if she wants a real future with someone.”

“We’re shit out of luck, no matter what. Either she leaves us and we lose her, or she wants to stay with us and we self-destruct, lose each other and Russ, and then her. What’s the other option? We come out to Russ, he’s happy as can be that we’ve been secretly fucking his sister, and we lead a happy life as a...quad-couple?”

“Don’t say quad-couple. That makes it sound like I’d ever want to date either of you two fucks.” Theo shoved August’s shoulder and groaned as he collapsed against his seat. “I need whiskey. I’m taking Iris to a play tomorrow, though. Daddy can’t show up hungover and smelling like depression.”

I frowned when August’s house came into view, with most of the bottom floor lights on. “Afraid of the dark suddenly?”

August sat up. “I didn’t leave the lights on.”

A figure moved by the window and my breath caught. I would’ve recognized those curves anywhere. I slammed the truck into park and looked over at my best friends. “She didn’t choose him.”

August ran his hand down his face and I could see his nerves. “Let’s go be sure.”

He went first and as soon as his foot hit the first step of the porch, the front door flew open and Reagan launched herself out the door and into his arms. He caught her and stumbled back a few steps. “*Baby*. Are you okay?”

She pressed her face into his neck and inhaled deeply. “I don’t want to talk about any of it. I just want to be here with the three of you.”

Theo moved closer and Reagan moved into his arms next. He grunted when she squeezed him tight. “You’re choosing us?”

“I can’t help it.” She moved to me next and gasped when I picked her up and tossed her over my shoulder. “Charlie!”

I cupped her ass and stomped into the house. “Today has officially driven us all a bit insane. How about we skip the talking all together?”

The guys followed me inside, all of us content to stick around after finding Reagan waiting for us. August went straight to his bedroom and the light dimmed before he came out shirtless. “Do you need time to settle in, Rea?”

She wiggled in my arms until I put her down. Seeing August, smiled and shook her head. Moving to stand in front of him, she grabbed the hem of her shirt and pulled it over her head. “I know what I need.”

I turned the stereo on and followed them into the bedroom. Theo was behind me, his energy wild as he leaned against the doorframe and watched Reagan. Reagan gently pushed August to the bed and then turned to face me and Theo while swaying her hips. I watched as she sat back on August’s lap and ground her ass into him.

He gripped her hips and then skimmed her sides as he moved to cup her tits and squeeze them. She took one of his hands and pushed it down to her jeans, still grinding into him while he unbuttoned them and forced his hand inside. I could see his knuckles moving through the tight denim as he cupped her sex and then rubbed her.

Reagan’s head dropped back onto his shoulder and she leaned into his neck, kissing him and running her tongue over the shell of his ear. “I need to come and then I want to show all of you how much I appreciate you.”

41.

August

My head buzzed from all the blood in my body rushing to my dick. It was trapped between Reagan's perfect, denim-clad ass cheeks and she was working it like a fucking stripper pole while Theo and Charlie watched. Hearing what she needed, I pulled my hand out of her pants long enough to shove them down to her knees with the tiny panties she wore. My dick met her warm flesh and jumped happily, but I ignored him. I buried my hand between her thighs again and spread her out as far as possible with her pants catching, so the guys could see.

Reagan was already wet as I rubbed my thumb in circles over her clit and teased my fingertips at her entrance. She rocked her hips, hungry for more already. I gripped her chin with my other hand and turned her face so I could kiss her. Stroking my tongue into her mouth, I tasted the sweetness that was Reagan and chocolate. She moaned into the kiss and submitted to my kiss, letting me kiss her deeper and longer. All the while, I dipped my finger into her just far enough to drive her crazy and have her wetness leaking out.

She whimpered into the kiss and when I pulled back, I could see the need brimming over in her. Not wanting her to suffer, I plunged my fingers in deep and curled them so I could rub her g-spot while working her clit faster. She was a sensitive little thing and came within seconds, throwing her head back and calling out my name. Her walls pulsed around my fingers and I found myself desperate to be inside her.

"Jesus." Theo met my wild gaze and I watched as he ran his hand down his face and fought to get control of his own need.

Charlie looked as if he was seconds from losing his mind. We were all pent up with desire and anger, too much of both, probably. Seeing someone else

touching Reagan had affected us. Being gentle with her was going to be hard when the need to claim her and mark her as my own, our own, was so strong.

Reagan kissed me again and then took off the rest of her clothes before kneeling in the floor between us. Naked and displayed, she was the perfect image, one that I'd burn into my brain to never lose.

She met each of our stares and licked her lips. "I have a fantasy. One that I envisioned a long time ago and it's never gone away. I always imagined that you three would be so desperate to fuck me when you finally got the chance that you'd be afraid you'd hurt me if you didn't calm down some first. You'd put me on my knees and make me suck your cocks until you came. Then, and only then, you'd be able to fuck me without being too rough."

My brain fried itself as I stared at the perfect woman offering herself up in the hottest way. I opened my mouth to form words, but I didn't have a lot of blood left going to my brain. It seemed none of us did.

"Um. Would one of you say something before I die of embarrassment?"

Theo ripped his shirt in his haste to get it off. "Fucking hell, woman."

Charlie nearly killed himself as he tripped trying to get his pants and boots off at the same time. "Can't really form coherent sentences in this state, but hell, yes."

One of my boots hit a glass of water on my dresser and knocked it off, but I didn't give a shit. I tossed the other boot in the same direction and kicked out of my pants and briefs. "You're moving in. Fuck a house in the hills."

Reagan shivered and spread her knees wider, dipping her fingers between her thighs as we all watched. She bit her lip hard and her chest heaved as a flush washed over her beautiful body. "Not that I ever thought you'd want me that bad. I wasn't—"

Theo cupped her jaw and ran his thumb over her lips. "Open up. I fuck this

sexy little mouth or I bend you over and fuck you so hard you won't walk right for a week."

With a soft whimper, Reagan parted her lips and held out her tongue, waiting for his dick. I watched as my best friend held the eyes of the woman I was obsessed with as he slid into her mouth. Despite the threat, he was gentle as he gave her more of his length. He stroked her cheeks and then cupped her head as he pulled out and thrust back in.

I stroked myself as I studied the way her fingers worked between her thighs. She moaned around Theo and gripped his thighs, but a second later, she seemed to realize Charlie and I were next to her, too. Her hand left her core as she reached for both of us and took both of us in her firm grip. I watched as her wetness smeared across my length and balled my hands into fists to keep from grabbing her away from Theo.

After working her mouth over him for a few more thrusts, she pulled back and shifted so she could pull me into her mouth. My eyes rolled back in my head as she took me to the back of her throat on the first stroke and held me there while she swallowed. I fisted her hair and pumped my hips, fucking her mouth.

She moaned and then gave me one more playful lick before moving to Charlie. It went on like that for a while, each of us slowly losing our fucking minds as Reagan teased and tortured us. She swallowed us deep, sucked like a damn vacuum, and then nibbled the head before moving on. Her hands never stopped stroking, keeping us close to orgasm. She was driving herself just as crazy. Her moans had turned more desperate with each moment that passed. She rubbed her thighs together helplessly, unable to take her own pleasure with her hands full.

Theo was the first to break. His thrusts grew slightly rougher and he

growled her name like a man possessed before feeding Reagan more come than she could swallow down. It was filthy, watching her suck his dick and get covered in his come, but seeing our sweet woman be just that filthy was the hottest thing.

Theo barely finished before Charlie and I both moved forward. Reagan took both of our heads into her mouth, sucking and stroking with her tongue, all while her hands pumped us to our finish. I shouted her name as the first jet of my come hit the back of her throat. Charlie came at the same time and it was too much for our woman. Swallowed as much as she could, Reagan still ended up with our come coating her chin and tits as it dripped down.

I stumbled back a step, the power of my orgasm nearly taking my knees out. I was helpless to move any farther, though, when Reagan's hand moved between her thighs and rocked roughly until she screamed out her own orgasm and collapsed forward on her hands.

The rest of the world started to come back to me as I regained my senses. The music had switched to some old country station and the ceiling fan made the same low rocking noise it always had. I could hear our breathing, all labored, all of us trying to get any semblance of control back.

I recovered first and gently lifted Reagan to her feet. "Come on, baby. Let me clean you up."

She lifted dazed eyes to me and smiled. "And then we can finish?"

Charlie let out a shaky laugh behind me. "Give me twenty minutes and a glass of water. I think you just sucked part of my soul out."

Theo's grin was shameless. "Told you. Our baby has a mouth like no other."

Reagan, drunk on her pleasure, wagged her finger. "No others."

I kissed the side of her head. "Damn right, baby."

42.

Reagan

Kara's cheeks were flushed and her eyes were wide as she turned to Megan. "Take me home."

I slapped my hands over my face and giggled like a schoolgirl. "I don't know what came over me. I think there's something to the alien stuff. Maybe instead of abducting us, they're turning us into sex-crazed maniacs?"

Megan shook her head and playfully slapped Kara's roaming hand. "That's just you. And my wife, thanks to you. Baby, we're having lunch. You were starving two seconds ago."

"And then Rea told us all about getting screwed in a hundred different ways over the last week. It's the hormones. I can't help it."

Megan's lips pursed instantly and she sent a look toward Kara that spelled trouble. I frowned and focused on my fries, not wanting to start an argument between them, even if I didn't know how I had.

"Shit. Sorry. My brain. You've seen me. It's all over the place." She pouted at Megan and pressed a series of kisses to her cheek. "Can't we tell her?"

Megan sighed and kissed Kara slowly, passionately enough to make me feel like I was invading. Finally, she looked over at me and then back into her wife's shining eyes. "We're having a baby. Kara started the hormone treatments, anyway. I'm a little nervous to tell people, just in case it doesn't work right away."

I screamed before I could slap my hand over my mouth in time to stop it. Tears instantly filled my eyes and I choked on a sob. "That's amazing!"

Megan stared between me and Kara, who was also crying, and raised her eyebrows. She looked like she was going to say something and then shook

her head. “The hormones have turned Kara into one giant ball of horniness. Along with making her forgetful, emotional, and oddly irate at people who don’t use turn signals. I can’t imagine how the actual pregnancy hormones will be.”

“That one is valid. The turn signal, I mean. It’s infuriating.”

I nodded and wiped my eyes. “It really is.”

