

EVA ASHWOOD

Santa, I've been
naughty...



Naugrapped
by *Them*



UNWRAPPED BY THEM

EVA ASHWOOD

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*For all the dirty girls on Santa's naughty list who dream of
being kissed under the mistletoe...*

then tied up with Christmas lights and railed by three men.

SADIE

I'VE GOT three sweaters in my hands when my phone rings, and I toss them all into my suitcase before snatching up my phone. I don't have time to be indecisive about what to pack. I'm already running late, and the impression I make on my new employer will hardly matter in the long run.

"Hey, Mom," I say as I swipe to answer, adding a few bras and panties to the suitcase, then my bag of toiletries.

"Sadie!" There's laughter in her voice, and I can pick up voices in the background. "How are you, sweetheart?"

"Good. Just heading out the door. How are you?"

"Oh, fabulous. We're at a holiday party some friends of Vincent's are throwing, and he just surprised me with the most wonderful gift!"

I make a non-committal sound to let her know I've heard without having to actually express an opinion on that, looking around my bedroom to make sure I haven't forgotten anything. Luckily, Mom has always been perfectly capable of carrying most of any conversation we ever have on her own, and she doesn't seem to notice that I'm not fully attentive as she goes on for a moment about how wonderful her current man is.

Satisfied that I've gotten everything I need from my room, I tuck the phone between my ear and shoulder and grab my suitcase.

"You won't mind, will you?" Mom says, catching my attention again as I head to my living room, where I left my earbuds charging.

“Sorry, mind what?” I ask, unplugging the earbuds. I doubt I’ll want to socialize any more than necessary with my new boss over the next few days, but as long as I have these and a steamy audiobook or two, my evenings will be covered.

“Vincent is taking me to Bali! How romantic is that?”

“Wonderfully romantic,” I murmur, tucking the last few items into my suitcase.

“Oh, good. I know we were supposed to spend it together, but I *told* him you’d be happy for me.”

I blink. “Of course I’m happy for you.”

But clearly, I missed part of the conversation. I’m about to ask her what it was that we were going to do together, but then the familiar sound of holiday music in the background of the call makes it all click.

“Right. Christmas.” I sigh, although I’m not surprised. “He’s taking you to Bali for Christmas.”

“Yes! He’s a keeper, isn’t he?”

I roll my eyes and bite my tongue, not even a little bit surprised that she’s bailing on me. It’s been like this for most of my life. My dad left when I was young, and Mom hasn’t found a “keeper” since then, although she’s somehow managed to convince herself that each new man she dates might be the one.

“I’m sorry I won’t be there with you over the holidays,” she goes on. “But you’ll be fine, won’t you, love?”

“Of course,” I say with a sigh. I’m twenty-eight years old, and I’ve been fending for myself for at least half that long. “I really do have to go, Mom. You remember that John sold the resort, right?”

She makes a vague sound that clearly indicates she *didn’t* remember, and I shake my head.

“Never mind. I hope you have a nice time in Bali.”

“Oh, I’m sure we will! Vincent told me about these lovely...”

She goes on about the trip for another few minutes while I get out the door, and by the time I've got my suitcase stowed in the back of my Subaru and my sunglasses on to guard against the snow glare coming off the mountains, I've got all the details about her trip. And she's asked me exactly nothing about what I'll do for Christmas without her.

We end the call as I slip in behind the wheel of my car, and as I pull away from the curb, I call my best friend, Luna.

"Hey, girl!" she chirps warmly, answering on the second ring. "What's up?"

"Not much." I huff a little laugh as I navigate the snowy streets of Denver. "I just got off the phone with my mom, and she's running off with a new man for the holidays, apparently."

"Ugh, that sucks," Luna groans. "Why does she do this to you every year?"

"I don't know." I shrug. "But at least it doesn't take me by surprise anymore. I didn't even get my hopes up, you know?"

"It still sucks." She clicks her tongue on her teeth, and then her voice brightens. "Hey, I'm heading up to Big White with my family for Christmas. Is your passport current? We'd love to have you. And maybe I'll finally get you on a snowboard!"

I roll my eyes, grinning. "Not a chance. Snowboarding and I will never mix."

We've been having this snowboarding-versus-skiing debate ever since she defected to the dark side back in college. I blame it on the guy she was dating at the time, and she claims it's the one good thing to come out of the two months they dated. But I'm still firmly Team Skiing.

"Aw, but this could be your year," Luna says as I navigate out of Denver proper toward the long, familiar road to Whispering Pines, the resort I've worked at for the last several years. "We really would love to have you, and with all the air miles I have, I'm sure I could find you a last minute fare. I'll even bring the Xanax."

"No, really, it's fine." I smile at her offer to bring meds, since she knows I'm terrified of flying. "I'm on my way to the

resort to show the new owner around right now. He wants me up there for a few days so we can go over everything at once, and I can already tell from the tone of his emails that it's going to be exhausting."

"All the more reason for you to get away! Come join us when you're done there."

I shake my head even though she can't see me. "Thanks, but honestly, I'll probably just want to crash on my couch when I get back."

"Aww." There's a pout in her voice. "That's not festive!"

"It'll be totally festive. I'll order some good takeout, then curl up and binge watch Christmas movies to my heart's content. Seriously, I'll be fine."

"Okay," she says, still sounding reluctant. "If you're sure."

"I am."

"So do you know anything about the new guy who bought the resort?" she asks, shifting the subject.

"Ugh." I sigh. "Not a lot, but what I know so far isn't making me optimistic."

It's a forty-minute drive to Whispering Pines, the beautiful and rustic old resort situated in the Rocky Mountains, and I'm dreading what's waiting for me when I arrive. The place means a lot to me, and as far as I can tell, I'm on my way up there to help some rich asshole destroy it.

Being the previous owner's executive assistant was the best job I've ever had, and the remote lodge is also the most beautiful setting I've ever been in. Some of my best memories were made there, and while my heart goes out to John for having to sell the place due to his health complications, it's a damn shame what's about to happen to it now that ownership has changed hands.

I shake my head, unable to keep the frustration out of my voice. "You know the last thing we need up there is another fancy ski resort."

“Damn. So it’s set in stone, then? The new guy really wants to tear the lodge down?”

“That’s what all these wealthy billionaire investors do, isn’t it?” I joke, although there’s no humor in it. “I mean, who cares about rustic charm when there’s profit to be made?”

Luna scoffs. “So, he’s a dick.”

“Of course he’s a dick!” I scowl. “He swooped in and took advantage of John’s health scare to snatch the place up. What else would you call it?”

Technically, John called it a godsend, but I’m not feeling that charitable right now. At least, not toward this new guy who doesn’t seem to understand or care about the heart of Whispering Pines.

“How is John?” Luna asks, worry entering her voice. She knows that he’s like family to me at this point. “Has he settled in up in Oregon?”

That’s where his children and grandchildren are, and I understand why he needed to relocate, but honestly, I miss him just as much as I’ll miss the lodge.

“He’s doing well,” I tell her. “I think the Pacific Northwest will be good for him.”

We chat about my old boss for a few minutes as I drive, and I try not to get emotional thinking of the way John took a chance on me. He hired me several years ago despite my lack of experience for the position and even invested in accessibility technology to accommodate the challenge of my dyslexia.

“Are you sure you really want to help this rich asshole change everything?” Luna asks. “I know your temp position at the real estate office kind of sucks, but admin skills are always in demand. Can’t you just... not?”

“John asked me to,” I tell her.

It’s true that I don’t really like the job I took once he had to shut down the resort last fall, but even though I’ve agreed to help the new owner out for John’s sake, I know there’s not

going to be a place for me at the resort for long. Not once the new guy changes everything.

We hang up after a while, promising to keep in touch over the holidays.

A few minutes later, my phone pings—but it's not a call coming through. Instead, I recognize the familiar sound of a severe weather alert.

“Yeah, yeah,” I mutter, chuckling as I swipe to dismiss the alert.

The storm they're predicting is supposed to miss this side of the mountain, but even if it didn't, I wouldn't be worried. Whispering Pines is remote enough that I automatically put chains on my tires every year after Thanksgiving, if not before, and I've been driving in winter conditions like these my whole life.

I tune in to the satellite radio station that plays non-stop Christmas music this time of year and turn it up, singing along at the top of my lungs as I watch the familiar landscape go by. The sun glints off the snow-covered trees like each one of them is gilded in diamonds, and the sight makes me smile.

“It really is beautiful up here,” I murmur, not even a little bit embarrassed about my habit of talking to myself after all these years. After Dad left when I was younger and Mom started serial dating, there were plenty of times growing up when the only company I had was myself.

A few of the dark clouds from the storm that's hitting the other side of the mountain peek over the top of the range after a while, bringing some flurries with them. I don't mind the darker skies, since they also come with a fresh crop of pretty white flakes to add to the landscape.

The snow gets a little heavier as I turn off the main road onto a winding one that leads higher up the mountain toward the resort itself. I push my sunglasses to the top of my head and sing along with a holiday pop song, grinning as I get half the lyrics wrong and belt the high notes off-key.

I might not be looking forward to meeting the new owner of Whispering Pines, but being called in to show him around gave me a good excuse to take a few extra days off from the real estate office I've been working at. It'll be a relief to have a bit of a break from my coworkers, several of whom seem to think I made up my dyslexia as some kind of excuse not to work as hard as them—totally ignoring the fact that I often have to work *harder*—and always act condescending about the workarounds I use to do my job. I definitely won't miss any of their snide comments while I'm up at Whispering Pines.

My heart aches a little at the thought that this might be my last time visiting my beloved lodge. Depending on how quickly the rich asshole who bought it decides to start “upgrading” things, it could be totally unrecognizable, or completely *gone*, by next year.

“Just how fancy will this new ski resort be, Mr. McAllister?” I mutter. “Are you going to take *all* the charm out of the place, or just enough to pad your bottom line?”

I squint through the rapidly falling snow, looking ahead for the familiar, cheerfully welcoming lights of the lodge before I realize I'm searching in vain. Of *course* His Royal Douchebaggery isn't going to have the lodge lit up. Honestly, it's early enough in the day that we normally wouldn't have had the lights on back when it was open either—although with the way the snow is coming down now, maybe it would've been a good idea.

I frown, glancing at my darkened phone screen, even though I know from experience that I won't have any reception from now until I get into the lodge with its boosters. Then I shake off my moment of worry. This is far from the first storm to blow through this year, and it certainly won't be the last.

I slow down a little as I finally near the resort, turning my windshield wipers up a bit as I pass by the private log cabins spaced out around the main lodge. When I drive around the final curve in the road and am greeted by the sight of the rustic, snow-covered building that's both huge and cozy at the same time, I can't help but grin.

Being here feels more like being *home* than any place I've lived in years.

"Worth it," I say with a happy sigh, leaning forward to get a better view. "Totally worth it."

No matter what kind of crap I have to put up with from the scrooge who bought this place, it's worth it to be able to escape up here for a few days. And I was wrong about the lights. He doesn't have all of them on, and the main lodge definitely isn't in its full holiday finery, but a warm yellow glow still welcomes me as I park near the entrance and step out of my car.

I look up at the sky, closing my eyes and feeling the stinging patter of snow on my upturned face as I breathe in the crisp mountain air. There's a lot to do in Denver, but there's nothing in the world that can beat the smell of fresh snow up here.

It's also cold as all hell, so after a couple more deep breaths, I grab my suitcase and make my way inside, stomping the snow off my boots on the broad porch before I let myself in.

"Hello?" I call out, setting my suitcase down just inside the large front door and blowing on my hands as I look around the familiar grand entrance.

It's empty, but somehow, it still feels welcoming. The warmth of the fire burning in the gorgeous old river-rock fireplace that dominates the central area of the lodge probably has a little to do with that, and I move toward it automatically, drawn like a moth to a flame.

"Mr. McAllister?" I call out again. "Cade McAllister?"

This time, I get a response.

"Sadie Evans, I presume?"

He's backlit by the fireplace as he steps into the room, and his deep, rumbling voice stops me in my tracks, moving over my skin like warm velvet. My pulse skyrockets—not just because the hint of laughter in Mr. McAllister's voice is far from the cool, detached tone I expected to hear from a

soulless, profit-hungry billionaire, but also because I've heard it before.

He takes another step toward me, coming fully into the light, and my heart stops.

Holy shit.

This is my new boss?

“Hey, dream girl,” he drawls with a slow, sexy smile. “Fancy meeting you here.”

I swallow hard. If this is Cade McAllister, he isn't just my new boss.

He's also the mystery man I hooked up with last week.

SADIE

ONE WEEK AGO

THE COFFEE COLLECTIVE is bustling with activity when I push the door open, the cheerful bell that announces my arrival almost drowned out by the combined sounds of conversation, busy espresso machines, and Christmas music.

As frazzled as I'm feeling, the cheerful chaos still lifts my spirits. I come in here every chance I get, and love seeing the place so busy.

They've been struggling lately, and I'd hate to lose my favorite coffee shop. But hopefully the holiday rush will help keep that from happening. The Coffee Collective is practically a Denver institution.

I hum along with the festive pop song that's playing as I take my place at the back of the line, the enticing scent of caffeinated heaven making me glad I made this my first stop of what will be a long shopping day. I know it's ambitious to try to knock out all my Christmas shopping in one go, but as long as I can fortify myself with a hot drink, I'm confident I can get it all done.

I go through my mental shopping list as the line slowly moves forward, hoping I'm not forgetting anyone. I meant to get all my Christmas shopping done on Black Friday, but Luna talked me into a spa day instead, and now Christmas is looming on the horizon.

"Coal for you, Luna," I mumble to myself with a little grin. "This is all your fault."

“What’s my fault?” the perky barista asks with a smile, making me realize I’ve finally made it to the counter.

“Oh, no! I didn’t mean *your* fault.” I flush, embarrassed she caught me talking to myself.

“I’m just teasing.” The barista laughs as she plucks a cup out of the stack near the espresso machine. “Pour over with oat milk, right?”

“That’s right,” I say, grinning. I’m not quite a regular, but I come here as often as I can, and a few of the baristas have started to remember my usual order.

“Did you want anything else to go with your coffee?” she asks.

“No thanks, I—”

I frown as I reach into my bag, realizing I’m missing my wallet. *Dammit*. I must’ve forgotten it at home. So much for my day of shopping.

“Wait,” I tell her quickly. “Shoot, I’m sorry. Don’t make that drink. I forgot my wallet.”

The barista gives me a sympathetic look, but before I can step out of the line to make room for the next person, a man’s voice speaks from behind me. “I’ve got it.”

I turn and look up. *Way* up.

“Are you sure?” I say to the ruggedly handsome man behind me, my heart skipping a beat. The guy is easily a few inches over six foot since he towers over my own 5’6”, and he grins down at me before turning his attention back to the barista.

“I’m completely sure. Go ahead and make her drink.”

The deep timbre of his low voice does something to me. Or maybe it’s the lethal combination of his square jawline, high cheekbones, and intense green eyes as he turns his attention back to me.

I lift an eyebrow. “I have very expensive taste in coffee, you know.”

“I’m good for it,” he says, giving me the kind of slow, sexy smile that makes it feel like Christmas came early, with me on both the naughty *and* nice lists.

“Okay, then. Thank you.”

His hand skims my hip, gently shifting me to the side as he moves toward the counter. “What are you drinking?”

“A pour over with an extra shot and oat milk,” the barista offers before I can, grinning at the two of us.

“Perfect,” my caffeine savior says, his eyes locked on me for long enough that the barista clears her throat. He turns back to her. “Make it two, please. I love oat milk.”

I purse my lips against a smile, since he doesn’t really seem like an oat milk type of guy. “Lactose intolerant, saving the environment, or do you just have good taste?”

He chuckles. “Yes.”

“That’s not an answer.”

He lightly rests his hand on the small of my back so he can lean around me to swipe a black credit card through the machine, then ushers me toward the other end of the counter to wait for our drinks. “Actually, it’s three answers. But the real one is that I like to try new things. How about you, Ms...?”

“I don’t mind something new now and then,” I say playfully, ignoring his subtle prompt for my name.

I’m not sure why. He’s probably the most attractive man I’ve had the pleasure of flirting with in ages, and the chemistry between us feels like an electric pulse.

Our drinks are placed at the end of the counter a few minutes later, and he picks his up, nodding toward two plush armchairs that have just opened up near the window. “Really? Then tell me, what’s something new you’d like to try?”

“Um, gosh. I don’t know. Waking up to a breakfast of crepes and champagne in Paris with a view of the Eiffel tower?”

“Ah, Paris.” He grins as we both take a seat. “Go big or go home, is that it?”

I wince slightly. “More like *stay* home, if I’m being honest. I’m actually afraid of flying, but a girl can still dream, right?”

“And what else does a girl like you dream of?” he asks, and I can’t quite tell if I’m imagining the husky note I hear in his voice. He settles back in his chair, pushing up his sleeves to expose some gorgeous ink before taking a sip of his coffee. My stomach flutters at the sight.

He raises an eyebrow, prompting me for an answer, and I nudge his shin with the toe of my boot, shaking my head. “Nope. I already went. It’s your turn. Tell me something you dream about.”

“You mean, besides finding out the name of the woman who’s going to get me hooked on oat milk? I’ll even go first.” He leans forward, holding out his hand. “I’m—”

“Nope,” I say quickly, batting his hand away and then holding up mine to stop him. “No names. Let me just bask in the fantasy a little longer.”

He smirks. “So you’re saying I’m your fantasy?”

I raise my cup toward him, enjoying how easy he is to flirt with. “*This* is my fantasy. No one makes it better than The Coffee Collective. I need to get as much of it as I can, while I still can.”

“Oh? Is there an oat milk shortage I don’t know about?”

“God, I hope not.” I wave a hand around, taking in the cozy decor around us. “But this place may not be around much longer.”

“They’re going out of business?”

“Again, I hope not... but maybe. Is it really your first time in The Coffee Collective? It’s been here forever.”

“I actually don’t get to Denver very often.”

“You’re from out of town?”

“That’s right.”

“And you’re here for...?”

“For a bit.”

His eyes gleam with amusement, and I laugh, but I deserved that. I started it, after all, by withholding my name, and the little pang of disappointment at finding out he’s not someone I’ll ever run into again is silly.

Although, if he’s not going to stick around, I really *am* free to flirt with him without any consequences. Thinking of it that way sends a rush of exhilaration through me, and I’m suddenly feeling reckless and bold in a way that I haven’t in a long time.

“Let me guess,” I say, letting my foot nudge his leg again. “You’re here for the skiing.”

He laughs. “No.”

I groan, shaking my head. “Please don’t tell me you’re Team Snowboard.”

“Something tells me I should plead the fifth,” he says. “But make it a fifth of whiskey, neat, and I’ll take it in the lodge and leave the slopes to someone else.”

My breath catches, and I lean forward. “In front of a roaring fire?”

“Is there any other way?” he asks, leaning in to match me with a sexy gleam in his eyes. “Ms...?”

We hold eye contact for long enough to kindle a small flame inside me. I’m finally the one to break the silence.

“Let’s not do that,” I say, feeling a little breathless.

His eyes drop to my lips for a moment. “Do what?”

“Exchange names.”

He doesn’t answer for a moment, taking time to bring the cup up to his mouth, then raising one eyebrow as he stares at me over the rim.

Finally, he asks, “Still basking in the fantasy?”

I raise my cup. “Exactly. The holidays are supposed to be magical. Let a girl live the dream a little.”

He gives me that sexy smile again, then sits back, relaxing into his seat and changing the subject. “Okay, dream girl, tell me some of your favorite things about Denver.”

“Oh, that’s easy.”

We finish up our coffee while I regale him with my favorite things about the city, and end up walking together as we leave the coffee shop. I’m in no hurry, since my Christmas shopping plans have been derailed, and he doesn’t seem rushed either.

“Are we heading the same way?” I ask as we meander away from The Coffee Collective toward the end of Larimer Square, in the direction of the 16th Street Mall, bumping him with my shoulder.

His eyes flare with something that sends a little thrill through me. “That depends. I hear there are some sights here in Denver that are worth seeing.”

I hesitate for a moment, certain that there was an unspoken invitation in his words. But am I brave enough to take it?

“I’m sure you’ve got other plans,” he says when the pause stretches out too far, giving me a gracious out.

For some reason, that decides it. I don’t want an out.

I want him.

I give an exaggerated sigh. “I *did*. Christmas shopping. It’s why I came downtown today. But I’m not going to get far without my wallet, so my plans are definitely open to... new things.”

He grins, bumping my shoulder the way I just did to him, then slipping his hand into mine as we keep walking. “Christmas shopping? It sounds like you dodged a bullet. Now you can knock it all out online without suffering through the crowds.”

I gasp. “You did *not* just say that. You can’t *touch* anything online!”

He tugs me against his side, moving me out of the way of a woman walking toward us, bundled up in a ski coat with her

eyes glued to her phone.

“That’s the point,” my sexy savior says, grinning down at me. “No getting bumped by crowds. Just tell Google what you need, then let the magic happen. And you did say you liked a little holiday magic.”

“I do,” I say, stopping in front of a window display that fits the bill perfectly. It’s set up like a diorama of a winter wonderland, and it’s gorgeous.

He leans in with a smile, then taps the glass in front of a couple of the miniature figurines in the display. “Look at these two though. See all the trouble they’re going through just to lug that Christmas tree back to their cabin? They could have ordered one online and had one delivered!”

I laugh, shoving his shoulder. “Oh, stop. There’s *nothing* like the smell of real pine and fresh snow.”

“Nothing?” He smirks. “I’m pretty sure I ordered a candle with those two scents for my mother last year.”

He keeps up the teasing as we wander through the pedestrian-only streets of the festively decorated outdoor mall.

“Oh, now *that* smells good,” he says when we pass the Blue Agave Grill a while later, his steps slowing. “Join me?”

The fairy lights sprinkled through the trees that line the walkways in the mall are starting to come on, and dusk is falling. I have no idea where the time has gone, but I definitely want more of it with this man, so it’s an easy answer. “I’d love to. This is one of my favorite places to eat.”

He grins down at me, squeezing my hand. “And eating is one of my favorite things to do.”

Mine too, and I have no qualms at all about ordering what I want from the menu once we’re seated. I’m a curvy girl, there’s no hiding that, and if this gorgeous man has a problem with it, does it really matter? It’s not like I’m ever going to see him again.

Then again, if he had a problem with it, we wouldn't have just spent the day together.

I notice the sign on the table. "Oh, look! It's happy hour."

"Damn right it is," he murmurs, reaching across the table to take my hand again. This time, neither of us have our winter gloves on, and the contact sends more of that sizzling heat over my skin.

We keep flirting all the way through the appetizers and drinks we share, and when we finally walk back outside, the rush of cold actually feels nice on my heated skin.

When it starts to snow, I let out a delighted gasp.

I look up, sticking out the tip of my tongue to catch a wayward flake, and he laughs as he watches me.

When I look back down at him, our gazes meet. The smile has faded from his face, replaced by an expression that makes my breath catch.

He doesn't look away from me, and I can't tear my eyes away from him either. Not when a snowflake lands on my forehead, like a kiss of ice. Not when another gets caught in my eyelashes, or when a third lands on my cheek.

And definitely not when my fantasy man finally steps closer, brushing that last one away and then cupping my cheek with his large hand.

"I want to kiss you," he murmurs. "It's all I've been able to think about since the second I laid eyes on you."

SADIE

ONE WEEK AGO

HEAT POOLS BETWEEN MY LEGS, and I brush a few snowflakes off his shoulder, letting my hand rest there.

“Then what are you waiting for?” I breathe.

My mystery man’s lips curve up in a hungry smile, and he doesn’t wait at all. As if my words are all he’s been waiting for, he leans down and presses his mouth to mine.

Heat explodes between us like a spark igniting an inferno, and I go up on my toes, tugging him closer, sucking on his tongue as his hands slide down to cup my ass. It’s far too much for a public street like this, but I don’t care. My breasts flatten between us, and he groans again, a rumbling sound that makes me shiver as he hauls me even closer.

Fuck, I want to climb him like a tree.

Before I can, he tangles his hand in my hair, tipping my head back and dragging hot, open-mouthed kisses down to my throat. “Come back to my hotel room.”

His words bring me to my senses, and I take a step back, brushing my hands over his chest and smoothing down the lapels of his wool coat as I try to catch my breath.

This really does feel like a fantasy, and I want more of it.

I nod, my heart pounding. “Okay.”

He groans, kissing me again before taking my hand again and leading me toward one of the nicest hotels in the downtown area.

“You’re so fucking sexy,” he whispers in my ear as we step onto the elevator, pulling me against him when an older man follows us into the small space.

“Which floor?” he asks us as the elevator doors smoothly close, his fingers hovering over the bank of buttons. He’s already pressed number twenty, and when my fantasy man tells him to push number forty-five for us, I realize it’s all the way at the top.

“The view must be amazing,” I say, leaning into him.

“It is,” he murmurs, staring down at me.

I squeeze my thighs together, the promises he’s making with his eyes lighting me on fire.

As soon as the elevator doors open on the twentieth floor, then close behind the man who’d been sharing the elevator with us, he spins me around and presses me against the wall, one hand tilting my chin up, and the other diving between my legs.

He kisses me again as the elevator smoothly starts to rise, and I moan, grinding against his hand.

“Fuck,” he mutters against my mouth as he rubs my pussy through the thin material of my pants. “You’re already wet for me, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” I gasp, letting my head fall back to allow him better access as he scrapes his teeth down my throat.

“I want to feel it.” His fingers dip under my waistband, and he slides the fastener open. “I want inside you.”

“God,” I moan, bucking against him. “Yes.”

He slides my zipper down, letting his fingers drag over the front of my panties. “I want to taste this. I want you on my tongue. I want you panting for it.”

I already am. I’m also vaguely aware that we’ve reached the top floor, but I don’t care.

I buck against his hand. The elevator doors open, and I *can’t* care. Not with the way he’s started rubbing me over the

silky panties I'm wearing, right over my clit.

"There, god, right there," I gasp, so primed and ready for him that I'm already teetering on the edge. "Faster."

His mouth crashes back into mine as he gives me what I just asked for, and the soft sound of the elevator chime is drowned out by my moans as the doors slide smoothly closed again.

I hitch one leg up to his hip and he grabs my ass with his free hand, holding it there.

"You're so fucking responsive," he mutters, shoving my panties aside to find my slick entrance. "Fuck, you feel perfect."

The elevator doors open again, and I arch into his touch, my breath quickening when he shoves thick, callused fingers inside me. "God, don't stop."

"I'm just getting started," he promises as that soft chime sounds again. The elevator doors slide closed, and he pins me in place with an intense gaze. "I want to see you come for me. I want to feel it from inside this tight little pussy of yours. Fuck, you feel amazing."

"Yes," I gasp, pleasure rising up so fast that I'm almost dizzy with it.

"That's it," he murmurs, his eyes blazing as they lock onto mine. He fingers me faster. Harder. Rubbing against my g-spot like he has a map. "You're fucking gorgeous. Show me how good it feels. Let me hear it. You're so—"

The elevator doors swoosh open again, a well-dressed woman with an equally well-dressed dog stepping onto the elevator and cutting off whatever filthy compliment my fantasy man was about to give me when she sucks in a sharp, audible breath, tugging on her pet's leash hard enough that it whimpers.

"Oh!" she says, her eyes widening as they meet mine over my fantasy man's shoulder.

He wrenches himself away from me, tucking me behind him to block me from her view.

“Ma’am,” he says tightly, giving her a short nod as he pulls me off the elevator.

I stumble, my blood still humming with need, then giggle as he swoops in to catch me.

He doesn’t let go.

The elevator doors close on the woman and her dog, and I shamelessly wrap myself around him even tighter. “Naughty man. You’re going to get coal in your stocking this year.”

“Fucking worth it,” he says, a playful gleam in his eyes as his hands make their way down to my ass. “You’re too damn tempting.”

“Do something about it,” I dare him, biting my lip when one of his hard thighs slots between my legs.

He groans, then grabs my hand and turns down the hallway. His room is all the way at the end, and the moment we’re inside, he has me pressed up against the door, his mouth on mine again.

By the time he rips his lips away from mine again, we’re both gasping for breath. I almost melt against the door as he starts licking, sucking, and biting his way across my jaw. Down my throat. Along my collarbone.

“You taste like fucking heaven,” he mutters as his hard shaft grinds against my stomach. Then he drops to his knees, all but ripping my pants the rest of the way open. “Get these off.”

Once they’re gone, he stares at my fabric-covered pussy for a moment, pushing my shirt up so he can frame it with both his hands. Then leans in and presses an open-mouthed kiss directly in the center.

“Oh god,” I gasp, my hips bucking forward a little.

He looks up at me with a wicked grin, then opens his mouth even wider and sucks on the tiny scrap of cotton keeping us apart, tasting my arousal. Teasing me. Taunting me.

I dig my hands into his thick hair, panting. “Make me come.”

“I’ve been fucking dreaming of it,” he mutters right before he buries his face between my legs.

I shudder with how turned on I am as he breathes in deeply, groaning with such obvious enjoyment that I almost *do* come.

He lifts one of my legs, hitching it over his shoulder and turning his head to kiss the delicate skin of my inner thigh. His end-of-day stubble rasps against me, sending another full body shudder through me and drawing filthy sounds from my lips.

He grins as he looks up at me. “I love how fucking sensitive you are.”

I tug on his hair, beyond words, and his eyes flash with heat before he dives in again, lapping at me through my panties, pulling them into his mouth and sucking.

I cover my mouth with one hand as I cry out.

“Don’t do that,” he growls, looking up long enough to yank my arm down. “I earned that sound. Give it to me.” I moan, and he rewards me with a wicked grin. “Good girl.”

Then his fingers dig into my soft curves, and he’s suddenly doing his damndest to fuck me with his tongue, making filthy sounds of his own as he licks my wetness right through the fabric and tries to drill through it with each thrust of his tongue.

“God, please, yes,” I pant, grinding against his face.

He brings me right to the edge, then backs off.

Then he does it *again*.

“Bastard,” I whisper, pulling his hair to get his attention. To beg him to stop teasing me. To finally get him to let me come.

“*Your* bastard tonight,” he says, grinning as he reaches for my panties.

Then he peels them off my body and tosses them aside, leaning back in to taste me with nothing between us.

He groans, licking me like he has all the time in the world before he finally buries two thick fingers inside me, his lips still locked tight around my clit.

“Harder,” I whisper as he pumps them in and out, working me over with his tongue. “*Faster.*”

I’m trembling. Desperate. Ready to scream if he edges me again.

But he’s finally done teasing, and this time, he doesn’t let up.

It only takes seconds. My legs almost give out as a long, low moan rips through me, my orgasm crashing through me hard and fast, the waves of pleasure making me tighten around his fingers as he keeps working me through it, pushing me even higher.

“Again,” he demands, surging to his feet with his fingers still buried inside me. He grips my jaw, staring into my eyes. “Give me another.”

Pleasure rocks through me. I can’t catch my breath. I can’t control my own body. It’s *his*, and when he growls out another command, grinding the heel of his palm against my clit as he pumps his fingers into me even faster, I give him exactly what he asked for, coming again before I even know what hits me, so hard this time that I swear I see actual stars.

He makes a low, primal sound of satisfaction, finally sliding his fingers out of me.

“Oh god,” I whisper, completely breathless. “That was...”

“Delicious,” he finishes for me, holding me up when I collapse back against the door with a whimper. I would slide right down the wood and end up in a puddle on the floor if he didn’t have me pinned here, holding me in place with his big body as he brings his fingers—slick and wet with my arousal—to my lips.

He pushes them inside, his other hand sliding around my body to grip my ass as he grinds against my stomach.

“So fucking delicious,” he repeats. “Don’t you think?”

The taste of my own arousal is an illicit thrill, and I suck hard on his fingers, looking up into his eyes to let him know. Sliding my tongue between the thick digits as his dick throbs against me.

“Dirty girl,” he purrs softly, pushing them deeper. “You’re addictive.”

Then he slides his fingers out of my mouth and presses his lips to mine again, kissing me like I belong to him.

And for tonight, I most definitely do.

CADE

ONE WEEK AGO

FUCK, this mystery woman really is the girl of my dreams. And I don't even know her name.

I rip my mouth away from hers, my blood on fire. "I need to fuck you." Her lush ass overflows my hands as I haul her closer. "I need to be inside you."

Her dimples pop out as her green eyes, touched with just a hint of blue, gleam at me over her sex-flushed cheeks.

"Oh?" she asks, her arms draped around my neck as she peers up at me through impossibly long lashes and rubs herself against my shaft, sending all my blood south. "And what about what I need?"

I squeeze her ass hard enough to make her gasp. "You need my cock."

Heat flares in her eyes, and the wicked grin she gives me does nothing for my patience.

"I do," she agrees.

Her thick blonde waves tickle my hands as she tips her head back farther to look up at me, and she's a fucking vision I can't look away from.

I squeeze her ass again, just because I can. It's like her curves have been custom made for me, and with her silken skin and plush, pillowy breasts, stomach, and thighs, it's almost as if she stepped out of one of my filthiest fantasies and straight into my arms.

But it's not just her looks that have me desperate to bury myself inside her. I had *fun* with her today. I wasn't exaggerating when I called her my dream girl. All my life, I've been impulsive and adventurous, and this gorgeous woman has matched me in all of it from the moment we met. I can't get enough.

I start to pull her away from the door, intending to strip the rest of her clothes off, lay her down on the king-sized hotel bed, and bury my face in her generous breasts before I finally bury my cock in her body.

"Wait," she says, shaking her head. She reaches down and squeezes my shaft through my pants. "I just told you, I need your cock."

I suck in a sharp breath, her touch making it jerk against her hand. "Then let me give it to you."

She drops to her knees, nuzzling against the outline of my shaft as she peers up at me through those impossibly long lashes.

"I'm going to let you do a lot of things," she whispers. "But it's only fair that I get a taste first, since you did, don't you think?"

My nostrils flare, and I fist her hair, using it to pull her close. "You want to taste me?"

"Yes," she moans, melting against me as I roll my hips.

"You want to suck my cock? Swallow it down? Choke on it?"

"Oh god, you're killing me," she sucks in a breath as I tighten my grip on her hair just to see what it does to her. "Yes. Give it to me."

Using my free hand, I unzip my fly. "Take it then, dream girl, but I've got conditions."

She looks up at me, her dimples popping out as she grins up at me. "What conditions?"

Pulling myself out, I wrap my hand around my shaft and rub the tip over her lips, painting them with the slick drops of

precum she's already drawn out of me. "You come so fucking beautifully, I want to see it again."

A pink flush spreads across her cheeks, flowing down her neck. "That's your condition?"

"No, that's just a fact. My condition is that you can only suck my cock with the understanding that you're not leaving this room until I come in your pussy too."

Just saying it makes my shaft jerk against her pretty mouth, and without waiting for her to agree, I push the head between her lips, done teasing.

Her eyelids flutter for a moment, her tongue wrapping around me in a way that should be illegal.

Then she sucks me deeper.

"Fuck," I growl.

When her lips hit the first barbell in my Jacob's Ladder piercing, her eyes go wide in surprise as she looks up at me. I grip her chin, holding her in place as I rock my hips, pumping myself deeper into her mouth in short, shallow thrusts.

She moans, playing with my piercings with her tongue, and I shove my pants and boxer briefs down to my thighs, freeing myself completely to give her better access.

"You like that, beautiful? It's all for you."

She pulls off slowly, then wraps a hand around me. "You're pierced."

She strokes my shaft, staring at it intently as she traps her lower lip between her teeth. The row of six barbells goes from my base to just under the head, and as the barbells roll under her hand, pleasure rocks through me, making me feel a little feral.

I tug on her hair, tilting her head back as I guide myself back to her mouth. "Suck."

She opens wide, her eyes locked on mine, and I groan as I push between her lips. "You were fucking made for this."

She makes a hungry sound, closing her lips around me and taking me deeper, and I watch in a kind of awed fascination as she works me over, giving my piercing exactly the kind of extra attention that makes my pleasure shoot through the roof, then sucking me all the way to the back of her throat.

Then she swallows.

“Fuck,” I grit out as her throat massages me. My balls draw up and I grip the base of my cock, squeezing off an orgasm that I’m in no way ready to allow yet.

She wanted a taste, and I’ll give it to her. This woman is going to get every drop and then some.

But it’s too damn good to let it be over quickly.

I want her all night.

I wasn’t lying when I said I need to know if her pussy is as hot and wet and tight as her mouth is. I need to wreck it. In a perfect world, I’d fill it, make it sloppy with my cum. I never fuck bare though, so that’s one part of my fantasy that will have to stay a fantasy.

The *only* part, since she’s fulfilling every single other thing I could want right now.

“Your mouth feels like fucking heaven,” I tell her, my breath starting to grow rough as she bobs her head. “So fucking good, baby. Go a little deeper for me now.”

She does it, making a filthy sound of pleasure as she follows my instructions.

“Play with my balls,” I breathe. “Good girl. Now use your tongue again. Ahh, fuck. Yes. Just like that. Now *suck*.”

Her eyelids flutter closed, and I tug her hair sharply until they pop open again.

“That’s it,” I praise her, pushing in deep and letting her throat work around my shaft for a moment. Tears spring to the corners of her eyes, and it only makes her even more beautiful. “Keep your eyes on me. You feel fucking amazing, but you look even better. Don’t deny me the sight of that.”

She moans around my shaft but does what I asked, staring up at me as she continues to worship my cock like she really was made for it.

“Deeper,” I demand again, watching her pupils dilate as a gorgeous flush stains her cheeks. “God, you take me so fucking well. Your mouth is so good for me. You look like a goddamn dream, sucking me like this.”

She makes another hungry sound, gagging a little as she pushes herself, taking me all the way to the root.

“Fuck.”

The feeling of her throat spasming around not just my crown, but my whole fucking shaft, makes the curse come out more like a growl than an actual word as her eyes flutter closed again. If I thought her mouth was heaven, her throat is... whatever the fuck is even better than heaven.

And I really am a greedy bastard, because all I want is more.

I pull back, and she gasps for air, tears leaking out of her eyes and her lips wet and swollen.

I grab my shaft, giving myself a few strokes as I drink in the sight. Her eyes are glassy and half-dazed, and I need to see that she’s watching me, here with me, like I need air.

I stroke her hair, pushing the blonde waves back from her face. “That’s it. Keep looking at me, just like that. Can you take it if I choke you again?”

“Yes,” she whispers, her voice already sounding a little wrecked as her hands tighten on the backs of my thighs. “Use me.”

My cock jerks, her offer almost shredding the control I’m struggling to hold on to.

I lean over her, letting her soft hair tickle my skin and hide some of my ink as I take hold of the back of her neck, holding her in place as I grip my shaft and offer it up to her.

“Open those pretty lips for me again. Open wide and stick out your tongue. Keep it open for me.”

She does it, and I slide my cock in, back and forth over her extended tongue, both of us groaning this time as I play with her.

“Your mouth feels so goddamn good, you have no idea. Now touch yourself for me. Let me see you make yourself come. I’ll give you the taste you’re craving, but first I want you to get yourself off with my cock down your throat.”

Her hands tighten on my thighs, her breath hitching as her eyes go even more fuck-drunk, and then she obeys me, moving one hand down between her legs as she finally sucks me into her mouth.

