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COULD NEVER
BE ENOUGH...

STUDY
You

BESTSELLING LESBIAN ROMANCE AUTHOR
MELISSA TEREZE

STUDY
You

MELISSA TEREZE



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FORBIDDEN

(THE PAST)

FORBIDDEN - CHAPTER ONE

IT HADN'T OCCURRED to Finn Ashton that she would find herself longing for the woman at the front of the lecture hall when she enrolled at university—her start date three months ago. She didn't usually *need* to long for anyone. Yet here she was, longing for *her*.

Gillian Masters.

The sexiest woman alive.

Her gaze swept up Gillian's body as she turned her back on the room full of students, but Finn hadn't heard a word she'd said. That wasn't ideal given the fact that Finn would be paying off her student loans for the next twenty-odd years, but if *this* was what she had to keep her entertained, she would pay double. *Fuck, I'd pay triple for an arse like that in my lap.* She cocked her head ever so slightly—inconspicuously—and smirked. Thankfully, it was only a small class present today, so Finn had situated herself away from the other students, allowing her to shift in her seat whenever she needed to.

She sat up straight when Gillian turned back around and locked eyes with her. That gaze did terribly good things to Finn's body. Her pussy, too. Did Gillian know that Finn craved the friction from the seam on her jeans whenever they were in the same room together? If she did notice how Finn squirmed in her seat, did it turn Gillian on, too?

“Okay. That'll do us for today,” Gillian said as she rested back against the desk, her legs crossed at the ankles. She was wearing that skirt again. The very same skirt Finn had

imagined just last night as she lay in bed. She would lower the zipper down the back of it and watch it pool at Gillian's feet. It was a shame she'd woken up alone...but very wet. "See you all in an hour for the seminar. Enjoy lunch. I'll expect you at the usual room."

Finn didn't move. Everyone around her started to pack up and file out of the room, but no, Finn remained. She'd managed to grab a seat at the front for the third week in a row. She clicked the end of her pen and jotted on a scrap of paper. Anything for another moment or two in this woman's company. With her head down, she managed to catch a glance of Gillian, and she was doing the exact thing she'd done a few weeks ago.

Oh, she knows what she's doing.

Finn watched on with her bottom lip between her teeth as Gillian bent forward and 'perused' her laptop. She wasn't looking for anything in particular; Finn knew that for a fact. Because the last time Gillian was in this position, Finn had taken it upon herself to test the boundaries here. Gillian knew how to flaunt what she had, and it seemed she had no issues doing so either. Finn was confident that Gillian knew she was checking her out at any given opportunity because Finn's eyes always gave her away. Only this time, Finn *allowed* that to happen. She *wanted* it to happen. Gillian Masters should know what she did to her. *She does know.*

And so, they'd had a moment a few weeks back. Gillian had been packing away, just as she was right in this moment, bent forward and logging out of her laptop. In a moment of what could only be described as madness, Finn had stepped up behind her, not expecting Gillian to push her arse back against Finn's crotch.

"You have to stop looking at me the way you do, Finn." Gillian had said, that perfect arse still pressed to her. Finn had dragged her hand through her short blonde hair, lips parted, watching in awe as Gillian moved so effortlessly against her. "I can't concentrate."

Finn had brought her hands to Gillian's hips, smoothing them over the red material of her tight pencil skirt. Again, Gillian hadn't moved. She remained, most definitely testing how far Finn was willing to go. That had been a silly mistake to make because Finn was willing to go *all* the way. The thought of slipping her hand up the back of Gillian's skirt and feeling her wetness, the moan it would elicit, fuck yeah...Finn could go all the way with Gillian Masters. And one day, she would. Finn suspected Gillian knew that. Perhaps that was why she had avoided being alone with Finn since that brief encounter.

But Finn felt the intensity of her stare when Gillian thought she wasn't looking. She delighted in the way Gillian gripped the arms of her chair when Finn pulled her bottom lip between her teeth, her hand on her crotch beneath the desk. Finn was discreet, but Gillian saw *everything*.

So, here she was. Contemplating doing the very same thing she had done last time. *I don't think I could stop myself from going further this time around.* Finn knew what she wanted, and it was the very woman wiggling her arse in front of her today. The fact that Finn was a student didn't faze her at all. The twenty-year age gap wasn't an issue either. Finn would always choose the older woman. Why? Because they knew what they wanted, and they knew how to fuck. Besides, Finn was the mature—twenty-five-year-old—student here.

Gillian's phone started to ring on her desk suddenly. "Jan, hi."

Finn listened intently, not caring if she could be seen as eavesdropping. It was Friday, and if Gillian had plans, she wanted to know about them. Finn was done with pretending this woman didn't want to fuck her. And she was done with dreaming about fucking Gillian in return.

"Yes. Don't forget the cake. It's brilliant."

Huh. Interesting. Was Gillian attending a party this evening?

"No, no. It'll be great." Gillian eyed Finn, offering her one of those flirty smiles. "Seven works. I'll see you there. Bye."

Gillian ended the call, her stare not wavering. “You may want to miss lunch, Finn, but I have things to do.”

“Celebrating something?” Finn asked as she gathered her notebook and satchel.

Gillian exhaled a deep breath and lifted her laptop case. “Mmhmm. My divorce.”

Also Interesting. Not that Finn would have cared if Gillian was married. If her husband or wife couldn’t give Gillian what she needed, Finn would have *happily* stepped into that role. Affair or not, Finn was going to have this woman someday. The sexual tension between them only confirmed that as each lecture passed. Quite frankly, Finn wouldn’t be at all surprised if Gillian was the one who sought her out in the not-too-distant future.

She rose to her feet and rounded the desk. The first thing she noticed was the look in Gillian’s eyes as she admired Finn’s sleeve tattoos. The second was how her breathing became laboured the closer Finn inched towards her. “Well, congratulations.”

“Thank you.”

“You don’t seem like the kind of woman who likes to be tied down.” Finn held the scrap of paper in her hand, moving closer again. “So, big night tonight?”

“Maybe. I don’t know yet. Depends how it ends, I guess.”

Oh, she’s flirting.

Finn knew this was her moment to strike if she ever wanted to find herself naked with Gillian.

“Take this.” She handed the piece of paper over. “Call me later if you...want some company.”

Be bold, Gillian. Let’s have some fun.

Gillian opened the paper and lifted her eyebrows. When she looked back up at Finn, those eyes told a whole story. A story that likely began with ‘Finn, fuck me now’. *Oh, I wish.* “Your number? That’s very forward of you.”

“I just know what I want.” Finn turned her back on the entrance to the lecture hall, stroking a finger up Gillian’s stomach. She felt that ripple beneath the silk shirt Gillian wore, her perfume a reminder of the elegance of this woman. “I’ll wait to hear from you.”

Finn took a few steps back, their eyes locked.

“Finn, I...I’m your professor. It’s inappropriate.”

Finn could only smirk at that. Gillian couldn’t help herself, and they both knew it. “You want inappropriate, call that number tonight, and I’ll show you just how inappropriate we can be.”



Gillian lowered herself into her seat, watching as her students got to work on the group task she’d assigned them. It hadn’t quite been the plan for today’s seminar, she’d had something more interactive set up, but she wasn’t in the right frame of mind this afternoon. In all her years as an employee at the university, she’d *never* felt so out of sorts. Some days, it was a good out of sorts, but then other times, it wasn’t. Today was a mixture of both.

She should have been thrilled that it was Friday and tonight was a celebration. She should have been eager to get home and fancy herself up for a night on the town with her friends. Instead, she sat here wondering if she could make it to Monday without seeing a certain student.

The days were becoming harder around Finn Ashton. That handsome face and her ink-covered body. The sexy gaze she penetrated Gillian with at any given moment. The nose ring and the slicked-back blonde hair.

Gillian shifted in her seat ever so slightly, feeling her cheeks beginning to redden. Finn was watching her—she always did—but today, it felt far more powerful than usual.

Today felt as though she was going to explode if Finn so much as breathed within her personal space.

She cleared her throat and crossed her legs, almost gasping from the friction against her aching clit. Gillian barely managed to suppress a moan, her hands gripping the edge of the desk she sat at. If Finn was capable of this without touching her, what the hell kind of night would she be in for if she ever allowed herself to go there?

She couldn't. That was a given. Finn was her student, and it would be unethical. Gillian had to admit that she hadn't looked into the specific policies at the university, but did she really need to? It was common knowledge in all education settings.

She's twenty-five. Would it be the worst thing in the world?

God, she couldn't believe she was entertaining such a thought. But it was true...she wanted Finn Ashton. She had since the day she walked into her room for a brief introduction to the module Gillian taught. Finn had shaken her hand, and Gillian had focused on her beautiful blue eyes. Striking and captivating. She hadn't expected to be so entranced by the silver flecks present, the subtle aftershave, or the neck tattoo. Gillian...hadn't expected Finn.

She was butch, but Gillian liked that in a woman. Finn certainly knew who she was and how to carry herself, and that only caught Gillian's attention more. How she dragged her hair back off her face if she laughed with fellow students. The way she sat in her seat so confidently, resting her ankle on her knee, shoulders relaxed. There was just something about Finn Ashton that drew Gillian in.

As she reached into her bag, wanting to send off a quick text message to a friend, her fingers found Finn's phone number on the piece of paper she'd handed over when this morning's lecture had ended. Gillian chanced a look in Finn's direction, blushing further when Finn—as always—lowered her hand to her crotch. The other students didn't see, the desk obscured their view, but Gillian did...her own pussy soaked.

The things I'd let her do to me.

This was probably going to be the wrong move to make, but Gillian quickly added Finn's number to her contact list and opened a new message.

Please, stop!

Finn slid her phone out from her pocket, reading the screen. She smiled and lifted her eyes, a brow quirked in Gillian's direction.

And then Finn started to respond.

Meet me tonight.

Gillian swallowed, exhaling a slow, inconspicuous breath. God, she wanted to. The longer this went on, the more she craved Finn Ashton.

You know I can't. You're my student.

Gillian placed her phone down on the desk, flicking it from vibrate to silent mode. She looked around at her other students; they were all busy chatting away amongst themselves. Everything seemed normal except for Gillian's now racing pulse.

I have a surprise for you.

Gillian frowned as she read the message. What could Finn possibly want to surprise her with? They didn't know one another.

I have plans. And you have an assignment due on Monday.

She watched Finn smirk and shake her head.

I'm the teacher's pet. Assignment is finished. Next excuse?

Gillian dragged a hand through her long, dark hair. This was ridiculous. She was a professional, career-driven woman in her forties. There was absolutely *no* reason to entertain such a thing.

It's not happening, Finn. Now delete my number, get on with what you're supposed to be doing, and don't think about it again.

She threw her phone into her bag, sinking back in her seat. Finn Ashton had the potential to ruin everything for her, and she simply wouldn't allow it. This *should* have been a cause for concern—Finn was really pushing the boundaries now—but deep down...Gillian desired every moment of it. She couldn't chastise Finn for that when Gillian didn't even know how to control herself.

All she had to do was get through the last twenty minutes of this seminar, and then she could be on her way to a good bottle of wine while dancing late into the night with friends.

“Okay. Ten minutes and we'll start to wrap up for the weekend.”

FORBIDDEN - CHAPTER TWO

“THAT CAKE IS HILARIOUS!” Jan, one of Gillian’s long-time friends, sat back in her seat laughing. “Fucking brilliant!”

It was. Gillian had initially wondered if it was too much for a public place, but divorce parties were supposedly all the rage these days. Add in the dick with a knife through it, and Gillian was definitely telling everyone what she thought of her ex-husband.

Dave was the biggest prick to walk the earth, in her opinion. He had never really known what he had with Gillian. Always needing more, always allowing his eye to wander. It also didn’t help that she had caught him having an affair with her own cousin. What sort of man did that to his wife? Fucked her cousin for what turned out to be two years! And what sort of woman did that to her own relative? Gillian had seethed about it at the time, but on reflection, she couldn’t help but laugh. They were made for each other. Both self-centred. Both unable to keep their hands to themselves. Both...pathetic.

“You don’t think the knife is too much?”

“If you’re going to say how you feel through a cake, then you have to say it properly, babe. I think it’s great.”

“I don’t suppose it’ll matter soon once people have helped themselves to it.” Gillian finished her glass of wine, then refilled it. “So, I had something I wanted to talk to you about. But it has to stay between us, Jan.” Gillian didn’t have anything to worry about. Jan had always stood by her word.

Gillian could trust Jan with *anything* she said. Including this 'thing' with Finn.

Still, Jan held up a hand. "Of course. Scout's honour or whatever."

"There's...this student." Gillian's clit throbbed at the mere thought of Finn. Especially tonight when Finn was on offer if Gillian found herself unable think of anything else. "She's... intense."

"Giving you grief?" Jan frowned. "Your uni students are usually mature by now."

"No, no. Not grief in that sense. She's...I think she's attracted to me."

"Well, obviously. Who isn't?"

Gillian rolled her eyes, slapping Jan on the arm. "Stop it. That's not true."

"Oh, I think it is."

"My own husband couldn't wait to fuck someone else, Jan. I find it hard to believe that I'm going to find anything meaningful any time soon." Gillian knew that with age...life changed. She knew that no matter how sexy she felt, things started to drop or dry or whatever else she would be faced with in the coming years. She wasn't stupid. But her thirty-year-old cousin? Really? After everything she'd been through with Dave. Their twenty-four-year marriage. She sometimes found it hard to comprehend. "Not that she would be into that sort of thing anyway."

Jan nodded slowly. "She wants to fuck you. I get it."

Well, that was one way of getting straight to the point. "I guess so, yes."

"And you want to fuck her?"

"God, no. I...couldn't. It wouldn't be right. I have a very good reputation at work. I'm not going to potentially sour that because a student wants a night of fantasy."

Jan lifted a shoulder and then leaned closer to Gillian's ear. "And that's *exactly* all it would be. A fantasy. So why not humour her and get your kicks while it's on offer?"

Fuck. Jan was supposed to tell Gillian how wrong and forbidden it was. She was supposed to threaten her with the loss of her job or a reprimand from the powers that be. Not... encourage her. "That's...I...why have you just said that?"

"Because it's secretly what you wanted to hear." Jan grinned, tipping her wine glass towards Gillian as her eyes scanned their table of friends. "You may not realise it, but I know when you're thinking about doing something. I've been your best friend for twenty years, babe."

"Jan."

"Is it illegal?" Jan asked, a brow quirked.

"I...no." Gillian frowned. That was beside the point. "It's still not right."

"Oh, for fuck's sake! Live a little. You've got a student fantasising about you, Gill. What more do you want?"

"For it to *not* be a student?"

"Ah. But that's all part of the fantasy." Jan winked, sending Gillian's thoughts wild. Could she get in touch with Finn? Of course she could. It didn't mean she should, though. "You're thinking about it. I'm not sure what else there is to say. If you were so concerned, you wouldn't even be having this conversation with me."

"It doesn't help that she's exactly my type."

"Mmhmm. Let me guess. A little on the butch side. Tattooed. Has that something about them. One look, and you'd spread your legs. I get it."

Gillian wrinkled her nose. "Am I that predictable?"

"Nope. Not at all. As I say, I've known you a long time." Jan patted Gillian's knee. "And I'm still saying you should go for it. Let your hair down."

“I’m going to the bar. You’re deluded.” Gillian rose from her seat and took her phone from the table, slipping out of the booth and heading for the bar.

Her phone buzzed in her hand.

What are you wearing?

Oh, God. No, not now. This couldn’t be happening.

I thought I told you to delete my number.

If you were so hellbent on me not having your number, you never would have texted me in the first place.

Fuck. Finn was right. And hot. So *fucking* hot.

I’m busy. I can’t do this right now!

Gillian caught the server’s attention, ordering another few bottles of wine for the table. She rested her forearms on the bar counter, sighing as she allowed her head to drop between her shoulders. Why did things have to be complicated?

I know what you’re wearing. That sexy, strappy dress should be on my bedroom floor.

Gillian didn’t dare to turn around. Because she knew that when she did, Finn would be there, those eyes piercing her. But she would humour her for a little while. Since Finn enjoyed turning Gillian on, she was going to take the bait and return the favour.

And would one of your shirts be lying on the floor beside it?

Gillian grinned, seeing the read receipt immediately. This woman seemed to hang on her every word.

No. It would be hanging open on my body. That’s what you’d like, isn’t it? Me fucking you...half naked.

All sensible thoughts left Gillian’s mind at those very words. Had she thought about Finn fucking her? Oh, only every other night since they’d met.

I’m not sure you could handle me, Finn.

Wanna find out?

Gillian would love nothing more than to find out. For someone so butch, Finn had the softest hands. She'd thought about running her fingers through Finn's blonde hair while her mouth was between Gillian's legs, knowing her hair would be just as soft as those hands.

The question is, do YOU want to find out? That confidence of yours is very sexy, but I don't believe you really want to fuck me, Finn. It's all bravado.

Now that was sure to really rile Finn up.

Oh, yeah? I know how wet I make you when I'm in class. I see it in your eyes. Do you go back to your office and touch yourself while you're thinking of me? Do you taste yourself while imagining me?

Gillian's knees wobbled, her heart slamming in her chest. Before she could respond, Finn started typing again.

Do you think of me putting my cock in you while you're bent over your desk? A personal favourite of mine is being on my knees under your desk. I'd love to have my face in your drenched pussy. And I know you'd love it too!

The server snapped Gillian out of her aroused thoughts. She took the bottles of wine, smiling when he added them to the open tab they had, and carefully made her way back to the table. If she didn't concentrate on each step she took, her legs were going to give out on her.

"Thanks, babe." Jan took a bottle of red and opened it before Gillian set the others down on the table. "What were you smirking at when you were at the bar?"

"Me? Nothing."

"Something on your phone," Jan said, nudging Gillian with her shoulder. "Your student, maybe?"

"Don't be ridiculous. Why would my student have my number?"

"Because the woman sitting in the window over there hasn't taken her eyes off you since you left the table. Every time she lowers her phone, you pick yours up."

“And in what way does that prove she’s my student?”

“She couldn’t be your type any more than she already is. Look at her. You’ll see.” Gillian couldn’t look up at Finn. Not after the texts she’d just received from her. Then Jan laughed. “Ah. You can’t. Because she’s just had some very...choice words for you, hasn’t she?”

“Jan.”

“I give it thirty minutes, and you’ll be out of that door with her.” Jan leaned in and sighed. “May I say...you’ve chosen *really* well. She’s hot.”



Finn had been watching Gillian for the last forty minutes. How she would grin as she leaned in towards her friend. The way she flicked her dark hair when she laughed. Her fingers as they toyed with the necklace that sat between her cleavage.

Mesmerising.

Finn couldn’t put her finger on the moment her infatuation began. Maybe it was the day Gillian flashed her that smile as her gaze swept up Finn’s body upon meeting. Maybe it was the time she traced the tattoo on Finn’s bicep when they were alone together in Gillian’s office. But Finn was going to bet it was the first time Gillian bent over her desk to reach for the controller that powered up the whiteboard. She did *that* a lot. Usually when she knew Finn was watching.

The only thing Finn knew right now was that she didn’t plan to sit here for much longer. She knew what she’d rather be doing, but how far would Gillian take this night if a hot fuck was presented to her? Would she allow Finn to touch her in all of the places she’d deprived lately? Would she lay bare, legs spread, while Finn lavished her pussy with her tongue? Would Gillian end this night crying out Finn’s name?

She guessed she was about to find out.

Finn ordered a drink from the server passing by as she moved from the seat in the window to a booth. She sent a fresh glass of wine in Gillian's direction, choosing to wait and pray she took the bait. Finn knew she would. Gillian's deep brown eyes gave away the desire she had buried deep down. She may avoid any situation that could mean they were alone lately, but Finn knew Gillian went home thinking about her. Or...doing much more than thinking. Yeah, Finn knew Gillian was sinking those slender fingers inside herself, moaning Finn's name into the silence of her bedroom.

Come on. Turn around.

That silky dark hair Finn had come to imagine her hand fisted in whipped around, and Gillian met her stare. She hesitated for a moment or two, and then she slowly slid out of her seat and headed in Finn's direction.

Well, that didn't take as long as I thought it would.

"Finn."

Finn lifted a brow and sipped her beer slowly. Gillian looked divine tonight. As beautiful as she looked in her dress, Finn would prefer her naked. "Gillian."

"What are you doing here?" Gillian couldn't help but lower her eyes to the open buttons on Finn's white shirt...to her chest piece tattoo. Finn knew Gillian got off on seeing her ink, but she only had to say so, and then she could see the rest of Finn's art.

"Drinking my beer. How is the celebration going?"

Gillian lowered herself to the leather seating, placing her wine on the table. Finn gave herself a moment to admire those dark eyes of hers before she mirrored Gillian's previous actions and focused on her dreamy tits. What she'd give to bury her face in them.

"Great. But how did you know I'd be here?"

"Fate." Finn winked. She received the smallest smile in return. "Joking. I'm here for you. And I may have overheard you on the phone when you were leaving your office earlier."

“For me?” Gillian took a large gulp from her wine glass. “Finn, I’m your professor.”

“Mmhmm.” Was that supposed to concern Finn? It probably should have, but it didn’t. If she wanted this woman...if Gillian wanted her, then they were going to have one another. There were no two ways about it. Finn could fuck who she wanted...when she wanted. She draped her arm across the back of the booth, her hand reaching Gillian’s shoulder. Finn felt her shudder, and then she watched Gillian pull her bottom lip between her teeth. *Oh, she wants me.* “I... noticed none of the friends you’re with work at the university.”

“No. These are my close friends, not my work colleagues.”

“So, if you were to leave with me now, nobody at the university would know anything about it?” Finn lowered her other hand beneath the table, stroking a fingertip across Gillian’s knee. The university was a big place, so Finn wasn’t overly concerned by the thought of being caught in this position. Unless Gillian spent time outside of work with other professors *within* Finn’s degree, they were mostly safe. “I know you intentionally tease me during lectures.”

Gillian turned her body inwards towards Finn, propping her head in her hand. “Can you blame me?”

Finn smirked. “I could never blame you for that.”

“It’s that confidence that makes me...” Gillian hesitated, her eyes closing when Finn stroked her fingertips a little higher.

“Wet?” Finn finished for her.

Gillian opened her eyes and stared directly at Finn. They were blazing with desire. “Yes.”

Finn leaned in closer and lowered her voice as she breathed against Gillian’s ear, “Then why don’t you let me take care of you?”

For every second that Gillian took to make a decision, Finn was going to inch higher and higher. She felt Gillian squeeze her thighs together. But the heat that radiated from the very

place Finn wanted to place her tongue told her everything she needed to know.

She grinned when Gillian placed her hand on Finn's thigh, rubbing her palm against the denim. "Where do you want to go?"

"Depends how you want me to fuck you."

She squeezed Finn's thigh at those words, but Finn only guided her higher. Gillian's breath caught when her hand landed on the bulge at Finn's crotch. "Oh, fuck!"

"We could be. I wore this especially for you tonight."

Gillian lifted her glass and drained it, taking Finn's hand and guiding her out of the booth. She didn't even bother to say goodbye to her friends. It was in that moment that Finn knew she had her full attention. The excitement building inside her was going to be unleashed soon, but Finn wasn't sure she could wait until they were somewhere private to touch Gillian.

As they landed outside on the pavement, Gillian dragged Finn towards the end of the street. Before they reached the corner, Finn pulled her into an alleyway and pressed her to the wall. "How long have you wanted me?"

Gillian lowered her hand and grabbed at Finn's bulge again. "Since the moment you walked into my lecture, Finn."

Finn lifted the hem of her dress and forced her hand past the waistband of Gillian's underwear. "A whole three months, huh?"

Gillian arched against Finn when she pressed two fingers to her swollen clit. "Y-yes!"

Finn circled slowly, her lips on Gillian's throat and moving towards her ear. "The times I've wanted to fuck you in your office. The way you sway that arse when you stroll the corridors. These tits," Finn said as she bit down on the swell of her breast. "You've been teasing me for too long now, Gillian. It's about time I did something about it."

"Mm. Are you going to punish me, Finn?" Gillian stroked her palm up Finn's taut stomach and between her breasts. "I

can't wait to feel you on top of me. Taking everything you need from me.”

Fuck. I need her now. But Finn wanted Gillian to herself where she could strip her bare and spank that fucking glorious arse. She gripped Gillian's jaw and yanked her other hand from between her legs. Finn's fingers found Gillian's lips, and as she poked her tongue out to taste herself, Finn's legs weakened. This woman knew how to fuck. She could see it in Gillian's eyes. “We need to find a room right now.”

“I live on the next block. Can you keep your *cock* to yourself until then?”

Oh, she's feisty. I like that. “Only if you promise to get on your knees and suck it for me.”



Gillian fumbled around with her keys, trembling when Finn's hand smoothed over the curve of her arse. If Finn had realised anything so far, it was that Gillian loved her arse being touched. Good thing, really, because Finn fucking loved it. It was firm, perfect for spanking. Every time Finn felt it beneath her palm, Gillian moaned.

“Finn, please...” Gillian wriggled, but it only shifted Finn's hand between her legs. “Shit, please. You have to stop that.”

“Why?” Finn turned her around and backed her up against the door, taking the keys from Gillian's hand.

“Because if you keep touching me, I'm going to come.”

Mhmm. She's not wrong. Finn could feel the tension in Gillian's body. She could smell her arousal. God, Gillian was going to see stars once Finn really got her hands on her. Finn lifted the keys between them, praying she'd chosen the right one. “Is this the one you're looking for?”

Gillian snatched the keys from Finn, turning and forcing it into the lock. Finn breathed a sigh of relief when the door opened, and Gillian pulled her inside. She placed the light switch to the side of her head, unable to move further when Gillian pressed her to the back of the door. She dropped to her knees, looking up at Finn with hooded eyes, and smirked as she popped the button on her jeans and lowered the zip.

The toy sprang free when Gillian tugged Finn's boxer shorts down, her jeans sitting low on her thighs. "Oh, Finn." Gillian took hold of it, rolling her tongue around the tip. "You chose the perfect size."

"You like being filled then, huh?" Finn couldn't take her eyes off Gillian as she sucked on the length of the toy, her hands wrapped around Finn's thighs. "Fuck, you're sexy."

Gillian lifted a brow and quickly slid the thin straps of her dress from her shoulders. When Finn realised she wasn't wearing a bra, her body only lit up further. Her hands craved to reach out and touch Gillian. Her mind...was blown. Finn knew Gillian was gorgeous, but seeing her on her knees was something entirely different.

She slurped and sucked, pressing the base of the toy against Finn's clit. She had surely done this before. Finn was impressed by Gillian's lack of hesitancy. "F-fuck, yeah." Gillian pressed again, digging her manicured nails into Finn's skin. "Oh, shit."

As much as Finn loved seeing Gillian like this, she needed to fuck her. She *had* to have her. Finn leaned down and cradled Gillian's chin in her fingers, those gorgeous dark eyes staring back at her.

"Where do you want me?"

In every possible position, if I have my way, Finn thought. "On your feet."

Gillian stood, and as she did, the dress that had been pooled around her waist dropped to the floor. Gillian Masters stood before Finn wearing nothing but a black lace thong and a pair of heels.

Finn's dream...was coming true.

She held Gillian's hips, forcing her jeans the rest of the way down. She kicked off her boots, followed by her jeans, and then guided Gillian towards the back of the couch. Their lips met, tongues sliding against one another, and Finn's heart really started to pound now. All she had wanted since her 'The principles of designing architecture' module began was to fuck this woman senseless. And now, here they were.

"Finn, I'm dripping for you."

Well, now, Finn would have to check that Gillian wasn't telling lies. She smirked. "Turn around and bend over."

Gillian did so, spreading her legs for Finn without a second thought. She lowered herself, biting on the supple flesh of Gillian's arse. And then she came face to face with that delicious pussy from behind. *Fuck!* Even though Finn knew she'd have this woman one day, she had to quickly question her confidence. Gillian was exquisite. A goddess. And yes, she was dripping wet, just as she had claimed.

Finn didn't wait another second. She buried her face in Gillian's soaked lips and lapped up every drop she had to offer. Gillian's moans only had Finn gripping her thighs, struggling for breath as she slipped her tongue inside Gillian. She immediately tightened around Finn's tongue, her slick arousal covering Finn's chin. Tonight, Finn wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

Gillian reached behind herself and gripped the back of Finn's head, encouraging Finn to give her more. If Gillian thought for one moment that this was all Finn had to offer, she was in for one hell of a surprise. Finn pulled back, only to ease two fingers inside Gillian. She sunk back against them, moaning and panting as she threw her head back.

"Fuck me harder, Finn."

Finn obliged, adding a third finger and thrusting fast. "Fuck, you're tight."

"Mmm. You've had me on edge for a long time, baby."

Baby? Oh, yeah. Finn could definitely work with that. “If only you’d told me sooner, we could have been far more acquainted by now.”

Gillian was close. Finn felt her walls clenching, her knees trembling, her breath becoming more and more ragged.

“C-close.”

Finn pulled out of her suddenly. She got to her feet, spanking Gillian’s divine arse hard. Gillian yelped, moaned, and then she wiggled those smooth cheeks for Finn. A private show.

“You wanted me, Finn.” Gillian bent further forward, bracing her forearms on the back of the couch. “So take me.”

Finn spread Gillian’s lips from behind and coated the toy with her wetness. Glistening, she lined the head up and thrust hard.

“Oh, fuck!” Gillian dropped her head on her shoulders, slamming back against Finn. “Y-yes.”

“Tell me you want me.” Finn’s strokes were so rhythmic that even she was impressed by her dedication.

“O-oh, I want you. My pussy is craving you, Finn.”

The way Gillian said Finn’s name had her gripping her hips and pounding furiously. “Fucking take it. All of it.”

“Finn...” Gillian gasped and moaned. Finn was barely able to move inside her. “Fuck, I’m coming.” Gillian forced Finn out of her, gushing down her thighs and covering the hardwood flooring. “O-oh, I...”

Now *that* was something Finn wanted to witness again in her lifetime. Gillian Masters was just full of surprises. Though, if Finn was being honest, this was one of the moments she had fantasised about. She knew exactly what this woman was capable of the day she walked into the room and their eyes met.

So, for the time Finn could have with her, she was going to make the very most of it. She leant forward, dragged her nails

up Gillian's back, and whispered, "Turn around. That pussy is mine for the rest of the night."

FORBIDDEN - CHAPTER THREE

OH, God. What have I done?

Gillian pressed a hand to her forehead, staring up at the ceiling. Finn was sleeping beside her, Gillian's body ached in every place imaginable, but she knew she had made a mistake. A terrible mistake. Only, as she lay here...Finn's scent enveloping her, Gillian couldn't help but want more. So much more. Why couldn't Finn have been terrible in bed? Why couldn't she be a vicious, nasty piece of work who Gillian couldn't bear the sight of? Why, for the love of God, had Gillian entertained this idea last night?

You're a fool.

This morning, Gillian didn't know if she would be able to face her students come Monday. Would they know? Would it be obvious to her colleagues? Gillian's belly flipped at the thought. She didn't have a good poker face at the best of times, so if Finn expected her to carry on as normal, she was in for a surprise.

She also wasn't a very good liar.

Gillian turned on her side, watching Finn's tattooed chest rise and fall. She slept peacefully, that blonde hair flopped over one side of her face. She wanted to reach out and stroke it, to remind herself of what she'd briefly had with Finn, but something held her back. The guilt. It was the guilt that held her back.

While Gillian had loved last night far more than she cared to admit, she shouldn't have allowed herself the opportunity.

She was the professor here; she should have known better. No excuse would make any of this okay, and right now, it would be best if she woke Finn and asked her to leave.

I want her. Gillian allowed her eyes to travel Finn's naked body. How had they found themselves in this position? Well, Gillian knew exactly how. It was Finn and her charm. It was Finn and those strong arms. The tattoos, the soft blonde hair, it was everything, quite frankly. When Gillian had placed her hand on Finn's thigh last night, it was like waking up from one very bad dream. Gillian had craved another woman through most of her marriage to Dave. Women just...knew what she wanted. They knew where to touch, when to touch, and how to touch. They knew the things to say and how to treat another woman. Enter Finn...butch and so fucking handsome, and Gillian had been in trouble from the get-go.

Butch was her weakness. Butch was what she dreamed of when she touched herself night after night. Butch was... fucking hot. And Finn was no exception to that. It always came back to the way she carried herself. The way she appeared standoffish, but behind closed doors, had the most beautiful smile. The sparkle in those blue eyes while she pounded Gillian all night long.

Fuck. She wanted so much more.

She lowered her hand, knowing full well that she was soaking...again. That was the effect Finn had on her. Whether they fucked or only fantasised didn't really matter. She pressed her fingers to her clit, hissing as a jolt of arousal shot through her.

Finn shifted a little, her arm resting over her stomach. Gillian focused on her hardened nipples, the cool air in the room providing a perfect image of Finn Ashton in Gillian's mind. And that was all it could ever be from this point forward. An image. A memory. A moment in time, frozen for when Gillian needed it most.

One last time with her...and then you ask her to leave.

Gillian shifted closer to Finn, bringing her lips to her ear. She poked out her tongue, teasing Finn's earlobe.

“Mmm. Mornin’.” Finn smirked as she turned her head and looked into Gillian’s eyes. Breathtaking. “I suppose you want me to get my shit and leave...”

“I...yes. Soon, anyway.”

Finn nodded and turned her head again, looking up at the ceiling. Was she contemplating the mistake they’d made too? Perhaps if she was, it would make it easier when it came to putting an end to all of this. Because it did. It *had* to stop.

But Finn reached an arm out and manoeuvred Gillian on top of her. The press of their skin, the very sensation of this woman beneath her...Gillian tried but failed when it came to rocking against Finn. It seemed she simply couldn’t help herself.

“This...has to be the last time, Finn.” Gillian closed her eyes, her lips parting when Finn grazed her nails up her back. “I...it has to be.”

“Then I want to do one thing. If this is the last time, I want to taste you, Gillian.”

Gillian smiled down at Finn, disappointed that she had ever given in to the satisfaction of her. If this was any other scenario, she would spend every moment she could in this position. But it wasn’t another scenario...and Finn was still her student.

“I don’t want a single thing from you, Gillian. I just want to taste you...and then I’ll leave.”

Gillian nodded slowly, still grinding against Finn. “What about your pleasure?”

“Your pleasure *is* my pleasure.”

Oh, that was incredibly hot.

“I want you on my face.” Finn tilted her head, that delicious tattooed neck begging for Gillian’s mouth. “Now, Gillian.”

Gillian shifted, placing her knees on either side of Finn, and lowered herself to Finn’s mouth. That tongue was just as

magical as it had been last night. “Mm. Is there anything you can’t do?”

Finn licked the length of Gillian’s pussy, moaning as she held her thighs. “Shame we’ll never have the chance to find out.”

It was. It was a real shame.

“Now let me give you what you need, and then you never have to see me like this again.” Finn gripped Gillian and forced her down against her tongue.

Gillian could pretend that she wouldn’t want this again, but it would be a lie. As Finn’s tongue eased inside her, stretching her unexpectedly because of the position she was in, Gillian held onto the headboard and rocked against Finn’s mouth. “Oh, fuck.”

Finn didn’t slow, she didn’t pull away, no...she replaced her tongue with her fingers, latched her lips onto Gillian’s swollen clit, and sucked. Oh, she sucked and worked Gillian up like she’d never been worked up before.

“Finn, yes.”

“Mm. You like that, gorgeous?”

Gillian looked down between herself and the headboard. Those blue eyes penetrated her in ways she didn’t know were possible, the sparkle still present. “Yes. You know I do.”

“I want you to fuck my face.”

Those words had Gillian hurtling towards the edge. It was Finn’s voice, her hands, that fucking confidence. God, Gillian hadn’t known how a confident woman could make her feel. To be honest, she was terrified for the future if that was all it took.

“You’re the sweetest woman I’ve ever tasted. I can’t get enough of you.” Finn latched onto Gillian’s clit again, this time flicking the tip of her tongue over it. “And when you come for me, how you moan, it’s something I’ll never forget.”

Gillian gripped the headboard tighter, silencing Finn by doing exactly what she’d asked of her. It was easier to fuck

Finn's face than it was to hear things like that. "Harder." Gillian rocked, her knuckles white. "Suck me harder."

Finn did exactly that, the vibration of her moans tipping Gillian over.

"Yes, that's it. Right there, baby." Gillian came undone, the bed creaking in protest as she rode hard and fast. "Fuck, I'm coming." She shook, her thighs trembling. And then Finn offered one last flick of the tongue, sending a shockwave through her that had Gillian slumping forward. "Oh, God."

Finn caressed Gillian's cheeks, kissing the inside of one thigh, then the other. "Thank you," she whispered. "For being everything I imagined you would be."



Finn sat on the edge of Gillian's bed, lacing up her boots. She didn't particularly want to leave just yet, but she wouldn't put Gillian in a position that made her feel uncomfortable. She got it, okay? She knew she was the student, and this had to end. Finn saw the look in Gillian's eyes as she climbed from the bed thirty minutes ago, the fear of people finding out. Only Finn would *never* broadcast this, and she would never discuss it with her closest friends. She had pushed...Gillian had given in, and now they had to move on.

She left the bedroom, buttoning up her shirt as she moved into the kitchen. Gillian stood at the counter, resting back against it, watching Finn as she gathered the last of her belongings. "I'd ask you to stay for coffee, but—"

Finn held up a hand. "Don't. You don't have to explain. I understand."

"Do you, though?" Gillian cleared her throat, that husky aroused tone no longer present. "Do you really understand that you have to stop?"

"Of course I do. I'm not going to force myself onto you, Gillian. Fucking hell."

“That’s...no. That wasn’t what I meant. I’m sorry.”

Finn swallowed. Had she pushed this too far, and now Gillian felt as though she had no way of saying no? It hadn’t felt that way. Gillian had never specifically told her no. In fact, it had been Gillian who had dragged her out of the bar last night. “Did...I fuck up here? Did you ever even want this?” Finn’s mind worked in strange ways at times. So now, she was wondering if she *had* messed up.

Gillian crossed the kitchen, placing her hands on Finn’s shoulders. “Relax. I wanted it. You *know* I wanted it. But *we* have to stop.”

Yeah, Finn did know. Gillian could deny that what they shared meant something...if she really wanted to, but Finn would always know exactly what they’d had. Brief, so very fleeting, but explosive.

“All I’m saying is that it can never happen again. I can live with one night of unbridled passion, but some kind of secret affair? No, Finn. I can’t do that. And I’d hope you wouldn’t want something like that either.”

“I...think I could make an exception for you.” Finn took a step closer, placing one hand to Gillian’s waist. Their bodies touched, that fire continued to burn, but Finn knew the answer as she studied Gillian’s eyes. “But it’s too complicated. It’s unethical. Yeah, I know the drill.”

“Even if it wasn’t unethical, you’re twenty years younger than me.”

And? Was Finn supposed to give a fuck about the twenty years Gillian had on here?

“We had a wild night. I’m mostly certain that you’ve ruined me moving forward. Just...I have a job to do, and *you* have a degree to complete.”

Finn brought her hand up, brushing Gillian’s hair from her face. “You are stunning. I hope you know that.”

“Thank you.”

She cleared her throat, aware that she could easily get lost in Gillian's eyes. "And you know, if you ever *did* want to fuck again, you only have to let me know. I'll be here in a heartbeat."

"You should be very careful with that confidence, Finn. You're going to break someone's heart."

Finn snorted, taking a step back and grabbing her wallet from the coffee table. They'd ended up ordering in last night, halfway through their...activities. At least Finn had technically bought Gillian dinner. "I don't stick around long enough to break someone's heart. Which bodes well for you, I guess, since you only needed me for one night."

Gillian frowned at that, fixing the belt on her robe. "You... think I was just using you to get myself off?"

Hmm. That was a difficult one for Finn to answer. While she was more than happy to taste this woman whenever it was possible, it did kinda feel like Gillian had used Finn. No offer of coffee, being asked to leave... Finn knew Gillian didn't want to see her again, it wasn't about that, but a coffee together? What was the big deal?

"Never mind."

"No." Gillian took Finn by the wrist, stopping her before she could approach the door. "If that's how you feel, I need to know."

"Why? Are you going to take me out for dinner to make it up to me?"

"Well, no."

Finn lifted a shoulder. "Then what does it matter?"

"Because your feelings matter, Finn. I know we fucked one another senseless last night, and I know that this doesn't mean anything, but I *am* allowed to take your feelings into consideration. So, if you feel as though I used you...tell me that."

"I feel as though you used me."

Gillian's face paled as she let go of Finn's wrist. "Y-you do?"

"I just think you could have handled this morning a little better than you did. You know, kicking me out and stuff? I know after today I won't see you again like this, but fuck, a cuppa and a slice of toast may have eased the tension."

"I'm sorry."

Finn leaned in and kissed Gillian's cheek. "Don't be. This is what you want, and I respect that." She stepped away, this time adamant to get to the door before they could go over some other small detail. Any conversation they had was pointless; why waste one another's time? "I'll see you around, okay?"

Gillian offered a single nod. "Before you go, I have one question."

"Shoot."

"You were so confident and sure you could take me home, you've been teasing me for months, yet you just respect my decision to not want to do this again. Why is that?"

"Because...I won big last night. I had the chance to do what I've wanted to do since the moment I met you. The only way I could do that was to be who I was. I knew it was what turned you on."

"The chance to do what?"

Finn smiled. "Feel your pulse quicken under my fingertips...knowing it was me that made you feel that way. The opportunity to taste you. It's all I've wanted."

"Finn, I—"

"Goodbye, Gillian. Take it easy."

FORBIDDEN - CHAPTER FOUR

TWO WEEKS LATER...

For the third time today, Gillian tried to focus. Finn had seemed to be distant during the seminar this morning, not involving herself in any discussions. That wasn't Finn. Gillian knew what she was capable of, knew how well she applied herself, but today she seemed...off. Almost as though she wasn't in the room. Except she had been. Gillian only needed that subtle scent Finn wore to know she was in the same building.

She's been distant since the first time you saw one another again.

It was true. Gillian was just trying to make things seem far less than they were. She was trying to push down the guilt she felt from not only taking Finn home with her but also the way in which she'd asked her to leave. The idea she had used Finn continued to play on her mind. But the truth was, Gillian wanted to see Finn again. So much so that she had checked university policy.

You both agreed to end the silly game you were playing. Let her be...

Oh, if only she could let Finn be. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

She shook her head and lifted her phone. Maybe an evening at a wine bar with Jan would take her mind off things.

She called one of her oldest friends, smiling when it connected. “Hi. Do you have a few minutes?”

“Of course. How are you, babe?”

Gillian sighed, rocking back in her chair. “I couldn’t tell you the last time I slept throughout the night if that gives you any indication.”

“Ouch. That bad?”

“This is all your fault for telling me not to dismiss the idea of Finn. I hope you know that!”

Jan snorted. “It’s not my fault you can’t keep your hands to yourself.”

“Jan, this is an issue. A huge issue. Finn is entirely detached during lectures, and I don’t want to be the reason she fails my modules.”

“I think you need to sit down and talk to her. Figure out a way to move forward. If...that’s what you want to do.”

Gillian knew what she wanted, and it wasn’t to sit down and talk. No, she wanted Finn on top of her, pressing her to the bed, taking control of her just as she had two weeks ago. What she wanted...was another chance to familiarise herself with Finn’s handsome body. Gillian’s clit ached at the thought. *Not the time or place!* “I don’t know what I want.”

“Oh, I think you do.”

Jan was right. It was just going to take a moment for Gillian’s brain to catch up.

“Look, I can understand your dilemma. She’s your student, and it’s generally frowned upon. Having said that, if you’re both into one another, then you can’t help it. You can block it out and be miserable, but you’ve spent long enough being miserable, babe. You deserve to have a little fun when you can. And if it turns into something more, that’s great.”

“Oh, I don’t think it would turn into something more. Finn is...I get the impression she’s complicated.”

“Then settle on no-strings. Judging by what you told me when she left, Finn wants some dirty sex with you just as much as you do with her.”

Gillian kicked off her heels under her desk and shook her head. “That’s where it becomes an issue for me. It feels really sleazy and wrong.”

“Sometimes that’s the most exciting way. Sometimes, letting off steam unexpectedly with someone you probably shouldn’t can be just what you need.”

“You’re really not helping here.” Gillian sat forward in her seat and rubbed at her forehead. Should it feel so wrong to want a woman she couldn’t have? Because that’s exactly what turned Gillian on. She wanted the things that felt wrong sometimes. She wanted to enjoy life while fucking who she wanted to fuck. And she wanted Finn. Only Finn.

“Okay, then what is it you want to hear?”

Gillian puffed out her cheeks. She didn’t know the answer to that, either. Whenever she tried to reason with herself, her mind and her memory went straight to Finn. That said a lot, really. “Can we meet this evening for a bottle of wine? I just need to get through the rest of this day, and then I can process it all.”

“You’ve been processing it for two weeks now, babe. I hate to say it, but I think you’re going to find yourself in the same position tomorrow.”

“I won’t. Because I know that this is my workplace and that Finn is my student. If she walked in here right now, I’d put a stop to any hint of flirting. Perhaps if I focus on that, things will get easier.”

“You don’t sound convinced.”

“Of course I’m not convinced. My head is up my arse with this, Jan. But I do have to remember where I am...and focus on my job.”

“Okay. I guess I’ll see you tonight so we can go over this *all* again.” Jan laughed, her heels clicking in the distance. “What time?”

“I’ll be leaving work at five. I can be at the bar in twenty minutes.”

“I’ll see you later.”

Gillian lowered her phone and straightened her shoulders. *You are the one in a position of authority. It’s time to act like it!*



Finn steeled herself, puffing out her cheeks as she ran a hand through her hair. She glanced in a cabinet nearby, checking she looked half alive, and turned back to Gillian’s office door. They hadn’t spoken one on one since the morning after their marathon sex, and Finn suddenly felt nervous. She didn’t know why; she didn’t generally do nervous.

She couldn’t say for sure if they’d been actively avoiding one another, but Finn knew she had lessened contact purposely. She’d had to. Since that night, Gillian was all she thought about. Her plan to have what she wanted seemed to be backfiring on her. But that was typical of Finn. She was always doing something to make her life more difficult.

Just knock on the door and get this over with.

She curled her hand and knocked loudly. When Gillian called out for her to enter, Finn turned the handle and exhaled a breath. “Hey.”

“Can...I help you?” Gillian watched Finn over the top of her glasses, her cleavage too much in this moment. She knew looking was going to be a problem, but Gillian’s tits were just...there. Like, *in your face* there.

“Yeah, uh...” *Think, Finn. Remember why you came in here and open your mouth.* Jesus Christ! This was ridiculous. “I-I...”

“I thought I told you we couldn’t be alone anymore, Finn? What part of that did you not understand?”

Finn shoved her hands in the pockets of her jeans, standing heavier on one leg.

“And you can stop with that.” Gillian motioned up and down Finn’s body. “It won’t work.”

“I’m sorry?” What the hell was Gillian talking about, and what was her problem? Finn didn’t expect bells and whistles, but she hadn’t expected a foul attitude either.

“All of this. The smouldering looks, the cocky stance.” Gillian shook her head, removing her glasses and rubbing her temples. “What can I help you with, Finn?”

Finn chose to take a step back, her hand placed on the door handle. “You know what, it’s fine. I’ll figure it out. Don’t worry. See you, Gillian.” She turned to leave.

“Finn, wait!”

Finn heard Gillian’s chair wheels roll against the laminated flooring in her office. She held her breath and turned back around. “What is it?”

“I’m sorry. That was really unprofessional. What was it you needed?”

Feeling chastised, Finn regarded Gillian with a weak smile and rubbed at her forearm. “An extension if it’s possible.”

“For which module?”

“Contract law.”

“Sure. How long do you need?” Gillian rested against her desk, legs crossed at the ankles as they always were. “Will two weeks be enough?”

“Yeah, that would be perfect. If it’s not going to be an issue...”

“No issue.” Gillian smiled, studying Finn from across the room. “Is everything okay?”

You got the extension, now leave. Finn knew she should, but Gillian was holding a conversation with her, and Finn had discovered she had one hell of a weakness for this woman. “Just some family stuff going on.”

“Mm. I noticed you were missing from a lecture last week. And the seminar.” Gillian motioned to the seat in front of her desk. “I’m free if you need to talk.”

“It’s okay. But, thanks. I appreciate the offer.” Finn threw a thumb over her shoulder, offering the best smile she could manage. “I should get going. I can crack on if I manage to get a spot at the library.”

Gillian pushed off the desk, those long, slender legs catching Finn’s attention. It wasn’t hard, considering they went on for days. Finn adored seeing Gillian in red. Of course she just so happened to be wearing it today. “Okay. If you’re sure.”

Finn noted the hint of sadness in Gillian’s eyes. They’d really messed up here. The flirting and the banter had been fun, harmless in a sense, but now everything was a little awkward. “Hey,” Finn said, bracing her hands against the back of the chair. “I’m sorry if you’ve felt uncomfortable around me since the other week. If...I’ve made things awkward for you.”

“You haven’t.”

“I’m having a hard time believing that. I don’t really want to fuck up my own future, but if you need me to, like, move some things around so I’m not in your lectures anymore, just say the word. I started all of this by pursuing you, Gillian.” Finn ran a hand through her hair, exhaling a long breath. “And I don’t particularly enjoy the thought of *any* woman feeling weird around me. That’s not who I am.”

“Finn, you haven’t made me feel any of those things. We’re okay.”

“You’re sure?” Finn studied Gillian’s eyes. “You’d tell me if I’d fucked up, right?”

“Finn, you haven’t. I’ve spent a lot of time wondering the same thing. If *I’d* been the one to mess up. This is your future we’re talking about, and I’d never want to do anything to jeopardise that.”

When Gillian said things like that, it only reminded Finn of the soft spot she had for her. It was dangerous to feel that way,

Finn was fully aware of the complications this could bring, but it was true. Gillian was as sweet as she was fuckable. “Nah. Never. You’re good.”

“Promise me?” Gillian had a pleading look in her eyes.

Finn nodded slowly. It was time to leave and figure out a way to keep out of Gillian’s hair. “I promise. We’re good.” As she placed her hand on the door handle, she heard Gillian sigh. *Don’t turn back. Don’t get involved.* “I’ll see you around.”

“I...can’t stop thinking about you.” Gillian spoke so quietly that Finn frowned, wondering if she’d imagined those words. Then Gillian cleared her throat. “Morning, noon, and night. You’re all I think about, Finn.”

Finn swallowed and glanced over her shoulder. Gillian was standing in the middle of the room, watching her.

“I know we shouldn’t, we...*can’t*, but I don’t know how to work through this when all I want is to feel your hands on my skin.”

Finn flicked the lock on the office door and took a few steps towards Gillian. “I don’t know how to help you work through that either. I’m sorry.”

“You don’t feel the same way.” Gillian cast her gaze on the floor, nodding slowly. “I should have known you wouldn’t, but I couldn’t let you leave this office without being honest. I don’t want you to walk out of here thinking you’re the one in the wrong or that I’m uncomfortable. That couldn’t be further from the truth.”

“I...do feel the same. Trust me.” Finn chanced her luck, reaching out a hand and taking Gillian’s. “But I don’t want to make life difficult for you, and that’s exactly what’s going to happen if I stay in this office for a moment longer.”

Gillian laced their fingers, pulling Finn closer. Their bodies touched, that delicious sensation spreading throughout Finn as she looked up into Gillian’s eyes. “Don’t go. Not yet. I’ve been desperate to talk to you for two weeks now.”

“About what?”

Gillian stroked a fingertip up the middle of Finn's throat, holding her chin as she said, "Anything at all. The weather if it means I can hear your voice. Or look into your eyes."

Those words fired something up inside Finn. She'd successfully done as Gillian had asked over the last two weeks, but Gillian was instigating this. If she even thought about kissing Finn, then Finn was going to show Gillian just how much she'd missed her. She guided Gillian back towards her desk, standing between her legs when she rested against the wooden edge. "I thought we couldn't do this."

"We shouldn't." Gillian's eyelids fluttered closed as Finn stroked her palms up and down her thighs. "F-Finn..."

"You want me to leave, say the word, and I'll leave." Finn leaned in closer, her lips inches from Gillian's. "You're in control here. It doesn't matter how much I want to feel as though I'm in control; it's all you."

Gillian studied Finn's eyes, dragging the corner of her lip between her teeth. She was thinking about it, but Finn knew that deep down, there was nothing to think about. Gillian Masters wanted her...just as she had two weeks ago. "I've spent the last two weeks replaying that night in my mind."

"Oh, yeah?"

Gillian brought her hands up to Finn's upper arms, smoothing her palms over her muscles. "God, nobody has ever made me come so hard, Finn. Nobody has ever given their all the way you did."

"I don't give anything but my very best."

"Mm. I know."

Finn inched closer again. Gillian's skirt strained between them. "So..." her fingertips disappeared beneath the hem of the material, that soft skin reminding her of what they'd shared. A little higher and Finn would be touching the very thing she craved.

"I don't know what you're doing to me, but I can't stop myself. I need you, Finn." Gillian fisted her hand in the front of Finn's T-shirt and kissed her with an urgency that had Finn

wondering if they'd ever be able to stop. The way Gillian kissed her, it was a way no other woman had before. "Oh, God. I really need you."

"Now?" Finn lifted a brow.

"Y-yes." Gillian whimpered as Finn stroked her fingertips over her underwear. She felt the heat, the dampness, smiling when Gillian shifted forward to gain a little friction. "Please, I need you to touch me."

Finn slid both hands under Gillian's dress and hooked her fingers through the waistband of her underwear. She slid them down her thighs, taking the red lace and putting it in her back pocket.

Their eyes met, that palpable tension between them back tenfold. Finn had to stop and stare for a moment. To understand that this was happening *again*. She wasn't sure she could be this lucky. But she was, and she was going to make the most of it.

She shifted Gillian to the very edge of her desk, clasping her fingers around the back of her neck. Finn brought their foreheads together, smiling when Gillian gasped at the simple touch to her thigh. "I didn't think I'd have the chance to touch you again."

"This isn't right, but then...I don't want to imagine you as being wrong."

Finn drew Gillian into a kiss, tugging on her bottom lip as she smiled. "You know I'll fuck you whenever and *wherever* you want."

"Oh, God." Gillian trembled with anticipation, the sexiest moan music to Finn's ears as she teased her clit. "Y-yes."

"You can't help yourself, can you?"

"No."

Finn watched a range of emotions cross Gillian's face, but the one that remained throughout was arousal. Pure unbridled want and arousal. "I've barely even touched you, and you're soaked."

“Y-you,” Gillian whispered. “You’re always on my mind.”

“Have you...been touching your pussy while you think about me? Here?”

Gillian nodded. “Once or twice.”

“Fuck. That’s hot.” Finn kissed her way along Gillian’s jawline until she reached her ear. “I’ve been wanting to fuck you in your office since we met. Because you and I both know that we get off on it. It’s...forbidden.”

“All of you is forbidden, Finn.”

Part of Finn wanted to be forbidden, it was what turned Gillian on, but the other part of her wanted to enjoy this woman whenever she possibly could. Gillian Masters was seductive—no shit—but she had something about her that Finn wanted to learn and understand. The smallest piece of her wanted to know Gillian on a personal level. “Do you want me to be forbidden?” As Finn asked that question, she teased her fingers through Gillian’s lips. “Well?”

“God, n-no.”

Hmm. Finn wasn’t so sure that was the truth. It was the idea of being caught that made Gillian wet, and Finn knew it. The secrecy and the locked doors...Gillian couldn’t deny how it made her feel, even if she tried to. The fact that Finn’s fingers were dripping said a lot. “I know what you want deep down.” She eased two fingers inside Gillian, smirking when her eyes lit up. “You want me to fuck you on your desk... knowing we could get caught. That’s the thrill, isn’t it?”