“So, um, Rea...” Megan glanced at my stomach and then away just as quickly. Before she could finish her thought, her attention locked onto something behind me and she swore. “Here comes a big snake. Looks like she has her next victim in her fangs already.”

We were sitting outside of Landings in an odd off hour, getting the entire patio to ourselves. The heat was tough, but I couldn’t exactly give them a play by play of my sex life while sitting inside, next to half the town. I had my back to the street and I quickly turned to see what had pissed Megan off.

Shock struck me as I saw Jenny walking towards Landings with her arm through Ben’s. Ben looked miserable and had his head down, just being led around. He even managed to make it inside while Jenny gave me a smug look without noticing a thing.

“Who is that? He’s pretty.” Kara shoved one of my fries in her mouth and made a face. “Probably won’t be when Jenny is done with him.”

I waited for jealousy or anger to settle over me, but they never came. I only felt bad for Ben, which annoyed me because he was a cheater, but no one deserved Jenny. “That’s my ex.”

Megan gasped. “No!”

Kara growled and threw her napkin down. “I’ll kick her ass.”

I shook my head and laughed. “I’m not upset. I feel bad for him. He looks sad and now he’s stuck having lunch with Jenny. That’s a terrible

combination.”

“Wow.” Megan smiled as she studied me. “You’ve got it bad for your men. Seeing Jenny going after your ex didn’t even phase you. Do you remember what you said in high school?”

I stilled as panic worried its way through me. I knew what she was going to say from the look in her eyes. I didn’t want to hear it, though. Things were going okay. I didn’t want to start thinking about what came next. “No. Let’s focus on Jenny being a terror.”

“What’d she say?”

“She told me she loved them and she thought she always would. We’d just watched some sappy rom-com and she said she felt like a part of her had never really been hers; it’d always been theirs.” Megan held my gaze. “You’re a little older, but you’re no less you. I don’t think you’d chance hurting Russ for a roll in the hay, not for a second. It’s always been more.”

I shifted in my seat. “Shut up, Megan.”

Kara put her hand over Megan’s mouth. “Clearly, Rea isn’t ready for that conversation, baby.”

Any conversation we were going to have was cut short by Jenny and Ben coming out to the patio area. Jenny stroked Ben’s arm and spoke to him in a sickly sweet voice. “Why don’t you grab us a table, Benny?”

Ben looked around and froze when he spotted me. Jenny was forgotten as he walked over to me. “Reagan. I... How are you?”

I smiled, determined to be kind to him, despite everything. “I’ve been good. I didn’t know you were still in town.”

He squatted next to me and braced his arm on the back of my chair. “Do you think it’d be okay if we got together to talk? I won’t push for anything,

Reagan. I just want to talk. I think I need help making sense of the mess I made.”

Jenny was the picture of anger behind us. “Ben? Aren’t you ready for lunch?”

I leaned in closer to Ben and lowered my voice. “We can talk. Just as friends, okay? And as a friend? Run as far as you can from that one.”

He stood up and leaned over, gently kissing the top of my head. “It’s a joke to think I could even look at another woman right now. She’s just showing me around as part of the welcome committee. Nice town.”

Megan snorted. “Getting nicer by the minute. I wasn’t aware we had a welcome committee.”

Jenny glared at Megan. “You aren’t aware of a lot of things.”

“Watch it, Regina George.” Kara’s grip on her fork was threatening, to say the least.

I patted Ben’s hand and kept my smile in place. “I’m free later today. We can talk then if that works for you?”

He pulled out his phone and mine beeped a second later. “That’s the address of the place I’m staying. We can sit out on the porch. I’d rather not have to hear all about my failures, no matter how valid, in a public setting, if that’s okay.”

I stood up and hugged him before quickly pulling away and resting my hand on his arm. “I’ll be there around five.”

“Shit. I suggest you run, Benny Boy. Even though you cheated on my bestie, you don’t seem like you deserve to be crushed to death.” Megan’s quick warning alerted us all to the incoming storm that was Theo.

Ben had the balls to pull me in for another fast hug before nodding at me. “See you at five.”

Jenny was left standing just on the outskirts of our table when Theo came to a stop in front of me. She was all eyes as she looked on.

“What the hell did he want? Why was he hugging you? Can he not take a hint?” Theo gripped the back of my neck and looked me over, clearly not seeing his ex-wife. “You okay? Did he bother you? I’ll kick his ass if he upset you, Rea. Just say the word.”

Megan cleared her throat. “Situational awareness, anyone?”

I pressed my knuckles against his stomach lightly, where Jenny couldn’t see, and flicked my eyes in her direction. “He was here with Jenny, actually.”

Theo glanced up, saw Jenny, scowled, and then pulled me into his chest. “I’ve got to run. I’m picking Iris up and we’re going to the park with Piper and Posie.”

Jenny scoffed. “What the actual fuck, Theo?”

He didn’t take his eyes off me as he spoke to her. “Good to see you, too, Jenny.”

I licked my lips and went to step away from him, slightly freaking out at being seen by his crazy ex. He caught the front of my shirt and pulled me closer.

“Want to come?” He stared at my mouth and when he glanced up at my eyes, he narrowed his slightly. “What? You’re about to say something I’m not going to like, aren’t you?”

“She’s going on a date with her boyfriend. Guess she’s too busy for a mechanic from Bumfuck, nowhere, when a rich boy from Hollywood is calling.” Jenny left with that parting blow, clearly happy with herself for trying to hurt Theo as she whistled her way away, food forgotten.

I glared after her and seethed, losing myself momentarily. Jerking away from Theo, I hurried after Jenny, catching up with her easily. She jumped

when I popped up next to her. “That mechanic from Bumfuck is the best man you could ever hope to spend a second of time with. If you have an issue with me, keep it with me. Going after Theo is bullshit and you know it. Not only is he great, he’s the father of your child. Show a little respect.”

Megan appeared at my side and wrapped her hands around mine, which had balled into fists. “On that note, you should go before my sweet and kind best friend loses herself to teach you a lesson.”

I’d said what I needed to say, though. I walked back towards our table, nearly bumping into Theo, who was right behind me. I looked up and saw that he was grinning down at me. Sighing, knowing that I was going to be teased for how I’d tried to fight for him, I poked his chest. “Not a word, Theo.”

He followed behind me as I walked back to our table. “That was almost enough to make me forget that you’re meeting with your ex.”

“Go away, Theo.”

He spun me around and lifted my chin. “You’re beautiful when you’re angry.”

I rolled my eyes and shoved at his chest, barely moving him. “Goodbye, Theo!”

“Let Hollywood down easy, baby.”

43.

Theo

My skin itched knowing that Reagan was with her ex, but I knew she was ours. Whatever that meant, it was true. Seeing her chase Jenny down to stand up for me had not only been the sexiest thing I'd ever seen, it was downright adorable. Reagan got wild with us; she acted out and slipped out of her normal politeness. She didn't do it in public. Seeing her snap because she couldn't let someone insult me was enough to make me feel ten feet tall.

I was sitting outside the shop with Charlie and August, drinking a beer and counting down the minutes until Reagan called one of us. It was a nightly occurrence. She finished work, spent some time with her family, and then called us. There hadn't been a night that she hadn't been with one of us, if not all of us.

"You should've seen her. It was fucking stunning. Jenny dropped some low blow that didn't even phase me and then Rea was yanking away from me to chase after her. Her eyes shot fire, I'm pretty sure."

August scratched at his beard and grinned. "She's pretty fond of you, I guess."

Charlie slapped my chest with the back of his hand. "Don't let it go to your head. You're not the favorite."

"Of course, he thinks his dimples make him the favorite." Groaning, August finished his beer and tossed the empty bottle into the recycling bin. "Fucking pretty boy."

I laughed and tossed him a fresh one from the cooler. "He thinks we haven't noticed the way he uses them on Rea. No one grins that much."

"Oh, fuck off." Charlie chuckled and stretched his legs out in front of him. "How long does it take to tell someone to leave town and never call again?"

Shifting in my seat, I shrugged. “We were just talking about how sweet she is. There’s no telling how long it’ll take her to tell him to fuck off.”

“Think she needs help? I’m great at telling people to fuck off.” Charlie clenched his jaw and stared out at the potato chip. “I feel like a teen girl sitting by the phone, waiting on a call.”

“I’ve been thinking.” August bounced his leg and then put his beer on his knee to force himself to stop. “Maybe we talk to Russ. It doesn’t seem like this thing is getting lighter. Every fucking time I touch her, I find something else I can’t get enough of.”

Silence stretched on for a few minutes as we each thought about the repercussions. Charlie was the one to break it. “It’s serious. With all of us. Am I crazy for not being horrified?”

I rested my elbows on my knees and set my beer down between my feet. “I think we’re all crazy. Somehow, it just is, though. If anyone else touched her, I’d want to kill them. You both are like my brothers. You’ve been there with me through everything. We started this thing together a decade ago and I think that might be the way it’s supposed to be.”

“Let’s just acknowledge that it’s weird as hell and move on from it. Because you’re right. It feels like this is how it’s supposed to be. The idea that one of us would have her to ourselves feels like the end of something special.”

“It’s what Rea wants. She wouldn’t pick one of us.” Charlie smiled and then chuckled. “Just imagine asking her to choose. I’m pretty sure it’s all of us or none of us for her. She couldn’t pick.”

I smiled too because something about knowing that we were in something so deep together felt right. “Pretty sure she’d beat the shit out of us for even suggesting that she pick one of us as better than the other two.”

“So, we’re verbally acknowledging that this is what we’re doing?” August grimaced. “We’re doing the quad-couple bullshit?”

I laughed until my sides hurt, a sense of relief loosening the tightness that had plagued my chest for weeks. “So. The bet.”

Charlie groaned. “The bet. What a stupid thing.”

“We are the stupid things.” August shrugged. “But we can learn. Clearly. And we’ve learned that making a bet on who would win Rea was fucking dumb.”

“Especially since there was no way that would’ve ended well. Did we really think one of us would win her over and the other two would be happy-go-lucky about it? Enough so that they’d just go clean and stock the lake house? Talk about a fight in the making.” I folded my arms behind my head and snorted. “There is the matter of who is going to be stuck doing that shit, though.”

“You say that like we’re even going to have a lake house to go to after Russ finds out. He’ll probably burn everything we’ve ever touched to the ground.” Charlie frowned. “I won’t lie. I don’t have a clue how to do it, how to tell our best friend that we’ve been lying to him and breaking the only rule he’s ever given us.”