I let her, pushing deep as she moans.

Her eyelids flutter again, but this time, she keeps them open, the gorgeous pink flush of arousal coloring her cheeks turning darker as she watches me watching her. I slide deeper, and she closes her lips tighter around me, working my piercings over with her tongue and the gentle graze of her teeth.

“That’s it, sweetheart,” I murmur, holding her gaze as I push deeper. “Relax. You can take me. You know you can. Rub that little clit while you suck me. You’re perfect. Make yourself come now. Be good and give me what I asked for.”

She makes a desperate noise, the flush spreading further across her cheeks, and I can’t see as much as I want, but I know she’s obeying me. Her arm moves in a quick rhythm, her hand buried between her legs, and even though I have no intention of coming until she gets herself there, it’s going to be fucking close.

I bottom out, the feeling of her throat contracting around me sending stars bursting behind my eyelids.

“Fuck,” I grit out, my hand tightening on the back of her neck as I hold her there, grinding against her face. “Come for me, baby. Do it now. Give it to me. Now.”

Her eyes roll back, her hand moving even faster, and she starts to shake, her body shuddering as the orgasm overtakes her.

I pull back, giving her air and watching her come apart.

The moment she can breathe again, she cries out, and the sounds she makes as her body continues to shake are fucking indescribable, her cries of pleasure the sexiest thing I've ever heard.

When she starts to slow, her hand going lax between her legs, I pull out of her mouth and grip her chin.

“Open your mouth.”

It only takes me three strokes before my balls pull up tight and I paint her with my cum, striping it over her cheeks, her chin, her tongue. It drips down her face as I wring every drop out of my shaft, stripping it raw.

She doesn't move, staring up at me, and if I thought she was gorgeous before, it's nothing compared to how good she looks covered in me.

I pull her to her feet, then lift her hand—the one she had between her legs, still slick with her pleasure—to my mouth.

“Swallow,” I tell her, sucking her fingers into my mouth. Her flavor explodes on my tongue, and I groan. My cock is already trying to spring back to life as I watch her obey me again, licking her lips and swallowing what I gave her. Tasting me while I taste her.

A taste, like I told her, that I'm already addicted to.

She's fucking perfect, and I'm not done with her. Not even close.

CADE

ONE WEEK AGO

I SCOOP HER UP, lifting her into my arms, needing to get her spread out on the bed so I can put my cock back inside her. She yelps, her arms latching around my neck.

“Stop! What are you doing?” she asks breathlessly. “I’m too heavy for this.”

I snort, because she’s wrong. She’s gorgeous and pretty damn close to perfect, so I’m not even going to dignify her ridiculous comment with a response. She feels amazing in my arms, and the only reason I’m planning on putting her down at all is so that I can get her naked.

I settle her on the bed, loving how debauched she looks. Bare from the waist down, pussy wet and thighs smeared with her arousal. Mouth swollen and cheeks smeared with my cum.

And that sweater she’s wearing. It’s clinging to her curves like a tease, and I physically can’t take my eyes off her as I slowly undress her, finding a sexy little camisole underneath, and then finally getting her all the way bare. Cupping those generous mounds and rubbing my thumbs over her wide pink nipples until they tighten into perfect little buds.

“You know you look like a fucking dream right now,” I murmur. “Spread your legs a little more. Let me see what I’ve got waiting for me.”

She blushes but does it, lifting one knee and running a teasing hand along her inner thigh, still slightly reddened from the rough stubble on my jaw when I ate her out.

I enjoy the view as I make quick work of getting my own clothes off, grinning as her gaze tracks over the tattoos on my arms and chest. I love how soft and curvy she is, and I can't wait to feel all of her, skin to skin.

But as much as I want to fuck her, I want to worship her more right now. To kiss and lick and nibble every inch of her body, starting with the places where I already know how fucking sweet she is.

I grab her hips, dragging her toward the edge of the bed, and drop to my knees.

Her legs are over my shoulders in a heartbeat, her hands buried in my hair, and I growl as I shove my face against her pussy, burying my tongue inside her again and drinking her down.

"You taste so damn good," I tell her, and her whole body shivers. "I love how you react to me."

She whimpers, her hips bucking as I press my tongue against her clit, then flick it hard, the way I've already learned she likes.

Tasting her like this gets me fully hard again, and by the time she comes on my tongue, my balls are aching, dying to unload on her again.

She runs her hand through my hair as I come up for air, giving me a gorgeous smile. She looks completely fucked out, but I gave her my conditions and I plan on holding her to them. She's not leaving this room until I've been balls deep in that tight pussy and made her fall apart that way.

"Come here," she whimpers, tugging me up. "Kiss me."

I surge up to hover over her, pinning her to the bed with my body. I kiss her hard, then work my lips down to her tits, squeezing them together.

"I fucking love these." Just like her ass, they overflow my hands. "Has anyone ever fucked them?"

She blushes, the color moving down her throat and spreading across her chest. "No."

“I want to.”

She nods, biting her lip, and I kiss each of her lush tits, sucking on the nipples one by one, before moving higher on the bed and straddling her waist.

“Hold them together for me.”

She does, her eyes glazing over and her breath hitching a little as I guide my shaft into the tight cleavage she’s made for me.

I start thrusting. Her skin is glowing, flushed and warm and slick with a fine sheen of sweat from our earlier exertions.

“Fuck,” I grit out. The sight of the tip of my cock peeking out from her tits with each thrust is almost as good as the way it feels to push my shaft through their pillowy softness. “Look how perfect they are. You look so goddamn good like this, sweetheart. You’re going to make me come again. I’m going to get you covered in it.”

“Do it,” she says, the words breathless as she squirms underneath me. Her body moving in a way that can only mean one thing.

I’m not the only one getting off on this.

“Are you getting wet for me again?”

“Yes,” she gasps, her fingers visibly digging into the flesh of her breasts, pushing them tighter around me as her back arches off the bed, pushing closer to me. “Don’t stop.”

I fuck between her cleavage even harder, her words spurring me on.

“You’re going to get another taste of me. You’re going to lick me off your beautiful tits.”

She whimpers, her eyes locked on my cock, and the look on her face as she watches it nearly undoes me.

“Do it,” she breathes. “Come on me.”

“Fuck. Look at you, you little hellion. You’re so goddamn beautiful. Give me that tongue.”

She sticks it out for me, and I grip her jaw, holding her steady as I shove deeper into her cleavage and pump my hips a few more times. My balls pull up tight as I give her what I promised, striping her neck, her collarbone, and her tits too.

She licks her lips, then relaxes back onto the bed, a gorgeous mess.

I move off her, pushing her hair back from her face. “Shower with me.”

Her lips tilt up, those dimples making another appearance. “I thought you liked me like this.”

“You have no idea.” My cock definitely needs more recovery time, but it gives a twitch of agreement anyway. I roll off the bed and hold out my hand. “Come on.”

She lets me pull her up, then follows me into the bathroom and lets me guide her into the shower, not protesting at all as I take my time cleaning her up. “You smell good.”

She laughs. “I smell like you.”

I give her a feral grin, because she’s not wrong. But underneath that is something else. “You smell like, what is that? Some kind of flower?”

She hums in what sounds like agreement, melting back against me, her back to my front, as I slowly soap the cum off her tits.

I bury my face in her hair, breathing in deeply. “No, really, what is it?”

“I use a locally made line of bath products,” she murmurs, tilting her head to look up at me. “They infuse them with honeysuckle.”

“I like it.”

Her eyes dance. “I can tell.”

“You know what else I’d like? Your name.”

She laughs, shaking her head. “We should just leave it like this. No names. Just this moment.”

“The fantasy?”

She turns, running her hands over my pecs as she looks up at me. “That’s right.”

It’s what we agreed on, but it doesn’t feel like enough anymore.

Before I can say so, she surges up on her toes, kissing me. I grab a handful of her ass, hauling her closer. I slip my hand between her legs from behind and swallow the gasp she makes when I plunge my fingers back inside her.

She’s still wet for me.

“I promised you we wouldn’t be done until I buried myself inside this sweet pussy of yours.”

I may not get her name, but no way in hell am I letting her leave without making good on that promise.

I shut the water off and carry her back to the bed, loving the way she laughs, the way her eyes light up, and how she clings to me, wrapping her legs around my waist and her arms around my neck.

She feels so fucking good.

I set her down in the middle of the bed, then climb between her thighs.

“You are fucking beautiful,” I murmur, spreading her open and running my thumb over her clit.

She shudders, her legs falling open even wider.

It’s a clear invitation, and the only thing that could make it better is if she called my name. Told me she knew who she was with. Who was touching her, pleasuring her, worshiping her.

I don’t push it though. She’s made her feelings clear. Instead, I dip my head to flick my tongue over the swollen nub between her legs, taking another quick taste before I pull away to grab a condom.

I want to see her face when she comes on my cock, but we’ll get to that. First, I want to see that plush ass. She was

driving me crazy in the shower, rubbing it against me as I watched her.

“Turn over,” I say, rolling the condom down my shaft. “Get on your hands and knees.”

She’s a goddess, stretched out on the bed in front of me. Her blonde hair fanned out over the pillows, her cheeks pink and her tits trembling with every breath. But once she does it, rolling herself over and pushing up into the position I asked for, then turning to look back at me over her shoulder, she’s irresistible.

“Gonna take you hard,” I warn her, rubbing her ass and then sliding my hand between her legs before lining myself up. “Are you ready for that?”

“I’m ready for everything you can give me.”

I grin at her, then groan as I finally push inside her lush body. “Fuck, you’re so tight.” I pull out, then push back in, holding her ass wide so I can watch her body take me. “This pussy is perfect. You’re so wet, it’s fucking dripping down my cock.”

“Oh my god.” Her words come out in a breathy rush, her hands clenching the sheets as she drops her head and rocks her hips back to meet me. “Please, don’t stop. I can feel your piercings.”

“That’s what they’re for.”

She lets out a breathy laugh. “For me?”

“Fuck yes.”

Her head drops even lower, her cheek pressed against the mattress, and her ass lifts a little higher, her body silently begging me for more.

So I give it to her, fucking her hard and fast the way I’ve been dreaming of all day. Letting my balls slap against her with every thrust. Grinding into her soft heat when I bottom out. Getting her close enough that her voice starts to rise in a rhythm I’m already starting to recognize.

She can come, but we’re not done yet.

“Fuck, that’s good. You’re so goddamn tight. Let go for me.”

“Yes! God, yes...”

Her arms collapse, her cheek sliding over the mattress, but her ass stays in the air as her muscles tense and contract with her climax. I pull out, then roll onto my back, bringing her with me.

“Ride me, beautiful. Climb onto my cock.”

She whimpers, still trying to catch her breath. Despite our shower, she’s already a mess again, sweat-slicked, sex-mussed, and fuck drunk from her latest orgasm.

She’s gorgeous, and she looks even better once she does what I’ve told her to and seats herself on my shaft.

“God, you’re big from this angle,” she gasps, her thighs trembling around my hips.

I run my hands over her curves, thrusting up into her soft heat. “Just from this angle?”

She laughs, a sound that turns into a breathless moan when I tighten my grip on her and drive up even harder.

“N-No,” she stutters. “Your cock is... you’re just... ah... I...”

Her words fall off as I take control, guiding her movements, her tits bouncing as I fuck up into her deep and hard, watching her get lost in the pleasure all over again. Losing myself in it a little too.

When she starts to pant, her body trembling as she tenses up around me, I slow it down. She feels unbelievably good, like she really was made for me.

I want to drag it out. I want to have as much of her as I can get.

And I want to give her a night she’ll always remember.

“Come for me again,” I demand.

She throws her head back, her eyes squeezed shut as she pants for air. "I'm not sure if I can... oh god."

"Look at me."

She does, the glassy, dazed look in her eyes telling me that she definitely can, and it's not going to take much to get her there again.

I lift her, pulling her off my cock and flipping us again, then slamming back into her, making her scream.

"You're fucking amazing," I growl, the words ripped from me. "You can and you will."

"Please, oh god, please," she pants, her hips lifting to meet mine. "Yes, like that."

"You're not leaving here until you do."

She moans, and I lean forward, grabbing her hands and pinning them above her head as I fuck her harder.

Her legs wrap around me, her body arching and her head tipped back, and she does it, crying out and her body squeezing mine as the pleasure overtakes her so hard that she starts shaking.

I fuck her through it, holding on to my own control by the thinnest of threads as I draw it out as long as I can.

"That's it. That's it," I murmur, the pressure building in my spine and making my balls draw up. "Just a little bit more. Give me everything."

She shudders under me, ripping away the last of my control when she squeezes me like a vise as she comes one last time.

"Fuck," I grit out, my own release rocketing through me. I fill the condom, grinding against her, wanting to be buried as deep as I can get it.

I kiss her, framing her face as I hold my weight off her, slowly rocking my hips against her soft curves as my dick starts to soften. I wasn't planning on being in Denver any

longer than necessary, but with this gorgeous woman in my bed, I've got no interest in leaving.

Eventually, I get up and get rid of the condom, cleaning us both up a little and then tucking her against me when I crawl back in bed. My cock is officially done for the night, but I still want more of her.

Not more sex. Just more... her.

"Tired?" I tease when she yawns.

"Not even a little bit," she murmurs, her eyes drifting closed as she nestles back against me. We're both still naked, and I can feel all of her.

Every inch feels perfect.

"Liar," I tease her, pressing a soft kiss to her temple.

She hums her agreement, a small smile on her face as her eyes drift closed, just enough to give me a hint of those dimples.

She's the most gorgeous woman I've ever seen, and the best fuck I've had in... possibly ever. Two things I plan on telling her in the morning, when I convince her to finally give me her name.

It's my last thought before I drift off to sleep.

But when I wake up the next morning, she's gone. No note. No name. Just that pretty little camisole that smells like honeysuckles—kicked under the bed and forgotten—for me to remember her by.

SADIE

PRESENT DAY

I STARE INTO HIS EYES, frozen in place with shock, then bite my tongue hard to keep from blurting out that he's not supposed to be here. I'm here to work. I'm not supposed to be thinking about how much fun I had with him or how he made me come more times in one night than anyone *ever* has. He's a fantasy, one that briefly came to life. A one-time thing. Not—

“Mr. McAllister?” I whisper.

“I take it we're exchanging names now,” he says, the heat in his eyes unmistakable as he graces me with that slow, sinfully sexy smile again. “And you must be Sadie Evans?”

I nod, swallowing, then throw my shoulders back and remind myself to get my shit together. No matter what happened between us, I'm here to do a job, and I love Whispering Pines enough to put the hottest night of my life in the past and keep it there.

Unfortunately, Mr. McAllister doesn't seem to have gotten that memo.

“My first name is Cade,” he says, his voice dropping low as he steps closer, his hand twitching like he's going to reach for me. “And trust me when I say that I'm *very* happy to see you again.”

“I had no idea you were... you. I mean, when we met. I didn't know you were my new boss.”

He smirks. “If you had, I'm sure you wouldn't have disappeared on me.”

“I’d never have gone to the hotel with you in the first place.”

I’m lying, and something in the way his eyes drop to my mouth, then bounce up to meet mine again, flaring with heat, tells me he knows it.

“We could have had a nice morning, you know. I am in town for a few days, after all. I was disappointed to find you gone when I woke up.”

The way he emphasizes the word “disappointed” sends my mind to dirty places. Places *he’s* occupied all week.

I clear my throat. “That would have been totally unprofessional. I... you’ve got to know, Mr. McAll—”

“Cade.”

“Fine. Cade. But believe me, I would never have hooked up with you if I’d known who you really were.”

“Then isn’t it lucky for me that we kept everything so mysterious?” he murmurs with a grin, reaching out and running the back of his hand down my cheek.

I shiver, suddenly realizing how near to me he’s standing.

Did he move closer? Or did I?

I honestly have no idea, but my body reacts to him like it remembers every single touch, lick, stroke, and bite he gave me.

Because it does.

I do.

Heat pools in my core, and I swallow hard again, reeling as I try to reconcile the hot-as-fuck hookup that’s already shot to the top of my list of best sex of my life, with the billionaire asshole I came here to meet. The one who’s planning on sucking the heart and soul out of one of the places I love the most.

That thought kills some of the sexual tension thrumming between us.

I take a step back, giving him my blandest customer service smile. “Well, there’s no mystery anymore, Mr. McAllister.”

He opens his mouth, probably to correct me about using his first name again. But I need to keep some distance between us, to remember that we’re nothing more than boss and employee, or else I’m going to give in and lick the man.

“This weekend is about business,” I say quickly, not giving him the chance to jump in and insist on more familiarity. “*Only* business.”

“I agree, Ms. Evans.” He smirks again. “We do have unfinished business.”

The low tenor of his voice makes my clit throb, and I stiffen my spine, determined to ignore it. “I’m here to do a job. I’m more than capable of keeping things professional between us.”

Instead of getting him to back off, my words make his eyes flare as if I’ve just laid down a challenge that he’s eager to accept.

“*Are* you?” he practically growls, looking at me like he wants to eat me.

“Absolutely,” I say, lying through my teeth again.

Of course I want him to eat me up. I dream of him laying me out and taking me apart like he did the first time. Even though I honestly never expected to see him again, it hasn’t stopped me from reliving the time we spent together, over and over, since I left his hotel. But no matter how much I enjoyed my fantasy man, I’ve *disliked* this man—the faceless billionaire property developer who swooped in to snatch Whispering Pines out of John’s ailing hands—ever since I found out about his existence.

I just need to remember that, and remember what Cade is really here for.

What *Mr. McAllister* plans on doing to the place.

“I’m here to show you around the resort,” I remind him, hardening myself against my attraction to him by silently adding *the resort you want to destroy* in my mind. “I’m happy to get started as soon as you’re ready.”

I hold out my hand, putting on my most businesslike attitude, and after a moment, he shakes it. His hand doesn’t linger, but I can feel the way his fingers are slightly callused in a way that says that despite his billions, he doesn’t spend all his time in a boardroom.

I remember all too well how those fingers felt on much more intimate parts of me, and I lock those memories down with a vengeance as I yank my hand away and step back.

He knows how he affected me, the cocky bastard, and the appreciative way his gaze lingers on me tells me that I’m not the only one who’s reliving that night in my mind.

“Shall we start?” I ask, proud of the way I keep my voice steady.

“Haven’t we already?” he murmurs, a smile hovering around his lips.

“Why don’t I show you around the premises?” I suggest, ignoring the innuendo in his words. “Have you already begun familiarizing yourself with the property?”

He makes a non-committal sound, his heated gaze still riveted to me as if business is the last thing on his mind, so I take the lead.

“Great!” I say, as if he actually answered. “Then let’s start here in the lodge.”

“Perfect.” He grins. “Show me everything.”

My stomach flutters at how suggestive he makes that sound, but I turn away quickly to hide my expression from him.

Honestly, I’m so rattled that I can barely remember how to speak, but luckily, I know Whispering Pines like the back of my hand. I have no problem rattling off both the practical and whimsical details of the building on autopilot as I start to

guide him through the large building, pointing out its features and regaling him with a little of its history.

“The windows here are one of my favorite features,” I tell him, running my fingers over the rippled glass when we reach one of the upper floors. “The glass is antique, salvaged from a church in a nearby town and shipped in, piece by piece. Some of the panes are original, dating back to the eighteen hundreds. It’s a beautiful detail. The stained glass has a kind of muted quality that really lends a certain feeling of old-world charm.”

“Beautiful,” he murmurs, but his eyes are on me, not the windows.

Good lord, the man is a menace.

I turn toward the stairs and continue the tour, moving us away from the windows and showing him the rest of the top floor as he nods along, giving me his full attention.

He’s not taking notes though, and that annoys me. Sure, our hookup was incredible, but does he just not care because of his plans to tear the place down? Is this level of detail beneath him? The kind of thing he usually delegates to a corporate minion?

“Did you bring anyone with you?” I ask, turning to face him again.

My heart rate instantly kicks up as I lock eyes with him, the intensity of his gaze shooting through me despite my best efforts to keep some distance between us.

Then he grins. “Are you fishing... Ms. Evans?”

He pauses before my name, just long enough to make me feel ridiculous for insisting on the formality. The man *has* had his tongue inside me, after all. Among other things.

I clear my throat. “Just wondering if you brought along a secretary or assistant to help with the transition.”

“So close to Christmas? What kind of monster do you take me for?” he asks, his green eyes gleaming with amusement. “I gave everyone time off for the holiday. This is really just a chance for me to get a feel for the place, since I didn’t have a

chance to visit in person before acquiring it. I'll start with the real work after the new year."

I tilt my head to the side. "If you wanted to get a feel for the place, why get the hotel in Denver? Why not just stay here?"

The grin he gives me is positively filthy this time. "Denver has its perks."

I blush. I can't help it. But thankfully, he respects the boundaries I've put up not to get any more explicit than that as he goes on.

"Actually, that was just a convenience for the first few days I was in town. Now that my friends have arrived, we're all staying here at the resort. We'll be spending the holiday here."

I clear my throat. "Friends?"

"Don't worry, I mean male friends."

I roll my eyes. "I'm definitely not worried."

"Two of my closest, actually," he says, his grin turning into something softer. "I don't see them nearly enough, but this year, the timing worked out for all three of us. And since one of them actually grew up around here—"

We've been moving toward the large commercial kitchen at the back of the lodge as we speak, and it's all the warning I get before he ushers me inside. As we step into the room, the second shock of the day hits me like a ton of bricks when I see the man standing at the counter, a steaming cup of coffee in his hand.

"Sadie, let me introduce you to my friend, Dex Blaine. Dex, Sadie—I mean, Ms. Evans—was John Nelson's executive assistant. She's here to help me figure out what I'm doing with the place."

Cade goes on for a second, going a little bit over the top as he talks me up. Everything he's saying is probably all based on what John told him about me, but I barely register it, stunned

into silence as I stare into the all-too-familiar amber eyes of Cade's friend.

Better known as my ex's older brother.

Seriously, what the fuck kind of Twilight Zone episode have I fallen into?

Dex Blaine may be one of my fantasy-man-slash-billionaire-boss-nemesis's "closest friends," but that's not all he is. He's also a massive pain in my ass. One I thankfully haven't had the displeasure of having to put up with in years. And I say that not just because of the unfair and entirely secret attraction I always felt for him, but because he really is one of the most insufferable men alive.

Dex laughs, a single harsh, disbelieving bark of sound, holding up a hand to stop Cade. "No need to talk Sadie up so much. We already know each other."

Cade blinks. "You do?"

A small part of me feels a little bit smug at the surprise on Cade's face. It's nice that I'm not the *only* one caught off guard here. But the larger part of me is still too busy reeling from this blast from my past.

"We do," Dex confirms, smirking as he calmly takes a sip of his coffee, his eyes raking me over. "She used to date my younger brother."

SADIE

DEX'S REVELATION makes Cade stiffen up for a moment, and he shoots me a loaded look that's both curious and, if I'm not mistaken, laced with what almost looks like a touch of jealousy.

Before I can decide if I'm imagining what I just saw or not, he looks back at Dex, raising an eyebrow with a quiet smirk. "Oh, really? Small world."

"Damn right it is," Dex says with the lazy grin I remember all too well, taking another sip of coffee. The way he leans back against the counter says he doesn't have a care in the world, but his eyes stay locked on me above the rim of his cup, his gaze sharp and assessing.

Or, if he's anything like he used to be, sharp and *judging*.

My heart rate picks up, and I lift my chin, refusing to let him get to me even if I kind of wish the floor would open under me and swallow me whole.

"Very small," I agree. Then, pulling on a protective cloak of professionalism, I add, "How have you been?"

"Fine."

Cade looks back and forth between us with interest, and I bite back a sigh at Dex's cryptic answer.

He's not going to give me an inch, is he? It's bad enough that the memory of the best sex of my life is now tainted by finding out it was with my new boss, the billionaire asshole set

on destroying something I truly love. But on top of that, I have to deal with my ex's older brother now?

Dex has never liked me.

Worse, I was never sure why.

One of the reasons it didn't work out with his brother, Parker, was that Parker made it clear he wished I would fall into a more stereotypical female role. He wanted me to be his supporter and his eye candy instead of someone with my own opinions and ambitions. Basically, he wanted to date his idea of me, instead of *me*.

I always figured Dex's dislike of me was because he and his brother were cut from the same cloth, but honestly, who knows? It wasn't like it was any of his business, and he's still giving me the same kind of look he used to level at me back then—staring at me like he can read every one of my thoughts—so maybe he's just a dick.

“How's Parker doing?” I ask, doubling down on just how professional and pleasant I can be in the face of these curveballs the universe keeps trying to throw at me.

“Fine,” Dex repeats, this time with a little bite to it. When Cade's eyebrows shoot up at his tone, he loosens up a little, adding, “The last I heard, he was dating an Instagram influencer.”

I make a very unladylike snort, then cover it up with a cough.

Dex arches a brow. “Do you care? I thought you'd be over him by now.”

The question makes me blanch. Not because I'm not over Parker, because that is seriously old news, but because I can't stand the way Dex still has the power to get under my skin.

“I was just curious,” I say, giving him a tight smile. “I haven't talked to Parker since we broke up.”

Dex smiles, a grin with some teeth. “Good.”

Cade is watching us both as avidly as a hawk, and the combined intensity of their scrutiny is making me feel like I'm

about to combust. In other circumstances, I'd blame the heat I'm feeling on a whole different kind of emotion, but this is definitely not the time or place for that.

Or the men for it, I remind myself quickly.

"Should we continue with the tour?" I suggest, turning my attention back to Cade with a bright smile.

"Sounds good," he agrees easily.

Dex pushes himself away from the counter, draining the last of his coffee and setting the mug down on the counter. "I'll come along too, yeah?"

"Sure," Cade says.

"Why?" I ask at the same time.

Dex grins at me, clapping Cade on the shoulder. "Gotta make sure my buddy here made a good investment."

I bite my tongue to keep from snapping that Whispering Pines is so much more than an *investment*. It's a haven where people make memories. But I'm here to do a job, so I'll do it.

"Let me show you the guest rooms next. Each one has its own character, but the rustic theme carries through all of them. My favorite is the one with the claw foot bathtub, because the original owners of the resort had it commissioned. The feet are actually carved to look like pine cones. You know, for Whispering Pines?"

I lead the two men from the kitchen, telling them a little bit more about the local artist who made it. The tension between Dex and me eases slightly as I talk them through the rest of the lodge, and pretty soon, I'm caught up in some of the happy memories I've made here, almost starting to enjoy myself as I share details of the place I love with the two of them.

It takes us almost two hours to get through the entire building, but just when we're about to move outside to tour the grounds, my phone sounds with a harsh, staccato alarm.

"What's that?" Cade asks, frowning as I pull it out.

I've already recognized the sound—it's a severe weather alert, and living where we do, it's not the first time I've heard it—but before I can tell him that, his own phone goes off, and then Dex's does too.

I swipe across the screen to read the alert, grimacing as I do. The earlier forecast about that winter storm that's barreling down on us has been revised. Now it's on track to hit us hard, right here at Whispering Pines.

"Well, shit," Dex says, frowning down at his own phone as he undoubtedly reads the same thing.

"Nah, it's fine," Cade says, tucking his phone back into his pocket. "Nothing to worry about."

"You don't know Colorado storms," I tell him, starting to freak out a little. Not because of the storm itself. I'm a Colorado girl, born and bred. But getting snowed in here with these two? The guy I hooked up with last week and the older brother of my ex?

Oh, *hell* no.

"No, really," Cade says with the confidence of a man who's used to throwing money at problems and making them go away. "It's not going to be a problem. I was already planning on Dex and Noah staying here with me through the holidays, so the place is well stocked."

Well, that's just great, but it's still not happening. No way in hell am I putting myself through that.

I glance at the alert again, then look out the window. The snow is coming down hard, but I can still make it down the mountain, as long as I leave now.

Right now.

I give Cade a bright smile. "Well, I'm glad you two—um, three—will be okay, but I'd better get going. I've got some big holiday plans, and I can't risk missing them," I lie, quickly walking toward the entrance to retrieve my outerwear and purse. "I need to get back down to Denver before the mountain roads become impassable."

“Do you think that’s safe?” Cade asks, following me as he eyes the snow-swept landscape outside.

I nod. “For now, but I’m glad you have supplies laid in. Plowing the roads up here is already pretty low on the county’s priority list since the lodge is so far out, so now that it’s closed to guests...”

I shrug, and Dex frowns at me. I have no idea if it’s because he can tell just like I can that the storm really is coming fast and I’m going to be cutting it close, or if he picked up enough about the dysfunctional nature of my family life back when Parker and I were dating to suspect that my excuse of holiday plans is total bullshit.

Before he can call me out on either one, I finish buttoning up my coat and grab my purse, fishing out my car keys. “We can continue this after the holiday if you’d like,” I call out to Cade as I turn toward the door. “Or I can just email you the rest of the information you’ll need.”

I pull one of the heavy double doors open, and a blast of cold slams into me. I lift my chin, daring it to try to stop me as I tug on my gloves.

“The snow’s coming down pretty hard, kitten,” Dex says, making my spine snap straight with irritation when he slips in the old nickname he used to toss at me whenever we snarked at each other back in the day. Which, to be clear, was basically whenever we had to breathe the same air.

“I’ll be fine. I’ve had chains on my tires since Thanksgiving.”

“I still don’t think you should leave,” Cade says, following me out to the lodge’s wide porch. He crosses his arms over his chest, making his inked arms flex under the Henley he’s wearing. I can’t see his tattoos right now, but just knowing they’re there is enough to bring back memories of tracing them with my fingertips.

I turn away.

“I’ll be *fine*,” I repeat, waving them both off and heading to my car.

I haven't been here long, but it's already covered in two inches of snow.

"Shit," I whisper, making quick work of brushing it off, barely listening as the guys continue to call out to me. They—along with the third one Cade mentioned—are welcome to hole up here and enjoy all the amenities Whispering Pines has to offer for the holidays. I'm getting the hell out.

I wave to them again before I finally hop in the car, squinting a little through the falling snow, then crank up the heat and drive off.

"Well, this is fun," I mutter under my breath, cranking up the volume on the Christmas station I'm listening to as I try to drown out the sound of my pounding heart.

I have plenty of experience driving in Colorado winters and know these roads like the back of my hand, but I still return my hands to ten-and-two and slow down until I'm practically crawling down the mountain, because trying to outdrive the storm *may* have been a poor decision.

"No, it will be fine," I reassure myself when I hit a patch of ice. "It will be *fine*."

I steer through it, my heart pounding, but straighten out just fine thanks to traveling at a snail's pace.

I laugh with relief as I regain control of the car. "See? Totally fine. And *much* better than being snowed in with—oh *shit!*"

The last word bursts out of me as I hit more ice and the car starts to fishtail. Visibility is down to practically nothing, but when the car's front end suddenly dips before jolting to a stop abrupt enough to lock my seatbelt, I realize I've gone off the road.

"Shit," I gasp in disbelief. "That did *not* just happen."

This must be a bad dream. Because being stuck in a ditch with my car wedged into a snowbank in the middle of a blizzard, while listening to Blake Shelton crooning about *thanking* the storm? No.

Nope.

Fuck.

Fuck, fuck, *fuck*.

I turn off the Christmas music just as Blake hits the chorus with Gwen Stefani, the silence closing around me like a winter blanket.

“Okay,” I mutter to myself as the initial adrenaline rush starts to pass. “I’ve got this. It’s just a minor setback. I’m prepared. And I’m *definitely* not spending Christmas in my Subaru.”

I force myself to loosen my grip on the steering wheel, then take another moment to psyche myself up a little more. Then I wrap my scarf a little tighter around my neck and get out of the car.

“Dammit,” I hiss as the cold bites right through my coat and sinks its teeth into my skin.

I make my way around to the trunk, clomping through the rapidly deepening snow, and pull out the tools every good Colorado girl keeps back there. Then, with determination and a touch of stubbornness, I take my snow brush and start attacking the snow piled around my tires.

But the flakes are falling so fast that it’s impossible to make much headway before more snow piles up.

After several minutes, I stop, breathing hard.

Shit.

It’s time to cut my losses and head back to the lodge. If there’s one silver lining to this situation, it’s that I’m cold enough that I’m not even worried about being stuck there for the duration of the storm with two men who light my blood on fire.

I toss my winter tools back into the trunk and grab my purse and my small suitcase, then lock up the car and turn back toward Whispering Pines. The snow is coming down even harder now, but there’s only one road up the mountain,

and I've driven it so many times that I could probably find my way back blindfolded.

At least that's what I keep telling myself as I start to hike back up the road.

But although the path should be easy to follow, it's getting really hard to see with how hard the snow is coming down. I can't even see my own tire tracks anymore.

Dammit. Have I gotten myself totally turned around?

I'm alone out here, and I'm getting a little scared now. It's so cold that parts of me are starting to go numb, it's getting dark, and I'm not even sure I'm still *on* the road.

Clutching my suitcase to my chest to block some of the wind, I peer into the darkness and try to get my bearings.

"Okay," I mutter, the words distorted by my chattering teeth. "I think that's a cabin over there. That means I must still be—*ohmygod.*"

A figure suddenly looms out of the darkness in front of me, a huge, shadowed shape lurching toward me out of the impenetrable wall of snow falling from the sky.

"Ahhh!"

I scream, instinctively swinging my suitcase at it.

SADIE

THE WEIGHT of the suitcase as I swing it makes me overbalance, and I start to go down, my feet slipping out from under me. But before I can fall, a massive hand shoots out and wraps around my arm. I'm yanked against a chest that feels just as hard as the ice I thought I was going to land on.

The figure grunts, sounding annoyed. "What are you doing?"

"What are *you* doing?" I blurt, a little embarrassed that I thought the man in front of me was some kind of snow monster or something when he first appeared. I pull free of his hold, peering up at him. "Who are you, and why are you up here?"

"Noah King. Cade sent me out to look for you."

"Oh," I murmur, feeling like an idiot. Cade had mentioned that a third friend would be staying with him through the holidays. "I hope I didn't hurt you."

He raises an eyebrow, then reaches down and fishes my suitcase out of the snow. "With this?"

"I did hit you with it."

He pins me with a skeptical look for a moment, then shakes his head and reaches for my arm again. "Come on. Cade and Dex are out here too. Let's get back so I can let them know I found you."

"Oh god." My face heats up despite the fact that it feels half frostbitten. "All of you? I'm so sorry. It's freezing out."

“And yet someone decided it would be a good idea to try to drive down the mountain in a blizzard,” he mutters as he all but drags me after him, my suitcase still in his other hand.

“It wasn’t supposed to turn into a blizzard,” I say in my defense, panting a little with exertion as I try to keep up with him. Something that’s only possible because he still hasn’t let go of me.

“And yet, here we are.”

“Did you see the alerts? They clearly said winter storm. *Not* blizzard. No one said anything about a blizzard.”

“I’ll be sure to let Mother Nature know she fucked up,” he says, glancing down at me, a dark shape almost obscured by the frigid snow around us. Not *falling* around us. No. The wind feels like it’s whipping it into a million icy knives.

My teeth are chattering so hard that when I laugh at his dry delivery, it comes out more like a wheezing gasp.

He doesn’t turn around, just keeps plowing through the frozen landscape like he really is a yeti.

I let him lead me along without any protest for a few minutes, but then realize that I’m actually the one who knows this mountain, not him. And yes, I’m exhausted and freezing and can’t see a damn thing, but this is definitely not the direction I was headed before he found me.

“Are you... sure... we’re going the right way?”

“Yup.”

“We are going back to the lodge, right? You’re not a serial killer?”

“Nope.”

I dig in my feet and yank my arm out of his grasp, shivering so hard I can barely get the words out. “We’re *not* going back to the lodge?”

He turns back to me and sighs, the exasperated sound almost drowned out by the blizz—the *winter storm* around us. “Yes, we’re going back to the lodge. No, I’m not a serial killer.

And we're never going to get there if you don't pick up the pace."

"I—*ahh*."

The embarrassing sound is startled right out of me when, instead of having a conversation about it like a civilized person, he just scoops me up in his huge arms. Turning back in the direction he seems so sure is the right one, he starts carrying me along.

I cling to him, completely embarrassed that it's come to this, especially when I know I'm no lightweight.

I should probably fight him on it, but it honestly doesn't even seem to slow him down. And since I'm a strong independent woman who's also so damn tired and cold that I was apparently walking down the mountain before he found me when I should have been heading back up, I can't seem to find the will to argue with the way he keeps manhandling me.

Something glimmers in the darkness ahead of us. Whispering Pines.

"I should, um, walk the rest of the way on my own," I force myself to offer, my arms reflexively tightening around his neck because now that he's got me, slogging through the knee-high snow is the last thing I want to do.

"No."

If my teeth weren't still chattering, I might actually smile at his high-handed grouchiness. King is a good last name for him.

"But I'm too heavy."

The only reaction I get is a scoff, and I bite my tongue, holding in any further protests since it's slightly warmer in his arms anyway. Besides, Noah seems bound and determined to do whatever he wants, and since that includes saving me, I really don't have any cause to complain.

Even if I don't fight him, I can't seem to stop the words I'm biting back from rolling around in my head. Lord knows I heard enough of them from my ex. Parker has been out of my

life for a few years now, but the disparaging remarks he used to make about my weight have stuck with me.

He never would have picked me up. He wouldn't even let me get on top during sex. But this is the second time in the space of a week that a man has lifted me up without any hesitation or apparent strain, and a tiny frisson of warmth curls inside my chest when I realize that.

I shake it off. Both Cade and Noah are virtual strangers who will be out of my life again before I can blink, and besides, it's not like Parker was wrong. I have a mirror and am perfectly aware of my more generous proportions, no matter how effortlessly these two men seem to manhandle me.

We reach the lodge, all lights blazing, and Noah stops just inside the door—still without putting me down—and flicks them a few times.

“It's what we agreed on to signal that we found you,” he tells me without waiting to be asked. “Cell service is shit out there.”

“It's all the tall trees,” I get out, my teeth still chattering even though we're finally out of the storm. “We don't have it in the lodge either.”

He grunts in acknowledgment, then clomps through the lobby, heading up toward the guest rooms.

This is the point where I really *do* need to tell him to put me down, but even though I'm still freezing, it's like the warmth of the lodge has reached right into my soul and sucked the last of my energy out.

Noah finally gets me inside of one of the bedrooms and sets me on my feet. I wrap my arms around myself, turning to face him, and my breath hitches.

He was nothing more than a dark, looming shape with indistinct features out in the darkness of the storm, so this is the first good look at him I've gotten.

Holy shit. He's gorgeous. And also *huge*.

He must be a foot taller than me, maybe more. And with the scruff on his strong jawline, dark hair worn a little bit on the longer side, and broad shoulders that are evident even beneath the layers of his winter wear, he has a rugged, untamed look that makes him look like a mountain man.

He frowns, reaching for me, and it jolts me out of my momentary daze.

“What are you doing?” I gasp, jerking backward slightly.

“You’re soaked.” His piercing midnight blue eyes drill into me with a look of impatient annoyance. “You need to take these layers off before they make you ill.”

“I’ll do it,” I tell him quickly, flushing as I start to unwind my snow-encrusted scarf.

His frown eases up and I get a terse nod in response, but he doesn’t take his intense gaze off me.