“Oh, fuck!” Gillian threw her head back, spreading her legs wider. “That feels...”

“So. Fucking. Good.” Finn finished for her. “You want to come around my fingers knowing that your colleagues are walking past the door.”

“Baby.”

Finn placed a hand around Gillian’s throat, thrusting deeper. “Tell me the truth.”

“I-I...yes. This is what gets me off.”

Fuck! Finn could come just hearing that. Gillian spent her days walking the corridors all prim and proper, but behind it all, she was the complete opposite. She wanted sordid. She wanted to be fucked by her student in her office. Who the hell was Finn to deny her that? “Touch your clit.”

Gillian gasped and moaned—quietly but not silently—and brought her red manicured nails to her clit. The moment they touched the sensitive bud, Gillian wrapped her legs around Finn’s waist and bucked her hips. “Fuck, yes. Please, Finn. Make me come.”

Finn curled her fingers, massaging the spot that would have Gillian moaning her name. She may have only spent one night with her, but she knew everything Gillian enjoyed. She leaned in, their lips almost touching, and stared deep into Gillian’s eyes. “You’re fucking filthy. I love it.”

“T-this is all you, Finn. I can’t get enough of you.”

With a cocky grin, Finn said, “I know. And that’s why I can’t get enough of you either.”

“When you fuck me, I feel alive.”

That only had Finn thrusting harder again, her mind spinning at the thought of this woman needing her. “Then enjoy this. Let me take care of you.”

“Oh, fuck. I’m close.”

“Come for me,” Finn demanded, her arm straining as she fucked Gillian harder with every rhythmic breath they took. “Go on. Come for me so I can watch that gorgeous smile.”

Gillian released around Finn, her legs tightened around her waist as she brought the fingers working her clit to Finn’s lips. Finn sucked on them, coaxing everything she could from Gillian, entirely mesmerised by this woman.

“F-Finn.” She pushed against Finn’s stomach, her chest heaving. “Oh, God.”

“You don’t have any idea how much I want you. Or how good it feels to be inside you.”

Gillian lowered her legs from around Finn, slumping as best as she could, given the fact she was resting against her desk. “I...that...”

Finn laughed. “Can’t happen again. Yeah, I know.” She cleaned Gillian from her fingers and winked as she backed up towards the door. “Enjoy the rest of your afternoon.”

“Finn, wait.”

“Got to go!” She pulled Gillian’s underwear from her back pocket and held them up. “But I’ll keep hold of these. You know, for next time.”

STUDY
You
(THE PRESENT)

CHAPTER I

FINN MINDLESSLY STIRRED HER COFFEE, gazing across the cafeteria where Gillian stood. How was it possible for one person to always look so good? Finn tried to look presentable most days—she believed that feeling positive in your clothes, in turn, made you feel positive within—but Gillian? It was obscene how perfect she looked every damn day.

Maybe it was the fact that she hadn't seen Gillian in almost a month that had Finn feeling that way. The longing had been there, the craving to call Gillian up over the Christmas and New Year break, but she'd somehow managed to stop herself from doing so. Honestly, Finn could have done with something to occupy her time, to get her out of the house, but Gillian had made no attempt to strike up conversation with her in the weeks leading up to the Christmas break. In the weeks following their fiery office situation.

Finn knew where she stood now.

Gillian had used her *again*. It was quite simple.

But that had been beneficial to Finn without her realising it at the time. When she'd woken up on New Year's Day alone—still living with her parents—Finn had decided that, for the first time in her life, she was going to get her shit into some kind of order. She didn't quite know how that looked yet, but she was determined to have meaningful relationships with people. Sure, she wouldn't dismiss the idea of enjoying women when it was possible, but whatever she'd had with Gillian had come to an end. That was self-explanatory, judging by their lack of contact.

Gillian had been the spark when it came to igniting the changes in Finn's life. While she would never regret those moments with her, Finn knew it couldn't continue. She also knew she was at a point where a routine...something meaningful in her life was a must. She was turning twenty-six next week, and right now, she had very little to show for those years on earth. Other than work and university, Finn hadn't done anything remotely meaningful with her life.

As Finn sipped her coffee, trying to remain inconspicuous around campus, she saw Gillian cast her gaze across the room. And then it landed on her. Finn managed a tight smile before she lowered her eyes to the table. While she was planning to be on campus solely for her degree, she knew deep down that one look from Gillian would have her considering *other* things.

Open your laptop. She's less likely to interrupt.

Finn pulled it from her satchel and powered it up. She was up to date with her assignments—she'd spent most of Christmas night working—but Gillian didn't know that. Actually, nobody knew that. Finn wasn't in the habit of telling anyone about the dreadful social life she had.

“Finn...hi.”

That voice. It instantly sent a shiver down Finn's spine. She'd missed that voice, but she'd also learnt to detach from how she felt when she heard that voice. *Almost.*

She looked up and smiled. “Hi.”

“May I speak with you for a few minutes if you have the time?”

“Sure. What's up?”

Gillian looked around and cleared her throat. “How about my office?”

Finn paused for a moment. She had no issues going to Gillian's office, but she had to prepare herself for the possibility of one of two scenarios. One, Gillian expected *something* to take place in her office. Two, she'd come to the

decision over the holidays that she couldn't work with Finn in her classes anymore.

“Finn?”

“Y-yeah. Of course.” She closed her laptop and shot to her feet. Whatever the outcome, she'd deal with it as it happened.

As she rushed to gather her belongings, Finn knocked her coffee cup over, spilling the contents across the table. She fumbled, wiping it away with a napkin, and then glanced back up at Gillian. “Sorry. It's been a long morning already. I'm a little bit spaced out.”

“Perfectly fine.” Gillian regarded Finn with one of her sultry smiles and turned to walk away.

Finn followed—of course she did—aware that she had to keep her eyes on the floor and not on Gillian's arse. That wasn't the easiest of tasks, not when she hadn't come across this woman in a month. The thoughts had been there, the reminder of Gillian's sweet pussy, but Finn had done well to hold back. If nothing else, it showed she was capable of keeping her hands to herself.

As they reached Gillian's office and she unlocked the door, Finn steeled herself and took a breath. She really hoped they could continue sharing the same space. They were adults; it surely wasn't hard. Only Finn knew just how hard it could be if they *dared* to continue what had already happened. Quite frankly, Finn would get on her knees if Gillian asked that of her—something she wouldn't do for any other woman—because when it came down to the truth of it all, Gillian did something to Finn that she couldn't explain.

“Come in.” Gillian held the door open as the lights flickered on. That familiar perfume reached Finn's nose, her spine tingling, but she forced it down. If she gave herself a single second to think about being inside Gillian, she would have her bent over the desk in the next minute or two. “How was the Christmas break?”

Finn shoved her hands into the pockets of her ripped jeans. She was mindful not to have that ‘confident stance’ as Gillian

had once called it. She didn't want to be accused of seducing her lecturer again. "Yeah, it was okay. Quiet."

"Sometimes quiet is best," Gillian said, flashing that smile again.

She offered Finn a seat, but Finn declined.

"What did you want to see me about?" Finn hated getting straight to the point, but being back in this office brought back some of the most intense memories of her life. Memories she was close to re-enacting. It felt far too easy to just slip a hand up Gillian's dress. "Just that I have stuff to do."

"Right. I'm sorry." Gillian waved a hand. "I just wanted to check in with you about the extension you asked for back in December."

Finn frowned. "I...submitted the assignment before the two-week extended deadline."

"You did. But is it likely that you'll need the same in the future? You mentioned that you had some family things going on, and I'd like to be on the same page should you need an extension again."

"No. I'll make sure everything is submitted on time. That was just a hiccup. I'm good."

"If you're sure?" Gillian quirked a brow, sending Finn's pulse racing.

It didn't really matter what Gillian did or how she presented herself, Finn was familiar with her body now, and that was an image she could never scratch from her mind. The innocent looks didn't wash with Finn anymore. Instead, the sweet and shy smile only reminded her of the night Gillian dropped to her knees and took Finn's 'cock' into her mouth. Every last action had an opposite...and Finn knew it.

"You know I'll give you whatever you need, Finn."

Anything at all? Finn wanted to ask. "Really, I'll be okay."

Gillian seemed satisfied by that, even if Finn didn't know if she was coming or going most days. Life at home had been tough during the holidays.

“Okay. Well, it was good to see you.” Gillian rounded her desk and took a seat. “I’ll see you this afternoon at my lecture?”

“Of course. Yeah.” Finn chewed the corner of her bottom lip, one hand gripping the strap of her satchel where it was slung across her body. “Did you have a nice Christmas?”

“I’ve...had better.” Gillian managed the smallest of smiles. “First one alone in twenty-odd years.” She focused on her computer screen, a sadness in the air around them.

“Onwards and upward now though, right?”

Gillian’s dark eyes lifted, piercing Finn in all ways possible. They held that sadness, uncertainty about the future, but they still made Finn wet in an instant. She guessed some things would never change. “I hope so.”

“I know so. If that cake at your divorce party was anything to go by, your ex-husband was a prick. Surely you’d rather be without that than put up with it for the sake of it.”

“I’ll always choose myself.”

Yeah, don’t I know it, Finn thought. Given the complete lack of communication for the best part of five weeks now, Finn was well aware of the fact that Gillian only chose herself. Because it hadn’t only been the break that had provided that silence. The two weeks prior to uni finishing had been just as lonely.

Gillian got to her feet and approached her briefcase. She took out paperwork and placed it on her desk. “I suppose I should start this year with minimal work. That was all I wanted to see you about. Go and enjoy the rest of your lunch break.”

“R-right. Yeah.” Finn turned towards the door, placing her hand to the back of it. “It was good to see you too, Gillian.”



God, she looks good.

Gillian watched Finn from across the lecture hall, mindful that other students were present. For twenty-five days, she'd reminisced. About Finn's eyes. Her smile. Those hands. For twenty-five days, she'd wondered if it was possible to call Finn and have her come over. Christmas night had been particularly difficult. After an entire bottle of wine in the space of an hour, Gillian had been close to calling her student.

She could dress this up however she liked, but she still wanted Finn. It simply wasn't possible to forget someone like Finn Ashton. As Gillian sat here right now, she knew she didn't *want* to forget something that had brought her so much pleasure. Sure, she may want to forget her own past, her miserable life, and enjoy something that didn't have to mean anything—or so she kept telling herself—but deep down, it simply came back to her desire to be with Finn. It couldn't mean anything, but that pleasure she'd felt when she was alone with her student, the undeniable urge they'd both had to have one another... It meant far more than Gillian could admit. She would keep her own feelings buried away, she had to, but God, she missed Finn Ashton.

Gillian gripped the arms of her chair, crossing her legs when she caught Finn grinning during a conversation with another student. She did her usual signature hand through the hair, sitting so confidently as always. That desire flared deep within Gillian, but it was quickly followed by jealousy. Jealousy because Finn was giving her attention to another woman. Jealousy because that woman had the pleasure of being up close and personal with Finn. The very same place Gillian wished she could be.

“Okay, everyone. I thought I'd ease you into this semester,” Gillian said as she stood up and moved towards the front of her class. “I'll be updating the online portal this afternoon. If anyone has any questions, you know where to find me. Or you can drop me an email.”

Everyone started to pack up. Gillian waited for Finn to make eye contact, to grab her crotch the way she used to, but it never came. She was too enthralled by the conversation she

was having with Deena, one of Gillian's mature students. Finn was a mature student too, but Deena was...thirty-seven if Gillian recalled correctly.

She focused on her own belongings, closing down the PowerPoint presentation she'd spent the last week working on. The rest of the day was Gillian's now, and it was about time she got out of here and took care of things that needed taking care of.

After the last hour watching Finn...Gillian definitely had 'things' to take care of.

As the last of her students filed out of the lecture hall, Gillian dropped her head on her shoulders where she was bent forward at her laptop. The Christmas break was supposed to bring her some kind of clarity. It was supposed to rid her of anything she felt for Finn. Fuck, it was supposed to put a stop to all of this.

Yet here she was...craving a release. All because she had laid eyes on Finn again. But it wasn't *only* a release she wanted. Just being with Finn was incredibly satisfying. Sex or not.

Oh, you have to stop this. It's too dangerous!

What Gillian wanted...she couldn't have. The nights she had lay awake, wishing she was in Finn's arms. The mornings she sat at home, imagining Finn coming up behind her and wrapping those arms around her waist. The days when those thoughts became so intense that Gillian sat with tears in her eyes. It could never happen, but God, she wished there could have been a different outcome.

"Hey."

Startled by a low voice, Gillian turned around. Finn was resting against the front row of fixed desks, her legs crossed at the ankles. "Finn, I thought you'd left. Is everything okay?"

"Sure. You seem a little...off, though. You good?"

Lie. "I'm really good."

Finn narrowed those blue eyes, her head cocked. She'd had a fresh haircut before the semester had begun, shaved on one side. Gillian liked it. So much so that she wanted to graze her nails against it...preferably while Finn's mouth was between her legs. *Oh, God.* She mirrored Finn's position, squeezing her thighs together.

"My birthday is next Friday. I'll be at The Corner bar if you want to join me."

Gillian knew in her heart she would give anything to join Finn at one of the local bars, but anyone could be around. It wasn't a good idea. "I...shouldn't."

"No, I know." Finn nodded slowly. "Still, I wanted to invite you. Even though I knew you wouldn't accept it."

Gillian pushed off the desk and approached Finn. "I'd love to, really I would—"

"But you can't."

She stopped in front of Finn, aching to reach out and touch her in some way. To brush her hair from her face, to stroke a fingertip up her forearm. Just something to show that connection was as palpable as ever. "I can't be sure we wouldn't be seen together."

"It's just a drink, Gillian."

Was it, though? And if that *was* the case, would their chemistry be obvious to everyone around them?

Gillian wanted to throw caution to the wind, to enjoy a rare night out, but the fear of being found out stuck firm in her mind. "I'm sure you'll have a great night."

"Y-yeah. So, I'll see you Friday for the lecture."

"I'm not here this Friday. I have some things to take care of."

Finn got to her feet, and Gillian found herself practically pressed to her. "Then I guess the rest of my week *and* the weekend are completely ruined."

Gillian frowned.

“Since whatever we had going on...isn’t going on anymore, admiring you is all I’m allowed.” Finn cleared her throat and inconspicuously placed a hand to Gillian’s thigh, stroking her fingers against the material of Gillian’s skirt. “I’ve spent the Christmas break promising myself I wouldn’t find myself this close to you.” Finn leaned towards Gillian’s ear and growled, “But one day back, and all I want is to put my fingers inside you and remember how good you feel.”

Gillian’s clit ached at that. Her wetness had just *really* made an appearance. She wrapped her hand around the wrist almost between her legs, slowly guiding Finn’s hand towards her pussy. “F-Finn.”

“Don’t worry. I know we can’t...or shouldn’t. It doesn’t make me want to fuck you any less, though. I arrived on campus this morning determined to focus, to...be your student and nothing more, but one look from you and everything unravelled.” Finn grazed the back of her hand between Gillian’s legs, smirking when Gillian’s knees trembled. “I can live with the dreams. Bye, Gillian.”

The sudden loss of Finn’s hand had Gillian braced forward against the nearest desk, panting. How the hell had things changed so suddenly within the space of a few minutes? Gillian recalled the smile on Finn’s face as she spoke to Deena, wishing that smile was directed at her instead, but then she focused on the look in Finn’s eyes as she touched Gillian exactly where she needed her most, and memories of their short but fiery time together came flooding back. It didn’t matter how Finn looked at anyone else, it was Gillian who she wanted.

The lecture hall door closed with a thud, reminding Gillian of where she was. She stood bolt upright, brushed down her skirt, and packed up the last of her things. Gillian needed to be alone, and if she didn’t get Finn off her mind right this second, she would be fucking herself in her car in a matter of minutes.

CHAPTER 2

GILLIAN ALMOST FELL through the door, her work bag and briefcase thrown to the floor as she stumbled out of her heels. Finn had awoken the beast, and now Gillian wasn't sure she could keep it at bay, deep down with her darkest fantasies. She rushed into the kitchen and took the bottle of red wine sitting on the counter, pouring a large measure into a glass. Her shaking hand gripped her phone, the thought of calling Finn now fully at the front of her mind. She couldn't do and say what she had to Gillian and not expect there to be some kind of bite back. It didn't work that way.

She exhaled a breath, unlocking her phone and bringing up the last messages Finn had sent to her. Messages that led to them fucking one another senseless the first time around.

Oh, yeah? I know how wet I make you when I'm in class. I see it in your eyes. Do you go back to your office and touch yourself while you're thinking of me? Do you taste yourself while imagining me?

Fuck. Gillian groaned at the mere thought of having Finn again. Realistically, she could if she wanted to. It didn't matter what her head said; her pussy demanded something else entirely.

Do you think of me putting my cock in you while you're bent over your desk? A personal favourite of mine is being on my knees under your desk. I'd love to have my face in your drenched pussy. And I know you'd love it too!

Oh, Gillian *always* thought about Finn being inside her. Of all the positions they'd found themselves in that night, Finn pounding her against the back of the couch was up there with her finest achievements. The way she gripped Gillian's hips and slammed harder with each rhythmic thrust. She had the perfect stroke. Fuck, Finn was the only one who knew how to satisfy Gillian.

At least, that was her fear when it came to meeting someone one day. That nobody would live up to Finn and the incredibly mind-blowing sex they'd had.

She couldn't hold on any longer. If she closed her eyes, Gillian could imagine Finn looking down at her, toy in hand, demanding Gillian gag for her. And she would, time and time again. God, she wasn't sure there were *any* limits when it came to Finn Ashton.

Gillian rushed off into her bedroom, taking her bottom lip between her teeth as she hiked her skirt up around her waist and pressed her underwear between her lips. Soaked was an understatement. "Oh, Finn. What are you doing to me?"

She took the biggest toy she had from the top drawer of her nightstand and threw it to the bed. She considered reaching for a bottle of lube too, but it wasn't needed. Gillian was so wet that as she removed her underwear, she felt it coat her thighs. She lay back on the bed, brought the tip of the toy to her entrance, and plunged it deep inside.

"F-fuck." Gillian grasped at her blouse, untucking it from her skirt. She forced a hand inside her bra, pinched and tugged at her aching nipple, then fucked herself hard and fast. "Y-yes. Oh, Finn. Fuck me."

With her head buried in the mattress, her mouth agape, Gillian gasped and moaned with every thrust. If only Finn were braced above her, staring down at her with those huge blue eyes, this day would be ending on the perfect note.

"Harder. Fuck my pussy harder."

"All I want is to put my fingers inside you and remember how good you feel."

Finn's voice played on repeat in her mind, building her up to the most intense orgasm. Sometimes the fantasy was far better than the reality, but that depended entirely on whether you'd had the chance to live out those fantasies. Gillian had, and this was nothing compared to the real thing. "Y-yes. So close."

Gillian yanked her hand from her bra, now lavishing her clit as her toes started to curl. She slowed, but thrust deeper and harder, trembling as she came for a woman she couldn't have. "Oh, shit." Her chest heaved, and her thighs shook. Gillian wasn't done, not by a long stretch, but the unexpectedness of this had thrown her.

Her walls forced the toy out, every inch of Gillian throbbing for something far more, but that could only happen if she allowed Finn into her life in some capacity.

She had a decision to make.

But not before she'd fucked herself into oblivion.

Oh, Gillian...you're going to get yourself into trouble.



Finn's phone rang on the bed next to her, startling her from the assignment Gillian had uploaded to the online portal this afternoon. It was her mum.

"Hi, Mum. Everything okay?"

"Could you come down here for a minute, please?"

Finn smiled, shifting her laptop from where it rested on her knees. "Yep. Give me a second, and I'll be there."

As the call ended, Finn threw her phone to the bed and left her room. She would always be on hand to help her mum when she needed it, but Finn also had the added work of assignments these days. She *would* need some time to herself to get ahead with her studying. Failing her modules was not an option.

Maybe it's time to find a place of my own...

She took the stairs, wondering what would be required of her now. Her dad was home—drunk as usual—but he may as well not exist when it came to helping out around here. Carol had been confined to her bed for the last three years. Finn had once been her carer on mostly a full-time basis, but enrolling in university meant she didn't have as much time to tend to the house and anything her mum may need now. Not only did she have uni work on her plate, but she had her actual job as well.

“What's up?” She stepped into the living room that housed her mum's bed at the far end. “Everything okay?”

“I couldn't trouble you for a cup of tea, could I, love?”

Finn looked over at the couch, rolling her eyes when she found her dad asleep on it. Roy was a drunk, he had been for as long as Finn could remember. “I see he's about as much use as an ornament once again.”

“He's only just nodded off. I didn't want to wake him. He needs to rest.”

Rest from what, exactly? Lifting pints of beer with his right arm all day?

“He's really going to have to start pulling his finger out, Mum. You know I'll do anything I can for you, but he needs to pull his weight. With university, I don't have as much time as I used to.”

Carol lay her head back on the pillow and stared up at the ceiling. “I'm sorry.”

“I'm not complaining. I'm just making you aware of the things I have on at the minute.” Finn had tried to encourage her mum to hire a carer service, but that had been a non-starter. Carol claimed she didn't need people judging her as she lay in bed. Finn had explained that they wouldn't be there to do anything of the kind, that their careers were based solely on caring for people, but Carol had only gone on to explain how she was a burden to Finn and would manage alone rather than with someone she didn't know or trust. “I'll make you a cuppa, and then I really need to get on with some studying.”

“You’re taking me to my appointments at the hospital next Friday, aren’t you?”

“I... It’s my birthday. You said Sue was taking you.”

Carol propped herself up in bed, smiling weakly. “Maybe I should cancel them. If you have plans, I don’t want you to change them for me.”

“Mum, you can’t cancel them. You’ve been waiting *months* for these appointments.”

Carol shrugged. “That’s okay. I’m sure another date will come around soon.”

Finn perched herself on the edge of her mum’s bed, taking her hand. “Sue was supposed to be taking you.” Carol and her sister got along when it suited them, but most of the time, it was strained. Finn didn’t get involved with the family drama—or anyone’s for that matter—so she had no idea what was going on this time. “Is she not able to take you anymore?”

“I told her you’d take me instead. I feel more comfortable with you there. You know what they’re talking about, you know?”

Finn dragged a hand through her hair and sighed. Of course she would change her plans so her mum could go to her appointments—they were hugely important—but Finn did wish she wasn’t the only person around here willing to do those things. She had really been looking forward to her birthday, alone or not. “I have a lecture that day. And it’s my birthday. That’s why Sue was taking you rather than me.”

“I didn’t know you had plans. You don’t usually go out much, so I thought it would be okay to cancel with Sue.”

“It’s fine. I’ll cancel my plans. I don’t know how long we’ll be sitting around at the hospital for.” She didn’t have anything set in stone when it came to those plans, but it wasn’t the point. Finn didn’t want to sit at home for her birthday. No way. She’d invited Gillian to the bar hoping she’d agree, but that was dead in the water. Still, Finn would take herself out for a drink. So what if she celebrated alone?

“Finn, I’m sorry. I should have asked you first.”

Finn squeezed her mum's hand. "I need you to stop worshipping the ground he walks on." She eyed the couch, scoffing. "He does *nothing* around here. He's useless. Don't you see that?"

"Don't speak about your father like that."

Father. That'll be the day. Finn exhaled a calming breath. She hated all of this. If he could just help when it was needed, Finn's life would be far less hectic. But as she watched him, snoring over the noise of the TV, she knew he was a lost cause. "I'll put the kettle on."

"I appreciate you, Finn. I hope you know that."

Finn turned back as she reached the kitchen door. "I know, Mum."



Gillian lowered her reading glasses over her eyes, settling in for an evening of paperwork and plans for the new semester. She didn't have to worry about her students, they had already shown her what they were capable of, so it would be wise to give them the very best version of herself, too. It was important that they felt they could approach Gillian with any issues they faced.

She brought up the notes for the next module of contract law and got comfortable on the couch. Finn had finished top of her class last semester, even with the extended deadline. Whatever had been going on to cause that extension, Gillian was impressed by Finn's dedication to the degree.

Her phone buzzed on the coffee table. She reached for it, surprised to see Finn's name waiting for her.

I know this isn't what we do, but I was in your area and wondered if maybe we could talk? Finn.

Talk? Finn...wanted to talk?

Not a good idea. We don't have to discuss earlier today. It's okay.

Gillian chose not to sign her name at the end of the message. The last thing she wanted was future texts to get into the wrong hands.

Okay. I'm sorry for texting you. I just needed someone to talk to. See you next week. Finn.

Finn needed someone to talk to? About what? This Finn didn't feel like the Finn she was used to being around. Perhaps there was another issue that her student was dealing with. If so, surely it could wait until university hours. From what Gillian knew of Finn so far, her student was more than capable of looking after herself. That confidence was the very reason Gillian struggled so much around Finn Ashton.

I'll be on campus tomorrow if you want to come to my office.

Gillian sent off the message, hoping that satisfied Finn.

It's not degree related. But thanks for the offer. I appreciate it. Finn.

Okay, Gillian didn't know how to deal with this side of Finn. Even only through a text message, something felt off. Finn...felt off.

Do you remember my address?

Gillian's address wouldn't be the same for much longer. On Friday, she was collecting the keys to her new place. A home with a garden and plenty of space. Gillian could hardly wait to put her own stamp on it. Granted, it would take a while to complete renovations, but it would all be worth it in the end.

Yeah. That's not an address I could forget in a hurry. Finn.

She smiled at that. And then she made a mental note not to give Finn her new address when the time came to move in. This could be the place they'd had their fun while her new home would be a fresh start for Gillian.

Then come over now. If you're sure it's me you want to talk to.

As Gillian sent off that message, she lowered her work to the coffee table and mentally prepared herself for seeing Finn again within her own four walls. Something told her that she wouldn't have to worry about the dangerously good side of her student tonight, even if that was the side she would always crave.

Are you sure?

Gillian inhaled a deep breath and let it out ever so slowly.

I'm sure.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT THE FUCK are you doing here?

Finn puffed out her cheeks and strode out of the lift. Part of her hadn't expected Gillian to invite her over when she'd texted her, but Finn was grateful that she had. She just needed an hour to herself but not alone. She wanted to have a conversation with someone that wasn't either of her parents. Finn...wanted to have a normal life.

As she approached the very door she'd had Gillian pinned against at one time, she pushed any of those thoughts from her mind. Unless they naturally gravitated towards one another tonight, Finn was going to tame herself. The last thing she needed was Gillian thinking she'd come here specifically for sex. As wonderful as that would be, that wasn't what they had anymore.

She's used you twice now, but you're the one being respectful. Huh. Okay, that wasn't strictly true. They'd used one another as it suited them, and Finn would do well to remember that. Nobody was the villain here. It was simply a fucked up situation.

When she stopped outside Gillian's apartment, glaring at the door, Finn once again questioned what she was doing here. She was shocked she'd asked Gillian if they could talk. Yes, she wanted someone to talk to, but was it wise to choose the very woman she preferred to spend her time with naked?

You're here now. She cleared her throat and knocked anyway. When the door opened and Gillian looked back at her,

Finn could only smile. It felt odd to be here under different circumstances.

“Hey.”

Gillian cocked her head. “Come in.”

Finn did so, avoiding staring at Gillian for too long. She wore her reading glasses—glasses that sent every last thought of Finn’s directly into the gutter. “Thanks for responding to my message. I just started walking and ended up in your area.”

“*Really.*” Gillian deadpanned.

That reaction was understandable. If Finn was thrown by being here, Gillian surely felt the same way. Finn held up her hands and took a step back. “Really. I wouldn’t lie to you.”

“Then can I get you something to drink? Maybe a beer?”

Finn smiled as she ran her fingers through her hair. “I’d love a beer. Is it okay if I take my jacket off?”

“Sure.”

Finn slid it off as Gillian turned her back and took a few steps towards the kitchen. She wore an oversized hoodie, her hair pulled up into a bun. Finn briefly admired the leggings sculpted to Gillian’s legs, and then she allowed those thoughts to pass. *Keep it clean, Finn.* She slung her jacket over a dining chair and stood awkwardly in the middle of Gillian’s space, aware that this was all very odd. Finn was her student. Odd was an understatement.

“So, you wanted to talk?” Gillian reached out with a beer to Finn, motioning for her to take a seat on the couch.

“Thanks.” She perched herself on the end, not entirely sure of the atmosphere yet, and nodded slowly. “Yeah, um...I know it’s probably a bit unexpected, and you can ask me to leave—”

“What is it, Finn? Because if this is about us, I’m going to stop you before you even start.”

There was no ‘them’. Finn knew that. “It’s not. And if it makes you feel better, I’m not trying to pursue you, Gillian. It

was never about wanting a relationship. You don't have to worry about that with me, okay?"

"Famous last words," Gillian said with a slight scoff, but Finn saw through it. She was putting on a front, and Finn understood that Gillian was simply trying to protect herself. Gillian had no idea why Finn was here.

And Finn was beginning to feel a little bit ridiculous for even contacting Gillian. How was she supposed to explain to the woman who thought she was hot and fuckable that she had practically no life outside of university? "Can I say some things and it not change your opinion of me?"

Gillian reached for her glass of wine and sipped. "It depends on what it is you're going to say. If you've come here to tell me you're a drug dealer or a thief, then naturally, I'm going to have a *very* different opinion of you."

Finn frowned, unsure if Gillian was joking or not. Either way, she felt a little offended. "Thankfully, neither of those. But if you'd rather not do this, I can just go."

Gillian placed a hand to Finn's knee as she tried to stand. "Anything you say here can be said without judgement."

"I appreciate that." Finn took a moment or two to breathe. She really didn't want Gillian to think of her any differently. What they'd had was the one thing that made Finn feel less like a loner. When Gillian looked at her the way she usually did, Finn didn't feel so out of the loop with life. "As for the reason why I'm here, it's as pathetic as simply wanting some company."

Gillian's brows drew together. "Finn, I'm sure you have plenty of people to spend time with. I mean, look at you. Your friends and...*interests*, shall we say, must be falling over themselves for your attention."

Finn snorted, staring down at her beer bottle. "Yeah, I don't have any 'interests'...or friends."

"I'm sorry?"

"I suppose not everything is as it seems when you look at people, huh?" Finn knew this would be an instant turn off.

Gillian had clearly been into the confident and intriguing side of Finn. Not the one that had no friends and very little life. “I care for my mum. When I’m not at university or working, I’m at home with her.”

Gillian nodded slowly. “That explains the extension.”

“Yup.” Finn scooted back on the couch, resting her ankle on her knee. “And that won’t happen again. I can assure you.”

“Finn, I’m pretty understanding when it comes to needing more time. You’re university level now; we don’t generally run around chasing students for assignments. Whatever you need, you let me know, and I’ll make it happen.”

Finn looked up at Gillian, her gaze unwavering. “Honestly? I need *this*. And I know it’s not something I’m entitled to, nor would I expect it from you, but it’s what I need. Someone I can hang out with. Someone I can come to when I need to vent.”

“You don’t know how much I *wish* I could be that person.”

“I’m not your kind of person—I get that. But the fact you even agreed to see me tonight has been a huge help. Everything just gets to be a bit too much at home sometimes.”

“You and I both know you’re *exactly* my kind of person. Let’s not pretend otherwise.”

Finn blushed ever so slightly. Seeing Gillian like this, wearing her comfy clothes and make-up free... It made her feel some kinda way. Add in the care in her eyes, and Finn was unexpectedly thrown. “That’s fair.”

“Now tell me, what gets to be too much? Caring for your mother?”

Finn winced. Confirming that was going to make her sound like a terrible person. “Don’t judge me for that. I’ve been caring for her since I was nineteen. It was only occasional at first, but for the last three years or so, it’s been practically full-time. It’s never been easy, and it’s only getting harder. I try my best, I do everything I can when I’m there, but...she won’t accept that she needs someone other than me there. An *actual* carer.”

“I’m not judging you for that. I don’t have a relationship with my mother, so anything you do is already above and beyond as far as I’m concerned.”

“I’m sorry to hear that.” Finn almost slid her hand towards Gillian, and then she remembered that they didn’t work that way. So she would stick to the script. *I wish I could know her on a deeper level.* “It’s like she doesn’t understand that I have a life, too. That I’m now working towards a degree to do something I’ve always wanted to do...and that I have to *actually* work to make that happen.”

“She wants you to spend every waking moment taking care of her.”

Finn hated to admit it, but it was true. “Yes.”

“Correct me if I’m wrong, but you seem to feel guilty about that.”

The guilt was something that ate away at Finn most days. Even as she sat here now, Finn wondered if she should be at home waiting on another instruction or demand. But she didn’t want to live her life that way anymore. She had already held back on her studies and ended up being a mature student in Gillian’s classes. It was time she focused on herself while getting her mother the best care she could. Care that wouldn’t come solely from Finn.

“I do feel guilty about it.” Finn lifted a shoulder, not caring if she said too much. “I don’t expect a full-blown social life, and I certainly don’t have time to meet anyone. But just to get out the house for a few hours when I’m able to would make a huge difference.”

“Well.” Gillian puffed out her cheeks.

“Not what you expected, is it?”

“Honestly? No. You don’t come across that way—isolated and lonely—at all. At least, not in front of me.”

Finn watched Gillian, trying to gauge the thoughts running through her mind. “I know you’re probably disappointed now. It’s just...you make me feel like the real me. I don’t feel like the carer who is stuck at home with very little life outside. I

don't worry about my future and where it's *not* going. Who I am when I'm with you...*is* the real me. Deep down, anyway."

"Is that so?" Gillian turned in her seat and curled her legs to the side of her. She propped her elbow on the back of the couch, watching Finn intently. "Why is that?"

"You bring it out in me. You make me feel like I can be that person." Finn studied Gillian's eyes, the delicate lines on her face. She could be wrong, but... "You...like that side of me."

Gillian smirked. "Oh, I do. I *really* like that side of you."

"Can I be completely honest?" Gillian nodded as Finn cleared her throat. "Those moments I've had with you...well, it's like an escape for me. You know?"

"An escape..."

"I don't have the time to date at the minute. It's simply not possible between uni and life at home. When you looked at me the way you did the day we met...I had to explore it. To see what it meant. And yeah, being with you is an escape. A luxury escape, of course."

Gillian took her bottom lip between her teeth and shook her head slowly. "It's strange to hear you say that."

"Why?" This had to be the most conversation Finn had ever had with another woman. Sure, she played around and dabbled here and there when she needed to relieve some tension, but this? This was new. In many ways, she enjoyed this.

"Because you're an escape for me, too."

Okay, that *did* catch Finn off guard. One hundred percent. Gillian could have anyone she wanted, why Finn? "O...kay."

"It's nothing. Really. Nothing worth discussing, anyway." Gillian trailed a fingertip around the rim of her wine glass, no longer making eye contact with Finn.

"Try me. You may have other ideas about me, but I *can* be a good listener."

“No, Finn. You’ve come here because you need to talk. I’m not going to take over that space for you.”

“I’ve said what I needed to say.” Finn mirrored Gillian’s position, relaxing and hoping her body language showed that. “Tell me...why am I an escape for you?”

“I’m not sure I want to say. I’m not quite over the humiliation of it all as it is, and it’s been a year.”

Concern grew within Finn. Why would Gillian feel humiliated? And who *the fuck* had made her feel that way? “I know we don’t know one another. I know you have your people, and I’m just your student. But I am here to listen if that’s what you want.” This time Finn did chance sliding her hand forward, resting it on Gillian’s knee. “Okay?”

“I prefer the fun side of you.” Gillian spoke that quietly, but Finn didn’t know what to do with it.

“You don’t want the fun side of me. I think you’ve made that clear in the last couple of months.” If Gillian wanted *any* side of Finn, she had done very little to show it. She squeezed Gillian’s knee, dipping her head to meet her eyes. “Unless you tell me what you want, what this is, I don’t know what to do for the best.”

“I was doing just fine until the end of today’s lecture.”

Ah. That *had* been Finn’s fault. While she had promised herself to try harder around Gillian, to...not go there again, it seemed she didn’t know how to keep her thoughts and ideas to herself when they were alone. But if this really couldn’t go any further, not even just as fuck buddies, then Finn would do everything she could to make Gillian feel safe in whatever space they shared going forward. She never wanted to make anyone feel uncomfortable, least of all Gillian.

Why? Oh, the why was easy. Finn was wildly attracted to Gillian, and it wasn’t just because of what she could offer in the bedroom. Or the couch. Or the kitchen counter. Finn smirked to herself, trying to keep her head. Gillian may have been sexy as hell, but it was those deep, dark eyes that Finn wanted to gaze into. It was her soft skin that left Finn tingling

whenever she had the privilege of touching Gillian. Even a simple handshake had sparks flying, her knees weak, her pulse racing. Gillian Masters was far more than just a great fuck. She had the potential to change Finn's life. Being in Gillian's company made Finn feel all kinds of things. But mostly, she felt a strange sense of contentment. Peace. Happiness.

"I'm sorry. That's on me. It won't happen again, okay?"

Gillian looked up this time, visibly swallowing. "Only...I want it to happen again. Over and over again. I know the mistake I'm making...but whenever I can have you, I want you, Finn."

"I don't know if I'm coming or going with you," Finn laughed, but it was more of a nervous laughter. "You do realise that, don't you?"

"I know the feeling."

Finn decided to be bold. Now was the perfect opportunity to lay their cards on the table. Gillian knew how Finn felt about all of this. If this woman wanted and needed what Finn was offering, she would drop everything to be here. "Gillian, do you want me to be your escape? Forget what we are outside of this apartment and tell me what you want. You know I can be discreet, and you know I'd never do anything to jeopardise your career."

"Finn..." Gillian inched forward, placing her wine glass down and straddling Finn's lap. She stroked her fingers up Finn's throat, their eyes met, and then she leaned down and kissed Finn with a soft yet heated urgency. Finn hadn't expected this to be where her evening went. She hadn't imagined Gillian would want her like this again. But those fingers up her throat...the wetness between her legs as Gillian kissed her, it had Finn fired up for *anything* this woman wanted tonight. As she drew back, her eyes told Finn of the conflicted thoughts running through Gillian's mind. "This... isn't right."

"Fuck what's right. We need one another." Finn spoke, her voice hoarse with desire. "You know I'm right."

“When I’m with you,” Gillian whispered against Finn’s lips, “I forget about the woman who was walked all over. I forget that I put up with so much shit. I forget that I’m not good enough to make someone happy...”

Finn inched back ever so slightly, staring deep into Gillian’s eyes. “Not good enough?”

“This is what suits me. Someone who can take my mind off what I hoped for in my future. Someone I can feel satisfied with. Nothing...serious. I’m not cut out for that. He made sure I knew that.”

Finn brought a hand to Gillian’s cheek, frowning as she turned her face away. “Hey. Look at me.”

Gillian shook her head lightly.

“*Please*,” Finn pleaded, aware that one push too far and this could be over. She sighed. “If you won’t look at me, at least kiss me again.”

Gillian drew Finn into another kiss, touching their foreheads. “When you left me today, I had to come straight home. I was so wet.”

It seemed that was the end of any talking they were doing. Gillian had just pivoted the complete opposite way. But Finn couldn’t deny how much she wanted Gillian, so she would play the game. Oh, she would *always* play the game.

“Oh, yeah?” Finn smiled against Gillian’s lips. “And did you...do something about it?”

“Mmhmm. I called out your name when I was fucking myself.”

“Maybe I should take you to the bedroom so I can hear you doing *exactly* that all over again?” Finn gripped Gillian’s ass and pulled her in, kneading her cheeks and knowing just what it was doing to that soaked pussy. Because it *would* be soaked. It always was around Finn.

Gillian moaned. “You don’t have to get back for your mum?”

Thankfully, not tonight. Finn had spoken to her dad once he'd slept and sobered up. He was staying home tonight. "No. These hands are all yours for as long as you want them."

"Fuck."

Finn urged Gillian out of her lap. They got to their feet, and as Finn held Gillian against her, she smirked. "Any second now."

CHAPTER 4

GILLIAN RESTED against the kitchen counter, aching in all the right places as she brought up a message thread with her best friend Jan. She had woken this morning to Finn sleeping next to her, and now she didn't know what to do. The last time that had happened, Finn had taken offence to being asked to leave. But after last night, Gillian felt as though they were in a different place. Nothing she needed to worry about, but definitely on a different footing.

Finn was her escape, and she was Finn's.

If they could contain this to the privacy of Gillian's home, what was the worst that could happen?

You won't believe the night I had! G x

Gillian rushed away from the counter and peeked around the doorframe. Finn was sprawled out and fast asleep. God, she was astonishing to look at. Gillian could admire her ink covered body for days on end and never be satisfied. *Enough of that!* She returned to her position at the counter, leaning forward with her arms braced against the distressed wood. Fuck it. She would call Jan instead.

When the call connected, Gillian grinned as she whisper-yelled, "Guess who's here?!"

"Hmm. A new squeeze?"

"No. But close. *Finn!* Finn is here. Asleep in my bed. After another night of fucking *mind-blowing* sex."

“Oh, yeah?” Jan teased and then she giggled. “I knew you couldn’t stick to your word. But you know what? I don’t blame you. Life is too short to have either no sex or terrible sex.”

Terrible sex had been her very existence for too long. Dave, her ex-husband, had never known what she wanted in the bedroom. Fuck, Gillian had spelled it out to him on many occasions—guided him too—but he just...didn’t have it in him. “I don’t know how she does it, Jan. It’s like she’s reading my mind the moment we’re naked together. No, she’s reading my mind the moment we’re in the same room.”

“That’s a special connection to have, Gill. You know that, right?”

Gillian *did* know it. While she knew this had to remain with no attachment, she wasn’t sure Finn could ever fully satiate her. Inside the bedroom, absolutely. Sex with Finn was the very sex Gillian had been dreaming of all her adult life. But outside of the bedroom? Gillian was worried that she would always want more. Whether she put up her walls or not, Finn was what and who she wanted. *It can never be*. “I know. But Finn and I are just spending time together. Well, in secrecy, obviously.”

Jan cleared her throat. “You think you can maintain that secrecy? All it takes is one look, one tone of voice, and someone could become suspicious.”

Gillian trusted Finn to keep this at her apartment. “We’ll discuss it when Finn is awake. I don’t have to be at the university until midday, so there’s plenty of time to lay out some ground rules.”

“Oooh, rules. You’re not turning all Domme, are you?”

Gillian smirked. “I couldn’t dominate Finn if I tried. God,” she whispered, dragging her hair over one shoulder. The thought of being dominated... Gillian had to wonder if it would be something Finn was interested in. “It’s so intense, Jan. I’ve never known anything like it.”

Before Jan could respond, Gillian felt a hand on her ass. And then she felt something pressing against her. Finn...and that delightful strap she used so well.

“I-I have to go.” Gillian dropped her head on her shoulders, taking her bottom lip between her teeth to keep her from moaning. She shifted back, unable to stop herself. “I’ll talk to you soon. Bye.”

Finn lifted her robe from behind, her palm connecting with one cheek, then the other.

“Mm. Good morning.”

“Mornin’.” Finn soothed her hand over Gillian’s stinging flesh, leaning in and kissing her neck. “Feeling okay about last night?”

“When you greet me like this, yes.” Gillian placed her palms flat against the counter, aware that this was just another thing she wasn’t used to yet had always wanted. Finn, fucking her in the kitchen before either of them had begun their day.

Finn sunk her teeth into Gillian’s shoulder, sending a jolt of arousal straight to her core. “Telling people about me on the phone?”

Oh, God. Gillian was treading a fine line here. If Finn knew she was talking to her best friend, would Finn do the same thing? While she understood Finn considered herself to have no friends, Gillian found that very hard to believe. Finn surely had...someone. “Maybe. But only my closest friend. She already knew about you.”

“What does she know?”

Gillian ground against Finn’s crotch, craving that friction she’d come to *need*. “That I’m into you.”

“Yeah?” Finn asked as she pressed her hand between Gillian’s shoulder blades and forced her down against the counter. “What else?”

“I told her that the sex we have is off the scale. That you know exactly what I like.” Gillian tried to grip the counter when Finn pressed the toy to her entrance, her mind whirring

with the possibilities of her morning. “That it’s never been so intense with anyone else.”

“And to think that you didn’t want to see me anymore...”

Gillian glanced over her shoulder, eyeing Finn as she stood so confidently behind her. “Maybe you should fuck that thought right out of me. Here and now. God knows I need it.”

“Mmhmm. You’re right.”

Gillian gasped when the tip pushed inside her. And then she was filled fully without a second thought. “O-oh. Fuck. Yes.”

This was all she’d wanted. All she’d craved. How was it possible that a woman—one twenty years younger than her—knew that from one night of raw sex? How did Finn know Gillian’s preferred positions, how hard she wanted it, or that morning sex was one way to *really* get her fired up?

“I watch you in lectures,” Finn said, panting as her trimmed fingernails dug into Gillian’s hips. “Replaying your moans in my mind. Thinking about that delicious smile when you come for me. Wishing I could make the room disappear so it’s just you...and me...with my cock inside you.”

“F-Finn, please.” Gillian slammed back against Finn when she slowed.

“Needing this dripping wet pussy. *Fuck.*” Finn forced herself deeper and held her position. “I’ve never dreamt about fucking someone the way I dream about you.”

“Y-yes.”

“I want you whenever I can have you.”

Oh, Gillian wanted that, too. What else she wanted...she wasn’t sure she could verbalise. Not right now while Finn was fucking her so hard that her breath caught with every thrust. Finn spread Gillian’s cheeks, opening her up further. Just that feeling of being full had Gillian’s knuckles white with anticipation and excitement. “You feel so good.”

Finn leant forward and dipped her head towards Gillian’s ear. “Mmhmm. I know.”

Oh, God. This woman was going to really ruin her. In all the greatest ways possible. Thankfully, Gillian wasn't looking for someone to complete her, or someone she could build a life with. It was this. *This* was what Gillian was looking for.

Her lips parted when Finn reached around and stroked her clit. "S-shit."

"Close?"

"Mm, fuck. Yes." Gillian whimpered, trying desperately to squeeze her thighs together. Only Finn had her pinned to the counter so hard that she couldn't move. "But I don't want to. I'm not ready to."

"No?" Finn slowed again, teasing Gillian's throbbing clit. "You really don't want to come so soon?"

Gillian shook her head.

"Okay." Finn suddenly pulled out and took a step back.

Gillian forced herself away from the counter, her robe falling back into place, and turned to face Finn. "W-what are you doing?"

Finn reached out and gripped the front of her robe, pulling Gillian against her. She smirked against her lips...a devilish look in her eyes. "You don't want to come."

"Yet, Finn. I don't want to come *yet*."

Finn stroked a hand up the inside of Gillian's thigh and slipped a finger between her lips. Gillian's legs trembled. "And you're so fucking wet for me, too."

"Finn, please." Gillian gripped her shoulders to help keep her upright. Finn was teasing—it was fucking hot—but this hadn't been what she meant.

"I should head home. I have stuff to do." Finn took a few steps away, leaving Gillian gobsmacked in the kitchen. "Call me later?"

"Finn?" Gillian frowned as she watched Finn's back. Should she follow her into the bedroom? Of course she should.

Only if Gillian moved, she was going to come. Without a doubt. “Finn!”

Finn peeked her head around the bedroom door. “Yeah?”

“Are you fucking kidding me?”

Finn laughed. “No, gorgeous. I’m not.”

“But—”

“But I’m going to enjoy the thought of you barely able to contain yourself all day long.” Finn winked. “As I said, call me later. You know I’ll come over and take care of you.”



Finn sat at a table in the cafeteria, outlining her next assignment. She didn’t need to be at the university today, she didn’t have a lecture until tomorrow, but being out of the family home gave her more of a chance when it came to getting words down. Her ‘blow-out’ last night had helped tremendously, but she still needed space from her parents.

My blow-out...

Finn grinned. Some people chose to drink when they wanted to unwind or destress, but Finn chose beautiful women she could get lost in instead. *Woman*. Just *one* woman.

As she sat here this afternoon, Finn was pleasantly surprised by how her morning had begun. She hadn’t thought for one moment that Gillian would keep her around last night, but she had. Finn didn’t know if that was Gillian feeling differently about their arrangement, or whether she didn’t want Finn to feel used like the last time. Whatever the reason for it, Finn had thoroughly enjoyed her kitchen activities this morning.

And then what followed.

She looked up as she took her coffee cup and sipped. Gillian was getting lunch from the salad bar. Finn watched her, how every movement appeared tense, and bit her lip to keep

her from laughing. She hadn't intended to leave Gillian high and...*not so dry* this morning, but as she'd pulled out and saw the look in Gillian's eyes, the teasing that ensued was just too easy. Finn knew what explosive times lay ahead.

If you can just keep it to sex, this will be something epic!

Finn knew she could keep her heart and emotions out of this. When she had told Gillian about her home life last night, how she wasn't in a position to date, she'd meant it. Finn hadn't lied to Gillian to worm her way into her home...or her bed. She wasn't that kind of person. Of course she wanted more in life—a partner—but it wasn't the right time.

Gillian strode across the room with her lunch and took a seat. She pulled out a book as she stabbed a fork into her salad and crossed those long, sexy legs beneath the table. Finn had *the* perfect view of the perfect woman. She considered sending Gillian a message, to watch her squirm once or twice during lunch, but as she looked around the cafeteria, she decided against it. There were too many people around.

And then her own phone pinged on the table.

I expect to see you at my place tonight!

Oh, Gillian did now, did she? Of course Finn would be there, she'd walk over hot coals for another round with Gillian Masters, but that didn't mean she couldn't play the game.

Demanding to see me won't get you very far.

Finn shifted her laptop to the left a little and watched Gillian across the room.

Finn, I don't know what the hell that was this morning, but you KNOW that I need to see you tonight!

Mmhmm. Finn did know it. Poor Gillian had looked as though she was going to pass out as Finn kissed her on the cheek and left the apartment.

I'll see what plans I have. I'm sure you'll survive without me.

Finn watched as Gillian pinched the bridge of her nose. Her gorgeous professor was frustrated. How exciting!

I can't even concentrate on my lunch! How am I supposed to go home and concentrate on anything else?

Finn smirked. Gillian had no idea she was also in the cafeteria.

Maybe if you stopped texting me you could enjoy your salad. Is that...chicken? Looks delicious!

Gillian's head shot up, her eyes immediately trained on Finn. Was the connection *that* palpable that Gillian knew exactly where Finn was in the room? Finn smirked in Gillian's direction, relaxing back in her seat with a brow quirked.

Why are you here? You don't have a lecture today!

Finn tapped her fingers on the table as she looked back up at Gillian. God, what she'd give to have this woman right now.

Maybe I wanted to see how well you were coping...

It was quite clear that Gillian wasn't coping at all.

Finn.

Their eyes met again briefly.

Yes?

Finn watched the bubble bobbing up and down as Gillian replied.

I need you inside me.

Oh, fuck. Finn hadn't expected that. Not while they sat across from one another in the cafeteria. Okay, they hadn't quite had the chance to set those ground rules Gillian had mentioned this morning, but Finn *did* think that Gillian would control herself.

I'm going to assume that you enjoyed having me there this morning then.

Finn caught Gillian shifting in her seat as she glanced up to where she sat. Would it be a terrible idea to slope off somewhere with one another right now? Of course it would. Did Finn care as she felt wetness coat her own pussy lips? Not at all. This woman was worth getting caught for.

Her phone buzzed in her hand, shocking her out of some terribly arousing thoughts.

All I've ever wanted is someone who knows how to fuck me.

Finn almost puffed out her chest with pride at that.

How long do you have?

She felt the tension in the air as Gillian started to respond. If she named a time and a place right this second, Finn would be falling out of the door to make it.

Not long enough.

Damn it!

Although...

I don't need long, gorgeous. You know I can make you come right here and now if I really want to. Though, I'd rather feel you around me.

Gillian looked up at Finn, her brows drawn together.

“Finn, hey!”

Finn almost jumped out of her skin when another student stopped in front of her, blocking her view of Gillian. *Rude!* “Hey, Deena.”

“I didn't think you'd be here today.” Deena pulled out a chair, confusing Finn. She hadn't invited her to sit down, and she didn't particularly want any company. “You still have those plans next Friday for your birthday?”

“I...yes.” Finn had stupidly invited Deena to the bar next week. It would be great to have company, to not sit alone drinking beer on her birthday, but Finn was kind of hoping those bar plans may have changed. If Gillian wanted her over at her place, the bar would be the last thing on her mind. “I think so.”

“Cool—I can make it now. What time?”

Finn chewed her lip, glancing over Deena's shoulder to where Gillian still sat. Her stare was practically burning

through Deena's back. But Finn got it completely. She would rather sext with Gillian than have actual interaction with someone else. "I'll...let you know. Your number is on the forum, right?"

"Yep. Looking forward to it."

Finn closed her laptop and gathered her notebook and diary from the table. She quickly shoved it all into her satchel and got to her feet. She eyed Gillian, a silent plea to meet her somewhere other than here, and cleared her throat when she looked down at Deena. "I should head off. I need to get home to take care of a few things."

"I'll walk out with you. I'm leaving, too."

For the love of fucking God! Finn smiled a fake and frustrating smile. "Great."

She quickly brought up her messages, furious that Deena had so rudely interrupted her conversation with Gillian.

Tonight.

CHAPTER 5

GILLIAN WHISTLED as she stood in the middle of her empty new living room. The ceiling was huge, and the light flooding in was quite something on this clear winter morning. This was her dream home. One hundred percent. How she had managed to nab it when it had multiple offers, she would never know, but it was hers. Her new life. Her new project. Her...new sanctuary.

The apartment had been sufficient when she'd walked out of her marital home, it did what was required of it, but this was Gillian. The expansive back garden that she could use to entertain friends. The huge hallway with the original flooring still intact. The quiet neighbourhood where everyone knew one another.

Yes. This was Gillian through and through.

“If that’s everything, Ms Masters, I’ll leave you to enjoy your new home.”

Louisa, the estate agent, came from the hallway into the back section of the living room. “Don’t hesitate to call if you come across anything that requires our attention.”

Gillian beamed a smile. Louisa had been great throughout this whole process. “There’s no ex-husband here, so I’m sure anything else I come across will be a walk in the park.”

Louisa regarded Gillian with an understanding smile. “I see. Was the divorce recent?”

“Officially, almost two months, but I left him just on a year ago.” Gillian twirled her keys around her finger, her heels

echoing around the empty room as she took in each and every detail. She smiled again, hoping this could all work out for her. “Best decision I ever made.”

“Me, too.”

“Isn’t it freeing?” Gillian asked, turning back to Louisa. “Having nobody to answer to. Having your own space. I didn’t realise how much I’d needed it until I’d left him.”

“You’d think being married to a woman was easier, right?” Louisa quirked a brow. “Well, that’s not always the case. My ex-wife made Satan look like a nice guy.”

“Thankfully, I’ve never had that issue with women. Granted, it’s been, what...over twenty years since I dated a woman? But I guess I got lucky back then. I am looking forward to getting myself back onto the dating scene at some point.” Gillian was aware that she was lying, but Louisa didn’t need to know just how much Dave had shattered every ounce of confidence she possessed. She wouldn’t give him or anyone else the satisfaction of knowing he’d done that to her. “But not until I’ve taken care of everything here.”

“I’ve had a few...interesting dates. A lot of women want no-strings these days. Unless, of course, I’m just looking in the wrong places.”

At least Gillian fell into the majority if that was true. “Maybe some women just want to enjoy life without the headache of commitment right now. The last few years have been a lot for everyone to deal with. I know *I’m* at a point in my life where I don’t particularly want to settle down. I hope to in the future, but no-strings isn’t the worst idea in the world if you find the right person.”