I stood up and then sat back down, unsure what to do with myself as guilt weighed heavily on me. “He’s going to fucking hate us. He won’t even be wrong for it.”

“I know that we’re wrong. I know that we should’ve kept our shit in our pants and ignored the pull to Rea, but I’m not sorry. I…” August took a deep breath and blew it out loudly. “I care about her. There’s never been anyone else.”

“Do you think it’ll make Russ take a little better if he knows that we…”

care...about her? That feels like too small of a word for what it is.”

I studied Charlie. “There’s probably a word that fits it better. It’s scary as hell, though. I thought I felt it before for Jenny, but I was a fucking idiot. Now I know that what I felt for Jenny was just...a longing to feel what I felt for Rea.”

“We could’ve told you that.” Charlie nodded for a second and then chuckled. “Yeah, that other word fits better, but it’s too soon. Right?”

Something fell over in the shop, but when I looked in the open bay doors, I didn’t see anything out of place. Before I could get up to look around, my phone buzzed and I looked down to see a message from Rea.

“I’m starting to think she only wants us for Hunter. She’s at your house, again.” I nodded to August and laughed. “She says Hunter is keeping the bed warm until we get there.”

Cursing, August stood up. “Damn dog.”

Charlie pulled his keys from his pocket. “Close this place up. Our girl’s waiting for us.”

We all hesitated, looking back and forth at each other for a minute before August punched us both in the arm and growled. “I’ll strangle you both if either of you ever repeats that I said quad-couple.”

Charlie did the same, punching both me and August. “And I’ll bury you both if you tell anyone I said any of this shit.”

I joined in and punched them, too. “I don’t know what embarrassing thing I said because everything I say is awful lately, but just keep it to yourselves. Assholes.”

Manly friendships realigned, we closed up the shop faster than ever before and climbed into Charlie’s truck so he could drive us to Rea.

44.

Reagan

Things had been going well. Probably too good, if I really stopped and thought about it. I loved working for the Stovalls; baking for Pearl was getting me tons of practice in things that I didn't do a lot as a private chef; I spent every night with the guys. My friendships with the women around me were growing and becoming even more special than anything I'd ever experienced before. While I'd had close friends in LA, I'd always been so busy that I hadn't poured anything into them. Megan, Kara, and Lisa were showing me how fulfilling friendship could be as an adult.

I felt complete for the first time in my life and, though it was scary, I had never been happier. I was where I was supposed to be. Even if the location didn't make a lot of sense compared to other people's.

The future wasn't something I spent much time thinking about, but when I did, the rose-colored glasses did threaten to slip a bit. I just didn't know what could come of my relationship. Relationships? I didn't even know the correct way to label what I had.

Not thinking about anything past the present was probably why Russ' annual lake trip had snuck up on me. He talked about it every year, but I'd never been around for it before. I even had the silly idea that I would be excused and I'd get to stay home alone for the weekend. Of course, I really thought I'd just get to stay with my guys all weekend, undisturbed. I hadn't paid attention enough to understand that everyone was going to the lake. Everyone. By the time Charlie told me he'd see me at the lake house in passing, it was too late for me to do a damn thing about getting out of the trip.

I'd driven the hour to the house with Russ and Lisa, sandwiched between Piper and Posie's car seats. We'd listened to kid songs for what felt like much

longer than an hour and then spent the night in the house, just the five of us. It wasn't until the next morning that I had to face my first interaction with the guys in front of Russ.

Over breakfast, while Lisa and I applied a ridiculous amount of sunscreen to the girls in between bites of pop-tarts, the guys showed up. Of course, they didn't come fully clothed, willing to help me out. They showed up in swim trunks and nothing else, having arrived early and gone straight to the water.

I was tasked with staying calm while they stood around the kitchen, bare-chested and already sun-kissed. It was torture to not run my tongue over their abs and taste the perspiration gathering.

I sighed as I thought about what a freak I'd turned into and drew Russ' attention. He stared at me with raised eyebrows until I sat up straighter and scrunched up my nose at him. "What?"

"Something wrong? You've been sighing so much you warmed my pop-tart."

I scoffed and made a face at him. "Ha. Ha. Funny. I'm fine. Just ready to get into the water."

"Is Ben still bothering you?"

I planted my elbows on the table and thought about murdering my brother. Why he brought up awkward topics in front of everyone, I'd never understand. "No. He's leaving town soon."

"Has he still been trying to talk to you?" August's annoyed tone sent a shiver down my body. August annoyed usually meant I was going to find myself bent over any flat surface with him working that frustration out buried inside me.

I licked my lips and dusted my hands off on my shorts before standing and taking a step towards the door. It wasn't that I'd been keeping Ben's

communication a secret from the guys on purpose. It was just...awkward. I felt bad for Ben and I knew I was a sucker for it, probably, but I couldn't help it.

"That looks like a yes." Charlie frowned at me as he twisted the cap off a bottle of water a little too roughly. "What the hell doesn't he get?"

I glanced over at Theo and found that he looked just as annoyed. Blowing out a big breath, I held up my hands. "He's been reaching out every so often. Just as a friend."

The four men laughed in unison like it was the funniest thing they'd ever heard. Lisa, who'd been annoyed at Russ for some unknown reason since she woke up, looked over at me and put her hands on her hips. "Let's go down to the water. Looks like these four can handle this without us."

Russ groaned. "Lisa, honey, what's—"

"Do not ask me what's wrong right now, Russ. I am as mad as a cat with its ass on fire. I suggest everyone in the vicinity with a penis stay away from me." She took my hand and pointed at the girls, who were both giggling about mad cats. "To the water."

Of course, the guys followed. They clearly had a death wish because Lisa was scary when she was mad. I'd only seen her that angry a few other times in all the time I'd known her, and that had been when she was pregnant with the girls. I studied her, wondering if she could be pregnant again, but she'd never kept the pregnancies quiet before.

Before I could think about it much more, the girls were dragging me into the water with them. I barely had time to throw off my coverup before I was soaked by their splashing. While Lisa settled in a lounge, I stayed with the girls in the water until Russ and the guys joined us. Then, it was too much wet skin and temptation, so I rushed out of the water, desperate to bake in the

sun to cool off from the looks the guys were giving me. That's how heated they were; the sun was a break.

I settled next to Lisa and watched her for a few minutes before a thought started forming in my head. My stomach fluttered and I rested my hand over it, just to find Lisa staring at my hand. I sat up in a hurry, facing her, and grabbed her hand. "Lisa?"

She shoved her sunhat up and met my eyes. "Reagan?"

"You're pregnant, aren't you?"

She laughed, her eyes brimming with unshed tears. "Yep."

I squeezed her hand, a nervous feeling settling over me. Pearl's weird premonition, or whatever it'd been, slammed into my mind like a semi-truck. She'd said Lisa wasn't going to be alone in whatever her secret was. "Why... Why are you keeping it a secret?"

Before she could answer, Theo's raised voice calling his ex-wife's name in confusion had us both turning. Sure enough, Jenny was strolling towards us in the world's smallest bikini, Iris bouncing along beside her. Ignoring me and Lisa, she walked to the edge of the water and beamed at the guys while cocking her hip out, drawing attention to her tiny waist and slim hips.

"Hey, fellas. Iris and I thought we'd join you for a bit. We were over at Jim's house and saw the fun. Do you have room for two more in there?" Her sweet voice immediately grated on my nerves, and when I looked back at Lisa, I could tell she wasn't taking too kindly to Jenny's presence, either.

I didn't fully understand the weight of her being there with us until she walked over a second later and dropped her bag at my feet and smiled. It was chilling and I sat back, forgetting that I was still clutching Lisa's hand.

"What's wrong, Reagan?" She leaned closer. "You look like a well-kept secret you've been hiding is on the verge of being exposed. Wow."

45.

Reagan

My hands shook as I dipped potato salad out on my plate and moved on to the baked beans. I was watching a car crash and even though I knew it was coming, there was nothing I could do to stop it. Short of killing Jenny. Which was, sadly, something I'd considered for about two seconds. She was sitting between Theo and August at the picnic table, across from Russ, laughing happily, like she wasn't tormenting me. Russ, who had no clue what was happening, seemed like he was having a good time, to the utter fury of Lisa, who sat next to him, glaring at Jenny.

The kids were at a little plastic picnic table, cheering about the cupcakes Lisa brought. They were far enough from the adults' table that if Jenny chose to ruin everything, the kids might escape some of the fallout.

Charlie moved to my side with a hot dog in one hand, a beer in the other. With his damp blonde hair, tan skin, and bright blue eyes, he was the picture of summer happiness to me. The only thing missing would've been fireworks going off behind him. His dimples were on full display as he stopped next to me. "Everything okay?"

I had a flash of a little boy who looked just like him, the two of them playing catch in the front yard. Dropping my plate on the table of food, I shook my head and hurried into the house. Rushing to the bathroom, I barely made it to the toilet before throwing up. I chanted in my head that the heat and the sun had just gotten the best of me. It was the middle of the afternoon. There was no way it was morning sickness. Of course, not. There was no way. I'd taken my birth control religiously. Pearl's words haunted me, though.

After brushing my teeth and washing my hands, I stumbled back outside, terrified to leave Jenny alone with the guys, with my brother, for too long. Only when I got to the table, I realized that things were already tense.

“If you just came to start trouble, Jenny, you should go.” Theo shook his head and pushed away from the picnic table. “No one here needs that.”

I froze as I watched Jenny turn to me. For a second, I saw pain there and almost felt bad for her, but then her gaze turned ice-cold.

“I wasn’t starting trouble, Theo. I was just commenting on the food. I mean, if Reagan is a professional chef, shouldn’t it be better?”

Lisa scowled. “She didn’t cook. I did.”

With a giggle, Jenny waved Lisa off and kept smiling at me. “Hey, Reagan, what’s Russ think about how you’ve been spending your time in Lunar?”

August stood up and stepped closer to me like he was going to physically block her ugliness from touching me. “Jesus, Jenny, when are you going to grow up and realize that high school ended a decade ago?”

“What the hell is going on?” Russ growled as he stood up, too. He looked around at all of us and braced his hands on the table. “You’re all keeping something from me. I can fucking tell something is going on.”

“Watch it in front of the kids, Russ.”

“Don’t, Lisa. I know you know something, too.”