I get the scarf untangled and set it aside, making a mental note to be sure to take care of the snowmelt later since obviously we’ve got no housekeeping staff here at the moment. Then I bite the fingers of my gloves, pulling one off after the other, and start on the buttons of my coat.

It takes me a moment to realize Noah is still standing in front of me, watching every move I make like a hawk. He doesn’t blink. Doesn’t glance away. Doesn’t even try to pretend he’s going to honor normal rules of propriety as I finally get my coat off and grab the hem of my sweater with aching cold fingers. He just stares, unblinking.

I wait, subtle shivers still wracking my body despite the warm room.

“For fuck’s sake, I know how to undress myself,” I say after a moment. “You don’t need to supervise.” He’s still staring at me, so I wave my hand at him, making a swirling motion. “Turn around.”

His frown comes back, but he does it, turning to face the door and giving me a view of his broad back exaggerated by his winter coat, and a view of an ass that should honestly be illegal.

“I don’t hear any movement back there,” he grunts. “You’re going to get sick if you don’t get out of those clothes. You sure you can handle it on your own?”

I yank my gaze away from his ass, embarrassment flooding me as I realize I got totally distracted. “Yes, I’m fine. And most people would have the courtesy to leave the room.”

“Most people wouldn’t have run out into the snow in the middle of a blizzard,” he shoots back.

I purse my lips. “Winter storm.”

He snorts, not even dignifying that with a response.

“And I didn’t run off, I drove,” I point out, yanking my sweater off and tossing it aside. “With chains on my tires.”

“Yeah, I noticed that when I passed your car in the ditch.”

I huff out a breath. “That wasn’t my fault. There was black ice.”

Despite the fact that I’m still staring at his ass—I mean, his back—I just *know* he’s raising that annoying eyebrow at me again.

I clear my throat, my nipples hardening to twin peaks through my thin, wet bra. “You can leave now.”

“I can’t risk it.”

My hands pause at the waistband of my slacks. “What do you mean?”

“Cade and Dex would be pissed if I let you run out and get lost in that blizzard again.”

I frown, starting to wiggle out of my wet pants before I realize I’m not going to get far without taking off my boots first. “You think I’m going back out there? I’m not that stupid.”

“You did it once.”

“I thought I could make it.”

“You were wrong.”

I kick off my boots, then finally manage to get my pants off and kick those away too. “Yeah? Well, you’re *infuriating*.”

I hear something suspiciously close to a chuckle. “I think you mean I’m right.”

“No,” I grit out, my teeth chattering hard. “I mean—”

“*Sadie?*”

I jump when Cade and Dex burst into the room, my hands flying up in an instinctive reaction, trying to cover myself. I’m in nothing more than my bra, panties, and thick winter socks now, and I’m not sure what it says about me that instead of being mortified to be on display like this, my first thought is how horridly unsexy the socks are.

It makes my cheeks heat to nuclear levels, especially since both men freeze the moment they see me, their eyes going wide as they rake over my body. Heat flashes across Cade’s face, and my body reacts just like it did the day we met. I suck in a sharp breath, then realize he’s not the only one staring at me practically naked.

A tingling heat gathers between my legs as my eyes fly up to meet Dex’s. Before I can even begin to make sense of the complicated look on his face, Noah makes an odd, animalistic sound that pulls their attention off me, shifting his body so that it blocks their view.

“She’s changing,” he says, crossing his huge arms in front of his chest.

His words break me out of my shock, and I quickly crouch down to open my suitcase, tugging on the first dry things I find.

“I need to call and get my car out of that ditch,” I blurt, the confused emotions swirling inside me igniting the “flight” part of my fight-or-flight response even though I know there’s no way any emergency vehicles are going to be able to get up here right now.

Noah scoffs again as he turns around to face me, and Dex, as judgmental as ever, frowns at me.

Cade is the one who points out the obvious though. “I don’t think anyone’s going to be able to manage those roads right now. You shouldn’t be thinking of leaving until after the weather clears.”

Which is exactly what he told me before, even though he’s gracious enough not to tack on an *I told you so*.

Dex has no such qualms. “Just like we said before, Sadie! Goddammit, that was a stupid move. You could’ve gotten trapped in your car and frozen to death!”

“This isn’t my first winter storm,” I snap, lashing out at him because he’s right, and the thought is terrifying. “I have a full survival kit in my trunk.”

Dex narrows his eyes. “And how much good did *that* do you?”

“To be fair,” Noah butts in. “She wasn’t trapped in her car when I found her.”

I blink, not sure why it suddenly sounds like he’s defending me after he basically told me that he didn’t trust me not to run back out into the blizzard—I mean, the winter storm, earlier.

“But I would have been in trouble if you hadn’t found me,” I admit, swallowing my pride. “Thank you.”

Noah stares at me hard, his face giving nothing away, then gives a single nod of acknowledgment.

“You actually *can’t* leave right now, Sadie,” Cade says, breaking our stare-off. He sounds genuinely worried that I don’t get it and might try to make a break for it again. “The blizzard has closed all the passes. We’re stuck here together for the duration.”

“Winter storm,” I mutter, suddenly feeling flushed and embarrassed and off kilter around these three. But I know Cade is right, so when he looks confused and Noah raises that infuriating eyebrow again, I suck it up and say so. “I’ll stay until the weather gets better and the roads clear up.”

“Good,” Cade says with a nod of satisfaction, the tension going out of his shoulders.

I shake my head, holding in a laugh that might have come out sounding just a tad bit hysterical if I’d let it. *Good* is definitely not the word I would have chosen for this situation. Not even close.

I’m snowed in with all three of them, and by the look of this storm, that’s not going to change anytime soon.

Fuck.

SADIE

DEX GIVES me a look I can't quite interpret, but it's definitely not neutral. Noah's expression is much easier to read. In the short time I've known him, he's had a pretty consistent case of Resting Annoyed Face, but whether it's a permanent condition with him or he's irritated right now because he just froze his balls off rescuing me from that storm and now I'm crashing his holiday getaway with his buddies and about to ruin their bro time, I've got no idea.

Cade, on the other hand, is grinning. "You should unpack and get settled in."

I look around. "Here?"

I'm not sure why Noah brought me to this particular guest room. It's not the closest one to the front doors, if he was just trying to warm me up, but it is one of my favorites. I've always liked the warm, inviting decor, not to mention the custom-made clawfoot tub in its ensuite bathroom.

"Take any room you'd like," Cade says, still the only one of the four of us who doesn't look like he's sucking lemons at the idea of me being stuck with them for the holidays.

"Not *any* room," Dex says, still staring at me with an intensity that brings back memories of how uncomfortable it felt to be around him back when I was dating his brother.

Cade waves him off. "Any unoccupied room. These guys arrived last night. They've already settled in."

"And you?"

Cade tells me which room he's taken, and which ones Dex and Noah are each in, and I realize that if I do stay in this one, I'm basically going to be surrounded by them. For my own sanity, I should choose one in the other wing of the lodge.

"This one is fine," I say instead.

"It makes sense." Cade shoots me a sexy smirk. "Your stuff is already here."

"Right." I swallow. "It makes sense."

His smile grows, neither one of us pointing out the obvious—how easy it would be to grab my single, small suitcase and find another room.

I clear my throat. "I'll just stay out of your hair until I can leave."

Noah grunts, which I take as agreement, and after getting another inscrutable look from Dex, they leave the room so I can unpack.

I don't even realize how cold I still am until I start to take my clothing out of my suitcase and find my fingers still stiff. I shake them out, then rub my hands together before bringing them up in front of my mouth and blowing on them.

I'd give anything for a cup of hot cocoa to wrap them around right now, and if it came with a shot of whiskey? I'd marry the man who handed it to me.

"Although I'd totally settle for a hot bath and a glass of wine," I whisper to myself, eyeing the door to the ensuite with longing.

I'm suddenly encased in warmth, my cold hands wrapped up in two larger ones and my back pressed against a strong, familiar chest. "I told you, I'm well-stocked here," Cade murmurs in my ear, rubbing the warmth back into my hands. "Wine and a hot bath can definitely be arranged."

My heart lurches. I thought he left the room with the others.

"What are you doing?"

His breath gusts against the back of my neck, sending shivers down my spine. “You could have gotten hypothermia out there. I’m just trying to help you warm up.”

“This isn’t how a boss warms up his employee’s hands,” I point out, my heart racing now.

“Consider it part of the benefits package.” He turns me around to face him, then brings my hands up to his mouth and blows on them, his eyes locked on mine. “Better?”

Goosebumps race up my arms, my clit throbbing. “That’s not what I meant.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

He hasn’t lowered my hands, and his firm lips brush against my fingertips with each word, a tease that I know he’s doing on purpose.

Before I can call him out on that, or even decide whether or not I want to, he drops my hands and cups my cheek. “Why the hell did you drive off into a storm like that? It wasn’t safe.”

“Is this the ‘I told you so’ you refrained from giving me earlier?”

He smirks, his thumb stroking my cheek, the tip dipping into my dimple. “Well, Dex and I *did* both try to stop you.”

It would be easy to joke around with him and smart to step away. Instead, I cover his hand with mine, holding it against me, and admit the truth. “I was trying to escape. I can be professional. I can do my job. But this, us, it’s too awkward. The storm was a good excuse to get away and get some breathing room.”

“And yet, you decided to stay in the room next to mine.”

“I had no idea who you were when I showed up today.”

“I know. Believe me, I was just as surprised as you were. Although, maybe more pleasantly so.”

He’s fishing, and I bite my lip. If I’m talking to my hookup from last week, to the strong, tender man I had so much fun

with, I'd deny it. Running into *him* again would be a very pleasant surprise.

But Cade isn't wrong. He's not that man. Or, he is, but he's also something more. Someone whose plans for Whispering Pines mean that his values fundamentally don't align with mine.

"Seeing you again, it was just too much," I confess. "It brought back... memories."

He smirks, looking smug and far too sexy.

I drop my hand and smack his chest, laughing. "It made it hard to focus."

He rubs the spot I hit, grinning as he stares down at me. Then he leans in, brushing my hair back from my shoulder to whisper in my ear. "I can still remember how you taste."

His fingers trail over my throat as he pulls back, and I whimper, clenching my thighs together. My panties dampen with arousal, heat thrumming through my blood with every beat of my heart.

"Maybe I should switch rooms," I whisper, swaying toward him.

He smiles, the same irresistible one I remember so well from the hotel. "Maybe you shouldn't."

The attraction between us is making the air feel charged, the sexual tension so high that every breath I take feels like it might snap it.

"Cade..." I start, not sure at all where I'm going with this.

"Not Mr. McAllister?" he teases.

I laugh, the tension easing a little but the heat rising even higher when he takes one of my hands and brings it back up to his mouth. He kisses the tips of my fingers, then gently bites one.

"Shit," I gasp, pure electricity shooting down to my core. "I'm just, um, just trying to keep things professional between us."

He shakes his head, still holding my hand. “Let’s make a deal.”

“What kind of deal?”

“I’ve got no doubt at all that you’re excellent at your job, but you’re off the clock now. You’re not my employee in any capacity while we’re all snowed in here, agreed?”

My heart starts to race. “You’re firing me?”

His thumb strokes the back of my hand, and he tugs me a little closer. “No. But I’m proposing a free pass, for the both of us. Just while we’re snowed in here together.”

“What does that mean?” I ask as my breasts press against his chest, my nipples tingling at the contact.

Cade’s free hand winds around my waist to hold me in place. “It means that whatever we do won’t count. It won’t affect our working relationship. And we’ll both be free to enjoy the holiday.”

The innuendo he puts on the word “enjoy” would be a little over the top if I wasn’t so turned on, and when he grins down at me, I’m reminded all over again that on top of being incredibly attracted to him, he’s *fun*.

“Quit being so tempting,” I say, laughing as I step away.

He lets me go, but follows after me, tipping my chin up as he stares down at me. “There’s no way I’m quitting that. Not if it’s working.” He pauses. Then, with a boyish smile, he presses, “Is it working?”

I do my best to hold in the smile he’s determined to pull out of me, but it’s a losing battle. “I need to think about it.”

He searches my face, tracing my lips as they curve upward, then running his thumbs over my dimples. “Then maybe I should give you something to consider while you’re thinking about it,” he finally whispers, leaning in and giving me a toe-curling kiss.

When he finally breaks away, I’m panting and too turned on to feel self-conscious about it. He smirks, then leaves the

room with a final reminder to let him know if I need any help finishing my unpacking.

I could definitely use some help with *something* right now, but it's not my suitcase.

“Asshole,” I whisper when he closes the door behind him, totally unable to wipe the smile off my face.

He keeps defying the idea I have of him in my head, and I'm not sure how to reconcile that with the assumptions I made when I walked in here this morning. Before I realized that Cade McAllister, asshole billionaire, was also Cade McAllister, my nameless fantasy man.

I shake my head and get on with settling into the room, my mind racing as I pull out my toiletries and arrange them in the bathroom. I glance at the clawfoot tub. The warm bath and glass of wine still sound good in theory, but I know I'm too wound up now to actually relax and enjoy them after Cade's kiss. Instead, I head back into the bedroom and pull out my phone to connect to the wifi.

A quick check of the time tells me that Luna's on her flight to Big White right now, so I wouldn't be able to call her even if we did have cell service at the lodge. But I know my best friend like I know the back of my hand, and as long as she picked an airline with in-flight wifi, she'll be connected and scrolling through social media.

I fire up my Facebook messenger app.

Even with the asymmetric font I've got set as my default keyboard, the one that makes it slightly easier to work out texts with my dyslexia, I don't have the patience for typing out a message right now. Instead, I hit the little microphone icon and cross my fingers that the voice-to-text feature won't autocorrect anything too horrendously.

ME: Hey girl, I'm snowed in at Whispering Pines and there have been some... developments.

I stare at the small screen intently, waiting for the three bouncing dots that will tell me she's replying, but get nothing.

ME: SOS, Luna. I'm serious. This shit is crazy-making. A billionaire just proposed to me.

I smirk, knowing for sure that if she *is* online, that little piece of clickbait will definitely get a response. And in this case, it's true, even if it's a sexy free pass he proposed and not the kind Luna's mind will jump to.

SADIE

LUNA STILL HASN'T ANSWERED by the time I finish unpacking. It's tempting to hole up in my room and avoid the various levels of discomfort I feel around each of my three temporary lodge-mates, but I'm starving, and my stomach won't let me.

I leave my phone on the charger and venture out of my room, heading toward the kitchen. I've got no idea what Cade considers "well-stocked," but I'm hungry enough that if there's anything even remotely edible in there, I won't complain.

And when I push open the swinging doors, I definitely find something edible... and as soon as he looks up from the stove and sees me, I mentally cringe for letting my mind go there.

It doesn't matter how attractive Dex is. He's always made it clear that he doesn't want me around, and not even my growling stomach is worth dealing with his loaded comments and judgmental looks right now.

I start to back away.

"Where are you going?" he asks sharply, eyeing me up and down.

I raise my eyebrows, crossing my arms over my chest. "Well, I *was* going to get out of your way so I didn't disturb you," I say snarkily, his tone sending me right back into old habits. "But since you asked so nicely..."

To my total shock, instead of snapping back at me, a faint flush colors his cheeks, making him look chagrined. Or maybe it's just the heat of the stove.

“If you came in here, you must be hungry,” he mumbles, turning back to stir something in the pot in front of him. “Almost freezing to death will do that to a person.”

I don’t know what to say to that, so after a beat, I blurt out the painfully obvious. “You’re cooking?”

He snorts. “Obviously.”

I roll my eyes. His prickly sarcasm is exactly what I’d expect from him, and it’s oddly comforting after all the curveballs today has thrown at me. Still, I’m already on edge enough from everything else that I don’t think I can deal with my ex’s older brother and his constant animosity right now.

“Great, well, I’ll leave you to it.”

I turn to go again.

Dex looks up. “No.”

“No?”

He clears his throat. “Stay. If you’re hungry, you should eat.”

“Okay,” I say, feeling off kilter again. “Um, do you know what Cade has stocked?”

Dex throws me an enigmatic look. “Yes.”

He gives the pot one more stir, then wipes his hands on a dishtowel and heads over to the huge, industrial refrigerator.

I start to follow him, and he points to a stool. “Sit.”

“Bossy, much?” I mutter, doing it anyway as he pulls out an assortment of colorful vegetables and other things from the fridge.

His lips quirk up on one side, making him look unfairly handsome. “So I’ve been told.”

He makes quick work of slicing up some of the items he brought to the counter, and my stomach growls like an embarrassingly noisy traitor.

“Patience, kitten,” he says with a smirk. “The actual meal will take a bit, but these canapés will be ready for you in just a

second.”

Before I can snap at him for calling me kitten again, he slides a plate of little snacks toward me—rustic-looking crackers topped with some kind of herb-filled spread, along with some sliced meats and vegetables. My mouth starts watering too much to engage in our usual testy banter, and since the snacks turn out to be just as good as they look, I decide I can forgive him this once.

“What are you making?” I ask once I’ve taken the edge off my hunger. “It smells amazing.”

He’s dicing a red pepper, the knife flying over the cutting board at a chef’s speed that surprises me, given that I know his career is in finance, not a Michelin-starred kitchen. My question makes him pause, and he looks up at me with the smirk I love to hate back on his face. “Was that an actual compliment?”

I snort, waving off the snark as I pop another canapé in my mouth. “Just answer the question,” I say once I’ve swallowed. “Nobody’s stroking anyone’s ego here.”

He hasn’t gone back to chopping yet, and his eyes flare with something that—if it were coming from anyone else—I would definitely have called heat. Then he looks back down, knife flying again. “Noted. No stroking in the kitchen.”

I choke, and before I recover, he has a glass of water in my hand.

I glare at him as I drink it, my voice coming out with a little croak. “Thank you.”

His lips quirk up again. “Just remember, Noah’s not the only one who saved your life today.”

I roll my eyes. It wasn’t like he did the Heimlich. He just handed me water.

“How’s your family doing?” I ask, falling back on polite small talk because the weird energy between us is making me feel on edge. But as soon as I ask, I find that I genuinely want to know. The Blaine family has always been close-knit, and other than this animosity that’s always existed between Dex

and I, I genuinely liked them. In fact, in retrospect, I have to wonder if part of the appeal of staying with Parker as long as I did was being a part of their closeness.

But for some reason, my casual question has Dex looking up at me sharply again. “Why?”

I blink. “What do you mean, why? Um, because I want to know how they’re doing?”

“You mean, how *he’s* doing?”

I stare at him, then laugh. “Who, you mean Parker?”

“Obviously.”

I snort, shaking my head. “No, Captain Obvious. Why on earth would that be obvious? Parker and I don’t even stay in touch.”

He huffs, a distinctly grouchy sound, and goes back to dicing his vegetables.

I reach across the counter and steal a piece, then throw it at his head.

He bats it away and looks back up at me.

“So?” I ask, biting back a grin at the annoyed expression on his face. “How are they? How’s your mom? Is your dad still collecting old vinyl?”

He cocks his head, looking at me like he’s trying to solve a puzzle. “You really want to know?”

“Yeah, I really do,” I say softly, meaning it. “Tell me what Isabelle and Madelyn are up to these days.”

At the mention of his sister and eight-year-old niece, his whole body language opens up, a smile hovering around his unfairly sexy lips.

“They’re doing great,” he says, one of his hands unconsciously moving in front of his chest, hand flat and fingers all touching as he brushes it over his heart a few times. It’s the ASL sign for “happy.”

“Maddie’s in, what, third grade now?” I ask, grinning.

Dex nods. “She’s got a great teacher who keeps getting her fired up about learning.”

I laugh. “Isabelle must be thrilled.”

He snorts, shaking his head even as his eyes glint. “I don’t know if ‘thrilled’ is the word. Maddie keeps bugging Isabelle to take her out to see the Manitou Cliff Dwellings since they’ve been covering a Native American unit in social studies, and no amount of telling her it will be better if she waits until summer will shut her up.”

It’s a figure of speech, but it makes me smile at the memory of Maddie’s hands enthusiastically flying through clumsy baby signs the first time I met her. It was at a family gathering Parker brought me to shortly after we started dating, and suddenly, with Dex staring at me so intently, I’m swamped by another memory from that particular Blaine-family get-together.

One that has me stumbling over my words as Dex holds my gaze.

“It’s good to hear that, um, that Maddie’s doing well,” I say, the intensity behind his amber eyes making my stomach flutter. In fact, the look on his face is almost enough to make me worry that he can read my mind... and to wonder if he remembers that first time we met too.

But he’s not psychic, obviously, since that shit doesn’t exist. And besides, there’s nothing to remember.

“Can I help you dice some vegetables?” I ask, brushing crumbs off my fingers and collecting another cutting board and knife.

He gives me another funny look, then makes room for me at the counter and hands me a zucchini. “Sure.”

For a few minutes, we chop and prep in companionable silence. It’s totally out of character for us, but nice.

I never did understand exactly why he’s always so prickly around me, but I didn’t *always* think he hated me. In fact, that family gathering he just reminded me of was the first time the two of us met. And when we had?

For a moment, that first time, it had felt like Dex very much did *not* hate me.

My breath hitches at the memory, but then I quickly remind myself that I was obviously wrong. Whatever I'd felt like may or may not have passed between us back then, the truth is it had all been in my head. And, honestly, is probably something I should feel a little guilty about since I'd been with Parker at the time. But the point is, during every other interaction with Dex since—well, every one up until today—he's either ignored me completely, or been gruff, sarcastic, and sometimes downright harsh.

This odd bubble of companionable silence we're in as we prep food together almost makes me want to just outright ask him about it, but I'm not that brave and not even sure I really want to know. Instead, I turn the subject to something I *do* want to know.

“How do you know Cade?”

The smooth motion of his knife pauses for a second, and he glances at me out of the corner of his eye. “We've been friends for a while.”

“That's not an answer.”

He grins. An honest-to-god grin that's there and gone so fast I almost wonder if I imagined it. There's no way in hell I could have imagined the way the sight of something like that would transform his face, though... or the way it makes my heart race.

“Fine, we met through work,” he says, which makes sense. “The world we all inhabit can be pretty cutthroat. We started out doing a few deals together. When those went well, we started socializing a bit, and at some point, you find out who your real friends are and the value of keeping them close.”

That last part is cryptic enough to ignite my curiosity. I don't know all that much about Dex's personal life, other than that he was married for a while and now isn't anymore. Suddenly, I find out that I want to though. I want to know what makes this man tick.

But it's not what we're here for. Hell, we're not even here by choice. Or at least, I'm not.

"I assume that for you, that means Cade... and Noah?"

"That's right." He slants me another look out of the corner of his eye, then smoothly slides my cutting board away and hands me a block of cheese and a grater. "How do *you* know Cade?"

I flush, the question catching me off guard even though it shouldn't have. It's just that I've been so caught up in my complicated feelings about Dex that, for the first time all week, my hookup with Cade had temporarily slipped my mind.

"You know how," I say, focusing all my attention on the cheese. "He bought Whispering Pines from John. He's my boss, for now at least. I'm here to help with the transition."

"Right," Dex says with a scoff, the word dripping with all the judgmental sarcasm I've come to expect from him.

"It's the truth!" I say defensively, grating a little more furiously.

"I know why you're here. I asked how you *know* him."

"Fine," I say, dropping the block of cheese and turning to face him, my hands on my hips. "We have met before. Anonymously."

"So, you hooked up with him."

I lift my chin. "That's right."

Dex smirks, but his amber eyes are hard instead of glowing this time. "I thought so."

He goes back to food prep while I glare at the judgy bastard's profile. He is unfairly handsome. He's got the same dark brown hair as Parker, but somehow, it looks sexier on Dex. He's almost a foot taller than me at 6'5", with broad shoulders and muscular arms that, along with his chiseled jawline, make him look like some kind of action figure come to life. An upscale, sophisticated action figure, but still someone who no one would bat an eye about if he suddenly

declared he'd been chosen to fight evil and protect those who couldn't protect themselves.

At least, not until he opened his mouth.

I kick his ankle. *Lightly*, but without a single ounce of remorse.

He baited me, and now he's ignoring me. He got away with that shit for years while I was dating his brother, but things are different now.

"You thought so?" I repeat when his head snaps around to look at me in response to my kick. "What's that supposed to mean?"

His eyes shutter, and for a second, I think he's going to shut me out the way he's done in the past. But this time, he doesn't.

"Cade's been going on and on about this dream girl he met," he says after a minute. "He won't fucking shut up about her, even though she ghosted him after their night together. The way you two have been ever since you arrived today, I figured it was you."

He stares at me like he's waiting for me to confirm it, and I'm suddenly more flustered than I can remember being in a while. Cade talked to his friends about me?

"I... um, yes?" I finally say, stumbling over my answer as several different emotions war inside me.

Dex's lips tighten for a second, and I quickly look away, snatching up the block of cheese again and violently dragging it down the side of the grater.

I've got nothing to be ashamed of. It was just no-strings sex, but it was *amazing* no-strings sex with a man who it felt like really got me, and the part of me that's been swooning over that memory all week is dangerously touched by the idea that Cade went "on and on" to his friends about me.

But the more cynical part of me, the part that's been burned by more than a few men in the past, wonders if it was just locker room talk and male gloating.

How much did he tell Cade and Noah?

Does Dex know that Cade fucked my tits?

My nipples tighten, my core clenching as heat floods me, but my arousal is tainted by the rush of embarrassment that comes along with it. Worse, I'm not sure if I'm embarrassed at the idea of Dex knowing, of him picturing what Cade did to me... or if I'm embarrassed by how much that idea turns me on.

“Kitten?”

“What?” I jerk my head up, heat rushing to my cheeks.

I'm so distracted by my worry that he'll somehow guess what I was thinking that I forget what I'm doing. The grating blades nick my finger instead of the cheese on my next downward pass, and I hiss out a pained breath.

“Shit,” Dex growls, grabbing my hand and dragging me over to the industrial-sized sink. He runs it under cold water, frowning as we both watch my blood swirl down the drain. “You need a damn keeper. First wandering off in a blizzard—”

“It's a winter storm.”

“It's a fucking blizzard. And now look at you. You practically took your own finger off.”

My lips purse. “I wouldn't go that far.”

He gives me another one of his shuttered looks, then turns his attention back down to my cut finger. His big hand is wrapped so tightly around mine that I couldn't have pulled free even if I'd wanted to, and despite the fact that my finger is starting to go numb from the cold water, I don't think I do.

“You're a menace to yourself,” he murmurs, his thumb stroking my wrist as he turns my hand this way and that under the flowing water.

“I think it's stopped bleeding,” I say after a minute, his touch doing confusing things to my libido.

He turns off the water and pulls my hand up in front of his face, then gives a single nod of satisfaction. “Let me bandage

it.”

“I can—”

“No,” he says, cutting me off as he pulls out a first aid kit. He looks up at me again, his lips tilting up. “Menace. I’ll take care of it. Sit.”

I do. “Bossy.”

He holds my gaze, his smile turning into something that reminds me of the first time we met. “I can be.”

I squeeze my legs together, my body’s reaction to him thoroughly distracting me from the mild discomfort of the cut as he carefully bandages it. He’s almost tender, treating me like I’m something precious. Treating me the way every woman dreams a man will.

But this isn’t ‘a man.’ This is Dex. And Dex and I are like oil and water.

“I should go,” I say as soon as he’s done, slipping off the stool and backing away from him like he’s something dangerous. He’s not though. He’s the same Dex I’ve always known.

It’s these confused feelings inside me that are dangerous.

He frowns, an expression that I’m used to seeing on his face and a good reminder that the building attraction I’ve just been imagining between us is no doubt just as one-sided now as it was the first time around.

“Sorry I wasn’t much help with the cooking,” I say before he can say whatever it is that goes along with the current frown. I hold up my bandaged hand. “I’m just going to leave it to you before I get blood on everything.”

I don’t give him a chance to point out that I won’t. That’s literally what the bandage is for. I just bolt for my room, because sometimes the only answer to “what the fuck am I doing?” is to GTFO.

DEX

SADIE'S MUMBLED excuse about bleeding on the food we're preparing is bullshit. She's running from me. Worse, she barely ate.

I stare after her as she goes, rubbing my fingertips together. I can still feel the silk of her skin, and when I drag in a breath, her familiar honeysuckle scent lingers around me.

I haven't seen her since she broke up with Parker, and finding her here has blindsided me.

She's exactly the same. Gorgeous. Both soft and strong. Funny and full of snark. I remember everything about her. The way the dimple on her left cheek is deep enough that a hint of it shows even when she's not smiling, and the way the two of them together are devastating when she does. The shifting shades of blue in her green eyes that make them look like a tropical sea. The tiny smattering of freckles across her nose, barely darker than her skin and shaped a little bit like a cat's paw.

I've never told her, because I know the nickname annoys the shit out of her, but it's why I started calling her kitten. That, and the fact that she's soft and irresistible... but still has some claws.

"I'm an idiot," I mutter, finally turning away from the door she left through and grabbing my knife. I missed my chance, and I need to live with that.

I should have reached out to her after she broke it off with my brother. Parker would have been pissed and I know damn

well it would have violated the brotherly code to go after his ex, but I sucked it up, ignored my feelings, and honored that once already. The first time I met her. And what did Parker do with my sacrifice? Showed his true colors and took her for granted.

I was a fucking idiot for not making my move the minute he was out of her life, and now I've missed my chance again, because there's obviously something going on between her and Cade.

Not that Cade doesn't deserve some good in his life. He does. But that doesn't do shit to calm the green-eyed monster inside me.

I reach for another zucchini and realize I've already diced all of them, far more than I need for the creamy vegetable Alfredo dish I'm making.

"Good thing they freeze well," I mutter, setting down the knife and pulling out a pot so I can start some water boiling to blanch the extra zucchini. No sense letting it go to waste, and I can already think of a few other meals I can incorporate it in this week.

None of which distracts me from the fact that not only am I shit out of luck with Sadie again, but now I *know* things about her. Things that I deliberately kept myself from picturing in the past. Things that Cade hasn't been able to shut up about ever since his mystery hookup with his "dream girl."

No way in hell will I tell him she was my dream girl first.

And no way in hell will I be able to stop picturing the shit he told Noah and me about now. How stunning she was in bed, those tits of hers...

"Fuck."

My cock twitches as I curse under my breath, but enough already. She's not mine, was never mine, and I respect the bro code I've got with Cade far more than what I have with my actual brother, so I need to back the fuck off and keep my fantasies on lockdown.

I get back to cooking, the familiar process soothing me in a way nothing else does. I'm damn good at my job and have made an obscene amount of money doing it, but this is my passion. It's something I'll always make time for, and the reason I've never hired a personal chef.

It was one of many points of contention with my ex-wife, Anna. We married young, maybe too young, and instead of growing together, we grew apart. By the end, I honestly think she was only staying with me because of my money, and that was the shittiest feeling in the world. It's what made me come out of my failed marriage determined to never walk down the aisle again.

I press my lips together and get back to cooking. Those memories are exactly the boner-killer I need to get myself together as I finish prepping the meal. By the time it's ready and the four of us gather for a late dinner, I'm back on lockdown when it comes to Sadie.

She's not for me, and one of these days, I'm going to get that through my head and stop wishing she could be.

"Is everything in good shape for us to weather the blizzard?" Cade asks Noah as I lay the food out on one of the lodge's smaller dining tables.

Noah grunts, fetching drinks for all of us when I point him in that direction. It's a sound that Cade and I both know him well enough to recognize as a yes. Just like we both know that Noah has been prowling around the resort all day, doing safety checks.

"Good," Cade says as Sadie looks back and forth between the two of them with a look of confusion.

"Um, did I miss something?" she asks.

Noah shrugs, opening the wine I chose and setting it on the table to breathe, and Cade and I share a look. We're two of the few people Noah opens up to, and we both know enough about his history to understand why it's so important to him to be prepared.

We also both accept Noah's constant vigilance and careful, protective nature, the same way he accepts our individual quirks. It's what makes our friendship, our bond, so strong.

"Were you worried about the state of the resort?" Sadie asks Cade, turning her attention to him when she doesn't get what she wants from Noah.

My lips quirk up as Cade answers her. She sounds slightly miffed, as if anyone doubting it is a personal affront to her.

"Just being thorough," Cade says. "Noah did a perimeter check for us."

Sadie's eyes widen as we all take our seats and she turns her attention back to Noah. "You seriously went back outside? It's freezing!"

He shrugs. "We don't know how long the weather will last. Best not to be caught unprepared."

"I guess so," Sadie says, taking Noah's statement at face value as I meet Cade's eyes across the table.

We both know it goes a little deeper than winter preparedness. Noah is always ten steps ahead, always focused on predicting disasters so he can avoid them before they hit. It's a quality that definitely had a hand in the massive success he's experienced in business—he expanded the small bar/restaurant his late father opened into a billion-dollar franchise that spans the globe—but it also means the guy never relaxes. He's so tightly wound all the time that it will be a miracle if he manages to chill out enough to truly enjoy himself over the holidays.

But if there's anywhere he can manage it, I'm pretty sure this remote getaway is the place.

"John and I thoroughly winterized the lodge before Cade took ownership, you know," Sadie says, a cute little wrinkle appearing between her eyebrows. "This isn't the first storm Whispering Pines has had to weather."

Noah grunts again in response, and that wrinkle gets a little deeper as Sadie frowns at him.

I hold in a chuckle, passing around the pasta dish and steaming garlic bread I made. She's definitely taking this particular quirk of Noah's personally, and I predict that he's going to find out that the pretty little kitty has some claws if he insults her efforts.

"You guys did a good job," Noah finally says, as if he's just realized she's not going to let him get away with his usual reticence. "Firewood might be a little low though."

"We've got plenty."

He grunts. Then, when she huffs, he says, "I only saw half a cord."

He gestures toward the east side of the lodge, and Sadie relaxes, her full lips pursing and her dimples deepening as if she's trying to hold in a smile. "Just how much wood do you think it takes to heat this place?"

He pins her with a stern look. "It's big. Lots of square footage. Lots of open spaces."

"Sure." She shrugs. "But we're not going to freeze before the storm lets up. We don't even have to heat the whole place if it ever comes down to that."

"You never know—"

"Actually," Sadie cuts in. "I do know. I've worked here for years. And if you're really that worried about it..." Her dimples appear again as she smirks. "We've got another three full cords in a shed over by the utility buildings."

He eyes her for a second, then gives her a small, satisfied smile. "Good."

"I told you we know how to winterize," she says with a little huff that's more playful than irritated this time.

"You clearly know the place pretty well," I say, biting my tongue to keep from tacking *kitten* on at the end this time.

What I really need to do is distance myself a bit now that I've made my peace with not having her for myself. But then she grins at me, the same radiant smile she just gave Noah,

and I realize that being snowed in together like this might just mean I'm completely fucked.

“Whispering Pines has been my home away from home since I was a kid. My dad used to bring me up here during the summers before he...”

She pauses, that wrinkle appearing again for a moment as she takes a quick bite of the Alfredo, then she skips over whatever it was she was going to say as she goes on with her story.

“I got a job here as soon as I was old enough, working here for a while as one of the lower level staff, but I think John could tell I loved it as much as he did, and eventually, he had me managing the place.”

Noah is steadily working through the food on his plate, but I can tell he's also listening to every word. Cade isn't even trying to pretend he's not interested in Sadie's stories, cocking his head to the side as he looks at her like he's trying to solve a puzzle.

“You love the place,” he says.

She laughs, looking a little embarrassed as she daps a napkin against her lips and shrugs. “*So* much. Who wouldn't?”

“It's kinda cold,” Noah says with a low grunt.

She rolls her eyes at him, obviously appreciating his dry humor in a way that most don't.

Cade isn't going to drop it. Not when he's been obsessed with her ever since they hooked up.

“I meant that it's more than a job to you, isn't it?” he pushes. “John Nelson spoke highly of your skills, but I'm guessing that part of the reason you're so good at what you do is because of what this place means to you.”

She blushes. “It means a lot to a lot of people.”

“I'm glad,” he says, which for some reason has the opposite effect on Sadie, leaching the color from her face as her spine stiffens.

“Because it will be easier to market it and turn a huge profit?” she asks, her voice hardening.

Cade’s eyebrows shoot up, then he smiles. “That’s always smart business, but we’re on vacation, remember?”

Noah snorts, and even Sadie looks slightly amused as she asks, “A vacation? Is that what we’re calling being snowed in and cut off from civilization now?”

“Tomato, tomahto,” Cade says, waving that off and leaning toward her. “Tell me what you love about the place.”

She bites her lip, nibbling on it for a second while she studies Cade’s face like she’s looking for bullshit. I’m not sure what she’s expecting, but she’s not going to find it. Sure, Cade bought the place as an investment. And yeah, he’s definitely going to turn a profit. That’s what he does. But his interest in Sadie?

I fight down the beast inside me again and take a sip of wine, almost wishing I’d skipped proper pairing and gone with straight scotch.

I’m sure Cade will appreciate whatever it is Sadie brings to her job, but that’s definitely not what he’s interested in tonight, and I can’t blame him. Not any more than I can help envying the fact that the warm flush in her cheeks means she’s interested right back.

“When I came here as a kid,” Sadie starts, her voice softening as she settles back in her seat, “every minute here was a new memory to cherish. Telling ghost stories and making s’mores under the starlight, learning all the myths about what it is that the pines around here actually whisper about, discovering the hidden details local artisans have tucked into all the nooks and crannies of the lodge.”

“Like those carved feet on the clawfoot tub in your room?”

Her eyes get literal fucking stars in them as she gazes back at Cade. “Yeah, like those.”

They smile at each other for a minute. A full fucking minute. And then, when I accidentally drop my fork onto my

plate with a loud clatter, Sadie clears her throat, cheeks flushing again, and goes on.

“My favorite part about coming here when I was a kid was the Enchanted Forest Treasure Hunt. The resort staff would organize this rustic scavenger hunt through the woods each summer, complete with hand-drawn maps, hidden clues, and little surprises for us kids to find, tucked among the trees. And every clue meant learning a little about the history of the area and the lore of Whispering Pines.”

“That’s how you know so much about the place?” Cade asks.

“Well, that started it.” Her voice cools a little as she adds, “It’s definitely not something you’ll find at some fancy, impersonal luxury resort.”

She crosses her arms over her lush breasts, staring him down, and Cade arches a brow.

“On the other hand, think about how many more people can enjoy the resort you love once we upgrade and upscale it.”

Sadie gives an indelicate snort. “What they’ll be ‘enjoying’ definitely won’t be the same resort I’ve got so many wonderful memories of.”

“Well, it’s not like we’re razing the forest. The actual pine trees will all still be here at Whispering Pines. I’m not going to vacuum out all the crisp mountain air or get rid of your clawfoot tub.”

“I’m sure you won’t,” she says sweetly, her tropical-sea eyes sharpening enough to tell anyone who knows her well that the kitten is about to get her claws out. “Don’t billionaire owners generally hire other people to do all the vacuuming for them?”

Cade throws his head back and laughs, and even Noah looks up, a hint of a smile on his face.

“I’ll be sure to inform the housekeeping staff that the great outdoors is off limits,” Cade promises once he stops laughing.

They keep up the banter, Sadie clearly opinionated about Cade's development plans, and Cade pointing out the advantages of the renovations he'll be making.