“You sound like you’re speaking from experience.”

Gillian almost blushed, but then she realised that she was proud of where she was at in her life. She had no shame or embarrassment for enjoying Finn Ashton. Well, when she was off campus, anyway. Gillian chose not to think of Finn as her student. *That* reality was too painful to deal with.

“I am. And if you want my honest opinion, it’s quite exciting. I’m learning a lot about myself. I’m putting *my* needs first. You should try it some time.”

Louisa narrowed her eyes, her gaze sweeping up Gillian’s body. Louisa was probably the kind of woman Gillian ‘imagined’ herself with back in her twenties, femme and pretty, but she was on a different path right now. Finn...oh, Finn and that handsome smile had Gillian weak at the knees.

“Maybe I will.” Louisa held out a hand. “And maybe I’ll see you around the town if you go out drinking around here.”

Gillian cleared her throat as she shook Louisa’s hand. “Maybe. Yeah. Thanks for all your help with the sale. I appreciate it.”

“Bye, Gillian.” Louisa’s hand lingered for a moment longer than it should have, and then she turned on her heel and approached the hallway. “You have my number, yes?”

Gillian smiled. “Yes.”

She took a deep breath when Louisa left, walking towards the sash windows and taking a seat on the sill. She had nowhere else to sit right now, but in time, this would become Gillian’s forever home. It had to be.

Her phone buzzed in her hand. A reminder.

Gillian planned to discuss things with Finn if she was available. Ground rules were important if they wanted to keep this going. Gillian couldn’t afford to fuck up here.

She brought up her messages, hoping Finn was around this evening. It wouldn’t be the end of the world if they couldn’t talk tonight, but Gillian *did* need it to happen sooner rather than later. And not only that, she wanted to see Finn for... other reasons.

After Gillian’s very interesting morning yesterday, followed by their sexting in the cafeteria, she had been hugely frustrated when Finn hadn’t been able to make it over to her apartment last night. Sexually frustrated, but frustrated, nonetheless. Still, the normal part of her understood. Finn was

her mother's caregiver, and there would be times when plans would go awry.

Busy tonight?

She locked her phone and got to her feet. Gillian should be celebrating this day. She should be drinking champagne while spending time with the people who mattered to her. Only, deep down, she wanted to celebrate with Finn. Preferably naked. Gillian hadn't released that pent up tension from yesterday yet; she wanted to save herself for Finn.

Planning to go to The Corner for a few beers but nothing after that. I boxed off two pieces of work today, so I believe I'm entitled to it. You?

Gillian *wished* she could just drop by and drink with Finn. Especially since the sale had gone through and she had the keys to her new home, but it wasn't wise to be seen out in public together, so she couldn't for one second hint at joining her. If Gillian had any hope of maintaining this with Finn, she knew she had to be very careful with each step she took. While she didn't want to neglect herself and her own needs, her career was just as important to her.

I hoped we could talk at some point...

Gillian didn't want to talk at some point, she wanted to talk to Finn as soon as she possibly could. *Liar!* Okay, she wanted to be with Finn tonight. Deep down, she *knew* it was all she wanted. She wanted to have all of Finn's attention, amongst other things. It was a dangerous game to play, but Gillian found that she simply couldn't help herself. Despite her reservations, and despite knowing how careful she had to be, Gillian found herself pulling up her browser on her phone.

She wracked her brains, trying to recall the location of the bar Finn would be at. Only Gillian didn't recognise the place. She couldn't say she'd passed it by on the way home from work or while she was out for lunch. She brought it up online, surprised when she realised it wasn't anywhere near the campus. Actually, it was in an entirely different town.

Of course. You let me know the time and place, and I'll be there.

Gillian smiled at that. Finn was always so eager.

The bar isn't close to the university.

Maybe she could scope out the place on arrival and then surprise Finn if the coast was clear. That idea had excitement coursing through Gillian. It was Friday, she had the keys to her new home, and the potential for time with Finn was on the table. Though, the truth was, time with Finn would always be on the table.

You have some preparations to make.

But before that, she would respond to Finn with a message that gave *nothing* away.

I'll be in touch.



Finn sat at the bar, glaring down at the bottle of beer she'd ordered thirty minutes ago. She'd hoped to hear from Gillian since she'd texted and asked Finn about her plans, but that didn't seem likely now. It was eight in the evening; Gillian was probably knee-deep in work. Even on a Friday night, Finn imagined that was the kind of woman she was. Dedicated to her job.

So here she sat...alone.

You always knew you'd be here alone.

God, that was depressing. She *had* considered just staying in this evening, but the last couple of days had felt kind of freeing for her. Her mum didn't seem to be pushing so hard since Wednesday when Finn told her she needed space. Maybe she was just beginning to realise that Finn needed a life too, or maybe she was worried that pushing too hard would result in Finn being unavailable permanently. She didn't know, but she

wasn't sitting at home looking at the same four walls tonight. No way.

She lifted her bottle and swigged her beer, grimacing when the warm liquid slid down her throat. She lifted a hand towards the server, motioning for another. When Morgan set a fresh bottle down on the counter, she rested her arm on a beer pump and cocked her head. "You been stood up, gorgeous?"

Finn smiled and shook her head. "Nah. Didn't have any plans other than sitting here."

"How about a shot on me?" Morgan lifted a brow, her soft brown eyes calming. Morgan was stunning, Finn had always had a bit of a thing for her, but she had never managed to pluck up the courage to tell her that. Finn didn't know why; Gillian was as much out of her league as Morgan was, yet she'd been more than forthcoming with Gillian.

"You going to do one with me?"

Morgan winked and brought up a bottle and two shot glasses. "Only because it's you."

"Go on then. Hit me." Finn patted the counter, pushing her beer to the side. She watched Morgan bob her head to the beat of the music, her tongue poking out and playing with her lip ring. "You not dating?"

"Me? When do I have time to do anything other than run this place?"

Finn lifted a shoulder. "You *make* time."

"When *you* take your own advice, *I'll* consider it." Morgan slid a shot glass towards Finn, smiling as they clinked. "Come on. Get it down your neck."

Finn knocked it back, blinking rapidly as the heat in her throat intensified. "Whew. The fuck was that?"

"Honestly, I don't know. It's supposed to be some vodka concoction, but it's fucking grim." Morgan burst out laughing as she put the bottle back in its place. "Take it easy, Finn. I'll be back when I get the chance."

Finn rested against the bar; her fist propped under her chin. Yeah, Morgan was all kinds of fine in Finn's mind. She had that fiery look about her. While she was feminine, she had a sleeve and multiple piercings. Morgan seemed like the kind of woman who would have the most intimate places pierced. Anyone who could do that knew what they wanted in life.

Finn's phone lit up on the sticky wood it rested on.

How's the bar?

Ah. Gillian. The woman Finn couldn't get off her mind.

Terrible. I can think of other places I'd rather be.

She locked her phone and sat back on her stool. Finn didn't recognise a single person in here tonight. No one she could get talking to. Nothing. Maybe next time, she would drink closer to the university. She was sure to bump into someone there. At least then she wouldn't look so fucking miserable and lonely.

Her phone flashed again.

I did something today...

Oh, God. Where the hell was Gillian going with this?

Oh, yeah? Anything exciting?

Why was Finn asking that question? If Gillian came back with something deep and meaningful, she wouldn't know what to do with it.

I'd like to think so. I bought a house!

Wow. Not what Finn expected at all.

Congratulations. That's amazing. I hope you're celebrating!

A little frustrated, Finn instantly wanted to be celebrating with Gillian. A house purchase was a huge occasion. She groaned, her head in her hands, and closed her eyes.

Life was complicated—most peoples were—but growing up, she hadn't imagined she would fall into that category. No, growing up, Finn knew *exactly* what she wanted. The house,

the wife, the dog. Maybe even the kids if it worked out with the right person. Sure, she was only twenty-six, but shouldn't she have had at least *one* of those things by now? Even just the committed relationship would have been good enough.

As she sat here, that wasn't something she could even begin to envisage within the next five or ten years. What she had with Gillian worked. It was exhilarating, and the anticipation kept Finn on her toes, but that couldn't last forever. Gillian would want to move on one day, and Finn hoped she could be in the same position.

"Can I...celebrate with you?"

Finn frowned when she felt the softest breath wash over her ear. That was Gillian's voice, she was certain of it, but... how?

She turned her head, almost falling off her stool when Gillian stood to the side of her. "H-hi."

"Hi, Finn." Gillian wore a sexy shy smile, and her outfit left very little to the imagination.

"Aren't you cold?" Finn ran a hand through her hair, clearing her throat. "I mean, you look amazing, but still..." Finn swallowed as she lowered her eyes. Gillian wore *the littlest* little black dress Finn had ever seen. She wasn't sure it could even be considered an outfit. Had Gillian picked up a piece of material and wrapped it around her tits and *barely* her torso? "Fuck."

"I'm sorry?" Gillian leaned in, her perfume killing Finn.

Finn stared down at the stiletto heels Gillian wore, knowing exactly how this night would end. Even if it hadn't been in Gillian's plans, she was going to be spread out on her bed, wearing nothing but those heels. Finn was a sucker when it came to women's shoes. Stand before her in stilettos, and Finn would lower herself to the floor and kiss them if that was expected of her. "Are you trying to kill me, Gillian?"

"I...no." Gillian took a step back. "You're alone?"

Finn snorted. "Yep."

“You should have said. We could have met earlier.”

Considering this was about to become Gillian’s celebration, Finn felt as though it was her occasion entirely. Gillian had walked in here and practically offered herself as Finn’s ultimate gift. Yeah, Finn *wished* she’d told Gillian she was all alone. But if this was what waiting around resulted in, it was worth it.

Morgan approached Finn and Gillian, smiling. “What can I get you?”

Finn cut in before Gillian could order. “We’re going to take a bottle of champagne, Morgan.”

Gillian rested a hand on Finn’s forearm, that electrifying touch making her insides shiver. “No, we don’t need to do that. A glass of wine is fine.”

Finn shook her head. “We’ll take the champagne...*then* the wine.” Finn rummaged in her pocket for cash, then realised she would likely need her card for this transaction. But it was a small price to pay when Gillian had just shown up looking like something Finn only ever saw in her dreams. “You want to sit somewhere a little more private?”

Gillian’s hand remained on Finn’s forearm, only now her thumb was stroking her skin. “Yes. If you’re okay with that?”

“I am. Grab a table, and I’ll bring the drinks over.” Gillian nodded and turned to walk away, but Finn latched onto her hand. She turned back to Finn, her brows drawn together. “Thank you for being here.”

“Thank you for having me here.”

CHAPTER 6

GILLIAN WATCHED Finn as she poured two glasses of champagne, the sweetest smile on her face. Finn had a beautiful smile, *all* of her was *very* appealing to Gillian, but she kept coming back to the smile. Because whether it was the smile Finn wore as she greeted Gillian, or the smile she wore as she watched Gillian come undone beneath her...it made her feel the same way.

Appreciated.

Wanted.

Attractive.

“So, what made you change your mind about meeting me here?” Finn handed Gillian a glass, sitting beside her in a booth along the back wall of the bar. The lights were dimmed, and it wasn’t very busy, so Gillian felt as though they would be safe here.

“I checked where the bar was. I thought you would be somewhere closer to the university, but we’re...quite out the way here.”

“Yeah. I prefer to stay close to home if I can. I think it’s because of Mum, you know?”

Gillian smiled. “Yes. I know.”

“And I think if this is going to be a thing between us, it’s a good idea to go to bars away from the university.” Finn rested her ankle on her knee, slinking an arm over the back of the

booth. “While I really enjoy being at your place, it’s nice to be out sometimes.”

Gillian wanted that to be the case but spending time with one another outside of the bedroom hadn’t really been on the agenda. At least, she hadn’t thought so. If Finn was going to start moving the goalposts, Gillian needed to know that. “Finn, when we spoke about things on Wednesday night, I got the impression that *this* wasn’t really on the table. You said you weren’t looking for anything serious.”

“I-I...I’m not.”

“Then I have to ask...why would we ‘be out’ together sometimes?” Fuck! Gillian didn’t like the way that came out of her mouth. And judging by the look on Finn’s face, neither did she. “I didn’t mean for that to sound the way it did. I just don’t want to blur any lines, Finn.”

Finn nodded slowly. “No blurred lines. Got it.” She lifted her champagne glass and slanted it towards Gillian. “Congratulations on the new place.”

“Thank you.” Gillian clinked her glass to Finn’s, sipping her drink slowly as she watched Finn over the rim.

She’d offended Finn—that was clear by the silence that had settled between them.

“Finn?”

“Mm?” Finn briefly glanced in Gillian’s direction as she lowered her champagne to the table and instead picked up her beer. Finn wasn’t a champagne kind of person, and that was okay.

“If I offended you—”

Finn held up a hand, that ever-present smile on her lips. “You haven’t. Don’t worry about it. I just...don’t really know what to say to you when we’re not in bed together.”

“I don’t understand.”

“I know what this is. I’ve never not known. But I also don’t want you to feel like I *only* want to know you when it

comes to fucking, you know? Like, I feel awkward because I don't know what kind of questions I can and can't ask."

Gillian offered a weak smile. "Sorry."

"Can I ask about your new place at least? The plans you have for it?" Finn turned to face Gillian in the booth. "I don't want to overstep, and I don't want to push you away, so I need you to tell me what's what here."

Gillian noted the confusion in Finn's blue eyes. Of course they could talk about things. Just...nothing too personal. And there was the small matter of rules they needed to go over. Just...not yet. "For a start, it needs a massive overhaul. A lot of work."

"Anything I can help with? I'm sure you want to keep costs down where you can."

That was a sweet offer from Finn, but the work Gillian needed doing was more than a simple paint job. "If you saw the place, you'd understand why I have to turn down your offer."

Finn shrugged. "Tell me about it."

"It needs re-plastering throughout. Doors need hanging. The kitchen is incomplete. I need floorboards replaced in several rooms. It's a lot. Things that I need qualified people for."

"Who says I'm not qualified?" Finn lifted a brow as she brought her bottle to her lips.

"Finn, I need electricians and whatnot. It's easier for me to just get a company in who can take care of it all."

"What's your timescale to move in?"

"Well, I'm not in any immediate rush. I want to get it right, you know?" Gillian had managed in her apartment for long enough; she could wait a while longer. "Can you recommend anyone to come and give a few quotes?"

"I can recommend me. We can figure the rest out when we know your budget and stuff."

Gillian studied Finn. She wasn't lying. "You're qualified?"

"Mmhm. Electrician. And I've been plastering for...six years. I can also hang the doors, and I'll have a look at the kitchen when you show me around the place."

"Finn, are you sure? You have plenty going on with your degree."

"You're right, I do. But I still have to make a living. I'm self-employed. I've had my own business for two and a half years."

"I...had no idea." Still, Gillian wasn't sure having Finn at her new place was a good idea. Sweaty, covered in paint and other things... She was hot just thinking about it.

"There's a lot you don't know about me. But if you want me to take a look and give you a price, I'm happy to do that."

Say no, Gillian. "That would be great."

"Okay, cool. I'm free the days I'm not in uni. And the weekends, too. Mostly the weekends, actually. My mum visits a respite place on weekends at the minute. It's the only thing I've managed to get her to try."

"Hey, whatever works for you." Gillian settled her hand on Finn's thigh, closing her eyes briefly when she felt the muscle contract beneath her palm. "There was something else I wanted to ask, too."

Finn gazed into Gillian's eyes as she shifted closer. "What is it?"

"Will you...spend the night with me?"

That filthy look flashed in Finn's eyes. Oh, it was a look that could get them both into so much trouble. "You know I will."

Now that they'd gotten that out of the way—the rest of their evening plans—Gillian had a few things she needed to say. "I know this is probably going to kill the mood, but could we discuss some ground rules?" She looked around, satisfied that they were still safe here. "If you wouldn't mind..."

“Sure. We can do that.” Finn relaxed, lowering her hand to the space between them. She stroked her fingertips across the back of Gillian’s hand, knowing that the table obscured any view. “You know I’m good with keeping this quiet.”

“I know. I know.” Gillian couldn’t be more appreciative of the fact that Finn was willing to do something like that for her, but it didn’t stop Gillian from wishing her life didn’t have to be this way. Trust her to find some kind of solace in a woman she couldn’t be with. “I just think it’s wise to know what’s what, you know?”

“Agreed.” Finn nodded confidently. “So, talk to me. Tell me how you want to do this.”

Gillian smiled, lowering her eyes to their hands. “I don’t know how you can be so understanding with all of this.”

“Because I want to spend any time I can with you. I enjoy being with you. If I have to do that in ways I wouldn’t usually, then so be it.”

“You’re far too good for all of this.” Gillian sighed and shook her head. “I don’t deserve a moment of your attention.”

“Look, I came into this knowing we wouldn’t be a couple. I came into it wanting you...and now that I’ve had that chance, I don’t really want to let it go. This works for me. For us. I *know* we have to be careful, and *you* know I’d never do anything to fuck your life up. Ever. You don’t have to worry about me doing anything I shouldn’t. On or off campus. Okay?”

“I know you wouldn’t.” Gillian turned her hand over, lacing her fingers with Finn’s. It just felt right. As though they were supposed to be sitting in this bar together. Secrecy or not, it felt right to Gillian. “I guess I’m worried that you may feel I’m taking advantage of you. If you think that at any point, please talk to me, Finn. I never want you to feel that way.”

“Trust me, I don’t. I...couldn’t.” Finn squeezed Gillian’s hand. “I still can’t believe you even looked my way, to be honest.”

“Oh, I found myself unable to look *anywhere* else once you walked into my lecture.” Gillian wouldn’t allow Finn to feel less than. This may have been no-strings sex, but Finn still meant something to her. “When I tell you that what we have together means so much to me, I need you to believe that. A different time and place...it may be different, but this is all I’m able to offer. So long as we’re both *fully* in agreement with that, it could be something very exciting.”

“I’m already excited.” Finn winked, that gorgeous smile present. “Are you?”

“Mmhm.” Gillian pursed her lips and reached for her champagne glass. “Maybe we should finish up here and head back to my place.”

“Oh! You’re *that* excited?”

Gillian shifted. Yes, she was that excited. “One thing you should know is that whenever you and I are sharing the same space...I’m *very* excited.”

“A-all the time?” Finn asked, a brow lifted. “Like...really?”

“Really.”

Finn scanned the bar, then shifted closer. She placed her palm to Gillian’s thigh, stroking it higher. “Then we should definitely finish these drinks and leave.” She dipped her head towards Gillian’s ear. “Because if we don’t, I’m going to fuck you under the table.”

Fuck. That was hot. It also wasn’t a terrible idea. Gillian would bookmark that for the future. “Finn.”

“Yeah?” Finn smirked, knowing full well the effect she had on Gillian.

“Get your coat. It’s time to leave.”



Finn relaxed back on Gillian's couch, following her every move as she reached for a beer in the fridge. She poured a glass of red wine then approached Finn in the living room. "I can't believe I didn't know you were an electrician."

"It's not something you're likely to know unless you know me personally." Finn rested one arm along the back of the couch, drinking in Gillian and her appearance. She couldn't believe how good she looked tonight. It should have been a crime. "Thanks again for coming to the bar tonight."

"You're welcome." Gillian sat beside Finn, crossing her legs as she turned her body inwards a little. That only left Finn with the perfect view of Gillian's cleavage. "Did you have a nice evening?"

"It got significantly better when you turned up," Finn said, her eyes still fixed on Gillian's tits. Again, it should have been a crime. "No idea why, though."

Sensing that Finn was just about ready to let loose, Gillian palmed her thigh, inching higher. Finn knew she was checking for her 'package', but it was there. Gillian didn't need to worry. "You weren't expecting me..." Gillian narrowed her eyes as she squeezed Finn's crotch.

"Nope. Couldn't believe it when you walked in."

"Then I have to ask why you're prepared if you didn't expect me?"

Finn smirked. Was that a hint of jealousy she caught in Gillian's tone? "It's the weekend. I was hoping I'd get lucky one way or another."

Gillian slid her hand down the front of Finn's jeans, stroking at the brand-new toy she wore. "You're telling me you were going to fuck another woman tonight?" She shifted the base, lifting a brow when Finn moaned. "Well?"

"M-maybe." Fuck. When Gillian looked at Finn the way she was, Finn wanted to take her hard. "If I couldn't have you, I'd have to look elsewhere."

Gillian lowered her wine glass and slid to her knees, shifting between Finn's legs. She didn't speak. She locked her

gaze with Finn's, popped the button on her jeans, and lowered the zipper. When Gillian palmed Finn's thighs, painfully close to her crotch, Finn lifted her ass and forced her jeans over her hips. The toy sprung free, delighting Gillian when her eyes lit up.

"Mm. Someone is very big tonight."

Finn knew now that Gillian could take much more than she'd given her so far, so maybe she'd done a little shopping recently. "You know I like to give you what you want."

Gillian took Finn in her hand. Every movement had Finn wetter and wetter. But it was when Gillian dipped her head and wrapped her lips around the head that Finn jerked her hips. It was her hooded eyes looking back at her, her full lips as she slurped and sucked, those delicately manicured hands... Gillian was on her way to discovering who she was and what she wanted, and Finn desperately wanted to be a part of that.

"Fuck." Finn jerked her hips again as Gillian forced the base against her clit.

"Mmmm." Gillian drew back and circled the tip with her tongue. And then she deep-throated Finn, gagging when she reached the base.

Mind-blowing. That's all Finn had to describe this woman. *Fucking mind-blowing.*

Finn wrapped her hand in Gillian's hair, guiding her up and down. While she wanted to be inside her, she couldn't stop what was happening. Nobody had ever shown Finn so much attention. "You've no idea how good you look on your knees for me."

Gillian wiped at her mouth as she looked up at Finn, and then she took her bottom lip between her teeth.

"Tell me what you want," Finn said, leaning forward and cradling Gillian's chin in her hand. "Where you want me?"

"I want you exactly where you are." Gillian sat up on her knees, slowly unbuttoning Finn's shirt. When it hung open on Finn's shoulders, Gillian practically growled her approval. "Oh, fuck." Gillian slowly ghosted her palm up Finn's

stomach, tweaking a nipple as she slid it higher. “I’m so lucky to be here...on my knees for you.”

“Yeah?”

Gillian nodded, dragging her nails back down Finn’s stomach. She shuddered and hissed as that pleasure coursed through her, her clit aching at the slightest friction. “Mmhmm.”

“Maybe you should climb up here so I can give your pussy what it needs.”

Gillian got to her feet and pulled her dress up around her waist. She wasn’t wearing any underwear, and that only had Finn wanting to drag Gillian on top of her. “You’re sure you know what I need? After all, you were ready to give yourself to someone else tonight.”

“And I’d have chosen you in a heartbeat.” Finn wrapped a hand around the back of Gillian’s neck and drew her into a heated kiss as she straddled her lap. She felt Gillian grind against her, stroking her clit up and down the silicone, her moans becoming breathier with each rock back and forth. Finn quickly removed her dress, Gillian’s naked skin just begging to be lavished. “You know I want you. That’s not going to change.” Gillian lifted up, taking Finn’s cock and lining it up with her entrance. Finn wanted to ease her down, to give her a moment to adjust, but Gillian whimpered as the tip pushed inside her, and then she slammed down, skin meeting skin. “Fuck. Me.”

Finn could only stare up at Gillian with a smile on her face. Gillian wanted this raw, and that was exactly what Finn could provide. A space for her to let go. A place where she could feel those intense emotions burst from within. Gillian just wanted to be free.

“Oh, Finn.” Gillian rocked back and forth, her palms placed flat on Finn’s chest. Finn was as deep as she could possibly be, but that still didn’t feel as though it was enough. She wasn’t sure ‘enough’ was a word in Gillian’s vocabulary. “Y-yes. Oh, fuck. Yes!”

Finn felt Gillian tighten. “Did you take care of yourself last night?”

“N-no.” Gillian threw her head back, twisting at a taut nipple. “I wanted to wait for you.”

That was...*wow*. Gillian had waited to come for her. Finn knew she had to give this woman everything she wanted tonight.

She leaned in and took Gillian’s other nipple into her mouth, biting and then soothing it with the flat of her tongue. “I want to fuck you so hard.”

“D-do it.”

Finn wrapped her arms around Gillian’s waist, manoeuvring them both until Gillian was flat on her back with Finn still buried inside her. She stared down, brushing that silky dark hair from Gillian’s face. As she almost pulled out, Gillian gasped. But then Finn thrust deep, the couch scraping across the wood flooring. “I missed you last night. This is exactly where I wanted to be. Like this,” Finn said, her arms straining as she held herself up. “Deep in your pussy.”

The sound of Gillian’s wetness became louder when Finn relentlessly pounded her. Gillian wrapped her legs around Finn’s waist, causing her to slow, and dug the heels of her stilettos into her cheeks. Fuck, Gillian wanted even more. “Yes. Right there. Fuck me just like that.”

“Slow and hard, baby?”

Gillian lifted her head and locked eyes with Finn. So dark and intense that Finn almost forgot to breathe for a moment. “You’re so perfect.”

Those words had Finn almost losing her balance. She wasn’t perfect. Far from it. “I’m afraid you’ve never come close to perfection if you see me as that.”

Gillian smiled into a kiss, moaning when Finn sucked on her tongue. She buried her head into a cushion at the sensation, slipping a hand between them and giving her clit the attention Finn knew it deserved. “You’re perfect for me. To me.”

“You know what’s perfect to me?” Finn studied Gillian’s eyes as she forced herself deep again. “Watching you come. Hearing you moan my name.”

Gillian wrapped a hand around the back of Finn’s neck, brought their foreheads together, and whispered, “Then fuck me like you mean it.”

Finn did exactly that. She braced her arms on either side of Gillian, inhaled a deep breath, and thrust hard and fast. Gillian’s eyes widened, her mouth agape, those fingers lashing her clit furiously.

“Y-yes. Fuck. I’m close.”

Finn panted, her shoulders straining. “Then let go. Come for me.”

Gillian roared her approval as her orgasm rocked her, her thighs shaking when Finn kept up her pace. She felt Gillian trying to push against her, and as Finn pulled out suddenly, Gillian gushed all over her stomach. “O-oh.”

She kept shaking, but Finn could only imagine drinking this woman up. She got to her knees, rubbing vigorously against Gillian’s clit. Gillian gushed again, whimpering, almost crying, as Finn sucked her clit into her mouth.

“Oh, Finn. I-I can’t.” She pressed a hand against the top of Finn’s head, panting and trembling. “Baby, please. I need a minute.”

Finn pulled back, soothing Gillian’s pussy with a gentle hand. “Take all the time you need.” She kissed the inside of her thigh. “But I’m not done with you yet.”

CHAPTER 7

GILLIAN CRACKED one eye open as the smell of toast wafted towards her. Finn was...helping herself to the kitchen? Gillian wasn't sure how she should feel about that. The one thing she was sure of, however, was that she didn't plan to make a big deal out of it. Finn was making breakfast...so what?

She climbed from the bed, smiling down at Finn's socks on the floor. Her jeans were thrown over the back of a chair, one boot in the doorway of the bedroom. The other could be anywhere this morning. Gillian hadn't known what marathon sex was until she met Finn—she ached in every place imaginable—but she didn't want to picture not having this anymore. That day would come, it had to at some point, but not yet. Gillian needed Finn in her life; it was that simple.

She crept towards the open bedroom door and peered around the frame. Finn stood in her kitchen wearing nothing but a pair of boxer shorts, her back to Gillian. *Oh, my.* This was an image Gillian could foolishly become used to. Finn's muscular tattooed shoulders flexed as she reached for her coffee cup, those hard sculpted thighs on full view for Gillian's eyes only. She watched Finn for a moment, wondering how she would feel if she knew Finn was standing around like this in another woman's kitchen. Because last night, that potential had been there.

You have no right to feel anything about that scenario.

Gillian grabbed her robe from the back of the door and slipped it on. As she cleared her throat and moved into the kitchen, Finn spun around.

“Hey.”

That bright white smile had the hairs on the back of Gillian’s neck standing to attention. “Good morning.”

“I...probably should have woken you up before I helped myself to your kitchen cupboards, but I was hoping to be out of your way sooner rather than later.”

God, that was a sad thought.

“Could I get you some coffee before I get dressed and stuff?” Finn moved into the living room and took her shirt from the arm of the couch. She quickly put it on, a piece of toast hanging out of her mouth, and stared back at Gillian. “Right. Probably not. Sorry.”

“Finn.”

Finn strode past Gillian and into the bedroom. She heard Finn muttering to herself, clearly stressed about still being here. Gillian had expected herself to feel the very same thing...only she didn’t. She had no plans to kick Finn out yet.

Finn came back out into Gillian’s small, open-plan space. “So, you have my number. If you *did* want me to price up the work on your new place, just let me know.” As she drained her coffee cup, Finn started to wash it in the sink. She glanced over her shoulder briefly. “I’m sure you were just being polite last night, so there’s no hard feelings if you don’t want me in your space. I am happy to price it up, though.”

Gillian quite enjoyed a flustered Finn. Sure, it took away the confident image she held of her student, but only a little bit. It also reminded Gillian that Finn was a human being just like everyone else. “Finn, there’s no rush.”

“I know. You’re the one who knows when you hope to move in. Just let me know if I can help in any way.” Finn dried her hands on a tea towel and offered Gillian a beaming smile. “Thanks for inviting me back last night. It...was great.”

Oh, how Gillian wished her belly didn’t flip at that. “You’re welcome. But...Finn?”

Finn chewed her bottom lip. “Mm?”

“When I said there was no rush, I meant that you didn’t have to leave so soon.” *Please don’t leave so soon.* Gillian took a step closer to where Finn stood at the kitchen sink. “Our situation is a little unusual, I understand that, but I think after the last few days, drinking coffee with one another is acceptable.”

Finn’s shoulders suddenly relaxed. Gillian hadn’t realised she’d been so tense. “Yeah?”

“Sure. Relax. Enjoy another cup.”

Finn turned her watch towards herself. “I’ll have another cup with you. But then I should make a move. I need to help Mum get ready for the respite place I told you about.”

Oh. Now Gillian felt bad for keeping Finn from her personal business. “If you have to leave, that’s okay.”

“I’m okay for another thirty minutes or so.”

Finn prepared fresh coffee, tapping her fingertips against the counter as she did so. There was the smallest part of Gillian that wanted to approach her and remind Finn of her intentions, but Gillian wouldn’t. They were drinking coffee together...not fucking.

“So,” Finn began. “Are you going to your new place today?”

“I am. Just to get my bearings, really. And yes, I do want you to have a look at it, but could we maybe do it next weekend? I have a busy week coming up, and I’m not sure I have the time to really envisage what I want yet.”

“Sure. You just let me know what day and time works best for you, and I’ll be there.” Finn turned and rested against the counter, her arms folded across her chest. “But like I said before, if you were only being polite last night, then I understand if you wanted to get someone else in to take a look.”

“I’d...like you to do it.”

Finn’s brows rose at that.

“What?”

“Nothing. I just didn’t expect you to actually want me to work for you. I’m not usually that lucky when it comes to some hefty work.” Finn smiled weakly. “I’m good at what I do. But people see a woman and assume I don’t know my arse from my elbow.”

Oh, Finn absolutely knew her arse from her elbow. Judging by what Gillian had seen so far, she could vouch for *all* of Finn’s...talents. “I have faith in you. Let’s have a look at it together and go from there, okay?”

“I really appreciate that. I won’t let you down.”

Gillian nodded slowly, taking a couple of steps back and towards the bathroom door. Only as she did so, Finn stalked towards her.

“Hey,” Finn said, continuing to close the distance. Gillian stopped, her skin burning where Finn gently placed a hand to her waist. She leaned in and kissed Gillian, lingering as she smiled. “Sorry. I just wanted to say good morning.” She pulled back, studying Gillian’s eyes. “But if that’s too much, I’m sorry, and it won’t happen again.”

Gillian lifted a hand to Finn’s cheek, still enamoured by those striking blue eyes. “My plan here is to not overthink things.”

Finn dipped her head. Was that...a blush? *Huh. Interesting.* “Then I’ll remember that in future.”

“Good.” Gillian took Finn’s hand and squeezed. “Now, I’m going to drink coffee with you, then jump in the shower. I’d like to be at the house within the next few hours.”

“I’m excited for you. A new home is quite something, Gillian.”

Gillian moved barefoot towards the breakfast bar, guided by Finn’s hand in her own. This wasn’t too much, was it? With or without kissing one another, the connection was still there. Gillian would see what this day brought and *then* take stock of the position she now found herself in.

“It’s something I needed to do. This place is perfect if I plan to live a lonely existence for the rest of my life, but I want

space and a garden, you know?”

Finn glanced back over her shoulder, her blonde hair flopped forward and as unruly as ever. Gillian wanted to fist her hand in it and guide Finn’s mouth to her pussy. “It’s going to be amazing when it’s finished. I’ll do anything you want me to do. Just bark orders at me.”

Oh, there was *a lot* Gillian wanted to do.

Just remember that this woman is still your student!

CHAPTER 8

FINN SAT at the front of the lecture hall, transfixed on Gillian as she wrapped up the end of the lecture. Was she really lucky enough to have this woman off campus? Had Finn fallen into some kind of alternative universe? Today, it felt exactly like that. She'd spent the last hour watching every move Gillian made, adoring every tone of voice, those pretty eyes straying towards Finn on a small handful of occasions. Yeah, Finn was definitely living some kind of alternative life. She had to be.

"The new module will be uploaded by the end of the day. Dates for final submissions are also available under the timetable tab." Gillian rested against her desk, removing her glasses. "And as always, don't hesitate to reach out to me if you're having any issues at all."

Oh, Finn had many issues she needed Gillian to resolve.

She smirked as she lowered her head, not wanting Deena or anyone else to notice. It was very easy to get lost in everything Gillian Masters was, so Finn had to be extra careful in those moments when she couldn't help but admire her.

"Gillian, do we have a date yet for the reading week that's coming up?" one of the students at the other side of the hall asked. "I usually head home for reading week to see family, so I'd like to start making arrangements."

"Yes! I'm sorry. Reading week is," Gillian said as she pushed off her desk and turned her back. She dragged her diary towards her, but Finn didn't care about reading week. No, she cared about Gillian's impeccable arse. Her calves in

those killer heels she wore. *Stop. It.* “Week commencing the fifteenth of February.”

“Great. Thank you.”

Gillian smiled. “No problem. Now, if there’s nothing else, get yourselves out of here and nab those spots at the library before everyone swarms on it at lunch.”

Everyone started to pack up, rushing to their feet and heading out of the door. Finn remained in her seat, but that was something she often did. She hated that rush as a lecture ended. A load of eighteen-year-olds gossiping about their weekend was Finn’s idea of hell. She could do without it on this fine Monday morning.

“Everything okay, Finn?” Finn looked up at the sound of Gillian’s voice. It was just the two of them, but Gillian stood with her back to Finn. “That suggestion of the library included you.”

Finn got to her feet and shoved her notepad into her rucksack. “I was in the library at seven this morning. No use in me taking up a computer when I’ve got the material I need and I have my laptop with me.” Finn slung her rucksack over her shoulder and approached Gillian. She checked they were definitely alone before going any further. “Are you busy tonight?”

“No. Just home to update the portal and then maybe a soak in the bath.” Gillian stifled a yawn as she turned to face Finn. “You?”

“Not that I know of. Dad should be home, but I never know for sure until I get there and he’s either half cut on the couch, or he’s not home at all.”

“Well, I hope you’re able to find some time for yourself.” Gillian gathered some papers on the desk and slid them into her satchel. “Sorry, I’m in a bit of a rush. I have a student meeting in ten minutes.”

Finn held up her hands. “Yeah, don’t worry. I think I’ll get some lunch and then head home to prep for the new module.”

“I’ll talk to you soon, okay?” Gillian started for the door, an apologetic smile on her lips.

“Go and be amazing.” Finn followed, keeping a decent distance. “But if I do have some time tonight, could I see you?”

Gillian stopped at the door and turned to Finn. She appeared tired, but Finn wouldn’t keep her too long. “Yes. I’d like that.”

“Perfect. I’ll text you as soon as I know what’s what.”

Gillian nodded. “I look forward to hearing from you... hopefully.”

As Gillian left the lecture theatre, Finn stood back and watched her go. Last Monday, as she had walked through the doors for another semester, Finn hadn’t imagined being in this position. Not at all. She was grateful to Gillian for giving her a chance, for seeing her as someone who could fulfil whatever it was Gillian needed. Finn only hoped now that this could continue and Gillian didn’t allow her guilt to eat away at her. Because Finn saw it in her eyes this morning. She felt it in the atmosphere around the room. Gillian felt bad about all of this—the secrecy—and Finn understood.

Still, it didn’t make her want to end this.

No. It just made Finn want to show Gillian the kind of time they could spend with one another outside of campus. Time that was beneficial to them both.



Gillian forced her apartment door open, dropping her bag to the floor. She adored her job—it was her one constant in life—but this week was only just beginning, and she was already shattered and ready for the weekend. Perhaps she needed to get herself back into a routine through the week. Finn was certainly keeping her busy and awake until all hours of the morning. Still, she couldn’t complain. Not really. A younger

woman who wanted to devote her time and attention to Gillian? She could *never* complain about that.

She flicked the kettle on; a lack of energy to stand around waiting for fresh coffee meant it was going to be an evening of instant cups. But any caffeine was better than none at all. Even if she would regret it when it came to climbing into bed later. Now, she just had to decide what to have for dinner.

In an ideal world, Gillian would have prepared something hearty and warming over the weekend, but she had been too busy with Finn to stand around batch cooking. Again, she really had to get back into her work routine. And that would start from tomorrow morning. So long as she was direct with Finn—explaining how it would have to be a weekend thing between them—everything would be okay. Actually, doing that wouldn't be the worst idea in the world. It would lessen their contact while keeping the anticipation.

As she prepared her coffee and opened the fridge door, her phone pinged in her blazer pocket. She spied the prepared salad in a box, groaning. She needed something far more filling tonight. She always did when she was tired and cold. Maybe there was a ready meal in the freezer that she could stick a fork in.

Deflated, Gillian took her phone from her pocket and immediately smiled. Finn's name on her screen always brightened her mood...and other things.

Hi. I'm available tonight from about 6. Can I still see you?

Could she? Of course she could. Even if Gillian knew less contact was better, she couldn't turn Finn away. She would, however, discuss weeknights with her this evening.

Did you have something in mind?

Gillian chewed her lip as she took her coffee and moved towards the couch. She kicked her heels off, sighing with relief, and made herself comfortable.

Well, I know you don't want to be seen with me, and I know you don't really want to leave your apartment when

I'm around, but I hoped I could take you somewhere out of the city.

Gillian sipped her coffee, her eyes narrowed at her screen. Out of the city wouldn't be dangerous.

Okay. Where are you taking me?

Finn started to respond no sooner than Gillian's message had been delivered.

It's a surprise. Do you trust me?

Did Gillian trust Finn? Yes. She did.

I do trust you. What time should I be ready?

Just the knowledge of spending time with Finn this evening had Gillian's mood lifting. Yes, she was tired, but she would only sit around, forcing herself to stay awake anyway if she chose not to see Finn. At least leaving the apartment meant she wouldn't be alone overthinking...or working all night.

I can be with you about 6:15. I'll park across the street and keep the engine running.

Gillian had to smile at that. Here Finn was, doing anything she could to protect Gillian from being caught. The guilt of allowing this would always be there, but Gillian didn't have to worry about this getting out of hand. Finn didn't want that, Gillian couldn't handle it, and one day...this would fizzle out, and Gillian would find herself back at square one. For the time being, she was going to have as much fun as she possibly could.

I'll be ready. Text me when you're outside.

She turned her watch towards herself. She had just over two hours before Finn would be picking her up.

Do I get a kiss tonight?

Gillian's entire being sparked at that message. A kiss was just a kiss...unless it was Finn Ashton doing that kissing. Gillian would never know how Finn had that effect on her, but she wasn't questioning it. She was going with it.

Maybe. If you behave yourself.

She lowered her coffee to the table and lay back on the couch, her legs crossed at the ankles. Why couldn't she stay here all night just talking to Finn? Why did life have to get in the way of this undeniable connection?

So you're saying I could get more than a kiss if I REALLY behave myself?

Oh, Finn. Gillian smirked as she closed her eyes. Finn was all she saw lately. When she was working, when she was eating, when she was sleeping. It was Finn Ashton everywhere she turned.

I'm saying that you may or may not receive something in return for getting me out of this apartment.

That would satisfy Finn.

I don't need to receive anything for getting you out of there. You know it's my absolute pleasure whenever I get the chance to see you. Tonight. 6:15. I'll be waiting.

If Gillian could have allowed herself, she would have swooned at those words. The more Finn spoke, the quicker Gillian realised that she was potentially the perfect partner for her. But those alarm bells continued to ring whenever Gillian gave herself even a second to imagine that potential.

It simply wasn't possible.

And that was that.

CHAPTER 9

GILLIAN RUSHED OUT of her apartment, unsure as to whether she should be more dressed up than she was. Jeans and Chelsea boots likely wouldn't cut it with Finn, but she had been in her heels all day, and honestly, Gillian was still getting used to wearing them, having avoided them for the entirety of Christmas.

She pushed the main door open, lifting the hood on her coat as she jogged towards the car waiting for her across the street. Gillian didn't live close to the university, but she still had that fear of being caught with Finn. It was a fear she didn't expect would lessen in the near future. For every moment she spent with Finn, it would be there. Gillian knew what she was doing was wrong, she'd never believed otherwise, but she couldn't bring herself to stay away from her student.

You're here now. Stop worrying and enjoy your evening.

She slid into the passenger seat of Finn's car, puffing out her cheeks and staring directly ahead of her. "Can we drive, please? I really don't need to be caught in your car."

Finn pulled away, remaining silent as she did so.

"Thank you. I'm sorry I'm so nervous."

"I get it. Don't worry. Although, you didn't seem nervous at the bar on Friday night. Why is this any different?"

Gillian turned her head and studied Finn's profile. She had one hell of a striking jawline. "I think today it became real. Walking into work and knowing I'd see you...as my student... I don't know. The weekend was quite intense. Friday night

was *so intense*.” Gillian exhaled a long breath, trying to rid that memory from her mind. The plan had been to set ground rules—which they had—and then head home alone. Only as she’d sat in that bar with Finn, aware of how Finn had looked at her when she stepped up beside her, Gillian couldn’t *not* invite Finn back to her apartment. Gillian wasn’t sure anyone had ever looked at her the way Finn had. As though she was going to devour her there and then. In the exact spot she stood in. “Things feel different since Friday.”

“Feel different how?” Finn focused on the road.

“Again, I don’t know. We’ve spent a few nights together now, but Friday? Oh, Friday was quite something.”

Finn smirked as she shook her head. “You know, it’s not good to make me blush while I’m driving. I’m already struggling to concentrate as it is.”

“Why?”

Finn snorted. “Because I have Gillian Masters in my fucking passenger seat. That is *not* something I expected back in December when I left you in your office.”

“Well, then, I guess we’re both surprised. Because I never expected to feel so fucking high on life since we came back from the Christmas break.” Gillian relaxed into her seat, watching the city lights pass her by. She didn’t know where they were going, Finn had told her it was a surprise, but she was trusting her. She sighed. “What a mess.”

Finn suddenly lay a hand on Gillian’s thigh, squeezing gently. “You good?”

Gillian would always be good when Finn’s hands were on her. “Yes. I’m good.”

“Then let’s get out of the city so I can give you my undivided attention.”

Oh, Finn. Stop doing that.

Gillian rested her head back and focused outside the window again. When Finn’s softer side threatened to peek out, Gillian had to remind herself of what this was. She didn’t want

to push away to a point, but she would have to if Finn kept making her feel a certain kind of way. “Yes. Let’s get out of the city.”



Finn sat side on in the driver’s seat, watching Gillian as she enjoyed the bag of chips they’d picked up from a local chip shop. Finn didn’t know why she had thought to bring Gillian here, but it was mindless...while being intimate at the same time. Well, intimate in Finn’s mind anyway. There were so many things she wanted to talk to Gillian about, but Finn didn’t want to ruin this. She was having too much fun.

“I couldn’t tell you the last time I ate chips from the wrapper.” Gillian sunk down into her seat, smiling in Finn’s direction. “What made you bring me here?” She looked out of the windscreen at the clear night. It was a far cry from the weather closer to home. The rain thankfully hadn’t followed them. “I mean, it’s beautiful, but still...”

Finn had brought Gillian to Parbold Hill. A place she often visited when she wanted to be in the quiet. The hill sat at around four hundred feet high, with views of West Lancashire below. It was nothing more than a lay-by and a road, but it was beautiful. “I wanted to see you, and I don’t know...thought that maybe seeing somewhere together may have been nice.”

Gillian smiled weakly. “Right.”

“I don’t expect us to do this all the time. Or ever again if you don’t want to. This is just one of my happy places. I thought maybe you’d enjoy being here, too.”

“I am enjoying it.”

Finn was almost certain that was a lie. She could read Gillian’s body language far better than Gillian likely realised. “We can go if you’d rather get back. I just wanted you to see the view.”

“Finn,” Gillian said, placing a hand on her knee. “Relax. It’s okay. I *am* happy to be here.”

“Okay. If you’re sure?”

Gillian finished her bag of chips, scrunching the paper up and throwing it to the footwell with Finn’s. “I am. Could we get out and look at the view?”

“Absolutely.” Finn shot out of the car, rushing to the passenger side to open the door for Gillian. She looked really good tonight. Comfy, yet entirely different from what she usually wore around Finn. “You look great, by the way.” Finn noted the shy smile Gillian wore. It always confused her when a woman who oozed so much confidence blushed at a simple compliment.

“Thanks. I wasn’t sure where we were going, so I had to wing it.”

“Well.” Finn cleared her throat. “You should wing it more often when you’re not on campus. Although, I’m willing to bet my life on the fact that you’d look good in *anything*.” She turned her body towards Gillian, leaning in and offering her a gentle kiss. “So long as this is outside and the whole skirt and heels thing is campus attire, I’m one really fucking lucky person.” Finn stroked her thumb against Gillian’s jaw, smiling.

“Such a sweet talker.” Gillian nudged Finn’s shoulder as she laughed. “Now, show me this view that you love so much.”

“Which one? Because the view I have right now is the best I’ve seen yet.”

Gillian fisted her hand in Finn’s jacket, pulling her in close. With her lips just millimetres from Finn’s, she whispered, “Finn, if you want to fuck me, you only have to say. The compliments aren’t necessary.”

Finn lifted a brow at that. Sure, she knew this was just fucking, but couldn’t she even compliment Gillian when she felt it was appropriate? Damn. These rules were brutal. “Right. Sorry.” She exhaled a deep breath and took a step back. With her hands shoved in her pockets, Finn moved towards the edge

of the grass verge and looked out at her supposed happy place. “Well, here it is. West Lancashire, and beyond.”

“It’s...amazing. Breathtaking.”

Finn wanted to say that Gillian was the very same thing, but she wouldn’t. One more word in that direction, and this was over. She felt it in the sudden atmosphere.

“Do you come up here often?” Gillian turned to Finn.

“Yeah. Usually a few times a week...before we started hooking up again, anyway.”

“Why?”

Finn frowned. “Why...do I come here?”

“No. Sorry. Why don’t you come here as much anymore?”

“Because I haven’t needed to. I come here to get away from things. I just sit and think and appreciate the beauty of my surroundings. Since I met you, I haven’t felt I needed to clear my head so much.”

“I...it’s only been a week or so.”

Finn shrugged. It hadn’t only been a week. It had been months of longing and fantasising. Still, if Gillian preferred to not remember how this all began, Finn would keep that in mind. “And in that week or so, I’ve felt good and haven’t wanted to be here. I’d rather keep my evenings free for you. Whenever that’s possible.”

“I see.” Gillian stared down at the ground. “There was something I wanted to mention, actually.”

Noticing the change in Gillian, that sexy smouldering look no longer present that was so often there, Finn simply offered a single nod. Gillian was calling this off, and all because Finn didn’t know when to shut her mouth. “Okay.”

“Whatever this is...it needs to be weekends only.”

“That’s okay. I’m happy with anything you’re comfortable with.”

Gillian inched her hand towards Finn's, where it hung at her side. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah. I know you think I only want to fuck you, and I know that's all you want from me, so whatever it is that's best for you...is best for me."

"It's not about that, Finn."

It felt like it. Given the talking down to about compliments, and now this, it sure felt like it. "Okay."

"So, maybe the weekend coming up? Once you've had your birthday drinks and stuff. The Saturday? Could we see one another then?"

"Yeah." Finn scuffed her boots against the ground, not sure what else to say. She *had* planned to ask Gillian about coming out for her birthday again—this week and last week were two entirely different situations now—but it was probably best if she didn't. "Yeah, that would be nice."

"I just have a lot of work on at the minute, and if I want to enjoy my weekends, I should dedicate my weeknights to it."

Finn held up a hand. "Please, you don't need to explain yourself."

"I know. But I wanted to just put it out there so we're on the same page."

"Look," Finn said, stepping closer and squeezing Gillian's hand. "You just let me know when you want to see me, and I'll be there. I'll work around you. It's no problem."

"That makes this all feel very one-sided in who wants what, Finn."

Wasn't it? Because that was how it was beginning to feel to Finn. But she understood completely. And whether it did feel one-sided at times or not, Finn couldn't imagine not having Gillian in her life anymore. "Maybe it is, to an extent. But you're the one who has something to lose here, not me. So you tell me what you want, when you want it, and we can go from there." Finn took her phone from her pocket and checked

the time. “And we should probably head back. It’s nearly nine now.”

“Thank you.” Gillian held onto Finn’s hand when she tried to pull away. “For understanding *and* for tonight.”

“No problem.”



Gillian unhooked her seatbelt when Finn brought her car to a stop. The atmosphere had become more and more tense as they’d passed different road signs. Everything had changed once they’d gotten out of the car, but Gillian didn’t know why. Finn had been wonderful tonight. Every time Gillian looked at her, she got lost in Finn’s eyes. So...why this? Why had Finn barely spoken two words during the drive back?

“Here you go.” Finn cut the engine and held onto the steering wheel. She seemed almost uncomfortable all of a sudden. “Sorry it took longer to get back. I didn’t realise there would be roadworks down the A road.”

“That’s okay.” Gillian looked in Finn’s direction. “Thank you again for taking me out tonight. I had a lovely time.”

“You’re welcome.” Finn focused on the street through the window, nodding slowly. “I’ll see you Wednesday for the lecture.”

“Finn, is everything okay?” Gillian chanced a hand towards Finn’s thigh, looking around before she made contact with that strong, delectable muscle. “If something is on your mind, I’d prefer it if you spoke to me about it.”

Finn rested a hand over Gillian’s. “Nothing. I’m good. Get inside where it’s warm.”

Gillian checked the clock on Finn’s dashboard. “Did you want to come in?”

“No, I shouldn’t. You have things to do.”

Ah. That's what the silence was about. Finn was sulking because Gillian couldn't see her through the week. "Really? You're going to throw that back at me?"

"Excuse me?" Finn did face Gillian this time, turning in her seat. "Throw *what* back at you?"

"The fact that I have a career that comes first? You're sulking because I can't see you through the week. Jesus, Finn." Gillian threw up her hands. "I know when we're together it's really fucking hot, but I *do* have a life I have to deal with, too." She scoffed, shaking her head. "Maybe this was a mistake. I can't handle all of this if you're going to start to want more. I'm sorry."

"Right." Finn fired up the engine. "Well, then. I guess that's that. You're entirely wrong, but I'm not doing this with you if you're going to speak to me like that. What you *think* you know and what is *actually* true are very different."

Gillian frowned when Finn turned away. She'd heard the break in her voice, and she could see Finn repeatedly swallowing. "Hey, Finn. Come on, I don't want to fight with you."

"And that's why I'm not doing this," Finn whispered. "Please, go inside so I can go home."

"O-okay." Gillian didn't want to leave things like this. Finn had been perfect and exactly what she needed, so to leave everything this way...it didn't feel right. "If you want to talk, you let me know." Gillian waited for a response, but nothing came. "Goodnight, Finn."

"Yeah. Night."

Gillian left Finn's car and crossed the street. She turned back to see Finn wiping tears from her cheeks, and then Finn drove away...leaving Gillian with a pain deep in the pit of her stomach.

CHAPTER 10

“HI, MUM. EVERYTHING OKAY?” Finn strolled down the corridor towards the lecture hall, slowing her pace when she saw Gillian walking towards her from the other end. They hadn’t spoken since Monday night, but Finn wasn’t sure she had anything to say. The not knowing when it came to getting things right and wrong had her head up her arse.

“Yes, love. Sue is here. She brought an afternoon tea for us.”

“Oh, that’s lovely. I bet it was a nice surprise, too.”

“It was,” Carol said, the rustle of paper heard in the background. “Are you going to your lecture now?”

“I am, yeah. I’m going to head to the library when it’s finished, and then I’ll be home.”

“Okay. No rush. Take your time.”

Finn smiled. “Bye, Mum.” As she shoved her phone into the side of her messenger bag, she remembered that she had to tell Gillian she wouldn’t be at Friday’s lecture. She had those hospital appointments with her mum to take care of.

She looked up, watching Gillian’s flash of dark hair as she went inside the lecture hall, followed by several other students, and then puffed out her cheeks. *No time like the present.* Deena waved at Finn as she followed everyone else inside, pointing towards the seat beside her.

Finn waved back in acknowledgment, then approached Gillian. “Hey, Gillian.”

“Not now, Finn,” She said through gritted teeth, her back to the students taking their seats. “Sit down. I’d like to begin.”

“I...uh.” Finn frowned, holding onto the strap of her bag. “I just wondered if I could have a word.”

Gillian turned, a smile plastered on her mouth. “I said not now. Take your seat, and let me do my job.”

Wow. Okay. This new attitude of Gillian’s wasn’t what Finn was fond of. Not at all.

Finn lowered her voice as she said, “Forget it. I’ll send a fucking email instead.”

She strode across the lecture hall and took the steps up to where Deena sat. Slumped in her seat, her bag still slung across her, Finn felt as though the wind had just been knocked out of her. Did Gillian really think Finn would discuss them in the middle of a lecture? Did she think Finn was stupid enough or careless enough to even contemplate that?

One thing was becoming increasingly clear. Whatever was going on here, Gillian *did* only see this purely as an arrangement. There wasn’t a hint of respect or decency on her part...only fucking or not. When Finn wanted to compliment her—something she would do to anyone—it came back to the fucking. When she wanted to discuss an issue related to university, it came back to the fucking. It was all Gillian had on her mind when it involved Finn. Which was a shame. Because while Finn enjoyed every last naked second she spent with Gillian, she was still a normal human being who had a life, too.

“How’s your week going?” Deena asked, her eyes straying towards Finn.

“Yeah. Great. Yours?”

Deena sighed. “Could be better. I really need a night out.”

“Friday? I’m still planning drinks if you fancy it?”

“Yeah. Count me in. I’d love to have a drink with you. I’m buying the first round, birthday girl.”

Finn beamed a smile. “Sounds great.”

“Okay. We have a lot to get through today, so if I could have *everyone’s* attention,” Gillian said as she eyed Finn. “I’d really appreciate it.”

Fuck. This wasn’t the Gillian she knew at all.



Finn paced in her room, seething that Gillian had treated her the way she had earlier. She wasn’t a child, she knew the rules, so there had really been no need for such a hostile reception. And right now, as she continued to wear a hole in her bedroom carpet from all the back and forth...she didn’t want to speak to Gillian again until she learnt how to talk to people with respect.