I covered my mouth in horror and shook my head. Lisa didn’t deserve Russ’ wrath. That was all me. Stepping closer to him, I reached out to touch his arm. “Russ, don’t be like that to her. She didn’t do anything wrong.”

“So, she didn’t know that you’ve been fucking his best friends behind his back?” Jenny tossed her napkin down and kept right on smiling. “Wow, Reagan. You’re like really good at keeping secrets.”

Russ swung around to face me, shock and fury warring on his face. “What?”

Theo swore and moved closer while Charlie grabbed my arm to pull me out of Russ’ path. That just seemed to piss Russ off even more, though. He grabbed me and yanked me behind him, turning with me to glare down at me.

“Is she lying? Tell me she’s fucking lying, Reagan.”

“Inside, girls. You, too, Iris.” Lisa hurried to get the girls, who were already starting to cry, inside.

August moved to my side again. “Let her go, Russ.”

I whimpered when Russ shoved me away and walked away. I tried to go after him, but August wrapped an arm around my waist to hold me back. It didn’t matter, though, because Russ came marching right back.

“How long?” His eyes went to August’s arm and narrowed. “Guess I don’t need to ask which friend.”

Jenny snorted. “Oh, Russy. It’s all three of them.”

August swore and pushed me out of the way when Russ charged at him. I screamed at the sight and watched in horror as Russ punched August hard enough to bloody his nose. Charlie and Theo stepped in to push Russ back and took several punches, too. None of them fought back against my raging brother and I couldn’t take it.

I rushed into the chaos and grabbed at Russ’ arms while screaming at him to stop. One of Russ’ wild swings landed across the bridge of my nose, making my vision darken for a second. I stumbled but came right back at him. The guys, seeing me get hit, reacted finally. Russ took a few solid hits that knocked him backward, where Charlie shoved him to the ground and August pinned his arms behind his back, both of them shouting at him for hitting me.

Theo pulled me into his arms, holding me as gently as he could while I fought to get away, needing it all to stop. I was in a full-on panic, tears pouring down my face.

Russ went still as he saw my face and jerked out of his best friends' grips. Standing and dusting himself off, he glared at the four of us and finally settled his hard gaze on me. "I want you out of my house."

A sob escaped my mouth and I sagged against Theo. "Russ, I'm sorry. Please, just—"

"Shut up, Reagan! I don't want to hear it. You've all been lying to me and I want nothing to do with any of you right now. Be out of my house by the time we're home from the lake tomorrow."

I watched him storm into the house and slam the door shut behind him. My chest ached painfully and I cried harder, feeling like I'd just lost my brother, the only person in the world I had left connecting me to my parents. I felt the guys surrounding me, each of them stroking my hair and holding me in turn.

"Unfortunately, I have more bad news for you, Reagan."

"Go the fuck away, Jenny!" Theo's loud demand felt like it shook the ground, he yelled it with so much conviction.

Jenny wasn't leaving without pushing in the final knife, though. "How does it feel to know that you just lost your family for these three and that you were just a bet to them?"

I couldn't make sense of what she was saying, but the guys had stiffened around me. It made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end.

"Yeah. They made a bet. Whoever got you would get to avoid stocking and cleaning this place, something I know how much they hate from the time I spent here with Theo. No wonder they worked so hard to get you. So, who won?"

“Fuck off, Jenny. Jesus.” Charlie didn’t sound like himself.

“You’ve done enough.” August even sounded worried.

I looked up at them and saw it. There was guilt in their eyes. My stomach cramped and I put my hand over it. “You made a bet about me?”

“It wasn’t like that, Rea.” Theo glared at Jenny. “It wasn’t some dirty thing.”

“Poor Reagan. You were a joke to them back in high school and you still are. Do you want to know what they used to call you?” She laughed. “Russ’ kid sister. You didn’t even get a name. And when I told everyone there was no way that they’d ever touch Russ’ kid sister? They laughed along like it was the most ridiculous thing in the world. You’ve always been a joke to them. A joke and an easy, freak lay. Now, they just learned to put something worthwhile on the line. Cleaning and stocking this place.”

“She’s full of shit, baby.” Charlie bent forward so he could look me in the eye. “You know what we have isn’t fake.”

August wiped tears from my face and roughly kissed me. “Stop listening to her. She’s trying to hurt you, Rea. You’ve spent every night with us for weeks. You know this isn’t a joke to us.”

“Looks like the bet isn’t over yet, Reagan. Better tell them who you pick and put them out of their misery.”

I held up my hands and stepped forward, closer to Jenny. “I saw it earlier, you know?”

She rolled her eyes. “What?”

“How sad you really are. I don’t know what caused you to be so nasty when we were kids, but I can see it now. You lost the best thing that will ever happen to you and it hurts, doesn’t it? You pushed Theo away and let him go and now you fall asleep every night, knowing that you can do everything in

your power until the day you die, but nothing will ease the pain of losing him. For a woman who thinks so highly of herself, it must kill you to know that you don't deserve him. And everyone knows it." I swallowed the lump in my throat and took another step closer. "And maybe you're also sad because you were just never what any of them were truly looking for. Maybe it isn't me, Jenny, but it's never been you, either. How bad it must hurt to know that you're no better than the girl you think so lowly of.

"I hate that you're in pain, but you should know that you're going to be stuck in this ugly place until you stop trying to bring everyone down to your level. You may be happy in this moment. You hurt me. Congrats. You also hurt my brother, who did nothing wrong. You hurt the guys behind me. You hurt the girls who had to see that. So, celebrate now, because tonight? Tonight, Jenny, you're going to be just as alone as you were last night. And the night before."

She glared at me with tears filling her eyes and her hands balled into fists. "You're just a bitch. What do you know?"

"I know that you should leave now."

She shoved past me without another word, leaving Iris inside the house. The guys surrounded me again after she left, ready to comfort me again, but they didn't understand that Jenny's poison had gotten to me.

I pulled away from them and looked at my feet. "I'm going to take a walk. I'll be back to get my stuff."

With no room to argue, they stayed behind and watched me walk away, unaware that I couldn't think of anything but running. I didn't care about my stuff. I didn't care about anything but trying to outrun the pain.

46.

Reagan

“Are you sure this is the right thing to do, Reagan?” Ben looked over from the seat next to me in first class. “I mean, this feels a little rushed.”

I clutched my purse to my chest, thankful I hadn't brought it with me to the lake. Looking down at the cup of ginger ale on my tray, I nodded. When it didn't feel sure enough, I nodded harder. “I need...space. I need to breathe.”

“So you're leaving a town with nothing but air for LA? You've heard of smog, right?” Ben pried my fingers off my purse strap and pressed his vodka cranberry into my hand. “Drink. You need to relax at least a little bit.”

My eyes filled with tears and I shook my head. Looking up and meeting his eyes, I felt my lip wobble and blew out a breath while wiping my cheeks. “I'm sorry.”

He took the drink away and clutched my hand. “What's going on? You showed up at my doorstep, demanding I take you back to LA, and I didn't push you, but you're freaking me out. I've never seen you this distraught and I managed to get you slapped by my wife and fired in the same day.”

The stewardess cleared her throat from beside us and offered me a pack of tissues. She shot Ben a disapproving look and leaned over to pat my hand. “Are you okay, honey? Can I get you anything?”

I shook my head and choked back more tears. I took the tissues and fought to open the package before bursting into shaking sobs that startled both the kind stewardess and Ben. While I fought to contain them, Ben rushed to make sure the woman knew he hadn't caused the tears.

“What I did was a while back. This isn't something I did. I'm not sure what exactly this is.”

“Jenny told Russ about me being with the guys. He kicked me out and hates me. He hates me so much. Then Jenny told me the guys were just with me as a bet. And Pearl hinted that I’m pregnant!” I accidentally shouted the last word and then buried my face in my lap and cried even harder.

“Oh, god. Is it mine?”

I slapped Ben’s arm and groaned. “No! We were always careful. And don’t sound so horrified about it. *And* maybe Pearl was wrong. She’s just a crazy old gossip.”

The stewardess slowly straightened and cleared the shock from her face. “Um. Wow. You know what? I think I’ve got something chocolate somewhere. Would that help?”

I nodded. “Please.”

“I wasn’t horrified, *per se*, but now that things between us are really over, for good, I’ve been thinking about how much I messed up with my wife. I was thinking about calling her. A kid would kill those plans, though.”

I patted his hand. “I hope she gives you hell. Men are the worst.”

“I thought you were going to be sweet for a minute there.” He sighed. “You were so much sweeter when we were dating.”

“You mean when you were one of my bosses?”

“Touché.”

We sat in silence as the plane took off, hurtling us away from Lunar. I’d run all the way to Jim and Mary’s lake house, only finding the wrong house twice before getting to theirs. Then, while Jenny watched on, I’d asked them to give me a ride back to Lunar so I could flee town. Thankfully, they were the most amazing couple. They’d listened to me cry and explain things that no employer should’ve ever had to hear about their employee, and then they’d offered me a place to stay. I’d just cried harder.

I'd grabbed my purse and a bag of my things from Russ' before rushing to Ben's and begging him to leave with me. I didn't think I could do it on my own. Having a friend by my side made it possible to get through the pain of walking away from Lunar again.

"All three of them, huh? No wonder I didn't stand a chance." Ben laughed when I groaned. "I'm kidding. I know you have your reasons for leaving, Reagan, but I've got to say. When those guys were threatening me away from you, it didn't seem like you were just some bet."

I curled up in the seat and chewed on my lip. "It didn't feel like it, either. They didn't deny the bet, though."

"So, they're men and did something stupid? You care about them." He looked down at my stomach. "And you might be carrying one of their children."

"I don't know what I'm doing, Ben. Seeing Russ attack them and hearing him tell me to leave... And then having Jenny trigger all of my fears... It was too much. It's been too much since the beginning. I've been selfishly taking what I want, not caring about how it's going to affect anyone else. They've all been best friends since they were old enough to pee outside together. And I just ruined that."

"You didn't ruin it. It sounds like Russ did. I'm not going to push you, but I think you should rethink running. I've never seen you so happy. I think you might be home in Lunar."

I rested my head on the seat and closed my eyes. "That's what I'm afraid of."

"I'll give you a week of feeling sorry for yourself and then I'm going to start pushing." Ben patted my hand and chuckled. "I can one thousand

percent say that I didn't think I'd be leaving Lunar with you, lecturing you on going back to your other three boyfriends."