I do my best to tune it out and just finish the meal, not proud of how fucking jealous I am of a man that I should only want the best for. As I eat, I refill my wine glass, then do it again. The sexual tension at the table only grows as Sadie and Cade argue, pulling tight enough that I finally snap when Sadie's dimples come out again, directed solely at Cade.

"Are you done yet?" I ask, standing abruptly and picking up her plate.

She looks up at me with wide eyes, her confusion over my interruption written all over her face. "Sure. I... guess?"

Cade gives me a slight frown, and Noah looks puzzled.

"I'm going to clean up," I tell them, even though I seem to be the only one who doesn't want to linger around the table for the rest of the night.

Well, maybe not the only one. Noah pushes back from the table, collecting his place setting. "I can help."

"No need." I take it out of his hand. Then, making a small effort not to be a total fucking asshole, I force a smile and add, "You should turn in early. Jet lag's gotta be hitting you the hardest."

Noah shrugs but stifles a yawn. "You're not wrong."

"I can help too." Sadie gets to her feet. "You cooked." She gives me a tentative smile. "It was delicious."

"Thanks," I bite out. She flinches again. I fucking hate it, but it's for the best, so I fall back on our shared history, pushing her away a little harder. "I don't want your help."

It's a dick thing to say, especially in the sharp tone I deliver it in, but if I'm around her for another second, watching her light up for one of my best friends when it might have been me if I hadn't been such a fucking coward all those years ago, I'm going to do something I regret.

Something I regret even more than missing out on my chance with her, I mean.

Cade is looking at me like he wants to have words, but I'm out of them, so I stride into the kitchen with the dirty dishes in hand, leaving them to do... whatever it is they're going to do tonight. And if a few of those dirty dishes end up broken while I think about that?

Just collateral damage from my own stupidity.

Kind of like my heart.

SADIE

“TYPICAL,” I mutter as I head back to my room, more annoyed than I should be about the way Dex snapped at me over dinner.

I should be used to it. Dex blowing hot and cold is exactly how he acted the whole time I was dating Parker. If I’m hurt about it happening again, that’s on me for assuming, *hoping*, things might be different.

It wasn’t even that Dex and I spent that much time together back then. Parker wasn’t as big on family as I would have expected given how great his family is, but when Parker and I did get together with the rest of the Blaines, Dex would either be a complete dick to me, or... the way it was in the kitchen between us earlier today.

That was the most confusing part of it all: the way we clicked when we weren’t snarking at each other.

I shake my head, frustrated with myself for being so fixated on a man who’s made it clear that he doesn’t like or respect me.

“Let it go, girl,” I tell myself as I head up the stairs, channeling my inner Luna. It’s exactly what she’d tell me if she knew I was wasting my feelings on my ex’s older brother. And don’t even get me started on what she’d say if I ever confessed the part I’ve never told her—that even though I knew Dex didn’t want me that way, my own confusion over how he made me feel was part of the reason I finally broke it off with his brother.

Only a small part though.

I deserved better than Parker, and as Luna still likes to remind me, one good thing to come from that relationship was that now I know better. I'll never settle for someone who doesn't truly appreciate me again.

I drag my hand over the familiar curves and points of the intricately carved handrail, so lost in my head about Dex that it's not until I reach the top of the staircase that I realize Cade followed me out of the dining area.

His hand lands on my hip, his breath sending a visceral thrill through my body as it tickles the back of my neck.

"You seem like you've got a lot on your mind. Trying to come up with the next zinger to throw at me?" he whispers, laughter in his voice.

I turn to face him, rolling my eyes even as my cheeks heat with embarrassment over being caught talking to myself. But then he presses me up against the wall, and I'm suddenly heating up for an entirely different reason.

"Do you know what a fucking turn on it is to see you all fired up?" he murmurs. "You have no idea how badly I wanted to bend you over the table and fuck you right then and there."

My breath hitches, my core tightening in response to that hot-as-fuck image. This man knows exactly how to get to me. Even though it's just a fantasy, the idea of him actually following through with it—and how that would have shut Dex up once and for all—is an image I'll never be able to forget now that he's planted it in my mind.

Cade chuckles, low and dirty. "You're so easy to read, sweetheart. You like that idea, don't you?"

I roll my eyes, hoping that will hide how much it's true. "I'm sure your friends wouldn't have appreciated that during dinner."

He smirks. "Don't be too sure about that. Maybe they would have thought of it as dessert."

My stomach flutters, unexpected arousal blazing through me at the images that evokes.

He runs a hand down my hair, his fingers carding through it and sending tendrils of heat through my body as he stares down into my eyes. “Have you decided on an answer to my proposal?”

I hesitate. It’s completely unfair of him to ask that while he’s pressed up against me like this, my entire body screaming at me to say yes, desperately turned on just by his simple presence.

Then again, isn’t that what billionaire businessmen do? Stack the deck in their favor?

“Yes,” I whisper, giving in to what I really want for once.

But instead of ravishing me, his eyes slide down to my lips, then back up to mine, burning with intensity. “Yes, you’ve decided, or yes, you’re going to let me taste you again?”

“Yes to everything.”

“Thank fuck,” he groans, his mouth crashing down on mine and his hands sliding down to palm my ass as he grinds against me.

“*Cade*,” I gasp when he finally lets me come up for air, his thigh firmly wedged between my legs as he sucks on my neck.

He makes a sound of pure male satisfaction, lifting his head and staring down at me with hooded eyes. “Finally.”

I’m so turned on I can’t think straight. “Finally what?”

He gives me a feral grin, sliding his hand between my legs and teasing me through my pants. “I like hearing my name on your lips, dream girl. And I like it even better when it sounds like you’re begging me to get you off.”

“Oh god,” I moan, as I grind against his hand. “I am. I’ll beg if you want. Just... *please*.”

His eyes flare with heated satisfaction, and he’s got my pants open and his hand inside my panties before I can draw

another breath.

“Please, what?” he teases me, his fingers dipping into my slick entrance. “This?”

His thumb rubs against my clit as his fingers plunge inside me, and I let my head fall back against the wall with a thump, panting as he works me up.

“Yes, that, I...”

I swallow hard, movement at the end of the hall catching my eye.

It’s Noah.

He’s watching us.

“You what?” Cade growls, grabbing my chin and tilting my face back toward his. “You need it? Need to come? Need that sweet pussy of yours to soften up so it’s ready to take my cock?”

His dirty words almost push me over the edge, my pulse racing so hard that it feels like my whole body is vibrating with it.

I should say something. Noah is still *right there*. He’s still hovering in my peripheral vision, I can see it. His presence looms silently at the end of the hallway, and I swear I can feel his inscrutable gaze locked on my body like it’s a living thing.

But I don’t say a word. And when Cade kisses me again with a filthy groan, it feels like I’ve stepped right into the fantasy he spun for me just moments before. He’s claiming me while one of his friends watches.

Cade’s tongue plunders my mouth as he fingers me, holding my chin in place and grinding against me as he pushes me closer and closer to my peak. It feels incredible, just like it always does with him, but the idea that Noah is watching as Cade takes me apart feels sexy and forbidden in a way that I’ve never dared to imagine before.

“Come for me, Sadie,” Cade mutters, his voice raw with desire. “I fucking missed the sound of it. Missed your taste.

Want you to flood your pussy so I can get in there and lap it all up.”

He’s found my g-spot and is fucking his fingers into me in a relentless rhythm that already has me flying, but it’s the dirty talk that sends me over the edge.

“Oh fuck, *Cade*.”

“Good girl. Just like that. Goddamn, you’re stunning.” He keeps his gaze locked on mine as I come, groaning as I give him what he demanded. “You really are my dream girl.”

Waves of pleasure crash through me, Cade’s fingers buried deep inside me and the heady weight of Noah’s gaze pushing me even higher. But then Cade’s mouth is on me again, my secret moment of exhibitionism over as he takes me into the bedroom, kissing and groping me as we tumble inside.

He walks me backward to the bed, undressing me as we go with his hands and mouth all over me. When the mattress hits the backs of my knees, he turns me around to face it, my back to his front.

“I want you,” he murmurs, lifting my hair to the side to kiss my throat as he grinds against me. He’s still dressed, and I can feel how much he means it as his cock strains against the denim that traps it.

“You’ve got me,” I whisper, half expecting him to bend me over the bed the way he threatened to do at the table and fuck me right through the mattress.

Hell, I’m not just half expecting it. I’m craving it.

Instead, when he steps back and gives me a little push to get me on the bed, I realize he has other plans.

“Crawl,” he says, giving my ass a squeeze. “All the way up to the headboard. Then grab it.”

“I... what?” I ask breathlessly, turned on by the idea and a bit worried too. Crawling sounds sexy as hell in theory. In practice? I’m not sure the angle will showcase my assets in the most appealing manner.

Cade doesn't give me time to let those worries set in though. He slaps my ass, then I hear the distinct *chink* of a belt buckle being opened. "Get up there, beautiful. I want you ready for me by the time I get undressed."

I do it, my face flaming even as desire pools in my core. My body is greedy for more of what this man does to me, even though he already gave me one of the best orgasms of my life out in the hall.

"Fuck, you look good like that," he says from behind me, the approval in his voice almost enough to overcome my self-consciousness as I crawl across the mattress. "That's it. Now grab on with both hands. Spread your legs."

"Why?" I ask, turning to look at him over my shoulder.

He's naked, prowling toward me like a hungry predator, all ink and muscle and green-eyed desire.

"Because I said so," he growls, fisting my hair and tipping my head back when he reaches the head of the bed. He kisses me, then lowers himself to the mattress next to me. "And because I want you to ride my face."

My body flushes all over, that same mix of desire and awkwardness flooding me as when he told me to crawl. "I can't."

Cade lifts one of my thighs and gets between them, lying on his back and manhandling me into the position he wants, guiding me to straddle his shoulders. "You wanna try that answer again?"

It was different when we were in the hotel together. I didn't *let* myself feel self-conscious during our hookup—at least, not too much—because I knew I'd never see him again. I just let myself enjoy everything Cade did to me, his enthusiasm for eating me out feeling more like a dream than something a living, breathing man would ever actually want to do. It gave the whole thing even more of a fantasy-like element, but this...

"I'll smother you," I blurt, my whole body going tense when he fills his hands with my ass, urging me down toward

his face.

Cade's eyes blaze, his mouth curving up in a sexy smirk. "Fucking do it."

The heat of embarrassment floods my cheeks, even as an entirely different kind of heat floods the rest of my body.

"Do it," he repeats, his hands kneading my ass. "I don't want to breathe. I just want you."

I clear my throat as my legs, which I don't think he realizes really *could* smother him, shake. "No, really. You don't want me to—"

"Oh yes, I fucking *do*," Cade cuts in, yanking me down against his mouth.

For a split second, all I can think of is the way Parker always tried to avoid going down on me, and his insistence—those few times when he actually did—that I had to be careful not to suffocate him with the thickness of my thighs.

But then those memories are obliterated by the overwhelming feeling of having Cade's mouth on me again, and the wicked pleasure of his tongue.

"Oh god. Oh *fuck*," I gasp, rolling my hips without meaning to, just to get more pressure on my clit.

Cade groans, his fingers digging into my ass, and pulls his mouth away just long enough to growl out, "There you go. Fucking *ride* me."

His pupils are fully blown out, the black almost eclipsing the green, and the look on his face is a raw, animalistic hunger that shatters whatever insecurities I have. I rock against his face again as his grip, just the right side of painful, urges me on.

"Fuck, yes, like that. So damn sweet. I could live on this," he mumbles, his stubble scraping my thighs as he laps at me. He spears me with his tongue, then sucks on my clit as I grind down against his face. His filthy mouth and even filthier words of praise turn me into something wild. Someone I don't

recognize at all as my cries escalate and my body races toward a climax that feels like it's going to wreck me.

Another orgasm rocks through me so hard that I scream, shaking against him as I cry out. The vise-like grip I've got on the headboard is the only thing that saves me from collapsing on top of him and smothering him for real.

"Fucking perfection." Cade groans, rolling his head from side to side and pulling me even tighter against his face as I ride it out. "I love that sound. My favorite damn thing. I want to hear it again and again."

A shudder goes through my body, my bones trying to liquify even as my core throbs with the greedy desire to give him even more. Finally, I start to come back down to earth. But the moment I begin to loosen the death grip I've got on the headboard, Cade stops me with another sharp slap to my ass.

He looks up at me with a feral grin. "Uh uh. I didn't tell you to let go. Stay just like that. I need to be inside you."

He scoots out from beneath me and rolls a condom onto his shaft. I can't deny the quick pang of disappointment as I watch the latex cover up his piercings, but I don't have time to focus on that for long.

He's behind me a moment later, his hips pressing against my ass as his cock slips between my slick thighs. He reaches down to guide himself to my entrance, and then with a low growl, he pushes forward and drives into me.

"Fuck," he grits out, one hand on my hip and the other between my shoulder blades. My knuckles are white as I hold on to the headboard for dear life. "I thought I was imagining it."

"Imagining what?" I gasp.

He leans forward, fitting his chest against my back and rocking into me even deeper.

"You," he growls in my ear. "No one should feel this good. Your pussy was made for me. I've been dreaming about it all week, but didn't think it could actually be as perfect as I

remembered.” He grinds against my ass, reaching around to finger my clit. “And it’s not. It’s fucking *better*.”

I moan, my whole body vibrating with the need to be taken by this man.

“Gonna fuck you hard,” he says as if he really can read my mind. “I have to. Your pussy is fucking heaven. Hold on.”

It’s all the warning I get before he pulls back and slams into me again. Following through on his promise and fucking me so hard that each thrust makes my entire body light up like a supernova.

“So fucking good,” he groans, his breath ragged as he pounds into me. “Get loud for me. Make those filthy sounds that tell me how much you need my cock.”

When an orgasm slams through me like a tsunami, the sharp, mewling cries it wrings out of me seem to unleash something in him. He palms my ass, spreading me wide around his cock, and with three more brutal thrusts that almost crack the headboard, he follows me over the edge, his cock pulsing inside me as he comes with a groan.

“Milk it,” he whispers. His hips keep slowly pumping into me after he comes as my walls continue to clench and squeeze around him with the aftershocks of my pleasure. “That’s it. Use that tight little pussy to get every drop. I can’t fucking leave. You feel too good.” He slips a hand between us, holding the base of his cock as it starts to soften so he can drive it into me a few more times. “You’re so fucking wet. Makes me want to get my mouth on you again. You’re... *shit*.”

“What’s wrong?” I ask as he goes still.

I twist around to look at him as he pulls out, and when he settles back on his heels, his hand still wrapped around his cock, I have my answer.

“Oh shit. Did it break?”

I can see the condom still encasing his shaft, but his hand is also pretty fucking clearly covered in cum. And I *am* wet. Sopping. But there’s no mistaking the difference between my slick arousal and his creamy white release.

A complicated look crosses his face as he carefully pulls the condom off, then frowns down at it before heaving himself off the bed to dispose of it.

“Can’t tell,” he finally answers, walking back toward me. “I think I might have just overflowed it.”

I blink, then cover my mouth as a shocked laugh escapes me. I’ve never had a guy overflow a condom with me before, and honestly, it’s a bit of an ego boost.

“Do I get credit for that?” I ask, biting my lip.

“Fuck yeah, you do.” Cade grins, crawling back onto the bed next to me. “And don’t worry, I’m safe,” he adds, brushing my hair back. “I get tested regularly, but—”

“It’s fine,” I reassure him, settling back in his arms and then twisting half around so I can still see him. “I’m on the pill. We won’t have anything to worry about.”

He stares at me for a moment, then smiles. “Good.”

“I’ve never seen that happen before,” I admit. “You’re sure it didn’t just break?”

“I’m sure.” His cocky smirk returns. “I told you, dream girl. I missed you. In fact, I…”

A flash of something I can’t quite name crosses his face, and I raise my eyebrows at his hesitation. “You what?”

“I kept something of yours. From the hotel. It smells like you.”

My camisole. It has to be. I realized I’d left it after I got home, but I couldn’t regret losing the scrap of satin and lace since the trade-off had been so worth it. It touches me that he kept it though. That he wanted to remember me, the same way I haven’t been able to stop thinking of him.

“Should I ask for it back?”

“No.”

“Why not?” I tease, my heart tripping a little at the intensity of his gaze. “It’s mine.”

“That’s where you’re wrong,” he says, giving me that slow, sexy smile that I need to be very careful not to fall for. “I licked it, so it’s mine.”

He pulls me closer, making me the little spoon, and I have to bite my tongue to keep from reminding him that that’s not the only thing he’s licked. Which is ridiculous. This is a temporary free pass, and all I need to do is enjoy it.

But for the first time since the storm hit, I’m in no hurry for the weather to clear.

No hurry at all.

NOAH

IT'S cold as fuck out here, and with the snow still coming down hard and visibility down to almost nothing, it's a damn good thing Cade had the foresight to stock a fair amount of supplies. I squint through it, sweating a little under my winter gear as I move through the knee-high layer of snow already on the ground.

I'm on my way out to check on the extra stock of firewood Sadie mentioned, out in the shed by the utility buildings. Not that I don't trust her, but the resort has been closed up for a while, and who knows what could have happened since she was last here.

It's a thought I couldn't shake as I was doing my final perimeter check of the night. I already covered the grounds earlier and just meant to stick to the building. Making sure the doors are all locked for the night, everything turned off in the kitchen, no obvious fire hazards or other threats that would bite us in the ass if left unattended.

But fuck, I needed to cool off.

I'm always agitated the first night I spend in a new place. It doesn't help that the holiday I planned on spending with the two people in my life I can actually relax a little with, my two closest friends, now has an unexpected fourth person added to the mix.

Sadie.

My mind flashes with the image of her gorgeous blue-green eyes locked on mine, pupils dilated as she came on

Cade's fingers, and my cock instantly tries to fight off the ball-shriveling cold and come to life.

The blizzard tames it. That's why I'm out here. Well, part of the reason. The unknown never sits well with me, whether it's an x-factor like Sadie intruding on the plans I had with the guys, or just a new place. The need to see with my own two eyes that we're safe, prepared, and well-stocked would have compelled me out here even if I hadn't just gotten an eye-full of live porn that I needed to calm the hell down from.

Once I reach the shed Sadie mentioned, I do a quick sweep of the perimeter before trying the door. It's unlocked, which makes me frown, but when I step inside, I don't see anything obviously out of place. It's fully stocked with several cords of dry wood, just as Sadie said. There's also an emergency generator in case the power goes out.

I nod to myself, one worry easing. We won't freeze, no matter how long these conditions last.

I take a quick inventory of the tools and equipment stored in the shed and make a mental note to talk to Cade about locking all the outbuildings when not in use, then head back toward the lodge.

When I come back in, I pass Dex, still in the kitchen. He's in a fucking mood, and though we make eye contact and exchange silent nods, he doesn't question why I'm covered in snow and I don't push him about what crawled up his ass during dinner.

I figure I might have an inkling anyway, what with the way he's been so fixated on Sadie ever since she showed up, and I know damn well that he'll understand what I was doing out there.

My friends know how I am and what to expect when they travel with me, and travel is something I do a good deal of now that Keystone Culinary has become a massive franchise. It's something I never could have imagined back when I still had to use a stool to reach the countertops at the restaurant, while Pops taught me how to prepare our signature crab cakes. But it doesn't matter where in the world I end up, or how

secure the area supposedly is, I can't rest easy until I've made sure of that for myself.

I dry off and grab my laptop from my room. I've still got work to do tonight. I don't have time to waste thinking of the past, even though of course that's where my head goes anytime memories of Pops sneak past my defenses and rise to the surface.

I know where my issues come from. I know that the trauma of losing Pops the way I did dug itself into me and left irreparable scars. I've done a lot of work with a therapist to make sure the habits I formed to protect myself because of the past don't become debilitating.

But I also know how fucked up it left me.

I'm damn good at the business I built up in Pops' memory—the billions I've got in the bank attest to that—but it hasn't won me many friends. Most people find me cold and uptight, or just downright intimidating.

I'm okay with that. I don't need more than I've got, which is Cade and Dex. They're the only two people who've ever been able to crack through my shell. They get me. It's why I said yes to this holiday trip, even though it comes right at a critical point for my business. They're the only ones I let my guard down around, and I don't care how prickly and withdrawn Dex gets or how obsessed Cade is acting about this woman, I've got their backs, fucking always.

After heading back down to the lodge's rustic great room with my laptop, I connect to the surprisingly robust wifi here. It's not like I can really blame Cade for his current obsession, now can I? We've always had similar taste in women. All three of us. So the minute Cade started going on about the mystery woman he'd hooked up with, I knew she'd be fucking gorgeous.

I scrub a hand over my face, trying to clear my thoughts and get my cock back under control, since now I'm reliving that moment in the hallway again. An unprecedented opportunity has come knocking on Keystone Culinary's door,

and I need to get my head on straight and take care of business.

I've been working hard on this deal for months. Now isn't the time to get distracted by soft curves, a perfect laugh, or a set of dimples that have already come too damn close to cracking through the walls I keep up between me and the rest of the world.

Keystone Culinary finally has a chance to franchise internationally, something that would have blown Pops' mind. It will mean I move to Japan for at least a year to get everything set up, which is another reason I wanted to spend this time over the holidays with my friends.

But if I'm going to get the deal done, I need to make sure everything is on track. Nothing is guaranteed until everyone signs the final contracts, and no matter how smoothly our negotiations have gone up until this point, I refuse to leave anything to chance.

Ever.

I push everything but business out of my head, and quickly skim through my inbox before initiating a video call with my assistant, Becca.

It's late, but that doesn't matter. She's been with me for long enough to know how I operate, and she's dedicated enough to be available whenever and however I need her. Hell, she's so deeply involved in managing my life at this point that she'd probably be the one to call me if she didn't hear from me, wondering what the fuck is wrong.

It only takes two rings before the call connects.

"Hey, bossman!" Becca answers with her usual perky enthusiasm, looking completely put together despite the late hour. "I was hoping I'd hear from you."

"Why, has there been a new development with the Eiwa Izakaya Group?" I ask, mentally calculating the time difference between Colorado and Japan. It should still be the middle of the working day in Tokyo, so it's entirely possible.

She laughs and shakes her head. “No, of course not. You know I would’ve reached out to you if anything new had come up. I just wanted to make sure your vacation was off to a good start.”

“It is.”

“Good,” she says with a grin, leaning back in what I now recognize as her apartment. There’s a small Christmas tree behind her, and beyond that, I can see the familiar view of the city at night. “I’m glad you ended up going. You needed a break. How is it out there?”

I’m anxious to get down to work, but my assistant never lets me get by without at least a little small talk. She says it’s good for my social skills. Sighing, I give her a quick update on the storm, then throw in a brief description of the meal Dex made for us when she worries aloud about the three of us being cut off from civilization by the blizzard.

“We’ll be fine,” I assure her again, not mentioning Sadie despite her comment about *the three of us*. Our unexpected guest is irrelevant to this conversation, and definitely not any of Becca’s business.

“Alright, if you say so. At least you’ve still got internet service,” Becca says. “I would’ve worried if I hadn’t heard from you.”

“Yeah, internet is good. There’s a lot to take care of. Have the numbers come in for the western region?” I ask, steering the conversation toward the reason for my call. It’s one of the last pieces of data I promised the Eiwa Izakaya Group, and I’m counting on the growth those numbers will show to seal the deal.

Becca nods, pulling up the information and screen-sharing with me as we go over it together. The numbers are good. Damn good. But *good* isn’t bulletproof, and there’s no way I’m sending this information to one of the most successful conglomerates in the Asian markets without making sure I go through every line myself.

“What’s going on with our franchisees in southern California?” I ask, frowning as I notice the discrepancies for that region.

“I think that has to do with the union strike with some of our suppliers down there,” Becca says, pulling up another set of reports.

As she starts to walk me through the data, a rhythmic thumping sound starts up, coming from upstairs. Cade’s room.

Shit. I must be right below it.

The unmistakable rhythm yanks my attention away from the matter at hand, and the faint sound of Sadie crying out—of Sadie getting fucked good and hard by one of my best friends, unless I miss my guess—has my cock swelling with no convenient blizzard around this time to keep it in check.

I’m glad Cade’s getting some, especially after the way he’s been obsessed with her ever since their first meeting. And having seen how beautifully Sadie falls apart, it’s damn hard not to imagine how good it must feel to pound into her like that.

“Fuck,” I mutter quietly, reaching down to adjust myself when I imagine it a little *too* well.

Becca pauses mid-sentence. “What was that, bossman?”

I blink, remembering where the hell I am and what I’m actually meant to be doing.

“Nothing,” I say briskly. “Has the refrigeration issue been dealt with?”

She nods. “It was the first thing we told our franchise owners to take care of when rumors of the strike started. We’ve got far less ability to absorb losses with the deliveries uncertain.”

I grit my teeth, wishing like hell there weren’t so many short-sighted bastards in the world of business. In the long run, taking care of your own damn people *always* pays off. But the current strike just goes to show that not every CEO gets that.

“How can we mitigate these numbers then?” I ask, drumming my fingers on the edge of my desk.

The question is rhetorical more than anything. It’s not Becca’s job to figure that out. It’s mine. But she’s a good sounding board, and with as involved as she’s become in every aspect of Keystone Culinary’s financials, she often has valuable insight.

She pulls up another set of reports, laying out a few potential strategies that I’ve had her research for me in the past, and Cade does something upstairs that makes Sadie moan like a fucking porn star.

My blood rushes south.

“Noah?” Becca prompts. “Do you want to see the projections?”

“I...”

I’m distracted again when the faint sound of Cade’s groan filters down to me. I look up. Somehow, I managed to settle right under an ornately covered vent, discreetly camouflaged amongst the rustic logs that make up the big room’s interior.

The vent carries every goddamn sound those two make straight to my ears, letting me hear the distinct sound of Cade slapping her ass before the fucking picks back up at a pace that makes my pants feel too damn tight.

“Shit,” I mumble, sucking in a long breath as I try to get myself under control. Then Cade, that fucker, groans again, sounding like he just found heaven.

The sounds are muffled enough that I’m sure the mic on my laptop can’t pick them up, but they’re still more than loud enough for me to be flooded with images of what’s happening up there. Unbidden, my mind drifts to thoughts of what it would be like to be in Cade’s shoes right now. I bet she feels fucking incredible.

My hand drifts down to cover my raging erection before I can stop it as I strain to hear even more.

Quiet murmuring is all I pick up now, then a soft giggle that has my heart twisting in a way I'm definitely not comfortable with.

"Noah," Becca says a little sharply, jerking my attention back to the screen. Her brows are drawn together. "Is everything okay?"

"Yes."

I take my hand off my cock, thankful as hell for the limited shoulders-up view my assistant has with the way my webcam is currently oriented.

"You seem distracted." She peers closely at me, her gaze shifting as if she's trying to see the room behind me. "Is the storm getting worse?"

"It's fine. I'm just tired," I lie, since sleep is the last thing on my mind.

Becca relaxes, seeming to buy my explanation as she arches a brow. "Well, I'm not one to say 'I told you so,' but I *did* tell you that you should try to relax a bit while you're out there, didn't I?"

"You did." I give her a small, wry smile. "And on that note, I think I'll call it a night. We can continue preparations for the Eiwa Izakaya Group later."

"Sounds good, bossman," she says, resting her chin on her hands as she smiles. "You know I'm always here for you. Anything you need."

"Thanks. And goodnight," I tell her before ending the call.

As soon as the screen goes black, I stand and stretch my neck, ignoring my straining cock. Even down here in the great room, I've got the privacy to take care of it since the four of us are the only ones at the resort. And it would be damn easy, and is very tempting, to handle the issue and be done with it already.

The problem is, something tells me that *handling it* isn't going to make it go away. Sadie is a temptation that, when I glance out the window to confirm that the blizzard has only

gotten worse, I know I'm not going to be able to get away from anytime soon. But since Cade has already staked his claim, I do the next best thing and decide to ignore it.

Quiet, unintelligible murmurs filter down through the vent, but they're not my business. So I open up my laptop, download the reports Becca was referencing, and get back to work.

SADIE

I DON'T KNOW what time it is when I drag my eyes open, coming out of the sexual haze Cade put me in. His arms are wrapped around me, and the room is pitch dark, other than a thin strip of light coming from the ensuite door.

Cade left it cracked open when he went in to clean up after fucking the living daylights out of me, and I carefully roll to the side so I can see his face. After making me come harder than I knew was possible, first out in the hall and then more thoroughly once we made it to the bed, he completely wrecked me when we went for round two.

And yet, just the sight of him, the feel of his body next to mine, makes me want to go again.

Cade is just as handsome asleep as he is awake, the tattoos scrawled over his skin only making him look more dangerously attractive.

Giving in to his proposal of no-strings sex is probably a mistake, but right now, I can't bring myself to care. The first time we hooked up, it felt fun and a little reckless and so sexually gratifying I almost worried that being with him would wreck me for all future men. I hadn't had any of those things in my life for a long time, and I told myself I deserved it.

This time around, I'm not sure if it's what I deserve, but it's definitely what I want. I feel powerful around Cade, sexy and daring. *He* makes me feel that way, and the way it allowed me to push my own boundaries out in the hallway when Noah

watched Cade get me off is just one more way saying yes to Cade has let me be more adventurous than I knew I could be.

It feels naughty but wonderful, and I want more of it.

I also really do want more of his cock, and I'm almost tempted to wake him up and take it right now, but then my stomach reminds me just how much of a workout good sex is, and I decide to grab something to eat before going for round three.

Slipping out of bed, I throw on the first thing I grab out of my suitcase, then poke my head out the door to make sure I'm alone. I don't know how late it is, but the lodge is quiet and dark.

When I sneak downstairs, heading to the kitchen, I pass through the great room and my steps slow.

Noah is here.

My body reacts to the sight of him with the same rush of heat I felt when he locked eyes with me while Cade whispered filthy things in my ear, getting me off on his fingers in the hallway upstairs. I haven't given a single thought to what I'd say or how I'd act around Noah after the silent, secretive moment we shared up there, but thankfully, I don't have to figure it out right now.

He's asleep, sprawled out on one of the wide, comfy couches I convinced John to buy for the place last year. His laptop is open and dark in front of him, and I frown a little at that. Is he really such a workaholic that he fell asleep while doing work? Here? While he's on vacation?

I assume he's as rich as I know Cade and Dex are, and in my mind, that means he should be in a position to actually take time off. Then again, I know what they say about assuming, and I really shouldn't. Who knows what his situation is. I don't even know what he does for a living. If Cade mentioned it, it went in one ear and out the other, and Noah himself barely said two words when we all sat down to dinner.

I wish he would though.

I'm not sure if Cade's just awoken my libido, or if there's something about Noah and his rugged silence that's getting to me, but I want to know more about him. He's sexy as hell, but he seems closed off and rigid in a way that I might be turned off by if I didn't know he was friends with Dex and Cade.

There's no way he can be that close to those two and not have some redeeming qualities under his gruff exterior. I'd just like to know what they are. I'd like to know why he's so self-contained.

And if I'm honest, I'd like to see what happens when he lets go of all that control.

A shudder moves through me, heat pooling between my legs. But then I realize I'm standing in the dark staring at a sleeping man like a creeper and force myself to stifle my curiosity and move on. If our roles were reversed, I'm not sure I'd appreciate having him loom over me while I sleep.

"Liar," I whisper to myself at the way my body reacts to that fantasy.

Still, the fire is dying down and the room is getting too cool to stand here and explore my newly unleashed libido, so I cover him with one of the chunky knit blankets we keep down here and then go find myself the snack I came down for.

Noah hasn't moved by the time I eat and head back upstairs, but thoughts of him are still swirling around in my head as I head upstairs, so when I hear a soft noise—a low moan that practically throbs with sex—for a second, I actually wonder if it was me.

Then it comes again, and I realize that one of the doors down the hallway on the second floor is cracked open.

The room Dex took.

I freeze, knowing I should just head back to my own room. But instead, my feet move without my permission, silently taking me toward Dex's door.

I peer through the crack. He's in the attached bathroom, and *that* door is wide open, giving me a clear view.

He's naked, and he's got his hand wrapped around his cock, his hips flexing as he drags his fist up and down.

I squeeze my thighs together as the arousal that's been building in me ever since I woke up explodes into an inferno. He's jerking off like he's trying to punish himself, his hand rough on his shaft and his face set into grim, determined lines that look closer to pain than pleasure.

He groans again, low and ragged, and the sound curls through me.

"Fuck, kitten," he grits out, his hand flying as his muscled thighs tense up. "Sadie."

Holy shit.

He's close. He's about to come, and he just said... my name.

My heart flips over. I can't look away now, completely frozen in place as my pulse races.

"Sadie," Dex growls again, my name sounding like it was ripped from his throat. He slams his free hand into the wall, holding himself up as he spills over his fist.

My heart is pounding so hard that I'm afraid he'll hear it, but I still can't look away. His muscles stand out in stark relief, his body full of rigid tension as he gives himself three final pumps, the wet sound almost obscene.

Then he finally relaxes, leaning his forehead against the wall he's still got one hand splayed against as his spent shaft softens in his grip.

I'm so turned on I almost do something stupid. My mouth waters, and I bite my lower lip hard, almost able to taste the salty, musky flavor of his cum. God, I can only imagine the look on his face if I barged in and begged him to let me clean it up with my tongue.

I can't make sense of it though. Not with the way he's always treated me. So instead of throwing myself at him, I tiptoe away as quietly as I can, my hands shaking when I finally get to my room.

I glance at the bed. Cade is still out cold, and while the deep hum of arousal in my blood makes me tempted to wake him up, I pick up my phone instead.

Taking it with me, I slip into the attached bathroom and close the door. I'm too stunned by the sight of Dex jerking off while moaning my name to trust my shaking fingers and dyslexic brain with the keyboard, so I open our chat app and press the little microphone icon that allows me to dictate.

"You there, girl?" I whisper, then hit send.

ME: You there, girl?

I let out a breath I didn't even realize I was holding when the three bouncing dots that tell me she's answering instantly appear.

LUNA: Fuck yes, I'm here! And how dare you leave me a message like that and then disappear on me??? What is happening up at Whispering Pines?

I turn the volume down and let my phone read me her answer, then laugh quietly. I forgot about telling her what Cade proposed to me.

Speaking quickly and letting my phone translate it to text, I fill her in on everything that's happened between the two of us since that moment.

LUNA: So you're saying you went up there expecting a rich asshole, and instead found your mystery hookup?

ME: I mean, technically, my mystery hookup IS the rich asshole.

I know Luna will laugh at that, but I almost feel bad after sending it, because Cade is... well, he's really not.

I still get a row of crying-laughing emojis back. Then another text comes through.

LUNA: Who cares? I'm 100% in favor of you finally getting some. This agreement you two have got sounds like Santa finally brought you what you really need.

I roll my eyes.

ME: It's not even Christmas yet! And hopefully, I won't still be stuck here by then.

I bite my lip. That one feels like another lie, and my bestie immediately calls me out on it.

LUNA: Are you fucking kidding me? Where would you rather spend Christmas day? On a gorgeous billionaire's cock, or curled up back at your place in your footie pajamas with nothing but wine and sappy movies in your stocking?

ME: Hopefully, that's metaphorical. I don't want anyone pouring wine into my stocking.

Not that I actually bothered to hang one, since it will just be me, assuming the weather clears up enough for me to get home by then.

LUNA: Too bad, so sad, because I already saved some airplane-sized liquor bottles to stuff your stocking with. But forget about that. Tell me more about your sexploits with Cade McAllister.

ME: Actually, you got me off track from the original reason I messaged you when you reminded me about Cade's proposal. Something else happened.

This time, her three dots come and go half a dozen times before the next message comes through.

Actually, messages *plural*, one after the other.

LUNA: What?!

LUNA: I reminded you of his proposal? Didn't he just fuck you senseless a few hours ago? How is that anything but unforgettable?

LUNA: What else could possibly have happened?

LUNA: ???

LUNA: !!!

I laugh, putting a hand over my mouth to muffle the sound. I get why she's floored. On any other day, hooking up with Cade would have been enough juicy gossip to keep the two of us going all night, but thanks to her flight schedule and the craziness of this whole day, I haven't even had a chance to tell her the rest.

I get it all out at once.

Well, almost all of it.

ME: A lot has happened. Cade has a couple friends here, and the one who saved me from the blizzard is this gruff, dark-haired mountain of a man who may or may not have watched while Cade got me off earlier. And the other guy is Dex.

LUNA: What? Who?

LUNA: Holy shit, you don't mean Dex Blaine, do you? Parker's older brother?

ME: Yup. We've had... a weird time of it. But I just caught him jerking off, and Luna...

LUNA: Hoooooolllyyyyyy shiiiiiiit.

She follows that with a whole string of laughing-crying emojis alternating with flame emojis, before sending another text.

LUNA: God, he's so fucking gorgeous. Did he catch you spying on him? And don't think I missed the part about you putting on a sex show for this third guy.

ME: Dex didn't catch me. But when he came... he called out my name.

LUNA: WHAT? He DID? Your ex's brother? How long has this been a thing?

ME: It's not. He's just as hot and cold as ever, but when he blows hot...

I find a gif of a woman fanning herself in front of some flames, and send that.

LUNA: OMG. Seriously, what is even happening up there? If you're pranking me right now, I will literally kill you.

ME: I'm not, I swear. I think I fell into an alternate dimension where I'm suddenly a sex kitten.

I bite my lip. Why did I have to write "kitten"? My clit throbs, which is the last thing I want while chatting with my best friend. But now all I can hear is the gravel-rough tone in Dex's voice as he stroked himself. *Fuck, kitten.* He said the words like he didn't want to but couldn't stop himself.

LUNA: Where is this alternate dimension, because I volunteer as tribute!

She sends me a gif of a woman wildly waving her hand in the air, and I laugh. But my stomach is twisted in knots, and what I really need is for her to tell me I'm not losing my fucking mind here.

ME: This isn't like me. What do I do?

LUNA: You do them.

ME: I'm being serious.

LUNA: Girl, so am I. You do realize what's happening here, right?

ME: No, that's what I need you for.

LUNA: You've got me, babe. Always. So listen to your elders, and listen up good.

I roll my eyes, but laugh quietly. She's about three weeks older than me, and loves to pull out this "elders" crap whenever she has an opinion on my life. Which is often.

LUNA: This is just like those books you like. One chick, multiple handsome men who want to bang her.

ME: Not likely.

LUNA: Um, hello? Very likely. You're already getting dicked down by the hot billionaire. Dex clearly wants to pounce on you too. And this other guy watched Cade fuck you already???

ME: No... Noah just watched Cade finger me.

I get back more laughing emojis, then a bunch of water droplets, eggplants, and more flames.

LUNA: Seriously, girl, if I come back into town and find out you haven't been spit-roasted over an open fire, I'm disowning you as a friend. Live a little! You deserve it.

LUNA: And I deserve to hear exactly how long it takes you to lose your gag reflex when you've got three cocks to choke on. You know, for research purposes.

She ends it with a winking emoji, and I'm still chuckling under my breath as I promise to keep her posted and tell her goodnight. I know my bestie would never shame me for what I'm doing, but I guess part of me *has* been questioning my actions a bit.

It's one thing to fall into bed with Cade and take Luna's advice to let myself live a little. I do deserve that. But the truth is, I'm insanely attracted to all three of them, and now I've got reason to believe that the attraction isn't one-sided.