No. She wasn’t doing this. She wasn’t going to sit back and not rock the boat. Gillian had spoken to her like something she’d stepped in, and Finn wasn’t having it.

She slowly sat down on her bed and brought up her messages.

I don’t know why or when you decided to turn on me, but I don’t appreciate being spoken to like that. I’ve done nothing to deserve it. And since you don’t know how to talk to people anymore, I’ll just say what I have to say here. Whether you give a fuck or not is down to yourself.

Finn sent the message, not giving Gillian the chance to respond before she started to write out exactly what she wanted to say.

I know this thing between us is very fragile. I know you have a career and a life outside of me. One you can’t jeopardise. I’ve always known that, and I support you in anything you need to do, any decisions you make, and whether or not you want to see me again. I’ve always understood your feelings towards me and this arrangement. Sure, it hurts sometimes when I remember what’s happening and that it could never be anything more

if things grew naturally, but I'm big enough to deal with that myself. If I didn't think I could handle it, I never would have started this again with you. Since Monday though, I feel as though it's falling apart. While I know you're only here for the sex, I find it hard to understand the rules at times. You allow me to kiss you, but I can't compliment you. You let me fuck you senseless, but the idea of having a drink is out of the question. Unless it suits you, and you turn up at the bar I'm at. I don't understand how this is working. Or...am I supposed to sit at home pining after you? Is that what you want? For me to sit glued to my phone wishing I'd hear from you? Because that's how this feels now. So, yeah. You were right on Monday night when you said things feel one-sided. They are. And anything that I say or do is only allowed when YOU say so. It doesn't matter anymore how much I want you. It doesn't matter if I wish you'd call, or text, or beg me to come over to your place. I'm not doing this anymore. When I can't even compliment the woman I adore spending my time with, no. I can't do it. Take care, Gillian. I hope you find whatever the fuck it is you're looking for. Though, I'm not sure even you know.

Finn hit send, scoffing as she stared down at the delivered status. Gillian probably wouldn't even respond, but Finn was expecting that. Silence. It was always far easier to remain silent than to accept you'd done something wrong. And though Finn didn't know Gillian well enough yet, she suspected that was precisely the kind of person she was. Whatever was going on, Finn was out. She wasn't doing this anymore.

She opened up her laptop, sending off an email to Gillian.

Hi, Gillian.

I won't be at the lecture or seminar this Friday. Apologies, but my mother has hospital appointments that she has been waiting on for several months, and I'm the one taking her to them. If you could alert me to any module uploads, I would greatly appreciate it.

Thanks,

Finn Ashton.

Finn rolled her head on her shoulders and sent off the email. That had been all she wanted to say to Gillian this morning when she reached the lecture hall, but even that had gone to shit. She closed her laptop, threw it to the other side of the bed, and fell back onto the mattress.

Time to move on with your life, kid. Women are the fucking worst!



No, no, no.

Gillian sat on the couch with her head in her hands, tears brimming on her eyelids. She had come home from work with the intention of contacting Finn, but that wasn't a good idea right now. Finn...was done.

Can you blame her?

Gillian couldn't blame her at all. She had been in a foul mood when Finn approached her at the beginning of the lecture today, and she was well aware of how disgusting her attitude had been. Because since Monday, all Gillian had wanted was to see Finn. To talk things through with her. She hadn't wanted it to end the way it had in Finn's car, and she certainly hadn't wanted *this* to be the outcome.

God, seeing those words from Finn hurt. They hurt far more than Gillian could have imagined they would. Should she risk it and call her? Should she maybe just send a text and apologise? No. An apology should be done face-to-face. Gillian's head may not be in the right place, but she wasn't that much of a coward.

She read the message back again. The one thing Gillian never wanted was for Finn to sit at home pining for her. That had never been her intention. Not with Finn and not with anyone else. Gillian just...didn't know how to deal with the compliments. And that was really fucking sad. Why? Because

Finn's compliments made her feel some kind of way. A way that Gillian wasn't used to, but also a way that could encourage Gillian to feel something more. And that wasn't a possibility.

Finn had done the right thing in ending this. That was safe to say. She never wanted to hurt her. God, she only wanted to feel Finn against her...holding her, keeping her grounded. That was exactly what Finn provided, even if sex was somehow off the table. It was never just sex. Not really. Deep down, Gillian knew it had never been about sex for Finn, either. They both just wanted someone who they felt comfortable with.

And now Gillian had royally fucked that.

Still, she couldn't sit in silence with this. Finn deserved more than that.

Can we talk?

She sent the message off before she could back out. Finn would either agree or she wouldn't. When her phone buzzed in her hand, Gillian's stomach dropped.

I've said everything I needed to say.

Fuck. Gillian shook her head, determined to make this right. And not for the sex aspect, as Finn likely believed. But because she wasn't the person she'd been in her lecture today. That had never been Gillian.

Please, Finn. I'm sorry about today and I'd really like to talk.

That was never going to happen. Gillian felt Finn's rejection seeping through her phone before she'd even received it.

I think it's best if we just don't see one another. We don't talk. We don't interact in any way at all other than on campus. You were downright rude to me today and I really don't know what I did to deserve it. Was it because you didn't get your own way on Monday night and I asked you to get out of my car? Did you expect me to end up in your bed with you?

That was harsh, but it was also fair. Gillian knew she continuously fucked up—more so when it came to her personal life—but that hadn't been it. Not at all.

I hope you know that's not true. Please can we talk? If not soon, whenever you're ready?

Gillian had made plenty of mistakes in her life—marrying Dave was a huge one—but she really needed to make amends here. Not only because it was Finn but because it was her student. Finn would never do anything harmful to hit back, but Gillian felt terrible.

Not right now.

As she read those words back, Gillian sighed. It wasn't an outright no, but it wasn't a yes, either.

Then I can only hope you'll give me the opportunity to talk when you're ready to hear it. I'm so sorry, Finn.

Gillian locked her phone and placed it on the coffee table. If she couldn't fix this with Finn, she would forever regret it.

CHAPTER II

FINN CARRIED a round of drinks to the table for her and Deena, a few shots thrown in for good measure. She appreciated that Deena had shown up for her; it meant so much, and she was going to make this night a night to remember. Deena had mentioned she had a few friends who were also out on the town and that maybe they'd come to The Corner to join them at some point. "Beer for you. And some shots...because why the fuck not?"

Deena grinned, nodding enthusiastically. "My kinda friend."

"The only thing I draw the line at is dancing. I'm not a dancer. No way." Finn would dance with a beautiful woman if she was trying to make the night go a particular way, but that was only when it was absolutely necessary. "You're welcome to bust a move, but don't even think about trying to get me up."

"I would never." Deena held up a hand. "And to be honest, I plan to get so legless that I don't have the ability to dance anyway. It's been so long since I had a night out. I'm making the most of it."

"That's what I like to hear."

Deena's phone flashed on the table, but she flipped it over and rolled her eyes. "I'm not even dealing with life tonight. I refuse to."

Finn leaned in. "If you need to take a call, that's fine."

"I don't."

Okay. Finn wasn't going to push on this. She wanted a night out, free from drama. It was as simple as that. "So, how's the semester going for you so far?"

"Not bad. I'm enjoying it more than last semester. The modules this year are right up my street. I...noticed you crack on with your assignments like the world is going to end. What's up with that?"

"Oh, I have a lot of time at home. I care for my mum, so once she's settled, I tend to just get on with what I need to do. Then I'm not worrying about how I'm going to spend my weekends, you know? Or if I have a job on, I don't have to split my time...or myself...a million different ways."

Deena tipped her beer towards Finn. "That's dedication."

"I've been wanting to enrol for a long time now. Since I have the chance, I'm going to get those decent grades at the end of it all." Finn was proud of the dedication she'd put into studying so far. She had no plans to lessen that, even if Gillian had made her question whether being in her classes was the right idea this week. "And it's nice to have another mature student on my course. I was worried I'd be the odd one out before it began."

"Yeah, I worried about that, too." Deena lifted her phone when it started to ring again and groaned. "Right, give me two minutes, and I'll be back. If I don't answer, they won't stop calling."

"You got it." Finn nodded.

As Deena turned to walk away, Gillian stepped into the bar. Deena stopped, said something to her, and then weaved around Gillian until she was outside.

Finn lowered her eyes and toyed with her pint of beer. If she'd known this would become a place Gillian enjoyed, Finn would have found somewhere else to drink. She didn't want outside of campus to become an issue for either of them. She wasn't into all that drama and upheaval.

"Happy Birthday, Finn." Gillian's gentle voice sent the hairs on Finn's arms upright. "I shouldn't be here, but I wanted

to see you.”

Finn swallowed as she lifted her gaze to Gillian. She refused to admire her tonight. What good would it do? Finn was trying to move past all of this. If she entertained Gillian for a second, it would undo the work she'd done since Wednesday. “Yeah. Thanks.”

Deena came back in, a scowl on her face. “Will I ever get to have a night out?”

“Everything okay?” Finn eyed Gillian briefly as she stepped away and made her way to the bar. Deena sunk down in her seat, sighing. “Hey, what’s going on?”

“I have to leave in a few minutes. I’m just waiting for a cab.”

“Oh. I’m...sorry to hear that.”

Deena shrugged. “I should have known it would happen. I’ll explain everything some other time.” Deena glanced over at Gillian. “Didn’t expect to see any lecturers in here.”

“No, I know. Can’t say I’ve ever seen her in here before.” Finn hated lying, but she had no choice. She had put herself in this position.

“Should you...invite her over for a drink? Would that be weird?”

Oh, if only Deena had any idea what had been going on here. A social drink with Gillian Masters was the least weird thing to happen lately. “Nah. She’s probably meeting people. And if you’re leaving, I’m going to head off too. No use sitting around here on my own.”

“I’m so sorry, Finn.” Deena placed her hand over Finn’s, regarding her with an apologetic smile. “I hate to let you down.”

“Hey,” Finn said, turning her hand over and squeezing Deena’s. “Don’t even worry about it. You have things going on, and I get that. Completely. I’m just grateful that you showed up at all.”

Deena's phone pinged, alerting her to the taxi waiting outside. "I'll see you Monday, yeah?"

"Yeah." Finn got to her feet and pulled Deena into a hug. She turned her face to Deena's ear as she said, "Look, I don't know what's going on, but I'm always here if you need to talk or vent, okay?"

Deena pulled back, holding Finn at arm's length. "I appreciate that. You be careful getting home."

"I will. See you Monday."

Finn watched Deena as she left and got into her taxi. She turned back, moved towards the bar, and caught Morgan's attention. "I'm headed off. Could I get the bill, please?"

"Sure. Early night for a reason, or...?" Morgan frowned. "The night is only just beginning, and your date has already left. Even *I* know you can make women swoon in seconds, so something happened."

"She had to leave. And she wasn't my date." Finn felt Gillian's presence beside her, where she sat on a stool. "Just the bill, please, Morgan."

"Alright, alright. Give me a few minutes." Morgan held up her hands and served the guy who was waiting further down the bar.

Finn tapped her fingers against the bar, puffing out her cheeks. She didn't do awkward very well, and this was a reminder of that.

"Please don't leave because of me," Gillian said, her voice small and non-commanding. She sounded entirely different to how she usually did. "I'll leave."

Finn scoffed as she turned her head. "I'm leaving because I'm sick of drinking alone in fucking bars. It has nothing to do with you."

"So...have a drink with me."

"What's the point?"

Gillian smiled weakly and lowered her eyes. She fidgeted with the hem of her dress, shaking her head. “You’re right. There’s no point. I hoped I could buy you a drink and apologise, but you deserve more than that.”

“Here you go, gorgeous.” Morgan placed Finn’s bill down in the leather wallet. “No rush. I’ll come back in a few.”

Finn checked the bill and took some cash from her back pocket. She slipped the notes inside the wallet and reached over to leave it securely behind the bar. Then she turned fully to Gillian. “We really don’t need to do this. You’ve always said it was a mistake, and I guess I knew deep down that it would complicate things, so...thank you for the time you spent with me, but I have to leave now.”

Finn turned her back on Gillian and left the bar. The sooner she got home, the sooner she could kick herself for ever getting involved with Gillian Masters.



Gillian rushed outside and followed Finn as quickly as her heels would allow. “Finn, please come back inside.”

Finn spun around, frowning. “Why are you doing this? Why are you following me out of the bar tonight when you wouldn’t even let me speak to you the other day? Move on with your life, Gillian. It’ll be far less complicated without me in it.”

Gillian swallowed. She hated hearing Finn say things like that. Even if it was true in many respects, it didn’t mean she didn’t want Finn around in some capacity. “Can we talk?”

“About what? How this isn’t a good idea? How you never should have gotten involved with me? How your career is on the line? We’ve *had* those conversations.”

“The way I spoke to you on Wednesday was disgusting. I’d like to make amends.”

Finn nodded slowly, her hands shoved in her pockets.

“Please, Finn. If you never want to speak to me again, I understand...but let’s not leave things like this. I never want to upset you.”

“If you think I’m the kind of person who would report you to the university, you’re wrong. So, like, you don’t have to say any of this stuff. We can just go our separate ways and never mention it again.”

“I...no. God, I know you’d never do that. And I’m not saying any of this because of some sort of guilty conscience. I’m saying it because I would like to apologise. A *real* apology. A...conversation.”

“Okay.”

“Y-yes? You’ll stay and talk?” Gillian settled ever so slightly. She had spent the last two nights hoping Finn would turn up and hear her out. Now, she was finally going to be given that chance. “You’ll come back inside?”

“If that’s what you want.” Finn shrugged and stepped past Gillian, pushing through the heavy door to the bar. She moved straight towards the booth they’d shared last time they were here and took a seat.

Gillian stopped at the table, looking down at Finn. “Can I get us something to drink?”

“I’ll take a beer, thanks.”

Gillian turned and eyed Morgan. She hadn’t had much conversation with her since she started to drink here, but it was quite clear Finn and Morgan were fond of one another. Anyone who paid even an ounce of attention could see that. “A beer and a pinot, thanks.”

Morgan smiled as she took a glass and turned her attention to the beer pump. “Is Finn okay? I’ve seen you in here with her a couple of times now.”

“She’s...yes. She’s okay.”

“You two a thing then?” Morgan winked as she briefly eyed Gillian. “She’s a real catch. Finn is lovely.”

“No. We’re not anything. Just friends.”

Morgan grinned. “Riiiiight.”

Gillian exhaled a deep breath, wondering why she was even giving this server a second of her time.

“You know, if you’re playing hard to get, she won’t wait around for you. I see the way she looks at you, it’s quite clear she fucking *adores* you, but she doesn’t play games. If you want to risk losing her, then it *will* happen.”

Gillian remained silent, aware that she was very close to losing Finn. But was she really losing her when Finn wasn’t hers to begin with? She placed a ten-pound note down on the bar, took their drinks, and moved away. Finn was watching her every move, something which usually thrilled Gillian, but they weren’t at that place right now. “Bartender seems fond of you.”

Finn smiled. “Yeah. We’ve known one another for a few years now. She owns this place.”

Gillian offered a single nod and sat down in the booth with Finn. She sipped her wine slowly, giving herself a moment to breathe, and composed herself. “Finn, I don’t like how I behaved on Wednesday.”

“No, me neither.”

“I have no excuse for it. It was terrible, and I accept that.”

Finn got comfortable and faced Gillian. “What *was* going on?”

Perhaps it was time for Gillian to be entirely honest. Because while she had been inside her own head, she had hurt the one person who had done everything to make her happy lately. Finn was...all she wanted. All she needed. “I don’t know how much to say without complicating this further.”

Finn’s stunning blue eyes stared back at Gillian, melting her ice-cold heart. “Just say whatever it is you need to say. As little or as much as you want.”

“Sometimes you’re too much for me, Finn.”

Finn shifted in her seat and cleared her throat. “R-right. I’m sorry about that.”

“No, don’t apologise. You’re perfect. You have a wonderful heart. But it’s...too much for me. Right now, anyway.”

“So, you want me to be some cruel bitch? I don’t understand.”

Gillian smiled as she cocked her head. “I don’t want you to change for anyone. Don’t *ever* lose who you are. But the little things like Parbold Hill and waking up with one another...it makes me forget that this isn’t going anywhere.” Gillian dragged a hand through her hair. “I know I have to learn to control those feelings, that I cannot act on anything I wish I could. And for the most part, that works just fine for me. I *am* capable of having a no-strings fling. You just...you’re different. You’re not who I thought you were when we first met.”

Finn scanned the bar and then shifted closer to Gillian. She took her hand and held on tight. “Tell me what you need from me, Gillian. If I’m doing this all wrong, then I need you to lay it out for me. I don’t want to lose this with you, but if it’s too much, say the word, and I’ll walk away.”

“Do you ever worry that things may get out of hand between us?”

Finn frowned. “Out of hand?”

“You know...that we’ll want more.” Gillian chewed on her bottom lip. Whatever Finn said next could define how they moved forward. Morgan had just claimed that Finn adored Gillian, so she needed Finn’s thoughts on this before she considered continuing.

“First of all, you make it sound like some bank robbery gone wrong.” Finn laughed; her blonde hair flopped against her forehead. She carded her hand through it—a move Gillian was very fond of—and smiled. “Secondly, I *know* what this is. We both do. You’ve told me on multiple occasions now that it could never go anywhere, so no, I don’t believe that we’ll

come to want more. Because you don't want that from me, and I don't want to fall for someone who doesn't see a future with me."

Oh, if only Finn knew what Gillian did see when she allowed herself a moment to imagine it. "Right. Okay."

"Look, you're fucking stunning, and one day, I'm going to lose you to someone who you cannot imagine being without. I know that, and I'm okay with it. Because you're right when you say that we can't have a relationship. Not unless we're both willing to wait until I've graduated in what...a couple of years. I wouldn't expect you to wait around for that, and I don't plan to put myself in that position either."

That wasn't strictly true. Gillian would only be teaching Finn until the end of this academic year. But Gillian didn't have the heart to divulge that. Because it would only complicate this further, and then Gillian would have to be entirely truthful in that she didn't believe she could give Finn what she needed should they enter into a relationship. She cleared her throat, aware that she felt a hell of a lot for her student. *Just...carry on as normal.* "Then I'm sorry. It's about time I took my own advice and reminded myself why we're doing this."

"Why *are* we doing it?"

"Because we enjoy being with one another? Because in all my life, I've never come across someone who can satisfy me the way you do. Because...when you're in the same room as me, I feel it. Your presence, your attention...*you.*"

Finn regarded Gillian with a shy smile.

"And because that shy smirk you wear always makes me weak at the knees."

"I don't know where we go from here, Gillian. I really don't."

"I think we should wipe the slate clean and try again. If that's what you want?"

Finn sat quietly, her knee bouncing up and down beneath the table. "You think we can do that?"

“I believe we can.” *Even if all I want to do is spend weeks and months getting to know every last thing about you*, Gillian thought. “And if the time comes when one of us is worried about things going too far, we speak up, okay?”

“Okay.”

“Now, can I have the absolute pleasure of spending the rest of your birthday with you?”

Finn beamed a smile, her eyes bright. “Yeah. I’d love that.”

“Come on. Let’s get out of here. I have beer and wine back at my place.”

CHAPTER 12

FINN DIDN'T KNOW how she had put herself in this position, but as she walked through Gillian's apartment door, she had to stop and give herself a moment to understand. Just days ago, Gillian had flown off the handle and almost belittled her in front of the other students. Finn had never expected that from her. Gillian was professional, not disrespectful. While Finn was still upset by that, the fact that she missed Gillian overruled everything else.

Even if Finn knew she should walk out the door right now, she couldn't do it.

She turned to Gillian, watching her back as she locked the door. When she turned around, those dark eyes so fucking enticing, it took everything within Finn not to rip the dress from her body. Instead, she kept her hands occupied by wringing them in front of her.

"Finn?" Gillian frowned.

"Y-yeah?"

"Is...everything okay?"

Was everything okay? No, not really. But Finn found herself rooted to the spot, praying her fears would leave her alone for the rest of the night. It was her birthday, she was with Gillian, shouldn't she be happy about that? "Yeah, I think so."

"If this isn't what you want, then please communicate that with me." Gillian placed her clutch bag on the side table next to the door. She took a step closer, reaching out a hand, tears welling on her eyelids. "If you want to leave, I understand."

Finn smiled and lowered her eyes to their hands. It may have been a stark contrast—Finn’s tattoos with Gillian’s impeccable manicure—but it felt so right. They *fit* so right. She swallowed when she met Gillian’s gaze, fighting down the lump in her throat. “I don’t know what’s right and wrong anymore, Gillian.”

Gillian moved closer again, placing a palm to Finn’s chest. “What is this telling you?”

Oh, God. When this side of Gillian made an appearance, it really didn’t help Finn. She preferred the icy side of her. She knew where she stood then. “It’s telling me that I hate missing you.” Not ideal, but the truth. It seemed Finn was only capable of that tonight. “It’s telling me that I should be stronger...and walk away.” Gillian lowered her hand, but Finn gripped her wrist and held it between them. She brought Gillian’s fingertips to her lips, kissing them. “But I can’t.”

“Finn...”

“Are you sure you want me, Gillian? What you said the other day, the anger, it must have come from somewhere. So, before we go any further...are you *absolutely* sure?”

Gillian fisted her hand in Finn’s hair, her eyes dark as she dragged Finn closer. She took Finn’s hand, lowered it between them, and slipped it up her dress. Finn’s eyes closed when her fingers made contact with Gillian’s soaked pussy. *No underwear.* “What do you think?”

“Fuck.”

“If I have to spend the next several months making it up to you, I will. But for tonight, I just want to be with you, Finn.”

Finn rolled her fingers over Gillian’s swollen clit, watching a multitude of emotions cross her face. She had spent long enough pretending that this wasn’t going anywhere; she could surely continue doing that. As though a switch flipped inside Finn, she brought her hand to the side of Gillian’s neck and then wrapped it around her throat. “Have you been thinking about me?”

“Y-yes.” Gillian moaned as Finn teased her, her eyes not straying from Finn’s. “Every minute of every day.”

Finn smirked. Gillian was telling the truth, and that only had Finn’s confidence soaring through the roof. “What have you been thinking about?”

“The way you touch me.”

Finn quirked a brow, stroking her fingers up and down Gillian’s lips. “Like this?”

Gillian nodded as she closed her eyes. “Yes.”

“What else?”

“T-the smile on your face when you watch me come for you.”

Oh, fuck. Finn was dangerously close to falling here. “What can I say? I love it when you tighten for me...but beg for more.”

Gillian’s knees trembled at that. Finn felt it as she backed her up towards the bedroom door. “But it’s the way you kiss me when you’re deep inside me that I can’t get off my mind.”

Finn, with her hand still wrapped around Gillian’s throat, pushed two fingers inside her and crushed her mouth to Gillian’s. She didn’t give her a moment to adjust—it wasn’t what Gillian liked—she simply bent her knees slightly and fucked her hard and fast.

Gillian drew back, gasping for breath, her head pressed to the closed bedroom door. “Oh, Finn. Y-yes.”

“Yeah? You like that?”

Pinned to the door, Gillian could only nod, her mouth agape. But Finn pulled out, stepped back, and watched on with delight as Gillian’s chest heaved.

“N-no. Please, don’t stop.”

Finn brought her fingers to her lips and sucked Gillian from them. God, she would never tire of that taste. On the nights when she couldn’t be with Gillian, it was all she thought about. It only left her aching for more. “Bedroom.”

Gillian's eyes lit up at that one word. Did she really think Finn was about to walk out the door? Wow, she *was* worried about where they were headed. Finn would have to remedy that. As Gillian reached behind her and opened the door, Finn stalked towards her, pressing their bodies together. She drew her into a kiss, nipping at her bottom lip, then gripped the hem of Gillian's dress and lifted it from her body.

Finn smirked. "Did you know I have a thing for you in heels and nothing else?"

"I didn't. But I'll remember that."

"You should. Because when you're standing in front of me wearing nothing but heels, it only makes me want to fuck you until you beg me to stop."

Gillian turned and walked into her bedroom, that perfect ass craving Finn's hands. She stopped at the edge of the bed and bent over, her hands braced on the mattress. Gillian widened her stance, opening herself up to Finn.

Finn swallowed. Every moment they spent together became more and more unbelievable. Even if she *could* tell people about this, not a soul on this planet would believe her. She stepped into the room and popped the button on her jeans. As she lowered her zipper and shimmied out of them, Gillian looked over her shoulder.

"Mm. Just as I hoped." Gillian brought one hand between her legs, stroking her own pussy as she eyed the toy attached to the boxer shorts Finn wore. "God, I need you, Finn."

Oh, and she would have Finn. There were no two ways about it.

Finn shed her shirt, stepped up behind Gillian, and dropped to her knees. She wanted to taste what belonged to her tonight. Because it did. Gillian's body was hers for the taking until she told Finn otherwise. She buried her face between Gillian's dripping lips, moaning her approval. Gillian rocked back, craving more, but Finn wasn't ready to give that to her yet. With the back and forth lately, Finn never knew when it would

be the last time. She *had* to savour every last drop of Gillian Masters. One day, this *would* end.

“Oh, Finn.”

Finn pulled back and licked her lips. “Fuck, I adore tasting you.” As she rose to her feet, Gillian stood upright and turned to face her.

“On the bed, birthday girl.”

Finn’s brows drew together. Gillian...wanted her on the bed? But why? This was supposed to be all about Gillian and what she needed. Not Finn. “You know I can fuck you so much harder from the position you’ve just been in.” She cradled Gillian’s chin in her fingers, the taste of her still on Finn’s lips. “Turn around, gorgeous.”

“This is your night, Finn. It’s your birthday.”

Finn blushed as she dipped her head a little. “That’s not necessary.”

“Oh, it is. It’s important that this is *your* night to remember.”

“And what about you?”

Gillian leaned in, kissing Finn so softly that it had the power to break her. “It’s not possible for me to forget *any* night we’ve spent together, Finn.” Gillian took Finn’s hand and guided her towards the bed. She sat Finn down, then juttied her chin. “Go on. Get comfortable.”

Finn did so, swallowing as she watched Gillian climb onto the bed with her. The toy she wore stood proud when Finn laid her head on the pillows, but she desperately wanted to reach out and take a handful of Gillian’s gorgeous tits. “Come here.”

Gillian crawled up Finn’s body, her heels now discarded somewhere in the room. Those eyes, that smile...every ounce of attention Gillian possessed was firmly on Finn. She straddled Finn’s stomach, placing her hands on Finn’s chest. That wetness coated her skin, but Finn was too lost in Gillian’s eyes to do anything about it.

When had this become so much more than just sex to Finn?

Honestly, she didn't want those thoughts in her head tonight. If she allowed them any space at all, she would be urging Gillian off her and running out the door.

Gillian trailed a fingertip across Finn's collarbone, ghosting it lower and between her breasts. Finn shuddered, enamoured by the concentration in Gillian's eyes. "The day I met you, I had no idea how good it would feel to be with you," Gillian said, slowly tracing a fingertip over Finn's nipple. *Fuck, that felt good.* "As the weeks passed, I thought about it. Imagined it. Being here with you like this. Only nothing could have prepared me for how good you'd feel. How perfect you'd look laid out on my bed for me. Nothing in this world."

Gillian tweaked Finn's nipple again, lowering her head and taking the other between her lips. Finn was a huge fan of nipple play but with Gillian? Oh, it was far more arousing than it had ever been with any other woman. "Fuck, that feels so good."

She felt Gillian smile against her, her hot breath teasing Finn's skin. "This is your night, baby. Tell me where you want me."

Finn knew exactly where she wanted Gillian. On top of her, while she fucked her into next week. *That* was what Finn wanted. To see...to feel Gillian's pleasure. But first... "Kiss me."

Gillian braced her hands on either side of Finn's head, smiling into a kiss. It wasn't one of their standard hot and heavy kisses. No, it was a kiss that had stars exploding behind Finn's eyes. God, she was in so much trouble. But in that moment, she didn't care. Whatever came of this, Finn would never regret a single feeling they shared. Even if it hurt, even if she walked away from this entirely shattered, Gillian would be the greatest accomplishment of her life.

Finn wrapped her hands through Gillian's luscious locks, rocking her hips. She was more than ready to come...and, in return, give Gillian her own night to remember. As she pulled

out of the kiss and held Gillian's face, Finn memorised this very moment. "Turn around and put me inside you."

Gillian tugged her bottom lip between her teeth and changed her position. Finn had the perfect view of her ass, those glistening lips about to envelop the head of the toy.

"Fuck. You're amazing." Finn smoothed her palm across Gillian's lower back, unable to take her eyes off what was happening. Gillian was eager, and Finn fucking loved that. "Go on." Finn urged, watching Gillian take a hold of the toy and line it up. "You know how much I love seeing you full."

"F-Finn," Gillian whimpered, lowering herself until the toy was entirely inside her. "Oh, God."

"Mm. Perfect. All of you." Finn propped herself up on her elbows, her own wetness pooling on the sheets beneath her. "Show me how much you want it."

Gillian lifted, only to sink back down hard. Finn was mesmerised, wishing she could have these moments whenever she wanted them. But she couldn't. That only made this all the more special. She tensed her thighs where Gillian planted her hands, thrusting her hips to meet every movement Gillian made. "Oh, Finn. I-I don't know how long I can hold on."

"I don't give a fuck. Seeing you like this, you can come for me anytime you like." Finn's palm connected hard with one cheek, eliciting a filthy moan from Gillian. "Because when you do...we go again. Until you can't take anymore."

Gillian sat back, rocking back and forth against the toy buried inside her. "Mmm. Fuck. You feel so good."

"For you...always."

Gillian arched her back, pinching at her nipples. Right now, Finn wished she had the perfect view of that. She couldn't get enough of Gillian Masters, and she knew she never would. "F-Finn."

"Go on, babe. Come for me. Let me hear you."

Gillian groaned when the toy slipped out of her, and frantically forced the boxer shorts Finn wore down her legs. "I

need to feel you, Finn. I want *you*.”

If Finn wasn't already worried about this, she was now. Gillian didn't want the toy. She wanted Finn. *Fuck!*

With the toy and boxers thrown to the edge of the bed, Gillian crawled between Finn's legs and stroked her fingertips up her bare thighs. She shuddered and gasped as Gillian inched closer, fisting her hands in the sheets when Gillian touched her clit painfully slow. “O-oh. F-fuck.”

“Mm. Someone is just as ready as I am.” Finn caught the grin Gillian wore as she hooked one leg over Finn's thigh and positioned herself until their aching, swollen clits were touching. That sensation...was something Finn couldn't comprehend. “Feel good, baby?”

“S-so good.” Finn reached out and tugged on one of Gillian's painfully hard nipples. The expected result...Gillian riding Finn's clit hard.

Just when Finn thought she couldn't feel any more euphoric, Gillian weaved a hand between them and pressed her thumb to Finn's clit.

“Y-yes! Oh, fuck. I-I...” Finn arched her back, matching each thrust. Her orgasm roared through her, every inch of her skin tingling. “Gillian, I—” Finn tried to catch her breath, but all she really wanted to do was flip this woman and fuck her senseless.

Gillian slowed, leaning down and kissing Finn. She pulled back, holding Finn's jaw, and whispered, “Happy Birthday, baby.”

Finn's entire body relaxed when she felt the weight of Gillian fully on top of her. Just a minute, and she would be good to go again. “Gillian, fuck!”

As Gillian lay against her, her heart pounding against Finn's, she ghosted her fingers up and down Finn's arm. “I feel entirely privileged to be here with you tonight.”



Gillian woke to Finn's arm wrapped around her, the sunlight just about making an appearance as she allowed her eyes to adjust to the light in the room. Finn felt good this morning. Gillian had missed these situations, even if they did fuck with her head.

And they did. They fucked with her head something terrible.

"I don't know if you know this," Finn said, her voice husky as she held Gillian tighter. "But whenever I wake up next to you, I can hear you thinking."

Fuck.

"Stop overthinking the fact that I'm lying next to you, and just relax."

Gillian did relax against Finn as she spoke those words. Why the hell was she worrying? Finn wanted to fuck, and that was that. "Sorry."

"Don't be. It's kinda cute."

With the side of her face buried in her pillow, Gillian bit her lip to keep the grin she wore at bay. "Cute is not what people usually say to describe me."

"Yeah, well, those people probably haven't fucked you into oblivion and seen your come-down face. I have...and it's all very cute." Finn turned Gillian, smiling when she stared back at her. "Hey. Good morning."

"Hi."

"I think today is the day when I look at your new place for you. You know, before you push me away again and I never get the chance to give you a quote."

Gillian could take offence to that, or she could understand that Finn was joking based on the devilish look in her eye. "I

think that's a good idea. It's about time I started to make some plans."

"It's Saturday, I don't have anywhere to be, and I *love* looking around houses."

Gillian leaned up and offered Finn a chaste kiss. "You mean we don't get to spend all day in bed together?"

"I'll tell you what, you have way more in your tank than I do sometimes. I'm jealous."

"I'm just making the most of the time we have together," Gillian said, admiring the line work on Finn's chest piece tattoo. She recalled the first time she was ever given the opportunity to see her naked, her mind whirring with those *very* good thoughts. She stroked her fingertips along the flowers, feeling Finn shudder. "You're so soft."

"Well, now, I wouldn't want to be dry and bumpy when I'm lying on top of someone like you, would I? I exfoliate so *you* can have the smoothest ride." Finn winked and leaned down. When their lips met, Gillian tried to block out the fact that Finn's hardened nipples were pressing against her own. "God, you even taste good first thing in the morning." Finn gently wrapped her hand around the front of Gillian's throat and deepened the kiss. These were the moments when she struggled to separate their arrangement from reality. It was hard to do so when Finn was perfect in every way possible. Finn drew back slowly, stroking her thumb against Gillian's jawline. "I'm so fucking lucky to be here with you."

"Stop it. You'll make me blush." Gillian only partly meant that. It wasn't the blushing she was worried about. It was the effect Finn's words had on her. "And if we don't shower and dress, we'll never make it to my new place."

"I'll need to go home first and get a change of clothes, okay? But I can meet you there." Finn rolled away from Gillian, but Gillian reached out a hand. "What's up?"

"Lie with me for another few minutes." Gillian knew this was blurring the lines. Still, she hoped Finn *would* lie with her. This was their sanctuary, even if Finn would never know that.

Gillian didn't have the balls to tell her what *this* meant. Comfort. To feel needed. Not alone.

Finn lay back down, mirroring Gillian's position and staring up at the ceiling with her. "Hey, thanks for last night. I had a great night."

Gillian found Finn's hand between them and took it. "Me, too."

"Any other plans this weekend other than going to the house?"

You inside me if I have my way, Gillian thought, smirking ever so slightly. "No, nothing yet. You?"

"Nah. Just to your new place, then home to crack on with some work."

"I have to say, you're one of the most dedicated students I have ever come across, Finn. Your studying is impeccable."

Finn turned her head and stared into Gillian's soul. "Maybe it's time to study you next." She grinned. "Lesson one. One hundred and one ways to make your professor come in your mouth."

"Now, that's a module I would find *very* interesting to be a part of." Gillian laughed from deep within her belly. It was a laugh she didn't often have these days. "It's a one-on-one course, right?"

"Oh, yeah. Only the most dedicated students are allowed anywhere near the professor's sweet pussy." Finn lifted a shoulder. "After all, there's only a select few who could even make her wet, let alone have the pleasure of tasting her." Finn reached over the side of the bed and then fidgeted under the covers. "Actually, it's not even a few. Rumour has it that it's just *one* student."

"Mmhmm. I can confirm that there's only one student who makes me tremble just by looking at me."

Finn turned on her side towards Gillian and beckoned her closer. "Come here." When Gillian rolled closer, she felt that familiar cool silicone. "Are you wet, babe?"

Babe. *Oh, my.* Gillian simply nodded and lowered her hand. She coated her fingers with her own arousal and then brought them to Finn's lips. "You're the one studying me. You'd better be the judge."

Finn sucked Gillian's fingers clean and shifted closer. "Put me inside you. Now."

Gillian didn't wait a second. She rubbed the head against her clit and moaned. "Oh, Finn."

"I said now, Gillian." Finn bucked her hips, those blue eyes dark and filled with desire. "I need to be inside you."

"Fuck." She brought the tip to her entrance and slipped it inside. God, she was already tight and ready to come. But that was commonplace when Finn was around. "Y-yes." She lifted her leg, gasping when Finn slowly sunk deeper. Those hips moved in the most beautiful of ways, sensual as they moulded into one. Finn wrapped Gillian up in her strong arms, thrusting harder. "F-Finn."

"I don't care what happens in the future. I'll always remember these moments as the fucking greatest." Finn moaned as she slowly brought Gillian towards the edge. "It's a privilege to be inside you. I hope you know that."

Gillian buried her face in Finn's neck, matching every thrust. "You feel so fucking good."

"And I always will," Finn whispered, kissing Gillian's hair. "Just remember that you're the only woman who has the ability to make me come without even touching me. That's how fucking good it feels being inside you. Y-you have me on edge without a single touch."

Gillian gasped when Finn held her tight and thrust harder. She was no contortionist, but Gillian managed to weave an arm around Finn's thigh—while still being held by those safe arms—and find her wetness. She pushed two fingers inside her from behind, drew back, and moaned when Finn tightened around her fingers. "Together."

"F-fuck." Finn's jaw clenched, and her nostrils flared when she stared back at Gillian. "T-that feels...fuckkk."

“Are you close, Finn?”

“Y-yes.” Finn didn’t pick up her pace, but she did thrust long and slow inside Gillian. They moved in rhythm, moaning and panting, a non-verbal acknowledgement of what it meant to be like this together. “God, your fingers are a fucking dream.”

Gillian had been inside Finn on a number of occasions now, but everything about this morning...this position, felt different. It was intimate. It was slow and meaningful. Gillian and Finn usually partook in heavy, raw sex. But not this morning. If this was Gillian’s lifelong partner, this was the very position they’d make love in. “Finn, I’m coming.”

“M-me, too.”

Gillian sunk her fingers deeper, hitting that sweet spot. She knew the friction from the harness was working wonders on Finn’s clit, and as Finn’s head lolled back and her mouth fell open, Gillian came just watching her. “O-oh, fuck. Yes.” Finn thrust short and sharp as she continued to fuck Gillian, her face now buried in Gillian’s neck. “Oh, Finn.”

“Fuck, babe.” Finn rolled her hips slowly, the harness pressing against Gillian’s clit. It only sent shockwave after shockwave through her, gasps and light moans still filtering throughout her bedroom. “God, I never want to not be inside you.”

The room fell silent as they held one another. Gillian wasn’t sure what to make of any of what had just happened, but it had secretly been everything she’d needed this morning.

CHAPTER 13

FINN WHISTLED as she took in the detail of Gillian's new home, shoving the spare key Gillian had given her into her back pocket. She hadn't known what to expect—she didn't believe she knew Gillian well enough to gain any kind of knowledge about what she was into when it came to the interior of her perfect home—but *this* hadn't been what she imagined. Though it was clear the house needed some work, it was remarkable. The original features still sat in place, the huge ceilings gave the place so much character *and* light, and the windows? Well, Finn had always dreamed of sash windows. There was something about having old features as part of your home in this day and age that had always appealed to her. She would take old wood over UPVC doors and windows at any opportunity.

Honestly, she could see Gillian living here.

While Gillian seemed modern and 'in' on the outside, Finn suspected this was her dream home. Something that wasn't too high-end, even though her appearance would suggest otherwise. Something that felt homely and comfortable, even if Gillian was on a mission of self-discovery. Something she could call her own, even though she didn't know what her future looked like.

Did Finn want to keep peeling back those layers? Did she want to *know* more, and *see* more, and *be* more? Of course she did. But it would never happen. They'd discussed their position last night, agreed that nothing would come of it, and

then had mind-blowing make-up sex. Because that's what it had been. Make-up sex.

Only as Finn stood here right now, it hadn't only been make-up sex for her. And this morning? Well, that had been anything but. The truth was that she'd lied to Gillian. The way she'd held her this morning, fucking her slowly, was *not* the kind of sex Finn usually had with women she wouldn't get attached to. No, the sex she'd had this morning had been the exact kind of sex she'd wanted to share with Gillian just once. To feel her heartbeat as Finn held her in her arms. That warm breath moaning against her ear. And then, when Gillian had insisted they come together...well, Finn's world aligned once and for all.

And that was a huge issue.

Finn was attached whether she wanted to be or not. She wouldn't share that information with Gillian, not until things came to be too much, so Finn would continue on that no-strings path until Gillian decided Finn wasn't who she wanted to spend her time with anymore. It wouldn't last forever, and that was okay.

Yeah, you keep telling yourself that. Finn sighed. *Just wait until you see her kissing someone else.*

None of Finn's feelings mattered anyway, regardless of the situation she'd put herself in. Finn wasn't relationship material to someone like Gillian. No, she was forbidden. The secret. Finn, when looking at her future, found it very hard to imagine herself walking hand in hand down the street with Gillian.

While she could be Gillian's secret in this capacity, if anything progressed and rules changed...Finn would expect people to know who she was. She wouldn't stand for being someone's secret if she was in a relationship with them. Gillian was no exception to that.

You're never going to be in that position with her.

There was no use thinking about something that would never come to be.

Back to work!

Finn puffed out her cheeks and studied the kitchen. Gillian was right. It did need a re-fit. For a start, the worktops didn't look usable. Chipped, damp in areas towards the back patio doors, and very tired. Not something she could see when she looked at Gillian. She was prim and proper.

Finn smirked. *Until she opens that filthy mouth when you're alone.*

The image of Gillian watching herself as Finn fucked her last night flashed in her mind. She gripped the tape measure in her hand, her nostrils flared as she closed her eyes. Finn couldn't believe she'd been lucky enough to spend her birthday with Gillian. When she'd thanked her for such a special night, she'd meant it. With her whole heart. Finn was used to being alone, she was used to receiving one...maybe two birthday cards at a push, so to be with Gillian last night had really exceeded her every expectation.

She just wished she could repay Gillian in some way.

Would dinner be out of the question? Perhaps a bunch of flowers? Finn didn't know what she was and wasn't entitled to when it came to that woman. Maybe she wasn't entitled to a damn thing, though. That would likely be the outcome of this. No, Finn *knew* it would be the outcome.

Her phone started to ring in her jeans pocket. It would probably be Gillian. As she removed it, that name on her screen had her heart leaping in her chest. But only slightly. Slightly was okay, right? "Hey, Gillian."

"I'm so sorry I'm running late. Did you get into the house okay?"

"Yeah, fine. I'm here now. Did you want me to just do what I need to do and then text you an idea of what price you're looking at?"

Gillian cleared her throat. "No, I'll be there in a few minutes. I'm stuck in traffic."

"Okay, well, drive safe."

"I-I will. Bye, Finn." Gillian ended the call suddenly, but Finn only shrugged her shoulders. She was probably stressed

or something. Or maybe Gillian was having second thoughts about all of this again.

Whatever the issue, Finn would wait for Gillian to arrive... and take it from there.



Drive safe.

Gillian stared at the now empty dashboard, where her call had once been connected to Finn. *Drive safe.* Nobody had told her to drive safe in the past. Friends, of course. But the person she was fucking? Never. Finn may not have noticed her tone as she'd said it, but Gillian had. It had been genuine. Caring. It had tugged on her heart ever so slightly. What heart Gillian had left inside of her, anyway.

You're treading a very fine line here.

The car behind her beeped when she sat at a green light, her mind not quite in the right place now. Finn had thrown her with that small comment, and as Gillian drove away from the traffic lights, she knew she had to get her head together. Any other frame of mind around Finn was dangerous. For them both. This morning still played on repeat in her head, and every time she thought about seeing Finn...her belly fluttered.

Her phone started to ring on the dashboard, only this time it was Jan. She answered quickly, knowing she didn't have much time before she arrived at the house. "Hi, Jan."

"Hi, babe. How's your weekend going? I thought maybe you and I could catch up over a glass...or bottle of wine."

Gillian knew that would be the perfect night. She had considered inviting Finn over, they couldn't keep away from one another, but it would be wise to see Jan instead. "I'd like that. I just have to be at the house for a while, and then I'll sort out a time with you."

“You’re meeting contractors? God, I’m so excited for you!”

Gillian cleared her throat. “I’m meeting Finn there. Who knew she was an electrician? *And* a joiner.” Gillian had known that information for over a week now, but she had chosen not to tell Jan before today. Now that she *had* told her, she was prepared for whatever comments came with it.

“Oh, how convenient.” Jan laughed. “Christened the place yet?”

And there it was!

“No. Don’t be ridiculous.” Jan had no idea how intense things had been over the last week or so between Gillian and Finn. Perhaps now was the time to come clean. Fully. “Something is definitely going on between us now, though. It’s not the one-off...*ish* fling that I thought it would be back when my divorce went through.”

“Mmhmm. I knew that wouldn’t last very long. I could tell by your voice when you called that morning.”

“You knew what wouldn’t last long?” Gillian frowned as she turned onto her new road.

“That whole ‘she’s my student’ stuff.”

“Well, she is. That hasn’t changed. We’ve spoken about it, and I’m pretty confident we can keep things to a minimum on campus and no-strings off campus.” Gillian really had to stop telling lies. To herself *and* her friends. There was nothing ‘no strings’ about how she was feeling this afternoon. It also wasn’t entirely because Finn was her student. Gillian found it far easier to use that excuse than offer the whole truth. The brutal truth. *Nobody* needed to know that she didn’t believe she was capable of being loved.

“Well, good for you. So, she’s doing the work on your new place, then?”

“I guess so.”

“Gill?” Jan’s tone changed. “You know I love and support you no matter what, but have you thought about what you’ll

do if things become a little more serious between you and Finn? You were so adamant that your career came first, but have you thought about the...implications, shall we say?"

Gillian pulled up further down the road and rested her head back. She closed her eyes, tugging her bottom lip between her teeth. "No."

"Don't you think it may be a good idea to at least recognise what could potentially happen? Or is this just definitely some throw-away thing with Finn? You may not speak about her much, but the fact you're even sleeping with her says enough."

"What exactly does it say?" Gillian didn't need her best friend to analyse any of her behaviours. It wasn't what she wanted from their friendship right now.

"That you're ready to move on from Dave."

She snorted. "I've been ready to move on from him for a long time. I *have* moved on from him."

"Yes, you're right, but this is different. It *feels* different. Before you brought Finn into your life, your confidence was on the floor. You didn't leave the apartment unless you had to work. Doesn't that say a lot about where this could be headed?"

"Jan..."

"I'm just saying that I see the changes in you. Positive changes."

"Yeah, well, when you have a twenty-six-year-old that hangs on your every word, eyeing you up on a daily basis, it's hard not to feel confident." Wait, no. Part of that made Gillian sound like she knew exactly what she was doing. Luring Finn in. But it wasn't like that. Finn had been the one to take that step. She had been the one to chase Gillian around. "Does that make me sound terrible?"

"No, babe. It just tells me that you know your worth. That you're not borderline reclusive anymore. You know I hated seeing you like that. We all did. If Finn makes you feel good, then don't lose that."

Was Gillian making a mistake in giving the work on the house to Finn? Right now, in this moment, it felt exactly like that. Because Jan was right. Finn did make her feel like a new woman. Gillian had been so confident and full of life before Dave destroyed her. The last thing she wanted to do was grow attached to Finn because she was the only person who paid her any attention. “I think maybe I should put an end to it.”

“To...what?”

“Finn.”

Jan fell silent, as did Gillian. She didn't want to stop seeing Finn, not by a long shot, but in terms of the possible outcome, it would probably be for the best.

“Is that what you *want* to do?” Jan asked.

“I'm not really bothered if we continue or not.” Oh, Jesus. Gillian could have tried to sound more convincing than that. Jan was going to see right through it. “It's just something to pass the time. And that's true for Finn, too.”

“Gill, I know you're still not back to normal, but at least use me for what I'm here for. To listen. To be your best friend...with no judgement.”

Gillian smiled at that. She had a lot to thank Jan for over the last year. “I'm not sure I want to say it out loud. Because then it becomes real.”

“What becomes real, babe?”

“How I potentially feel about Finn. What a mess I know I could get myself into.” Gillian dragged a hand through her hair, her knuckles white where she gripped the steering wheel. “She's lovely. She's ridiculously hot. But she cares too, you know?”

“I'd hope she cares if she's sleeping with my best friend.”

“That's just it, though. We're *only* supposed to be sleeping together. Yet, I woke up with her *again* this morning after *purposely* seeking her out for her birthday. She does little things like make me a coffee when I wake up. Shouldn't I be asking her to leave once we've done whatever the hell she has

planned for us on any given night? Shouldn't I *not* care if I walk into the house and see her now?"

"Do you care if you see her?"

Gillian swallowed. "I'm...scared to see her."

"Why?"

"Because, Jan. Because she's not just an amazing fuck. She's so much more than that. And she's my student. I don't want to hurt her. I don't want her to hurt me. This...whatever it is...can never be anything more. It simply cannot."

"I think you need to give yourself a chance to see where things *do* go with her. Maybe one of you will get hurt, but that's life, Gill. Imagine walking away from something you're getting a lot of joy from...only to regret it down the line."

Gillian sighed, placing her hand on the door handle. "Can we talk about this later? Finn is waiting for me. I'm already late."

"Of course. Call me when you're back at the apartment."



Finn jotted down some measurements before she left the kitchen, satisfied that she could make it something pretty special for Gillian, depending on her budget. Either way, the end result would be great, but Finn had a feeling Gillian didn't plan to scrimp on her new place. Whatever came, Finn was more than ready for this project. She'd needed something to sink her teeth into, something she could focus on other than her uni assignments, so this had fallen into her lap at the right moment. Okay, maybe that wasn't the entire truth. Finn had taken this on—aware that it was a monumental task—because she wanted to impress Gillian. She wanted to be around her while hoping that maybe Gillian would find herself longing for Finn, too. And this was another safe way of spending time together without getting caught.

As she moved into the double living room and counted the broken floorboards she'd noted on arrival, she saw Gillian pull up outside the house. Finn wouldn't be much longer, and since it was only just after midday, they could both enjoy what was left of their Saturday.

Her watch pinged on her wrist, and as Finn looked down at the notification, she smiled. She had booked a hotel room on a whim just ten minutes ago, and the confirmation had just come through. Why had she booked a room? Because this was her birthday weekend, she didn't need to be at home since her mum was away until Monday morning, and she had zero plans to sit around at home with her drunk of a father. If she got lucky, *maybe* Gillian would stay there with her.

"Finn?" Gillian called out as she slammed the front door shut. "Are you still here?"

"Sure. I'm through here." Finn shoved her notepad into the empty pocket on her tool belt, smiling as Gillian came rushing through the hallway.

"I'm so sorry."

Finn held up a hand. "Stop apologising. You didn't even need to be here. I'm only taking measurements. I did have a few suggestions to run by you if you decide you want to hire me. I could have discussed it over the phone, though."

"Y-you're hired," Gillian said, her tone sultry as her eyes swept up Finn's body. "For sure. You're hired."

"O...kay." Why was Gillian looking at Finn that way? As though she was about to pounce on her. "Are you good?"

"So good." Gillian rested against the doorframe, smirking. "You look...very nice."

Very nice? Finn was wearing washed-out jeans with plaster stuck to them in places, a white tank top, and old Timberland boots she was pretty sure had a hole in the sole of them. But they were too comfy to throw out. "I...uh, thank you?"

Gillian motioned up and down Finn's body. "Will you...be wearing this while you're working for me?"

“Well, yeah. It’s my work clothes.”

“And will you maybe need any help around here? From me?”

Finn smiled. While she believed women were capable of anything men were, Gillian was *not* builder material. “No, probably not. I wouldn’t want you to break one of those expensive nails.”

Gillian quirked a sexy eyebrow in Finn’s direction, making her knees weak. God, Finn hated it when she did that. It threw her off her train of thought entirely.

“Sorry, that wasn’t me having a dig. But this is going to be an intense re-fit.” Finn rested back against the nearest windowsill, keeping some sort of distance between them. She wanted to be professional for as long as she possibly could. “I’m thinking I’ll take care of the kitchen, living area, main bedroom, and bathroom first. Then, if you want to move in, I’ll make sure it’s clean and as dust-free as possible for you. I can work on the rest around you.”

Gillian pushed off the frame, slowly approaching Finn. So much for that distance. She swallowed when Gillian stopped dead in front of her. “I’m very happy that you’re taking care of this place for me.”

“Y-yeah?” Finn swallowed again. “I appreciate you putting your trust in me. A lot.”

“I know how good you are with your hands, Finn. I’d be stupid to give the work to anyone else.”

Yeah, Gillian needed to stop with the teasing. Finn was still coming down from this morning’s high. And last night’s. The last week or so, in all honesty. Even the mid-week meltdown had been long forgotten.

Finn had never enjoyed herself as much as she had since university had resumed after the Christmas break. Instead of having breakfast this morning, they’d ended up showering together...and fucking. *God, she’s hot!* Finn reached out and took Gillian’s hand. “Hey, um...” Finn studied Gillian’s face, realising what she was about to ask was a stupid idea. They’d

already spent last night together. That should be enough. She smiled and shook her head. “Never mind.”

“Use your words, Finn.” Gillian cradled Finn’s jaw in her hand. “You usually have no issue telling me what you want, so use your words.”

Okay, here went nothing. “Can I see you tonight? I know we spent last night together, but I would like to see you tonight.”

Gillian sighed. “I’m not available. I have plans with my best friend. I’m sorry.”

Damn it. Part of Finn had hoped she could convince Gillian to spend the night at the hotel with her. “That’s cool. I didn’t think you’d be available, but I wanted to ask anyway, you know?”

“Another time?” Gillian guided Finn to her feet, stroking a fingertip up the middle of her throat. Oh, God. When Gillian did things like that, it took everything within Finn to hold back. “If...you’d like to?”

“Absolutely. You *know* I’d like to.” Finn gazed into those deep brown eyes of Gillian’s, wishing tonight could have been better planned. She would have cancelled the hotel room and just stayed at home, but the stupidity in her had booked a non-refundable room. Fuck it. She would enjoy herself either way. “Can I...kiss you before I leave?”

Gillian drew Finn in, her tongue slipping into Finn’s mouth so effortlessly. Fuck, this woman just knew everything that worked for Finn. How was it possible to feel so compatible with a woman who would eventually drop her? It didn’t make any sense. But Finn knew it wasn’t supposed to make sense. It was just supposed to be this way. Gillian squeezed Finn’s upper arms as she pulled back slowly. “Thank you for the perfect night last night.”

“Hey, anytime. You know that.” Finn kissed Gillian again, this time choosing to take a step back rather than deepen it. She wanted to, of course she did, but this wasn’t the time or place to get handsy. One day, perhaps, but not today. “I’m

going to head off, okay? I'll price up some materials, the things I know for sure you need, and then we can go from there. You know, your ideas for the place and that."

Gillian regarded Finn with the most beautiful smile. "Perfect."

CHAPTER 14

“WHY ARE WE HERE?” Jan slid into a booth, looking around the bar. They’d somehow found themselves at The Corner, but Gillian had no idea why. *Liar!*

“It’s a new bar I came across. I like the vibe, and I hoped you would too.”

“I do. It’s lovely. It’s just a little bit out of the way, don’t you think?”

Gillian lifted a shoulder. She wasn’t particularly bothered about the cab price if it meant she could drink her wine in a place she enjoyed. Not only because of the vibe, as she had told Jan, but because of the clientele here.

Oh, it’s only one person in particular.