"And I can say with the same conviction that I never thought I'd have three boyfriends."

"Liar." He was grinning when I looked over at him. "I heard a few rumors while I was hanging around town."

Groaning, I closed my eyes again. "Wake me up when we get to LA."

"Sure. Expecting mommas need their rest."

I slapped his arm. "I'm not pregnant, Ben. Probably. How would the town gossip know?"

"Take a test and put it to rest, then."

I shifted and swallowed around a ball of nerves. "Why waste the plastic?"

"Chicken shit."

"Yep."

47.

August

I banged on Russ' front door, my anger getting the best of me. I'd taken my best friend's shit. I had the bruises to prove it. Reagan had been gone for almost a week and I was done. Done waiting, done placating Russ' temper, and done pretending that I wasn't absolutely losing my fucking mind. Charlie and Theo were at my back, the two of them just as lost as I was without Reagan.

Lisa finally opened the door, her scowl transforming into something softer at the sight of us for a moment, and then it was back to scowling. "You three have a lot of nerve banging on this door. You've officially made my calm and peaceful life a living hell."

I didn't have the patience to pretend to feel as bad for her as I should've. "Sorry, Lisa. Where's Russ?"

She full-out smiled then, showing she was as crazy as I'd always known she was. "Basement. Go around the back. The girls are just starting to calm down and I don't want them losing it again if they see Russ chasing you out the front."

I nodded and almost rushed away, but something about the way she looked at me made me pause. "You talked to her?"

She nodded. "She's okay."

"Where is she?" I knew I sounded unhinged, but I didn't care. "We need to bring her home, Lisa."

She put her hand on my shoulder and sighed. "I know. I wish I could tell you. I want her back, too. At this moment, I'd rather she be here than her brother. She wouldn't tell me, though. Probably because she knew I'd send you three after her."

I tugged at my hair and backed away. “Thanks anyway, Lisa.”

“Hey. What’d you do?” She looked over my shoulder at Charlie and Theo. “I know that for her to have run, something had to have happened. Did you act like idiots after she told you?”

Charlie, looking every bit the washed-up footballer in his misery, frowned deeper. “Jenny made her think that we aren’t serious about her. We made a stupid bet before—”

“Told us what?” Theo eased Charlie out of the way and looked down at Lisa. “What are you talking about?”

Lisa’s face paled and she slapped a hand to her forehead. “Oh, god.”

“Lisa.” I pulled her hand away from her face and studied her face. “What is it?”

She groaned. “Pearl somehow knew I’m pregnant.”

I was confused, but I’d celebrated every pregnancy with Russ and Lisa. Pulling her into a hug, I lightly squeezed her and forced myself to show her that I was happy for her, even if I was dying a little inside from missing Reagan. “Why the secrecy?”

“She also insinuated that Reagan was pregnant, too.”

I stumbled backward. My heart slammed against my chest and I had to force myself to breathe. “Pregnant?”

Charlie growled. “That’s not funny.”

“Well, I’m not joking, Charlie Taylor.” Lisa planted her hands on her hips. “Reagan didn’t know. She was starting to put it together at the lake and then Jenny showed up. I just assumed she told you guys that she’s pregnant and you panicked and said something stupid.”

“She’s pregnant?” Theo sank down on the porch steps and hung his head between his knees. “She’s pregnant and she’s just...on her own?”

“She’s pregnant?” Charlie looked at me and then back at Lisa. “Okay, give me your phone. I think we can trace her last call or something. We need to find her. She can’t be in the city by herself in her condition. She needs to be here, with us, so we can take care of her.”

Lisa smacked Charlie and rolled her eyes. “You’re not the FBI, Charlie.”

“You don’t know the lengths I’ll go to or the money I’ll spend for her, Lisa. I have an entire trust fund sitting untouched. I’d burn it to the ground for her.”

She hugged him then, tears spilling over. “I don’t know where she is, guys, but I’m sure if her brother called her and talked to her, she’d tell him. It’s not like she’d ever believe his stubborn ass would tell you where she was.”

“Pregnant.” I bent forward and rested my hands on my knees, sucking in a lungful of air. My mind raced with the possibilities. Elation was quickly replaced with outright fear. The woman I loved was gone, out in the world somewhere I couldn’t protect her. The things I’d seen in life were usually kept at bay, but thinking of Reagan exposed and helpless brought them all raging back like the worst nightmare.

I charged towards the back of the house, happy to beat the shit out of Russ if I needed to. He was going to call his sister and he was going to do it right then.

“Oh, shit.” Theo jumped up and raced after me, seeing the look on my face. “Charlie! A little help!”

I kicked open the fence and found Russ at the back door of the basement, pulling a box out. He’d just straightened, startled by the sound, when I grabbed him and slammed him against the side of the house. “You’ve had your time brooding. Call your sister and find out where she is. *Now!*”

Russ shoved against me, but I had him beat by a few inches and twenty

pounds of muscle. “Get off me, asshole!”

“You kicked her out and she’s pregnant! If anything happens to her, I’m going to—”

“What?” Russ finally pushed me off and paced away. “She’s pregnant?”

Theo, still watching me closely, nodded. “We just found out ourselves. You can imagine that emotions are a little high. We need to find her and bring her home, Russ. She belongs here, with us.”

“With you?” Russ turned a glare on Theo. “With all three of you? What the fuck, man? You’re all just going to share my sister? That’s sick.”

“We love her.” Charlie’s quiet words left the backyard silent. He walked closer to Russ and put his hand on our friend’s shoulder. “We love her, Russ. Maybe we always have. It’s not conventional and I fucking know it’s not what you want, but that doesn’t change anything. She loves us, too, Russ. She wouldn’t have chanced hurting you if she didn’t.”

Russ knocked his hand away, but it lacked his full anger. “You fuckers lied to me. *Ten years* of lying. I made fun of her for being obsessed with you three like she was some loser stalker.”

I growled. “None of us told you to bully your sister, Russ. We fucked up. We shouldn’t have lied, but we were stupid fucking kids. The idea of ruining our friendship felt too huge to own up to what we’d done. We should’ve been men and told you the truth. That we’d watched Reagan grow into a woman and that she meant something to us. All of that aside, though, we never once joined you in making fun of her. We told you to stop. You were cruel to her for no reason.”

He charged at me and swung, but I easily dodged his punch and hit him instead, giving him back some of the bullshit he’d given us the week before. Groaning and cupping his eye, he stumbled away. “Fuck! You don’t think

I've been thinking about this shit all week? I know what I did and the way I acted to her. She never cut me off, though. She never held it against me. She's too fucking good for any of you. She's too fucking good for me, too. She deserves a brother who would've been there for her. Not me. What did I do? I kicked her out of the fucking house.

"It's *our* house! Did she mention that I have no right to kick her out of the house that she owns half of? Nope. She just let me treat her like shit and left. Goddammit!" Russ picked up the box he'd been moving and threw it farther into the yard. "I'm fucking furious with you three. You went behind my back and you slept with my *sister*. In ways that I can't even begin to consider. But I fucking hate myself right now."

My anger fizzled out and I followed him as he walked over to sit on the patio furniture. Charlie and Theo settled in the chairs across from us and we all just sat there, looking at each other. Finally, Theo laughed.

"What was in that box, man?"

Russ groaned and stretched his neck from side to side. "Fucking books. I think I just threw my entire spine out."

It didn't take long before we were all laughing, some of the tension broken. When we grew silent again, I sucked in a big breath and thought of Reagan out there, pregnant.

"I need you to call her, Russ. I love her. I need her back here. If she really is pregnant, I can't just let her stay out in the world, unprotected. If she won't come back here, I'll go to her."

Charlie nodded. "Without a second thought."

"It'd be hard with Iris, but I'd do it. If I sell the shop and my bike, I can afford to fly back and forth to see her plenty." Theo shrugged. "Whatever it takes."

Russ pulled his phone from his pocket and set it on the table. “I’m not over this shit. I need Reagan to have whatever she wants, though. Whatever it is.”

“It’s us.” Theo sat back in his seat and looked from Charlie to me. “She wants us. She needs us, Russ.”

“Don’t fucking make me regret this.” Russ pressed a button on his phone and then glared at us. “Just so we’re clear, this is for Reagan. And Lisa. Lisa is threatening to murder me in her sleep.”

I didn’t care why he did it as long as he dialed the damn number and talked to his sister. When he put the phone to his ear and awkwardly said hello to her a few seconds later, I felt lightheaded from the relief. And frustrated. We’d been calling Reagan nonstop, but I’d worry about that later. I just had to find her first.

48.

Reagan

“Nope.” I stared at Megan and Kara and then down at the pregnancy test. “I can’t do it.”

Kara groaned and fell back on the guest bed. Megan was at her side in a split second, touching her stomach and reminding her to be careful since they were already expecting. Kara just rolled her eyes and refocused on me. “Take the damn test, Rea. Do you think we flew all the way out here *just* to see you?”

I threw the test on top of the dresser and shook my head. “I think you flew all the way out here to see the beach and because you weren’t finished bothering me. I’m glad you did, though.”

Megan studied me the same way she’d been doing since getting off the plane and seeing me. There was worry permanently etched on her forehead. “It’s not like you even need the test. You’ve been sick since we got here.”

“There’s been a flu going around.”

“Around where? The kitchen? You haven’t left the house, besides to pick us up, since you got here. Ben brings you food and whatever else you need. The guy has gone from public enemy number one to enabler number one. He needs to stop taking care of you. Maybe then you’d realize you should come back home.”

My stomach turned like it’d been reminded that it was on an hourly vomiting schedule. Resting my hand on it, I ignored the imaginary bump I was starting to feel. “Remind me why I begged you to come here?”

Kara cackled. “It’s so sweet that you’re pretending that Megan didn’t basically invite herself here to check on you.”

“Reagan?” Ben’s voice called from the other side of the house. “Where are you? I brought prenatal vitamins and all the fruits and veggies that the store had to offer. Which was a lot.”

Megan made a face saying she told me so and led the way out to Ben. “Sorry, Reagan isn’t accepting that she’s pregnant.”

“Oh, I know. I just don’t care. She needs vitamins and to see a doctor soon. If she isn’t going to take care of herself, I’m going to do it for her.” He wagged a bunch of celery at me. “We all know you’re pregnant. What’s the holdup?”