Luna being so enthusiastic about the idea of me banging all of them is delusional, but at least it reassures the part of me that's been worried about what kind of person I am for wanting it.

I may not get it, but at least I'm not going to beat myself up anymore for fantasizing about it. And the one fantasy that I'm currently living, the naked man waiting in my bed, is already making being snowed in here the best holiday-slash-disaster I've ever had.

I turn off the light in the bathroom and set my phone on the charger, then slip off the clothes I put on to go downstairs in and crawl back into bed next to Cade.

He murmurs something without waking up, pulling me close in his sleep, possessive and handsy and—at least until the weather clears—all mine.

CADE

I WAKE up with my dick hard, pressed against a round ass that's so lush I want to fucking live in it.

I grin sleepily. Now *that's* a thought.

Rolling my hips, I pull Sadie closer as I bury my nose in the crook of her neck, her long, silky blonde waves catching on my morning scruff and feeling like silk against my face.

I breathe her in. The first night we spent together at that hotel was incredible, but waking up in an empty bed was nowhere near as good as this.

When I press a kiss behind her ear, she groans softly, stretching her body.

"Mmm, that feels nice."

I rub her back, letting my fingers wander down to the curve of her ass. She shifts, my cock slides between her thighs.

"Oh, that's not fair," she murmurs, moving her hips so my dick is rubbing against her clit. I grin and thrust forward, pushing deeper between her legs.

"No, it's not."

She reaches back, grabbing my hand and guiding it downward. "Then make it fair."

I run my fingers over her clit, feeling her wetness coating my skin. She's soft and warm and still half asleep, and there's

nothing I want more right now than to hear her beg me to make her come again.

She rubs her ass against me, forcing my pierced length to slide between her plush thighs, and I groan as I keep moving my fingers, rubbing slow circles against her while I kiss and suck on her neck like an addict.

I am. Fuck. I'm already addicted to her.

Her pretty moans turn into irresistible whimpers, and her breathing gets shallow and needy, telling me everything I need to know.

"Cade," she pants, rocking her hips, grinding against my fingers.

"Tell me what you want."

"I want you to fuck me again." Her voice is husky, and I reach down, angling my crown toward her entrance.

"Like this?"

It's so fucking tempting to go in bare, and I can't help teasing her with it.

"Yes," she gasps, her hands clutching at the sheets as I push forward, indulging myself by wetting just the tip.

"I love the way your pussy grips me," I whisper, pulling back before I lose my head and thrusting hard between her thighs again. "I can't wait to be back inside you."

She whimpers, pushing her hips back against me. "Do it."

"Soon," I promise, teasing her clit and sliding my shaft through her slit. I can't make myself stop. It's too fucking good.

"Please."

Her voice is thick with desperation, and the sound of her begging is my kryptonite.

I give her what she needs, pressing harder on her clit. "Come for me, dream girl."

Her orgasm crashes through her, her body trembling and her core clenching so hard that I can feel it from where I'm still lodged between her thighs. Her body shudders as she cries out, and I've officially held out as long as I can. I fucking need to be inside her.

I roll backward, hating the fact that I'm going to have to leave the bed to find a condom since we're in her room, not mine, and I blew through the three I had with me last night. Even after I overflowed the first one, it was the responsible thing to do.

"Where are you going?" she asks, sitting up quickly.

I lean back down to kiss her. "We need protection."

She stares at me for a moment, chewing on her lip. Then she whispers, "Do we though?"

My cock throbs, a groan ripping out of my throat. "Don't tempt me more than you already do. I'd kill to fuck you bare."

"I'm sure it won't have to come to murder," she jokes, her dimples popping as she grins. Then she hesitates, looking a little unsure. "I told you last night, I'm on the pill. And we're both clean. So..."

"So you're inviting me to put my cock in you? To fill you with my cum? To take you bare, with nothing between us but sweat and sex and your sweet arousal?" I growl, gripping her chin and holding her gaze. "Is that what you want?"

I need to know she means it. I need to know she's sure.

"Yes," she breathes out, her pupils dilating. "I want all of it. I need to feel your piercings with nothing between us."

Heat blazes through me. It doesn't matter how many times I take her. I'm always going to want more.

I lean down and kiss her hard, then roll her back onto her stomach, running my hands down her gorgeous body and then covering her with mine.

"Please, Cade," she begs. "Fuck me."

"As you wish."

She laughs. “Oh my god. Did you just make —”

Before she can accuse me of referencing a cheesy romantic movie that I’ll never admit to actually liking, much less quoting on purpose, I slide into her, letting her feel every one of my piercings. The beautiful sound of her laughter turns into an even more beautiful moan.

Fucking her is like coming home. She hugs me like a glove, and it feels so good that I have to grit my teeth and count to ten before I can move.

“Please,” she whimpers, arching up under me.

I kiss the back of her neck, then push her back down to the bed and hold her there as I take what she’s offering, setting a relentless pace as I pound into her.

“You feel so damn good.”

She pushes her hips back, meeting me stroke for stroke.

“Don’t stop,” she gasps, her walls fluttering around me. “Make me come.”

It’s exactly what I plan on doing, as many times as I can manage while the weather holds us both hostage here.

I bury myself to the hilt, grinding against her perfect curves. “Do you have any idea what you do to me?”

“Show me,” she whispers. “Let me feel what I do to you.”

I groan, then pull out. “With pleasure. Get up on your knees.”

She does it, looking sweet as sin as she rocks back onto her elbows and knees, ass spread wide and her perfect pink pussy inviting me back inside, where I belong.

I kneel behind her, grabbing her hips and sinking back into her, filling her so deep that it’s a wonder I can even speak.

“This is what you do to me,” I tell her, wrapping her hair around my fist.

“God, yes.” She shudders. “Do it again.”

I smile, keeping a firm hold on her hair as I fuck her just like she wants me to. Hard. Deep. Over and over, until neither of us can think straight.

“Come for me, baby,” I order when I can barely hold out anymore. I lean over her and fill my hands with her breasts, pinching her nipples.

She cries out, her body tightening around me. “Yes, yes, yes, please.”

Her orgasm hits her hard, triggering mine. When I start to unload inside her, filling her with my cum and marking her from the inside out, some long-buried alpha male instinct suddenly rises up inside me, making me want to mark her up even further.

Making me want to claim her, then beat my fucking chest over the fact that she’s mine right now.

I give in to those instincts. Pulling out, I spray the last few jets of my cum over her back and ass. When I rub it into her skin, the sight turns me on more than should be possible given how hard I just blew my load.

“Fuck, you look amazing like this,” I murmur, dragging my still-hard cock through the cum dripping down the crack of her ass. *My* cum.

I smear it all over her, then gather as much of it as I can and stuff it back inside.

Her walls clench around my fingers, and she turns to look at me over her shoulder, face flushed and ocean-colored eyes sparkling. “You’re such a caveman.”

I reach around and tease her clit with my cum-covered fingers. “Are you trying to tell me you don’t like it too?”

“No,” she admits, a hitch to her breath as I play with her swollen nub. “I do. I, oh god, *Cade...*”

When I make her come again, that primal part of me that she’s awoken is finally satisfied.

For now.

It doesn't mean I'm done with her though. I lose track of time as I hold her, kissing and fondling her with the knowledge that she's full of my cum. Trading quiet whispers and early morning pillow talk that's almost as good as the sex.

Or maybe it's why the sex is so good. Fuck, everything is good with her.

But finally, I get up to clean us both up, bringing back a warm, damp towel and insisting she let me take care of her.

"Careful," she says with a lazy smile that does shit to my heart that should definitely be illegal. "I could get used to this."

"You should." I toss the towel aside, and brush some of her silky blonde hair away from her temple as I climb back into bed and pull her into my arms. "You were made to be spoiled, don't you know that?"

She laughs, but the blush highlighting her gorgeous face tells me she likes hearing that, even if she doesn't believe it. "So what you're saying is, Merry Christmas to me?"

She's making light of it, but it reminds me that she's not here by choice, no matter how much we're both enjoying this.

I cup her cheeks, staring into her eyes. "I *am* sorry you're going to miss your big holiday plans," I tell her, meaning it. "But selfishly, I can't lie. I'm glad we got snowed in together. I don't want to be anywhere but here right now."

"Me too," she says, her blush burning brighter. "But can I confess something?"

I grin. "Anything."

She winces a little, rolling over and becoming my little spoon. "I... actually don't have holiday plans. I made that up as an excuse to leave quickly. I wanted to avoid getting stuck here with you and Dex."

"I don't blame you," I joke. "His cooking is atrocious."

"Oh stop," she says, laughing. "You know it's amazing. And that was *before*, obviously. I'm glad I'm here now."

“I am too.” I kiss the back of her neck, but then have to ask. “You really don’t have any holiday plans?”

It’s hard to believe. I would have expected a woman like her to be surrounded by loved ones.

Sadie sighs, melting back against me. “My best friend invited me along on her holiday, but flying isn’t really my thing. She went to Big White with her family. You know, in Canada? And other than Luna and her family, I guess I... well, I haven’t really made time for a lot of close friends, so there isn’t really anyone I could have made holiday plans with.”

I tighten my arms around her. “What about your family?”

She gives an indelicate snort, shaking her head. “It’s just my mom, and she isn’t exactly the type to prioritize time with me. We *were* going to spend Christmas together, but then she met a man who wanted to take her somewhere exotic, and here we are.”

I frown. Her flippant tone doesn’t do much to mask the underlying hurt, and it guts me. I don’t like thinking of this gorgeous, sweet woman alone. And I definitely don’t like the idea of the people who should be there for her not putting her first the way she deserves.

She rolls over to face me, resting a hand on my chest. “What about your family? You invited Dex and Noah, but... not them?”

“No.”

She waits for more, and I don’t want to give it. I don’t have any siblings, and my parents are each toxic in their own ways. I don’t want to taint this perfect woman with that shit any more than I want to let it intrude onto this moment I’m having with her.

But I realize there’s something I want more, and that’s to give her anything—no, everything—she wants. And right now, it’s written all over her face as she patiently waits for me to go on.

She wants to know, so I tell her, feeling a surprising kinship with her that goes above and beyond the burning

attraction I've felt from the beginning. We have more in common than I realized, and once I start talking, it makes opening up easier than I thought it would be.

“My dad was—is—a workaholic and a selfish asshole who only thought of himself. He mostly ignored me growing up, and his neglect drove my mother into having an affair. Things got messy after that. Really messy. Mom didn't want to leave him because of the lifestyle he afforded her, but she also dealt with her totally justified feelings of abandonment by following that first affair with a whole string of them. The cycle was toxic as fuck. They fought all the time, but neither one was willing to cut the other free.”

Sadie's eyes soften. “I'm so sorry you had to grow up that way.”

“Me too,” I say, giving her a tight smile. “But I *can* cut them free, and I have. I'd no more want to spend the holidays with them than...”

Than I'd want to turn into them. It's why I've never tried for a true romantic connection of my own. I work just as hard as my dad did, and I already know I've got bad genes when it comes to relationships. The last thing I'd ever want to do is drag a woman I had feelings for into the kind of hell my parents' marriage became.

When I trail off, not willing to dump *that* level of baggage on her, Sadie lets it go, turning the conversation to lighter topics as we both get up and start getting ready for the day.

“Hmm. Do you have a size kink?” I tease her at one point, picking up an oversized pair of headphones she's left lying out on the top of the dresser.

She snatches them out of my hand, grinning up at me. “You really have to ask? I mean, *look* at you.” Then she swallows, a vulnerable tone entering her voice as she says, “These though. Um, I like to listen to audiobooks.”

“Okay?” I'm not sure why that confession has her hesitant, but I think it's great. “What kind?”

She bites her lip. “Romance.” She holds up a hand quickly. “And I’m not ashamed of liking romance novels, so get that out of your head. But maybe you should know, I’ve got dyslexia. It’s why I listen to my books instead of reading them. And it’s never stopped me from being able to do my job even if *some* people don’t seem to understand that, but you are technically my employer, so maybe you need to—”

I put my fingers over her lips, silencing her. “Nope. Remember our agreement? We’re on vacation. No work talk. And if ‘some’ people don’t understand the way you handle your work, then fuck them.”

Her eyes go wide, then she smiles.

I pluck the headphones out of her hands and hit the Bluetooth play button. “I do want to know what kind of entertainment you like though.”

Her face flushes the most gorgeous shade of pink as the narrator’s voice starts to play in my ear, and I’m too taken by the sight of her to pay attention for a moment. When I do, I realize it’s not just a romance, it’s a steamy one.

A *very* steamy one, featuring multiple men.

“Oh, I see. It’s not a size kink that you have,” I tease her.

She crosses her arms over her chest, arching a brow at me even as her cheeks flush more deeply. “I’m sure it’s not that hard to imagine a woman who would enjoy getting taken care of by three men.”

One corner of my mouth tips up. “Three? Is there any particular reason you picked that number?”

She gestures to the headphones. “That’s, um, that’s how many are in the book.”

“You may have noticed, but that’s also how many are in the lodge right now.”

Her breath hitches, the pulse at the base of her throat fluttering as fast as a hummingbird’s wings. “That’s... stop. This is real life, not a fantasy.”

I grin, loving how flustered she's getting. "I thought we agreed when we first met that you're allowed to have both."

She rolls her eyes, but not before my cock makes note of the glint of interest there.

I let it go for now, pulling her into the shower before bringing her downstairs to search out some breakfast.

The guys are both down there, and watching them both try to navigate around Sadie is an entertainment all of its own.

I'm not sure why they're both standoffish around her, but I'm sure they'll come around.

"Coffee?" Dex asks us both, his voice stiff as he glances at Sadie, then looks away again.

She nods emphatically. "Yes, please."

"Shit," I mutter as he hands her a mug. She likes oat milk, and while I made sure the lodge was stocked incredibly well, that's one thing I didn't think of.

Sadie hears my low curse and glances over. "What's wrong?"

"There's no oat milk."

She grins, so sudden and bright that it hits me right in the chest. "You remembered how I take my coffee?"

Before I have to answer and potentially embarrass myself by admitting how completely obsessed I've been with every moment we've spent together, she quickly takes a sip, her shoulders relaxing as she lets out a little "ahh" of satisfaction.

"Black is totally fine," she assures me. "Honestly. Especially since Dex made it. He always makes the best coffee."

She shoots him a quick glance, and he looks away, muttering something under his breath that I can't quite hear.

We talk about our circumstances as we eat. Noah reports on the weather—still snowing, with a lot more coming—and we go over the contingency plans he's made for a variety of potential disasters that feel highly unlikely.

“Cade laid in enough provisions for a few months,” Dex tells him when he starts going off.

“Well, we’re certainly not going to be stuck here *that* long,” Sadie says, laughter bubbling out of her even though the reminder sends an odd pang through me.

Thankfully, a low noise outside distracts me from having to think too hard about why it bothers me to know we’re not going to be stuck together that long.

“Did you hear that?” Noah asks sharply, holding up a hand to shush everyone and cocking his head to the side.

It’s faint, and it’s coming from outside.

SADIE

THE NOISE from outside comes again, a tiny bit louder this time, and my brows draw together.

“The abominable snowman?” I joke, remembering my first sight of Noah.

He shakes his head and leads the way as we all go to the front door. When he opens it, I let out a soft gasp.

It’s a kitten.

“The abominable snow *cat*,” Cade murmurs as Noah crouches down to scoop up the tiny tidbit of fur and ice that’s shivering on the lodge’s doorstep.

“Poor little thing,” I murmur, watching as it huddles in Noah’s big hands.

“Where do you think it came from?” Cade asks once Noah brings the tiny fluffball inside.

Well, maybe not a fluffball. Not right now. The kitten is an orange tabby, but it’s hard to tell with the way its fur is matted down by ice and snow.

“She, not it,” Noah says gruffly. The kitten is dwarfed in his big hands, shaking and huddled close to his chest. “And I didn’t see any sign of her mother, or any other kittens.”

The intensity of his frown might be borderline frightening in other circumstances. In defense of a tiny kitten though?

My heart gives a heavy thump, and the attraction I’ve felt ever since he saved me from the storm rises to a whole new

level—one that only adds to the confused mix of feelings I’m having toward these men.

The kitten lets out a high-pitched meow, and Noah hugs her closer to his massive chest.

“Whispering Pines encompasses two hundred uninhabited acres,” Cade says, cocking his head as he assesses the tiny animal. “And she definitely doesn’t look like a wildcat.”

“We don’t have any close neighbors,” I confirm. “But there are a few other structures up here in the mountains. Private residences, a few small camps. Someone could have dumped her.”

My heart hurts just thinking about it.

“Well, she’s got us now,” Cade says, damn him. He’s going to make me fall for him with that kind of attitude, and that’s not what our deal is about.

“You sure she’s gonna make it?” Dex asks, crossing his arms over his chest. “She’s barely bigger than my coffee mug.”

Cade chuckles “To be fair, your coffee mug is more like a fucking soup bowl.”

Dex slants him a look. “I need my caffeine, so sue me.”

“She’s gonna make it,” Noah says with a stubborn set to his jaw. “She survived the storm, didn’t she?”

“Of course she did.” Cade heads toward the kitchen as the rest of us trail after him. “The holidays are a magical time. Anything is possible. Isn’t that right, dream girl?”

He throws that part over his shoulder at me, reminding me of what I said to him the first day we met.

I grin. “That’s right. *Anything* is possible.”

“I’m just saying, do cats this young even eat yet, or are we supposed to bottle feed her?” Dex grumbles, heading straight for the industrial kitchen and pulling out the milk.

Noah grabs a towel, fluffing up the little creature while Cade rummages around under one of the counters before

coming back up with a cardboard box and a couple of fluffy kitchen towels. He starts making her a little nest as the three of them argue about what our new kitten needs, and I find myself rubbing the center of my chest, my heart full enough that it might be in danger if I don't get it under control.

They aren't mine, and neither is the kitten. Being snowed in together definitely lends itself to feeling like we're in our own little bubble though. One where anything really *is* possible.

My mind goes to wicked places—Luna's fault, or maybe Cade's for opening the door to some of my deepest fantasies—but then the kitten mewls, and I find my hands full of so much fluff and cuteness that I can hardly stand it.

"Warm her up," Noah says, his voice bossy and stern but his hands impossibly gentle as he hands her over.

"What should we call her?" I ask, looking into the most magical set of mismatched feline eyes—one bright gold, one pale blue.

Oh god, I'm in love.

"How about Carrot?" Cade suggests, which gets a totally justified snort from Dex.

"No."

"Pumpkin?"

"No."

"Tiger?"

"Seriously?" Dex gives Cade a disgusted look. "Would *you* want to be named for your hair color? This little princess deserves better."

The little princess in question headbutts my chest, letting out a pitiful meow. "Aw," I say, stroking her delicate head with one finger. "*I think she deserves some food.*"

"Well, she can't drink that milk," Noah rumbles, his thick fingers flying over the screen of his phone. It looks huge in his big hands, and the fierce frown on his face makes him look

like a protective mountain man. “It would upset her belly. Put it away.”

Dex does, staring into the fridge as he scans the shelves.

“I’ve got some turkey here,” he finally says. “Or maybe we should try the rabbit? I don’t think she should have red meat at this age, but if she can handle solids, I can whip something up for her.”

Noah nods. “You might have to puree it though. And she also needs...” He pauses to read whatever he’s got on his phone. “Some fiber, some oil, and maybe some vitamins mixed in.” He looks up, pinning Cade with a fierce look. “Did you stock vitamins?”

“I’ve got a men’s multivitamin upstairs,” Cade offers. “We could grind it up?”

“But she’s not a man,” Dex points out, sounding grouchy. “Maybe we can use the protein powder I brought. It’s fortified with a bunch of shit.”

“It’s not that plant-based crap, is it?” Noah asks. “She needs protein.”

“I literally just said it was protein.”

“Yeah, but is it *plant* protein?”

They continue bickering about how best to take care of her, and it’s only when my cheeks start to ache that I realize I’m grinning hard enough that my face actually hurts. I rub my nose against the little sweetheart’s impossibly soft fur, getting a rumbling purr for my efforts that sounds like it comes from something twice her size.

“You’re in good hands,” I whisper to her. “Your new daddies are going to take *such* good care of you.”

She bats at my nose, catching the tip with one tiny claw.

“Careful, baby girl,” I say, laughing as I carefully capture her paw and move it away. “Those things are lethal.”

Dex whips around to face me. “Did she hurt you?”

I laugh. “With these little things?” I wave her paw at him. “Her claws are tiny.”

Dex gives me a long look, then lets his lips quirk up in the hint of a smile. “Small things can be lethal too.”

My cheeks heat up. Sure, I’m a bit shorter than him. Okay, a *lot* shorter. But no one would call me small, right? So he can’t be referring to me.

The look he’s giving me says I might be wrong about that though.

“How about Mrs. Claws?” I blurt, still waving the kitten’s sweet little paw at him. I blush harder when all three men stop to look at me. “You know, naming her for her lethal little claws? And for Christmas, of course. And... okay, never mind, it’s a silly idea for a name.”

“No, it’s not.” Cade steps closer, wrapping a possessive arm around my waist and scratching the top of the kitten’s head. He presses a kiss against my temple, his open display of affection in front of his friends surprising me a little. “It’s cute.”

“Well, I think it’s cheesy as fuck.” Noah snorts, then surprises me by cracking a smile. “Which is kind of perfect. I mean, look at her. If we’re not going to call her Cheddar—”

“Oh, *hell* no,” Dex interjects.

“Then Mrs. Claws it is,” Noah pronounces, giving me a small nod. “It’s perfect.”

The newly named Mrs. Claws pulls her paw out of my hand and nips at my thumb, making me jump even though it doesn’t really hurt.

I laugh. “Wow, okay. And she really is hungry. Do you think you can actually make cat food from scratch, Dex?”

“Of course I can,” he says, a knife already flying over the cutting board. Apparently, he’s putting some vegetables in whatever he’s whipping up. “We’ll probably have to hand feed it to her though.”

It turns out he's right, and with some grumbling about the work he's supposed to be getting done, Noah takes over as soon as Dex's gourmet puree is ready.

"Quit bitching," Dex tells him, handing it over. "You're the one who decided you had to personally oversee this kitten rescue operation."

Noah shrugs, his eyes locked on Mrs. Claws' mismatched ones as he carefully helps her get the puree down. "You know I like animals more than people."

I'm not surprised to hear that. The big man is surprisingly good with the tiny kitten, and although she's friendly with all four of us now that she's warmed up, dried off, and getting something in her belly, it's pretty clear that she imprinted on him when he saved her.

I bite my lip, a warm swirl of emotion moving through me. I can definitely relate.

"Quit lying," Cade says, slapping the back of Noah's head as he walks by. "You like animals *and* people."

Noah glares at him. "What are you on about? I don't like anyone."

Cade smirks. "Says the guy who funds more charities dedicated to both human and animal causes than anyone else I know."

Noah looks back down at Mrs. Claws, a hint of color on his cheeks. "Whatever."

My eyes go wide. "Is that true?"

He just grunts, his attention a little too focused on feeding the kitten for me to believe it's anything but avoidance. Which is kind of adorable, and *all* kinds of sexy. It makes me want to get to know him even more—not something that seems like it will be easy, as self-contained as he is.

Then again, maybe Mrs. Claws is the answer.

"Will you show me how to feed her properly?" I ask, taking a seat next to him. "I can take over if you really do need to get some work done."

He hesitates, then gestures for me to come a little closer. Finding and caring for Mrs. Claws has taken up half our day already. And I really would like to make sure she's properly taken care of, but I also want to support Noah the way he so silently and stoically seems to support everyone else.

And if that means getting up close and personal with him in a way he might not otherwise allow, what can I say? A girl's got to use every advantage she can get.

"She's small enough that she needs to be kept warm," Noah rumbles, cradling her gently in his big hands. "But luckily, big enough that she was able to make it this long. She'll be okay once she gets the hang of things and has some proper nutrition in her. Here, you try."

He places her on my lap, guiding me through each point of her care with all the seriousness of a man reluctantly handing over a grave responsibility. It makes me suspect that under his unapproachable exterior, there's a deep well of compassion and kindness that he deliberately keeps hidden away from the masses... and I'd be lying if I said it didn't make something just as warm and fuzzy as this sweet little kitten unfurl inside my chest to realize that he's letting me catch a glimpse of it now.

"She seems to be having trouble with that," I say the third time Mrs. Claws lets some of the high-end kitten puree dribble down her chin.

Noah deftly wipes it off with a kitchen cloth, then massages her fragile throat with a callused finger. "It's just because she's weak right now," he says in a quiet rumble, his midnight-blue eyes as soft as his voice as he watches her. "You've gotta cut her a little slack, yeah? She'll get it. It just looks like she hasn't had anyone around to teach her."

He's so careful with her that I can't look away. "Until now."

He glances up, and my heart starts to race as our eyes meet.

"Until now," he agrees, holding my gaze.

The quiet sound of Mrs. Claws purring surrounds us until it's interrupted by an adorable, turkey-scented yawn. Then she melts against me, curling up trustingly on my lap as she falls asleep.

The air in the room seems to thicken as Noah continues to watch me. I sway toward him, one hand wrapped protectively around the kitten in my lap and the other, without my permission, reaching toward the sexy scruff on his firm, square jaw.

My fingers brush over it, and Noah's nostrils flare as he inhales deeply.

Crash!

Dex drops something in the kitchen, letting out a string of colorful curses that are almost drowned out by the sound of Cade's laughter. The moment breaks, and Noah jerks backward, his expression shuttering.

"It looks like you've got it handled." He nods toward Mrs. Claws as he rises abruptly to his feet. "I'll go get to work."

"You *are* here on vacation, aren't you?" I point out as he backs away.

He frowns at me, an expression that I might find intimidating if I hadn't just seen through to his marshmallow core.

"I have to..." He makes a vague gesture that could mean anything, then clears his throat and glowers down at me. "I have responsibilities. Even on vacation."

I grin up at him. "And I'm sure you're good at them."

He looks like he doesn't know what to do with my flirting, like I'm a puzzle he doesn't know how to solve. But I don't think he totally hates it, because his eyes give me a slow once-over that leaves me breathless. Then, with a quick, jerky nod, he heads up the stairs.

I smirk as I watch him go.

Am I confused by that man? Yes.

Am I a little exhilarated and a lot turned on by the fact that I clearly confuse him too? Also yes.

“I’ll tell you a secret,” I whisper to Mrs. Claws, stroking her silky fur. “When I first met him, I thought he was a bit of a grinch.”

I don’t mention that after we had our moment in the hallway, I revised that opinion to a gorgeous, brooding grinch who’s earned a place in some of my steamiest audiobook-inspired fantasies, because Mrs. Claws is too young for that sort of thing.

Dex pokes his head out of the kitchen. He has a dish towel over his shoulder and flecks of protein powder scattered over his cheek like snow. “Did you say something, kitten?”

“Are you asking me or Mrs. Claws?” I ask with a chuckle, not minding the nickname quite as much as I usually do.

He rolls his eyes, heading back into the kitchen as he mumbles something about needing to perfect the next batch of puree he’s preparing for her. This time he’s using the expensive lamb I saw in there, which I’m pretty sure wasn’t intended for kitten consumption when Cade bought it.

Mrs. Claws rolls over in my lap, sprawling out with her rounded tummy on display like it’s just begging to be petted.

My cheeks ache again with how hard I’m smiling as I stroke her soft fur, careful not to wake her. After spending the night in the storm, she definitely deserves her beauty sleep.

“If Noah is a grinch,” I whisper, trusting her to keep my secrets, “then I think you just made his heart grow by three sizes.”

And maybe, under all of Dex’s prickliness, Mrs. Claws is starting to thaw his heart just a little bit too.

It’s the holidays, after all. Anything is possible.

SADIE

BY THE TIME evening rolls around, it feels like Mrs. Claws has always belonged here. Fortunately, the lodge is stocked with a bag of kitty litter to use as traction in case cars get stuck on ice, so she has both a makeshift litter box as well as a nest-like box for sleeping in.

Her rounded belly rises and falls as she sleeps in the box Cade prepared for her, her little paws twitching as she dreams—probably of one of Dex’s gourmet meals.

I don’t blame her. The kitten is fed, warm, and comfortable, and after the amazing dinner Dex made for the four of us, I feel pretty much the same.

Well, not the exhausted part. As content as I’m feeling right now, I’m not ready to call it a night the way our fuzzy little princess has. I’m enjoying myself too much.

Noah leans back in his chair. “I couldn’t eat another bite.”

“It’s because you’ve already eaten all of them,” Cade says with a grin. “But are you sure about that?”

He lifts an eyebrow at his friend like he’s sending a silent message, and Dex and Noah both groan.

“What am I missing?” I ask, looking between the three of them.

They don’t answer me, but Cade’s grin gets even wider as he looks at his friends. “I told you I made sure we were fully stocked.”

“Fine,” Noah says, lumbering to his feet. “I’ll go get a fire started.”

Dex stands and starts collecting the dishes from the table, and since Cade has already headed back to the kitchen without answering me, I follow Noah into the comfortably furnished great room. The high ceilings reach up two stories, and its centerpiece, the huge river-rock fireplace, was hand laid by a local craftsman long before my time.

“What is Cade talking about?” I ask, leaning against an end table while Noah gets started lighting the fire. He does it quickly and efficiently, as capable in this as in everything else I’ve seen him do today.

It’s sexy as hell.

He grunts in response to my question, and I huff out a breath. “Seriously? Is this some sort of male bonding thing I don’t get to be a part of?”

He finally looks up, his dark blue eyes holding a hint of humor. “No, it’s not male bonding. It’s just a little tradition we started the first time the three of us took a vacation together.”

“And that tradition is...?” I prompt.

“You’ll see,” Noah says cryptically.

“It sounds nefarious.”

His lips quirk up, and the sight makes my heart give a heavy thud. “Kind of the opposite, but I’ll remember you said that when Cade brings them out.”

He gets back to work on the fire, and I watch in silence for a moment before I speak again.

“What were you working on today?” I ask, and I’m a little surprised when he actually answers me.

“I’m working on expanding my franchise overseas.”

He keeps poking at the fire, and I settle in on the plush plaid couch next to it, vaguely aware of the low murmur of male voices as Dex and Cade give each other shit in the

kitchen. Mostly though, my attention is focused on the hulking man in front of me.

“Tell me about this franchise,” I prompt. “What industry do you work in?”

“The restaurant industry.”

I raise an eyebrow. That’s really all he’s going to give me?

But then he finally stands, obviously satisfied with the progress of the cheerily crackling fire he brought to life, and goes on. “It’s a family business. A bar-restaurant model that’s meant to be welcoming. Like coming home.”

Something clicks when he says the last part.

“Wait, ‘like coming home’?” That’s the tagline of my favorite restaurant in Denver. “You’re not talking about Keystone Culinary, are you?”

When he nods, my jaw drops open. “Oh my god.”

“Did we miss something exciting happening in here?” Cade asks as he and Dex finally join us. He’s carrying a tray of steaming mugs, and Dex has a paper bag filled with something.

“Did you know Noah works for Keystone Culinary?”

“Lies,” Dex says, setting down his haul on a low coffee table. “He doesn’t work there. He owns it. Fucking built it up from one spot in Philly to a global franchise.”

“Soon to be global,” Noah mumbles, rubbing the back of his neck.

Cade pins him with a look. “Soon to be in the Asian marketplace, but already global. What do you call Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, France, Great Br—”

“Fine, it’s already global,” Noah interrupts, waving Cade off and dropping down into one of the oversized leather chairs near the fire. “But Japan will make it more global, if I can pull this shit off.”

“You will,” Dex states with confidence.

I nod, echoing him. “You totally will.”

All three of them look at me. Noah seems surprised, Cade is grinning, and Dex raises a cynical eyebrow because he always has to be a bit of a jerk.

“What?” I huff. “I don’t have to be some billionaire business tycoon to know Noah will be able to grow the business. Keystone Culinary is seriously one of my favorite places in Denver, and even if it sounds cheesy, eating there really does feel like coming home.” I’m blushing, but I can’t shut up. Not with all three of them looking at me. “It’s like that classic neighborhood bar where everyone knows each other because there are so many regulars, you know?”

Noah flushes, and my heart trips a little. Success is one thing, but that bashful pride?

He’s killing me.

Cade sits next to me, throwing an arm over the back of the couch and giving me a heated look. “And here I thought The Coffee Collective was your favorite place in Denver. I know it’s recently become one of mine.”

“Have you gone back there?”

“No, but I have excellent memories of the place.”

Now it’s my turn to blush. “It is my favorite. My *other* favorite.” Then I sigh. “But unlike Noah’s global expansion, I think they might be going out of business soon.”

“Really?” Cade frowns.

“Yeah. I wish I could singlehandedly keep them in business, but I can’t drink that much coffee.”

“Speaking of coffee.” Dex starts to distribute the mugs, and I glance over and realize that he’s removed the contents from the bag he brought in.

I laugh. “Wait, are you serious? S’mores? *This* is the big, manly bonding thing you three do together?”

Cade pops a piece of chocolate into his mouth. “I am more than enough man for s’mores.”

“And we only eat them with Irish coffee. The whiskey cancels out the marshmallows,” Noah adds, nodding seriously as he snags a mug heaped high with whipped cream.

I take the mug Dex hands me, hiding my grin behind it. These men aren't just sexy as fuck, they're also endearing. Not a single one of them is anything at all like the cold billionaire asshole I originally thought I'd come up the mountain to meet. Getting snowed in with them is not the disaster I thought it would be.

The healthy dose of whiskey in the festive drinks relaxes all of us, and the s'mores are actually really good. But listening to the three of them give each other shit and tell stories of other places they've traveled together is the best part. Not that they spill any big secrets, but the depth of their friendship is obvious, and I like it a lot.

“So what else did the three of you have planned for your guys' trip before Mrs. Claws and I crashed the party?” I ask, starting to feel delightfully mellow now that Cade has gone to the kitchen and brought back the rest of the bottle of whiskey, topping off all of our mugs.

He chuckles. “Don't worry, no snowboarding.”

The inside joke, referring to the conversation we had the first time we met, makes me grin like an idiot. Then I clear my throat, trying to regain my equilibrium.

“Well, good. No one would have had a chance to hit the slopes with this weather anyway.”

Cade lounges back, sipping from his mug. “Honestly, we were just going to chill out, maybe explore the property a bit. Play a little poker. Whatever.”

“Poker?” I perk up at that. “I'm in.”

Cade's eyes light up, but Dex snorts before I can answer. “If you think Sadie will ever have a poker face, you're fooling yourself.”

I wad up a napkin and throw it at him. “Shut up.”

He grins for a second before he catches himself and goes back to his usual cynical snark. “Your face is an open fucking book.”

“He’s not wrong,” Noah rumbles, his eyes flashing with something that reminds me exactly what it is that he saw on my face up in the hallway yesterday.

The fact that he acknowledged it, even in a roundabout way, makes me feel reckless in the most exciting of ways.

I quickly take a generous drink before demanding that the men pull out the cards, and we all gather around a table to play.

Dex isn’t wrong. I’m *horrible* at poker. But what it turns out I excel at? Annoying the shit out of Noah, who plays with all the seriousness and intensity of a man who isn’t just used to winning, but expects it.

I grin when he throws another hand down in disgust after I bluff him yet again. “You had nothing.”

“I know,” I say smugly, giggling as I sip from the mug Cade keeps refilling for me.

Noah’s eye starts to twitch. “But you did that thing.”

I lift my eyebrows, trying my hardest to look innocent. “What thing?”

“You’ve got a tell, kitten,” Dex says, eyes narrow as he eyes me across the table. “You tug your ear whenever you’ve got a good hand.”

“The fuck she does,” Noah grumbles. “She rubs her pinky and thumb together.”

Cade looks between the two of them like they’ve each grown an extra head. “Are you guys blind? She bites her lip.”

“That’s not a tell, it’s a...” Dex waves a hand in my direction.

“A what?” I push him, liquid courage combined with the fun of messing with these men going to my head.

He glares at me, and Cade laughs as he says, “It’s a fucking turn on is what it is.”

Dex turns the glare on his friend. “I did *not* say that.”

“But you wanted to.” Cade looks like he’s having far too much fun as he goads his friend.

“Just deal another round,” Dex says stiffly.

“I’m on to you,” Noah tells me as Cade whips cards around the table with precision. “You’re not going to win this, sunshine.”

He’s right. Cade turns out to be the big winner when it comes to cards, but Noah is also wrong. As Cade gloats about his winnings, lording it over the rest of us good-naturedly, I realize I’m having the best time I’ve had in longer than I care to admit.

Well, the best time with my clothes on.

“Fine, we get it already,” Dex grumbles after a bit. “You cleaned up. Congratulations. You’ve won a buck seventy. Go crazy with it.”

“Oh, I plan to,” Cade says, gathering up the stacks of pennies we were playing for as the other two men resettle on the leather chairs near the fire. “But I think I deserve more of a prize.”

“Like what?” I ask, the question ending in an embarrassing yelp when he answers by pulling me into his lap.

“Well, since you asked,” he murmurs, tracing my lips with his finger. “How about some of this?”

My pulse starts to race. “Some of me?”

“Good idea,” he says as if I was the one to suggest it. Then he kisses me, heating my blood past the boiling point and getting just as dirty with it as he has when we’ve been alone.

But we’re not alone.

The room goes quiet around us other than the crackling of the fire, and I can feel Noah and Dex watching us. This time, Cade knows they’re watching too.

He groans, tunneling his fingers through my hair and palming the back of my head as he kisses me, then angling my head to the side so he can drag his lips down my throat.

“I like my prize,” he murmurs against my skin, sucking lightly on the place where my pulse has gone out of control. “And I think we should play a new game now.”

“Like what?” I ask breathlessly, not sure if I’m terrified he’s going to suggest something that takes this moment of exhibition even further, or praying for it.

But instead, Cade gives me one more kiss, then pulls me down onto the couch near the fire. “I was thinking truth or dare.”

He holds my gaze like the suggestion itself *is* a dare, and I lift my chin, feeling reckless all over again.

“I’m in.”

SADIE

“THE FUCK?” Dex grouches. “Truth or dare? What are we, fifteen-year-old girls?”

Noah snorts. “I’m down with s’mores, but I’m pretty sure we’ll all have to turn in our man cards if we revert to this shit.”

“Scared I’ll make you do finger pushups in your tighty whiteys?” Cade teases.

“Tighty...? I don’t wear fucking—what the *hell*, Cade,” Noah sputters. “Fine. I’ll play.”

“Truth. What *do* you wear?” I ask, leaning forward with interest.

Noah crosses his arms over his chest, his biceps bulging and his face giving nothing away. “Fuck, no. I’m not going first.”

“Cade will,” Dex offers, the words coming out with a little bite. “It was his idea.”

“Sure.” Cade grins easily. “And I pick truth. You wanna know what kind of underwear I’ve got on, dream girl?”

“I already do.”

He smirks, and I come up with a random question that he answers without a hint of embarrassment. To my surprise, all three of the guys go with it, and we play a few rounds with easy truths that aren’t that earth shattering, but which give me some interesting insight into each of them.

“Truth,” I say when I’m in the hot seat again.

“Biggest fear,” Noah asks, staring at me with a piercing intensity.