“We can go elsewhere if you want. I just felt like a change. I know we planned to drink at your place, but I’ve enjoyed getting out more recently.” Gillian eyed the bartender. Did she feel a hint of jealousy whenever she saw Morgan and Finn talking? Absolutely. Was she entitled to feel that way? No. No, she was not. It wasn’t something she’d anticipated when she started to drink in this bar, but the moment she’d stepped foot in here tonight, that pang of jealousy became quite apparent. Perhaps it was because Gillian knew she was treading a fine line. The lies she kept telling herself regarding Finn caught up with her when this kind of thing happened. Because if Gillian didn’t care about Finn and what they shared, she surely wouldn’t care about the bartender who often eyed Finn up.

“Hey,” Jan said, resting a hand over Gillian’s. “I like it here. Relax.”

“Good.”

“So...”

Gillian sipped her wine and crossed her legs, waiting for Jan to elaborate on that one word. She knew where the conversation was headed; she simply hadn’t expected it so soon. Perhaps it was better to get it over and done with now, though. Then they could enjoy themselves. “So, what?”

“Finn.”

Gillian nodded slowly. “Mm. Finn. Where to even start with all of that.”

“Wherever you want to start. As I said to you on the phone, I love and support you no matter what.”

“I know. And I love you for that.” Gillian had intended to walk into her new place today and allow the professional side of Finn to direct the conversation. Only as she came face to face with her student, that tool belt around her slender waist, all rational thoughts left her mind. If Finn had pressed her to the wall and put her hand up Gillian’s skirt, that would have been the perfect afternoon. She shifted as that image formed in her mind. None of this was healthy. Gillian felt as though she was permanently aroused lately. “I think I have some tough decisions to make.”

“What decisions? The decision to let Finn go?”

Sadness tugged in the pit of Gillian’s stomach at that. “It’s something I have to consider. I’ve not been entirely honest with you...or Finn. So, yes. I guess I have to make that choice.” That was all Gillian was willing to say, so she hoped it satisfied Jan.

“And you think that’s what you should do...for the best?”

Gillian eyed Jan, giving her a knowing look. “You don’t?”

“I think that life is short, you’re not *really* doing anything wrong, and you should enjoy whatever time you can with her.”

Jan was very good at putting Gillian at ease. Only lately, her heart and head were all over the place. She wanted to enjoy Finn so much, but the thought of hurting her...of not being enough should sparks continue to fly, it pained her to imagine such a thing. It wasn't only her job she was worried about. It was her heart, too. Though, if she could be completely honest with herself, she was more concerned about her heart than her job lately.

"Tell me what you're thinking, babe."

"That I've gotten myself into quite a mess." Gillian cast her eyes on the table and shook her head. "We spoke a couple of weeks ago. Finn has a tough time at home caring for her mother. She told me I was her escape. That being with me was her way of unwinding. While I love that she feels comfortable with me, I'm worried that things are so intense between us that one of us is likely to overstep."

"She fucked you in your office before Christmas, Gill. I think you've already overstepped whatever line you're trying to avoid."

"I meant feelings. What we have right now is purely sex. Maybe even a friendship of some sort."

Another lie. Gillian was feeling *everything* she shouldn't. Still, if she was confident of anything, it was that she could lie her way through this entire thing. It was just sex, even if each thrust of Finn's hips had her feeling something deeper.

"And you think that one day Finn is going to want more." Jan nodded, but she was on the wrong path with her line of thinking.

"No. I'm worried that *I'll* want more."

"O-oh." Jan's eyes widened. "I see."

"Look, it's never going to happen. Not only because she's my student, but it's like you said at the beginning of all of this. I'm Finn's fantasy. How many students out there dream about fucking their professor?" Gillian was careful to keep her voice low as she said that. They may have been away from campus, but that didn't mean someone wouldn't overhear. "I foolishly

allowed that to happen, and now I don't know how to get out of it. I enjoy her. God, I *adore* the time we spend together. I really do, but—”

“Hang on.” Jan lifted a hand. “You're worried that you may develop feelings, yes?”

“Mmhmm.”

“And what's so terrible about that? Just humour me for a moment. Say this *thing* between you and Finn did escalate. What's the problem with that? If you find yourself falling for her, so what?”

“The problem?” Gillian scoffed. Well, where to begin? “She's twenty years younger than me, Jan. That's one pretty big problem.”

“Plenty of people are in age-gap relationships these days. You certainly wouldn't be the first.”

“Dave had an affair with a younger woman. We'd been married for over twenty years, and he had an affair with someone older than Finn but many years younger than me. How the hell would I keep a hold of her? How could I go into a relationship with someone like her, someone who has no issue with the fact she likes to fuck women to unwind...and not wonder every day if she still wants me. If she wants to share a life with me. I'd be downright stupid to put myself in that position.”

“If you feel that strongly about it, I have to ask why you're still sleeping with her.”

That was a very good question. One Gillian hated the answer to. “Because she makes me feel incredibly good about myself. When we're alone, I feel her attention for me in every single moment. Like, I'm all she sees. I'm all she thinks about. When I'm with Finn, I forget the pain of how my marriage ended. I forget that just six months ago, I could barely look at myself in the mirror. When I'm with Finn...I'm happy.”

Jan grinned but didn't say anything.

“What?”

“Nothing. Please continue.”

Gillian sighed. This was a waste of time. “What’s the point?”

“The point is that your eyes light up whenever you say her name. The point is that I can feel the electricity as you speak about her. The point is...my best friend, who, by the way, is beautiful and deserves so much in life...is happy. She makes you feel wanted, doesn’t she?”

“So wanted. And it’s so intense that when I watch her leave, I desperately want to ask her to stay longer. But yeah, it’s that want in her eyes that keeps me coming back for more.” Gillian tugged the corner of her bottom lip between her teeth. “But maybe she knows that. Maybe it’s intentional. She knows how attracted I am to her, so maybe this is all just a game, and she’s seeing how much she can take from me.”

Jan narrowed her eyes over the rim of her wine glass as she sipped. “Do you really believe that?”

Deep down, Gillian didn’t believe it. But it helped to keep her feelings in check, so she would always lead with it. “Yes. I do believe that.”

“Well, I can only hope that nobody comes out of this hurt. Not you, and not Finn. I don’t know her, but she is making you smile lately, so I want the best for you both. Whatever you decide.”

Gillian squeezed Jan’s hand as she relaxed a little. “Thank you. For always being there for me.”

“Always.” Jan smiled as she scanned the bar. And then she squeezed Gillian’s hand so tight that she almost stopped the blood supply. “You’ve got to be joking! Now I know *exactly* why we ended up here!”

“What?” Gillian followed Jan’s line of sight, her skin tingling when she saw Finn sitting in the window of the bar, her laptop out and with a holdall at her feet. “Oh. I...didn’t know she’d be here.”

Jan lifted a brow. “Really?”

“Really. Though, it *is* kind of her local bar.”

“And there it is.” Jan threw up her hands. “Why didn’t you just tell me that you hoped to see her tonight?”

“I didn’t think I would. She asked if she could see me tonight, and I told her I had plans. I thought she would just be at home.”

“Are you going to introduce us to one another then?”

Gillian had to think about that. Introducing Finn to a close friend could complicate this. “I’m not sure. I’m going to need several more glasses of wine before I make *that* decision.”

Jan slid out of the booth. “I’d better go to the bar then.”

Gillian watched Jan’s back. She hadn’t wanted to pour her heart out tonight. Forgetting about her problems seemed the easier approach to take, but she did feel ever so slightly lighter for it. Then Gillian’s gaze drifted towards Finn. Her gorgeous, handsome Finn. Gillian caught that thought immediately. *Her Finn?* Oh no. Finn wasn’t hers. Whether Gillian secretly craved that very thing or not.

Still...could she sit here all night and just admire her? Deep down, Gillian wanted to, but what she wanted more was to be alone with Finn.

That would always be what she preferred.



“Thanks, Morgan.” Finn smiled up at Morgan as she set a beer down on the table. “Busy night?”

“Not as busy as I’d like it to be.” Morgan looked down at the holdall poking out from under the table. “Going somewhere?”

“Just to a hotel for the night. Thought I’d treat myself since it’s my birthday.”

“Nice. Wouldn’t mind a night in a hotel myself.”

Finn eyed Morgan, a brow raised. “You’re welcome to join me.”

“Oh, I bet I am.” Morgan hip-checked Finn’s shoulder, laughing. “That woman not taking the other side of your bed tonight?”

Shit. Morgan must have noticed how Finn and Gillian had been around one another. They would have to be much more careful in the future. “Unfortunately not. She’s busy tonight. And...we’re not sharing a bed. We’re just friends.”

As Morgan opened her mouth to speak, Finn’s phone buzzed on the table. She lifted it and grinned when she saw Gillian’s name.

Hi...

“Sorry, I need to deal with this. I’ll come talk to you at the bar once I’ve finished with this assignment, okay?”

“Sure.” Morgan turned and left Finn’s table, giving Finn the perfect opportunity to interact with Gillian.

Hey. How’s your night going?

Finn couldn’t help the smile she wore. A smile that rarely made an appearance so often. The last several days with Gillian were the sole reason for her smile lately. Even with the uncertainty, she was still feeling euphoric.

Pleasant. Good. Yours?

Finn cleared her throat. She didn’t want to lie to Gillian, but she didn’t want her to know she was sitting alone at a bar either.

Yeah, not bad. I’m out drinking with a few other students close to campus.

Gillian immediately started to respond. Finn loved that about her. How quick she was to continue the conversation.

Is that so? Hmm.

Finn frowned. Was Gillian questioning her?

Yeah. It won't be a late night, though. I booked myself a room at a hotel to treat myself.

Finn still wished Gillian was staying with her.

Ah. It's Saturday, you're out on the town, and you have a hotel room booked. How very interesting.

Was it? Finn didn't find it interesting in the slightest. Quite frankly, she was bored to tears.

It...is?

She shifted in her seat a little, unsure of the tone of Gillian's messages.

Hoping to find something better than me tonight? Someone you can take back to your room with you?

Better? It didn't get better than being with Gillian. And Finn was more than certain she wouldn't find anything better even if she was planning to look. There was no such thing now that she'd tasted Gillian Masters.

Ms Masters, you know that's not possible. You know I wanted to see you tonight, so please don't think otherwise. You know exactly where I wish I was right now.

As Finn imagined thrusting deep into Gillian, her clit ached. Gillian would never know what she meant to Finn, that wasn't what she wanted, but Finn could still wish for what her future could look like. A future with someone as feisty and enticing as Gillian. *Or Gillian, herself*, Finn thought.

And where DO you wish you were right now?

Oh, God. Finn knew where this was going. It was quite clear that Gillian was into sexting, but while Finn was sitting in a bar? This could get messy if she wasn't careful. Gillian riled her up so quickly that Finn wouldn't be at all surprised if she was in the bathroom within the next ten minutes.

Alone with you. Naked.

Finn smiled at the image she was conjuring up in her mind. If she couldn't have that, she would dream about it instead.

That's all? Just naked and alone?

Fuck. Gillian wanted more.

Naked and alone...slowly fucking you the way I did this morning. Watching you come undone while I hold you. Craving to hear you call out my name. You know how that makes me feel. You know how much I love hearing your voice when you're shaking beneath me. You know how much I enjoy tasting you. All of you.

Finn puffed out her cheeks and closed her eyes momentarily. She needed to get out of her head. She lifted her beer and almost downed the entire glass. This morning with Gillian had been on her mind all day. She'd even wondered if it was something they needed to discuss. It had felt so intimate to Finn that Gillian had surely felt it, too.

Do you know how much I wanted you today? Seeing you dressed like that...God, I needed you, Finn.

Damn it! Why the hell hadn't Gillian told her that back at the house? She would have been more than happy to take care of anything she needed in that moment.

Then maybe YOU should also use your words more often. I'm not a mind reader, gorgeous.

And that was probably just as well. Finn couldn't begin to imagine the thoughts that likely ran through Gillian's mind most of the time. Before Gillian could respond, Finn sent off another message.

Are you happy now? I want you, but I can't have you. I'm soaking for you, but you're not here to do anything about it. But I think that was your plan all along, wasn't it? To make me need you. Maybe I should give you my hotel and room number and pray that you drop by.

Oh, now that was an idea Finn could get on board with.

Go to the bathroom and take care of yourself.

Finn wanted to, but she would have preferred it if Gillian was here. Since that wasn't going to happen, maybe she would do as Gillian had requested.

How will you know if I have or not? Expecting proof?

What the hell was she doing? Anticipating every word this woman said was a dangerous way to approach this. *You're in too deep now. What does it matter?*

I'll know.

Finn downed the last of her beer and got to her feet. She approached the bar where Morgan rested against it. "Hey, could you keep an eye on my stuff for a few minutes? Need to use the bathroom."

As Morgan nodded, Finn rushed across the floor towards the bathroom sign. With every step she took, her clit throbbed. She pushed through the main door and checked the stalls. They were all empty. She lowered her hand to her crotch, hissing when her knees trembled. She needed a moment to calm down, a moment to breathe.

Finn braced her hands against the sink, dropping her head between her shoulders. *Just take a moment. She's just a woman on the other end of your phone.* Finn rolled her shoulders, looking up into the mirror. "You're one lucky fucker, Finn Ashton." She grinned, aware that she was having one hell of a good time right now.

And then the bathroom door swung open, and Gillian stared back at her through the glass. "Hi, Finn."

Finn spun around. "Where the hell did you come from?"

"I've been here all night."

"W-what? I thought you had plans with your friend?" Finn's lips parted when Gillian took a step closer. Then another. The short red dress she wore clung to every curve so perfectly. "Gillian?"

Gillian fisted her hand in the front of Finn's shirt and guided her backwards into a stall. Once the door was locked and she'd turned Finn to rest back against it, she dropped to her knees and started to slowly lower her zipper. Fuck, Finn wasn't wearing her strap tonight. Gillian was about to be disappointed.

She lowered Finn's jeans down her thighs and then her boxer shorts. One finger slowly teased through Finn's folds,

the back of her head pushing hard against the door. “F-fuck.”

This...wasn't usually how her sexual encounters went. Finn was usually taking care of the women she found herself with. Only on the smallest handful of occasions had they chosen to relieve her. And when they did, they certainly didn't go down on her. Nor did they initiate sex. No, it was usually afterwards...as though it was an obligation. But seeing Gillian on her knees, and not because of Finn's strap, well...it stirred something inside of her. No, it stirred *everything* she'd been forcing down. It brought it straight to the surface, along with a ball of emotion that lodged in her throat.

“Oh, Finn. You weren't lying.” Gillian spread Finn's lips and blew gently against her clit. Fuck! That was...*fuck!* “You're so wet, baby.”

“Shit, Gillian.” Finn felt Gillian's hot breath against her pussy, suddenly craving the very mouth she'd enjoyed kissing so much in recent days. She stroked a hand through Gillian's hair, guiding her that little bit closer. “Y-yes.”

Gillian sucked Finn's clit into her mouth, her knees almost buckling as those lips drove her to the edge no sooner than they'd touched her. She dug her nails into Finn's thighs, humming her approval, and rolled her tongue. But it was when one of Gillian's hands landed between Finn's legs, slender fingers suddenly filling her, that Finn lost her mind completely.

“G-Gillian, I...” Finn's mouth fell open, her orgasm rolling through her. “Oh, fuck.”

As Finn came down from her unexpected high, her chest heaving, Gillian got to her feet and pressed her to the door. Finn gasped when Gillian eased out of her, her mind shot. “Well, well, well. Who knew you tasted so fucking good?”

“Gillian, I...I didn't expect that from you.” Finn placed a hand on Gillian's waist. “Could we go somewhere? You know I'd like to return the favour.”

Gillian licked her lips and moaned, kissing Finn suddenly...and hard. When she drew back, one palm pressed

to the door at the side of Finn's head, she smiled. "Maybe later."

"But you—"

"Don't give to receive." Gillian stroked her thumb across Finn's cheek. "My friend is outside. She wants to meet you. How do you feel about that?"

In this moment, Finn wasn't sure what day it was, let alone how she felt about anything. "I, uh...I mean, sure. If you want me to meet her."

Gillian cocked her head. "It's your call. I don't want anyone to think that meeting each other's friends means something more."

If Gillian kept surprising Finn like that, she was going to mean something more...soon. *Too late, she already means everything to you.* "No, I know. I get that."

"So?"

Finn nodded. "Yeah, cool. I'll just say hi and then get out of your way."

"Oh, I don't think so. *You* have a hotel room, and *I* plan to be fucked all over it later."

Fuck, yes. Finn would always invite Gillian back. That was a no-brainer. Whatever Finn felt, she would push it down for the time being. But in the coming days, she *would* have to figure it out. Allowing this to hang over her was a recipe for disaster.

"Oh, and Finn?"

Finn brushed her own thumb across her bottom lip, blushing slightly as she dipped her head. "Yeah?"

"Don't lie to me again. If you're alone, I want to know."

CHAPTER 15

“HEY, I’m just going to the bar. Can I get you and your friend anything?” Finn stopped Gillian with a gentle, inconspicuous hand on the small of her back. “Another bottle of wine?”

“No, we’re okay for now.” Gillian smiled, her eyes still ablaze with that desire she’d had just moments ago as she pinned Finn to the door. “We’re sitting over at the back. You’ll come over, yes?”

“Sure. I’ll just grab my things and get a drink. Give me a few minutes.” Finn leaned in towards Gillian’s cheek, completely forgetting where they were and what their situation was.

Gillian pulled back, frowning.

“Shit. I’m sorry.”

“That’s...I...” Gillian looked terrified as she stared back at her.

Finn held up her hands. “Really, I’m sorry. I forgot where I was.”

She offered Finn a single nod, turned, and walked away.

Fuck! Finn chose to head outside rather than to the bar. She needed some air after the last few minutes. She needed to process the mistake she almost made and scrub the orgasm she’d just had from her mind. The latter wasn’t something she particularly wanted to do, but Finn was struggling right now. Not with the plan in place, that was going well...mostly, but

with the position she'd found herself in after Gillian's text messages.

Finn loved women. God, she adored every last thing about them. But she was so used to being the one who took care of *them* that the idea of someone unexpectedly taking care of *her* had thrown her. Completely. If she was being honest, she wasn't sure what to do with herself now. Gillian likely wouldn't understand, and they didn't get into deep conversations like that anyway, so Finn would have to deal with how it made her feel all by herself. Not ideal, but because she had nobody to fall back on when it came to this stuff, she had no choice.

She shook her hands at her sides and puffed out her cheeks. It was just Gillian going down on her. She didn't need to make a huge deal out of it. Only as she turned back to face the bar, it *was* a huge deal. For Finn. Gillian had *wanted* to do that. She had taken it upon herself to be in that position. And Finn? Well, she'd never felt such an intense sensation roar through her. She had never felt so connected to another human being. The sexual tension and lust had been there with Gillian from day one, but the connection she felt right in this moment...along with what they'd been through this morning? No, that was new. *Very* new. Finn wasn't sure she enjoyed being in that territory.

You have some serious decisions to make after tonight.

Finn squared her shoulders and strode back into the bar. Morgan was watching her as she approached, her head cocked. "You okay?"

"Oh, yeah. I just needed some air. Can I get a beer, please?"

"Sure." Morgan pulled a pint and set it down on the bar counter. "You taking your stuff too? It's fine if you want to leave it behind the bar until you're leaving."

"Would that be okay?" Finn didn't want to trip over her holdall as she crossed the floor. And with the way she was feeling, that was highly likely.

“Yeah. I’ll put it in the back. Just give me a shout when you want it, and I’ll grab it for you.” Morgan smiled. “Now, before that woman you’re with burns a hole through both of us, you should go and join her.”

Finn turned to find Gillian glaring at them both. “Oh, right.”

She smiled as she approached Gillian’s table, wondering where she should sit. She had pissed Gillian off by almost kissing her on the cheek; she didn’t need to get anything else wrong tonight.

“Hi.” Finn smiled towards Gillian’s friend. “Finn. Nice to meet you.”

“It’s nice to finally meet you. I’m Jan. Gillian’s long-time pain in the arse.”

Finn grinned. Jan had a sense of humour, so that was nice. “I don’t want to gate crash your night, so I’m just going to drink this and leave you two to enjoy your Saturday evening together.”

“Oh, don’t be daft. We’re always with one another. Sit, drink, let’s chat.”

Finn cleared her throat and eyed the spot next to Gillian. Her gaze drifted to the chair she was standing behind. It would probably be best if she took this one. Then she couldn’t be considered to be ‘too close’ to Gillian. She knew how much it stressed her professor out. She pulled it out and sat down. “As I say, just one. I should head off soon anyway. I have plenty to get on with.”

“Gill says you’re going to be working on her new place for her.”

Finn dragged a hand through her hair and smiled. “Yeah. That’s the plan. It’s a gorgeous place, so I’m looking forward to making it a home for her.”

“I wouldn’t know. I haven’t seen it yet.”

“Oh. Well, I’ve only seen it because I needed to take some measurements earlier. I’m hoping to start some prep

tomorrow,” Finn said, her eyes drifting to a very quiet Gillian. “If that’s okay with you.”

“I’m not available tomorrow.”

Finn lifted a shoulder. “That’s okay. I can take care of it myself. I have the spare key, so...”

Gillian nodded as she shifted in her seat. She lifted her glass and eyed Finn, then looked over her shoulder to where Morgan tended the bar. “If you’re not busy elsewhere. Fine.”

Was that...jealousy? No. Surely not. Finn didn’t pin Gillian for the jealous type. And besides, jealousy would imply some kind of feeling was involved for Gillian. *Not possible.*

“The next several weeks for me are going to consist of uni, assignments, and working on your place. You’ll be sick of the sight of me soon.”

Gillian downed what was left in her wine glass and slid out of the booth. “Excuse me a moment. I need to use the bathroom.”

Finn smiled and lowered her eyes to the pint glass in front of her. She felt Jan’s gaze penetrating her; God only knew what Gillian had said about Finn to her best friend while she was outside.

“Now isn’t really the time or place to talk, but I wondered if I could speak to you at some point, Finn.”

Finn looked up at Jan. “You want to talk...to me?”

“I do. Don’t worry—I’m not going to chastise you for getting involved with Gillian, but I do need to speak to you. Without Gillian being there...or knowing.”

Mm, Finn didn’t like the idea of that. She didn’t want there to be any secrets. “Oh, I’m not sure that’s a good idea. If you need to speak about something, Gillian should know. She’s calling the shots here right now, and I don’t want to get in between you two or ruin what I have with her.”

Jan regarded Finn with a sincere smile. “That’s a lovely thing to say.”

“I may not look like I particularly care about people’s opinions of me, but I’d like to think I’m trustworthy. Trust is massively important for me and Gillian, and I can’t risk that. I’m sorry.”

“Forget I mentioned it. It’s okay.”

Finn sat back in her seat. “Unless it’s something that I really should know, I’d rather not, you know?”

“I understand.”

Before Gillian arrived back at their table, Finn caught her perfume. It was a comforting scent these days, and yeah...still sexy as hell when Finn allowed her mind to wander there. Finn finished her pint and got to her feet. “So, it was lovely to meet you, Jan. Hopefully I’ll see you again sometime.”

Gillian stopped at the table. “You’re...leaving.”

“Yeah. This is girls’ night. I’m not really girls’ night material. I’ll see you Monday, okay?”

Gillian turned her body away from Jan and lowered her voice. “I thought you had a hotel room?”

“I do. But I think it’s best if we don’t spend the night with one another tonight. I cocked up before, and I just need some space.”

Gillian took a step back, a hint of a scoff heard. “From me. I see.”

“Not necessarily. But the last week has been a lot. And I don’t really want to have this discussion right now while you’re out with your friend...or in public.”

“Okay. See you around, Finn.”

Finn noted the very slight slump in Gillian’s shoulders. She hated disappointing people. She *never* wanted to disappoint Gillian. She only wanted to give her anything she needed. “Y-yeah. Um...sorry.” Finn scratched at the back of her neck, looking down at her boots. “Be careful going home later. Be safe and that, you know?”

“I’ll be fine.” Gillian turned her back, effectively dismissing Finn from the conversation. So she would do exactly what it meant, and she would leave.

“Bye, Jan. Take care.”



Gillian sat quietly, thankful that she had a moment to herself while Jan was at the bar. Finn had left suddenly, and now Gillian felt terrible. They’d just enjoyed themselves—*a lot*—and then Gillian went and found an *almost* kiss on the cheek offensive. There was tension in the air, and Gillian didn’t like it.

Actually, she loathed it.

“So, are you going to tell me what that was all about?” Jan asked as she lowered another bottle of wine to the table. “Finn left in a hurry.”

“I’m not one hundred percent sure, but I think it could have been my fault.”

“Why?”

“Finn almost kissed me on the cheek, and it was quite obvious that I wasn’t impressed.”

Jan tutted and shook her head. “I’m sure it was a simple mistake. No need to make the poor girl feel terrible about it. You should be thrilled someone like Finn is interested in you.”

Honestly, thrilled was the last thing that came to mind. This evening, Gillian felt herself slipping towards the point of no return. As she’d dropped to her knees and tasted Finn, she knew she wanted more. Not more sex...but more of Finn. “I feel terrible about it.”

“So call her. Ask if you can see her.”

Gillian chewed on the inside of her mouth, twisting her wine glass on the table. “She said she needs some space.”

“You were supposed to spend the night with her, weren’t you?” Jan dipped her head, offering a small smile in Gillian’s direction. “And she’s just blown you off.”

“Yes, I was supposed to spend the night with her. And I don’t know, but it does feel that way.” Gillian turned in her seat, facing Jan. “Maybe I’m too overbearing. Dave told me I was before I asked for the divorce. Maybe Finn feels the same way. I have been quite full-on for someone who claims that it’s just meaningless sex.”

“First of all, don’t *ever* use that man’s name in a sentence around me again. And secondly, I think that the way Finn looks at you...she wishes you were more overbearing than you are. And as for you claiming it’s meaningless sex, don’t make me laugh! You’re equally obsessed with one another.”

“Excuse me?”

“Do you not see the way she looks at you, Gillian? God, I’d give anything for someone to look at me like that.”

“Correct me if I’m wrong, but Phil?”

“Phil barely notices when I’m in the same room as him these days. Everything is very stale...very routine. But Finn? That woman *wants* to spend her time with you. She *wants* to hang on your every word...as you’ve already claimed. And I don’t know, I think maybe she wants something deeper, too.”

“That wasn’t in the agreement.”

Jan rolled her eyes. “Agreement. You’re a middle-aged woman, Gill. Fuck agreements. If you want Finn and she wants you, *have her*.”

Gillian’s skin tingled at the thought. But she refused to put herself in a situation that would *never* end well. “And by the way, she doesn’t look at me like *anything*. You’re deluded.”

“Text her,” Jan said, pushing Gillian’s phone towards her. “Go on, text her. I can bet my life that she’ll agree to see you.”

“And if *I* don’t want to see her?”

“Then we end this conversation now and move on to my boring love life.”

Gillian exhaled a deep breath. “Then we move on.”

“Okay then. But I have one last thing to say about all of this.” Jan cleared her throat and shifted closer to Gillian. “If you’re not careful, you’re going to lose potentially the best thing that could have happened to you.”

Gillian snorted. “You don’t even know Finn. That’s a very bold claim to make.”

“Maybe it is. But it’s one I stand by.” Jan topped up their wine glasses and side-eyed Gillian. “She’s the first hint of interest you’ve shown towards *anything* outside of work. She’s the first person to make you smile since...God, long before that shrivelled dick of a husband fucked you over. I may not know her, but I do know that you’re very particular about who you give your time and attention to, so she must be doing something right.”

Jan was right on the money. Finn was doing something right. Actually, she was doing *everything* right. But she had just walked away and told Gillian she needed space, so there was no point thinking about what could or couldn’t be.

“I’m done with this now. I don’t want to always be the topic of conversation. I’m tired of it.”

“Then do the right thing and just be fucking happy, Gill. You could be gone tomorrow. Any of us could. At least know that when the time comes, you’ve had so much fun that your face hurts from smiling. There are people out there who would give *anything* for another shot at life...and at love. Don’t be one of those people who come to regret it when they’re old, alone, and miserable.”

Gillian was already beginning to regret all of this. Not Finn, she was magical, but this whole entire situation. While she could understand Jan’s point of view, it wasn’t as simple as just being happy with Finn. Gillian wished it could be, but it simply wasn’t. “If you don’t give it a rest, I’m going to buy a shot tree and force every last one of them down your neck!”

CHAPTER 16

FINN PERCHED herself on the end of the bed, wringing her hands in her lap. Gillian had sent her a message ten minutes ago asking if she could see her, and Finn didn't know whether to agree to it or not. Her body still thrummed; her knees trembled if she gave herself a single second to remember her time in the bathroom with Gillian, but her head wasn't in the right place.

And her heart? Well, that was a complete mess tonight.

Her phone pinged again.

Please, Finn. I just want to see you.

Finn swallowed, craving the very woman who wanted to be here. To see her. To...probably rock her world again. Finn wanted that very same thing, but she'd come back to the hotel tonight and made a tough decision. Before she closed her eyes tonight, she would have ended all of this with Gillian. If she could touch her one more time, Finn would grab that opportunity with both hands, but if she decided to let Gillian into this room, she would lay her cards on the table first.

Agree to see her and put a stop to this.

She hit the reply button and sighed.

I'm at the hotel on the next block from the bar. Room 225. Just come straight up, and I'll let you in.

There. Sent.

She pulled a tank top on and started to pace back and forth. Finn had gone over the pros and cons of continuing this, but as

of tonight, something had changed for her. And it all began with Gillian on her knees in a semi-clean bar bathroom. Her phone dragged her from the very reminder.

Thank you. I'll be there in a few minutes.

Finn chose not to respond. It wasn't necessary. But what *was* necessary was to get all of this right in her head before Gillian knocked on her hotel room door. She had to articulate it in a way that wouldn't leave Gillian feeling used but also in a way that didn't leave Gillian feeling terrible. All of this had been mutual; Finn needed Gillian to remember that. It was Finn who was close to breaking the rules, so instead, she chose to break their connection.

She poured a glass of water as there was a light rasp on the door. God, she even loved how Gillian knocked on a fucking door. How sad and pathetic to feel that way. As though this woman could do no wrong in Finn's eyes. Another reason to end this. Because seeing someone without a single imperfection could only lead to heartache. *Nobody* was perfect. Not a single soul on this planet.

This was it. The end of the greatest time of her life.

She crossed the room and opened the door. Gillian stood out in the corridor looking as gorgeous as ever—sexy, too—but Finn lowered her eyes and refused to let her head rule her heart on this. “Hi. Come in.”

“Thank you. I didn't think you were going to respond to me.”

“I...wasn't,” Finn said, approaching the window. “But then I remembered that you deserve more than that.”

Gillian placed her clutch bag on the bed and sighed. “Finn, I'm sorry about earlier in the bar. I didn't mean to upset you, and I didn't mean for you to leave so suddenly.”

Finn frowned. When had Gillian upset her? “I don't understand.”

“I shouldn't have reacted the way I did to a simple kiss on the cheek.”

“Oh.” Finn smiled. She hadn’t even thought about that since she’d come here. “It’s fine. I didn’t leave because of that. You were right to remind me that it wasn’t in the rules.”

“Please don’t say that.” Gillian took it upon herself to sit down on the bed, smoothing out the sheet next to her. “Come and sit down.”

Finn hesitated, but then she looked into Gillian’s eyes and knew they needed to do this. Even if Gillian didn’t know what was about to come out of Finn’s mouth, she, herself, had things to say. But first... “I know I told you I wanted you to stay the night, but I don’t have much with me. I probably disappointed you before when I didn’t push to take care of you too, and I know I owe you for that...but, like, I don’t have my strap and stuff with me.”

Gillian’s brows rose at that, but Finn got it.

“I am sorry. I shouldn’t have invited you here knowing I wasn’t prepared. I know what you’re into, and I only *ever* wanted to give you what you want.”

“Finn.”

“I...can’t see you anymore.” Those words almost didn’t make it out of Finn’s mouth. As she said them, the tightest lump lodged in her throat. “You’ve been amazing. I don’t imagine I’ll meet anyone like you in the future, but I have to stop this now.”

“R-right.” Gillian stared down at the floor, the confidence she usually exuded not present. “Okay.”

“And it’s not you, I swear to God it’s not. This is all me and my own fucked up mind.” Finn sat side on, taking Gillian’s hand. “Can I be completely honest with you? I mean, lay it out there...but do it knowing you’re not just going to tell me things to make me feel better?”

“Of course.”

“All of this changed for me tonight. What we’ve been doing, it changed. How I feel about it changed. You...went down on me.”

Gillian frowned, trying to take her hand back from Finn, but Finn held it tighter. “Finn, it may have been terrible, but we really don’t need to get into it. If that’s all this is about...I can do far better.”

“Terrible? Gillian, it was amazing.”

“Then I’m struggling to understand what the problem is.”

Of course Gillian was. “It’s...not what I do. Usually.”

Gillian shot from the bed, this time dragging her hand from Finn’s. “Hang on! Did...you not consent to me doing that? Did you ask me to stop, and I was so deep in the moment that I ignored you...or...oh, God. Finn, I’m so sorry.” Gillian shook where she stood, fear clouding those deep brown eyes. She brought her hand to her mouth, trembling. “This has all been a terrible mistake. I’m the one in the position of power...and...did I...”

“Hey,” Finn said, getting to her feet and slowly approaching Gillian. She lowered her hand, brought her own hands to Gillian’s neck, and touched their foreheads together. “That is *not* what I’m saying. I *did* consent. Please, calm down. Let me explain.”

Gillian closed her eyes, shocking Finn when a tear slipped down her face.

“Please, don’t cry.” Finn didn’t know how to deal with emotions at the best of times. To know Gillian was upset was only making things worse. Maybe she should just continue this and forget about her own reservations. She *never* wanted to see Gillian crying. Ever. “Hey, please. Come on.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. But please sit back down with me.” Finn dipped her head, smiling when Gillian nodded. This was an entire change to how Finn usually saw Gillian. That confident, sexy professor had been stripped away. She guided Gillian back to the bed and calmed her own mind. “Can I continue?”

“Yes.”

“I...I don’t know the last time that happened. I usually do what you and other women want. I don’t focus on me. I like to know that the partner I’m with is satisfied. That’s always the most important thing. To...look after you. Make sure you feel comfortable and safe with me. To...give you that release you need.” Finn squeezed Gillian’s hand. “And can I just say, it has been *the* greatest pleasure doing that for you. With you. Knowing you’re happy and satisfied when I leave...it means a lot to me.”

“My pleasure...is your pleasure.”

Gillian spoke the very same words Finn had said to her before Christmas.

“Exactly.”

“We’ve had sex plenty of times, Finn. I don’t understand why now, tonight, was any different.”

“You’re right. We have. I’ve been having the best sex of my life with you. And I hope you feel mostly the same way about me.”

“God, I do. You know I do.”

Finn shifted closer, resting Gillian’s hand on her thigh where she held it. “Tonight changed for me because the moment you put your mouth on me, the second I came for you like that...that *supposed* meaningless sex went right out the window. I didn’t see you as some hot fuck anymore. Though, if I’m being honest, I’ve never only seen you as that. You’ve always meant that little bit more to me. I’ve always cared a little extra and tried a little harder when it comes to you.”

“Why?” Gillian asked, her brows drawn together.

“Honestly? Because I’m into you.” Finn expected Gillian to pull away, but she didn’t. Thankfully. *Well, this is going better than I anticipated.* “And I know that was never what this was supposed to be, so I can only apologise. I can only hope that you don’t hate me for how I feel. I could keep doing this and try to block it all out, but I’m not strong enough for something like that. I don’t think I have it in me to just

constantly not care. You mean too much to me at this point to just meet up so we can fuck, Gillian.”

“Thank you for being honest with me.”

“Hey, honesty is all I can give you at this point. And I know it’s going to be tough for me to see you around campus and know we don’t have anything anymore, but we survive, and we adapt. We grow, and we move forward. I just hope you know that I haven’t taken what I wanted from you, and now I don’t need it anymore. That couldn’t be further from the truth.”

Gillian sniffled and lowered her head.

“You’ve always been upfront about what you wanted. You’ve never once steered away from that or done anything to cause me to feel this way. Nothing intentionally, anyway. But...over time, this would just end up hurting me. And I don’t have the time or want to be hurt. I have so much going on at home that I’ve realised tonight that I can only have one or the other. I can’t have both. No matter how much of an escape you’ve been for me...I don’t believe it’s going to be beneficial in the long run. I’ve always been a carer, and I suppose I always will be in some way. I should focus on that and stop using sex as a way to unwind.”

“We made a mess of things here, didn’t we?”

“Maybe, but it was a beautiful mess in my eyes.” Finn brushed a tear from Gillian’s cheek. “You don’t know how lucky I feel to know you. To be given the chance to be with you. This...it really has meant so much to me.”

“It’s meant so much to me, too.” Gillian stared into Finn’s eyes. “You’ve helped me to discover who I am and what I want.”

“I’m glad I could do that for you. It’s time to look at the positives of life, right?”

“Mm. I hope you can do that.”

Finn grinned. “I meant for you, Gillian. You’re recently divorced, you’re a great person, and you’re about to settle down in a new home. Once you have a few dates under your

belt, that huge home won't feel so big. Because you'll meet someone who you don't have to hide. You'll meet someone who doesn't threaten your career. You'll meet someone suited to you."

"There are...things I want to say, but I'm not ready to say them."

Finn pressed a hand to Gillian's chest. "Then don't. Keep them in there."

Gillian slowly rose to her feet, taking her clutch bag from the bed. She looked down at Finn with tears in her eyes and then motioned towards the door. "I'll go. But I need you to know one thing before I do."

"What's that?" Finn stood and followed Gillian to the door.

"I hadn't come here tonight to sleep with you. I wanted to check and see if you were okay, talk about what happened back at the bar, and then I would have left."

"Well, I appreciate that."

Gillian offered one final sweep of the eyes up Finn's body. "Oh, I'm going to miss you, Finn."

"It's for the best. We both know that." Finn placed her hand on the door and turned back to Gillian. "Would you let me know that you got home okay?"

Gillian sighed at that. Then she took a step forward and pushed Finn to the wall. Their bodies pressed, and as Gillian drew Finn into a kiss—a kiss like no other they'd shared—she had to wonder if she was making the right decision. Gillian pulled back and studied Finn's eyes as she whispered, "I don't want to go."

"Please." Finn wrapped one hand around the back of Gillian's neck and kissed her. Hard. Passionate. But with a finality laced through it. "*Please*. I need you to do this for me."

And that was it.

Gillian stepped out of the open door and, in turn, out of Finn's life.

CHAPTER 17

ONE WEEK LATER...

Gillian hadn't slept or eaten properly in over a week. She didn't know if Finn had shown up at her new place last Sunday, and as she approached the main entrance to the university—eight days on from leaving Finn in that hotel room—she didn't care. The last week had been strained. Finn hadn't made eye contact during any classes, and Gillian couldn't wait to rush off campus whenever she knew Finn was around. Gillian *had* left her apartment this morning, vowing to put the awkwardness to an end, but the thought of seeing Finn today had her anxiety skyrocketing. Still, she *would* see Finn, and that was something she'd have to deal with.

I miss her voice.

Gillian clenched her jaw as she rushed through the main doors, not wishing to bump into anyone this morning. It was ridiculous to miss Finn in *any* capacity, but here she was, craving her. Wishing things could be different. Considering Finn was the younger of the two of them, she'd certainly been far more mature last week when she came clean about her feelings. Because if Gillian had realised anything, it was that she didn't have it in her to end things. Whether she knew Finn was right or not—whether Gillian felt a hint of what Finn did and knew it would complicate everything—she simply couldn't have brought herself to do it. *Pathetic.*

Seems she wasn't capable of much lately. That extended to her close friends. Gillian had gone back to her apartment last Saturday night, locked the door, and only surfaced from her bedroom on Monday morning when she knew she had no choice but to come to work. And each day since then had been the same routine. Get into work, do her job, then leave as quickly as she possibly could.

Gillian hadn't even mustered up the courage to call Jan and tell her of this new development. Because Jan had warned her about this. She *had* warned her about the looks Finn gave Gillian. She *had* warned her that she could lose what they had. And while Gillian knew that day *would* come, she hadn't expected it so soon. What had shocked her more was that it hadn't even been through her own choice...but at the hands of Finn. Honestly, she felt lost this morning. Almost as though she was on the outside looking in. At her terrible life. Her lonely existence. Because while she had Jan and a few other friends, the one thing Gillian felt constantly since her divorce...was loneliness. Until Finn walked into her lecture... and her life.

It hadn't really mattered that she spent most of her time feeling miserable and alone within her marriage. For the most part, anyway. At least she'd had a warm and inviting home. At least she'd had a lying, cheating husband who snored beside her. At least she'd had...*something*.

Still, Gillian knew she had done the right thing in getting out when she did. Dave had admitted his affair, blamed Gillian for not being what he needed anymore, and proceeded to spend most of his time with the very woman he'd been fucking for two years behind her back. No remorse and no apology equalled no marriage.

Had Gillian wanted to work things out with him? No, she hadn't. It wasn't possible to come back from an affair that had lasted two years. A one-off, potentially. But then she reminded herself of the fact that she wasn't happy with him even before she learned of the affair. She reminded herself that while she was alone, it beat being alone while sleeping next to another person. *That* had been the very definition of hurt.

She crossed the foyer and turned the corner, breathing a sigh of relief when her office door came into view. It was only nine in the morning; she didn't have a lecture until one this afternoon, so she could focus her mind on the very thing she'd spent so long getting right. Her career. Last week hadn't been so great in terms of Gillian's focus, but this week surely had to improve. She couldn't afford to let her work suffer because of a stupid mistake she'd made.

Finn could never be a mistake.

Gillian had to wonder if she was so desperate for company that a fleeting stint with another woman was so painful to deal with. She'd managed a month without Finn over the Christmas break. But a week of unadulterated bliss and then a week without her and she was falling apart? Gillian really needed to deal with this and move on. But...how *did* she deal with something like this and move on? Since the day she left her marital home, Gillian had known she wouldn't find anyone she could see her future with. She had come to terms with that—it was too soul-destroying to allow it to take up so much space in her life any longer—but here Finn was...saying the things Gillian had always wanted to hear.

Fuck. Even Dave hadn't given her that kind of speech before or during their marriage. Didn't that say a lot about the kind of person Finn was? Gillian scoffed. She *knew* the person Finn was. Attentive, trustworthy, downright gorgeous in every aspect she'd had the pleasure of seeing so far.

Still, this was Gillian's own fault when all was said and done. She had told herself repeatedly that it was a bad idea. She had chastised herself whenever she wasn't alone with Finn. She had talked herself out of it many times. But one look, one slight touch from Finn, and Gillian couldn't control how she felt. The slightest breath from Finn and Gillian wanted to get lost in her eyes. Her scent. Her personality.

Safely within her office, Gillian pressed her back to the door. She closed her eyes and memorised that sensation of Finn's hands on her skin, just as she had for the last eight nights. How they roamed her body in all the right ways. Only

that sensation was something Gillian couldn't forget. Not now, not ever.

It was ingrained in her memory.

It was burned onto her skin.

It was just Finn...*everywhere*.

Her phone started to ring in her satchel. Gillian didn't know who she wanted it to be. Part of her wanted it to be Finn, begging Gillian to forget everything she'd said in that hotel room. Praying they could see one another again...to continue enjoying their arrangement. But Gillian knew she wouldn't be lucky enough for that to happen.

She rummaged in her bag and pulled her phone out. It was Jan.

"Hello?"

"Hi, babe. I know it's short notice, but I wondered if you and Finn wanted to join me for dinner tonight. Phil is out of the country, so I thought we could have a little get-together. My place...where you don't have to worry about being seen together."

"I..." Gillian's bottom lip trembled, tears stinging her eyes. "S-sorry, I can't."

"Gill? Are you...crying?"

"No. It's just my hay fever." Gillian lied, plucking a tissue from the box on her desk.

"It's the third week in January. I find it hard to believe that your hay fever is playing up when there's not a single flower in bloom in the north."

Gillian gritted her teeth. "Jan, I'm fine!"

"Don't speak to me like that. I know you're not okay, and as your best friend, I'd hope you'd be honest with me."

"It's nothing. I'm just not having a great day so far. Which says a lot, considering it's only..." Gillian eyed the clock. "9:04."

Jan sighed. “So, take me up on that offer and join me for dinner. With Finn.”

Gillian didn’t need this today. She didn’t need it any day. Jan liked to push; she liked to be on the same page as Gillian at any given opportunity, but today just wasn’t ideal for her. She didn’t want to have the conversation she knew she’d come to have eventually. Right now, she wanted to go home and lock the door. “I’m going to say this, and then I don’t want to hear *any more* about it, okay?”

“O...kay.”

“Finn and I have ended things. So, while your offer of dinner is lovely, it simply *isn’t* possible. Now, I have a job to do and some slides to finish before my lecture. Is there anything else you need?”

“N-no.” Jan spoke low. “I’ll call you in a few days, okay?”

“Okay. Bye.” Gillian lowered her phone to the desk and braced her hands against the cool wood. She hadn’t intended to be so harsh with Jan, her tone was quite obvious, but Gillian hadn’t given herself a moment to process any of this.

Finn...wanted something more.

With her nostrils flared, Gillian clenched her jaw and fought back the tears burning her eyes. She *never* cried. She hadn’t come across a single tear when Dave destroyed their marriage. She had just been numb. But this, with Finn? Gillian had spent most of yesterday plucking tissues from any box she could find.

God, Finn was in too deep.

Gillian didn’t know how to feel about that. Mostly because she hadn’t thought it possible. Handsome Finn. Confident Finn. All of Finn...was interested in Gillian? It didn’t make sense. It didn’t matter how many times Gillian played it over in her mind; it didn’t make *any* sense at all. Finn could have anyone, especially someone far younger, but she wanted Gillian?

She barked a laugh as she stood upright. It was going to take a long moment to understand any of this. Only...it didn’t

matter what came of her understanding it.

Finn was still her student.



Hidden away at the back of the lecture theatre, Finn sunk low in her seat, tapping her pen against her chin. She had never felt so awkward before. It didn't matter how much she'd tried to hide last week; this room had the seats built up on an incline... so she *still* had the perfect view of Gillian. It was like the universe wanted to torture her. Not for a day or two, but forever. That's certainly how it felt as Finn had approached the lecture theatre on this cold Monday afternoon.

You tortured yourself the moment you got involved with your professor!

Finn had to applaud Gillian, though. She was ever the professional. That made everything easier here—on campus—but it didn't help Finn in her quest to forget Gillian. She felt as though she needed answers. Something more definite. Once she had said goodbye to Gillian last week, Finn quickly realised that Gillian hadn't really had much to say about her outpouring. Yes, she'd thanked her for being honest, but that was about as deep as it had gone on Gillian's part. Perhaps she was shocked...maybe she just didn't care. *You know she cares. She left that room in tears. Still...*

She had listened.

Then left.

But not before she'd kissed Finn and left her wanting more. If Finn concentrated hard enough, she could feel Gillian's lips against her own as they'd shared that last kiss. The faint hint of red wine. The smeared red lipstick as Finn looked in the mirror before bed. Gillian's hands as they'd gripped Finn's upper arms.

“Will you keep your bloody leg still!” Deena whisper-yelled. “It's like sitting next to my seven-year-old.”

Finn side-eyed Deena, one side of her lip curled up in a snarl. “Sorry, Mum!”

“Are you okay? You seem really tense.”

Tense? Oh, Finn was far more than tense. Her head was up her arse, sleeping at night was difficult, and the thought of stomaching something more than a light breakfast each morning was impossible. Still... “How would you know if I was tense? You don’t even know me.”

Deena leaned in, nudging Finn’s shoulder. “Because it feels like you’re so on edge that you’re making *me* tense with you.”

Fuck. Finn needed to sort herself out. This twitching and leg shaking was a mixture of longing, arousal, and not knowing where she stood with Gillian. They may have ended, but Finn wanted to know how Gillian felt.

Still, she wouldn’t ask. Finn had allowed her heart to become involved, so she would respect Gillian’s decision to not want that kind of relationship...and let it go. Answers or not, she *had* to let it go.

“Sorry. I just have a lot on. I’m still recovering from my birthday weekend. Which says a lot since that was over a week ago.” Finn lied, aware that there was far more going on. But she couldn’t exactly tell Deena that. “I’ll keep the twitching to a minimum.”

Deena smiled as she nodded. “It’s fine. I just wanted to make you aware of it. If you need to talk, I’m around all day.”

Huh. Could Finn talk to Deena? She didn’t have to give any specifics when it came to Gillian. “You know what, I’d *love* to grab a coffee before the seminar if that’s okay?”

“Sure. Let’s do that. And you can tell me all about your birthday weekend.”

A birthday weekend Finn had initially adored...and now one she wanted to never think about again. “Yeah. It was okay. Nothing to write home about.”



Finn strode into the cafeteria, her eyes landing on Deena as soon as she made it to the middle of the room. Two cups of coffee sat on the table, a smile also waiting for her. Finn wasn't in the habit of discussing her personal life with mere acquaintances, but she did appreciate Deena's offer. It beat having nobody at all to talk to. And Deena seemed kinda cool, the type of person Finn would probably be friends with. So, why not test that out and see what came of this?

"Hey. *I* was going to get the coffee. To apologise for all that leg shaking." Finn hung her satchel over the back of the chair next to Deena and sunk down into it. "But thanks."

"Are you sure coffee is a good idea, given how jittery you are?" Deena grinned, shaking her head. "You're always so laid-back. What's going on?"

"Just...personal life, you know?" Finn almost said relationship, then remembered it had been nothing of the kind. "Someone I was seeing."

"Oh." Deena's brows rose, her pale green eyes soft as she ruffled her blonde hair. "Didn't go as planned?"

"Debatable, really. It wasn't ever anything exclusive. I knew that from the start. But we get attached, don't we? Even when we know we shouldn't." Finn puffed out her cheeks. "So, I guess it *did* go as planned on her end, just not mine. She never wanted anything more than hooking up, and that's all we ended up doing."

"I'm sorry. I've been there, and it's rough. Was it going on for long?"

Finn laughed. "I'm going to say no. It started before Christmas, and then it kinda died down. But we met up just before my birthday and spent most of our time together for a few days. It was pretty intense." Those days...Finn would *always* look back fondly on them. She held no anger towards

Gillian at all. She just hoped she went on to find someone that was right for her. She deserved that.

“The intense ones are the worst.” Deena rubbed her thumb against the handle of her cup. “I’m still having trouble with my ex now. He was the most intense I’ve ever come across, but not in a good way. Not like what I’m assuming you had.”

“What we had was...I can’t really explain it. Explosive. The connection was *so* there, but she’s not looking for that... and I thought I wasn’t either, until I was. You know?” Finn rested her elbows on the table, leaning in and lowering her voice. Finn wanted to come across as coping, even if she wasn’t. “Was your ex...abusive?”

Deena nodded, scoffing lightly.

“Ah, fuck. I’m sorry.” Finn placed a hand on Deena’s wrist. “Are you safe?”

“I think so. I *hope* so. He drops off and then reappears when I least expect it. That’s why I had to leave the bar on your birthday. I’m sorry. He turned up while my babysitter was there. Said he wasn’t leaving and he’d look after the kids. I don’t want him in my house, so I had to go home. He’s never been abusive with the children, but I don’t trust him. I *can’t* trust him.”

“You don’t have to explain.”

Deena lifted a shoulder. “I was hoping we could be friends. You seem to keep yourself to yourself, and I’m the same. I thought maybe having some kind of friendship would have been good for me, you know? He never liked that, so I didn’t go out of my way to have friends. Before I left him, I rarely left the house. That’s why I’m doing university in my mid-thirties.”

“We can be friends. Of course.”

“The kids are at my mum’s a couple of nights a week and every other weekend. She takes them to give me a break and... because she knows what he’s like.”

“It sounds to me like you have a great mum.”

Deena smiled. “I do. Are you close with your family?”

Oh, that was a question and a half. “Immediate family, or?”

“Whatever *you* consider family, Finn.”

“As you know, I look after my mum. My dad is a drunk. I have a few cousins I talk to on occasion, but that’s about it. I’m a loner.”

“Hey, sometimes being a loner isn’t the worst idea in the world. When we’re comfortable alone, life is much easier.”

Amen to that. “You’re right. I guess I’m just not cut out for too big of a circle. I’ve tried, it just doesn’t work out for me. And as I’m really beginning to realise...I’m not relationship material to most people.”

“Did you...want it to turn into a relationship? Did you ever hint at that?”

“Nah. It wasn’t what she wanted from the outset. And I went into it knowing that. So, I only have myself to blame. If I hadn’t chased her, I wouldn’t be feeling a little bit out of sorts.”

“Things will turn around for you, Finn. You seem like a lovely person, so I have faith that things will look up for you.”

Finn smacked Deena’s arm and winked. “Keep that up, and we’ll be best friends by the end of the week.” As they both laughed, Finn spied Gillian out of the corner of her eye. “Can you give me a minute?”

“Yeah, sure.”

This was it. The first time she would speak to Gillian since that night. The night Finn wished she could take back whenever she lay in bed thinking about Gillian. The night she should have realised would be the last...and felt Gillian against her one more time. The night that caused the last week to be so fucking miserable. Still, Finn had a job to do and bills to pay. It may have taken her longer than expected to pluck up the courage to speak to Gillian, but here she was...about to do so.

She cleared her throat and caught up with Gillian as she walked towards the exit of the cafeteria. “Gillian?”

Gillian spun around, her eyes a little swollen. “Yes?”

Oh, God. Finn didn’t enjoy seeing that sadness in such beautiful eyes. She swallowed, aware that she had made Gillian feel this way. “Hi, uh…” Finn took an envelope from her back pocket, playing down the severity of emotion written all over Gillian’s face. She couldn’t bear that look. It was painful to witness. “I just wanted to give you the quote. It’s itemised as best as it can be, and that’s pretty much what you’re looking at so long as I don’t encounter any issues along the way.”

“Oh. Right.” Gillian looked down at the envelope, her eyes cast on Finn’s tattooed hand. “Thank you.”

“I should have gotten this to you sooner. I’m sorry. But um… I’m only here until midday tomorrow, so I was planning to get there after lunch to prep what I can. So, if you could let me know whether you’re happy with the quote, then that would be great. I can have some of the materials dropped off tomorrow evening before the guy I know closes business for the day.”

Gillian held up the envelope. “Let me take a look at it, and I’ll get back to you by the end of the day. Would that be okay?”

Finn smiled. She hoped Gillian wouldn’t take back her offer of work. “Sure. Take whatever time you need. Just shoot me a text and let me know if we’re good with everything or if you want to go elsewhere.”

“I will. Thank you, Finn.”

Finn lifted a hand as she half turned on her heel. “No problem at all. I’ll talk to you soon.” Gillian slowly walked away, but Finn couldn’t take her eyes off her. “Hey, Gillian?” Gillian turned back, her bottom lip trembling. “It’s good to see you. Take it easy, yeah?”

Gillian offered nothing more than a single nod and left.

This was going to be difficult to navigate, but time would heal things. It often did. Finn made her way back to Deena, trying to keep her body language as neutral as possible. “Sorry about that. Needed to give her some paperwork.”

“All good. Drink your coffee before we’re late for the seminar.”

CHAPTER 18

IF FINN HAD to sit through one more quiz show, she was going to rip her eyeballs out. These were the nights she hated. Sitting at home, terrible TV, zero conversation. She threw the control to the couch and yawned as she got to her feet. “Mum, can I get you anything before I head up and finish some work I’ve been doing?”

Carol shifted in the bed and smiled. “No, love. But thanks. Your dad should be home soon.”

And what exactly is he going to do? Fall through the door as usual?

“Okay, well, I’m waiting on a call about a job I might be taking on. You’ll be okay if I need to pop out for a while?” Finn wouldn’t need to pop out for anything related to Gillian’s new place, she didn’t actually expect to hear from her, but it would give her an excuse if she wanted to head out and get some air.