The doorbell rang and I grinned, feeling saved by the bell. I wasn’t ready to talk about why I couldn’t accept that I was pregnant. It didn’t matter that my body was starting to change or that I was sick all the time. I just... couldn’t. Not when my heart was broken and I was homeless and I had no clue what I was doing with my life. I didn’t even feel like I had my life. I’d left it back in Lunar.

Not for the first, or thousandth, time, I thought about August, Charlie, and Theo and felt the chasm in my chest grow a little wider. They’d stopped calling basically nonstop. The day before, they’d only called once each, and that day, they hadn’t called at all. Had they gotten over me that quickly? If so, was Jenny right? Was I nothing to them?

“I guess I’ll get the door.” Megan rolled her eyes at me and pointed at Ben. “Try not to enable her anymore while I’m gone.”

“I’m not enabling. It’s called reparations when you’re a cheating asshole turned friend.” He grinned at me and winked. “The guys at the office asked that I offer whatever it takes to get you back to work.”

“So. The test.” Kara crossed her arms and leaned on the counter. “What will it take to get you to just take it?”

I bit my lip and then frowned. “If I was pregnant, depending on when it happened, I drank heavily that night at the chip. If I was pregnant, I blew up my life and fled Lunar for the second time. I’m not ready to accept that I’m a terrible mother yet.”

“You got flowers, Rea.” Megan brought a giant vase of tulips into the kitchen and put them on the counter. She looked through them and shrugged. “No card.”

The doorbell rang again and Ben laughed. “My turn?”

I moved over to the tulips and leaned in, letting the sweet scent of them tease my nose. Thankfully, the smell of them didn’t affect my stomach like most things did those days. When Ben came back with a huge vase of anemones, my heart skipped a beat.

“For you again. Still no card, though.” When the bell rang again, he nodded to Kara. “You’re up, I guess.”

“What’s going on?” I tried to follow Kara to the door, but Ben wrapped his arm around my shoulder and redirected me to the flowers. I twisted around to try to see the door, but I could only see Kara. Seeing her come back with another massive vase of flowers, that time peonies, I turned wide eyes on my friends. “Guys?”

Megan shrugged and pulled Kara into her side. “What?”

Three vases of flowers showing up didn’t have to mean anything. My friends acting weird didn’t have to mean anything. I found that I hoped that it did, though. I wanted the guys to have come for me. It wasn’t fair to them that I wanted that when I wasn’t giving them any clues or help, but god help me, I wanted it more than anything.

The doorbell rang again and I couldn’t help it; I ran to the door and yanked it open. My face fell in disappointment when I didn’t find three beautiful men

waiting on me. Instead, there was a flyer in the door. I grabbed it and nudged the door shut with my hip, looking at the flyer as I turned.

“Who was at the door?”

I screamed at the deep voice right next to me, startled and then just shocked stupid as I finally looked up and found Charlie standing right in front of me.

Theo walked out of the kitchen, tying an apron around his waist. “What’s with all the screaming?”

August came barreling down the stairs, chasing after Hunter. “Cat’s out of the bag!”

“No, the cat is still at home, because apparently, Jeremy is a second-class citizen.” Charlie stepped out of the way a second before Hunter came sliding into me.

I stumbled back into the door and dropped to my knees in front of the big dog, happily accepting his kisses as I rubbed his ears and cried shamelessly, another symptom of the pregnancy I wasn’t having. “You’re here.”

“Is she talking to us or Hunter?” Theo smiled when I looked up at him and winked. “Definitely the dog.”

“My part is done, I guess. I’m heading home, Reagan. Megan and Kara are coming with me. Can’t imagine why they wouldn’t want to stay here.” Ben eased his way between the guys and pulled me off the floor. “Take the vitamins. If you’re still here tomorrow, we’re scheduling an appointment.”

Megan hugged me while Kara cupped my face. They both looked seconds from crying themselves, but Megan pulled herself together. “We’re going to be hanging around out here for a few days. Don’t worry about us when you make your plans.”

I wiped my eyes and flicked my eyes over at the guys, nervous that maybe

they wouldn't want to take me back with them.

Kara slapped a slim piece of plastic against my palm and grinned when she saw that I could very clearly feel what it was. "Take the test."

Just like that, I found myself alone with my guys, all of them staring at me with varying degrees of need and frustration. Of course, my stomach chose that moment to revolt.

49.

Reagan

“I’m sorry!” I lifted my head from the toilet and clutched the pregnancy test in my hand, unwilling to face it. “I’m so sorry.”

August knelt behind me, his chest pressed against my back as he held my hair out of my face. “Why are you sorry, baby?”

Charlie sat on the edge of the tub on the other side of the toilet, a damp rag in his hand that he used to dab at my face each time I came up. “Finished?”

“I ran and I didn’t answer your calls and you came here anyway. I’m sorry! I just—” I jerked forward and threw up again, going limp against the side of the toilet halfway through.

“I called Ben. He said she’s been like this pretty consistently. No wonder she looks thinner.” Theo leaned over us and flushed the toilet. “Come on, baby. We’re going to get you tucked into bed so you can rest.”

I fought to keep my eyes open as I was carried to bed. “Scared. You didn’t want me before. What if you don’t want me now?”

“Hush, Rea. We’re here. We came to get you and we’re not leaving without you. Rest now.” Theo stroked my face and then pressed his lips to my forehead. “We’ll be here when you wake up.”

I fell asleep thinking there was no way that I was going to be able to sleep when they just showed up. I woke up terrified that I’d dreamt everything. That quickly, I worried that I was going to find the house empty and be crushed.

I made myself take the time to brush my teeth before racing through the house. My heart soared when I found them in the living room, sitting around on the uncomfortably low couches. Over the moon happy to see them, I flew over the back of the couch, into Charlie’s lap.

Wrapping my arms around his neck, I peppered his face with kisses and took in his impossibly blue eyes and deep dimples. “Charlie!”

He grunted as I climbed away from him and crawled into Theo’s lap, repeating the process with him and then again with August. I mumbled excitedly, uncaring that I probably seemed out of my mind. It didn’t matter. They were there. I hadn’t been able to process my pure joy before throwing up earlier, so I was making up for it.

August kept me in his lap, letting me turn so I could face them all. “Is it normal for you to bounce back so quickly?”

Theo grunted. “There’s no such thing as normal.”

That was when I made eye contact with the pregnancy test on the coffee table between us. I stiffened and looked away quickly, like it was just my imagination if I didn’t stare at it for long.

Charlie chuckled and raised his eyebrows at me when I looked at him. “Why are you avoiding the test, baby?”

August stroked my back and heaved out a giant sigh against my shoulder before laughing. “Sorry. Sorry, I just... I’ve spent the last couple of weeks as tense as I’ve ever been in my life and it’s starting to fade away. Feeling you tense up over that test just about gave me a heart attack, though. Do you not want kids, Rea? With us?”

I gasped and captured his face in my hands. “It’s not that, at all. I’m scared. Why are you three not shocked or scared? Or anything?”

Theo grinned. “Lisa accidentally told us. We were plenty scared, Reagan. We were scared shitless that our woman was just out in the world without us, vulnerable and pregnant.”

I whimpered as more tears filled my eyes. “I don’t even know that I’m pregnant for sure.”

“You’re pregnant, baby.” Theo nodded to the test. “You can take it if you need to feel sure, but I’ve seen it with Iris’ birth and all my brothers’ wives.”

August rested his big hand over my stomach and stared at it, blinking away a tear of his own. “We want this. More than that, though, we want you. The bet was just some stupid thing we did. It was never serious, Rea. We’re crazy about you. All of us. We love you... *I love you.*”

Crying harder, I kissed him. “You mean that? You love me?”

Charlie cleared his throat. “We love you more than you can imagine, Rea. I love you so much that I felt like I was falling apart without you.”

Theo nodded. “I love you, too, Rea. I realized somewhere along the way that you’ve had a place in my heart for so long that it wasn’t hard and it took no time for me to fall in love with you.”

“We’re in love with you, Rea. You’re it for us. We’re in this for good if you’ll have us. No matter what comes our way, no matter how much work it takes to figure out a...quad-couple...we’re in.” August made a face. “I’m deeply sorry for saying quad-couple.”

I pressed my face into his neck and breathed in his scent. “I love you. I love each of you so much that it’s been hell without you. I missed you so much. I missed your moodiness and overprotectiveness. I missed your silliness and your smiles and your touches. I’ve felt lost without them. I don’t want to be here. I want to be home. Please tell me you came to get me and not to tell me I’m terrible for running away or that you want me but can’t choose me over Russ.”

Charlie sank down next to us and pulled my face to his so he could slowly kiss me. “We’re here to get you, baby.”

Theo easily lifted me into his arms and grunted unhappily. “You’ve lost weight, Rea. Clearly, you need us around to force food on you and coddle

you into a round, happy pregnant lady.”

I wrapped myself around him and held on tight. The past two weeks of sadness came seeping out as I cried into his shoulder. The panic I’d been barely holding off overcame me, as well. “I drank. I don’t know when we got pregnant and I drank that night at the chip. Maybe after. I can’t remember. I just know I got drunk and I was pregnant. Maybe. I’m going to be a terrible mother. I probably hurt the baby and then I left town like a chicken. I’m so scared. I’m so scared I hurt her. Or him.”

They surrounded me, their hands stroking and soothing as I sobbed. Theo made comforting sounds until I quieted enough to hear him. “The baby is going to be fine. We’ll go to Dr. Sarah when we get home so she can tell you that for sure, but people a lot dumber than us have had children and done it perfectly fine.”

“Like Jenny.” I sniffled into his shirt and pouted. “That was rude. I’m sorry.”

August snorted. “Don’t be. You’ve earned several hundred shots at Jenny.”

“Never in front of Iris, though. I would never do that.” I scrunched up my nose as my stomach turned. “I have to go.”

Theo moved like an Olympian as he rushed me to the bathroom and got me over the toilet just in time. “We’re going to have a long drive home, baby. And we’re leaving as soon as possible. Let me tell you. When you’re feeling better and we’ve managed to convince you of how much we love you and that we’re never leaving, we’re going to have a long talk about you leaving us to hide with your ex.”

“Kara said something about spanking.” Charlie laughed at the way I stiffened, even with my head in the toilet. “Your friends were all too happy to

help us set you up, baby. And encouraged us to show you why you should never run from us again. I think Kara might be a sex addict.”

“Pregnant.” Theo smoothed a hand down my back. “You’ll see.”