“I know this one,” Cade says before I can answer, grinning.

“So do I,” Dex adds a little sharply.

I raise my eyebrows. “Are you guys sure about that?”

“I told you, you’re an open book. You’re afraid of flying.”

Cade nods. “That’s what I was going to say too. But don’t worry. You can still get to Paris by boat, you know.”

“For Paris, I’d *make* myself get on a plane,” I joke, trying to hide how flustered I am. This is just a temporary bit of fun between us, but every time he proves how much attention he’s paid to the things I say and care about, it gets to me.

I end up finding out that Cade’s favorite utensil is a spork, Noah is weirdly superstitious about his socks and will only wear mismatched ones on the last day of the month, and that Dex is secretly a huge Green Day fan.

I solemnly cross my heart and swear not to reveal this shocking character flaw, and in trade, I confess that my birthstone is an emerald and my favorite flavor of ice cream is double-chocolate chunk... and that the people I work with are kind of dicks about my dyslexia.

“They what?” Dex growls, sitting up straighter.

Noah’s lips flatten into a thin line, looking just as pissed on my behalf, but Cade must realize that that particular revelation goes a little deeper than I want for the light-hearted mood of our game, because he immediately jumps in and saves me.

“My turn, and enough of this truth shit. Someone give me a dare.”

“Okay.” Dex shrugs. “Strip and run out in the snow.”

Noah starts to laugh, and it’s impossible not to join in. It’s so childish that it’s fun, and it’s exactly what I needed after getting a little too deep a moment ago.

Cade grins, locking eyes with me as he stands and reaches for the button on his jeans. “This isn’t how I planned on getting naked with you tonight, but if it’s what you really want...”

“What *I* want? Dex is the one who dared you to do it.”

He stops undressing. “Okay, if you *don’t* want me to—”

“Strip, strip.” I cut him off, laughing like mad. “I love candy.”

“Candy?” Noah asks, looking confused.

I grin at him, then gesture toward Cade. “Eye candy.”

He groans, and even grouchy-ass Dex shakes his head with a little grin.

Cade gets down to his tight black boxer briefs and holds both arms out, putting himself on display. “You don’t really want all this to risk freezing, now do you?”

Feeling bold, I go to him and pull his head down as if I’m going to kiss him. Instead, I stop with our lips just a hairsbreadth apart. “It truly would be a shame. But what’s life without a little risk?” I grin, then spin him around and slap his very fine ass. “Now go!”

He laughs like a crazy man—a mouthwateringly attractive crazy man—and does it. The rest of us rush to the window to see him bolt through the thigh-high drifts and launch himself at one like it’s a heated swimming pool.

It’s so deep and fluffy that he disappears completely, then pops back up a moment later like a sex-on-a-stick frozen popsicle, cursing up a storm as he races back into the lodge.

Noah has the door open for him, laughing so hard I can barely believe it’s the same silent, stoic man who saved me from the blizzard. When Cade barrels through the doorway, he doesn’t stop. He runs right up to me and lifts me off the ground, hauling me against his frozen, snow-encrusted body.

“No, shit, oh my god!” I scream, laughing as I try to break free. “Cade, you’re *freezing*.”

“So warm me up,” he demands, spinning to pin me against the wall. He presses against me and holds me there with his body weight as he kisses me like a starving man.

A deep, full-body shiver works through me, but I honestly don't know if it's from the sub-zero temperature of his skin or the way he's kissing me.

I wrap my arms around him, and he groans, his mouth locked on to mine and his hands finding their way down to my ass. He lifts me up, and I instinctively wrap my legs around his hips, getting lost in sensation as he starts to take me apart.

I almost forget about Dex and Noah watching, but when Cade finally breaks the kiss and slowly lowers my feet to the ground, the first thing I do is instinctively look toward the other men, wanting...

Something.

I'm not sure what, but the atmosphere in the room has shifted a bit, and if Cade had kept going, I know I wouldn't have stopped him. If he'd gone further and stripped me down too. Fingering me the way he did the last time Noah watched us, or hell, just held me against that wall and fucked me. Put on the show he teased me about the other day, letting his friends watch... or even join.

My stomach flips, a whimper bubbling up in my throat before I can stop it.

“Dirty girl,” Cade whispers like it's an endearment, the fire in his emerald-green eyes making it feel like he sees right through me. Like he knows every single fantasy I have and is just biding his time until he gives me all of them.

“You going to get dressed, or do we have to stare at your bare ass all night?” Dex finally asks, tossing Cade's pants at him.

“You wish my ass was bare.” Cade snorts, turning away to give his friend some shit as he pulls them on.

“Don't,” I say quickly when he reaches for his shirt. “I want to be able to see your ink.”

“You like that, huh?” He grins at me. “Fine by me, but it *is* kind of chilly in here.”

It’s not. The fire is still blazing, and after that kiss, there’s no way Cade is still cold from the snow.

I’m happy to play along though. Hell, I feel like I’m in a bit of a dream right now. Not just snowed in, but caught in a whole separate world. An isolated snow globe, where I can be wild and bold. Reckless and shameless.

Cade pulls me back to the couch and straight onto his lap. “You’re going to have to keep me warm if you want me like this.”

“I can do that,” I say, pulling his arms around me and tracing a finger over the colorful patterns he’s inked onto his skin. “You earned it by picking a dare.”

He grins, then turns to his friends. “Who’s next? Because I’ve got something good ready for one of you.”

Noah snorts, shaking his head. “Too bad for you that I’m picking truth, then.”

Cade sighs, and I can’t help giggling at how he’s hamming it up. “But I already know everything about you.”

“I don’t,” I butt in. “Let me take it.”

“That’s not how the game works,” Dex grunts.

Cade’s knuckles brush back and forth under the curve of my breasts, making me a little crazy. “We’re making our own rules right now. Isn’t that right, dream girl?” he says, his breath tickling the back of my neck. “Go on. Ask Noah your question.”

I wrack my brain, a little distracted by his hands on me. “Um, okay. What made you decide to get into the restaurant business?”

I figure it’s an easy one, and I’m actually genuinely curious since I love Keystone Culinary so much. But the way Noah goes silent for a second tells me I might have inadvertently struck a nerve without meaning to.

“Never mind,” I say quickly, not wanting to put him on the spot.

He shakes his head. “No, it’s fine. It’s... the guys know.” He clears his throat. “The place was my dad’s. The first restaurant, I mean. I grew up there. Learned to run the kitchen. Swept those floors until my hands fucking bled and whined about it when Pops insisted I redo all the shit I screwed up. Eventually, I wasn’t screwing up anymore, and instead of being a burden, being part of the staff became a source of pride.”

“That’s right,” I say softly when he pauses. “You said it’s a family business. Does your dad still run the original restaurant?”

Noah stares at me for a long moment, but I don’t think he’s really looking at me. It’s more like he’s gazing into some moment in the past.

And then he finally shakes his head. “No. He died. We still only had the one restaurant, but I grew it for him. Expanded into other locations. I want to keep it alive in his name. Let the whole fucking world know...”

His voice cracks a little, and without thinking, I climb off Cade’s lap and stride across the room, wrapping my arms around him.

Noah stiffens the moment I touch him, but despite his gruff demeanor, I’m not put off by it. I’m not sure if it’s the whiskey or what but I’m not scared of being rejected by him in this moment. I’m not even especially turned on.

I just want to offer him comfort.

My lips press against his softly, just a gentle touch. After a moment, his big hands come up to hold me in place as he kisses me back.

“You’ve done it, you know,” I whisper, holding his gaze when we finally break apart.

His hands tighten on me. “Done what?”

“Honored his memory. Kept it alive. You’ve done something incredible. He would be so proud.”

His eyes, that beautiful dark blue color that reminds me of the moment just before the stars come out, burn into mine with all the bottled up intensity this giant of a man keeps so tightly locked down.

Then someone clears his throat, and I remember that we’re not alone.

Oh shit. I *also* remember that I’ve been sleeping with Cade, and that despite my salacious fantasies about being worshiped by several gorgeous men, or the way he’s joked about sharing me with his friends, kissing one of those friends right in front of him might make things awkward.

But when I turn to face the two of them, it’s not Cade who looks pissed. It’s Dex.

He’s staring at me the way he used to back when I was dating his brother. I never did understand why he hated me so badly back then, and the anger flashing in his eyes right now makes my stomach flip over. Because it’s not just anger. It’s something that looks a lot like... jealousy.

Before I can even begin to process that thought, Cade jumps in, breaking the silence.

“It’s your turn, Dex. Truth or dare?”

“Truth,” Dex bites out, his hard gaze never wavering from my face.

Cade snorts, shaking his head as he chuckles. “Okay then, you asked for it. Time to come clean. Are you ever going to admit how badly you want Sadie?”

SADIE

FOR A MOMENT, it feels like all the air has been sucked out of the room. Dex's expression goes tight, and Noah's hands fall away from me.

I'm frozen in place, shocked that Cade just called him out like that.

I have feelings for Dex. Big, complicated, messy ones that I've spent years locking away and denying. I'm still full of whiskey and chocolate, on a high from all the sex with Cade and this new, sizzling chemistry with Noah. And now that I know Dex was jerking off to me last night too...

"I'm going to go get us some snacks," I say suddenly, bolting for the kitchen before I blurt out all the truly wild and impossible things running through my head.

Behind me, the room stays completely silent. Whatever issues the three friends might have with each other over what Cade just threw down on the table, they're just going to have to go ahead and deal with them without me for a second.

"Because *I*, sweet baby, need to get my shit together," I whisper to Mrs. Claws as I pass her, running my fingers over her soft fur lightly enough to not wake her.

I keep going through the kitchen, which feels like Dex's domain now, and end up in the pantry, a windowless room about the size of my walk-in closet back at home.

"Cade really did stock up well, didn't he?" I murmur to myself, absently trailing my fingers over the supplies that fill the shelves.

“Yeah. He’s good at taking care of shit like that.”

I whirl around to face the door, my heart in my throat.

Dex followed me.

My whole body hums to life with the kind of awareness I spent my entire relationship with Parker trying to convince myself I didn’t feel.

We stare at each other for a moment, then he pushes the door closed behind him and clears his throat. “I need to apologize for what Cade said out there.”

I shake my head. “No, you don’t. Dex, it’s—”

“I do, Sadie,” he cuts, his voice tight and his body language stiff and awkward.

It’s a far cry from the comfortable, easy feel of the last few hours the four of us spent in front of the fire, and I hate it.

“It was a stupid game, and things got out of hand,” he goes on. “Cade is a good guy, but if he made you uncomfortable—”

It’s my turn to interrupt. “Is he right?”

Dex clenches his jaw, a muscle ticking in the side of it as he stares me down. “I think we all just drank a little too much,” he finally says.

I snort. It’s not ladylike, but I don’t give a damn.

Does he honestly expect me to just let it go at that?

“I’ve seen you drink all the men in your family under the table, and not one of you is under six-foot-five. Try again.”

For a second, his eyes blaze at my challenge. Then he shuts it all down, shoving a hand through his hair and looking away. “I know you and Cade have been... *are*, I mean. You two are together right now. Sometimes, he just gets a little—”

“Quit dodging the question,” I cut in. “Do you want me?”

He clears his throat, but I don’t give him the chance to deflect again.

I step closer, so near to him that I can feel the heat radiating from his large frame. “You always acted like you

hated me, and I could never understand it. Not when I liked *you* so much.”

He looks down at me, his hands clenched at his sides. “You didn’t like me. I made sure of that. I was an asshole to you.”

My heart kicks against my ribs as I flatten my hands on his broad pecs. “Yeah, you were. And yet here we are.”

“We’re nowhere. Cade was just trying to get a rise out of me.”

I raise an eyebrow. “Kind of like last night?”

He freezes. “What?”

I shouldn’t bring this up. Shouldn’t admit I saw him. But I can’t stop myself. I’m playing with fire, but right now, I don’t care.

“*Something* got a rise out of you last night. I saw you. Actually, I heard you first. You were jerking off in the shower, and...” I bite my lip, the memory flooding through me like liquid fire. “You said my name when you came.”

He shakes his head, but he still hasn’t tried to back away. “Sadie, I—”

“That’s *kitten* to you,” I shoot back, lifting my chin.

His mouth drops open in shock. He knows I hate that nickname.

Or at least, I used to. I don’t know when that changed, but it feels like everything’s changed.

But the more I think about the hell he put me through when I was dating his brother—the confusion and the hurt every time we interacted—the angrier I start to get. I don’t know what the hell his problem is, but now that we’ve opened this can of worms, I’m not going to just drop it.

“Why do you act like you can’t stand me when I’ve never done a damn thing to you?” I quit resting my hands against his chest and poke it instead. Hard. “Why are you so damn

grumpy around me all the time?” Another poke. “*Just* around me? No one else. What did I ever do to deserve that?”

He captures my finger and holds it still. “It’s not like that.”

“Then what is it like? If you honestly don’t like me, why the hell were you thinking of me last night? Why was it my name you shouted when you came?”

“I didn’t fucking shout,” he growls. “And you think I don’t like you? That I can’t stand you? Jesus, *kitten*. You really are blind.”

“I’m blind? *I’m* blind? Are you telling me I didn’t see what I saw? Hear what I heard?”

“No, I’m not fucking telling you that!”

We’re both breathing hard. Not quite yelling, but also not *not* yelling.

“It sounds like you are telling me that,” I finally whisper. “It sounds like you’re saying I couldn’t see what was right in front of me. That I was blind to how... how jealous you were.”

I’m not sure when he managed to crowd me back against the row of shelves, but one of them digs into my back as he looms over me, and the look on his face sends arousal rocketing through me, my breath hitching.

“Fine,” he says, his voice tight and controlled.

“Fine?”

“*Fine.*”

I glare up at him. “What the fuck does ‘fine’ mean?”

“It means *yes*, are you happy? You’re right. I treated you that way because I wanted you so fucking much. I was jealous of Parker. Hell, I’m jealous of Cade, right the fuck now. And Noah! You kissed Noah? What the *fuck*, Sadie. I’m right here.”

“And you want me,” I breathe out, liquid arousal coursing through my veins.

“So bad it’s making my chest bleed,” he rasps. “I want to touch you. Kiss you. Make you laugh. Make you come. I’ve always wanted that, and I would have done it so much better than my dickhead of a little brother did. Parker didn’t realize what he had. He didn’t fucking deserve you. He—”

I shut him up by throwing myself at him and crushing my lips against his, exactly the way I’ve dreamed of more times than I can count.

He stumbles slightly, caught off guard by the sudden movement. Then he wraps his arms around me and takes my fucking breath away. He kisses me back like his life depends on it, like he meant every single word he just said. Like he’s *always* meant it.

“Oh my god, Dex,” I pant, years of hunger making me greedy, desperate to have everything with him now that he’s finally given me a taste.

“I’ve got you,” he growls, manhandling me like he owns me. “I fucking *need* you.”

His lips crash down on mine, and his tongue invades my mouth.

He tastes like coffee and chocolate, whiskey and heat, and I groan as he takes control, letting him have his way with me and not even attempting to hide the way his touch turns me on.

I don’t think I could even if I wanted to, not now that the dam has broken.

He lifts me up, and I wrap my legs around his waist. I whimper, writhing against him, and he slams a hand against the shelving unit, rattling the jars and boxes and bags.

Something crashes and breaks, but neither of us stop. Years of sexual tension have just snapped, and it’s making me light-headed with want.

“More,” I beg, letting my head fall back as Dex’s mouth trails down my neck, his scruff abrading my skin and leaving a delicious burn in its wake.

He grunts, his hands tightening on my ass, and I gasp as his lips find the swell of my breasts. My nipples ache for his attention, and he gives it to them, sucking on each one right through my clothes.

It's not enough. I frantically reach for the hem of my sweater, and Dex is obviously on the exact same page, because somehow he manages to hold me in place, pinned against the shelves, while he yanks it over my head and tosses it aside.

"Fuck," he says almost reverently, freezing for a moment as he gazes down at me with a look I've never seen on his face before. Then I squeeze my thighs around his hips, grinding against him, and he groans and unclasps my bra before diving back in.

He lifts my breasts and buries his face between them like he's worshiping them, then lavishes one of my tightly pebbled nipples with his tongue before sucking it into his mouth so hard that I have to bite back a scream.

"Don't be quiet. Don't you ever fucking hold back with me," he growls, his head popping up and pure fire in his eyes.

I'm panting too hard to answer, so turned on that I feel like I'm about to combust. Dex groans as if that *is* my answer, then fists my hair in one hand and kisses me again, dropping my legs to the floor and getting my pants open with the other.

He yanks them down, rubbing me through the fabric of my panties, then spins me around to face the shelves.

"Fuck. You look damn good like this," he growls as he strips off the rest of my clothes except for my panties.

He frames my ass with his hands, then steps in close again, the hard shape of his cock hitting my lower back. One hand slides around the curve of my stomach, then down to cup my pussy.

I buck against him, the dampness of my arousal soaking through the thin fabric as I cry out.

"Yeah. Fuck yeah." His voice is husky. "Now put your hands on the shelf and keep them there."

He positions me right where he wants me, and the way he manhandles me makes my pulse trip. I arch my back and push my ass out as I grip the shelf tight, spreading my legs for him as my blood thrums.

“These are so fucking sexy,” he murmurs as he runs his palms over my ass, cupping and squeezing. Then his hands fall away, and I hear his zipper come down. “Need you.”

“Please.”

He groans again. “I fucking love it when you beg.” Then he’s back, his fingers slipping between my legs and spreading me open. “You’re so fucking wet for me.”

“You have no idea,” I gasp, a hitch in my breath.

“Oh, I think I do,” he growls, grinding against me. It feels like he’s still mostly clothed, but when he finally peels down my panties to fully expose me, his cock slips between my slick thighs, making me moan as I tighten them around him.

“Fuck,” he groans, palming my ass as he kisses my neck before reaching around me to grope my tits. His hands are all over me like he can’t get enough as he grinds against me from behind, thrusting between my thighs until I’m desperate.

“Say you want it,” he growls in my ear. “Tell me you need to be fucked. Beg me to give it to you.”

“Yes, god, please,” I gasp, my whole body thrumming with years of pent-up longing as his tip pushes against my entrance, teasing me. “Do it. Please. I...”

My breath catches in my throat. I’m almost frantic with need. I’ve wanted him for longer than I’ve ever admitted to myself, and I’m not just wet for him, my whole body is throbbing with a desire so deep it aches. But...

“Wait,” I whisper raggedly. “We shouldn’t.”

Dex goes completely still, pressed up against my back tightly enough that I know our hearts are both pounding in sync.

His cock jerks, and if I move an inch, if I even breathe, the tip will slip inside me.

I clench my thighs around him hard. I want this so badly I can taste it, but I *have* been sleeping with Cade, even if it's casual. Even if it's only because of the free pass we agreed to.

But casual or not, I like Cade. A lot.

And he's right in the other room.

"Because of Cade?" Dex asks quietly.

I nod, biting back a groan of frustrated confusion. It's not like Cade and I are dating or exclusive. We're just having a wild, snowed-in week together. But still, I feel things for him. Things that I don't want to screw up, no matter how hot my fantasies of getting fucked by three men are, or how many times I've imagined being in this exact position with Dex.

Then, as if I'm living either my worst nightmare or best dream, the pantry door opens behind us, a sliver of brighter light slicing through the dim room.

It's Cade.

SADIE

MY HEART WAS ALREADY RACING JUST from Dex, but it ratchets up to a whole new level when Cade walks in.

“Shit,” Dex mutters softly, dropping his head to rest his forehead against the back of my head. His cock doesn’t seem to care that we’ve been interrupted. It jerks a little between my thighs, and his hands grip my hips so tightly that I couldn’t move if I wanted to.

I don’t want to.

Even though I’m the one who just told Dex we shouldn’t do this, I’m not sure I want to be anywhere but right where I am. I’m not sure of anything right now, my confused emotions all tangled up with how badly I need the release Dex got me so close to.

Cade smirks, leaning against the door jamb.

“Fuck, you look good like this,” he murmurs, his eyes flaring with heat as they rake over my nearly naked body, still pinned against the shelves by one of his best friends. “Don’t stop on my account. Show Dex just how greedy your sweet pussy is.”

I twist around, staring at him in shock, and the move makes Dex’s cock head slip inside me.

Just the tip. Just an inch. But enough that he sucks in a sharp breath, his fingers biting into my hips so hard I bet it bruises, and I have to bite back a moan of my own.

“Yeah, like that,” Cade says, his voice turning husky. “Does she feel good, Dex? Doesn’t all that wet heat feel just like heaven?”

Dex lets out an explosive breath, ruffling the back of my hair, and mutters something that I don’t catch. Cade chuckles, low and dirty, and something about that, plus the tone of Dex’s muttering makes me wonder if they...

But no.

Unless, maybe?

My pulse picks up even more, my head suddenly filled with the idea that this might not be the first time they’ve been interested in the same woman.

And maybe done something about it?

A whimper of pure, lustful desire escapes me.

“Fuck, you’re sexy,” Cade murmurs, his eyes dropping to my tits after he saunters around Dex to lean against the shelf right next to me.

His attention makes my nipples harden even further, and Dex groans when I clench my thighs together. The tip of his cock slips out of me, and even though he was barely inside at all, I miss the sensation already.

Cade gives me a wicked grin. “I think this means we need to make an amendment to our deal.”

“What?” I gasp. “What do you mean?”

He reaches out and tucks my hair behind my ear, then lets his fingers trail down the blonde waves draped over my shoulder. “I meant what I said when I walked in. You look gorgeous with Dex’s cock between your legs, and since you’ve already agreed to enjoy yourself while we’re snowed in...”

He trails off, his eyes glinting.

“Enjoy yourself?” Dex rasps, repeating what Cade said as his big hands flex on my hips. “Is that what you’re calling what you two have been doing, kitten?”

Cade smirks before I can answer. “Sadie was reluctant to give me another chance once she found out she works for me, but I pointed out that while we’re snowed in, business is on hold.” He’s talking to Dex, but his eyes stay locked on mine. “We agreed it’s a free pass.”

“To fuck?” Dex asks, pulling me tighter against his body. “You two are just hooking up?”

Maybe I’m imagining it, but Cade hesitates for a split second before he nods. “We agreed to all the no-strings-attached fun that we want. No commitments, just sex, for as long as this blizzard keeps us all stuck here.”

I feel like I should say something. Speak up instead of just letting them talk about this, about me, like I’m not right here, naked between them and panting with arousal. But for some twisted reason, it turns me on.

I can’t pretend that I don’t have some level of real emotions for both of them, despite what Cade just said about what we agreed to. Being with Cade has made me happier than anything has in a long time, and I’ve always had complicated feelings for Dex.

But I can’t deny how turned on I am right now, and that’s even more true ever since Cade walked in on us.

I like this. It’s almost like they’re playing a game, and I’m the prize. Like they’re negotiating a win for all of us. And I may have been the one to stop things earlier with Dex because of Cade, but it sounds a hell of a lot like Cade just gave us the green light to keep going.

“So tell me about this amendment,” Dex says to Cade, his voice strained.

Cade smiles, slow and sinful. “Well, since Sadie is clearly into it, I propose that we extend that free pass to everyone in the cabin.”

Heat races through me, and I make a needy little sound that I would be embarrassed about if not for how it makes both men react. Cade’s eyes snap down to mine, filled with heat, and Dex’s hips rock forward, his hands tightening on me.

“Is that what you want, kitten?” he whispers, continuing to rock his hips and rub his shaft against my most sensitive place. “You stopped me earlier, but that was because of Cade. Do you want me to fuck you now? Do you want me to fuck you in front of him? Give me a free pass to do that for as long as we’re all here?”

“Yes,” I gasp, a shudder of lust going through me as every fantasy I’ve ever had crashes over me at once. “And Cade said everyone,” I blurt without thinking. “So... does that mean Noah too?”

Dex grunts, yanking me back against him possessively.

Cade smirks. “Careful. You’ll make him jealous, talking about another guy with his cock so close to filling your sweet little pussy.”

“I’m not fucking jealous,” Dex grits out.

I grind back against him, a visceral thrill going through me at the obvious lie.

I don’t want to cause problems between the three friends. Not ever. Their closeness is clearly special, something that I’d never want to become a threat to. But I do like the idea of Dex wanting me that badly.

I like it a *lot*.

“Good,” says Cade, cupping my cheek and teasing my lips with his thumb. “Because yeah, we’re all stuck here together anyway. And if Noah’s up for it, I think we’re all going to enjoy the holidays a little more if we open things up like that.”

“You mean, sharing me,” I whisper, my breath coming in short, hard bursts. “All three of you.”

Cade’s green eyes darken with lust. “Fuck yes, I mean sharing you. But only with these two. They’re my closest friends, and you seem... open to the idea.”

I can’t help but laugh, and Dex groans, rolling his hips a little.

“You’re killing me,” he mutters. “You feel so fucking good. *Smell* so fucking good.”

He leans down and buries his face in my hair, nuzzling the back of my neck as his large hands keep me locked in place, like a part of him is worried I'll disappear if he doesn't hold on tight, now that he has me.

Cade's gaze turns even hotter as he watches, and it suddenly brings to mind Noah's eyes locked on me and Cade up in the hallway yesterday.

I've never once in my life thought I had a thing for either exhibitionism or voyeurism, but these men might just prove me wrong. And based on the way Cade is looking at me, I don't think I'm the only one.

"Do you really think Noah would want this too?" I whisper, my breath hitching with the thought.

"He can be a bit prickly sometimes," Cade says, his voice dropping low with desire as he stops teasing my lips with his thumb and pushes it into my mouth, his lips tilting up in a sexy smirk. "As you might've noticed—"

"Prickly?" Dex cuts in with a little snort. "Noah is a goddamn cactus."

Cade grins, slowly sliding his thumb back out of my mouth. "Yeah, but he's clearly got a thing for our girl too."

My heart races, partly from the way he just called me *our girl*, and partly from the implication that Noah wants me. "He does?"

"You don't see the way he watches you," Dex mutters. His cock, which is firmly lodged between my thighs, jerks against me. "Fuck yeah, he does."

"So why not just open the doors to anything and see what happens?" Cade says, trailing his fingers down my throat. "Are you into this proposed amendment, dream girl?"

"Is this something the three of you do often?" I ask, not sure which answer I want. "Share women?"

"No," both men say at the same time, and I realize that *is* the answer I wanted. Not that I'm judging, obviously, given how turned on the idea makes me. But I guess Dex isn't the

only one feeling a little possessive right now. A part of me thrills to the idea that these three men are all mine, *only* mine, even though it's all casual and temporary.

Merry Christmas to me.

“Then yes,” I whisper. “I want it. I want you. All three of you. As long as it won't cause problems.”

“Like I said, I'll only share with these two,” Cade answers, a hard note to his voice that tells me—casual or not—he's feeling a little possessive too. “They're my best friends. Watching isn't new to us, even if we've never had a woman we all wanted to be with at the same time.”

“You've watched each other fuck?” I ask, a shudder moving through me.

Cade nods, and Dex groans, practically panting as he grinds against me.

“And you want to watch right now, don't you?” I whisper to Cade, goading him. Teasing him. A bold side of me feels like it's awakening at their revelations and blooming inside me like a flower. I start to pant, arousal coiled so tightly within me that I almost wonder if the thought alone will set me off. “You want to see Dex fuck me. Is that why you came in here? You aren't just okay with sharing me, you *want* to.”

“Yes,” he answers in a low growl, his gaze sharpening like a predator's. “I want it. I want to see how good he can make you feel.”

“Are you sure about this, Cade?” Dex grits out, his voice strung-out and tight as his hands bite into my hips. “Because I need to be fucking inside her already.”

“Hell yeah, I'm sure,” Cade says, meeting Dex's eyes over my head. “You have no idea how good her pussy is. It feels like sliding into satin. She takes my cock perfectly, and she's going to fall the fuck apart on yours.”

Dex and I both groan, then he pulls back and spins me around, slamming his mouth into mine.

I want him to fuck me.

I want him to do it already.

Instead, he pulls back, panting, and rests his forehead against mine, making me fall for him in a way that's a little bit too real for my heart's safety when he checks in with me one last time first.

“And you, kitten? We have history. I need to know if—”

“I want this,” I cut him off, resting my hand against the stubble on his jaw. I can see the desire blazing in his eyes, all the heat I always thought was dislike when he was trying to resist his attraction to me. But now that he's told me the truth? I can't deny my own attraction anymore either, and I don't want to. “I *want* this, Dex. I thought about you more than I should, even when I was with your brother. I want you to fuck me.”

Dex groans, then kisses me hard. “Fuck. I don't have a condom. I don't have—”

“It's fine,” I pant. “It's safe. I'm good. I'm protected.”

Better than good, because the thought of having his cum inside me takes the heat flaring between us to a whole new level.

Dex nods. “I'm good too. I would never put you at risk.”

I know. I know it down to my soul. It's why this fantasy works. Because it's not just being shared by more than one man. It's being shared by *these* men.

“Then fuck me already,” I tell Dex, earning a low groan from Cade. I reach between us and wrap my hand around him. He's still fully clothed, but I don't care. “I need this. I need *you*.”

“You've fucking got me,” he growls before hauling me up against him.

His hands go to my ass, lifting me, and I instinctively wrap my legs around his hips as his cock slots into place, nudging my entrance.

And then, fucking *finally*, he drives into me the way we both need.

SADIE

I MOAN as Dex fills me, my body stretching to accommodate him as he bottoms out. He kneads my ass as he holds me against him.

“Fuck,” he bites out, rolling his hips as if he wants to find a way to go even deeper. “Too fucking good. Don’t move.”

He’s the one moving, and when Cade’s hand slides down my hair, landing on my ass and pushing, impaling me even deeper on his friend’s cock, it pushes me right to the edge.

“Oh god, fuck me,” I beg. “I’m already close, Dex.”

He groans, and Cade chuckles. “She feels incredible, doesn’t she?” His voice has dropped, the low timbre rolling through me like liquid heat. “Make her moan just like that again, Dex. She makes the sexiest noises when she’s got a cock inside her.”

Dex’s fingers tighten. He huffs out a sharp breath like he’s just regained control and then starts to move, pulling out and thrusting back in. “Like this?”

“Fuck, yeah,” Cade rasps as I moan just like he said I would, his grip tightening on my ass as he watches Dex fuck me. “Just like that. Fuck her hard. Make her take it. She loves it when you push her. Loves trying new things, isn’t that right, dream girl?”

He grins at me, echoing the words I said to him the first time we met, and I really am close now.

“You love this, don’t you?” Dex pants, his rhythm picking up as he pounds into me. “You love taking my cock. You love that we’re doing this in front of Cade, you dirty girl. You want us to share you. Want me to fill you up with my cum. Tell me you do. Say it. Fucking beg for it, Sadie.”

“Yes!” I cry, the pressure building inside me. “I want it. I need it, please. Dex, don’t stop. Give me everything.”

Cade reaches up, grabbing a fistful of my hair and tugging. “That’s my girl,” he growls in my ear. “Ride him. Let him feel how tight and wet that pussy is.”

“You’re goddamn evil, Cade,” Dex grits out as my walls clench tight.

“Aren’t I?” He smirks, then adds, “You’re welcome.”

Dex doesn’t respond. Instead, he just slams into me even harder, the shelves rattling with the force of his thrusts, and it’s not long before my body starts to tighten, my orgasm cresting.

But just before I can fall over the edge, Dex pulls out, making me whimper plaintively.

“Not yet,” he growls.

He gives me a look that almost makes me combust, then spins me around so I’m facing Cade. Dex’s big hands hold my hips, his lips brushing the side of my neck. “I want to bend you over and take you just like this, but we’ve already broken something. Do you think Cade will mind if we mess up all his neatly organized shelves?”

Cade cups my breasts, rubbing his thumbs over my pebbled nipples and then pinching them the perfect amount when I moan. “Fuck, yes, I would mind,” he says with a chuckle. “It’s important to keep things organized. But you should still do it.”

His pupils expand, and I feel a shiver of anticipation. Cade tilts his head toward a stack of sturdy crates. They’re the perfect height for me to brace myself on.

“Go ahead,” he murmurs, his gaze locking with mine. “Bend over for him.”

“Fuck,” Dex whispers, then slides his hand around to gently grip my throat. Cade follows us as Dex guides me over to the stack of boxes and bends me over it, then runs his hands down my body, shaping my curves with them before kneading my ass again. “This is fucking incredible. Perfect for sinking into.”

I know my curves are generous, but the way these two seem to appreciate them is something I’ve never quite experienced. It makes me feel sexy and bold.

I arch my back, pushing my ass up for him, and spread my legs wider. “Are you going to make me wait forever?”

“Not a chance,” Dex says, gripping his cock and rubbing the head along my slit, making me moan. “I’ve been waiting for this for far too long. But I *am* going to savor every fucking moment.”

He does, slowly pressing his thick, blunt crown against my entrance, then holding my hips still and not pushing in any farther, letting the tension build instead of just giving in.

“Dammit. This is torture, Dex,” I pant, the need inside me ratcheting up until it’s almost unbearable. “Fuck me already.”

He doesn’t. He pulls out again, making me whimper as Cade chuckles.

“Torture, huh?” He thrusts between my thighs like he was doing before, then lines himself up again and slams home. “What do you think you put me through, every time I had to watch you go home with my brother instead of me?”

The jealous, possessive note in his voice does something to me, but I shake my head.

“No. No talking about him while your cock is inside me,” I gasp. “There’s no comparison.”

Cade grins. He’s leaning against the wall right next to where Dex has me bent over, and he moves a little closer.

“That’s right,” he says. “No talking about other men while you’re fucking her. Not unless it’s me or Noah.” He lifts my chin. “But don’t you like hearing how much Dex has wanted

this? How hard you make him? How badly you've made him suffer, waiting for his chance to finally get inside you?"

"Yes," I admit, a shiver moving through me as I add, "And I like you watching too. Tell me what you want to see him do to me."

Heat flares between us, the tension like a live wire under my skin as Cade stares down at me.

"I want to see Dex's cock buried inside you again," he finally says, his voice husky. "I want him to fuck you like you deserve, fast and hard, until you scream his name. Scream it loud enough that Noah hears and wonders why he's missing out."

"Please," I gasp, the dirty words turning me on almost as much as the idea of being heard by Noah. "That. God, Dex, fuck me already. Give me more."

"Greedy kitten," Dex says with a groan, pulling back and thrusting back into me hard enough to rattle the shelf. "You'll get what you need, but not until I'm ready. Not after making me wait for so many years."

He grips my hair, tugging it just enough to sting as he pulls my head back and thrusts into me again. "You have no idea how many nights I stayed awake thinking about this," he says, his voice raspy. "How many times I jerked off, coming in my hand because the only thing that could ever get me off was thinking about you. Imagining what it would feel like to be inside you."

The tension coiling inside me winds so tight that I can't stand it. I didn't just want Dex. I wanted him to want me back. And hearing that he did, even while he was trying to push me away, has the orgasm he interrupted earlier not just building inside me, but hurtling toward an explosive release.

"Fuck, Sadie," he growls, his thrusts getting faster, his hips slamming against mine. "You have no idea how much I want you sloppy with my cum, but first—"

He pulls out again, and this time I don't just whimper, I cry out in frustration.

“Dex, goddammit,” I pant, spinning around to find him grinning down at me with an expression on his face that makes my heart stutter.

Happy. Dex looks fucking happy, and as sexy as he’s always been with his perpetual scowl and resting grouch face, he’s so heart-stoppingly gorgeous like this that my heart stutters.

“That’s right, you little brat,” he says, grinning down at me. “We’re on my schedule now.”

He pushes me back until I’m lying back on the stack of crates and lifts my legs, draping them over his shoulders.

“Fucking beautiful,” Cade whispers, sliding his fingers through my hair.

His cock is an iron pole in his pants, right by my face, and I really am as greedy as they’ve both called me, because I don’t just want Dex to fuck me. I don’t just want the orgasm he keeps denying me. I want this too.

I want Cade’s cock in my mouth.

I want to be sloppy with their cum at both ends.

A shudder rolls through me as I reach down and press my fingers against my clit, but Dex growls, plucking my hand away.

“Uh-uh. If you’re ready for more, I’ll get you there.” His voice is rough as he rubs the head of his cock against me, leaning over me to slide it right over my clit a few times before positioning himself at my entrance again. “Do you want me to fill you up? Fuck you until you’re dripping with my cum? Hit that spot inside you that will make you scream?”

It’s like he’s reading my mind.

“Yes,” I gasp. Then I meet Cade’s eyes, reaching for his bulge. “Both of you. I want both of you.”

“Oh, dream girl,” he murmurs, grinning like he just won the lottery. “You’re going to make these holidays so damn happy.”

He helps me, unzipping his pants and pushing his boxer briefs out of the way, then wrapping his hand around mine and guiding me to stroke him as he cups my cheek, running his thumb along my lower lip.

“Open wide, beautiful,” he murmurs, his eyes glued to mine.

I do, and he slips the thick head of his cock into my mouth just as Dex thrusts into me again.

“Holy fucking hell,” Dex groans. “That’s just unfair.”

“Yeah, but you’re not complaining,” Cade points with a low laugh.

“Fuck no, I’m not.” Dex sounds like he’s just barely holding it together.

Cade pushes his hips forward, slowly filling my mouth as he watches Dex fuck me, and I have a flash of an image—of Noah here too. Of the three of them taking turns, using me until I’m dripping with their cum.

It’s that thought that finally sends me spiraling over the edge.

Cade curses, and Dex fucks me through it, pushing my legs wider as his rhythm stutters. He groans, his thrusts becoming erratic.

“You feel too fucking good,” he grits out, finally slamming deep and holding himself there as he empties himself inside me. “Holy fuck, I needed that.”

His words make my clit pulse, and another wave of pleasure rushes through me, leaving me gasping around Cade’s thick cock.

Cade pulls back, holding on to his shaft as it slides out of my mouth. “I want to dirty you up, sweetheart. I want to see you dripping with it. Are you ready for more?”

I nod, still panting from the intensity of my orgasm. “God, yes. Give it to me.”

“Fuck, you’re perfect,” Cade says, his gaze darkening as he strokes himself over my face, his musky scent filling my senses. “Open wide.”

“Shit, that’s hot,” Dex groans when I do.

He’s still buried inside me, and somehow, that makes it even better when Cade’s cock throbs in his fist, a string of low curses accompanying his release.

Hot ropes of cum stripe my cheeks and tongue, and it’s filthy and perfect and so much hotter in real life than the fantasy version I had for an encounter like this. I feel my core tightening all over again as my skin tingles with pleasure.

“Goddamn,” Dex grunts as a final. “She’s coming again, Cade.”

Cade’s hand stills, his eyes blazing with pure, possessive male satisfaction. “Is that so?”

“You’re the one who called me greedy,” I point out breathlessly when the orgasm finally subsides, allowing me to breathe again.

“Then I guess I was right about you,” he says with a grin, dragging his thumb over my lips.

His grin widens when I suck it into my mouth, and Dex’s cock pulses inside me as he groans at the sight.

“Fuck, I’m going to want to go again if—”

Dex’s words break off as the pantry is suddenly plunged into pitch darkness. I can’t see a thing, and the only thing I hear is the sound of the three of us breathing.

Shit. The blizzard just knocked all the power out.