“I’ll be okay. Don’t worry.” Carol reached out her hand as Finn took her phone from the coffee table and started towards the door. “Come here, Finley.”

Finn crossed the room, rolling her head on her shoulders as she tried to stave off another yawn. She wasn’t even tired, not really. Mentally drained, maybe...but her body wasn’t feeling that way. No, her body wanted to do something exciting. Seemed it was becoming used to not sitting around lately.

“You know you mentioned those care people? The ones who can help me dress and wash and things?”

“Yeah. The care agency.”

“Well, I think I’d like to give it a try. No harm in doing so.”

Finn hadn’t realised just how much she needed to hear that. Well, she did, but when the likelihood of ever hearing her mum agree to a care agency was practically zero, it was a shock. Finn almost wanted to squeal. Did this mean...she could have a life? An *actual* life that was interesting and fun and...potentially good for her love life?

Wow.

Still, she didn’t want to get her hopes up just yet. It could all go horribly wrong. “That’s great, Mum. Let me know when you’re ready, and I’ll look into some agencies. I only want the best for you. I hope you know that.”

“I know, love.” Carol squeezed Finn’s hand. “And I trust that you know what you’re doing.”

“Can I ask...why you decided to try it?”

“Because you deserve to have a life, Finley. You’ve done everything for me, and I realise that it can’t go on. I had a talk with Sue, and she agreed. You work and look after me. There’s no in-between. I don’t want you to come to resent me, Finley.”

“I-I don’t. I...won’t. Only do this if you’re sure, Mum.”

Carol nodded. “I am sure. Now, get to your work. You look tired, my love.”

“I’m okay.” Finn was tired of life more than anything lately. She had known that the Gillian thing wouldn’t go anywhere, stuff like that rarely did for Finn, but she’d been enjoying herself. Part of Finn wished she could have been stronger. That she could disregard the feeling she had around Gillian and just keep pleasing her. Or...maybe that Gillian could have felt the same way and had told Finn that. God, she desperately wanted to know what the hell was on Gillian’s mind. “Probably just need a good night’s sleep.”

“Is everything okay? Your dad says you weren’t home for a few nights last weekend. And you’ve been terribly quiet.”

Carol wouldn't know that since the medication she was on included sleeping pills. Finn was surprised her dad had even noticed she wasn't here. "Yeah. I just...kinda met someone."

"Oh?" Carol grinned. "Tell me all about them."

"Unfortunately, there's nothing to tell you, Mum. It didn't go anywhere."

"Has it been going on for long?"

Finn sat in the chair beside Carol's bed. She was aware of just how ridiculous she was. How the fuck did anyone develop feelings for another person in a few days? *Pathetic*. "No. Not really. Only a few days." Only it hadn't been a few days, and Finn knew that. Still, it felt ridiculous to find herself in this position.

"Then why do you look so sad, love?"

Finn wasn't sure she had an answer for that. And if she did manage to find one, she wasn't sure she wanted to verbalise it. She didn't enjoy feeling pain. Not like this. Because deep down, that *was* what she felt. Pain for the position she had put herself in. Pain for the way she couldn't control her emotions and just give Gillian what she wanted. Pain for...her entire situation. Her lack of love. Her need for something more. Finn was just in pain.

"Finley?"

Finn looked up at her mum with tears in her eyes. "I really liked her, Mum. I loved being with her. It was short and sweet...but epic, too."

"If you loved being with her, why aren't you anymore?"

"She...isn't looking for anything serious." Finn wasn't about to tell her mum that she fucked women to unwind. No way. "But that's okay. We don't all want the same thing, do we?"

"I think she's a fool." Carol lay her head back and stared up at the ceiling. "A complete fool!"

"No, we're not doing that. She's entitled to feel what she feels, and that's okay. I don't hate her for it. Actually, I'd love

to see her happy and with someone in the future. She's just not into that right now."

"Well, forget about her and move on. Life is for living now, Finley. I want you to grab it with both hands."

Finn got to her feet and leaned down, kissing her mum on the cheek. "I will. But first, I need to get this job in the bag. It's a big one."

"Will you be able to manage it with your studies?"

"Yeah. For sure. I'll probably work evenings and weekends when I'm able to. The owner of the house doesn't have a specific timescale." How exactly would this all work if Gillian was happy with Finn's quote? Would she show up and be around when Finn was? While she could be professional and do her job, Finn wasn't quite sure she could get over Gillian while she was in the very same house as her.

"Well, then I'm going to pray that you get it."

"Thanks. Give me a shout if you need anything, okay?" Finn's phone buzzed in the back pocket of her jeans.

Could you meet me at the house if you're available?

Finn's eyes widened.

It was Gillian.

"Speak of the devil. It's the homeowner."

"And?"

Finn smiled, even if she was slightly apprehensive about being alone with Gillian at any point in the near future. "They want me to meet them at the house."

"That's fantastic news, love." Carol shooed Finn away. "Go. See what's going on, and then make that home beautiful."

"Yeah. I will. I'll just let her know when I can get there."

I can be there in about an hour if that's okay?

Finn chewed her lip when Gillian read the message and immediately started to respond.

That's perfect. I'll see you there.

Okay, this *had* to be good. Surely Gillian would have just texted her and told her no if she didn't want Finn's expertise. Whatever was going on, Finn would find out soon enough.

"Looks like it's happening, Mum." Finn winked and turned towards the kitchen. "I think that calls for a brew, don't you?"

"Oh, go on. I'll have an extra sugar in mine."



Gillian paced back and forth in the main living room, chewing on the end of her pen. Finn's quote had been great, possibly less than Gillian imagined it should be, but the thought of seeing Finn was beginning to concern her. She knew there was a conversation that needed to be had—Finn had been open and honest, so Gillian should at least do the same—but she didn't know where to begin. She *still* hadn't sorted it out in her own head.

Did she want Finn? *Fuck, yes.* It was all she thought about.

Could she risk that deeper connection...for it to only fall apart? No, she didn't believe she could. Maybe Gillian was a coward, but it beat being destroyed again.

She could destroy you...or she could make you incredibly happy.

"Hello?" Finn's gentle voice called out from the hallway. "Gillian, are you here?"

"Y-yes. I'm in the living room." She brushed down her blouse, slipping her mask in place. When Finn walked into the room, looking more handsome than any time before, Gillian almost caved. She *almost* strode across the room and kissed Finn. "H-hi."

"Hey. Sorry I couldn't get here right away."

Gillian couldn't mistake the authenticity of that apology. "It's okay. I've only been here for five minutes myself."

“Okay, good.” Finn stepped further into the room, puffing out her cheeks. “So?”

Gillian held up the paper Finn had given her on campus this morning. “Is this quote a final total? It seems...low.”

“I’ve mostly given you a price for the materials. I’ve cut my own labour fee by fifty percent, and I’ll try and get as much of it done without needing any help from a few mates of mine.”

“You’ve...cut your own labour fee? Why?”

Finn shrugged. “Because we know one another. Okay, we may not be friends...or even acquaintances anymore, but... whatever.”

“Finn, you can’t do that. This is a lot of work to take on, and I want to pay you fairly.” Had Finn written this quote with what they’d had together in mind? It certainly felt that way. That only made Gillian feel worse than she already did. Finn really was a wonderful soul. “Please, give me a realistic quote.”

“Is the job mine?” Finn asked, a brow quirked.

“Yes. Of course it is.”

“Then that’s the quote.” Finn shifted ever so slightly, studying Gillian. “This whole issue between us isn’t going to spill over, is it? I’m going to be around *a lot*, Gillian. Whenever I’m not working on assignments, I’ll likely be here. Are you cool with that?”

God, Gillian could hardly wait for those days. Finn may have ended it, but Gillian could still appreciate her from afar, couldn’t she? She could still lie in bed longing for those hands, that tongue, the...*stop!* “I’m cool with it.” Gillian wrapped a hand around the back of her neck, trying to rub out the tension she felt while cringing at her use of the word cool. Who the hell was she becoming? *Is that really important right now?* She needed to stay on track here. “And...are you okay being here?”

“Sure. Why wouldn’t I be?”

“I think we can both agree that it could be awkward in the beginning. I’d love to give you this work, but if you’re going to be uncomfortable, I understand.”

“Do I...look uncomfortable?” Finn laughed, relaxing her shoulders. There she went with that confident stance. *Fuck!*

“N-no. You look amazing.” Gillian closed her eyes, exhaling a deep breath through her nose. “What I mean is, you seem fine. But I still wanted to check.”

“How about we have a conversation. Get any awkwardness out of the way now?” Finn started to shed her leather jacket, but Gillian held up a hand. “Or...not.”

“No, I do. I *do* want to have a conversation. I think you deserve that from me at the very least, but not here.” Gillian looked around at the dust sheets and broken wood lying around. “I’d like to be able to sit down.”

“Fair enough.” Finn nodded. “So, where did you want to go?”

Back to my apartment so I can see you naked. Gillian cleared her throat. “There’s a park nearby. Maybe we could walk and then sit for a while?”

“That sounds perfect.”

“Have you driven here?” Gillian asked as they both made their way towards the front door. She turned out the lights, sending the entire house into darkness, listening to Finn’s soft breathing.

“Yeah.”

“Okay, well, if you follow me, it’s only around the corner.” Was it the darkness playing tricks on Gillian, or was Finn standing painfully close to her? She turned around, only to find Finn taking her hand and stepping closer. “Finn...”

“I miss you,” Finn whispered. “I’m sorry about that night at the hotel. I wish I could have given you what you wanted... what you needed from me.”

“I...it’s okay.” Gillian closed her eyes, willing Finn to lean in and kiss her. She wouldn’t, Finn had made her decision, but

the thought alone had Gillian's legs almost shaking. "Really, you have nothing to apologise for."

"Can I take it all back?" Finn stroked her thumb across Gillian's knuckles. "Pretend it never happened?"

"Which part? The conversation we had or all the fucking we did beforehand."

"The conversation," Finn said, her other hand coming to rest on Gillian's hip. "I never want to take back anything else. I could never regret being with you. No matter how it ended, I could never."

Okay, Gillian really *needed* Finn to kiss her now. She craved it. But Finn surely couldn't mean what she was saying. Her student had been so honest in that hotel room, so genuine, that Gillian had to talk everything through first. "I think we should go for that walk. It's important to me that I know where your head is at."

"Do you promise to tell me where yours is at too? Because on Saturday, you didn't say very much at all."

Gillian lifted a hand and stroked Finn's cheek. She had no idea what conversation they would have, or how much she would divulge, but she really hoped she could get out of her head long enough to give Finn the answers she deserved. "I promise to be as open as I possibly can be."

Finn took a step back and let go of Gillian's hand. "Then yes. This talk is important."

CHAPTER 19

FINN WALKED SLOWLY around the park with Gillian, the tension palpable as the few streetlights around illuminated the darkened pathways. She wouldn't usually stroll through a park at night, but Gillian wanted to talk...and Finn wanted some answers. Sure, she'd stupidly hinted at taking everything back before, but Finn couldn't control how she felt around Gillian. She had this pull. A magnetism. Something so strong that all sensible thoughts left Finn's mind when they were breathing the same air.

It wasn't ideal to allow that, but Finn would learn to deal with it in time.

At least, that's what she hoped for.

Gillian finally lifted her head, choosing to focus on Finn rather than the Converse she wore tonight. She had been staring down at them for the last ten minutes. An interesting choice and one that only had Finn's heart pumping faster. Gillian Masters dressed down was *still* quite something. More so when she wore jeans that clung to her legs...and her arse.

"You okay?" Finn asked, her hands in her pockets. "We don't have to do this right now if you'd rather not."

"To be perfectly honest, I don't know what the right thing to do is." Gillian regarded Finn with the smallest smile, and then she shook her head. "Those things you said to me last week, I wasn't expecting them. I don't understand how you can feel that way about me, Finn."

Finn appreciated that Gillian was open to this conversation. “I thought it was important that I was honest with you. We agreed to come clean. I let my feelings get in the way, and I had to tell you. I...hoped you might have felt it too, but obviously it’s fine that you don’t.”

“I...do. I feel many things when we’re together, Finn. I need you to know that.”

Finn’s heart raced at Gillian’s admission. She hadn’t known how she would feel if Gillian told her there was some kind of mutual feeling present. Clammy palms—that was one thing she felt. “Right, okay. Then why are you so surprised that I feel what I feel for you?”

“Because I don’t understand how. We’ve spent a few nights together, and you see something in me? I just find it hard to believe. That’s all.”

“Yeah, well, I’m finding it hard to believe that a woman like you, someone who really knows how to fucking rock my world, can think so little of herself.”

Gillian snorted. “You’ve no idea who I am or what I’m *not* capable of bringing to the table. Whatever it is you feel for me, Finn, it’ll soon fade out. It’s the idea of us being together... something taboo. That’s all.”

Finn turned and stopped in front of Gillian, dipping her head. “While you’re entitled to feel how you do, I’d appreciate it if you didn’t tell me what I should and shouldn’t feel. Or why I feel it. I’d also appreciate it if you didn’t dismiss what I *know* I feel for you.” Finn took one hand from her pocket and held onto Gillian’s. “Look, I don’t know the kind of life you’ve had. And yeah, you’re right when you say I have no idea who you are, but I would have liked the chance to learn those things. I would have appreciated the opportunity to know you better. On a deeper level. To...I don’t know, date you or something. Make you dinner.”

“Finn—”

“If you don’t feel anything for me, then that’s fine. I’ll respect that. But if you’re holding back because you don’t

understand how or why I feel more for you than I was supposed to...then tell me that. Give me a chance. Fuck, I'll take anything I can have, Gillian. If that means seeing you once a week and cooking you dinner, I'll take it. If it means running away so we can go on a date, I'll do that, too." Finn was quickly changing her own terms and conditions here. She had always sworn she would *never* be anyone's secret, but here she was...considering that if it meant she could be with Gillian. "I don't need the world from you. I don't need some guarantee that we'll be together forever. But to see where this goes between us? Of course I want that."

"Why?" Gillian slid her hand out of Finn's and wrapped her arms around herself.

"Because I love spending my time with you." Finn inched closer, her breath misting in the freezing cold air. "Because while I did initially want to fuck around with you, you've become so much more to me. I can't explain why, you don't open up enough for me to delve deeper, but I know that down the line, I'd like what I found. I know that you're dedicated to your future and being happy. Why can't *I* contribute to that if this all goes to plan?"

"Because you're my student."

Finn laughed. "Right. Okay. Back to that again, I see."

"It's true, Finn."

"If you cared so much that I was your student, you wouldn't have left that bar with me before Christmas, bent over the couch in your apartment, and begged me to fuck you. You can keep telling yourself that it's enough of an excuse, but it's really not. If it had been a one-off, *maybe* I'd believe you...but it wasn't, was it? Unless the last couple of weeks didn't happen, and I'm imagining this whole thing, it's been far more than a one-off."

"I can't focus when I'm with you." Gillian hooked her fingers through a belt loop on Finn's jeans, guiding her in closer. "When we're apart, I go over all the excuses in my mind, but when we're together? God, I can barely function when we're together."

Finn leaned in and nipped at Gillian's bottom lip, cradling her chin in her hand. "Tell me how you really feel, Gillian. If you want me, tell me."

Gillian grazed her fingernails along the side of Finn's head, stroking her buzz cut. God, that did all kinds to Finn's body. "You don't know how much I want you, Finn. You really don't." She pulled Finn away from the footpath, quickly crossing the grass. Finn wasn't sure she liked the idea of hiding in a park on a winter's night, but she would follow Gillian's lead. "It's just..." Gillian backed Finn up against a huge oak tree, pinning her to the trunk. As she frantically clawed at the button on Finn's jeans, tears fell down Gillian's face.

"Hey." Finn placed a hand on Gillian's.

"Please, Finn." Gillian whimpered, her trembling hands popping the button. "Please let me touch you."

Oh, Gillian was welcome to touch Finn whenever she wanted. But like this? And here? Gillian wasn't that type of woman. "Are you sure this is what you want?"

Gillian looked up at Finn, those sad eyes breaking her heart. "I can't have what I really want, but this...you know I want you. You're all I think about."

Finn nodded slowly, guiding Gillian's hand down the front of her boxer shorts. Gillian gasped when her fingers met Finn's wetness, a guttural moan rumbling in Finn's throat in response. "H-how can this be wrong with you when it feels as though we're meant to be?"

Gillian braced a hand against the trunk, silencing Finn with one hell of a kiss. It felt different, it felt...final all over again. This kiss was the kiss that would replace the one they'd shared in the hotel room. "One last time. I need this with you...one last time."

And there it was.

The finality once more.

Gillian rolled her fingertips over Finn's clit, dipping lower and easing two fingers inside her. Finn trembled, her own tears

mixing with Gillian's, a bittersweet moment she never wanted to feel again. Gillian was bringing her towards the edge of another glorious high...but they couldn't be. Did Gillian feel the pain as much as Finn did? Finn hoped not. She wouldn't wish this feeling on anyone.

She held onto Gillian's face, staring deep into her eyes. "I don't want to let go."

"Please," Gillian whispered. "For me. *Please.*"

Finn fought back the lump in her throat and experienced Gillian for the final time. Hadn't this been her one regret back at the hotel room? Not feeling Gillian once more? "C-close." That intense sensation in the pit of her stomach started to rise, their eyes locked on one another's. Gillian sunk deeper, and as Finn bucked her hips, meeting every thrust, her orgasm roared through her. "Fuck." Finn's knees trembled, her back pressed hard to the trunk to keep her upright. "S-shit, oh, God."

Gillian pressed her forehead to Finn's as she sniffled. "You're so beautiful when you come."

No. Stop saying things like that.

Finn lowered her eyes, overcome with emotion that she refused to show. If this was the final out, she wouldn't make Gillian feel bad about it. Still, she had something she wanted to ask. It was a waste of time, but she *needed* to ask. "Do you need me to do this in secret with you? Because I will...for you."

Gillian tugged her bottom lip between her teeth, tears in her eyes. "I couldn't ever expect you to do that. It wouldn't be fair."

"I think you're worth it."

Gillian blinked a tear away, an unusual look in her eyes. "I'm not worth anything to anyone, Finn. You'll realise that soon enough. And that's why I can't be what you need me to be. I can't take the pain of being nothing anymore. Not with you."

"You're not worth anything?" Finn frowned, taken aback by that comment. "Who *the fuck* told you that?"

Gillian sighed and placed her palm on Finn's chest. She smiled weakly, almost laughing. "It really doesn't matter. What matters is that you realise I'm doing you a favour by *not* allowing this to become something that will hurt one or both of us."

"I-I...no. That's...no." Fuck. Finn needed to process this stuff Gillian was saying. How she spoke so little of herself. She quickly buttoned her jeans back up, her legs still shaking. "Gillian, you're not nothing. You're...God, you mean a lot to me. Why can't you understand that? Or at least accept it?"

"Because," Gillian said, cupping Finn's cheeks and drawing her into a kiss. Finn almost melted, not wanting this moment to end. "You'll leave me when something better, someone younger, comes along, too."

Gillian lowered her hands, turned, and walked away.

"Gillian!" Finn rushed up behind her, stopping her with a hand on the wrist. "Please, wait!"

"Go home, Finn." She turned and met Finn's eyes, more tears streaming down her beautiful face. "Please, just go home."

"If you walk away from me right now, I'm done. Forever. You don't get to bring me here, do what you just did, and then walk away. How fucking dare you!" Gillian had her demons, so what? Finn was old enough to deal with them. "You say you feel things for me. You fuck me as though I'm the only person in this world that matters to you. And the way you kiss me...you can lie to yourself as much as you want, but I see right through you."

Gillian visibly swallowed, shaking where she stood.

"I don't give a fuck what anyone has told you in the past; I'm telling you what I see. How I feel. You have no right to dismiss me like that. Not if I mean anything to you at all." Finn chanced her luck and moved closer. "If you never want to see me again, say the word, and I'm fucking gone. I'll switch universities—I don't care. But if you're doing this because of a past experience, one that has absolutely nothing to do with

me, then you really need to think hard about whether you really want that.”

“Finn.”

“No. Don’t Finn me. Listen to me.” Finn dipped her head when Gillian cast her gaze on the ground. “Have I not shown you how I feel about you? Even when I was trying to hide those feelings, did I not give anything away? That morning after my birthday, when I held you in my arms and we came together... Did you not feel that intensity the way I did?”

Gillian nodded slowly. “It’s all I think about.”

“You know, if there weren’t so many rules about this, if I didn’t have to watch every move I make...that probably would have been the moment I started to fall in love with you.” Finn scoffed. “Thank God for those rules, hey.”

Gillian lowered herself to the bench she was standing in front of, placing her head in her hands. “I’m sorry.”

“You keep apologising, but I don’t know why.”

She looked up at Finn, smiling weakly. “For not being honest with you.”

“About what?” Finn sat beside Gillian, placing a gentle hand on her shoulder. “If we’re ever going to work this out, I need you to talk to me, Gillian.”

“Everything. All of it. I’ve been far more into you than I let on since the moment we met. When we had those conversations about rules and boundaries, I already felt far too much for you. I thought I could convince myself that I didn’t need something more from you, that the desire I had to just be with you was just a part of the sex, but I can’t. I can’t lie to myself anymore, and I can’t lie to you anymore.”

Wow. Finn hadn’t expected that.

“My life is a fucking mess, Finn. You were the only one who made it feel remotely un-messy. You gave me hope, you made me feel as though I was worth more than what I’d spent the last several months telling myself, and you made me feel like the most beautiful woman in the world.”

Finn smiled. “Because you are.”

Gillian turned to Finn and swallowed, brushing tears from her face. “I’m scared of getting hurt again. I’m terrified that I’ll go through what I’ve already been through. I just...I want to feel normal again. And you gave me that.”

“Then let me *keep* giving you that.” Finn took Gillian’s face in her hands. She studied every inch of it, still breathless by this woman’s beauty. “Give me a chance, Gillian. I don’t ever want to look back and have any regrets. But if I lose you without fighting, it’ll be the biggest regret of my life.”

“I fear the very same thing.” Gillian closed her eyes, leaning into Finn’s touch where one hand remained. “I don’t want a life without you in it, Finn.”

And that was the very thing Finn had needed to hear. Something honest and meaningful from Gillian.

“Come on. I’m taking you home.” Finn got to her feet and guided Gillian up with her. When Gillian held onto Finn’s hip, those eyes puffy and red, Finn simply leaned in and kissed her. “You’ve done the hard part in admitting how you feel. We can figure the rest out, okay?”

“I am sorry.” Gillian placed her palm on Finn’s chest. “I never should have left that hotel last week, allowing you to believe that I didn’t feel anything for you.”

“Hey,” Finn said, smiling. “It’s done now. We move forward.”

Gillian wrapped her arms around Finn, nuzzling into her neck.

“You’re going to go home, and I’m going to be right behind you. I just need to stop off on the way, but I won’t be long, okay?”

Gillian pulled back, nodding slowly. “Okay.”



If you walk away now, I'm done. Forever.

Those words played on repeat in Gillian's mind, the thought of losing Finn once and for all quite terrifying for her. She had needed to hear it. She had needed Finn to put her in her place so she could take her head out of her arse long enough to understand the severity of her actions. Because tonight, Gillian realised just how much she wanted Finn. Not the arrangement or the sex, but Finn. In the flesh and as a whole package for a long time to come.

Only as she sat at the stool in her kitchen, head in hands, Gillian had to wonder if Finn would actually turn up at her apartment as she'd promised. This evening had been emotional, Gillian felt as though she could drop off to sleep at any moment, but she couldn't do that until she had seen Finn again. To clear the air one final time, to promise Finn she was here and that she would try harder.

In this moment, nothing meant more to her.

She took her phone from her back pocket, chewing her lip. Should she call Finn and check everything was okay? Should she leave it alone and hope Finn came to her? A text message wouldn't hurt...

Gillian brought Finn's messages up, jumping slightly when there was a knock at her door. She rushed from the stool and pulled the door open, her heart pounding when Finn stared back at her. She held a bouquet of flowers and a bottle of red wine.

As she stared back at Finn, everything changed inside Gillian. The words Finn had spoken in the park played on a loop. How she reassured Gillian, even when Gillian tried to push her away. The way in which she'd taken everything in her stride while standing her ground. Gillian didn't know what was to come for them, but she knew in her heart that the woman standing out in the hallway was the woman she was supposed to be with. Forbidden or not, it didn't matter. Gillian would *always* want her.

"I thought you wouldn't come here."

Finn smiled. “Sorry, I kinda broke into your apartment block. These flowers aren’t the best, I can do far better, but they’re for you.”

Gillian felt her bottom lip quiver as she reached out for them. “Finn.”

Finn held up her hands once they were free. “No. Don’t say anything. Just hear me out, please?”

“Okay.”

“When you asked me to leave before, when we were at the park, I almost did. I wanted to respect your decision to not see me again. I thought I’d fucked up by wanting more from you, but now that you’ve opened up a little, I get it, okay? We all have a past we’re not particularly fond of, and I now understand that yours wasn’t great. Whatever happened, whoever it happened with...I’m not them, Gillian. When I tell you that I won’t hurt you, I mean that with my whole heart.” Finn puffed out her cheeks. “If I seemed harsh at the park, it wasn’t my intention. You just...I had to be brutal with you to make you see the mistake you were making.” Finn stepped inside Gillian’s apartment, taking the flowers and wine as she kicked the door shut. She placed them on the coffee table and took Gillian in her arms. “You deserve the flowers and the wine. Quite frankly, you deserve anything you want. And I’m going to try to give that to you. I’m going to give this one hell of a shot because you mean so fucking much to me.”

Gillian fisted her hand in the T-shirt Finn wore beneath her leather jacket. “I know I’ve fucked you around multiple times now, but this is it, okay? You and me...here. You and me...figuring out a way forward.”

“Phew. I thought my flowers were shit and you’d throw them at me.”

Gillian laughed from deep within her belly, pressing her forehead to Finn’s shoulder. “Your flowers were perfect.”

Finn cradled Gillian’s chin when she lifted her head. “In case I forget to tell you, you have a fucking gorgeous laugh.”

Gillian flushed, lowering her eyes. “And in case I forget to tell you, you’re one of the only people who makes me laugh these days.”

“Come on. Let’s sit down.” Finn took Gillian’s hand and moved into the living room, the picture of cool, calm, and collected. For some reason, that settled Gillian. If Finn was calm, then she had no reason to panic herself. It seemed silly to be that way. While Finn had riled her up on many occasions in the past, she had relaxed Gillian in equal measures. “Now, are you *sure* you want me here?”

“Yes. I’m sure.”

“Then I’m happy to stay a while.” Finn held onto Gillian’s hand, that soft skin safe and warm. “Let’s just take a moment, you know?”

Gillian appreciated that far more than Finn would know. One thing she’d always felt comfortable with was sitting in silence with Finn. She was just that kind of person. “Yes. I definitely need a moment. I need several, actually.”

Finn sunk down onto the couch, holding Gillian when she sat beside her. Everything may well be a mess—as Gillian had claimed at the park—but with Finn’s arms around her, Gillian struggled to imagine a time when they said goodbye once and for all. Being held by Finn when no sex had been involved was new for her. It was delightful, in all honesty. Perhaps it was time for Gillian to clean up said mess...and just go with this. How hard could that be?

“Take all the time you need. I’m not going anywhere until you kick me out.”

Gillian brought her legs up onto the couch, inhaling Finn’s scent when she nuzzled into her chest. “Thank you for coming back here. I know we have things to talk about, but can we just be like this tonight? No more talking, just...this?”

Finn kissed the top of Gillian’s head, sinking further down into the couch. “Yes. This feels pretty damn good to me.”

CHAPTER 20

THERE SHE IS...

Finn stopped at the opposite end of the corridor. Gillian was heading into her office, that red skirt hugging her hips today, her dark hair silky...even from so far away. Last night had been emotional for Finn, but it was Gillian who had struggled to form a sentence once they'd made themselves comfortable on the couch. While Finn had wanted to hear all the amazing things Gillian thought about her, she hadn't expected her to actually feel something so deep that she wanted Finn in her life.

Shocked was an understatement.

Finn had woken this morning with a spring in her step. It didn't matter if things would be complicated or whether they had to lay low. What mattered was that she had managed to get through to Gillian last night, and now they had a fighting chance. It was all Finn had wanted as they stood in that park together. A chance, an opportunity to make Gillian happy.

Finn smiled when Gillian moved out of sight, heading inside her office. She had laid on the couch last night and held Gillian until she had fallen asleep. There had been times in the past when that was all she had wanted. Of course being intimate was a dream for Finn, but she never wanted Gillian to think she only wanted her body. Even if there had been times when it felt exactly like that, it simply wasn't true. Finn wanted all of her. Every last side of Gillian Masters.

Even the side she'd had last night.

Finn had carefully and quietly slid out from under Gillian, covered her with a blanket, and dropped a gentle kiss on her hair. She couldn't help but watch for a moment or two, admiring a woman who meant so much to her, but then she had slipped out of Gillian's apartment and made her way home. While there hadn't been any contact from Gillian this morning, Finn was okay about it. It had to be overwhelming; she felt it, too.

"Finn!"

Finn turned around, smiling as Deena walked towards her. "Hey, how's it going?"

"Not bad. You got time for a cuppa?"

"I..." Finn didn't really have time. She planned to be at Gillian's house within the next thirty minutes. A quick coffee wouldn't do any harm, though. "Yeah, go on. But *I'm* buying this time."

Deena held up her hands. "That's fine by me."

Finn turned into the cafeteria, thankful that it was quiet this morning. Tuesday was always an easy day around here, though. One lecture, an hour in the library to do what she needed to do, and then that was generally Finn's academic day done and dusted. Since Deena was studying for the very same degree, it meant Finn had someone to hang out with when it was possible.

"Grab a seat, and I'll get the coffee." Finn joined the queue, perusing the menu. Maybe she would take a sandwich with her and have lunch before she got started at Gillian's. Knowing Finn, the time would end up getting away, and it would be after dinner before she'd remembered to eat. She picked up a ham salad baguette and a bag of crisps and moved towards the cashier. "Just these, thanks. And two coffees." Finn paid and waited at the end of the counter for their coffee.

She took her phone from the side of her bag and glanced around to make sure nobody was watching over her shoulder.

Hey, it's me. Is it still okay to start at your new place today?

Finn quickly shoved her phone into her top pocket when the server placed two coffees down. “Thanks.” She felt her phone buzz immediately. Finn almost wanted to drop the coffees to see Gillian’s response, but she restrained herself from doing so. It was only a few steps to the table. She didn’t need to be so eager. “Here. Much needed caffeine if that last lecture was anything to go by.”

“Is it just me, or does Rich have the worst voice out of all the lecturers here?”

Finn smiled. “Yeah, he’s not exactly inspiring.”

She took her phone back out, bracing herself for the response.

Absolutely!

Huh. That was it? No mention of last night?

Don’t overthink this. Let it take its course.

Great. Grabbing some lunch and then heading over.

Finn sent the message, then decided she wasn’t quite finished.

Are we okay? After last night?

She placed her phone screen down on the table, aware that she had Gillian under her name in the phonebook. “So, got any plans for the rest of the day?” She eyed Deena as she took her coffee and sipped. “Anything exciting?”

“Nothing at all. Home, clean the house, pick the kids up from school.” Deena cleared her throat. “Did you want to get a drink at the weekend?”

Finn would love to say yes, but she didn’t know where she would be at with Gillian...or work. “Can I let you know? I’m about to start vetting care agencies for my mum, and I have a few assignments I’d like to get boxed off, *and* I have a job on at the minute.”

“Yeah, no problem.”

Finn lifted her phone. Gillian hadn’t responded.

Damn it!

Hey, you don't have to answer my last message. I'm around, I'm always here for you in whatever capacity you need me, and if you need some time to process yesterday, you know I'll give you that. Maybe I'll see you at some point before tomorrow's lecture, but I completely get it if not.

“If I'm free, I'll definitely be in touch.” And Finn meant that. She had the chance to form a friendship here; she would be a fool to not take Deena up on her offer if it was possible. Hadn't this been what she'd wanted for a while now? A normal life. Finn drained her coffee cup and shoved her lunch into her satchel. “I should head off and start this job I have on.”

“Anything interesting?”

“Mm. A gorgeous Edwardian house that needs renovating.”

Deena smiled. “Weirdly, that sounds right up your street.”

“It is. Anything with character, and I'm all over it like a rash.” Finn got to her feet and smiled down at Deena. “I'll see you...tomorrow afternoon for the lecture and seminar, yeah?”

“I'll be there.”



Finn bopped her head to the music playing on the radio, sanding down the windowsills in the living room. She had the basics laid out in the kitchen—her travel kettle the main priority—and had already worked through some of the things she'd hoped to get done when she'd arrived. Her headspace right now was pretty damn good. Surprising but good.

What will be will be.

That was the mantra Finn was going with. It was as simple as that. Finn knew she was incredibly lucky to have the life

she had. A secure home, food on the table, and cash in her bank account. She was excelling when it came to her degree, and she was healthy. What more did she need? Well, Gillian... hopefully, but time would tell with that.

A knock at the door had Finn turning and peering out of the window. Gillian's friend—Jan, was it?—waved back at her through the glass. Finn frowned, removing her mask and safety glasses as she headed for the front door. Was everything okay? Had something happened to Gillian? Finn's heart rate suddenly spiked at that idea. She hadn't heard back from Gillian since her one-word message at lunchtime. That wasn't a good sign.

Finn wouldn't show her concern, but it *was* there. She pulled the heavy door open. "Hi. Is everything okay? Gillian... isn't here."

"I know. I've just spoken to her. I thought I'd come and have a look at the place since I was in the area."

Finn smiled, almost placing a hand on her chest with relief. *Thank God for that.* "Oh, sure. Come on in. Just watch your step. I've prepped as much as I can, but I don't know what's still lying around on the floor." Finn eyed Jan's heels. She really wasn't wearing the right footwear to be on what was essentially a building site. "Wouldn't want you to get a six-inch nail stuck in those shoes."

Jan practically trotted past Finn, moving into the living room. "I'll tell you what, that girl knows how to pick a house."

"Isn't it gorgeous? I'm not jealous at all." Every time Finn stepped foot in this place, she fell in love with some other original feature. Today, it was the flooring. Once she'd stripped them back and varnished them, they'd look amazing.

Jan turned around, eyeing the original features as she did so, and then her gaze landed on Finn. "Play your cards right and you may not need to be jealous."

"Excuse me?" Finn removed the disposable gloves she'd been wearing, throwing them to the rubbish pile she'd made in

the corner of the back half of the living room. “I’m not sure what you’re trying to say.”

“Oh, come on. Gillian may not have given me all of the details, but I know things have been strained between you two. Considering you’re not seeing one another anymore, it says a lot about who you are, given the fact you’ve shown up here and not let her down.”

So, Gillian hadn’t updated Jan yet. Understandable, since things had only really changed last night. Finn wasn’t usually fond of people knowing about her private life, but Jan was Gillian’s best friend, and she suspected they talked about *everything* with one another. Rather than put her foot in it and perhaps say things Gillian wouldn’t like, Finn would play stupid. “It’s a job.” Finn lifted a shoulder, aware that she had beads of sweat on her forehead. She ran a wrist across her skin, puffing out her cheeks. “I’m just here to work.”

Jan held her phone and her car keys in her hand, nodding slowly. “You know I mentioned that I needed to talk to you? Well, I think that time may have come, Finn.”

“Yeah, that’s really not a good idea.” Finn didn’t want to stand around talking about Gillian behind her back. She had far more respect for her than that. She was sure Jan meant no harm, but it just didn’t feel right. “Gillian will say what she needs to say when she’s ready.”

“Only she won’t.”

Finn’s brows drew together. What the hell was going on here? First of all, she hadn’t heard back from Gillian since she’d messaged her around midday, so she had no idea where she stood with her...and now Jan was here effectively cornering Finn into listening to whatever she had to say. “Does Gillian know you’re here?”

“No. And I’d appreciate it if you kept what I told you to yourself...maybe even act surprised if she ever *does* tell you.”

Finn’s shoulders slumped. Whatever was going on, she just hoped Gillian was okay. “Look, I really appreciate you being here, and I love how close you guys are...but I’d rather not

discuss this with you. Gillian and I are...I don't know. I think it's a good idea to keep anything you have to say to yourself. If she found out we're here talking to one another, she would be devastated."

Jan slowly strolled around the huge space, stopping at the window. "You know she's divorced, yes?"

"Yeah. I've known since the day of her divorce party."

"He was having an affair with Gillian's cousin. For two years." Jan scoffed. "The hatred I have for that man is so terrible sometimes that it's all-consuming for me. Gillian says she's moved on, but I'm not so sure that's true."

"Jan, you really shouldn't be telling me this."

"It was around September last year when I noticed a change in her. She seemed to be *almost* herself again." Jan sighed and shook her head. "In the months after her separation, she became very quiet. Withdrawn. Hell, I was lucky if I saw her from one month to the next. Gillian...was almost reclusive."

That small piece of information hurt Finn beyond belief. But on the flip side, it explained why Gillian had been pushing her away repeatedly. She knew an entirely different person from the one that Jan described.

"I couldn't convince her to open the door to me most days. Dinner out with friends was completely out of the question. A telephone call would happen once every few weeks...*if* I was lucky." Jan turned back to Finn with tears in her eyes. "She's been my best friend since we started university together. We were inseparable. And he took that from me. From her, too. When she found out about the affair with a woman some fifteen years younger than her, it broke the very woman Gillian was. I couldn't bear to see it. I hated knowing she was in that tiny apartment, cooped up and alone. She started to drink heavily, and there were times when she admitted to taking sleeping pills just to see her through the night."

"This is a lot to hear, but...why *are* you telling me this?" Finn asked, aware that Jan was putting quite some trust in her

right now.

“You know I said she’d changed since September last year?”

Finn nodded. “Yeah...”

“She changed when she met *you*,” Jan said, her eyes soft. “We’d talked on the phone for hours the night before the semester started. She told me how she was going to make the end of the year count, that she was going to put her own interests first. I believed her to a point, and then she started to seem like herself again. I had no idea why, but then she told me about you months down the line...I couldn’t help but encourage whatever it was she was silently asking me. She wants you, Finn. Make no mistake about that.”

Finn swallowed. She had...changed Gillian? That was going to take a moment or two to process. “R-right.”

“I know she can be difficult when it comes to making decisions for herself, but please, give her a chance.”

“Gillian knows how I feel about her,” Finn said, trying to appear as blasé as she possibly could. “We’ve had a discussion, and I believe that if it’s meant to be...it will be.” Finn had full faith that this would all turn out right in the end. It simply had to. “I know a relationship wasn’t what she wanted, she was very clear about that from the start, but I don’t know. Things are slowly changing. I’m not pushing her. Only she knows what she wants.”

“Yes, well, sometimes she doesn’t quite *know* what she wants.”

Finn laughed and shook her head. Jan wasn’t wrong at all. “You don’t have to tell me that.”

“All I’m asking is that you don’t completely dismiss her. There will come a time when she does open up to you. And when that time comes, count yourself very lucky. Gillian is one of the most beautiful people I know. Inside and out. When she isn’t stuck in her own head...or the past, she would do anything for anyone. I just want her to be happy.”

“What makes you think I can make her happy?” Finn asked as Jan moved towards the door. “Why do you seem so on board with this? You surely know it’s going to make her life difficult because of who I am.”

“Oh, Finn. You already do. Happier than I’ve seen her in many years.” Jan beamed a smile. “As for the complications of this? Well, I believe everything happens for a reason. Gill knows I’ll do anything to help her...or protect her if that’s needed, but I think you two are going to be just fine.”

Finn lowered her head at that, trying to suppress the smile working its way to her lips. “I shouldn’t say this, but she did open up to me last night. We went for a walk in the park, and things got a little heated when she tried to push me away again, but in the end, she opened up a little.”

“She did?” Jan narrowed her eyes.

“Yeah. She tried to put herself down, but we talked it through, and I went back to her place with her.”

Jan scoffed. “You can thank that bastard of an ex-husband for that. Let me guess...she’s not worthy?”

Finn sighed. Jan knew Gillian through and through. “Yeah, that’s the one.”

“Then there’s only one thing you can do, Finn. *Show her* she’s worthy.”

The door suddenly slammed shut, startling Finn and Jan.

“Finn? Are you here? I’m so sorry I didn’t text you back earlier. I’ve been stuck in fucking meetings all da—” Gillian stopped dead behind Jan, a worried look on her face. “What’s...going on?”

“Nothing. I was in the area, so I decided to show myself around your new place since you haven’t bothered.” Jan kissed Gillian on the cheek. “I should go. I’m parked where I shouldn’t be. Gorgeous place, Gill. I can’t wait for the housewarming.”

And just like that, Jan was gone.

Finn stared back at Gillian, looking at her differently now that she knew a little more about her past. About...the woman behind the mask. None of it changed anything for Finn. She still wanted to know her. In every aspect. "Hey. Don't worry about not texting me back. It's cool."

"It's not. I fell asleep on you last night and woke up to find you gone. What kind of person invites someone into their home...only to fall asleep?"

Finn chanced a step or two forward, reaching out a hand and brushing Gillian's silky hair from her face. "The kind of person who is comfortable around me. The kind of person who'd had a really emotional day. You're the first woman to fall asleep on me, Gillian. Make of that what you will."

Gillian softened, subconsciously leaning into Finn's touch. "I'm still sorry."

"Don't be. I really enjoyed it." Finn decided to be bold and move closer, their bodies touching. "So, I know I said no pressure to you earlier, and you can absolutely say no, but I...wondered if I could see you again tonight?"

"You mean I didn't scare you off?" Gillian pressed her hand to Finn's, where it still sat against her cheek. "I can't believe you even want to give me a chance. I've done nothing but mess you around."

"Takes a lot to scare me off, gorgeous." Finn stroked Gillian's skin. "So, what do you say? You, me, and dinner..." Gillian's eyes closed when Finn drew her into a slow, lingering kiss. Finn allowed it to convey exactly what she felt for Gillian, hoping she would feel it too.

"F-Finn." Gillian reluctantly pulled back. "You have to stop kissing me like that."

"Nah. I know how you feel about me now, so I'm only just getting started." She kissed Gillian again, pressing her to the wall. "I have a few things to do here, but if you can give me a couple of hours, I'll go home and shower...then come to your place with dinner."

"What kind of dinner?" Gillian narrowed her eyes.

“Anything you want.” Finn couldn’t help but stare into Gillian’s eyes. “You tell me, and I’ll bring it.”

“Just...something mediocre.” Gillian lifted a shoulder, smirking. “Mediocre is good right now. I don’t want you to woo me too much in the early days.”

“I’ll find the worst meal I possibly can and force you to eat it. There’s nothing ‘woo-ey’ about that, right?”

Gillian took the corner of her lip between her teeth, wearing a shy smile. “I’m not sure you have to force me to do anything. I’m like putty in your hands.”

Finn slid a hand to Gillian’s impeccable arse. “Oh, you’re *something* in my hands alright.” She squeezed, dropping light kisses along Gillian’s jawline. Just because they were planning their evening, it didn’t mean Finn couldn’t be a little handsy. She knew Gillian loved it anyway. Why change that? “Now, go home and unwind. Just...don’t unwind too much. I’d like you to have a little something left for me by the time I get there.”

Gillian’s eyes darkened as she stared back at Finn. “You can take anything you want. You should know that by now.”

Mmhmm. Finn did know. She brought her lips towards Gillian’s ear, nipping at her lobe as she said, “You’re making me wet saying things like that. Get out of here before I bend you over the stairs and taste your pussy from behind.”

Finn received the *exact* response she had hoped for.

Gillian...trembling against her. “F-fuck.”

“Go on. I won’t be long.” She brought a hand between them, slipping it up the front of Gillian’s skirt. “And every time you wear red, the same thing will happen over and over again.” She pressed Gillian’s underwear between her lips, dampness greeting her fingertips. “Don’t touch yourself until I’m there.” Gillian stumbled back, her lips parted as her back connected with the doorframe. “Careful, babe. You’re going to do yourself an injury.”

“You...promise to come over tonight?” Gillian’s voice was laced with everything Finn had missed recently.

Finn turned her watch towards herself. It was three in the afternoon. "I'll be there by six. Okay?"

"O-okay." Gillian turned and rushed out of the door.

And Finn? Well, she just shifted slightly, enjoying the sensation of her boxer shorts against her throbbing clit. *Oh, Finn. You're one lucky bastard.*

CHAPTER 21

GILLIAN STOOD IN THE BATHROOM, staring at herself through the mirror. How had she come to be in this position? This... situation? She cocked her head, inspecting the slight frown lines between her brows. Just a few years ago, she hadn't imagined herself to be standing here. Not alone, not in a small apartment, and certainly not divorced. For the most part, that was because Gillian had grown up not wanting to rock the boat. So, when she realised that Dave was making her unhappy, she'd chosen to put up and shut up. And as she looked back at herself right now, it wasn't the same woman she had refused to look at this time last year.

Gillian felt...different.

She knew her life would piece itself back together one day, slowly and bit by bit, but she hadn't anticipated the way in which it would happen. She hadn't for one second expected Finn to enter her life, but truthfully, she was so grateful that she had. If Finn hadn't enrolled last year, Gillian had a feeling she would still be cooped up here. She wasn't even sure she would have bothered to look for a house. Finn brought out a confidence in Gillian. One she hadn't encountered even in her days with Dave. It was a different kind of feeling when she was with Finn. Yes, she was considered *forbidden*, but take that away, and Gillian wanted to know her on a deeper level, too.

Take away the confident, dominant butch in Finn, and Gillian would still feel the same way. She knew Finn cared. Her eyes told Gillian exactly how she felt in any given

moment. And Finn knew what Gillian's body needed...even before she did herself. Finn was...perfect, and from this point on, Gillian was going to allow herself to imagine a future with Finn Ashton in it.

It was time to forget what her head said. She *wanted* whatever was happening here.

To date. To spend time in the silence with Finn. To...*live*.

Gillian puffed out her cheeks and pressed the call button on her phone. She brought it to her ear and took a calming breath as the call connected. "Hi, Jan."

"Hi, babe. Is everything okay?"

Was it? Yes...it was. Gillian just needed a slight pep talk before Finn walked through her door and Gillian lost all rational thoughts. It would happen. It *always* did. "Everything is okay."

"Good. Phil is still away from home if you wanted to come over. We can catch up."

"I can't." Gillian turned out the bathroom light and moved into the living room. She sipped from the small glass of wine she'd poured thirty minutes ago and sat down on the couch. "But thanks."

"Gill, I don't want to interfere, but are you sure you're okay? I don't want you to start avoiding social situations...you know?"

Gillian appreciated the concern Jan was showing. But thankfully, that idea hadn't entered her mind for a few months now. "It's not that. When you left earlier, Finn asked if she could bring dinner over. I decided to say yes."

"I'm happy to hear that."

"I really don't know what's going to happen between us, but it doesn't matter how I feel about myself or the situation... I still want Finn."

"And Finn wants you. Whether you believe that or not, she does. Give her a chance to show you what she's capable of."

The kind of person she is. I know it's hard, and I *do* understand your reservations, but please give it a chance."

"I know what she's capable of. Even when she tries to play down all of this, little glimpses of the real Finn shine through." Gillian smiled at the reminder of Finn holding her on the couch. Gillian had felt her stroking her hair, a protective arm around the waist, but Finn had been right. It had been an emotional day, and Gillian couldn't stay awake. She just wanted to enjoy that moment with Finn without going over everything else in her mind at the same time. "She is genuine, isn't she?"

"I think that besides me, Finn is probably the most genuine person in your life right now." Jan's soft tone soothed Gillian. The more she spoke, the quicker Gillian's fears faded away. "But I think you know that already. Just do something for me, please?"

Gillian frowned. "What?"

"Enjoy your evening with her. Don't worry about what tomorrow may or may not bring. Don't think about work or six months down the line. Just be in the moment, Gill. Enjoy what you have with one another."

That *was* Gillian's plan for tonight. She hated being in her own head so much. The only time she didn't seem to be stuck in her mind was when she was naked with Finn. But realistically, they couldn't always be in that position. However thrilling it may be. "I will. We spoke last night, and I couldn't believe the things she was saying to me. She's...God, I didn't expect someone like her, Jan. I really didn't."

"Are you happy, Gill? In this moment, right now, are you happy?"

Gillian smiled. "I am. Stupidly happy."

A gentle knock at the door had Gillian getting to her feet.

"She's here. I should go."

"Go. Have a beautiful evening, babe. Call me tomorrow or whenever you're free, okay?"

“I will. Love you, Jan.”

Jan sighed. “Love you, too.”

Gillian silenced her phone and left it on the kitchen counter. As she moved towards the door, she took a calming breath and then opened it slowly. But...surely. Oh, she was *so* sure about this. Finn was beaming a smile back at her, those eyes staring deep into Gillian’s soul. “Hi. Come in.”

“You look gorgeous,” Finn said as she stepped towards Gillian and kissed her on the cheek. “I like the dressed-down version of you as much as the hot as fuck version...just so you know.” Finn moved straight into the kitchen and started to unpack dinner. “I hope you’re hungry. I ended up going to the Greek place that has the top reviews around here.”

“That’s not...mediocre.” Gillian narrowed her eyes, adoring the playful smirk Finn wore as she focused on the takeout containers dotted around the worktop.

Finn looked up at her, lowered a container to the counter, and then took the few steps separating them. “Why would I bring mediocre food over for a woman who is anything but?”

Oh, God. Gillian’s insides melted at that. If Finn kept this up, they might just find a heart somewhere deep inside Gillian. “That was smooth.”

Finn lifted a shoulder and placed a palm against the side of Gillian’s neck. She stroked it higher, guided it around the back, and gently fisted her hand in Gillian’s hair. “When I tell you that you’re not mediocre...or that you look gorgeous, I’m not being smooth. I’m being honest. Remember that, and this could be a very pleasant evening.” Finn drew her in, their lips met, and Gillian quickly realised that she couldn’t hold back the moan that slipped into Finn’s mouth. Finn pulled back ever so slightly. “Although judging by that kiss alone, it’s already a *very* pleasant evening in my eyes.”

Gillian rested a palm on Finn’s chest, smiling at just how easy-going she was. She’d always known it, but Gillian’s own tension often interrupted that knowledge. “Thank you for coming over.”

“Thank you for letting me in.” Finn placed a hand on Gillian’s chest. That had a double meaning, but Gillian wasn’t thinking too much into it. Finn was here, they had this place to themselves, and nobody could ruin that. Not...yet. “Tonight, I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else.”



Oh, this had to be the most perfect night Finn had ever found herself a part of. Takeout containers were strewn across Gillian’s coffee table, the radio was playing throwback classics, and Gillian had her legs resting over Finn’s lap. *Sheer Perfection.*

The night *and* the woman.

“Do you have any ideas for decorating when it comes to the house?” It may seem a boring conversation, but Finn had come across a fourth bedroom earlier today and had a plan for it. One she hoped she could keep to herself until completion. “It’s a huge place.”

“I have some colour schemes in mind. Nothing set in stone, though.” Gillian lay her head back when Finn slowly massaged her thighs. It wasn’t sexual—for a change—but Finn’s way of de-stressing the gorgeous woman she was spending the evening with. She pressed her thumbs to the spot above Gillian’s knee, smiling when Gillian relaxed entirely. “If you keep doing that, I’m going to invite you over every night.”

Finn shifted, situating herself in a better position to continue. “Then I’d better make sure I’m good.”

Gillian lifted her head and grinned. “Thanks for dinner. I’m glad you chose to do exceptional rather than mediocre.”

“Me, too. I don’t eat Greek food often, so I really enjoyed it.”

“You got it spot on. Greek is my favourite.” Gillian placed a hand on Finn’s, stopping her movements. Finn could only gaze back in astonishment. Was she really here...with

Gillian...just relaxing and talking? Fuck. Yeah, she was. “Really, thank you, Finn.”

Finn felt herself almost blushing as Gillian stared back at her. But she didn’t care if her cheeks *did* redden. Jan had opened Finn’s eyes today, and she wanted to be sure she had truly tried before she gave up on Gillian. If that meant being open about her emotions, her feelings, then so be it. “You’re welcome.”

“How are things at home?”

Interesting. Gillian rarely asked about Finn’s personal life. That was surely a step in the right direction. “My mum actually agreed to try out a care agency on Monday night. I think she’s realised that I just can’t manage as much as I am. She was really great about it, too. Said it’s time for me to have a life.”

“I’m glad she had that realisation. You’re young, and while I know you have a heart of gold and would do anything for her, you *do* need your own time and space.”

“It’s felt quite freeing. I’ll still be there for her, but it gives me some time to have a life outside of the house. The chance to breathe and not worry about finding time to do other things. My own things. I know my dad is a drunk and a pain in the arse, but he’s really good with her when he’s awake and not hammered.”

“I’m sorry you have to deal with that. It’s one thing to have to take care of your mum, but I’m sure you feel as though you’re taking care of your dad, too.”

Finn snorted. Hell would freeze over before she ‘took care’ of him. “Nope. He does what he wants, and if he lands face-first in the hallway, that’s not my problem. I’ve stepped over him before today.”

Gillian laughed. “Well, that’s understandable.”

“We don’t get along very well. Never have. We clash, and I don’t have the patience for him and his bullshit. His wife is stuck in a bed, his daughter put her own life on hold...and he just stands at the end of a bar sinking pints day in, day out.”

“Do you think maybe it’s his way of dealing with your mum’s health issues?”

“No. He’s been an alcoholic for years. Since I was a kid. Long before Mum started to become ill.”

Gillian nodded slowly, her eyes soft. “Well, you know you have a space here with me whenever you need to get out of the house for a while. Okay?”

Finn squeezed Gillian’s thigh, and then she took her hand and entwined their fingers. “I appreciate that, but I don’t know what’s going on here, Gillian. I’m here because I want to be, but that’s all I know.”

Gillian lifted Finn’s hand, tracing a fingertip over the tattoo there. She focused on it, refusing to make eye contact with Finn. She didn’t like to show her vulnerable side, but Finn hoped Gillian knew she could show it when she felt comfortable enough to do so. “Life has been rough for me in the last year. I didn’t cope very well when I left my ex-husband. Now that things are looking up, I guess I’m finding it hard to understand how. It wasn’t great. You know, the decision to leave him.”

Finn nodded, giving Gillian the space to be open.

“I don’t love him, it’s not about that, I just...don’t understand how anyone—especially you—could have any interest in me at all beyond sex.”

Wow. That lack of confidence Gillian sometimes expressed was painful to witness. This woman had so much to give, so much life inside of her...why *wouldn’t* Finn want more than just sex? Still, judging by the conversation she’d had with Jan earlier, those little comments Gillian made on occasion were starting to make sense.

“We don’t have to know all the answers right away. And we don’t have to try to figure them out either. Though, I will say that I am interested in you way beyond the sex. I hope you believe that.” For the first time in over a week, Finn felt as though they were getting somewhere. “But ultimately, what

matters to me is that you're comfortable with this. Us...like this."

"God, I am." Gillian toyed with Finn's fingertips, smiling. "I didn't think I would be, I probably *shouldn't* be, but I am."

"What...are the rules around us dating?" Finn asked, aware that she was probably jumping the gun. "I know we're not, but what *are* the rules?"

"It's not prohibited, but it's also not encouraged. It becomes *very* complicated if I'm dating a student of mine rather than just a student of the university."

Finn had a feeling Gillian would say that. She understood; of course she did, but it didn't make it feel any less shit. Finn was learning that none of this could be simple, even if Gillian *did* want to date Finn. "R-right."

"I have a long career at the university. I've never so much as stepped a foot out of line. I...don't know what to do."