I slapped his leg, thinking of how he knew that.

“Yep, spankings seem like the answer.”

August coughed and then grunted. “Maybe we keep the conversation PG for a while. Until we’re home and Rea can keep her head out of the toilet for more than thirty minutes.”

I took the rag he held out as I lifted my head. I thanked Theo for flushing and then tried to smile at August. “I can do plenty in thirty—”

Theo chuckled and continued rubbing my back. “Sure you can, baby.”

Somewhere else in the house, I heard Hunter bark. August swore. “In here, asshole!”

“Jeremy didn’t learn any bad habits while Rea stayed with us. That’s all I’m saying.” Charlie sounded smug until Hunter came running into the too-small bathroom. “Oh, god, Hunter. Come on, man.”

I finished up and managed to move to sit on the closed toilet seat after rinsing with mouthwash. Hunter wedged himself against my legs and stared up at me. I scratched his ears absently and looked around at them, settling on August, who was scowling at his dog. “What’d he do?”

“He’s not even pretending to be a guard dog anymore. He’s just a crappy search dog. Only he only searches for you. He’s perfectly the mournful howl of a bloodhound over the last two weeks.”

More tears filled my eyes and I wrapped my arms around the big dog’s neck. “I might love him the most.”

Theo growled. “Let’s pack your bags while you’re feeling okay. I’m ready to get you home.”

August ran his hands through my sweat-dampened hair. “Our home, by the way, will be my house until we can build something bigger on Charlie’s land.”

“Really?”

Charlie knelt in front of me, fighting Hunter to get closer. “Really. This is it for us. You’re our world.”

“You all want this? And...a baby?”

They all looked at each other and shared some silent communication between themselves before Charlie pulled a box out of his pocket. My lungs stopped working as he held it out in front of him and looked up at me. Then, with a silly smile on his handsome face, he opened the box and showed me a plastic potato chip ring from the souvenir shop in Lunar.

“Be our little potato chip, Reagan.” He started to laugh and then straightened his face. “Play your cards right and there’s more where this came from.”

I laughed and tried to grab the ring, but it shifted and I saw another ring under it. My eyes went wide as I watched Charlie pull out the real ring, a beautiful, vintage band with diamonds encircling it.

“Sure, it’s fast, baby, but we know. You, this baby, we want it all. Be ours.”

August knelt next to Charlie, followed by Theo, and they wedged themselves in with Hunter and the toilet. “We’re never leaving without you. And if you go, we’ll always follow, Rea.”

Theo grinned. “Come home with us and make us the happiest fucking men ever.”

I squeaked. “I just threw up! We’re in a bathroom!”

Charlie pretended to pull the ring away and laughed when I grabbed his

hand.

“Yes! I want it all. I want to go home. I want the same thing now that I wanted ten years ago. I want forever with the three of you. And this baby.” I caressed my stomach and blinked back more tears. “I’m going to be a good mom and partner. I have some bad news, though.”

Charlie lowered the ring and raised his eyebrows. “What?”

“I lost a bet to Russ when we were kids. He’s supposed to get to name my first kid. Whatever he chooses. And if I refuse, he gets to transfer the win to anything else he wants.” I winced. “I would say it isn’t a big deal, but you know Russ. And now we’ve given him a reason to be mean.”

August lifted Charlie’s hand and growled. “We’ll beat the shit out of that bridge when we get to it. Take the damn ring, woman. We’ve got about twenty minutes before you start upchucking again and I’d like to kiss the hell out of you after you put our ring on your finger.”

I lifted my hand for the ring, beaming with happiness, but just before they could slip it on my finger, the back of my mouth soured. Trying to fight it, I pressed my lips together and pushed my finger out farther.

“Jesus, you just went green. Out of the way, everyone!” Theo, who might’ve been having too much fun as vomiting director, lifted me and put me in front of the toilet after lifting the lid. “We’ll revisit the ring later, yeah?”

Before I threw up, I held up my thumb. “Yes, please.”

50.

Theo

I watched Reagan from across the room, our ring glittering on her finger as she animatedly told Mary and Jim about the latest shitshow happening at our house. I could tell it was about Hunter and Jeremy by the way she held up her hands like claws and then made a goofy face, which was definitely Hunter. Mary laughed excitedly while Jim jumped to volunteer to help the two pets get along. Not a vet or an animal trainer, Jim would've been useless in handling the two animals, but he loved Reagan so much that he was always volunteering to do things he had no business doing. I could tell it made Mary fall for him even harder to see him fawn over the woman they were calling their daughter-in-law.

“Help me out, Theo. I bet Kara that you'd kick everyone out before eight. She bet you'd last until nine.” Megan moved next to me and followed my gaze to Rea. “Don't you want to get your lady alone? Or as alone as you four ever get.”

I rolled my eyes at her and grinned. “Maybe another hour of partying sounds great.”

“Isn't Reagan just glowing, though? She's really starting to show now and she looks beautiful. I also have inside information that she isn't wearing any panties because none of them fit.”

I traced the lines of Reagan's flowy white dress and tried to see if Megan was just fucking with me. “Liar.”

“We're all going shopping tomorrow afternoon for pregnancy underwear.”

I swore and looked around the small party until I spotted August. He was staring at Reagan, his eyes hungry. He wasn't even trying to hide the fact that he was counting the minutes until we could get her alone. I found Charlie

next, sitting on the steps with a beer, his eyes on his watch before they moved back to Rea.

“You win. Now, get out.”

Megan, never bothered by the roughness of our friendship, slapped my arm and called to Kara. “Let’s go, baby! Theo says the party’s over!”

Russ, hearing Megan’s announcement, walked over to me and shook his head. “This is pathetic, even for you.”

Reagan came over and giggled when I pulled her into my chest, her perfect ass tucked firmly against me. She twisted her head to look up at me and pout. “Already, Teddy? Jim was going to help me with Jeremy and Hunter.”

Russ made a face. “Teddy? I’m never going to not want to vomit when I see and hear this shit.”

Lisa wrapped her arms around him from behind and grinned at us from beside his arm. “I’m surprised you made it this far, Theo. Next year, we’ll hold the back-to-school party at our house. That way, you four can sneak out as soon as the urge hits.”

Russ scowled. “You hate me, don’t you?”

“No, baby, I love you. I’m happy this thing is over, too. The girls are going with Jim and Mary and Iris.” Lisa’s hands dipped lower and she cackled when Reagan fake gagged. “You’re not the only horny pregnant bitch around here, Rea.”

“I have so many mixed emotions right now.” Russ reached out and cuffed his sister’s chin gently. “Love you, Rea.”

She sank deeper into me, her happiness as being on good terms with her brother so clear. “Love you, too, idiot.”

“Why don’t you bring the guys tomorrow when you come over for shopping? They can watch the girls together.” Lisa kissed Russ’ shoulder.

“You two can talk down to August and Charlie about knowing more about kids than them.”

August joined us and pulled Reagan into his arms, unable to go for too long with holding her. His hands went to her belly, cupping the small curve. “I live with Charlie and Theo. You think I don’t know about kids?”

Reagan’s eyes suddenly went wide and her cheeks darkened. I knew the look on her face and knew exactly what was happening behind her. August was failing at keeping his arousal in check, and without a doubt, it was pushing against her ass from behind. She let out a little giggle before clearing her throat. “Well. We should call it a night. Big day of shopping tomorrow.”

Russ groaned. “I hate it here.”

I walked them out, leaving August with Reagan. I found Iris and gave her a hug and kiss before she left with Mary and Jim. When the last person left, I locked the door and followed the sound of moaning coming from the bedroom.

It was always like that. We barely got everyone out of our house before we were all over each other. With Reagan being pregnant, it was like everything was heightened. She needed more sex, but she came like a rocket with barely a touch. Watching her body change and grow with the proof of our love affected all of us, too. There were days when we barely got anything done.

The scene waiting on me when I walked into the bedroom stole my breath. Charlie and August had Reagan naked and bent over the bed, her ass facing me. They were running their hands over her flushed body, touching her everywhere but where she needed them most. Her hands were tied to the bed with silk ties, the binds stretching her arms out in front of her and leaving her back arched.

She looked like a perfect gift, waiting to be devoured. My mouth watered

and my dick hardened painfully as I stepped farther into the room.

“Happy early birthday, Theo.” Charlie grinned. “Reagan told us what she wanted to give you for your birthday and we were both all too happy to help.”

August pressed one last kiss on the top curve of her ass and walked to the other side of the bed, where two chairs were placed, facing where the action would be. “I have to say. Our woman’s got a voyeur streak to her. Just thinking about us watching you fuck her has her dripping wet.”

I groaned and braced myself on the bedpost next to Rea. “You’ve been planning this, baby?”

Reagan turned her face to me and I was shocked to see a strip of cloth acting as a gag across her mouth. When I pulled it down, she licked her lips and smiled at me, almost shyly. “We can’t let anyone hear, or they might want to have me, too. And you know how loud you make me.”

August leaned over the bed and put the gag back in place. “See you soon.”

I watched Charlie and August leave the bedroom and the picture came together in my mind. My body boiled with need as I looked down at the woman I loved, the woman who was determined to give me everything I could possibly ever want and then some.

Running my hands down her back, I leaned down and pressed my mouth to her ass. “I’ve got you right where I want you now, Reagan. You’re all tied up and gagged so I can fuck you as hard as I want without you screaming.”

She moaned through the gag and wiggled her ass. I lightly slapped it and then dipped my fingers lower, testing her wetness. She jerked as I stroked her clit and arched her back even more.

“There are people outside, Rea. If you’re too loud, they’re going to want to see what’s going on. Even with the gag, I know you, baby. Try to keep it

down, or I might be forced to share you.”

51.

August

I threw back my whiskey and met Charlie's stare from across the kitchen. The game Reagan wanted to play for Theo was just as much for us as it was for them. The waiting, listening, and knowing what was happening, was driving us both insane. I'd been hard for hours, thinking about what was coming. I felt too hot and cold all at once, so turned on that I couldn't think straight.

Charlie lifted his head as the first cries of pleasure leaked out of the bedroom. The gag he'd wrapped around Reagan's head was pitiful and would do nothing against her voice. The woman was an angel in every way, but in the bedroom, she was a deviant in the best fucking way possible. She wasn't afraid to take what she wanted and to let us hear how good it was. We'd never be able to live next to neighbors, which was more than fine by me. I wanted her to be able to walk around naked, so neighbors weren't going to work for me.