SADIE

SHIT. I guess the power going out isn't a surprise given the way the storm is still raging outside, but it is a huge disappointment since it kills the moment we're having.

And by "moment," I mean the fact that I really am the greedy girl Dex and Cade were just teasing me about being. I've already had more orgasms in the last twenty-four hours than I've probably had in the last year. Well, not counting the night I spent with Cade in his hotel room, and if we're strictly counting orgasms that I don't have to take care of myself. But still, I want more.

Instead, Dex slides out of me and the guys both help me clean up in the dark, being sweet as sin as they help me dress and we all fumble our way out of the pantry.

"Did you stock candles?" Dex grumbles as we feel our way through the kitchen.

"Candles, batteries, flashlights," Cade answers. "Not that I've unpacked them yet."

I swear I can almost hear him shrug, and the sound of Dex's put-upon sigh makes me smile.

He's such a grouch, but now that I've seen another side of him, it almost feels like his crankiness is more of a habit than his true personality.

I like that. God, I like *him*, far more than I probably should.

“I know there are some batteries back in John’s old office,” I offer as the men start talking about finding those supplies in case the power stays off for a while. I turn in that direction, intending to go get them, and slam into a mountain of muscle.

“Careful.”

Noah’s deep voice rumbles as he reaches out and catches me before I go down on my ass from our collision. I suck in a breath, inhaling his familiar scent. I’ve known him for less than a day, and I already recognize the way he smells, like pine trees and spice and rugged masculinity.

I gasp, then realize that if I can smell him, he can smell me too. And the only thing I smell like right now is Dex and Cade.

“Are you okay?” Noah asks as I flush at the thought, imagining what he must think as he smells the sex on me. Imagining what he thought when he *heard* me being fucked by his two best friends.

“Sadie?”

His grip on me tightens as he says my name, a hint of urgency in his voice that makes me flush for an entirely different reason. He’s reserved but protective. And god, I want him to say yes to Cade’s proposal too.

“I’m fine,” I answer quickly, intensely aware of the heat of his body here in the dark. “Um, we all are.”

“Good.” He abruptly drops his hands. “I just checked on the kitten, and she’s asleep, so I’m going to head out to the woodshed. I saw that there’s a backup generator there.”

I like that he’s so concerned about Mrs. Claws, even if a small part of me is disappointed that we all have to be practical now instead of talking about what he may or may not have heard while I was with his friends.

“Do you know if the generator is in good working order?” Noah asks, still focused on those practicalities.

I grin in the darkness. If I’m being honest, his insistence on always taking care of things—from the kitten to the security of the entire lodge—makes up for that smidge of disappointment.

Noah makes me feel protected and safe in a deeper way than I realized was possible after having needed to be so self-sufficient all my life.

“The one out in the shed works just fine,” I tell him as Dex’s and Cade’s voices fade. They must be going for the candles and flashlights. “Um, but I think it’s overkill right now?”

Noah doesn’t say anything, but I can picture him frowning at me. Maybe because I’ve been watching him so closely.

“The one we keep out there is big enough to power the whole lodge, but you don’t want to go out in the blizzard to deal with it,” I say.

Without thinking, I reach up, my fingers brushing against his face. I trace the firm planes of his jaw and cheekbones until I reach the furrow I knew would be between his brows. He captures my hand and pulls it away from his face, but doesn’t let go of it.

“What I want isn’t the issue,” he says, his voice a little more gravelly now. “It’s too fucking cold. We need lights. We need heat. We need to keep the food cold. Going out to the shed is—”

“Unnecessary,” I interrupt, grinning at him even though I know he can’t see it. “We’ve got a smaller generator down in the basement that will handle the refrigerators and what just the four of us need.”

Noah grunts, and since he’s still holding my hand, I feel the small movements that make me think he’s nodding.

When his grip on my hand loosens, I tighten mine without thinking. “I can show you where it is, but I’ll be honest, I’m not entirely sure how to hook it up to everything.”

“That part’s easy. I’ll go down to the basement with you and help you set it up safely. If it’s gas powered, we’re going to have to put it outside so it can vent.”

I nod along without a clue what he’s talking about. But I do like the way he said he’ll help me instead of just taking

over. Even though he's protective, that doesn't mean he sees me as weak.

My eyes are starting to adjust to the dark. It's not as pitch black here in the kitchen thanks to the windows, but once I lead Noah down into the basement, it feels even blacker than the pantry was.

"Um, John mostly used the basement for storage, so it might be kind of hard to navigate."

He turns the flashlight on his phone on before I get the last word out, and I turn to look up at him.

"Seriously?" I whirl on him, hands on my hips. "You had that on you this whole time, and still made us creep through the dark up there?"

His lips twitch. "We didn't need it up there, and it's best to conserve batteries until we know we're going to have an alternate energy source."

That sounds like either a huge load of bullshit or an extreme level of caution that I truly don't think the situation warrants. I'd almost like to think it's the first—just an excuse to keep his hands on me in the dark. But somehow, I don't think so. For whatever reason, Noah really does seem to overthink safety and preparedness issues that much.

I want to know why, but it's not my place to pry. Besides, we've made it through the clutter and found the generator.

Noah hands me his phone. "Can you keep the light on it while I look it over? I want to make sure it's been properly maintained before we give it any juice."

"Sure," I say before immediately fumbling it.

It slips from my hands, hitting the concrete floor with an audible crack that plunges us back into darkness.

"Shit, oh my god, I'm sorry." I wince, dropping down to find it. My fingers brush the phone at the same moment that I accidentally kick it, sending it skittering across the floor near the generator.

"Dammit."

I scramble after it, but instead of finding the phone, I somehow manage to faceplant into Noah's crotch.

He grunts, his hand coming down. He's probably trying to protect his junk, but since I'm already there, his large palm lands on the back of my head instead.

"Sorry!" I yelp, tilting my head instinctively to look up at him. I can't see him, of course, but my face rubs against his bulge when I move, and I realize with a shock that he's... hard.

And holy shit.

He's big *everywhere*.

"Jesus," he mutters, his voice strained. His hand tightens on my hair, urging me closer to his growing bulge for a split second before he suddenly yanks me away and steps back.

"Sorr—"

"It's fine," he cuts me off gruffly. "It was an accident."

My hand finally lands on the phone, and I hand it back up to him. This time, I manage to do it without groping him, thank fuck. "Here."

He fiddles with the flashlight app, turning it back on again.

"I'm glad it still works. I was worried I broke it," I mutter as he helps me to my feet, feeling completely flustered.

"You didn't."

He stares down at me for a moment, but he's got the light angled so his face is a contrast of light and shadow, making it hard to read his expression. Is he mad at me for dropping his phone? Or for accidentally rubbing my face all over his crotch? And did I imagine that tiny moment where he pulled me closer, like he wanted to keep me right there, my breath warming his rapidly hardening shaft?

Did that affect him at all, the way it affected me?

Without another word, he turns back to the generator. I almost want to bring up what just happened, but I chicken out before I can. He clearly doesn't want to talk about me pressing

my face against his crotch, so instead, I try to pay attention as he walks me through the stuff he checks on the generator.

Apparently, it looks good, so he carries it back upstairs and sets it up outside the kitchen on the covered porch.

“Stay in here where you’ll be warm,” he says. “This will only take a second.”

“I want to help.”

He smiles at me, just the barest hint of the expression. “You are. But if you want to save us a little time, go find some extension cords. Once I get it running, we’ll hook it up to everything important.”

That’s exactly what we do, and his competence is as sexy as the rest of him.

“How do you know how to do all of this?” I ask as the lights come back on.

He slants a look at me, and even though he’s not smiling this time, I swear I can see a glint of humor in his eyes. “All of what, plugging in a power cord?”

I roll my eyes, laughing. “Of course not. Just...” I wave a hand around, taking in our surroundings. “Everything. Dealing with the generator. Saving Mrs. Claws. Making sure we’re safe during the storm.”

He looks away, fiddling with the connection between a couple of the power cords.

“It’s important to know how to handle the unexpected,” he says after a second. “I’ve just gained the skills to make sure I’m always prepared.”

“For what?”

He looks up, the intensity in his piercing, midnight-blue eyes doing dangerous things to me.

“Everything,” he says flatly, holding my gaze.

Heat rushes through me. The way he’s looking at me makes it way too easy to imagine all the different kinds of

things he might be skilled at, and how many of those things I'd love him to do to me while we're snowed in here together.

But it's not just that. The more time I spend with Noah, the more obvious it is to me that there's so much more to the man than he lets anyone see. And yes, I'm dying to have him join in on the naked, no-strings fun while we're snowed in together, but every moment I spend with him makes me wish he'd bare other things to me too.

I want to know why he pushes himself so hard. What happened to shape him into the man he is today. But I don't press it. It's not my place, and besides, I'm already in danger of getting too invested. Getting attached to any of these men is just a recipe for heartache.

"Well, thank you for helping set this all up," I finally blurt when the silence between us stretches on a bit too long. "And for rescuing our new kitten, of course. I have to admit, you're constantly surprising me."

He huffs out a breath, his lips curving up just slightly as he gets to his feet. "You surprise me too."

"Do I?"

His eyes roam over my face, and his spicy forest scent wraps around me, making me feel almost lightheaded.

"Yeah," he finally murmurs. "You do. You..."

His brows furrow a little, and he reaches for me, his fingers brushing against my cheek. My eyes widen, my breath freezing in my lungs as I hold perfectly still.

Is he... is he about to kiss me?

SADIE

MY TONGUE DARTS out to wet my lips, and I sway toward Noah a little as he trails his fingertips over my cheek, then through my hair.

“Noah,” I whisper, my heart thudding rapidly. “I...”

“You have some cobwebs in your hair.”

It takes me a solid several seconds to process what he just said, and when I do, it wrenches my mind out of the desire-filled stupor it was in.

I gasp, my hand flying up to bat at my hair like I’m on fire. “*What?* Oh my god, gross! Get it off, get it off, get it off!”

He laughs, a deep rumble that breaks right through his normal reserve. Then he grabs my hand to pull it away from my head. “Here, let me help you.”

I force myself to stand still, allowing him to get rid of the cobwebs, and by the time he’s done, I’m laughing too. I’m a little embarrassed that he just saw me spazz out like that, but at least he said something before I leaned in to kiss him like an idiot. That would’ve been way more humiliating.

“Promise you won’t tell Dex and Cade that I freaked out over a few cobwebs?” I ask as he steps back.

“Sure. I’ll just tell them you showed me some of your funky dance moves.”

I blink, surprised by the fact that this stoic man just made a joke, then grin. “Deal.”

He nods, and the two of us rejoin Dex and Cade in the living room. Even with the generator Noah just connected, most of the lodge is without electricity. This room is warmed by the fire and lit all around with the candles the other two men dug up.

It's stupidly romantic-looking, but before I can swoon—or suggest we all rip off our clothes and find better ways to warm each other up—Noah launches into a militant-sounding lecture about preserving power, laying out ground rules like a drill sergeant.

“This is a little excessive,” he says, glancing around the room. “We’re running on a limited supply, and the fire in here provides enough light as it is.”

Dex snorts. “You haven’t seen all the shit Cade stocked up.”

“All supplies are still finite,” Noah reminds him with a frown. “And we can’t get down the mountain for more until the weather clears.”

Cade grins. “There’s something to be said for ambience though, am I right?”

Noah crosses his arms. “No.”

“If you say so, Dad.”

“Safety first,” Noah mutters, rolling his eyes. But he clearly doesn’t mind the teasing. Maybe because even when they’re giving him shit, both Dex and Cade still respect Noah’s need to make sure we’re prepared. And despite his grumbling, Noah doesn’t insist that we blow out the candles. He even accepts a glass of wine when Cade brings out a bottle.

It actually has been a long day, and we’re all yawning by the time we finish the wine. I check on Mrs. Claws before saying goodnight to the men, smiling at the way someone—probably Noah—took time to make sure her nest was fluffed up and set closer to the fire.

Since I left my phone in my room earlier, Cade gives me a flashlight when I head upstairs.

But as I step inside the guest bedroom that's become mine, I stop, biting my lip against a smile. While I was setting up the generator with Noah, the other two must have come up here. There are fat white utility candles all around my room, unlit, and a long-handled lighter lying on the nightstand.

Noah's words about not being wasteful with our resources echo in the back of my mind, but the sweetness of one or both of the other men thinking of me like this makes it tempting to light all the candles anyway.

I bite my lip indecisively, then put a pin in that thought and shoot off a text to Luna instead.

I change into my sleep clothes while I wait for her reply. They're not sexy, but the silky sleep shorts and cami are soft and comfortable, and the pattern of snowmen and kittens makes me smile, thinking of Mrs. Claws.

By the time I've gotten myself ready for bed, my phone is lit up with a reply from Luna.

LUNA: OMG girl, what is this news???

I grin, flopping down on my bed with my phone and hitting the microphone icon so I can use voice-to-text for my response.

ME: Best. Holiday. Ever.

Luna sends back a block of emojis that take up my entire screen.

ME: Calm down or I won't tell you...

LUNA: Oh yes you will!

LUNA: You have to!

LUNA: Are you still banging your billionaire boss???

I scroll through the gif menu and send her one of a woman glistening in the heat, fanning herself.

I get back a whole string of fire emojis, then a one word text that my brain decides to cooperate and read on the first go.

LUNA: Spill!

LUNA: Is it still as good as the first time?

ME: Oh hell yes, but... there have been some huuuuge developments I have to tell you about.

LUNA: How huge are we talking? Ten inches?

She includes a grinning devil emoji and a string of eggplants, and I'm laughing, but I also wince a little. Both Cade and Dex are generously endowed, and if that embarrassing moment down in the garage is anything to go by, Noah might have them both beat.

Just to tease Luna, I send back the emoji with its lips zipped shut.

LUNA: If you think I won't fly back there to get the details out of you, you sorely underestimate how invested I am in this!

ME: Not possible, unless you rent a dogsled. Nothing is getting through this storm. It already knocked out the power.

LUNA: Wait, right now? Are you okay?

ME: I'm great. I've got three men to take care of me here, remember?

I bite my lip, holding in a laugh as I count down the seconds until she explodes. My money was on five, but my phone blows up in less than three.

LUNA: How hot are we talking here?

LUNA: Pics or it didn't happen.

LUNA: Wait, are all three keeping you warm???

LUNA: Sadie!

LUNA: You know what they say about conserving body heat...

LUNA: Please let me live vicariously through you! I don't even care if nothing new has happened. Lie to me. Feed me the plot of your latest book obsession. Tell me Santa brought you three cocks and a partridge in a pear tree.

I'm laughing so hard my stomach starts to ache, and the voice-to-text feature can't seem to make sense of it when I try to reply. Finally, I manage something legible.

ME: What actually is a partridge, anyway?

LUNA: A bird, maybe? Girl, idk and idc! Tell me about the cock!

ME: I mean, a cock is technically a bird too...

LUNA: OMG I hate you. For real, are you still getting laid or not?

I grin, drawing it out for a second just to torture my bestie.

LUNA: ???

ME: Ok, yes. So much yes.

LUNA: So billionaire business tycoon Cade McAllister is making good on his sexcation proposal?

I squint at my phone. Even with the accessible font, I'm not sure what the fuck I just read, so I make my phone read it out loud to me.

When it does, I laugh. I have my phone set to use this deep-voiced male Australian accent, but my new favorite thing now is hearing him say the word "sexcation."

ME: Oh, he's making very good on his proposal.

ME: And...

I send her the gif of that girl fanning herself from all the heat again.

LUNA: And???

I grin.

ME: And he's not the only one.

LUNA: Oh. My. God. Tell me everything!

ME: About Cade... or Dex?

LUNA: Whaaaaaaaaattttttt? What are you saying to me right now?

ME: I'm saying that things have gotten interesting.

ME: Cade walked in on me and Dex having a moment in the pantry.

LUNA: A naked moment?

ME: Well... one of us was naked.

Luna sends back a big-eyed emoji that looks shocked.

LUNA: We're still talking about Dex, right? Parker's brother, Dex? Parker's brother who was a jerk to you for years, and who you then caught jerking off to you less than 24 hours ago??? That Dex? He got naked with you?

ME: No.

ME: But things got a little heated between us, and he got me naked.

The three little bouncing dots appear and disappear over and over, but when something finally pops up on my screen again, it's a gif so extra that I drop my phone on my chest and start laughing again.

When I pick it up again, Luna is demanding details, so I fill her in quickly.

ME: After Cade walked in on me and Dex, he proposed an “amendment” to our agreement. He wants it to include all of us.

LUNA: All of you.

LUNA: All four of you???

LUNA: You’re actually, really and for real, having a sexcation for Christmas with three men???

Before I can answer, she sends another.

LUNA: What am I even doing with my life, and where did I go wrong?

A knock sounds on my door, and I drop my phone again, my heart suddenly racing. “Yes?”

Cade pushes it open, grinning at me. Dex is behind him.

“You busy, dream girl?”

“That depends,” I say, my phone vibrating like a Magic Wand with its power button jammed on.

The two of them come in, and Dex looks around with a little frown. “Have you been sitting in the dark?”

“I was thinking of going to sleep.”

Cade shakes his head, then pulls a lighter from his own pocket and starts walking around the room, lighting all the candles. Dex strides over to where I’m sitting on the bed, his movements reminding me of a predator.

“You’re not going to sleep yet.”

My breath hitches as the flickering candlelight starts to brighten the room. “I’m not?”

“No.” Dex cups the back of my head, looking down at me.

My core clenches, and I nod, then laugh when my phone buzzes again and a flash of jealousy appears on his face.

“It’s just Luna,” I tell him, quickly flipping it over and dictating a final text.

ME: Gotta go. Two partridges just showed up in my pear tree.

I toss my phone aside, and behind me, Cade laughs. “Is that some kind of girl code?”

Dex speaks up before I can answer him. “I wasn’t done with you earlier, kitten. I was just getting started.”

Cade finishes with the candles as Dex pulls me to my feet.

Then they pin me between them and kiss me.

DEX

I CAN'T KEEP my hands off Sadie as I kiss her. I can't fucking believe I *get* to kiss her now. But now that I've got permission, I'm hungry, insatiable, like a starving man who has just been offered a feast, and the feel of her lips beneath mine drives me fucking crazy.

As many times as I've imagined having her, I never imagined that Cade would be here too, his hands on her tits and his lips on her neck as she moans between the two of us.

"God, Dex," she gasps, clutching my shoulders when I let her come up for air for a second. "I need—"

"Me too," I growl as I dive in and kiss her again.

My tongue slants against hers possessively, letting her know without words that she's everything I've been waiting for.

"Fuck," Cade mutters from behind her. "I could watch you two all night."

I'm not usually a man who likes to share, and when I thought she was his and only his—at least for the duration—I was fighting my own demons. But it doesn't bother me at all to know that he's here too. Somehow, it feels right to be doing this with one of my best friends.

My cock throbs, trapped against her soft body as I fuck her mouth with my tongue, and when Sadie whimpers, I suddenly *am* jealous of Cade.

I'm jealous that he gets to watch.

I groan, ripping my mouth from hers, and turn her to face him. “Taste her.”

Cade grins at me over her head, then cups her jaw in both hands, his thumbs smoothing over her dimples, and dips down to kiss her.

Sadie makes the best sound I’ve ever heard, melting against him. I run my hands down her lush curves from behind as he starts to take her apart, sliding my hands up under the tiny crop top she’s wearing and then back down, tracing the dip of her waist and then squeezing those soft hips that made fucking her feel like sinking into a sensual cloud.

I move her blonde waves to the side and kiss the back of her neck.

She shivers, moaning, and Cade turns her back around to face me, smoothly lifting her top off as he does.

“Oh fuck,” I mutter as her breasts are freed. I cup them, running my thumbs over her nipples, then bend down for a taste.

“Dex,” she gasps, clutching my head. Then, a second later, she whispers, “*Cade.*”

I’ve got no idea what he did to her, but I fucking love the way it made her sound. I grin, kissing my way up her body as I slowly rise back to my feet. “Greedy girl.”

She flashes those dimples. “I really am.”

Then she gasps again, her lips falling open as Cade’s arms wrap around her from behind, one hand sliding down into the tiny holiday-themed shorts she’s wearing.

“Kiss me, Dex,” she begs as Cade starts to play with her clit. “God, keep kissing me.”

I do, passing her back and forth with Cade until we have her naked and panting. Soft and flushed. Warm and wet and begging to be fucked.

“Jesus, you’re addictive,” I groan, dipping my fingers inside her.

“That’s what I keep saying,” Cade chuckles as she closes her thighs around my hand, grinding against it as little whimpers fall from her lips.

Cade steps back, stripping down while I play with her, and once he tosses his clothes aside, I spin her back toward him and do the same.

Cade, Noah, and I once all fucked the same woman on a trip to Bangkok. Not on the same day though, and none of us knew she’d come on to all three of us until later.

We’ve also had a handful of group vacations where we ended up with separate women but made it hotter by keeping the party all in the same room.

But we’ve never shared like this.

Sadie is different. She matters, even if this is just a bit of temporary snowed-in madness. And even though I’ve never done anything like this before—never even considered that I might—sharing her is surprisingly smooth and easy since it’s with Cade. And since the two of them are like brothers to me, I won’t mind if Noah decides to get in on the action before the weather clears either. I’m sure as shit closer to them than I am to my own fuckhead of a brother. I trust these two in a way that I’ll probably never trust Parker, not after all the crap choices he’s made.

This choice though? Cade’s idea about heating up this holiday vacation by giving us all a free pass?

This idea is fucking genius.

“I need to get inside you,” I mutter when I almost can’t stand it anymore. “You feel so damn good. I need to fuck you again.”

Cade grins. “I told you she was addictive.”

“Well, you were right,” I say with a little growl in my voice, moving us all toward the bed. I tip Sadie’s chin up. “Are you down with letting us run this show, or do you have any requests?”

Sadie looks up at me through her lashes, and she's so damn beautiful that for a moment, I'm floored. Shocked and amazed that I finally get to have this, even just for a moment.

"I'm yours," she breathes out. She looks back over her shoulder at Cade. "Both of yours, for the duration. And as long as you make good on that promise..."

She's always been the sexiest woman I've ever seen, but that teasing grin and the joyful spark in her eyes could ruin me.

"I always make good on my promises."

I wasn't lying about needing to fuck her, and I *will* make good on that promise. But first, I need to taste her again. She's so fucking sweet that it really is addictive. I can't get enough of her.

"God, you're so sexy," Cade murmurs as she melts against me, running his hands over her shoulders and down her sides, then cupping her ass. "So damn gorgeous like this."

"So perfect," I whisper, kissing her neck before finally pulling back, breathing hard.

"Please," she whispers, reaching for me, then turning to look at Cade. She looks dazed and fuck-drunk already, and we haven't even had a chance to make her come yet.

"Get on the bed," Cade tells her, pushing her toward me. "We're going to give you everything you need."

I take her hand, pulling her down with me as I sit on the edge of the mattress and tug her onto my lap.

"So you're saying you're going to spoil me?" she asks us, breathless and grinning as she straddles me.

Cade laughs as he runs his hand down her hair, standing behind her. Then he wraps the strands in his fist and tilts her head back. "You were made to be spoiled."

He kisses her again, and my cock feels like fucking steel as I watch them together.

Sadie settles herself on top of my straining shaft, the little minx. She knows exactly what she's doing to me, especially when she starts to rub herself over my length, her hips rolling as Cade keeps kissing her.

I fill one hand with her lush ass and dip my fingers between her legs with the other, finding her clit again. I rub it, slicking myself up with her arousal. She gasps into Cade's mouth, shudders rolling through her body.

Cade chuckles, pulling away and brushing his fingers over her kiss-swollen lips. "Our girl likes what you're doing there, Dex."

I rub my slick fingers together, the intoxicating scent of her sex making me feel a little crazy. "She's gonna like it a hell of a lot more when I do it with my mouth."

I lift her off me as Cade makes a sound of approval and steps back, then I push her gently back onto the mattress. Cade and I kneel on either side of her, running our hands all over her body. She looks like a goddess, her hair spread out around her, her eyes half-closed with desire.

"Let us take care of you," I murmur, sliding my hand back between her legs.

"Dex, *please*," she whispers, writhing against my touch.

I push my fingers into her perfect heat, then lean down and take her nipple into my mouth, sucking and biting. She makes the most enticing sounds I've ever heard, and no matter how badly I want to taste her arousal on my tongue, it's hard to stop playing with her this way.

"Fuck," Cade groans, palming her other breast. "You're so fucking sensitive. So responsive. It's driving me fucking crazy."

"You're not the only one," she pants, arching her back as she pushes herself into our hands. "God, *more... please*."

"Tell us." I run my tongue over her nipple, then suck it hard, giving it to her a little rough, the way she seems to want it. "Tell us what you want."

“I want... I want you to make me come.”

“Yeah?” Cade slides his hand down her stomach, rubbing her clit, fast and hard, while I keep fucking her with my fingers. “Like this?”

“Yes!” she cries, bucking her hips as he touches her. “Oh fuck, oh god, so good.”

“Or would you rather have Dex’s tongue on your clit while I finger you?” he teases.

“Fuck,” I mutter, popping off her tit. Yeah, I fucking want that. I almost forgot. She’s like a buffet, and I’m the greedy fuck who wants all of it.

“Y-yes, please,” Sadie begs, stuttering as her breath gets choppy. “All of it. Touch me. Fuck me. Make me yours.”

Cade and I share a look, then move like it’s some kind of instinct, working perfectly together to please our woman.

I settle between her legs, and he moves up higher on the bed next to her, pulling her into his arms and kissing her deeply as I spread her thighs wider and stroke the impossibly soft skin there.

“Do you know how fucking sexy you are when you come?” Cade asks her, doing something that makes her whimper.

My dick aches at the sound, and I torture myself for one more moment, breathing her in before I bury my face in her wet pussy.

She tastes even better than I dreamed.

“*Dex*,” she gasps, bucking her hips.

I groan. The taste of her goes to my head, the scent of her arousal intoxicating. I lick and suck her, my fingers digging into her thighs as I hold her open, needing to go deeper.

Her inner walls tighten when I thrust my tongue inside, but I know what she really needs, so I latch onto her clit, sucking the sensitive bud into my mouth.

“Oh god, oh fuck,” she moans.

As promised, Cade slides his hand down her thigh and starts fingering her while I eat her out like a man possessed. And goddamn, it feels incredible to work together to drive her crazy like this.

I can't wait to see how far she'll go.

How much she'll let us do to her.

"That's it, beautiful," Cade says, his voice rough with need. "You're so fucking close, aren't you? Dex is getting you there fast. Are you going to keep making those sweet sounds for us? Let him taste all your pleasure. He's earned it, hasn't he? Is he treating you right? Spoiling you like we promised?"

She moans and nods, her body shaking with pleasure as she gasps out something unintelligible.

My dick aches, but I ignore it, drunk on her as her hips buck again.

Cade pins her in place, holding her still for me as she starts to fall apart.

I look up and meet his eyes, and something passes between us. I feel so in sync with him it's almost uncanny, and just like he promised Sadie a second ago, we both know that our girl needs more. She deserves to be spoiled. She deserves everything.

I lift my face for a moment, my voice getting hoarse. "Give it to her."

Cade nods as I dive back in and spear her with my tongue again. He urges her up to her elbows so her upper body is raised, and she turns her head when he kneels up on mattress beside her, her mouth at the perfect height to take his cock

"Open for me, dream girl," he says, feeding his pierced dick to her inch by inch when she does. "That's it. Fuck. Just like that."

He starts off with shallow strokes, gliding over her tongue gently, each thrust going a little deeper.

"She wants to be spoiled," I remind him, pushing her thighs open wider. "Quit fucking around and give her what she

needs.”

Sadie’s mouth is too full for her to tell him I’m right, but the hungry sound she makes is all the encouragement he needs.

Cade chuckles, then follows my suggestion and starts fucking her face.

She fucking loves it, and when my tongue lashes her clit again, her back arches, her arousal soaking my tongue.

“Fuck yes,” Cade growls, his hands fisting in her hair as he uses her mouth. “Make her come, Dex. Make her fucking come so that pussy is nice and wet and ready for your cock.”

He’s so deep that I can see her struggling to take him all, but she’s working valiantly to do it. Her cheeks are wet, tears leaking out of her eyes as she chokes on him, gazing up at him like he’s a fucking god.

This is what she’s always needed, to be worshipped and used and fucking adored.

My brother did a shit job of it, but Cade and I can keep going all night.

“Oh fuck,” Cade grits out as Sadie’s body starts to tremble, an orgasm finally overtaking her.

His eyes are hooded, and his hands tangle in her hair as an intense look of strain crosses his face. She’s gorgeous like this, and her mouth must feel too fucking good. He’s clearly trying to hold on to his control, to drag this out because he doesn’t want it to end.

Well, I can help with that.

I lift her up, pulling her away from him, and his cock slides out of her mouth with a wet sound.

“On your hands and knees, kitten,” I command.

DEX

SADIE'S EYES widen at my words, but doesn't give me any of her signature sass right now. Instead, she immediately follows my instructions, dropping down to all fours on the mattress.

Positioning her so that her ass is facing Cade, I kneel in front of her and slide my cock into her mouth, groaning as she looks up at me with her big blue-green eyes.

God, she's so fucking sexy.

She moans greedily as I thrust into her mouth, her fingers digging into my thighs to pull me closer. Cade moves in behind her, and her moan vibrates around my shaft as he pushes into her.

"Oh, fuck, that's good," he grunts, meeting my gaze once his hips are flush with her ass. "You got this pussy wet and ready for me."

"Then use it," I growl, fucking her face as he gives me a sharp nod and starts to fuck her pussy in the same rhythm.

"Good girl," I praise as she sucks me harder. "Fuck, that's so good. You look beautiful like this."

Her eyelids flutter, her face flushed and sexy and wrecked, and she does something sinful with her tongue to show me how much she appreciates the words of affirmation.

"Fucking Christ." Cade's hips buck as he drives into her like a man possessed. "Your pussy is so tight. So wet. Every single time. I keep thinking I'm dreaming, but it really is that good."

His hands move from her hips to her ass, and he kneads it as he fucks her, then spreads her cheeks wide, staring down at her. Sadie's moans are driving me closer and closer to the edge, but it's Cade, that fucker, who almost makes my control snap before I'm ready.

"And what about this sweet little hole here?" he asks, doing something with his fingers that makes Sadie gasp around me, her whole body jolting as if she touched a live wire. "Is this off limits during our little snowcation, or are we invited to use the backdoor too?"

"Fuck," I groan at the thought of taking her that way.

The question makes a visible shiver run through Sadie's body.

"I think she likes that idea," I tell Cade, pushing some of her hair back off her forehead as I grin down at her.

She pulls back, letting my cock slip from her mouth. "I love all of Cade's ideas," she says, panting. "Nothing is off limits. We've all got a free pass."

She swallows my shaft down again, the perfect heat of her mouth ripping a curse from mine, and Cade leans over her back, nuzzling her behind the ear as he slows his motion and fucks her long and slow for a moment.

"Good answer," he whispers in her ear, kissing her there. "But Dex and I are going to make you come again before we talk about all the ways we'll take you up on that. Are you ready?"

She makes a plaintive sound, her pupils blown wide.

"I think that's a yes."

"That's definitely a yes," Cade says, straightening back up and gripping her hips.

We all groan at once as he picks up his rhythm, fucking into her hard and fast.

Sadie's body starts to tremble, and I can tell she's getting close again.

“He’s fucking you good, isn’t he?” I croon, tugging her hair a little as she swallows around me over and over, her face completely wrecked and even more beautiful in the flickering candlelight because of it. “He’s got you nice and full, and he’s going to blow his load in a second.”

“Fuck yeah, I am,” he growls, his voice strained. “And all you’ve gotta do to earn my cum is let yourself go, dream girl. Let me feel you milk it out of me. Show me how much you love my cock.”

His filthy words sends her over the edge, and it takes everything in me not to come right along with her as Cade fucks her through her orgasm.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck,” he grits out, his face contorting with pleasure. But then he jerks back, wrapping a hand around his length as he pulls out of her. “Not yet,” he says, meeting my eyes. “Your turn first. Fuck her.”

I pull out of her mouth, then lean down and kiss her hard. “Do you have any idea how fucking perfect you are?”

Her eyes are heavy-lidded, a sated, gorgeous expression on her face. “Not as perfect as I’ll be with your cock back inside me,” she purrs, just like the kitten I’ve always known she is.

It startles a laugh out of me, and I kiss her again for that, pulling her up to her knees. Then I turn her around to face Cade.

She drapes her arms over his shoulders, and I slide deep into her, the feel of it pushing my control to the limit.

I curse, and Cade and I share a look over her head. “I know,” he says. Then he grunts, his eyes snapping down to hers as a wicked grin lifts his lips. “Naughty girl.”

She’s jerking him off, and he retaliates by fingering her clit as he kisses her hard.

They both moan, and my balls tighten up so hard and fast that I almost shoot before I even start fucking her.

“Fucking hell,” I grit out, going still as I try to regain some measure of control.

“Problem, Dex?” Cade jokes, panting hard as he grins at me. “I thought I had that pussy nice and primed for you. Aren’t you going to use it?”

I flip him off, then groan as I push even deeper into her. “I need you to come on my cock,” I growl, pulling back, then doing it again. And again. “I need to feel you.”

“Please,” Sadie moans, letting her head fall back on my shoulder as I start fucking her in earnest. “Harder, Dex. Wreck me.”

“Oh, I fucking plan to.”

Cade pulls her hand off his shaft and grips the back of her neck. “We both will,” he promises, staring down into her eyes as the last of my control snaps and I start driving into her like a beast. “Take what Dex gives you. He’s gonna fill you up, and then I’m going to make a mess of you too. I’m going to get you... fucking... *filthy*.”

He grunts the last few words, thrusting against her, and when she shudders and moans, I realize he’s using her clit like a fuck toy. Rubbing off against her. Using her slick arousal to lube up his shaft as he grinds against her pussy while I fill it up from behind with my cock.

“Come for us,” I growl as she cries out, her walls clenching around me. “Do it.”

“Oh my god, oh fuck,” she gasps, shattering between us.

Cade groans, his mouth crashing down on hers and his body stuttering against her in an unmistakable rhythm.

He’s coming too. He’s drenching her clit with ropes of his cum while she writhes between us, and the feel of her arching against me finally sends me over the edge too.

“*Sadie!*” I shout, slamming into her one last time before I empty myself inside her, panting as I clutch her hips and ride it out.

Fuck, maybe *I’m* the one who’s going to be wrecked.

I let my forehead rest on the top of her head as my hips keep pumping. The motion turns slower and lazier as the

white-hot intensity of the orgasm she ripped out of me starts to mellow into something else.

“So fucking good,” Cade murmurs after a bit, massaging his cum into her soft stomach. “Jesus, you look perfect like this. Covered in me. Filled by Dex.”

She laughs, low and sweet. “Yeah? You’re saying you like me messy?”

The three of us finally collapse onto the bed, panting and spent.

“Fuck yeah, I do.” He tugs her close and kisses the top of her head. “It probably makes me a caveman, but...”

He shrugs, and she smiles. “I like you being a caveman,” she whispers, tilting her head up for a soft kiss, then turning to me to get another.

I grin, pulling her into my arms as Cade rolls off the bed. He heads toward the en suite bathroom, probably to get something to clean her up with.

Which is a shame. I kind of agree with him. I like her messy too.

Luckily, it’s still snowing outside, so there will be time to dirty her up again.

“You okay?” I murmur. “That wasn’t too much?”

“I’m more than okay,” she whispers back, snuggling into my chest. “Spoiling me like that will never be too much.” She peeks up at me with her dimples showing. “And you two did promise me more, didn’t you? Because I could get used to being spoiled for Christmas.”

Cade comes back with a warm, damp washcloth and a towel. “You will be. I promise, we’ll all be doing a lot of *new things* before our time here is up.”

I’m not sure if he’s talking about taking her ass or something else. Something about the way he says it makes it seem like it’s some kind of inside joke. Still, I don’t feel excluded. Maybe because with Sadie in my arms after all these years, everything feels so fucking right.

Once we're all cleaned up, Cade blows out the candles, then crawls back into the bed on her other side. My body feels more relaxed than I can remember it being in forever, and the three of us talk quietly about nothing much for a moment or two, Sadie's soft body the sun we're both orbiting around. Before long, Cade's breathing evens out, one of his arms hooked around Sadie's waist. Then he lets out a quiet snore.

I snort. "I admit, the candles were a nice touch, but I think he's dropping the ball now on romancing you."

"I think it's cute," she whispers back with a soft laugh.

"If you say so." I grin, shaking my head but keeping my voice low too. "Cade has always been like that. Drifts off as soon as his head touches the pillow."

She smiles back. "I've noticed."

Right. Of course she has, because they've already been sleeping together.

Now that my dick is satisfied for the night, I wait for the jealousy to kick in. It was my constant companion back when she was sleeping with my brother, but I don't feel even a twinge of it right now.

Huh. I really am good with sharing her like this. In fact, I think I might even prefer it.

She reaches up to rest her hand against my jaw. "You're thinking too hard when you could be kissing me."

Her fingers scratch at my stubble, and I turn my head to kiss them. "If you think I've got any blood in the brain left to think with, you don't realize how fucking good that just was."

She laughs softly, her teeth a flash of white in the dark as she grins. "Oh, I think I have some idea."

I capture her hand and turn it over, kissing her palm. She hums a contented little sound, then rests her head against my chest, making my heart thud.

This isn't shit I imagined, and I've imagined Sadie Evans in my bed more times than I can count. In my bed, bent over the back of the couch, up against the wall. But as I stroke her

hair, the winter silence wrapping around us like a blanket, I realize that as amazing as fucking her is, I wouldn't trade this cuddly part either.

It's... nice.

Fuck, it's more than nice. And it's not going to last, so I don't want to waste it.

"Kitten..." I start.

I literally feel her smile against my chest, and that makes me smile in the dark too.

"Shh, I'm sleeping."

I tip her chin up. "No, you're not."

Her dimples look like shadows in the darkened room. "How would you know?"

She's teasing, but I tell her the truth anyway. "I see you, kitten. I've always seen you."

I could never look away, and I sure as hell won't start now.

SADIE

I'VE ALWAYS SEEN YOU.

Dex's words make something sweetly painful tighten my throat, and I swallow hard.

"Why didn't you ever say anything, back when I was with Parker?" I ask, the darkness adding a quiet intimacy to our whispered conversation that makes me feel braver than I might otherwise be.

Dex sighs. "He's my brother. I couldn't. You know that."

I bite my lip. I do know. Despite Dex's frequent prickliness, he's not actually an asshole. "Just tell me it wasn't my imagination. The first time we met?"

He pushes my hair behind my ear. "It wasn't. I felt... something," he admits. "But you and Parker—"

"Were never great," I cut in. I'm not about to shit talk his brother to him, but I'm also not going to pretend that the relationship I had with Parker was some epic love story. "I know it would have been a dick move to have done something about this, about you and me, when we first met. But just for the record, you were right."

Maybe I *am* shit talking a little bit, but it's the truth.

Dex laughs quietly. "You're saying I'm doing better than my dickhead of a brother at keeping you happy?"

"You're the one who told me you would."