Finn exhaled a long, slow breath. "You do nothing. I told you I wouldn't risk your career, and I meant that. It doesn't matter how much I want you, how much I wish I could be with you; I won't put you in that position." Finn knew all about the people who claimed the professor was in the position of power, but Finn was twenty-six, she knew what she wanted, and Gillian had done nothing 'of power' when it came to any of this. Finn was aware of her concerns, and she had been the one to keep coming back for more. "I hate that, but your career means everything to you."

"So, where do we go from here?" Gillian's voice broke, surprising Finn. Just when she thought Gillian was going to throw in the towel, it seemed not. "Tell me how we figure this out, Finn."

Finn lowered her eyes, aware that they held tears of her own. She really didn't want Gillian to see this side of her. "I don't know." Finn's voice trembled. She swallowed down the emotion, unable to meet Gillian's eyes. "I don't know. I really don't."

Gillian reached out a hand and lifted Finn's chin. That gentle touch—something she rarely felt from Gillian—had the lump in her throat growing by the second. “Hey, please don't be upset.”

“I'm sorry.” Finn took her bottom lip between her teeth to keep it from trembling. Tonight had felt so good, and now it was turning to shit again. “I wish I'd never enrolled. I wish I'd met you somewhere else and known who you were so I could avoid this situation. I wish...I wish it could be different.” Finn sniffled, running a hand down her face. “You'd lose your job, wouldn't you?”

Gillian lowered her hand from Finn's chin. “Potentially. *Probably*. The consequences are always far more severe for the lecturer rather than the student. Which is understandable.”

“Then I guess it's settled. You told me all along that we couldn't do this, and you were right. Maybe I knew that deep down. Maybe I just didn't want to face it. But you were right all along, and I'm sorry if I've ever made you worry about your job. So sorry.”

“There *have* been moments when I wondered what would happen if someone caught us, but mostly, I just enjoy being with you. I can't help that feeling, and I'm starting to realise that.”

“Me, too.” Finn lifted Gillian's hand and kissed it. “Maybe we could...be friends? I don't know.” That was the most ridiculous thing Finn could have ever said. She'd seen this woman naked. She'd fucked Gillian until she couldn't take it anymore. How the hell could they be friends?

“You want to be friends?” Gillian sounded as ridiculous as Finn had saying that. “Really?”

Finn rubbed at her forearm and lifted a shoulder. “I guess I could try. It probably wouldn't last, I think I'd find it too difficult, but I'd try...for you.”

Gillian lifted her legs from Finn's lap and shifted closer. “Maybe we should just hold our horses here in terms of any decision-making.”

“O...kay.” Finn stared at Gillian. She was going to need more before she even thought about anything else. “I mean, it seems pretty straightforward to me, but what are you thinking?”

“I’m thinking that we’re capable of keeping this off-campus. I’m thinking that I’m not sure I’m ready for this to end.” Gillian palmed Finn’s thighs as she sat forward and drew her into a kiss. Finn felt her smiling against her lips, sending her pulse sky-high. “I’m thinking that we can be very careful and...try this out. After your final semester this year, I won’t be teaching you again. The university won’t like that we’re dating, *but*...if you’d be happy to keep us a secret until then, I *will* tell them I’m in a relationship with you.”

Finn swallowed, gazing into Gillian’s deep brown eyes. “Y-you’re serious? That would be allowed?” Finn’s pulse thundered in her ears. It was...possible? “A-and you want to give me a chance?”

“Maybe,” Gillian said, smirking. Then she closed her eyes and pressed her forehead to Finn’s. “*Definitely.*”

“Wow. Okay.” Finn stroked a thumb across Gillian’s bottom lip, taken aback by everything she was saying. “Y-you mean that?”

“Oh, I mean it.”

Finn urged Gillian back on the couch, slipping her hands up Gillian’s hoodie. Nothing felt greater than her skin against Finn’s hands. “You always feel so fucking good,” Finn spoke between kisses. “And if you’re okay with this, then I’m *more* than okay with it. Just...talk to me if you’re worried, okay? I know a secret relationship isn’t ideal, I’m not sure how I feel about it yet, but if you have *any* doubts, then please communicate that with me.”

“You mean too much to me to let go of at this point, Finn. I’m sorry if I’m not quite in the right frame of mind some days, but I can admit to that. I can say right now that being with you recently has been the greatest pleasure of my life.”

“Yeah?” Finn smiled as she pulled back, her blonde hair flopping forward and over her eyes. “You’re sure I’m worth all of this for you?”

“We keep a low profile at the moment. Let me get my bearings. Then...I don’t know what the next step is, but we can work it out together. Because, like you, I don’t know how I feel about a secret relationship right now. Willingly lying isn’t what I thought my future looked like...but it won’t be forever.”

Finn got to her feet and pulled Gillian up with her. Their bodies collided in the most delicious of ways, Gillian’s hands roaming Finn’s hips beneath her shirt. “Then I’m going to need you to do something for me,” Finn whispered as she inched her mouth towards Gillian’s ear. She heard Gillian’s breathing falter, one hand slipping down the front of Finn’s jeans. “F-fuck.” Those slender fingers teased Finn’s clit, her legs weak. “I-I need you to go into the bedroom and undress for me.”

“Oh yeah?” Gillian moaned. “And then what?”

“And then you’re all mine. Every last inch of you. Tonight...” Finn pulled back and held Gillian’s jaw gently. “I’m going to show you *exactly* what you mean to me.”

CHAPTER 22

GILLIAN LAY naked on her bed, feeling far more exposed than she ever had around Finn. Actually, far more than she had around *anyone* in the past. This certainly wasn't something Dave would have demanded from her. To bare all, emotionally and physically. No, he preferred to bottle things up while expecting the very same from Gillian. But Finn... Oh she was something entirely different. Not only had she managed to open Gillian up out in the living room, but Gillian hadn't batted an eyelid as Finn undressed her just moments ago and guided her to the bed.

Now, here she rested, unsure as to what Finn's next move would be. Sex between them had always been so raw and, often, emotionless. At least, that's what they'd been telling themselves for so long, but this felt different. The atmosphere in the room was calm. Finn had lit candles in certain areas, and as Gillian lifted her head and caught sight of Finn...she found her removing various objects from her rucksack.

Oh, God.

Gillian's pulse quickened at the thought of the next few hours. She didn't know what was coming, but wasn't that part of the thrill? Finn always left her in anticipation, and moving forward, that appeared to be continuing.

"Hey," Finn said as she pressed one knee to the bed and leaned down to kiss Gillian. "How do you feel about me blindfolding you?"

Gillian's entire body fizzed at that question. How did she feel? Well, she didn't know. But judging by her body's response, it wanted to see what Finn had in store. "I'm okay with it. I think."

"You...think?"

Gillian smiled weakly. "It's not something I've done before. In case you forgot, I had a terrible marriage with a woeful sex life."

Finn smiled against Gillian's lips when she offered her another kiss. "Good thing that's changing, then. One thing we will *never* have is terrible sex. But I think you know that by now, babe."

Oh, Gillian did know it. "I do."

Finn draped a silk blindfold over her eyes. Gillian lifted her head to give Finn the space she needed to tie it, suddenly feeling overwhelmed by the fact she couldn't see anything at all. She felt safe with Finn, she trusted her implicitly, but Gillian could still feel apprehensive.

"Feeling okay?" Finn asked, her breath close to Gillian's ear.

The unexpectedness of Finn's husky voice had wetness gathering between Gillian's legs. "Y-yes." She pressed her thighs together, her nostrils flared.

"Sure about that?"

"Yes. I just didn't realise how much of a turn-on this would be." Gillian's skin tingled when Finn stroked her finger down Gillian's stomach, careful to avoid anywhere that Finn knew would turn her on. "Wow."

"You know I only want to make you feel good, babe. And I'm going to." Finn dropped a kiss just above Gillian's nipple, almost causing her back to arch. "And when I'm finished with you, you're going to be a soaked, shaking mess." Finn gently brushed her tongue over Gillian's nipple, eliciting a moan. "Mhmm. You know that's what I like to hear."

“F-Finn.” Gillian pressed her thighs together harder, determined to see this through without coming too soon. Only that was difficult when someone like Finn had her naked on the bed. Exposed...but ridiculously turned on. “God, I don’t know what you’re doing to me.”

Finn drew her fingertips down Gillian’s thigh as she whispered, “I’m about to be doing a whole lot more to you.”

Gillian relaxed her body, listening as Finn moved around the room. There was something incredibly arousing about not knowing what would come next. This was just another example of Finn knowing exactly what Gillian needed. Even if she didn’t know she needed it herself. *God, she’s perfect.*

A sudden featherlight touch caused Gillian to gasp, her hips lifting subconsciously. It wasn’t Finn’s fingers, but fuck, it heightened everything Gillian was already feeling. Her nipples hardened further, that need for friction now more prominent.

“I dream about this body,” Finn said as the bed dipped by Gillian’s legs. “I’ve fucked myself thinking of you. I’ve spent nights lying in bed alone...wishing I could be here with you while you moan my name over and over...”

“Oh, Finn.” Gillian gasped when Finn pressed a hand between her legs. She held it there, not moving, teasing Gillian. “Please.”

“Begging already?” Gillian knew Finn was smirking. She often did when Gillian couldn’t control herself. But that was Finn, always putting Gillian in a position to want more. “Would this help?” She slipped a finger between Gillian’s lips, moaning when she realised how soaked Gillian was. “Fuck. Do I not please you enough?”

“Oh, you please me more than enough.”

The mattress sprung back when Finn shifted, and light footsteps sounded within the room. Gillian heard rustling, and then she felt Finn beside her again. Her body heat gave her away. “Arms up. Hands together.”

Gillian complied, fighting back the urge to pull Finn on top of her. She wouldn't; this was too exciting to interrupt. She could have Finn on top of her whenever she wanted that. This...tonight...was about a new experience.

Finn brought another piece of silk material to her skin, tying her wrists and fixing her hands to the headboard. *Oh, my.* Gillian shook with anticipation. Her body trembled as she lay in this very position. If Gillian planned to enjoy this night, she would have to surrender her entire self to Finn. And she would, without a second thought.

“Mm. Mm. Mm. If only you could see what I see right now.”

Gillian listened as Finn's breathing changed. Knowing she had this reaction, how Finn found it hard to contain herself, it helped to dispel everything Dave had ever said to her.

“I wish you could see how beautiful you are. I wish you could feel how my pulse quickens just watching you. I wish... you knew your worth and just how honoured I feel to be in this room with you.”

Gillian rolled her lips inward, her eyes squeezed shut behind the blindfold. She didn't want to cry, even if it would happen whether she liked it or not. “I wish I could feel you against me.”

Finn climbed onto the bed, straddling Gillian's stomach. She felt Finn brace her hands on either side of her head, her breath painfully close to Gillian's lips. “I need you to know something, babe.”

“W-what?”

“*You* are the most extraordinary woman I've ever had the pleasure of being with.” Finn leaned down and brushed her lips against Gillian's. “Nobody in this world makes me feel the way you do.” She lowered a hand, grazing Gillian's nipple, and then tweaked it. “And I'm going to do everything in my power for you to understand that you have so fucking much to offer.”

“Finn, I—” Gillian caught herself before she said something she probably shouldn’t. Something along the lines of just how fond of Finn she was. Potentially...three little words that had such a huge meaning. But it was the setting that would have caused them, and Gillian knew they had so much more to learn about one another before either of them could contemplate such a phrase. “Thank you.”

“No, babe. Thank *you*. For letting me in. For allowing me this opportunity to worship you. For just...being you.”

Gillian lifted her hips, thrilled when Finn shifted back slightly and granted her that friction she craved. “O-oh.”

Finn spread her lips but didn’t touch Gillian. Not where she wished she would, anyway. “Look at that. So desperate to come.” Gillian rocked her hips, hoping it would shift Finn’s hand, but it didn’t. “Tell me...” Finn moved off Gillian, spread her legs, and lay between them. She knew that because Finn’s breath tickled Gillian’s thigh. “How does it feel not knowing what I’m going to do next?”

Gillian tugged at the restraint holding her in place, craving more. Needing more. Needing...Finn. But Finn spread her lips again and pressed the flat of her tongue to Gillian’s swollen clit. “F-fuck!” She arched off the bed, and then she heard it. The low buzz of a vibrator. Gillian held her breath, and then her eyes slammed shut behind the blindfold when Finn brought the cool tip to her clit.

“I...want you a little wetter.”

A little wetter? Gillian wasn’t sure that was possible. She was soaked beyond words. “B-baby.”

Finn moved the toy lower—painfully slow—and latched her lips onto Gillian’s clit. Oh, God. She wasn’t going to last. She surely couldn’t last. The vibrator slid inside her with ease, hitting her G-spot immediately.

“Oh, shit!” Gillian forced her heels into the bed, her body twisting as it lifted from the mattress. “Fuck. I-I can’t.”

“Oh, you can,” Finn spoke briefly, then dived back in. Those lips, Finn’s scent, everything in this moment centred

around Finn Ashton. “And you will.”

Gillian clenched her hands into fists, not entirely a fan of being restrained. It was hot, she loved how Finn worked her body, but she wanted to reach out and force Finn’s mouth harder to her pussy. She wanted to drag her nails down Finn’s back while she fucked her deep and slow. Finn angled the vibrator, building Gillian up, that intense heat sitting low in her belly. She knew what Finn wanted, and Finn would get it.

“Harder, Finn.”

Finn applied more pressure and rubbed vigorously at Gillian’s clit. Gillian felt it building, her body tense as she rocked against the toy inside her, and then she gasped, gushing when Finn pulled the toy out.

“F-fuck.” She shook on the bed, gripping the silk that held her in place. “S-shit. O-oh.”

“Mm. So fucking perfect.” Finn soothed Gillian’s pussy with a gentle hand as she caught her breath. Gillian knew exactly what was coming next. Finn always fucked her again right after. “You need more, babe?”

“Y-yes.” Gillian nodded slowly and took her bottom lip between her teeth. She felt movement, held her breath for a beat or two, and then Finn lay on top of her, that familiar ‘addition’ now pressing between them. “Oh, Finn. Please fuck me.”

Finn sat back, spread Gillian’s legs wider, and pushed her knees up to her stomach. One leg draped over Finn’s shoulder, the other gripped by one of Finn’s strong hands, and then Gillian was filled. Oh, she was filled so fucking much. “I love watching myself fuck you.”

“S-so good.”

Finn reached up and tugged the silk, freeing Gillian’s hands. Then she pushed the blindfold from her eyes, returning her attention to the strap. “Your pussy is *always* so ready for me.”

“Always.”

Finn rolled her hips, thrusting slow but so deep. Gillian could only watch and admire the very woman she saw her future with. “God, I can never get enough of you.” Finn moaned, pressing her thumb to Gillian’s clit. “You just give me everything I want.”

Gillian reached out a hand, urging Finn closer to her. She needed to feel her body weight, her warmth. She wanted to be looking into Finn’s eyes as she came. “Come here, baby.”

Finn regarded her with the most beautiful smile. She rested on top of Gillian, thrusting painfully slow, and ran a hand through Gillian’s hair. “I want there to be an us, Gillian.”

“There will be.”

Finn drew her into a kiss, those hips bringing Gillian towards the peak once again. “I tried to keep my emotions out of it, but I couldn’t. I want you, and I *need* there to be an us.”

“Hey,” Gillian whispered, tears sitting on her eyelids. “We’ll figure it out.”

“Promise me?” Finn asked, moaning when Gillian tightened. Finn’s vulnerability was the biggest turn-on of the night for her. “Promise me that I’ll be here with you like this again.”

“Oh, Finn. Y-you will.”

“I need you to promise me, Gillian.”

Gillian looked deep into Finn’s eyes, nodding as her orgasm built faster and faster. “I promise you.”

Finn wrapped her arms around Gillian, buried her face in her neck, and thrust harder. Finn had needed that reassurance, and Gillian was more than happy to give it to her. Because if she had realised anything tonight, it was that she couldn’t move forward without Finn. She needed Finn...and Finn needed her.

That feeling of being anchored while Finn was deep inside her had tears spilling down Gillian’s cheeks. As those incredible hips rolled and brought Gillian to the edge, she dug

her nails into Finn's back...and came. Silently, but so fucking beautifully.

“Oh, God.” Gillian held Finn, refusing to allow her emotions to show. But everything was just so overwhelming that Gillian couldn't help but be emotional. Finn would understand—she hoped—but now wasn't really the time or place. “Stay there. Don't move.”

Finn turned her head and kissed Gillian's neck, smiling against her skin. “I fucking adore these moments with you.”

Oh, no. That admission only had fresh tears steadily falling. “Me, too.”

Finn must have heard Gillian snuffle and, in turn, held her tighter. “I don't know what's going through your mind, but just know that I'm here for you, okay?”

“I know.” Gillian stroked her fingers up and down Finn's back. “Nothing to worry about. Just...overwhelming at times.”

“I understand.”

CHAPTER 23

GILLIAN SAT QUIETLY at her small breakfast bar, spreading marmalade on a slice of toast. Finn was still sleeping—she didn't have to be at university today—so this time was perfect for Gillian. Time to process last night. Time to allow the embarrassment she felt for being so emotional to pass her by. Time...to think. Only as she sat here, Gillian didn't know where to begin. Waking up in Finn's arms this morning had been incredibly comforting, but that was Finn through and through. Gillian always felt reassured in one way or another.

Let it play out the way it's supposed to.

Gillian lowered her toast to the plate and took her coffee. She wrapped her hands around it, sighing. Finn had agreed to a secret relationship last night, then proceeded to blow her mind in the most explosive of ways. *Could* Gillian fully immerse herself in this experience without feeling that dreaded guilt? God, she really hoped so. Because last night had been as equally thrilling as it was emotional. The way in which Finn had held her, how she'd kissed Gillian's hair and soothed her with those soft hands. Honestly, it left Gillian feeling emotional all over again.

She shook her head lightly and exhaled a deep breath. Gillian didn't want to sit here worrying or crying. She didn't want to fear for the future. While she would never have imagined herself to be in this position—a position where she would be lying to everyone around her—she couldn't help who she found herself attracted to.

Oh, if only it was that simple.

As Gillian lowered her coffee again, she felt strong arms wrap around her waist from behind. Finn kissed her neck slowly, smiling against her skin. “Mornin’.”

“Hi.” Gillian wasn’t sure of the atmosphere, but so far so good. “Can I get you some breakfast before I finish getting ready for work?”

“I’m okay for now. I’ll take some coffee, though.” Finn untangled herself from Gillian and crossed the kitchen. She wore boxer shorts and a tight tank top, that skin on view as it always was. “Another cup for you?” Finn turned back and pointed towards Gillian’s coffee cup.

“Sure. Thank you.”

Gillian studied Finn as she moved around the kitchen, smiling when she stretched, and her boxer shorts rode up a little higher. Oh, what a fine arse Finn had. It certainly explained why she was so good at thrusting. Gillian lowered her eyes when that smile turned into a smirk. *Keep it clean. You have to be at work soon.*

Finn placed a fresh cup of coffee down in front of Gillian and took her old cup away. She turned the radio up ever so slightly and then faced Gillian where she leant against the sink. “So.”

“About last night,” Gillian started, wanting to apologize for her emotion once again. “I’m sorry.”

But Finn only pushed off the counter, turned Gillian on her stool, and stood between her legs. “I’d rather you show me your vulnerability than close yourself off. One, because I care about how you feel, and two, because it’s sexy as hell.”

“Last night was...quite something.” Gillian’s cheeks heated at the reminder. God, she hadn’t known Finn had such a sensual side to her. But she absolutely loved it as much as her hot and heavy side.

Finn held Gillian’s chin gently. “I know that what we’ve had up until last night is the side of me you prefer, but it was important that I showed you who I can also be. Because if this

gets serious, I want to know that I did everything I could to be the right person for you...before you walk away.”

“Before I walk away?”

“I have another two and a half years left of my degree, Gillian. I know you won’t be teaching me for two of those years, but it’s still not ideal. I’d *love* to think that the university would be okay about it, but realistically...would they be? I’m not so sure.”

“I-I don’t know. But I *do* know that I don’t want to imagine a time when this right here isn’t happening anymore.”

“And I don’t either.” Finn leaned in, kissing Gillian gently. “But I also don’t want you to lose your job. I *won’t* let you lose your job.” With their foreheads touching, Finn lay her palms against Gillian’s thighs. “I want you, okay? In any way I can have you. Just...remember that whenever you’re having doubts.”

Gillian nipped at Finn’s bottom lip. “I don’t have a single doubt this morning.”

“Good. It’s also important that you know I’ll stand by any decision you make about us if that time ever comes. While I’d like to think that we can work this out and manage a way to be together, I do understand that the potential is there when it comes to losing you. It’s early days; you may even hate me down the line for something entirely unrelated to your job, but I would walk away if that was what you needed me to do. Okay?” Finn pulled back, giving Gillian a knowing look. “You understand that, don’t you?”

“I do.” God, Gillian didn’t want their potential relationship to be this way. She wanted to enjoy every moment of it while getting to know Finn. Still, she appreciated what Finn was saying. It meant a lot to know that Finn was aware of the consequences Gillian could potentially face. “Right now, I hate that we can’t be like this together outside of this apartment.”

Finn lifted a shoulder. “I’ll just have to be extra romantic and adorable for you in here then, won’t I?”

“Now that is something I would never turn down.” Gillian urged Finn back a little and climbed down from her stool. “Unfortunately, I have to finish getting ready, but I’ll look forward to the next time I’m able to see you.” She offered Finn a peck on the lips, then moved to step around her.

Only Finn blocked Gillian from going anywhere at all. She pulled her in by her robe, kissed her with that same heated urgency she’d kissed her with last night, and smiled against her lips. “You know you only have to say the word, and I’ll be here.”

Gillian did know that. Finn’s eagerness was just one of the things she loved about all of this. Dave had never shown an ounce of eagerness when it came to Gillian. To other women...oh, absolutely. But Gillian? Never. “I’ll call you later, okay?”

“Call me? Hmm. That’s going to be interesting.”

Gillian’s brows drew together. “Why?”

“I’m not used to hearing your beautiful voice. When I’m working for you, sure. But like this? Now that we’re...dating? I’m just used to those dirty texts you send.”

Ah. Gillian had wondered how Finn felt about the sexting. Seemed she was quite fond of it. “Would you prefer my texts?”

“Depends what they say.” Finn grinned, holding Gillian against her. “If they’re fucking filthy, then I’d love to keep receiving them.”

Gillian lifted a hand and patted Finn’s cheek gently. “Good to know. I guess later will be a surprise.” Gillian wandered off into her bedroom, smiling when she heard Finn puff out a deep breath. Before she closed the door, she turned back. “Oh, and Finn?”

Finn’s head shot up in Gillian’s direction. “Y-yeah?”

“I...may even treat you to a picture or two.”



Finn stretched where she lay on her bed, lowering her laptop to the side of her. She'd spent the last three hours looking into care agencies, and she'd finally narrowed it down to two. She would discuss it with her mum, ask which she preferred, and hopefully, they could come to some kind of arrangement. Finn was swaying towards the first private company she had come across—all carers were required to be experienced drivers, and the option to take her mum out for the day was there—but ultimately, it would be Carol's decision. Finn only wanted the best for her.

As she lay her head back and closed her eyes, the day *and* last night beginning to catch up with her, her phone started to ring on her bedside table.

Finn couldn't help the smile that spread on her mouth. It was Gillian. "Hey."

"Hi. How are you?" Gillian's voice floated down the line like the most beautiful of sounds. "Busy day?"

"Productive day. That's what I'm deciding to call it. Yours?"

"Tiring. But also productive."

Finn crossed her legs at the ankles, getting comfortable. "I did a few hours at your place this morning. The living room will be ready for skimming in a day or two. So, you may want to start deciding on those colour schemes."

"Wow. That soon?"

"Don't get too excited. It's only the living room. The rest of the place needs fixing, too."

Gillian laughed as her heels echoed in the background. "That is true. But I know you'll make it perfect for me, so I don't mind how long I have to wait."

“And it *will* be perfect. Nothing less is good enough.” Finn cleared her throat. “So, do you have any plans tonight?”

“Jan is coming over for a catch-up. Her husband is out of the country.”

Finn chose not to show her disappointment. She could survive one night without Gillian. “Well, have a lovely evening. Jan is great.”

“You...should come over. If you’re able to.”

Finn *was* able to. Her dad hadn’t left the house all day, and it was unlikely he’d do so now. “I’d love to, but I don’t want to get in the way, you know?”

“Why would you get in the way, Finn?”

The way Gillian said her name had Finn aching to kiss her. It always sounded like honey. “I don’t know. But she’s your friend, and I’m sure you have things to discuss with her. Given what happened last night...”

“I don’t discuss my sex life. Not in detail, anyway.”

Finn burst out laughing. “Oh, God. That’s not what I meant. I meant the conversation we’d had before the sex.”

“Oh. Yes. Sorry.” Finn knew Gillian would be blushing. She could tell by her tone. “How about I text you when we’ve got that discussion out the way, and then you could come over? Maybe...bring an overnight bag again.”

“I...yes. I’d really like that.” Spending time at Gillian’s place, away from here, only made Finn want to find a place of her own more so than before. The idea of lounging around, doing her own thing when she pleased, yeah...the appeal was there. “Maybe just text me later if you still want me to come over.”

“I *will* want you to come over,” Gillian said, the sound of her car door shutting. “I’m leaving campus now. Jan is due in a few hours, so be ready for when I text you. Though, I don’t plan to spend much time dwelling on something I can’t change right now. I’m tired of wondering what the right thing to do is.”

“Why the change of heart?”

“Because...” Gillian sighed. “I’ve realised just how much I like you being in my life. And my bed.”

“Mmhm. I had a feeling that played a part in it.” Finn grinned, fully understanding how lucky she was to be in this position. It wasn’t ideal, but it was enough for now. “You get yourself home and relax for a while. I’ll see you this evening.”

“Okay.” Gillian fell silent, the sound of her car indicator evident in the background.

“Is everything okay, Gillian?”

“Yes. Of course. It’s just...I like hearing your voice.”

Finn blushed at that. Thank fuck she was alone so nobody could see it happening. “Well, I’m not busy, so if you wanted to keep me on your hands-free, I’m cool with that.” Finn frowned. “Even though I’d prefer it if you concentrated on the road and just got home safely.”

“Okay, okay. I’ll end the call and see you later.”

“Good. I’d rather miss you for a couple of hours than potentially never see you again. If you’re bored when you get home, send me a text. You know how much it entertains me.”

“Ah. Okay. I see.”

“But if you have things to do, then I don’t expect you to give me all your attention. I know your job doesn’t end when you walk off campus.”

“Luckily for you, I’m all caught up.”

Mmhm. It was lucky for Finn.

“I’ll see you tonight, Finn. Don’t forget that overnight bag. Bye.”

And just like that, Gillian was gone, leaving Finn alone on her bed.

As she stared up at the ceiling, taking stock of everything, Finn could only smile. Gillian had just called her as though it

was the most natural thing in the world. And it was, regardless of their positions when it came to academia.

Her phone buzzed, and as Finn checked it, she found an attachment waiting.

From Gillian.

She bit her lip as she opened it, her eyes wide when she was met with a picture of Gillian's cleavage. She'd know those tits anywhere. White shirt, buttons undone, red lace bra. *Fuck!*

Gorgeous. Every last inch of you x

She sent it off, not expecting a response. Gillian was supposed to be driving home, and if Finn knew she was texting and driving, she would hit the roof.

Another ping.

This time, a picture of Gillian with her legs spread, no underwear, those pristinely manicured fingers spreading her lips.

Oh. My. Fucking. God.

Finn closed her eyes and grinned. Was this the woman she was potentially going to be in a relationship with? Jesus. Finn couldn't believe the turn her life was taking.

I took these in my office for you today.

Finn swallowed. She'd done things she shouldn't have in Gillian's office. It was a very memorable place for her. Knowing Gillian had spread herself in there for Finn today, well, it had her feeling *very* hot under the collar.

How are you sending me these? You're supposed to be on your way home!

Finn flicked back to the images, shifting when she felt her own wetness present itself.

I pulled over in a lay-by. Are you satisfied?

Finn took her bottom lip between her teeth as she got comfortable and propped herself up on her pillows.

Satisfied? Babe, I won't be satisfied until I taste you again. You're so perfect.

Finn meant that with all of her heart. Gillian Masters was perfection, and any fucker that told her otherwise was a piece of shit.

Thank you for always making me feel good about myself.

Damn right Finn would always be on hand to do that.

Hey, you're the most beautiful woman I've ever laid eyes on. The thought that maybe one day I could call you mine leaves me a little breathless.

Finn hoped that wasn't too much.

I am yours, Finn. All of me.

Oh, fuck. Gillian meant that? Finn felt as though she did, but if the last few weeks were anything to go by, she knew Gillian could allow her guilt to eat away at her.

I hope you mean that. Because when you say those things to me, it makes me want to show you just how beautiful you are. For a long time to come.

Feeling emotional...as well as aroused, Finn puffed out her cheeks and lay her phone on her stomach. She would have to be careful not to get too carried away too quickly, but it was painfully hard to stick to that when Gillian seemed to be opening up more with each moment that passed.

Another ping.

It's all I want.

Another message.

I'm driving now. I hope I see you tonight.

Oh, Gillian would absolutely see Finn tonight. One way or another, she would be in that apartment, wrapped up in the very woman who was potentially going to change her life.

CHAPTER 24

GILLIAN REACHED FOR HER PHONE, checking the message Finn had just sent her.

I'll be there in 10 mins.

She smiled, knowing Jan was watching her.

Door code is 9586. You'd better use it before a neighbour catches you breaking and entering! See you soon!

Gillian threw her phone to the couch and sighed. Today had been one of the most enjoyable days of her life. She had woken up with Finn, gone to work refusing to worry, and now she was waiting for the very woman who made her feel ridiculously happy.

“I don't think I've ever seen you smile like that,” Jan said, reaching for her cup of hot chocolate. “It *is* because of Finn, right?”

“Jan, I sent her dirty pictures earlier.” Gillian covered her face with her hand, knowing she was blushing. “I don't know what the hell I think I'm doing, but I sent fucking dirty pictures to my student!”

“First of all, good for you. I bet Finn thought she'd won the lottery. And secondly, maybe you should try calling her your girlfriend rather than your student. It may make things seem a little easier.”

Finn wasn't her girlfriend, though. They hadn't discussed it. Sure, they'd discussed doing whatever it was they were

doing in secret, but there had been no talk of being exclusive. “We haven’t had that conversation.”

Jan lifted a shoulder. “Maybe you should.”

“You don’t think it’s too soon for that?” Gillian wrinkled her nose. While she wanted to go full steam ahead into this with Finn, she had to remember that she wasn’t the only one in this relationship. “I’d love to, but I always come back to what Dave used to say.” The moment Gillian mentioned Dave, Jan’s nostrils flared. “I’m sorry, I know you hate talking about him, but he *is* the reason I feel the way I do sometimes.”

“I know. I know. I’m sorry.” Jan exhaled a breath as she crossed her legs. “I just worry that when you mention him, he’s taking up your headspace. You can do without that.”

“Oh, no. He’s not. The only person taking up headspace is Finn. And what a wonderful headspace it is to be in.”

Jan grinned. “Yeah?”

“Jan, I can’t describe it. I had some kind of realisation the other night when Finn turned up at my door with flowers and wine. And I know it’s probably not much, you’re used to Phil coming home with diamonds for you, but it just meant so much. Something so simple, you know?”

“I’d rather have the flowers than the diamonds. Phil thinks with his bank account, he always has. And while I love him to death, sometimes I wish he came home with something simple. Simplicity is often far more beautiful.”

“You’re right. But it’s just Finn’s entire personality that I’m a little bit in love with. I know what people probably think when it comes to first impressions. She’s covered basically head to toe in tattoos, and she carries herself a particular way, but she’s so soft and gentle when I want her to be.”

“When you want her to be?” Jan quirked a brow.

“Look, we all know this started with wild hot sex. Let’s not pretend it didn’t. But as I got to know Finn, when we weren’t in those situations, I saw such a beautiful side to her. I know this is going to be difficult, but I’m finally taking your advice and living my life. I can’t imagine waking up one day and

regretting the moment I let her go. I really can't. I'd kick myself forever."

"You're right, it will be difficult, but you can be professional...and Finn is not the type of person to do anything to jeopardise your career. No way."

Gillian smiled as there was a knock at the door. "You're right. She's not." As she got to her feet and approached the door, she said, "Now, can we all just have a normal chat and pretend that everything is okay?"

"Absolutely."

Gillian opened the door, grinning when Finn stood in the hallway wearing a shy smile. She stepped closer and kissed Finn. "You can wipe that smile off your face. There's nothing shy about you, Finn Ashton."

Finn shrugged as she followed Gillian inside. "That's fair."

Gillian moved into the kitchen, turning to face Finn and Jan. "Anyone for a drink?"

Finn smiled. "Sure. I'll have whatever it is you two are drinking."

"Baileys hot chocolate." Gillian held up a bottle of Baileys. "It was left over from Christmas. We decided to put it to good use."

Finn held up her hands. "Anything to help with waste. I'd love one."

Gillian watched on with a smile as Finn took a seat on the couch and started chatting to Jan. This was something she could definitely get used to. Her best friend and her...lover catching up and getting along like a house on fire. Finn just seemed so at ease around here. As though she was meant to be in this apartment. She fit within it.

"Hey, babe?"

Gillian's heart fluttered as she spun around. "Yeah?"

"Did you decide on any colour schemes yet?"

“I have one or two things in mind. I thought I’d show them to you later. See what you think.” Gillian wanted Finn’s opinion. It didn’t matter if it was going to be Gillian’s new home; she wanted Finn’s input. Who knew where they’d be down the line. “And I wanted to ask when I could start ordering furniture?”

“To be honest, you could probably start ordering it now, depending on delivery times. The living room is my priority. And since the walls don’t need a complete re-plaster and only a skim, that’s knocked some time off. Significantly, actually.”

“Oh, really?” Gillian added a shot of Baileys to Finn’s hot chocolate and stirred. Once she’d added whipped cream and chocolate sprinkles, she carried it through and placed it down beside her own. “Well, that’s quite handy.”

Finn smoothed a palm over Gillian’s knee and smiled. “Don’t worry, babe. Your place is all I’m dedicated to outside of studying.”

“I know.” Gillian squeezed Finn’s hand, pulling it into her lap as they both made themselves comfortable. “And I was thinking,” Gillian said as she eyed Jan. “That I could arrange some kind of paint party. Get some of the girls around, and we can all do our bit.”

“No alcohol.” Finn laughed. “I’ve been hired to go in and fix the result of paint parties before today. Getting leathered while you’re decorating a house isn’t the best idea.”

“Maybe I’ll just bribe them all with some fancy meal to say thank you.”

Finn nodded in agreement. “That sounds like the perfect idea.”

Jan slapped her knee. “Right, well, since that’s sorted...I had a few questions for you, Finn.”

Oh, Lord. Where the hell was Jan going with this conversation?



Finn swallowed as Gillian held her hand tighter in her lap. Jan had questions? About what? It had been Jan who had encouraged Finn to give Gillian a chance...to give her time, so if she was about to grill Finn, she wasn't sure what her reaction would be.

“Um...okay. What questions?”

“Well, I'm looking at having a new kitchen. Would you come and give me a quote for it? I'd rather have someone I trust in my house than a complete stranger.”

“Oh.” Finn nervously laughed, and then Gillian followed. “Sure. Of course. I can't really start anything until I've finished at Gillian's place, but yeah.”

“No rush. I haven't told my husband yet.”

“Well, uh.” Finn scratched the back of her neck, aware that she was feeling a little clammy. “I'm sure Gillian can give you my number whenever you're ready.”

“Perfect.” Jan got to her feet and took her cup into the kitchen. “So, on that note, I'm going to head home and leave you two in peace.”

“Oh, no need to leave because I'm here. Really.” Finn started to stand, but Gillian held her in place.

Jan smiled. “It's been a long day. I'm ready to go home and unwind.”

Finn simply nodded. She wouldn't force the woman to stay, not if it meant Finn could spend some time alone with Gillian. Those text messages from earlier had been on her mind since the moment Gillian said she was driving again. “Well, it was nice to see you again.”

“I hope I'll be seeing a lot more of you, Finn.” Jan shrugged her jacket on and draped her scarf around her neck.

“Gill, give me a call about that paint party when you need some extra hands.”

“I will.” Gillian separated from Finn, walking Jan to the door. They embraced, and then Jan pulled back and winked at Gillian.

“I’ll talk to you soon, love.”

Once they had said their goodbyes, Gillian flicked the lock on the back of her apartment door and turned to Finn. “Hi. How was the rest of your day?”

“Good. Yeah.” Finn sat lengthways on the couch, her hands clasped behind her head. “Yours?”

“Well, I had a long soak in the bath. *That* was divine. My feet were killing me today.”

Finn beckoned Gillian closer. “Come here. Sit at the opposite end.”

Gillian frowned but did as Finn asked.

“Socks off. Feet up.” Finn patted her lap, cracking her knuckles in preparation for giving Gillian one of her epic foot massages. “Now...hard or soft?”

Gillian laughed as she brought her feet up into Finn’s lap. “Depends what you’re referring to?”

“Mind out of the gutter. This is me being romantic. Hard... or soft?”

“Mm, a little of both?”

“Perfect.” Finn got to work, the first touch eliciting a moan from Gillian. She blocked out the sound, determined to have an ordinary conversation with her. “So, I spoke to my mum before I came here. We’ve decided on a care agency together, and she wants me to call them in the morning about availability.”

Gillian’s brows rose. “That’s great news.”

“She seems really excited about it. The company we’ve chosen can take clients to appointments and, if we pay for it,

days out too. I think she's already making a list in her head of places to visit."

"Oh, Finn. That's brilliant. And it's going to take a huge weight off your shoulders."

Finn couldn't agree more. Just thinking about it all made her emotional.

"Oh, God. That feels amazing." Gillian laid her head back, but Finn could see the smile she wore. "Why didn't we do this sooner?"

"I believe you had your reasons," Finn said, fisting her hand and slowly rolling her knuckles around the arch of Gillian's foot. "You should wear flats more often. Your feet wouldn't hurt then."

"Oh, no. There's no backing out now. I'm going to wear heels more because I know how good your foot massage is." Gillian lifted her head and eyed Finn. "Is there anything you *can't* do?"

"Plenty of things." Finn lifted a shoulder. She wasn't perfect. Not by a long stretch. "But...we're getting off topic."

"We are?"

"Gillian, I just wanted to thank you for taking a chance on me. These last few days have been quite crazy for me. I'm here with you, my mum has agreed to the agency, and I don't know. This doesn't happen to me. My life never falls into place like this." Finn squeezed her eyes shut when she felt tears threatening. Her voice shook, but she swallowed the emotion down. "It just all feels really good all of a sudden."

Gillian sat up and crawled towards Finn. She got comfortable in her lap, stroking her fingers through Finn's hair. "My hesitation was never about you, Finn. You've never done a single thing to make me doubt just how good we could be together. It's just everything else around us. But...I owe it to myself to try. If this all comes out one day, I'll deal with the backlash then. So long as I know that I'll still have you at the end of it all, I'll face everything head-on."

“I know you’ll make the best decision for you.” Finn leaned in and kissed Gillian, smiling against her lips. “That’s all I care about. What’s best for you.”

“I think we can get this right. You said it yourself in the park the other night. How can something be wrong when it feels as though it was meant to be?”

Finn wrapped Gillian up and shifted down the couch until they were lying with one another. “And there was me thinking you didn’t listen to a word I said.”

Gillian kissed the tip of Finn’s nose, sending her heart soaring. “I see and hear everything you do and say, Finn. I always did.”

Finn sighed, staring up at the ceiling as she stroked her fingers through Gillian’s hair. They may not know what was coming, but Finn would fight tooth and nail for this very woman in her arms.

Today, tomorrow, and in ten years’ time.

CHAPTER 25

ONE MONTH LATER...

Finn sat on the bench she'd spent the last hour standing on and took a breath. It was almost five in the evening, and she'd been at Gillian's new place since nine this morning. The house was really taking shape and much quicker than Finn thought it would. Okay, she had called in a few favours from friends within the industry—people she had helped out in a rush in the past—and now Gillian had a mostly functioning home. As of two hours ago, the kitchen was finished. And as of two minutes ago, Finn had applied the last stroke of paint to the main bedroom walls.

Honestly, she was proud of how much she had exceeded her own expectations. And Finn knew Gillian appreciated how hard she'd been working here lately. So much so that Finn's dinner had been prepared and cooked for her on four occasions this week alone.

She turned her watch towards herself, deciding she would give her mum a quick call before Gillian got here. Finn had told her to go straight to the apartment, but Gillian had insisted on seeing Finn's handiwork today.

She just wants to see you in the fucking tool belt.

Pushing those particular thoughts from her mind, Finn took her phone from the dust sheet covering the new furniture Gillian had piled up in boxes, and called her mum.

“Finley! Hi, love.”

Finn smiled. Her mum was far more chipper these days. “Hi, Mum. How was your day out with Monica?”

“Oh, it was fantastic! She took me along the prom, and we had fish and chips.”

Finn’s brows drew together as she looked out of the window. “Hasn’t it piddled down all day?”

“Oh, Finn. A little rain never hurt anyone.”

Finn’s brows rose this time. A month ago, Carol would have scoffed at the idea of going outside when there was a light breeze, never mind constant rain all day. “Fair enough. Anyway, I was just calling to see if you needed me home tonight. I’m finishing up at the house I’m working on in the next hour or so.”

“Oh, no. Don’t worry about me. Sue is calling in with some grocery bits she offered to pick up.”

“Mum, are you sure? I know I said what I said the other month, but if you needed me, I could come home.” While Finn loved having her own time and space lately, she was worried her mum was struggling rather than admitting that she needed help. The house appeared to be in order whenever she managed to surface from Gillian’s bedroom, but Carol had gone from needing Finn all hours of the day to practically not at all.

“Monica did all the housework this morning. Those private companies are much better than the publicly-funded ones. They’re not rushing out the door ten minutes after they arrive.”

“Yeah, I know.” Finn hadn’t told Carol, but she was paying for the extra shift Monica worked. Carol’s own funds took care of the initial daily routine of washing, dressing, and preparing breakfast and lunch for Carol, but Finn took care of the cost that came with keeping Monica until the early evening. “So long as it’s all working out for you?”

“It’s bloody marvellous! I feel like royalty some days when we drive out and visit some new areas.”

“Good. I’m glad you enjoy it.” Finn heard a key in the door, instantly getting to her feet. “I’m not sure of my plans yet tonight. But if I’m not coming home, I’ll let you know.”

“You may think I believe you when you tell me that you’re just out with friends from uni, but I’m not daft, Finn. Whoever it is you’ve been spending *a lot* of time with lately...enjoy yourself. And I don’t know, maybe bring her round one day so I can meet the woman who makes my Finley very happy.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about. Bye, Mum.” Finn quickly cut the call and removed her boots before she left the bedroom.

Gillian had decided that she didn’t want carpet on the stairs or landing now. The last thing Finn needed was to create more work for herself by traipsing paint across the freshly sanded floorboards. She took the stairs slowly, creeping down them until she landed in the hallway. She caught that familiar scent Gillian wore, following its path to the kitchen.

Gillian stood with her back to Finn, her arms folded across her chest. Finn placed a gentle hand on the small of her back, not wanting to startle her. Even if it had been her intention as she tiptoed down the stairs just moments ago. “Hi, babe.”

“Is...the kitchen finished?”

“Mmhmm.” Finn nodded, admiring that smile as it spread on Gillian’s red-painted lips. “What do you think?”

“It’s gorgeous. All of it. I thought you were finishing the bedroom today and leaving the last of the kitchen until the weekend?”

“Thought I’d surprise you. I had a pal come round and do the painting for me so I could get busy upstairs.” She checked her hands and arms for paint before settling one around Gillian’s waist. “I know you’ve been secretly hoping the kitchen would be finished soon, so I made that happen.”

Gillian turned to Finn, draping her arms over Finn’s shoulders. “I love it. It’s perfect.” Her nails scratched the back of Finn’s neck, sending a shudder throughout her. “And I’ve missed you today.”

Gillian seemed tired; those dark eyes half-lidded occasionally when they met Finn's. "I told you to go straight to the apartment. I'm almost done here for the day."

"Well, I know. But as I said, I missed you."

Finn hadn't known how the last month would progress, but she was very pleased with every aspect of her life now. On the days when she didn't have a lecture, she avoided the university. Their relationship was so intense behind closed doors that Finn didn't want to jeopardise anything by being around campus. "I missed you, too."

Gillian drew Finn into a kiss, guiding her back against the worktop. "Have you really been here since I left for work this morning?"

"I have. Once you'd driven into work, I came straight over here and got cracking. No use hanging around when I can keep myself busy doing things that make you happy."

"You're quite something." Gillian's voice dropped a little lower. Finn knew exactly what that tone meant. "You'd think I was fucking you or something..."

Finn eyed the kitchen window. The blinds were closed, thank God. "While I was here earlier, I was in my own head. Just...thinking about the last few months. Well, thinking about that one moment that led to us being here like this."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah. That night. Your divorce party."

Gillian lowered a hand between them, her expert fingers undoing the button on her jeans. "Greatest night of my life."

Finn quirked a brow. Was that really the truth that Gillian spoke? "I'm sure it wasn't."

"When I saw you sitting at that table watching me, I knew I was going to take you home and have you show me what fun I could be having. What I didn't anticipate was all of this. All of you. You make me ridiculously happy, Finn. I hope you know that, and I hope you can believe me when I tell you that night *was* the greatest of my life."

“Did I meet your expectations?” Finn rested back against the worktop, pressing her elbows to it as she slouched a little. Gillian slowly lowered her zipper, her gaze unwavering.

“Oh, you did far more than meet them,” Gillian said, lifting Finn’s tank top from her body. “You exceeded them in every way possible.”

“What can I say? I always had a feeling I knew what you needed.” As Gillian tweaked a nipple, wetness gathered between Finn’s legs. She rested harder against the worktop, concerned her knees may tremble soon. Too soon. “That night...the week before my birthday when I met you at the bar...”

“What about it?”

“Were you...jealous that I was potentially going to find someone else?”

An unusual expression crossed Gillian’s face at that question. One that *did* look a lot like jealousy. “Would my answer make any difference to the outcome of this?”

“Well, no. It’s just that I’ve never felt like I was in that position before. You know, someone jealous that I was with somebody else.”

“Turn the tables and tell me how *you* would have felt at seeing *me* with someone else.”

Finn scoffed. “I can admit that I’d be insanely jealous.”

“And...what would you have done about it?” Gillian slipped a hand down the front of Finn’s boxers, touching her clit lightly. *Oh, fuck.* “Well?”

“Shit, babe. T-that...”

Gillian rubbed harder. “Answer me, Finn.”

“I-I’d have waited until you were alone and then showed you how you deserve to be treated. H-how you deserve to be fucked and taken care of.”

“Mmm. Yes, you would.” Gillian lowered her hand, gathering Finn’s wetness. “Does it turn you on knowing that I

was potentially jealous?”

“M-maybe.” Finn’s eyes closed; her lips parted when Gillian suddenly eased two fingers inside her. “Fuck.”

“And as for me with someone else...” Gillian leaned in, whispering against Finn’s lips. “I’d have still thought about you. While someone else was fucking me, I’d have been thinking about *you* and how I always dreamt about you claiming my pussy. Wishing I was yours...always.”

Finn forced herself against Gillian’s fingers, desperate to come so she could turn the tables and fuck Gillian. Right here, against the counter. “O-oh, shit. Yes. Fuck me harder.”

Gillian obliged, managing a third finger. Nobody had ever made Finn feel this way, and as she tightened, she knew nobody else ever could. Gillian was the only woman in this world who could make Finn this wet. At times, Finn felt needy. That was a new experience entirely. “You’re so tight, baby. Do you need to come?”

“Y-yes.” Finn forced her jeans and boxers down her legs, widening her stance. “You gonna help me with that...or?”

Gillian smirked and bit down hard on Finn’s nipple. She sucked, easing the sting, and bent her knees. She thrust hard and fast, the muscles in her upper arms visible in her sleeveless blouse today. God, she had magnificent arms. “Only me. *Always.*”

And then Gillian suddenly dropped to her knees, moaning as she watched her fingers disappear inside Finn. “Babe, I-I’m close.”

Gillian brought her other hand to Finn’s pussy and pressed her thumb to her clit. “God, you have the most fuckable pussy.”

Okay, that was stroking Finn’s ego. She smirked as she stared down at Gillian, quite struck by how hard Gillian concentrated on every move she made. “Maybe you just feel fucking amazing inside me.” Before Gillian responded, she leaned in and enveloped Finn’s clit with her lips. That one

move would have Finn coming in seconds...and Gillian knew it. “Fuckkk.”

That delicate tongue rolled so effortlessly over Finn’s aching clit, Gillian’s full red lips driving her closer and closer to the edge. Gillian released it with a pop, poked out her tongue, and teased Finn. “Let me taste you, baby.”

And just like that...Finn was gone. She shook, her knees almost giving out, coming against Gillian’s lips. “B-babe. Oh, fuck.” She gripped the back of Gillian’s head, rocking against her. “Shit. Yes. O-oh.”

When Finn couldn’t hold on any longer, she released her hold on Gillian’s head and slumped further. Gillian offered a satisfied moan, licked her lips, and got to her feet. She pressed a hand to Finn’s chest, smiling into a kiss. “You...are *fucking* perfect.”

“W-what the hell was that for?”

Gillian lifted a shoulder as she fixed her pencil shirt on her waist. “I told you. I missed you.”



Gillian dropped her keys to the table, forcing her heels off as Finn locked up for the night with her own key. Yes, they’d reached that point last week. And no, they were not going to make a big deal out of it. Gillian wouldn’t even live here soon. But, when the time did come to move out, Gillian would likely give Finn a spare key for the house. That hadn’t been the plan in the beginning, but Finn deserved to be allowed to come and go as she wished to. Why? Because why not? They were in a *perfect* place right now, and Gillian didn’t see that changing any time soon. There wasn’t a chance in hell that she would do anything to fuck this all up. No way.

“I’m so tired,” Gillian spoke quietly as she flicked on the lamp in the living room and turned the TV on. “That’s your fault. *All* your fault.”

As she turned back towards Finn, those strong tattooed arms wrapped around her waist. “You don’t get to blame me. You’re the one who came onto *my* job...and made *me* drop my pants.”

“Are you saying you don’t want me to do that again?” Gillian pushed out her bottom lip, adoring the smile Finn wore.

“Never, babe. It was a nice surprise.”

“Good. Can I get you a beer or anything?”

Finn lifted her hands and rubbed Gillian’s shoulders. “No. You can go and sit down while I run you a bath. You need to rest and relax. I hate seeing you tired.”

God. Finn was incredibly attentive. Gillian knew that not long after they’d resumed their...activities, but she never imagined she’d be on the receiving end of it almost daily. “You don’t have to do that. You’ve worked far harder than me today.”

“It’s not a competition. And it’s also not up for discussion. Sit down, I’ll make you a cup of tea, and then I’ll sort your bath out for you.”

Gillian stroked a thumb across Finn’s cheek, smiling as they gazed at one another. “Do you know how lucky I am to have you in my life?”

“I think we’re equally as lucky as one another.”

Gillian dipped her head, blushing. She always did when Finn looked at her the way she was right now. A look that could potentially come with an ‘I love you’ at any moment.

“How do you do that?” Finn asked, finding Gillian’s eyes. “Switch from the person you were at the house...to this.”

“We’re the same person. It’s just...” Gillian shook her head as she took her bottom lip between her teeth. “Never mind.”

“Tell me, babe.” Finn’s brow furrowed. “You know I appreciate it when you’re open and honest with me.”

“The way you look at me sometimes,” Gillian said, cradling Finn’s chin in her hand. “It’s a way I’ve *always* wished you’d look at me. And now that you do, it reminds me of just what we have. That it’s not only sex anymore.”

“But...that’s what you want, right? For it to *not* be just sex anymore?”

Gillian held onto Finn’s open shirt, pulling their bodies together. “This is all I’ve wanted for so many years, Finn. Someone like you. Or rather...*exactly* you.”

“Well, you have me, babe. All of me. For as long as I’m lucky enough to have you.”

“We haven’t discussed our relationship much lately. While I prefer things that way, it is important to me to know that you’re still feeling okay about it. About the secrecy.”

Finn lifted a shoulder. “It won’t be forever. We get plenty of one another when we’re alone. It’s enough for me until I can have more of you...outside of this place.”

Gillian hadn’t known how much that would relax her. While she mostly forgot about the way this had to be, the idea that Finn could demand more or walk away did flit into her mind occasionally. “God, I hope you still want me when your module with me is over.”

Finn pulled back ever so slightly, shock written all over her handsome face. “Still want you?”

“I was your fantasy, Finn. And yes, you were mine. While you’ve become everything other than my fantasy in recent weeks, that may not be true for you. When your module ends, if you don’t...feel that pull towards me anymore, please tell me.”

If that day did come, Gillian would be shattered. More so than when she caught Dave cheating. Because Finn Ashton was her world right now. And as this went on, as things deepened and intensified in other ways, she knew Finn would only come to mean even more to her. Gillian tried to keep her heart out of it at times, but she was struggling to do that lately. The last month had been so amazing for her that the thought of

losing Finn physically hurt. That was a new experience for Gillian. To feel pain at a simple thought.

“Babe, you’re so much more than a fantasy to me. That fantasy ended the night you brought me back here. The first time I kissed you, touched you, I can’t even explain it. I knew what I wanted...I just wasn’t allowed to have it. Now that we’re in a different place, now that I’m yours and you’re mine...what you see is what you get. Anything I’ve said or done, I mean.” Finn guided Gillian into a soft, lingering kiss. The kind of kiss Gillian was becoming used to...and wanted more of. A kiss which promised Gillian that Finn was all in. “Don’t ever think that you’re nothing more than my fantasy. And don’t ever think that the day we can go public...I’ll back away. I can’t wait until the day when I can hold your hand in a bar or introduce you to people as my girlfriend.”

“You really mean that.” It wasn’t a question but a statement.

“I mean it with everything that I am, Gillian. You may be my superior outside of here...but behind closed doors, you’re basically my life.”

Gillian’s heart raced at that, her pulse whooshing in her ears. “I just want to enjoy any moment I can with you, Finn.”

“And that’s exactly what we’ve been doing. But when the time is right, when you’re sure there’s no repercussions, I’m going to take you out. For dinner, for walks, some crazy things I can think of. We’re going to do it all, babe. And we’ll enjoy it more than we probably should because we’ve waited so long.”

“Then...I look forward to those days with you.”

“I know.” Finn smiled into a kiss, guiding Gillian towards the couch. “Now, sit down so I can sort out your bath. Then... I’ll sit with you while we decide what to have for dinner. I had all intentions of cooking for you tonight, but we’re both whacked, so I’ll do that tomorrow instead.”

Gillian exhaled a contented sigh, watching Finn head for the bathroom. Was she happy? Deliriously happy. Would it

last? Time would tell.

CHAPTER 26

FINN VARNISHED THE FINAL STAIR, wanting to get finished for the day but also not wanting to do a shoddy job of it. Reading week had commenced today for her degree, and she had plans to surprise Gillian. She had snuck into the apartment after her midday lecture, got the essentials and some gorgeous outfits for Gillian, and packed them away. Finn had no idea if Gillian already had plans—she hadn't mentioned anything so far—but they were officially cancelled. This weekend, Finn would have Gillian *all* to herself.