Reagan's throaty moans grew even louder and the sound of skin slapping skin rose. We'd been waiting for a while, giving Theo time to get into his rhythm. From the sounds coming from the bedroom, he'd found it.

Charlie braced his hands on the island and swore. "Jesus. She's going to kill me."

I nodded to the bedroom. "I can't wait anymore."

He inhaled sharply and chuckled darkly. "Now, let's go see if we can look without touching for a while."

"Goddammit."

Outside the bedroom door, I took a deep breath and found it was easier to slip into character than I would've thought. Pushing open the door, I took in

the sight of Theo driving into Reagan from behind. Gripping her hips, he was fucking her hard and deep, giving her just what she wanted.

“Damn. Look at this, Charlie.” I walked farther into the room and heard Charlie shut and lock the door behind himself. “No wonder she was screaming the walls down. You’re fucking the hell out of her.”

Theo froze, still deep inside Reagan. “What the fuck? You can’t be in here.”

Charlie moved around the bed and lowered himself into one of the chairs. “Why not? Your girl isn’t complaining.”

I stood just next to Reagan’s head and leaned down. “What’s that, honey? Don’t stop? Is that what you said?”

Theo’s mouth twisted up and I could tell he was having fun. He pulled out of Rea and paused at the moan she made. “Baby... You like it?”

I sat next to Charlie and studied the way Reagan’s eyes were dazed with need. She was close to a giant orgasm. I nodded to Theo. “From this end, she looks pretty fucking into it, man. How about you keep going? Don’t let your lady down.”

Theo pumped into her and Reagan let out a wild scream as she came. The gag barely muffled it and Theo’s grin was nearly feral as he gripped her ass. “You like that they’re watching you, baby? They’re seeing you come all over my dick. Is that what does it for you?”

Charlie unbuttoned his pants and pushed the zipper down. “Don’t worry. Just making room, sweetheart.”

Theo started thrusting harder again. “Look what you’re doing to them, Reagan. They’re hard from watching you get fucked.”

Reagan’s hands dug into the bedding, her eyes rolling as her orgasm stretched on and on. When Theo picked up his intense pace again, she

dropped her head to the bed and screamed into the bed.

Theo swore as he reached up and gripped her shoulders, using the leverage to fuck her harder. “Fuck it. Let her see it. Jack yourselves in front of her. She should see what she does to you.”

Charlie and I played along, pulling our dicks out. Fucking my fist in front of Reagan wasn't a hardship by any means. When her head snapped up to watch, I grunted. Just a look from her could affect me so strongly. Charlie swore, as lost to her as I was.

“Watch them, Rea. You see how hard you make them? They want to fuck you so badly. They'd do anything for a chance at this sweet pussy.” Theo lowered one of his hands to her wetness and then rubbed it over her ass. “You like this, don't you, baby? You're so wet. Feel my fingers slipping into your ass? That's what they want to do to you. They want to fuck your ass, too, baby. Would you like that?”

Charlie stood up and stroked himself inches from Reagan's face. “She wants it, man.”

I moved next to Charlie and pulled the gag out of her mouth. “Tell your boyfriend, baby. Tell him that you want him to share.”

Theo pumped his fingers into her ass faster. “Is that right, Rea? You want me to share you with these guys?”

Reagan came again, her orgasm squeezing her walls tight enough to make Theo cry out. When she could talk again, Reagan looked back at Theo and spoke with the sweetest voice. “I want what you want, Teddy. Do you want to share me? If you do, I'd do it. I'd do anything for you. I'd suck their cocks, if that's what you wanted. Or, if you wanted to let them fuck me, that could be...fun...”

Theo pulled out and stepped back. “Fuck her. She needs it hard.”

Untying Reagan's hands, I shifted her until I could settle under her. Then, lining our bodies up, I thrust up into her sweet core and felt just how wet our play had made her. Pulling her mouth down to mine, I kissed her while Charlie settled behind her. Stroking my tongue over hers, I nibbled it while gripping her ass and pulling her cheeks apart for Charlie. After teasing her for a minute, I felt him slowly ease into her ass, making her already tight walls clench down on my dick.

"You take their cocks beautifully, baby. How does it feel?" Theo stroked her face and fed her his thumb for her to suck while he spurred her on. "You're letting them fuck your perfect pussy and tight little ass while your boyfriend watches. You're only missing a dick in your mouth. Should I go find someone else or do you want mine?"

She sucked his thumb hard and then opened her mouth wide. "Yours. Please, let me have it."

Theo swore like a sailor as he moved so he could slide his dick deep into her mouth. From my angle, I watched her throat bulge where she tried to take him even deeper. He gripped her head and fucked her mouth faster as he watched Charlie start to thrust into her ass.

We all moved, thrusting deep and hard into Reagan, giving her everything we had. I ran my hands all over her body, touching every part of her that I could. I listened to her moan around Theo's dick and heard Charlie and Theo getting closer to coming. We'd perfected fucking Rea together and that time was no different. Her nails bit into my chest as we worked her body harder and Theo gave her no breaks as he hit that spot at the back of her throat more and more, pushing past it.

"Fuck! Are you going to come for them, Rea? Are you going to let them come inside of you?" Theo held her face and shouted as he pulled out until

just the tip of his dick was still in her mouth. He muttered incoherently as I watched her throat move with each swallow as she drank his release down and still tongued him. “Goddammit, Reagan! This mouth!”

Charlie couldn't hold his release after watching Theo. He moved harder and faster, forcing a scream from Reagan as he got rougher just before slamming deep and coming. Reagan came like a jet plane, her body squeezing down on us so hard that Charlie had to pull out and I had no chance of lasting. I gripped her ass hard and shot my load deep inside her, calling out her name as I did.

Reagan screamed and then sank her teeth into my chest, leaving yet another mark. When her orgasm finally waned, she collapsed on my chest, both of us sweaty, and panted against my throat.

“Happy fucking birthday to me.” Theo fell next to us, his forearm over his eyes. “I might be dead. I think you sucked the life out of me, baby.”

Reagan gave a weak chuckle and shivered as my dick pulsed inside her. “Stop moving it, Auggie. I'm broken. No more.”

I stroked her back and held her tight. “That's involuntary. You giggle and it happens. Sue me. Are you okay, though?”

She kissed my chest and sighed. “What's better than okay? Great? Awesome? Fucking amazing?”

Charlie fell next to us and threw his arm over Reagan's back. “The kid is going to have a mouth like a sailor when it comes out.”

I grinned. “Clearly my spawn, then.”

Theo laughed. “Calm down, SEAL boy.”

Reagan giggled and then grunted when my dick reacted. “Don't start. If I have to listen to one more fight about being a SEAL or not being a SEAL, I'm going to be raising this baby as a single mom.”

Charlie growled. "You're never leaving us, woman."

"Who said leaving? I'm going to murder you."

I snorted and raised my eyebrows in surprise when Reagan's walls pulsed around me. "Oh, yeah?"

She blushed and shrugged. "I guess your stupid laugh does it for me, too."

Theo groaned. "Don't compliment him when we're arguing about SEAL things, baby."

"No, do. Compliment me, baby." I grinned and planted a kiss on her chin. "Give me all the compliments."

She giggled and climbed out of bed, leaving us all sitting up, staring after her. Standing naked in front of us with her rounded belly, she was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. "You know what I'm going to want for my birthday fun?"

"What?"

"Three actual strangers if you three keep up your fighting."

I looked over at Theo and then Charlie. "Did she just threaten us?"

Charlie nodded. "I think she did."

"I don't think we should take this. Not lying down, anyway." Theo jumped out of bed. "Come on, SEAL boy. I know you have some fancy knots. Let's tie her up and gag her again."

Reagan screamed and ran when we all started chasing her, her hair flying behind her as she went. Then, like the wild child she was for us, she threw open the door and ran outside, leading us on a naked chase around the property. When we caught her, we took her again, gentler, showing her just how much we loved her. She cried out our names under the stars, our ring on her finger, our baby in her belly.

It wasn't until I was sitting with Theo at Landings the next morning,

waiting on Charlie and Reagan to join us for breakfast, that I realized the flaw to Reagan's outside fun time.

Pearl Beerman stopped next to our table, giggling like a schoolgirl as she looked at us. "I tried to stop by your party to tell Reagan that I know who's been defacing the chip."

Theo smiled, the unaware bastard not picking up on Pearl's weirdness. "Oh? Who is it?"

She turned her focus on me and snorted. "Never seen three trouser snakes bouncing around like that before. I thought I was at the zoo for a second there."

Theo spit out the coffee he'd just drank. I felt my face burn an unflattering shade of red. The busy patio around us fell quiet.

"Jonah's nephew is a police sketch artist. I'm going to meet with him and see if he's any good later." Pearl giggled even more and then slapped her knee and slowly backed away. "Tell Reagan to come see me if she wants to know about the chip. And if she wants a copy of the sketch. He also does those vacation town drawings where they make your head really big and your body all little. Only, I'm going to tell him to do it a little differently. Snake forward, if you know what I mean."

Theo bit his fist and nodded like he was listening to the most normal thing in the world. I noticed that he was also blushing.

Pearl practically skipped away, clearly having a wonderful day.

Reagan and Charlie showed up a few minutes later and Reagan instantly saw our faces and laughed. "What happened? You two look like you just got caught with your pants down."

Theo groaned and I bit down roughly into a biscuit, talking around it. "This is all your fault!"

“What did I do?”

“You had us running around outside naked like a bunch of lunatics!” Theo’s raised voice filled in any Landings customers who’d missed Pearl’s announcement. “Pearl saw us! She’s on her way to a sketch artist as we speak!”

Reagan kept a straight face for all of ten seconds before she threw her head back and laughed so hard she was crying and then had to run inside to pee. While she was gone, Charlie shuddered and stared down at his lap. I nodded, feeling his pain.

The joke wasn’t complete until the chef, a friend from school, sent our pancakes out with penis-shaped whipped cream drawings, which set Reagan off again. Seeing her laugh like that, so happy and carefree, I knew that having my swinging penis immortalized by Pearl Beerman and a police sketch artist was worth it. There would never be anything that wouldn’t be worth the cost for Reagan to be happy.

She spotted me smiling at her after a while and smiled back at me, biting her lip. “What?”

“I fucking love you.”

She blinked away sudden tears. “I fucking love you, too.”

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