She checked the time, noting that she only had minutes before Gillian arrived. They needed to be on the road by six and ideally out of the house before then. Finn had contacted some trusted friends who she'd worked with in the past, along with three who had already returned favours in the last few weeks, and they would be arriving with any remaining materials she needed to finish off Gillian's dream home. Not only would they be bringing paint cans and other necessities, but they had offered to finish most of the remaining odd jobs *for* Finn. Gillian's home would be complete by the end of next week at the very latest.

The whole reason she had decided to finish varnishing the stairs today was so that Gillian didn't try to go upstairs when she arrived. Because the upstairs was entirely complete, except for one secret addition she needed to make to a spare room. This was the only way to guarantee that Gillian would be none the wiser, even if Finn itched to drag her up the stairs and show her around. Furniture needed to be assembled, but they could work on that together next week.

As Finn sat back on her knees and removed the mask she'd been wearing, a key in the front door had her smiling. She glanced over her shoulder. "Perfect timing. I'm just finished."

"Finn, you didn't say you'd be working after lectures today. I wish you'd take a bloody break."

She got to her feet and ripped the gloves from her hands, disposing of them in the bin liner hanging from the living room door. "I am going to take a break. All weekend with you, actually."

Gillian's eyes widened. "Really? I get you to myself all weekend?"

"Yup. I am here to serve." Finn stretched her arms out either side of her, grinning. "Work okay?"

"Yes. Fine. Just thankful that I have next week off. My feet need a break from these bloody heels."

"Is it...some kind of mandatory dress code or something?"

Gillian laughed. "That we wear heels? No. It's not the 1950s, baby. I can wear whatever I like."

"Then why do you put yourself through the trouble of wearing heels?" Finn followed Gillian through to the back living area, reaching for her now cold cup of coffee. Ah well. It was wet, if nothing else. "Throw some pumps on and have done with it."

"If I'm not mistaken, I recall you *demanding* that I wear heels on campus..."

Shit. Gillian had taken her seriously? "Babe, I was joking. I mean, I love seeing you sauntering around campus, but not if you're uncomfortable. I'd still get off on seeing you in jeans, since you have a great arse."

"Do you know how very good you are for my confidence?"

Finn beckoned Gillian closer with a curl of the finger. "I think you have that covered all by yourself." She hooked an arm around Gillian's waist and pulled her in. "A gorgeous woman like you has confidence most women would kill for."

Gillian nodded slowly. “Sure. You keep telling yourself that.”

Fuck. The look in Gillian’s eyes told Finn just how off the mark she was with that comment. Maybe one day, Gillian would open up to her, but Finn wouldn’t demand it. She’d had the bits and pieces from Jan weeks ago, but Gillian hadn’t added anything as of yet. Nor did she know Jan had spoken to Finn.

“Hey,” Finn whispered as she held Gillian. “I know that was a shitty thing for me to say, and I’m sorry. I have no idea how anyone feels, and I shouldn’t have assumed that I do.”

“It’s okay. No harm done.” Gillian sighed, nuzzling into Finn’s neck. “But just remember that the person I am...is because of you.” Gillian fell silent, holding onto Finn tighter with each second that passed. “We don’t need to talk about it. I just want you to finish up here so we can go back to my place and veg out on the couch.”

“I...had a different idea,” Finn said, holding Gillian in place as she tried to move away. “If you didn’t have anything specific planned for the weekend, anyway.”

“Nothing that doesn’t involve you.” Gillian’s brows drew together. “What did you have in mind?”

“Well, I may have taken the liberty of booking us a hotel room for the weekend. It’s about a two-hour drive away, so we should be free to go out to dinner. Maybe a club or a cocktail bar...”

“You...did that for us?” Gillian cocked her head, regarding Finn with a sweet smile. “Really?”

“Mmhmm. I wanted us to get away for a few days. I know it’s not much, it’s just a hotel, but I’d love to take you out for dinner and not worry about being caught.”

“Oh, Finn. It’s everything. Really, it is.”

“So, you fancy it then? Because I went to your place on the way here from uni and got some things together for you. I was hoping we could hit the motorway as soon as possible, really.”

Gillian smiled into a kiss, squeezing Finn. “Let’s lock up here and head off.”



Gillian strolled into the lift, a soft, fluffy robe covering her skin after the most indulgent full-body massage. Finn had booked it as a surprise for her, leaving Gillian speechless as she waved her off over an hour ago. She hadn’t known it was possible to feel so happy all of the time, but Gillian was absolutely going to enjoy those moments. Finn hadn’t needed to do this for her; she hadn’t needed to surprise her with anything at all. Yet here she was, at a fancy hotel and about to return to the very woman Gillian was head over heels in love with.

Oh, God. Don’t go into that room and open your mouth.

Gillian hoped Finn at least *felt* the love she had for her. Until she was brave enough to be honest, to tell Finn exactly what she meant to her, Gillian *prayed* Finn felt it. It was important that Finn never felt unsure about them, even if it was mostly Gillian who was the uncertain one. Really, Finn had been the perfect partner.

The lift reached their floor, and Gillian stepped out, taking the short walk to the room. In seconds, she would be in Finn’s arms again. In seconds, she would have the privilege of gazing into those ocean-blue eyes while running her fingers through Finn’s soft blonde hair. She shuddered; Finn did unimaginable things to her body.

She swiped the key card against the electronic pad on the door, quietly opening it as the light flashed green. She could just about make out Finn’s feet, the TV playing quietly. This room was so peaceful that Finn had probably fallen asleep once she’d walked Gillian to the lift earlier. As she took the small hallway, passing the bathroom as she did, she found Finn exactly how she expected to. Sleeping.

Gillian stopped for a moment, watching Finn's chest rise and fall slowly. She had been working so hard lately to complete the house that Gillian was certain this was the first downtime she'd had in weeks. Maybe longer. She crept across the room, crawled onto the bed, and carefully lay down beside Finn. God, even the bed was so comfortable and luxurious that she wasn't sure they'd make it out for dinner tomorrow. Could they just lock themselves away and hold one another until they were kicked out?

She draped an arm over Finn's stomach, snuggling into her.

"Hey," Finn spoke quietly, shifting and pulling the comforter from the bottom of the bed over them. "How was your massage?"

"Amazing. Thank you."

Finn kissed Gillian's forehead and wrapped her up in her arms. "Good. I wanted to do something relaxing for you."

"Finn," Gillian said, tilting her head and finding Finn's eyes. "You really are perfect."

"So long as that's what you think of me, that's all I care about." Finn lowered herself further down the bed and turned on her side, coming face to face with Gillian. "And I hope you know how perfect you are to me, too."

Sometimes Gillian had to wonder if Finn was only being polite. How could she be perfect to one person, but walked all over by another? It didn't make sense. "I know."

"But...do you? Really?" Finn asked, giving Gillian a knowing look. "Because whenever I say something like that to you, you kinda go a bit vacant behind the eyes. Would you prefer it if I didn't make those comments?"

"It depends entirely on whether you're only saying it to make me smile or not."

Finn frowned. "I say it because it's true, babe."

Was it possible that it could be true? Gillian had never felt as though it was. Perhaps that was down to her cheating

husband, though. No, she *knew* it was the reason she had spent the last eighteen months or so feeling worthless. “I’m sorry.”

“For what?” Finn stroked her fingertips up and down Gillian’s thigh beneath the comforter.

Gillian exhaled a long, slow breath. Maybe it was time to open up a little more. She didn’t want a relationship where she held anything back. Especially not with Finn. “My ex-husband cheated on me,” Gillian said, scoffing as she looked down between them. She toyed with the string on Finn’s hoodie, choosing to focus on that rather than the expression on Finn’s face. “With my cousin. It had been going on for two years.”

“Prick.”

“Maybe, I don’t know.”

Finn sighed. “Don’t know what? If he’s a prick?”

“Whether it was my fault that he cheated.” Gillian had spent a long time going over it all in her head. She hadn’t done anything wrong in their marriage, but Dave had decided he was unhappy somewhere along the way. Surely she’d contributed without knowing. “When I caught them, he didn’t even apologise. He told me that I wasn’t a good wife. I made him so unhappy that sometimes he didn’t want to come home from work, and sleeping beside me made him miserable.” Gillian had never told anyone the things Dave said. She had told Jan enough to satisfy her, but this was the first time she’d ever opened up like this. Now that she’d started, Gillian didn’t want to stop. It felt surprisingly freeing. “I stupidly asked him if he wanted to try marriage counselling, even though I didn’t love him anymore. While I was trying to do things right, to abide by my vows, I secretly hated him. I had done for years.”

“I think that sometimes, settling for what we’re familiar with makes us feel safer. You know? We assume things will get better, and when they don’t, it’s just easier to stay. I don’t think anyone is wrong for that, as humans we prefer to bury our true feelings when it comes to love or failed relationships.” Finn lifted a hand from beneath the cover and took Gillian’s. “Having said that, what he did was wrong. And if I ever hear

him saying shit like that to you, I'll punch his bastard lights out."

Gillian smiled at that. Finn struck her as the protective type. "When we first met and I used my job as my reason for not going further, that wasn't strictly true. Of course it plays quite a huge part in all of this, but it wasn't *only* that."

"You thought I wouldn't think much of you..."

"Before you walked into my lecture, I didn't leave the house unless it was for work. Some days I didn't eat, and there were nights when I lay awake wondering how to better myself. And then there were the times when I decided it was just easier and probably better for everyone else if I went to work and then came home. I felt like a complete failure, Finn. It's only now that you're in my life that I see any hope at all."

Finn guided Gillian onto her back and propped her head in her hand. Her robe separated a little, and as Finn grazed her trimmed nails down her skin, Gillian shuddered. "I don't know what you've been through, not really. I don't know how you feel about your future, about me, or whether you even see us going anywhere. Because I know that you're waiting for the other shoe to drop...and I leave. But I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to walk away, or hurt you, or look elsewhere." Finn dipped her head and kissed Gillian, her palm resting against her chest. When she pulled back, those blue eyes left Gillian breathless. "I'm falling in love with you, Gillian. You're all I think about. You're...all I see. I *want* a future with you. I *need* to see where we go."

A lump formed in Gillian's throat, tears slipping to the pillow beneath her head. Finn was falling in love with her? *Astonishing...*

"You are *nothing* that he says. You're fucking amazing, and I wouldn't want to wake up beside anyone else. You have brought so much to my life, babe. Whatever happens, I need you to remember that."

Gillian lifted a hand and cupped Finn's cheek. "I want a future with you, too."

“I know. I see it in your eyes when you’re trying to play all of this down.” Finn smiled. “When you don’t want to believe you’re in too deep.”

God, Finn knew Gillian better than she knew herself. “I’ll try harder.”

“You don’t have to try harder when it comes to anything, Gillian. You’ve been perfect this last month or so. And I get it, okay? When someone has done you over like that, it affects a person. So long as you believe me when I tell you that I see so many things I love about you, then everything will be okay.”

“Come here.” Gillian pulled Finn on top of her, the weight of her body anchoring. “I just want to lie in the silence with you.” She reached blindly for the remote control on the bed, turning the TV off. “I know this is the perfect opportunity to enjoy one another, but I just need you like this right now.”

Finn lifted her head and smiled. “I can have you whenever I want you, babe. *This* is perfect.”

CHAPTER 27

FINN WATCHED Gillian where she stood at the bar, mesmerised by everything this woman was. If they weren't already dating, Finn would have been charming her way into Gillian's bed tonight. She looked...fuck, she looked so good. Though, she always did, in Finn's opinion. From the very second they'd locked eyes, Finn had felt that shiver work its way through her entire body. Head to foot. Then came that handshake. A fire had spread, heating every last inch of her skin, those intriguing eyes only pulling Finn in. Had she wanted it? Not necessarily. Had she been able to think about anything else from that day on? No.

"You know, this has been the perfect couple of days away from home." Gillian slid into the booth next to Finn, their table out of the way of the throngs of people on the dancefloor. Finn may have been significantly younger, but she hated nights out with too many people around. Still, Gillian had been the one to decide on this cocktail bar. "Thank you for making everything so special."

Finn leaned in and kissed below Gillian's ear. "Anything for you, babe."

"Really. Thank you." Gillian's hand settled on Finn's thigh, caressing her.

"You work so hard. You needed the break. It's important that we look after ourselves, and sometimes that calls for a hotel, a massage, and cocktails."

“I can’t believe you’re drinking a cocktail. I’m so used to seeing you with a beer in your hand.”

Finn quirked a brow. “What can I say? I can change it up a little when required.”

“And why was it required tonight?”

“Because,” Finn whispered, turning her body to face Gillian. “I have the hottest woman in town on my arm. I have to fit in.”

“Baby, I don’t give a fuck what people think. You fit in with me, and that’s all I care about.” Gillian captured Finn’s lips, surprising her. While she wanted it, *always* wanted it, it felt foreign. Kissing in public wasn’t on the agenda until now. But wasn’t that the entire reason Finn had picked a hotel so far from home? “God, I’ve wanted to do that to you for so long.”

“I know.” Finn held Gillian’s chin, going in for another kiss. She slid her tongue past Gillian’s lips, provoking that sexy moan she was becoming used to. “Fuck, you’re so hot.”

“You should be careful. Anyone would think you wanted to get your hands on me.”

Finn lay a palm on Gillian’s bare knee, aware that she could move a little higher if she wanted to. There was a reason she had chosen a table so out of the way, and it wasn’t just down to the mass of people dancing. “I *do* want to get my hands on you.”

“You...you’re so different from anyone I’ve known before, Finn.” Gillian’s dark eyes studied every inch of Finn’s face. “You make me feel excited. As though I don’t know what’s coming next. In my book, that is *quite* an achievement.”

“I like seeing the fire in your eyes.”

Gillian lifted her cocktail and sipped, not losing Finn’s gaze as she watched her over the rim of the martini glass.

“And I always watch you, wondering what you’re thinking.” Finn inched her palm higher, smiling when Gillian took her own bottom lip between her teeth. “Like right now. You seem relaxed. You seem...switched on. And when I see

that in your eyes, I have to wonder if you're thinking about us together."

Finn knew a long-term relationship came with so much more than just sex, but Gillian was getting the hang of a new life, and Finn would be a fool to think for one minute that the sex they had wasn't off the scale. She knew what Gillian liked, knew she adored being wanted, and oh...Finn wanted her in so many ways.

"Finn, I'm always thinking about us together. It's the only time I feel happy and at peace." Gillian shifted a little closer, draping her arm over the back of the booth and behind Finn. "You've given my life a new meaning. As cheesy as that probably sounds, you really have. I laugh more, I have the greatest sex of my life, but that's not all you are to me or all you do for me. Just this...bringing me away from home so we can be together, it means so much."

"Because I see *you*." Finn grazed her nails down Gillian's thigh. "I see the need for something more in life. To have fun and explore. To discover who you are and what you want. You've chosen me to be that person by your side, and I'll never let you down, babe. Fuck the people who hurt you in the past. Life is about the here and now."

Gillian smiled into a kiss, touching her forehead to Finn's. "Even the things you say to me are incredibly sexy, Finn. Your character and your personality turn me on so much that sometimes it's hard to think straight."

"I've told you before. What you see is what you get."

"And I love everything I see," Gillian whispered against Finn's lips. "Thank you for never giving up on me. I know there were times when you couldn't handle me, my situation, but thank you for seeing it through."

"There would have always been a part of me that regretted walking away. I couldn't do it. I couldn't live with that kind of regret...not once I'd tasted you. *Touched* you. That's not something a human being is capable of forgetting." Finn slid her hand higher and beneath the dress Gillian wore. "*You* are unforgettable."

“F-Finn.” Gillian’s mouth fell open against Finn’s as she teased her way along her skin. The heat was undeniable—it always was—but it was the hoarseness of Gillian’s voice that had Finn gradually moving higher again. As always lately, no underwear. “Fuck, you have to stop that.”

“I thought you wanted fun and excitement?” Finn asked, looking around the club. “If you want that, you know I’ll give it to you.”

“N-not here.” But Gillian moaned as she said that, leading Finn to believe otherwise.

She smirked as she turned her face towards Gillian’s ear. “You really expect me to believe you? You’re so fucking filthy. I know you want it. Your pussy wouldn’t be soaked otherwise.”

“O-oh, Finn.” Gillian dug her nails into Finn’s thigh.

“Every time you do that, it makes me wetter. And you know what happens when I’m wet for you, babe.” Finn nipped at Gillian’s earlobe. “It makes me fuck you *wherever* we are.” Finn wasn’t worried. She’d had Gillian moaning her name in her office before today. A club was tame in comparison.

“Finn, I-I...” Gillian shifted and opened her legs a little wider.

“Just as I thought.”

Gillian clenched her jaw, her nostrils flared as Finn teased her clit. “I don’t know who you’re turning me into, but don’t ever stop.”

“Stop? Oh, babe. I’m just getting started.”

Gillian’s eyelids fluttered closed, her lip between her teeth. The table and chairs opposite where they sat obscured the view of anyone looking over, and Finn would go so far as to say that it simply looked like they were having an in-depth heart-to-heart.

“You’re always so needy for me.” Finn eased a finger inside Gillian, watching as a range of emotions crossed her face. “So wet and ready whenever I want you.”

Gillian whimpered, trying to rock against the hand between her legs. “I want you to always want me, Finn.”

Finn gripped the back of Gillian’s neck and pulled their faces together as she said, “You’re all mine. Don’t ever forget that.”

“O-oh, fuck. Y-yes.” Gillian inconspicuously lowered her hand and spread her lips, giving Finn a little more access. It wasn’t ideal, Finn would always prefer to have Gillian screaming her name, but this was just as exciting. “Baby, please...”

“You know, if I could get away with it, I’d be on my knees right now sucking your aching clit. Forcing my tongue inside you. Waiting...*begging*...for you to come in my mouth.”

Gillian rolled her fingers over her clit, briefly scanning the club again. Finn followed, satisfied that everyone around was preoccupied. “More. Give me more.”

Finn propped her head in her hand, elbow resting on the table, and added a second finger. As she felt Gillian’s warmth, her tightness, she didn’t give a fuck who could potentially walk by and see them. Being inside Gillian was a gift. Fuck, she felt like nothing in this world. Finn was continuously in shock at where her life was at. “You know this is just the warm-up, don’t you? When we get back to the hotel, you’re in for a night of hard fucking, babe. Just the way you like it.”

That alone tipped Gillian over the edge, her walls claspig Finn’s fingers tight. “Fuck. Yes.” She gritted her teeth, her eyes slamming shut as she slowly rocked back and forth. She barely moved, but it was enough to know Gillian was taking what she needed from Finn. “C-coming.”

“And you feel so good when you do.” Finn sat forward, pushing deeper as Gillian shook and gripped her wrist. “Don’t try to stop me. I’ll stop when *I’m* satisfied.”

“F-Finn, please. I can’t take anymore. Not here.”

Finn eased out of Gillian, brought her fingers to Gillian’s mouth, and smeared her wetness across her red lips. “Then you’d better clean me up so we can head back to the hotel.”

CHAPTER 28

“BABE? Where do you want this lamp?”

Gillian walked through from the kitchen to the living room, watching Finn move the lamp from surface to surface. These were the moments when Gillian realised Finn was so much more than her lover. The small details. “Where do you think?”

“Oh, I’m not really into interior design. I prefer knocking walls down and stuff.”

“Well, I want the couch area to be comfy and cosy, but I wouldn’t mind a light option should I want to read from there...or finish up on some work.”

“So...” Finn spun around and placed the lamp on the sideboard under the window. “Maybe here?”

Gillian grinned as she approached Finn. “Perfect.”

Finn reached over the back of the couch and plugged it in, ready for use whenever they needed it. As she groaned and got to her feet again, she turned to Gillian with tired eyes. “Can you believe the house is finished?”

“I can. I had every faith in you.”

“Thanks, babe.” Finn wrapped an arm around Gillian, swaying her to the sound of the radio playing. “I wanted you to have the perfect space as soon as possible, so this was all my priority...along with being there for you.”

Gillian stroked the back of her hand against Finn’s cheek. “Finn, I want you to know that this is your space too.”

Whenever you need it.”

“I appreciate that, but I don’t want to get in your way. I’ll be here when I’m invited over, but this place isn’t the same as your apartment. I want you to get used to it and enjoy your space here, okay?”

“This space wouldn’t be what it is without you, Finn.” Gillian meant that. Life, when Finn wasn’t around, was incredibly boring. Lonely, too. “What I’m saying is, I want this to be *our* space.”

“It will be.” Finn kissed Gillian, smiling against her lips. “Now, I have something to show you.”

Gillian frowned. Finn had shown her all of the work she’d done. God, she’d been here while it was happening at times. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, Gillian would have the pleasure of seeing Finn in a tool belt again. “Okay.”

“Come with me. It’s upstairs.”

Gillian followed Finn, their hands joined as they took the stairs. Finn had done a great job with stripping the floorboards back to the original wood, even if a few couldn’t be salvaged and new ones had been put in their place. Even though it still smelled of paint and varnish, it felt new and fresh. All done by Finn’s hardworking hands. “Finn, where are we going?”

“You’ll see.”

Finn stopped Gillian outside one of her spare rooms. She hadn’t managed to get inside it yet. Finn had told her she had a key to it and kept it locked because she stored her tools away there when she left each night. The area was generally quiet, but an empty house that was being renovated would always encourage thieves to try their luck.

“Okay, so...I wanted to do something for you. Something that felt like *only* your space. And I know the entire house is your space, but this...is a place where you can lock yourself away if you need to. Or where you can work in the quiet.”

Gillian continued to stare through Finn, with no idea where she was going with this. Had she...done something behind this very door? It seemed that way. “Finn, what’s going on?”

Finn puffed out her cheeks and took a key from the pocket of her joggers. She unlocked the door, then turned back to Gillian. “Close your eyes, babe.”

Gillian smiled as she did so, feeling safe as Finn took both of her hands and guided her through the door. The smell of fresh paint wafted towards her, stronger than the rest of the house.

“Okay, you can open them.”

Gillian opened her eyes slowly, taken aback by the room she was standing in. Olive green walls and neutral furniture greeted her, a huge beanbag situated in the corner with throws and cushions scattered on and around it. “Oh, my.”

“This is your office and relaxation room. The house has four bedrooms, and I doubt you’re going to need all of them to take on that role. I thought maybe it would be a nice idea to work on my own personal project for you. Something that you could remember me by, regardless of where our future is headed. I just...I hope you like it.”

Gillian sniffled as she pulled Finn against her. How had they gone from mind-blowing, meaningless sex...to this? “Finn, I love it. It’s so beautiful.”

“Yeah? You’re not just saying that to make me feel less like an idiot?”

“No, baby.” Gillian brought her hand to the back of Finn’s neck and drew her into a kiss. She touched her forehead to Finn’s, sniffing again as a tear slipped down her cheek. “I love it. All of it. You’ve gone above and beyond for me, and I couldn’t be any more thankful to have you in my life. Or as my partner.”

Finn closed her eyes. “Don’t. You’ll set me off, and I *don’t* cry.”

“You’re so good to me.” Gillian grazed her nails against Finn’s skin, watching as she shuddered. She knew Finn loved that. It was quite obvious, judging by her body’s reaction. “And I know I didn’t say much to you in response at the hotel,” Gillian said, pausing as she allowed this moment to

fully sink in. She never thought she'd be in this position when her marriage ended. And now here she was, about to say things she didn't think she was capable of saying again. "But...I'm falling in love with you, too."

Finn visibly swallowed, pulling back ever so slightly. "Y-you are?"

"I am. And I don't know how terrifying it's going to be, but you make me feel as though I can do anything I want. And falling in love with you is something I *definitely* want. If...you want it, too."

"I don't think you understand just how much I want *everything* with you, babe." Finn's voice broke. "Even doing this secretly, I still see so much with you. I would *never* go into a relationship with someone who couldn't be out, but with you? I'd wait an eternity to be out with you if I had to. That's how much you mean to me."

"Who knew we'd be here..."

"I could lie and say I always knew we would make it here, but I can't do that. I felt completely hopeless most of the time. But am I happy we've reached this point? Unbelievably so." As Finn grinned, her watch buzzed, and her phone pinged. She turned it towards herself, then focused her attention back on Gillian. "It's just Deena asking if I fancy meeting her for a pint."

"What time?"

Finn lifted a shoulder. "No idea. I'm not available anyway."

"Finn, you should go. You need to have a break, and it could be good for you to unwind away from the house you've just spent several weeks working on."

"You're right, but I'd rather be here with you." Finn leaned in, trailing her lips across Gillian's jawline. "Surely you know that."

"Mm. I do know that. But I'm not going anywhere, and I expect you back here when you've met your friend." Gillian wouldn't think of Deena as her student right now. It only

confused everything in her head. “Please, for me, go and have a few drinks with her. I can carry on unpacking some bits, and when you come back here, we can relax and start some kind of box set.”

“I’d love that.” Finn held Gillian at arm’s length, her head cocked. “Are you sure you don’t mind?”

“Not at all. Maybe without you here, I’ll get more done. God knows you only distract me in those sweatpants.”

Finn smirked as she took a step back, then another. “Well, I’ll be in the bedroom changing...if you want to join me *very* briefly.”

“Go! And don’t even try to tempt me!”



Finn strode into The Corner, grinning at Deena where she stood at the bar. It was nice to get out for a few drinks tonight; she just wished it didn’t have to be so secretive about Gillian. Finn would have loved her to be here, too.

“Got you a pint,” Deena said as she turned away from the bar and handed a glass to Finn. “Let’s sit down. I refuse to leave this place until I’ve at least had a few.”

“Everything okay at home?” Finn asked, concerned for Deena after the last time they’d gone out together. “I know you said your mum has the kids, but is there a reason why?”

“She just thought it would be nice to give me a break since it’s reading week.”

Finn smiled as she pulled out a seat. “Yeah, that is pretty nice.”

“I haven’t seen you around much lately. Couldn’t tell you the last time I saw you having lunch on campus or working from the library.”

“Yeah.” Finn dragged a hand through her hair. She hated lying, but she had no choice. “I’ve been getting as much work

done as I can when I'm not on campus. The house renovation I'm working on is really taking shape, so I'm focusing all my time and attention there." *While being madly in love with our lecturer!* Finn wanted to add but would never. "Got to take the work while it's on offer."

"I'm happy for you." Deena clinked her glass to Finn's as they lifted them from the table. "It's nice to see things coming together for you. You seemed so...miserable the other month."

"Well, no use sitting around feeling sorry for myself. It doesn't get shit done."

"You're right." Deena nodded slowly, looking up as Morgan stopped at their table.

"You know, you're going to get a name for yourself around here soon, Finn."

Finn almost spat out the sip of beer she'd just taken. "Excuse me?"

"You're in here with a different woman whenever you come through my door. I wish you'd pick one of them and settle down."

"Oh, no." Deena cut in. "I'm just Finn's friend."

Morgan regarded Deena with a sarcastic laugh. "Sure. So is the other one...apparently."

Deena quirked a brow. "What other one?"

"Gill, was it?" Morgan lifted a shoulder as she rested against the bar. "I have to say, I *am* surprised to see you here without her. That chemistry is off the charts, Finn."

Finn felt Deena's eyes on her, but all she could do was sink lower into her seat. If she wasn't careful, she would end up under the table soon. Maybe that was the best place for her. Hidden away.

"Anyway, it's good to see you. I'll bring you some shots over in a few."

Finn cleared her throat. "Oh, it's not that kinda night out. I'm good."

Deena laughed. “I’ll take her shot. Though, judging by the colour of her now, she’s going to need it to calm her nerves.” She eyed Finn, smirking. “Maybe we need more than one round of shots.”

“I...don’t think so. I have to work tomorrow morning. But by all means, you go for your life.” Finn considered her next move. She didn’t have to confirm or deny anything. She could surely do the whole ‘how dare you’ attitude. But would Deena see through it? God, she hoped so.

“So...” Deena leaned in when Morgan walked away. “That’s why she was in here the night of your birthday?”

Finn’s brows drew together, even though she knew exactly who Deena was talking about. “Who?”

“Gillian Masters.”

Finn burst out laughing and shook her head. As she lifted her beer and gulped it down, Deena continued to watch her. “Oh. You...were serious? You think I’m sleeping with Gillian?”

Deena sucked in a breath and shrugged. “It would make sense.”

“Why exactly is that?” Finn sat forward, resting her elbows on the table. If Deena had her suspicions, Finn wanted to know.

“Well, I have seen the way you look at her, Finn. You take in every last word that leaves her mouth.”

“Because I plan to succeed in my degree. I’m not paying student fees each year to fuck it all up.”

“We *all* want to succeed. But you seem to want it that tiny bit more.”

Fuck. Finn hated this lying. She hated the secrecy, even if it was worth it when she fell into bed with Gillian at the end of each night. Still, she had promised everything would be okay, and she couldn’t turn her back on Gillian now. She was in far too deep. “Look, I’m not sleeping with *or* dating Gillian.

Morgan sees things she wants to see. She's just accused me of dating you if you remember that part?"

Deena stared back at Finn. "Oh, my God. You're right. I can't believe I've even just asked you that."

"You see?" Finn lifted a brow. "Morgan runs this bar. She's known me for years. We have this joke about how we're always single...and I guess she just put two and two together and got five."

"That's fair enough." Deena relaxed into her seat and crossed her legs. "Sorry, Finn. I just thought with her showing up here that night...you know?"

"Look, I'll tell you something, okay? The house I'm working on is Gillian's. She was waiting for friends that night, and once she saw me on my own, she offered to buy me a drink before I left. I've shaved quite a bit of time off the expected finishing date, so she was saying thank you. That's probably why Morgan jumped to conclusions."

"Why are you working on her house?" Deena had that suspicious look in her eyes again.

"Because she contacted me for a quote, not realising who I was. My quote came out as the better option, and she decided to hire me. That's not illegal. Outside of uni, I *do* have a business to run."

"Oh, God. I know. I wasn't accusing you."

Finn gave Deena a knowing look. She knew an accusation when she came across one. "Really? Because it kinda feels like you were."

"No, I really wasn't." Deena lowered her eyes. "I feel terrible now."

Yeah, Finn felt terrible, too. Because really, Deena was right on the money, and Finn was the one who was being dishonest. She didn't like being that person, but she *had* to protect Gillian, and lying was the only way to ensure that. "Don't. It's okay. I'll have a word with Morgan, though. Throwing things like that around could get Gillian fired if someone else heard it."

“You’re right. You should probably mention that to her. Gillian is one of the best lecturers at that university. The last thing she needs is accusations flying around.”

Finn looked around the bar. It was packed for a Wednesday evening. “I’ll catch her some other time. The bar is rammed at the minute, so she won’t have time to talk.”

“Anyway, it’s really good to see you, Finn. I’m glad we could do this tonight. I felt really bad after I had to leave on your birthday. Things...seem to be picking up at home. The ex hasn’t been in touch for a few weeks now.”

“I’m happy to hear that. And I hope it stays that way.”

Deena puffed out her cheeks, her eyes wide. “Me too. I don’t know how much more I can handle.” She got to her feet and took her card from the back of her phone. “I’ll get in the queue for the bar. Same again?”

Finn, knowing she should probably call it a night, smiled. “Sure. I’ll have another with you.”

CHAPTER 29

GILLIAN HAD LAID awake for the last thirty minutes watching Finn, her girlfriend oblivious to that fact. Those blue eyes had been glued to the ceiling, Finn's brows drawn together, while she chewed on the inside of her cheek. Something was on her mind, and Gillian wasn't sure she wanted to know what. It wasn't often Finn appeared to be in a contemplative mood, only leading Gillian to believe that something wasn't right.

Did she question it...or did she wait for Finn to come to her in her own time?

Wanting another five minutes of peace and quiet, Gillian chose to remain silent while shifting closer. Finn instinctively reached out an arm, pulling Gillian against her. She had noticed how quiet Finn had been once she returned from the bar last night, but Gillian had put it down to tiredness. After all, Finn had been working extra hard lately. Perhaps now that the house was finished, Finn had crashed and burned. Which was entirely understandable if that was the case.

Still, Gillian wasn't convinced.

"Mornin', babe." Finn kissed Gillian's hair, lingering for a moment. "How was your first night at your new place? Sleep well?"

"Incredibly well. It's so much quieter here. I didn't hear a single police siren all night." Gillian really had made the right decision when it came to buying this place. The space felt exciting and had so much potential. And the garden...well, she

couldn't wait until summer arrived and she could spend her days out there. "Did you sleep well?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"Because you look a little tired. Burnt out, maybe..." Gillian settled her palm against Finn's bare stomach, enjoying the quietness of the morning. "But if you're okay, then I'm okay."

"I...think Deena knows about us."

Gillian allowed that to sink in before she started to have a meltdown because it would surely come. She rolled onto her back, mirroring Finn's position, and closed her eyes. They only had another five months to go before Finn was officially no longer one of her students. Why did it have to turn out this way before then?

"I'm not certain. I think I managed to get out of it, but we should be a little more careful from now on."

"How could she know about us, Finn? Did you say something you shouldn't have?"

"What? No." Finn turned onto her side, frowning in Gillian's direction. "Do you really think I'm *that* stupid?" Finn leaned in and kissed Gillian's shoulder, then sighed. "Morgan made a comment last night about you. How I was dating multiple women. She thought I was on a date with Deena, I think."

Gillian scoffed. Morgan had always rubbed her the wrong way, and she couldn't put her finger on the why. Although, she was fairly sure Morgan had a thing for Finn. She wasn't stupid. She had caught the stolen glances from the bartender. "Why would she think you were on a date with Deena?"

"Because Morgan always talks about how I'm some kind of womaniser. Which, by the way, I'm not. She just assumed and got it wrong." Finn laughed. "Well, she didn't get it wrong because we *are* together, but she has no proof, so...you know?"

"Do you trust Deena?" Gillian side glanced at Finn. If someone potentially knew about them, Gillian could only pray

it was someone who wasn't out to hurt either of them. "And... is she into you at all?"

"Deena? Nah, she's a friend. We drink beer together. I'm pretty sure she's straight, too."

"So, if Deena *did* know about us, she's not likely to tell anyone at the university as a way of getting back at you?" Gillian hated feeling suspicious of people, but that was a consequence of all this.

"Deena has her own shit going on. She has a terrible life with her ex. You and I are probably the last thing on her mind. I just...feel awful for lying to her. I got pissy because she 'accused' me of sleeping with you. When in reality, she's completely right."

"Mm. That'll be that guilt I've been living with since this started."

Finn lowered her eyes, sadness in the atmosphere around them. "I'm sorry you've been dealing with that. It's not a nice way to feel at all. Not when this should be an exciting time for us."

"I guess when you break the rules and have to hide, there's very little to be excited about." Gillian exhaled a calming breath, determined to figure this out without worrying. They were beyond the point of return; she couldn't change that. "If you think Deena can keep it to herself, if you trust her, then tell her. I don't want you to feel the guilt I do, Finn. One of us should at least feel hopeful where all of this is concerned."

"Five months, Gillian. That's all we have left." Finn propped her head in her hand, stroking her fingertips over the swell of her breast. "Everything is going to be okay. At the end of this, we will still be together."

"And I'll still have a job?"

Finn regarded her with a sympathetic smile. "Of course you will. There is no way you're losing your job. I...won't let that happen."

Gillian relaxed her shoulders, wishing she didn't feel that constant tension so much. How could she be tense about a

situation she had no control over? Some may say she could control it, that she could end this with Finn, but that simply wasn't a possibility. She loved this woman lying beside her. Her bruised and battered heart was beginning to mend. Walking away was *not* on the horizon.

“Five months.” Gillian sighed.

“Five months.”



“Finn? Is that you?”

Finn smiled as she closed the front door, turning for the living room. “Yeah. It’s me, Mum.” She shoved her keys in her pocket and ran a hand through her hair as she stopped at the mirror in the hallway. She stepped into the living room, not surprised to see her dad wasn’t home. “He not in?”

“He’s gone to the chip shop for us. Fish and chips for dinner tonight. Are you staying? I can call him and ask him to get extra.”

“No, don’t worry about it. I just came to see you and to pick up some uni books.” Finn perched herself on the edge of her mum’s bed, thrilled to see her looking so well. “You look great, Mum. How is everything going?”

“Marvellous! You’ll never guess where I’ve been today.” Her mum’s bright blue eyes stared back at her with a sparkle present she hadn’t seen for a while. “Into the city. We had afternoon tea at that hotel named after the footballer. It was bloody lovely.”

“That’s great. I told you going out more and getting some fresh air would do you the world of good.”

“I know. I know. But you know me. Stubborn and sometimes stuck in my ways.”

“I’m serious, Mum. You look like you’re about to spring out of bed at any moment. How have your legs been?”

“Better. The water retention isn’t so bad at the moment.” Finn had a long list of her mum’s ailments. It wasn’t any one thing in particular that kept her in bed, but Finn knew that her mum’s depression had as much of an impact on her decision to stay in bed as her pain level did. “Monica gets me out of bed each morning and helps me to the couch. Then we walk into the kitchen. Just to get things moving, you know?”

Finn sighed. She’d told her mum that getting up when she could was important. Trust her to not take Finn’s advice. “I do know. I’m just glad you’re listening to what Monica suggests. That’s the main thing.”

Carol narrowed her eyes. “Anyway, enough of me. Where the bloody hell have you been lately? I only see you for a few minutes every other day.”

“I’m sorry about that. As you know, I was working on that house. I’ve just finished it this week. It looks amazing.”

“Well, unless you’ve been sleeping there...it doesn’t explain not seeing you as often.” Carol placed a hand over Finn’s. “Look, love. If you have someone in your life, then I’m very happy for you.”

Finn chewed her lip. She should really come clean to her mum. She didn’t know why she’d kept it a secret for so long. Maybe because she wanted to be sure it would last? Maybe because she didn’t want to lie to another person she cared about. Either way, her mum should know. It didn’t mean Finn had to tell her Gillian was employed by the university. “I...do have someone in my life.”

“I knew it!” Her mum threw up her hands, laughing. “I don’t know why you kept it from me, but I want to meet her. I *should* meet her.”

“Not right now, Mum. It’s new and fresh, you know? I want to make sure it’s going somewhere before I introduce her to family and that.”

“You’re never home. I almost forgot what you looked like. It seems to me that it *is* going somewhere.” Carol dipped her

head and found Finn's eyes. "Why don't you feel certain of that?"

"I do. It's just that it's a bit complicated."

"Complicated how? She's not married, is she? Oh, Finn. Tell me she's not already involved."

"God, no. She's not. *Definitely* not." Finn would never get involved in an affair. She couldn't handle the guilt of something like that. "She's definitely single. Or...was. Before I met her."

"Oh, so you've put a label on it?"

"It's the same woman I was telling you about after New Years. We decided to give things a go."

"Then why is it complicated, love?"

Finn smiled, getting to her feet. "It just is. But it won't always be. That's all you need to know."

"Finley?" Carol looked up at Finn, those eyes still bright. "Would you stay and have a cuppa with me?"

"Of course. I'll just put the kettle on."



Gillian lay lengthways on her new luxurious couch, her eyes half-lidded as she tried to watch the TV. She really needed to get back into a night-time routine before she went back to work on Monday. Everything had been so full-on over the last few days—packing and unpacking—that she didn't feel as though she'd had a moment to breathe or admire her new home.

Finn was out visiting her mum, and this was the first time Gillian had found the time to just sit and relax. Or lie down, rather. Only she would prefer to be resting with Finn. *You can't have her to yourself every minute of the day.*

As Gillian's mind drifted to the weekend she'd just had with Finn, she heard a key in the door. A smile spread on her lips, that tingling sensation she often got when Finn was around making itself known. Life, right now, was beautiful. She wasn't even allowing the possibility of Deena knowing to put an end to that.

"Babe?"

Gillian opened her eyes. "Yes?"

"Oh, I thought you were napping." Finn lowered her keys to the dining table in the back half of the room, slipping her shoes off and leaving them in the hall. When she returned, her hair unruly this evening, Gillian reached out a hand. "You okay?"

"Mm. Hard to nap when I'm alone, though. Just another thing you've changed for me. I was so used to sleeping alone, but now, it fills me with dread."

"Sorry, babe. Mum asked if I'd stay and have a brew with her. Couldn't really say no since I haven't been around for her much lately."

Gillian frowned as Finn got to her knees at the side of the couch. "Don't ever apologise for spending time with your mum. I'm glad you stayed. I don't want anyone to think I'm holding you hostage here."

Finn snorted. "Chance would be a fine thing."

"How is she? Is it going well with the care agency?"

"It is. Maybe too well. She's never home these days. Then she tells me she never sees me." Finn grinned, and Gillian knew she was thankful that they could spend this time with one another while knowing Finn's mum was in safe hands. It meant a lot that she could be in this position now. She saw that in Finn's eyes alone. "Do you...think this all happened for a reason?"

"How do you mean?" Gillian asked, brushing Finn's hair from her face. Soft and so beautiful as it slid through her fingers.

“I don’t know. But I feel like everything is aligning for me lately. I have you when I didn’t think I could. My mum has finally accepted the help and is really enjoying it. I’m in a relationship with a woman I can’t stop thinking about. It just all feels as though it was meant to happen when it did. Even with the issues we could face at uni.”

Gillian had to agree with Finn. Several weeks ago, she would have panicked at the thought of Deena knowing, but now and as she lay here in her new home? She couldn’t help but feel at peace. Finn wasn’t going anywhere. She was more than willing to wait until the time was right. What did Gillian possibly have to complain about? “You’re right. I wasn’t looking, and you just landed in my lap. Whether I wanted it at the time or not.”

“I think you’ll find that *you* landed in *my* lap,” Finn said, smirking. That playfulness was present in her eyes, sending Gillian’s heart rate soaring. “But I’m glad that you did. It’s a very fine arse to have in my lap.”

Gillian sighed the most contented sigh. At peace didn’t come close to how she felt. In this moment, she felt so loved that nothing could bring her down. “Change into something comfortable. I want to snuggle with you.”

“Another thing you brought out in me.” Finn rolled her eyes as she got to her feet. “Finn Ashton, the snuggler. Unheard of until you came along.”

“Then I feel honoured to be in your arms night after night.”

“Hey, uh...” Finn scratched the back of her neck, hesitancy clouding her eyes as she took a step back. “I wondered if maybe you wanted to meet my mum.”

Gillian would love to...down the line. Now didn’t quite feel like the right time. She sat up, swinging her legs over the edge of the couch. “I’d love to, I really would, but not right now.”

“No, of course. It was a stupid thing to ask.” Finn laughed nervously. “I don’t know why I *did* ask. It’s just that she

mentioned it before, about how she'd like to meet you.”

Gillian got to her feet and brought Finn into her arms. She cocked her head, one hand slipping into the back pocket of Finn's jeans. “The reason I say not now is because I don't want to lie to her, Finn. She doesn't need to be a part of that. Once this is out in the open and we don't have to hide, I'll be there in a heartbeat. I hope you know that.”

“You're right. We're lying to enough people at the minute. It's probably best not to add any more to that list.”

“I don't particularly care about anyone else we lie to down the line, but not your mum. That's not a very good first impression to make, is it?”

“I know, babe. So long as you'd be willing to down the line, I'm okay with it not happening yet.”

“I promise you.” Gillian drew Finn in, laying a gentle kiss on her lips. “You know I wouldn't lie to you.”

Finn regarded Gillian with a loving smile. “I know. I'm going to take a quick shower, and then I'm all yours. I won't be long.”

Gillian nodded slowly, watching Finn turn and walk away. She knew they were serious, but having the conversation about meeting parents cemented just *how* serious this was. Was Gillian scared? At one time, she would have been. But it was hard to be scared about anything regarding Finn these days. When the time was right, meeting Finn's mum *would* happen. And Gillian couldn't wait for that day.

CHAPTER 30

FINN LAID out her notepad and pen, determined to make this semester count. Reading week was over, she'd had the most amazing time with Gillian, and now it was time to knuckle down and keep being the dedicated student she was. Finn didn't need to sneakily admire Gillian anymore; she could do that back at Gillian's place pretty much whenever she felt like it. Of course, there would always be lingering looks, but that was where it ended from this point on.

Five months and I can be with her everywhere...

Finn couldn't help the small smile that graced her lips as she reminded herself of that. After being away last weekend with Gillian, it was all she wanted. To be out and happy, showing off the very woman who had aligned everything in her life once and for all. Nights with Gillian in her arms were far more fulfilling than she thought they could be. When they cooked dinner together, swaying one another to the music in the kitchen...well, Finn couldn't remember a time before Gillian. When she lay on her bed, miserable and wondering where she was headed in life, *this* hadn't been the expected result.

Falling in love with a woman who wanted her just as much as she wanted them.

"How was the rest of your week off?" Deena asked, eyeing the front of the lecture hall where Gillian prepared today's presentation. "Busy?"

"Not really. Good, though."

“Oh yeah? Why so?”

Finn cleared her throat and side-eyed Deena. “You know I told you I care for my mum. Well, she’s agreed to have help around the house, and it’s going really well. It means I have more time to myself.”

Deena nudged Finn’s shoulder. “That’s great news. I’m so happy for you, Finn.”

“She’s doing great. They take her out for the day and stuff. And it means I can do my own thing pretty much whenever I want.”

“That has to be exciting for you.”

Finn smiled as more students filed into the hall. “It really is. The next step is to look for my own place.”

“Oh. Now that *is* exciting. Have you started looking yet?” Deena asked, sipping from her takeout cup. “I could help you if you fancied it? It’ll give me something to do.”

“Oh, that’s a really nice offer, but I don’t even know what my budget is yet. I don’t think I have the time to look for some kind of forever home right now, so it’ll only be a rental anyway. Nothing too grand, you know?”

Honestly, Finn hoped there would come a point when she and Gillian lived together. Bold to assume that Gillian would want that, but they’d already admitted they were falling in love with one another. Down the line, if things went to plan, it would make sense to look at that option.

“Well, if you ever need someone to make the decision with, give me a shout. I love viewing properties. Even if only to get some interior design inspiration.”

“I’ll definitely hold you to that.”

As Finn’s eyes drifted towards the front of the lecture hall, Gillian turned and faced her students. She wore that red skirt, but Finn wasn’t going to take the bait. No way. She needed to focus and then rip it from Gillian’s body later.

“Well, you all look refreshed.” Gillian’s bright white smile lit up the room as she rested against the desk at the front. She

briefly cast her gaze on Finn, then focused on the rest of the students. “Time to go again. You know what I expect from all of you, and I know you won’t let me down.”

Finn relaxed into her seat, ready for another semester of hard work, budding friendships, and Gillian Masters.



Finn knocked gently on Gillian’s office door, her other hand gripping her rucksack on her shoulder. She had the weight of seven books to lug around with her, but she wouldn’t be on campus for much longer. The second she could get them in the boot of her car, she wouldn’t look at them for the rest of the night. Still, she liked to be prepared with any reading material on the list for the semester.

“Come in,” Gillian said, her voice floating through the wood separating them.

Finn turned the handle, grinning when Gillian smiled back at her from her desk. “Hi.”

“Hi, gorgeous.” Gillian waved a hand. “Close the door. Lock it too, if that would make you more comfortable.”

Finn lifted a shoulder and closed the door, choosing not to lock it. “Nah. It’s okay. I’m not staying long.” She noted the disappointment in Gillian’s eyes as she said that. “I’ll see you tonight though.”

“I don’t know what time I’ll be home. I have a meeting at five about next year’s modules and timetables.”

“That’s okay. You just let me know when you’re available. I’ll go home and spend some time with Mum. *If* she’s home.”

“I swear your mum has a better social life than either of us.” Gillian got to her feet and rounded her desk. She reached out her hand, taking Finn’s, and smiled into a kiss. “Hi. I’ve missed you today.”

“I’ve missed you, too.”

“And you know I’d love to see you tonight, but if it’s too much or you have a lot on, then don’t worry about it.”

Finn wrapped an arm around Gillian’s waist, her shoulder sagging with the weight of her books. “If I say I’ll see you tonight, then I’ll see you tonight. I haven’t let you down so far, and I’m not about to start doing so.”

“Maybe we could order in? I won’t have any desire to cook once I get home. It’ll probably be seven...maybe later.”

“Sure.” Finn nodded but with no plans to feed Gillian takeout tonight. No, she would see her mum for a while, go to the supermarket and get some things in, then have dinner ready for Gillian when she walked through the door. “As I say, just let me know when you’ll be heading home, and I’ll be over.”

“Or...you could already be at my place waiting for me when I get in.” Gillian drew a finger up Finn’s throat, causing her to swallow hard. God, they’d fucked into oblivion by now, but that finger up her throat always had her knees weak. “What do you think?”

“I-I think I’ll definitely consider that. Wouldn’t want to make you unhappy.” Finn chanced another kiss, then stepped away. They didn’t need to play the dangerous game here. It wasn’t worth the fallout. “Now, what I really came here for.”

“You had a genuine reason?” Gillian quirked a brow.

“I did. The online portal seems to be down. Did you have a copy of what you uploaded to it by any chance?”

Gillian brought a hand up, patting Finn’s cheek. “You don’t have to impress me anymore, baby. I’m already yours.”

Finn snorted. Did Gillian really believe that all of her hard work had been a lie? That Finn had done it so Gillian would notice her? Nah. She didn’t need to do that. Gillian always would have seen her at some point. The pull was too hard to ignore. “Babe, I didn’t do any of it to impress you. I’m a hard worker. In my work life and my personal life.”

“Oh, I know just how hard you work. You kept me in bed until two in the afternoon yesterday. If that’s not hard work, I

don't know what is.”

“Well, when the woman I love is demanding I lie down so she can sit on my face, who am I to argue?”

Gillian took a step closer, pressing her body to Finn's. “You mean to tell me you're not falling anymore?”

“Honestly? I think I fell the moment I met you.” Finn took Gillian's bottom lip between her teeth, releasing it slowly. “But to answer your question, no. I'm not falling anymore. I hit the ground hard and woke up madly in love with you.”

“Finn,” Gillian whispered, hooking her fingers through a belt loop. “I—”

“You don't have to say it back. That's not necessary. But I'm not afraid to tell you just how hard you've hit me since we met. And I can't help that feeling. We have less than five months to go, and I'm going to girlfriend the fuck out of you when I'm able to.”

“Sounds promising.” Gillian grinned, kissing the tip of Finn's nose. “But...Finn?”

“Yeah?”

Gillian brought her hand to Finn's jaw and held it, those gorgeous eyes undoing Finn in all the ways they possibly could. “I love you, too.”

Oh, God. Finn hadn't expected that. Did she want to hear it? Only every moment for the rest of her life, but she hadn't thought for one second that Gillian was at that place yet. *Who are you kidding? It's obvious she loves you in the way she touches you.* “I...y-you do?”

“I do. But this really isn't the place to discuss it. You know what'll likely happen and I don't want to get caught with your hand between my legs in my office.”

Gillian was absolutely right. And she clearly knew Finn better than Finn knew herself, because that had been Finn's next move. She grinned, offering Gillian a quick kiss. “You're right.”

“Now, I should try to figure out the portal while I have time. But I *will* email you the module notes right away. I’ll send out a mass email, too, in case anyone needs them sooner.”

“Thanks, babe. Appreciate it.”



Gillian yawned as she closed her front door and lowered her bag to the floor at the bottom of the stairs. Finn’s car was parked outside on the street, and as she moved towards the door that would take her to the back living area and kitchen, Gillian caught a whiff of something delicious. She didn’t know what it was, but her stomach growled. Finn had cooked for her a few times now—Gillian was impressed by her skills—but hadn’t they agreed to takeout tonight?

“Finn?”

“In here, babe,” Finn called out from the kitchen, the sound of utensils clattering against the worktop as Gillian entered the room. “Dinner won’t be long. I didn’t get your message until ten minutes after you sent it. Sorry.”

“Hey,” Gillian spoke low, watching Finn move around her kitchen with ease. One day, this would be *their* kitchen. One day, all of this would belong to *them*. It simply had to. No other outcome was acceptable. “Relax. Slow down. What help do you need?”

“I don’t need any help. You go and do what you need to do, and I’ll have dinner ready when you’re done.” Finn finally turned to her, wiping her hands on a towel as she smiled. “But hi. How are you?”

“I’m better now that I’m home.” Gillian lifted onto a stool, taking the hair tie from around her wrist. She dragged her hair up and off her neck, officially done for the day when it came to looking professional. “What time did you get here?”

“Couple of hours ago. Mum was whacked today. She’d been out all day with Monica, and by the time I got there, she was falling asleep. I stayed a while with her, though.”

“Can *we* hire Monica to take us out places?”

Finn laughed from deep within her belly, crossing the kitchen and standing between Finn’s legs. “I’ll take you *anywhere* you want to go, babe.”

“Spain? The Maldives? Bahamas?”

Finn shrugged. “If that’s somewhere you’d like to visit, then let’s look into planning it and booking it. I don’t know that we’d make the Maldives or Bahamas this year, but we could absolutely try for Spain this summer if you fancy it.”

Gillian rested her head on Finn’s shoulder, turning her face to the crook of her neck. Spain sounded perfect. All of this sounded perfect. “I’d like that.”

“You feeling tired today, babe?”

“Mmhmm. I’m getting too old for these late nights and long days.” Gillian would prefer to keep the late nights; those were the times when they lay in bed with one another and made plans for the future. The long days she could take or leave. “I was hoping to have some idea of next year’s timetable after today, but the meeting about said timetables and modules didn’t go ahead. It ended up being a funding meeting instead.”

“Is there usually much change in your timetable year on year?” Finn asked, guiding her fingers through Gillian’s hair. “Or is it mostly the same?”

“Mostly the same. Just a different group of students.”

Finn sighed. “I’m going to miss you going into my second year. Your lectures were always the ones I looked forward to most.”

“I wonder why.”

“No, not because I could sit and watch you at the front of the hall. Though that made the time go by much easier. But...I just loved your module. Some of the other lecturers have the

most uninteresting voices and things to say. Me and Deena have spoken about it before. You know when someone just drones on, and you wish you hadn't bothered going and instead got the class up online?"

"Well, I hope nobody feels that way about my classes. I'd hate to think students see me as droning on."

"They really don't. Everyone is always fully focused in your lectures."

Well, that was always pleasant to know.

"There's actually a few who don't bother going to some of the other modules. But they'll know about it when they come to assignments and don't have a clue."

Gillian lifted her head and looked into Finn's eyes. "I hope you know I'm proud of you for the hard work you put into your studying while working and making sure everything is running smoothly at home with your mum."

"Thanks, babe. I appreciate that." Finn brought a hand to Gillian's jaw, those loving eyes melting her. "I love being here with you when you've just finished work. I get to see the real you. The tiredness. The dressed down you. And I get to hold you after dinner, which is something I've really come to love lately."

"Only because I fall asleep on you and keep you warm."

Finn lifted a shoulder. "What can I say? That's just something I love. It makes all of this seem real, you know?"

"I know." Gillian urged Finn back a little and got down from the stool. "I'm going to change out of this skirt and come back down for dinner. May I steal your hoodie that's on the bed?"

"I expect you to." Finn held Gillian by the waist and kissed her forehead. "Go on. I'll finish dinner."

Gillian dragged her feet towards the door, her shoulder slumped as her weary body reminded her that she wanted to do the bare minimum tonight.

"Hey, Gillian?"

She turned, smiling back at Finn. “Yeah?”

“I can’t wait until every last piece of you is mine.”

Oh, that day couldn’t come soon enough. “We can cross another day off the calendar when we go to bed tonight.”

Finn grinned. “One hundred and forty-seven days to go.”

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Oh, hi! It's nice to see you!

I'm Melissa Tereze, author of *The Arrangement*, *Mrs Middleton*, and other bestsellers. Born, raised, and living in Liverpool, UK, I spend my time writing angsty romance about complex, real-life, women who love women. My heart lies within the age-gap trope, but you'll also find a wide range of different characters and stories to sink your teeth into.

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