He said something to that effect earlier, when our emotions snapped in the pantry and led to all of this.

He chuckles again, then closes the barely-there distance between us and kisses me so softly that it makes my chest ache. “He never treated you right. I fucking hated it.”

“Our love life was pretty shitty. He never really gave me what I needed.”

“Why did you stay with him?”

I shrug a little. “I mean, why do any of us make bad choices? I think it’s hard to demand to be treated right when you don’t know what that looks like, you know?”

He snorts. “Anna never had that problem. She was full of demands.”

“Your ex-wife?”

I never met her since Dex was divorced before I met Parker, but the family made references to her occasionally, and honestly, the impression I got of the woman was never great. Apparently, she often seemed to be more interested in finding new ways to spend Dex’s money than in spending time with her husband, as if she loved his wealth more than the man himself.

He sighs, then kisses me again, hard and fast. “Yeah, but I shouldn’t have brought her up. She has no place in this bed.”

“Well, technically, neither does your brother.”

“Fuck, I was always so jealous of him. And pissed that he never seemed to appreciate you properly. When you two broke up...”

“What?”

“Best and worst thing ever. Best, because he didn’t fucking deserve you, but worst—”

“Because I lost the Blaines.”

“Not exactly what I was going to say, but really? I always thought you and Parker avoided our family gatherings.”

I roll my eyes. “That was all him. I tried to get him to say yes to as many family events as possible. Getting to know your family, what family *can* be, was definitely one of the perks of dating him,” I admit. “Do you remember that last Christmas?”

He hesitates for a moment, then nods, the movement a dark disturbance of shadows in the quiet room. “We both snuck downstairs at my parents’ house at, what, three in the morning?”

“Great minds think alike.”

That was the year his niece, Maddie, was seven years old, and Pixie Patch Pets were all the rage. I thought I’d scored the last one available in the stores, but apparently Dex found a way to get his hands on the sold-out toy of the season too.

Parker thought Maddie was too young to buy something so overpriced for, that she wouldn’t appreciate it, so I bought and wrapped it in secret, labeling it as a gift from Santa.

Dex had the same idea, and we literally bumped into each other in the dark in front of his parents’ Christmas tree. It was one of the few times that we were in the same room without sniping at each other, and there was a loaded moment—after we decided to call the duplicate gifts “twins” and rewrap them in one package—when it felt like we could have kissed.

But we didn’t. Of course we didn’t. And I convinced myself that it was all in my imagination. But now...

“I almost kissed you,” he says after a moment. “Just said fuck it, and did what I wanted.”

“Why didn’t...” I start, then shake my head. “Never mind. I know why you didn’t. And even though my relationship with Parker wasn’t great, I felt guilty for even wanting you to.” I hesitate, then ask what I really want to know. “But if you felt all of that, the same connection I did, why didn’t you ever contact me after he and I broke up?”

He groans quietly, and behind me, Cade shifts, muttering something in his sleep before settling back down. I’m his little spoon right now, and somehow, it’s a comfort that makes me

feel bold and confident enough to have this unexpectedly intimate conversation with Dex.

“I wanted to,” Dex admits after a moment. “You have no idea how many times I thought about it. But it would have felt like I was betraying Parker.”

“Seriously? Then what are we doing now?”

He snorts. “There’s a difference between going after his ex a few days after things end, versus a few years later.”

I grin. “Is that what you’re doing? Going after me?”

“I wish,” he mutters, making my heart speed up. But then he sighs. “It wasn’t just the fact that you were Parker’s ex that stopped me. It’s that ultimately, I know I can’t treat you any better than he could.”

I laugh, but then realize he’s being serious.

“Dex, you do realize you just made me come so hard that I still can’t feel my toes?”

He chuckles. “Yeah, well, I can definitely treat you better than he did in bed, from the sound of it. Fuck, if you were mine, I’d take care of you so damn well.”

The growl that enters his voice makes my stomach flutter. “Oh?” I tease, a little breathless. “Tell me about it.”

With the cloud cover keeping any moonlight from making it into the room, and the room dark now that all the candles are out, I can barely see him. Still, I swear I can almost *feel* the look he pins me with.

“If you were mine, I’d make sure you went to sleep boneless and sated after coming on my cock every night, and woke up every morning with my tongue on your clit.” He slips his thigh between my legs, teasing me with his fingertips. “I’d fucking devour you. I’d keep you so well satisfied that you wouldn’t have time for any worries. Hell, you might even have to leave that office job you hate, since I’d have you coming so many times every day that you’d barely be able to walk afterward.”

My whole body flushes. He's already done that. He and Cade, both. But somehow, I want him again. I've always had a healthy sex drive, even when I haven't always had a partner to fulfill it, but something about these men—or maybe just this little stolen window of time while we're all snowed in together—feels different. I feel free and bold and sexy in a way that I never have before.

Honestly, I'm hoping I *won't* be able to walk by the time the storm clears.

But then Dex's voice turns more serious, and he cups my face instead of ravishing me. "That's just in the bedroom though. I have no doubt I'd make you very happy there—"

"You already have," I cut in, giving him a smile as his fingers stroke my dimples. "And in the pantry too."

He laughs, then continues with his earlier thought. "But I'm just not built for relationships. I'm not interested in settling down again. That's the real reason I didn't try to track you down once you kicked Parker to the curb. I tried the whole marriage thing once—"

"With Anna?"

He nods, a motion I feel more than see. "Yeah. You deserve the whole package, and I just don't have it in me."

I don't quite know what he means, and I can't deny the pang of disappointment I feel even though I know that what we're doing right now was never meant to be more than temporary. Still, I can't help myself. I press him a little.

"What went wrong between you two?"

"Everything," he says with a sharp laugh that has Cade mumbling in his sleep behind me again. Dex lowers his voice. "She was my high school sweetheart, and we married as soon as she graduated."

"So you were, what, eighteen?"

"She was. I was nineteen. Back east in my first year of college, so she moved out to join me."

I bite my lip, knowing it's not my place to speculate. That feels awfully young to enter into a serious relationship though.

“We lasted five years before I realized that I was trying to salvage something that wasn't salvageable.”

“What do you mean?”

He's quiet for long enough that I almost think he's not going to answer, which is fair, I guess. It's not actually my business, no matter how mind-blowing the sex is or how close to him I feel in this moment.

But then he speaks in a low voice.

“We should never have gotten married,” he murmurs. “I thought we were in love, obviously, or I wouldn't have proposed. But now I'm not sure that's really what it was. After our wedding, things started to fall apart. Nothing I did made her happy, and I couldn't find a way to fix it. I would've given her the world, and I tried to, but... it was never enough. In the end, I felt like I was just trying to buy her love, like that's all she wanted from me, and it ate me up inside. When we divorced, I decided that was it for me. I'm not cut out for long-term relationships. Not cut out for marriage.”

“I'm sorry,” I whisper, my chest aching. “That sounds really hard.”

He's beating himself up, and even though he's not perfect, I know damn well that relationships aren't one-sided. He shouldn't bear the blame for the fact that things didn't work out between them, and if she made him feel like she only valued him for his money, that's on her, not him.

I snuggle a little closer to him, trying to ignore the slight pang of disappointment in my chest as I process the last part of what he said. That he's not cut out for anything long-term.

It's silly to even be disappointed by that fact, when our whole arrangement is about no-strings sex. I shouldn't be expecting anything more anyway, so the fact that Dex has made it clear it could never happen shouldn't matter.

So I brush aside the strange sense of longing and wrap my hand around the back of Dex's neck, pulling him in for a kiss.

"Well, don't worry. I promise not to fall in love with you," I tease when we break apart. "No matter how hard you make me come."

His hand tightens on my hip slightly, an almost unconscious seeming gesture that I can't quite read, but then he laughs the way I hoped he would.

"Catch me up on your family," I whisper, yawning a little.

He does, then asks what I've been up to too. I start to fall asleep while trying to tell him a funny story about the time Luna and I accidentally set each other up for a blind date with the same man.

Just before I drift off completely, I feel him kiss the tip of my nose.

SADIE

I'M NOT sure what it is that wakes me up in the middle of the night, but if there's anything better than waking up cozy on a dark winter's night, sandwiched between two men who've already warned me that they intend to spoil me, I don't know what it is.

Then I hear a soft noise from outside my room, and I realize that I actually can imagine something better: waking up in bed with *three* men.

My body feels warm and languid. The heavy weight of Cade's arm draped around my waist and the reassuring, steady thump of Dex's heartbeat under my ear are both luxuries I'm not likely to get in the future, and I'd be crazy to move.

But then that muffled sound comes again, and my curiosity gets the best of me. I slip out of bed, careful not to wake either man, and tiptoe down the hall after throwing on a short robe.

I stop outside Noah's room. I war with myself for a moment, wanting to respect his privacy but also wanting to know what's happening in there.

"Fuck it," I whisper when I hear the sound that woke me again. This close to Noah's door, it's clear that it's him, and he doesn't sound happy.

I push the door open. There must be a break in the storm outside, because moonlight streams into Noah's room. His covers are flung off and I'm definitely not ogling his dressed-only-in-a-pair-of-tight-boxer-briefs body, because his face isn't relaxed in sleep. It's contorted, almost as if he's in pain,

and another of those muffled sounds comes out of his mouth from between gritted teeth.

He's having a nightmare.

I'm not sure if I should wake him up or not, but my feet don't wait for me to decide. They're already taking me toward his bed before I have time to worry about whether or not it's the right thing to do. And then I don't have to decide. Noah wakes up with a start just as I reach the side of his bed, his hand shooting out and yanking me toward him.

"Ooph."

"Sadie?" he rumbles, his voice thick with sleep and confusion.

I press myself back up, pushing off against his insanely ripped chest. "Hi. Yes, it's me. I'm sorry. You seemed... upset."

He finally helps me get upright, seating me on the edge of his mattress as he swings his legs around and sits up too.

I bite my lip to keep from babbling anything more when he stares at me like he's wondering what the heck I'm doing here. Which, to be fair, is a good question.

"Was it a nightmare?" I whisper, fisting my hands in my lap to keep from reaching out to comfort him. "Are you okay?"

We had a moment. Well, maybe two if you count both his hallway voyeurism and the kiss I gave him that he definitely returned after poker. But that doesn't mean he wants me here in his bedroom in the middle of the night. He doesn't even know about the deal Cade proposed for all of us... yet.

After a moment, he looks away and scrubs a hand over his face. "Go back to sleep," he says gruffly. "I'm fine."

I cock my head to the side. I'm not so sure that's true. He looks more tense and closed off than "fine." And while his nightmares aren't my business, maybe I'd like them to be.

Screw it. I reach out and touch him, laying my hand on his arm and stroking it softly. "Does this happen often?"

“Random women falling into my bed in the middle of the night?” he asks so dryly that I’m not sure if he’s teasing me or annoyed.

“No, I mean the nightmares,” I clarify.

Instead of answering, he stands abruptly, making my hand fall away.

“Sorry.” I bite my lip, feeling suddenly a bit awkward. “Should I... go?”

By the time I get the last word out, he’s lit a few candles near the head of his bed, and he turns back to me with an unreadable expression. “If you’re staying, we might as well have some light.”

I bite back a smile. He definitely could have kicked me out, and he didn’t, which means he must be okay with me staying. That thought gives me the courage to press him a little.

“So, *does* it happen often?” I ask quietly. “The bad dreams?”

I’m still sitting on the bed, Noah standing above me, tapping the lighter he used against his palm. He seems unsettled, and I almost think he’s going to tell me to leave after all.

But after a moment, he shrugs, laying the lighter down next to one of the candles. He settles on the bed, leaning back against the headboard with more muscles on display than should be allowed, and I scoot around and tuck my knees under me, facing him.

“Yeah, I get them sometimes,” he finally admits, his voice still gruff. “It’s no big deal.”

He’s such a liar. I can tell the dream is still clinging to him a bit.

When we first met, I might have left it alone and let him push me away, but now, I don’t want to do that. It’s not just because I’m attracted to him, although I definitely am. Noah

has done nothing but made me feel safe, not to mention literally saving me, ever since I arrived.

If I can return the favor, I want to. I want to be there for him.

“I used to have a recurring nightmare when I was a kid,” I admit, even though the memory is embarrassing. The fear was real at the time though. “It always started with a real memory, which made it scarier, you know? Like, I wasn’t sure at first that I was dreaming.”

Noah’s brow furrows. “What was the memory?”

“Um.” I laugh, rolling my eyes at myself. “Well, my mom was on a date—”

“With your dad?”

I shake my head. “Nah. He left when I was young, and Mom kind of left too. Or at least, it felt that way. She was always looking for someone else to love instead of looking after me.”

She still is, but I’m not here to dump all my issues on him, so I skip past that part.

“Anyway, this one particular night I decided to stay up until she got home, streaming movies to stay awake. She was out later than I could keep my eyes open, and I fell asleep in front of this movie with a giant marshmallow monster terrorizing the city.”

He frowns. “Ghostbusters?”

I nod, blushing. “Yup. That damn Stay Puft creature scared the crap out of me. I know it’s ridiculous, but it’s still true.”

Maybe it’s because on the night I’m telling him about, I finally woke up—my neck sore from the weird angle where I’d fallen asleep on the couch—and realized that my mom still wasn’t home despite the sun being up, because she thought she’d met The One and decided that was more important than getting me to school on time. In those nightmares, the marshmallow monster wasn’t chasing me or even threatening me.

He was taking everyone who loved me away.

I shake my head and push away that part of the memory. “I woke up in a cold sweat for *years* afterward.”

Noah gives me one of his inscrutable looks. “So those s’mores earlier must have been kind of traumatic.”

That startles a laugh out of me, and I grin at him, twisting my fingers together just to keep from reaching for him.

“If you think that’s bad, then I probably shouldn’t admit that I also used to have a fear of kittens.”

His eyebrows shoot up. “Today really has been a trial for you, then,” he murmurs, the tension that’s been present in his body ever since he awoke from his nightmare easing a bit.

“I think I’ll survive the invasion of Mrs. Claws.”

“Death by cuteness is a real danger,” he says, nodding seriously even as a flicker of amusement dances in his eyes. “We should all be on the lookout for the signs.”

“Oh, I think the signs are already clear.” I grin at him. “And we’re all screwed.”

He snorts, shaking his head, but he’s definitely smiling a little now. He also seems to be catching on to my intentions here, and after I tell him a few more embarrassing stories about myself, he finally starts to open up a little too.

“How old were you?” I ask as he starts telling me about the first time his dad let him out of the kitchen to wait tables at the original Keystone Culinary.

Noah shrugs, a small smile playing around his mouth. “I don’t know. Maybe eight or so? And when I say Dad ‘let’ me serve them, I mean I basically volunteered to help when he wasn’t looking.”

I grin. “How did that work out for you?”

He snorts, shaking his head with a fond look on his face. “For me? Great. For the couple on their first date whose water glasses I decided to be helpful and refill?”

“Oh no,” I say, already giggling a little based solely on the expression on his face.

“Everything started off fine. I could tell they were both nervous, so I was trying to be the best waiter ever and impress them with the idea that they’d come to the right place.

“I asked them how the service was and if they needed anything and basically, looking back, probably annoyed the shit out of them when what they really wanted to do was just focus on each other. But that wasn’t what makes it memorable.”

It’s hard to tell in the candlelight, but I swear on my audiobook account that Noah’s cheeks turn a little pink.

“Tell me,” I prod, nudging him with my shoulder.

Noah closes his eyes and shakes his head. “Dad realized I’d left the kitchen, which was a big no back then, and when I saw him come out to find me, I...”

“You what? Oh my god, you can’t leave me hanging!”

He scrubs a hand over his face and grins at me. “I got distracted as I was pouring, and missed the cup. Ice cold water, all over his lap.”

My mouth drops open in a perfect “O,” then I burst out laughing.

“You did *not*.”

“Would I still remember it all these years later if I hadn’t?” Noah asks, arching a brow.

His eyes are lit up, so I know it couldn’t have ended *too* badly.

“Thankfully, the guy started laughing about as hard as you just did, because, let’s face it, it was pretty hilarious. His girl started laughing too, and before my dad made it over to me, the whole restaurant was in stitches.”

“Including your dad?”

“Yeah,” he says, a look of nostalgia on his face. “Not in front of them. He comped them the meal of course and made it

right, but once we got back to the kitchen, when I thought he'd let me have it, he finally cracked up too."

"He sounds like an incredible man."

Noah nods. "The real reason I remember that so well wasn't even because of how I fucked up. It was because of how he handled it. He told me he was proud that I had the impulse to help, and that good service wasn't about being perfect, but about making people smile."

My chest gets warm, and the far-off look in his eyes makes me want to be closer to him.

"Your dad sounds like he was pretty wise," I say softly. "I know you told me you wanted to expand Keystone Culinary as a tribute to him..."

I hesitate, biting my lip.

He tucks me into his side, and I rest my head on his shoulder. I'm not quite sure when I moved closer to him, or if it's just something that happened mutually. And I don't want to ruin the mood between us, but losing his father was obviously just as big of a part of shaping Noah into the man he is as the lessons his dad was able to teach him while he was still alive. And I want to know Noah. Now, more than ever.

"Can I ask what happened?" I venture softly.

For a moment, he tenses up again, but then lets it go with a gusty sigh, rubbing his hand over his hair. "Well, he died... but that wasn't the worst of it."

It's my turn to tense up, and a thousand horrifying scenarios flash through my mind in the brief seconds before Noah goes on.

"The worst part," he continues softly, one big hand stroking my hair, over and over, almost like he's unconsciously comforting himself with it, "was how fucking stupid it was. How *preventable*."

He spits out the last word as if it's almost a curse.

"Dad was on the roof, just doing standard maintenance. Fixing a weak spot he'd found." He pauses, and when he goes

on, his voice is even more gravelly. “He always liked to take care of that shit himself to save a buck or two, which is the same reason he always gave for not replacing the rusted-out ladder he was using that day. Not gonna lie, money *was* a little tight growing up, but a good one would have cost him, what, a couple hundred dollars?”

He shakes his head, and my heart goes out to him. I can easily see how that kind of loss might have driven him to not just honor his dad’s memory, but make sure he did it in a way that made sure money would never be an issue again.

“I’m so sorry you lost him.”

“Me too,” he says after a minute. “It’s not going to happen again though. Prevention is even better than maintenance. I always look for the weak spot before it can form now.”

“You take care of people, don’t you? You look out for things, like checking around the lodge’s perimeter every night, to keep us all safe.”

He shrugs, and when I tilt my head to look up at him, he looks a little sheepish. “I know it’s a lot.”

I turn and sit up a little, resting a hand on his chest and looking into his eyes. “Some people leave the ones they’re supposed to care about, Noah. But not you. You stay and make sure nothing goes wrong. I don’t think that’s a lot, I think...”

My cheeks heat up, and I stop myself from saying what I really think. I like him too much, maybe I like all of them a bit too much, for what this little snowed-in interlude is meant to be.

I clear my throat. “Is that what you were dreaming about? The past?”

I mean his dad, but I’m not going to be crass and say so.

Noah shrugs. “Not that, really. Just...” He lets out an explosive breath, scrubbing his hand over his face again in a mannerism I’m already coming to recognize. It’s like a tic when his emotions swell up and he needs a moment. “Those nightmares, they’re not really about any one thing in particular, but they’re always the same anyway. They’re

always about losing control. About me failing to stop an accident that could have been prevented. About something I didn't see coming, hurting people I should have kept safe."

He's outwardly calm. Stoic even. But my hand is still on his chest, and I can feel his heart pumping wildly.

"That must be exhausting," I say softly.

He stares at me for a moment like he's not sure what I mean. Like he's honestly never stopped to think about taking care of himself while he's so busy taking care of others.

Then he blinks, giving me a small smile. "Yeah, I guess it is, a bit."

He covers my hand with his, holding it against his chest as his heartbeat settles into something strong and steady. The flickering candlelight softens his usually intense gaze, making the dark blue look like a night sky.

I feel intimately connected to him, neither of us looking away, and even though I've been attracted to him from the first moment I met him, it still takes me by surprise when I realize how turned on I am.

I lick my lips, my heart starting to race and an electric sense of anticipation prickling over my skin.

Noah saw Cade and me in the hallway. He kissed me back in front of the fire. And I know damn well that there's no way he didn't hear Dex fucking me in the pantry.

"You know that I've been hooking up with your friends," I whisper, curling my fingers into the solid warmth of his chest. "I've slept with both of them, and they've... they've shared me."

Noah's blue eyes go almost entirely black as his pupils expand, his muscles flexing for a moment under my hand. That, and the rapidly filling bulge in his tight underwear, are the only outward signs that he's affected by what I'm saying.

His voice stays calm. "I heard."

"Did you want to join in?"

He looks away, a muscle in his jaw twitching, and I reach up and turn his head back to face me.

“I wanted you to,” I admit, my pulse racing. “We have an agreement. It’s just sex, just for fun, no strings attached while we’re all snowed in together.”

His eyes are literally smoldering as he holds my gaze. “I know.”

“Cade suggested it,” I whisper. “The power went out before we could talk to you about it, but you’re included in that, if you want to be.”

Noah doesn’t say anything, but he also doesn’t look away.

The intensity of the way he’s staring at me has heat pooling in my core, and I’m suddenly very aware that I’ve got nothing on under the short silk robe I grabbed. My breath quickens, and I squeeze my thighs together to try to tame the ache between them.

“I want you to be included,” I admit when he still doesn’t say anything, my stomach swooping. “Everything about this trip is so far outside of what I would normally do, but it’s been amazing. I don’t know when I’ll ever have a chance like this again, and I couldn’t live with myself if I didn’t put it all out there, you know? I think there could be something between us. I know I’m attracted to you, and if you feel the same way, then... this is our chance to explore that.”

The rough shadow of a beard on his well-defined jawline is just long enough to tickle my palm, sending little shivers through me as he keeps staring at me. I want to feel it between my legs. I want him to mark me up with beard burn *everywhere*.

But he doesn’t say yes. Doesn’t respond at *all*. He stays silent for long enough that I start to worry I’ve totally overstepped.

I swallow, my hand trembling against his face. Maybe I misread him completely. Maybe I’ve started to feel *too* bold, between the way the other men have spoiled me and my own explicit fantasies.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper, dropping my hand as I start to backpedal. “I don’t actually know what I’m doing here. It was a stupid suggestion, but I don’t want things to be weird between us now. Can we both just forget that I—”

Noah catches my hand before I can pull it all the way back to my lap, turning it over and flattening it against his chest where I had it before.

He holds it against him, his heart still thumping, but faster now.

Then he grabs the back of my neck and hauls me against him, his mouth crashing down on mine like a wrecking ball.

SADIE

HEAT EXPLODES BETWEEN US, and Noah groans from deep in his chest as he yanks me onto his lap and incinerates all my doubts about whether or not he wants this too.

He kissed me back, that first time. He held me, cradled my face, and took control in a way that left no doubt he was into it.

This is different.

This is *fire*.

This is Noah kissing me like he's going to die tomorrow and has to get a whole lifetime's worth in the connection of our lips.

"Tell me more about this agreement," he says, cradling the back of my head as he tilts my head back and kisses his way down my throat. "It's just sex?"

"Yes," I gasp.

"And just for now? While we're all snowed in?" He asks before biting gently on my collarbone, his length swelling under my ass.

"*Yes.*"

I clutch at his shoulders as he goes from biting to sucking, the sharp pull of his mouth shooting heat straight to my core.

I moan, and he pulls back, rubbing a thumb over the tender spot with a look of pure male satisfaction on his face that tells me he definitely left a mark.

He looks up, pinning me in place with a piercing gaze. “This blizzard won’t last much longer,” he growls. “So if that’s all we get, we’d better make it count.”

Then he flips me onto my back, leaving me breathless.

I have a healthy sense of self-esteem. I know I’m not model thin, but I’ve learned to stay away from men who try to make me feel bad about my size. And sometimes, like with Dex and Cade, I hit the jackpot and end up in bed with men who seem to truly appreciate it.

But no one, before Noah, has ever actually made me feel *dainty*.

“Fuck, you’re beautiful,” he mutters, spreading me out the way he wants me.

He kneels above me, parting the robe I’m wearing and running his hands appreciatively over my curves as he eats me up with his eyes.

I arch into his touch, biting my lip. His hands are big enough that for the first time in my life, my abundant breasts are completely covered when he palms them.

“*Noah.*”

His eyes darken at the sound of his name, and he leans down and sucks one of my nipples into his mouth like he’s trying to eat me alive.

I instinctively reach for his head. He keeps his hair a little longer than his two friends do, and I want to bury my fingers in it and hold him right where he is—but he doesn’t let me. Instead, he captures my hands and pins them over my head without any interruption to the sinful things his mouth is doing.

“Oh god,” I gasp, the restraint making me even more acutely aware of our size difference.

Noah is *huge*. Neither Dex nor Cade are small by any means, but Noah is truly something else entirely. He’s six-foot-seven of pure brawn wrapped around the heart of a caretaker, and the way he moves me around so effortlessly,

manhandling my body without any struggle at all, makes my heart race.

The possessive, forceful way he plays with me has me panting in moments, writhing on the bed as he holds me down. When he finally lifts his head, his lips swollen and his eyes molten, I swear I almost combust from the look on his face alone.

“What are the limits?”

I blink up at him stupidly, my mind sizzling too much from the flames he’s been fanning to make sense of his question.

“I... what?” I breathe out, so wet that my thighs slide together when I squirm in his grasp.

He keeps both of my hands pinned with just one of his, using the other to hold my hips still. “Limits,” he repeats, his voice a low growl. “What does this agreement cover?”

“Everything,” I breathe out, meaning it with every fiber of my being. “It’s a free pass. I’m yours. All of yours. For anything.”

He stares at me hard for a few more seconds. Then, finally —

“For now.”

I nod even though it wasn’t a question. “For now.”

Noah nods back sharply, then releases my hands. “Take your arms out of your robe. I want full access.”

I scramble to do it, and he pulls the silky thing out from under me and tosses it aside, then pushes me back down on my back, taking a moment to fan the long, blonde waves of my hair out around me.

His lips tilt up a bit as he does it, and I feel like a doll on display for him, being arranged solely for his viewing pleasure.

“You like looking at me,” I whisper as I flash back to the feel of his gaze on me when Cade got me off in the hallway yesterday.

“Who the fuck wouldn’t?” he answers, a possessive growl to the words that takes every single one of my insecurities and obliterates them. Then Noah’s smile turns almost feral. “But you know what I like even more than just looking?”

“Please tell me it’s fucking.”

He laughs, the sound rumbling in his chest.

“Hell yes,” he finally says, shaking his head. He’s still looking at me with all the heat and intensity of before, but now there’s something else there too. Something a little sweeter, maybe. “I definitely like fucking better, but I don’t want to hurt you.”

“You won’t,” I breathe. “I want your cock. Any way you want to give it to me.”

“Oh, you’re going to get it,” he promises darkly, dragging his fingers down my body and then dipping them inside me. “But before I give it to you, I want to watch you get ready for me. Once wasn’t enough. I want to see you come like that again.”

“Anything,” I promise, pressing up against his fingers.

But instead of plunging them inside me, he abruptly pulls them out and rises up on his knees, palming the massive bulge in his boxer briefs. “I said, I want to *watch*.”

Then he shoves his briefs down, tucking them under his balls, and frees his cock.

My eyes widen, and I suck in a short, sharp breath. I honestly don’t know if it’s from excitement or fear. He is big *all* over.

“Holy shit,” I murmur, my gaze locked on his huge shaft.

He strokes it, his eyes hooded as he kneels above me and works himself over.

“You can take it,” he reassures me, an almost imperceptible tremble moving through his tree-trunk thighs each time he twists his hand over his crown on the upstroke. “If you took Dex and Cade, you can take every inch of me too.”

Gonna need to loosen you up a little first though. Spread your legs. Show me that beautiful pussy of yours.”

I do it, need overriding the twinge of worry that he really won't fit.

Noah's hand stays slow and lazy on his massive shaft, but the look on his face gives him away. He likes what he sees, and that just makes me want to show him more. I rest my hand on the soft curve of my stomach, a flicker of self-consciousness immediately extinguished by the sharp flare of interest in Noah's eyes.

I let my fingertips brush back and forth over the thin line of trimmed curls. “Is this where you're going to loosen me up?”

“No. You're going to do it for me.”

My breath hitches at the growl in his voice. “What do you want me to do?”

“Touch yourself.”

I stroke the pad of my index finger along my slit, gathering some of the wetness there, and his eyes darken with approval.

“You really want me to do all the work?”

Noah's eyes flare. “I want you to do what I tell you to.”

Every part of me goes tight at the bossy edge to his voice, a heated desperation coiling tightly in my core. “I can do that.”

“Then get yourself off. Rub your clit for me. Work yourself up. I want to hear some of those sounds you were making up in the hallway yesterday. I want to hear them just for me.”

I've never felt like I was being fucked with words alone, but I do right now. I circle the tight bud of my clit, then moan as I slide a finger inside myself. My eyelids start to flutter shut, but his voice stops me.

“Look at me,” he rumbles. “I want you to know I'm watching.”

My eyes snap back open, my gaze locking with his.

“What else?” I ask breathlessly, arching up as I squeeze my thighs around my wrist, grinding my clit against the heel of my hand. “What else do you want to see?”

His eyes pin me in place, looking almost black in the shadowed room. “Take a deep breath and push another finger inside. Work yourself until you can take a third.”

“Mmm, fuck,” I groan as I do it, the stretch feeling good.

“That’s right,” Noah groans, stroking himself a little faster. “Work those pretty little pussy lips. Make them nice and red and swollen for me.”

My cheeks burn, and my breath quickens, and I do everything in my power to keep looking at him even though I’m feeling totally exposed.

“Good girl,” he murmurs, the praise hitting me right in the core. “Go deeper. Show me what you can take.”

I push my fingers in as far as I can, then pull them out, letting him see how wet I am.

“That’s my girl,” he rasps. “That’s what I want to see. Show me how desperate you are. How greedy.”

“Yes, god, yes.” My hips buck, and the sound of him stroking himself fills the room. “Please fuck me now.”

“You’re not ready for me yet. You need to stretch that pussy out. Soften it up with a good orgasm or two. Then you might be able to handle my cock.”

“Oh god, you’re going to kill me,” I moan, working my fingers faster, rubbing my clit harder, pushing myself toward that edge.

“Just imagine how it’s going to feel, sunshine. The sounds you’ll make when I finally slide deep inside you. Filling you up. Stretching you out even more.”

He’s still not touching me, but the way his eyes move over me, the way he’s looking at me, the sounds *he’s* making as he jerks his fist up and down, all work together to push me over the edge.

I gasp, crying out as the pleasure overwhelms me. I've never come so hard from my own hand before.

Noah lets out a guttural sound and tightens his fist around himself, as if he's staving off an orgasm of his own. He takes a couple deep, slow breaths, then releases his shaft.

"Fuck, that's it," he rasps. "Such a good girl for me. Now, slide those fingers out and let me see how ready you are."

I do it, my thighs still trembling with the aftermath.

Noah pushes them open even wider, then shoves his fingers into me, pumping them in and out before withdrawing them and using my arousal to coat his length.

"Look at how wet you got yourself," he murmurs, his voice rough.

"I was even wetter a few hours ago," I tell him, bold in a way I never could have imagined myself being before this weekend. "My pussy was soaked with Dex's and Cade's cum. I might even still have some inside me."

Noah's hand goes still, squeezing tightly enough that his crown turns dark purple. "They fucked you bare?"

I lick my lips. "We had the talk. Everyone is safe, and I'm on birth control, so..."

I squirm, letting my hand drift down to toy with my clit again. It's swollen and sensitive, and my breath hitches as my fingers brush over it.

Noah's hand flies up and pins mine to the mattress. "No more of that." He gives me a dangerous, devastating smile. "It's my turn now. And if you're willing to take me bare too —"

"I am," I blurt out, suddenly desperate for it.

He stares at me for a long moment, then gives that dangerous smile again. "Good. I never fuck raw, but I get tested regularly. You're safe with me."

"I know," I whisper, even though I guess it's not strictly true that I actually know that. But I *feel* safe with him, and

that's almost better.

The candlelight flickers over the ripples of his muscles as he repositions me, pulling my ass to the edge of the bed and putting my legs over his shoulders.

"Fucking beautiful," he murmurs, turning his head to plant a kiss against the curve of my calf. Then he presses his tip against my opening, rubbing it against me.

"Oh god," I gasp. It feels even bigger than it looked.

Noah's eyes drill into me. "You think you're ready for this now?"

I nod, and he nudges forward gently, testing me, teasing me.

Getting ready to finally fuck me.

"Please," I burst out when he doesn't go any farther, desperate for him even though I really shouldn't be since he's already made me come once.

Well, he's made me make *myself* come.

But I still need him. "I need more."

Noah grins, the wolfish expression making my stomach do a flip-flop. I've never seen this stoic man so expressive before. "Don't worry, you're going to get it, sunshine. All of it."

"Oh, shit. Did I say that out loud?" I laugh breathlessly.

"Fuck yeah, you did."

And then he leans over me, folding me almost in half as he slowly starts to work his way inside, finally making good on his promise.

"Oh god," I groan, the stretch more intense than anything I've ever felt.

Noah pulls back, then pushes forward again, giving me a little more.

I start panting, overwhelmed before we even get started. "You're... big."

“I know. You can take it. That’s it,” he murmurs, his eyes locked on me, avidly watching his cock start to disappear inside me. “So tight. So fucking wet. You can do this.”

I don’t know if I can. But I’ll fucking kill him if he stops.

“More,” I gasp, then moan when he gives it to me, my fingers digging into the bed.

Noah’s hips rock forward, and my body doesn’t know if it’s pleasure or pain as I take another inch. And then another.

He pulls back, then slides into me again, the friction making me whimper.

Some men instinctively know how to find my g-spot. Some seem to think its existence is only a myth. But Noah? His cock is so thick, it doesn’t matter how he fucks me or which position we’re in. He can’t *not* hit the right spot.

Every. Single. Time.

“Fuck, you feel incredible,” he grits out, his hips snapping forward now in short, shallow thrusts. “I’m halfway in.”

“Oh shit.” My jaw drops, the breath leaving my lungs in a rush. “Half?”

He chuckles, but it trails off into a low groan. “You have no idea how hard it is not to go balls deep and pound you through the mattress right now.”

A shiver runs through me. “You have no idea how much I want you to.”

“Fuck, don’t tempt me,” he pants, squeezing his eyes closed as his entire body goes rigid with tension. “You’re so damn tight. I just need... a minute.”

His voice vibrates with tension and a raw emotion that makes me feel powerful, his muscles standing out in stark relief as he hovers above me. My pussy clenches at the sight of him, and a sound rips out of Noah’s throat that seems to come from the depths of his soul. “You feel too fucking good.”

I reach out and trail my fingers down his abs, each ridge hard as steel under my touch. “You know what would feel

even better?”

“Careful,” he growls, pulsing inside me. “I’m this close to ___”

“Do it,” I interrupt, panting. “I want you to. God, wreck me. Please.”

“Fuck,” he groans. Then he drops forward, bracing his hands on either side of my shoulders, and kisses me hard enough to curl my toes.

Or maybe they’re curling from the way the movement forces his shaft another couple of inches inside of me. Except this time, he doesn’t stop. He keeps going, leaning over me and holding the back of my head as he tongue-fucks my mouth and finally gives me every last inch of his oversized cock.

“Is this it, sunshine? Is this what you’ve been begging me for?”

“God, please, yes,” I gasp, my eyes rolling back in my head.

My senses narrow until nothing else exists but him and the way he fills me. Overwhelms me.

And then, finally, he fucks me like I’ve been dreaming of. Hard and deep and exactly like the dirty fantasy-come-to-life that I’m living now.

“You like that?” he grunts, pounding into me. “You like getting fucked by a cock big enough to break you?”

“Yes,” I moan, barely able to form words and a little shocked that it’s true.

I’d fantasized about taking a guy like Noah before. Who hasn’t? But actually doing it is pushing me right up to my limit.

“Goddamn, you’re so tight, even now,” Noah rumbles, his breath growing ragged. “Even after being fucked all night before you came to me. Even after I softened you up and stretched you out. Your pussy fits me like a fucking glove.”

His words take me right to the edge, but it's the reminder that Dex and Cade have already had me too that tips me over. I've gotten more action recently than I had in a long time before this, and the slight soreness as he fills me over and over heightens the pleasure in a way I never could have predicted.

"So. Fucking. Good," he growls, slamming into me hard enough that it forces me up higher on the bed. "You're right there, aren't you?"

I nod, clinging to him as the first wave crests over me.

Noah lets out a guttural sound as my orgasm hits, fucking me through it. Then he's suddenly hauling me upright, his shaft still buried inside me, and carrying me over to the wall, bracing my back against it.

"I need my cum inside you," he rasps. "Can you take it? All of it?"

"Yes."

He holds me there like I weigh nothing. He's so strong that he literally folds me in half, pinning me against the wall and using the new angle to fuck me even deeper. To fuck me like he's finally let go of all restraint.

He's chasing his own pleasure now, and it sends me spiraling on another fierce wave of total bliss when he finally gives me what he promised, coming inside me with a series of deep, stuttering thrusts that set off my final release.

"Goddamn," he whispers, resting his forehead against mine for a moment. Both of us are panting, covered in a slick sheen of sweat, and I just know that if he tries to set me on my feet, my legs aren't going to hold me.

He doesn't though. Instead, he tips my chin up, kissing me so sweetly that it makes my chest ache. Then he carries me to the bed, laying me down carefully.

"Give me a minute," he says, his hips rocking forward. "I want to stay right here for a second."

Inside me, he means. His shaft is softening, but it's still buried to the hilt, thick enough even now that I feel well and

truly impaled. And I like it. I want him to stay right where he is for a little longer too.

I wrap myself around him and he melts against me. Somehow managing to cover me completely—and I do mean *completely*, with our size difference—and yet not crush me at all.

Instead, all I feel is secure. Boneless and satiated and like I'm exactly where I want to be.

Noah doesn't say anything else as we lay there together, our breath evening out and coming in sync. I stroke his back, feeling closer to him than I would have thought possible given how closed off and private he seemed when we first met. But now he's totally relaxed—the first time I've ever seen him that way—and it does something to me to know that he feels comfortable enough to be so unguarded here, with me.

After a moment, he drags himself up. His cum gushes from me as he pulls out, and he disappears into the bathroom without a word.

I bite my lip, confused over his abrupt departure. But before I can get too up in my head about what it means, he's back.

“Come here,” he rumbles, the candlelight flickering over his muscles as he lifts me right out of the bed.

“What are you do—” I start to ask, but the word breaks off. “Oh,” I finish softly as he carries me into the bathroom.

He's drawn me a bath and lit the room with more candles. To say it's not what I expected from this big, gruff man who fucked me so forcefully, so *perfectly*, is an understatement. But I'm touched more than I can put into words.

“I figured you might be sore,” he says, gently lowering me to my feet. “I went pretty hard.”

I turn to face him, resting my hand on his chest. “I am sore, in the very best way.” I grin, feeling a little giddy. “You went exactly hard enough. I liked every single thing you did, Noah. It was amazing.”

“Yeah, it was,” he says softly, his big, calloused fingers coming up to brush my dimples. For a moment, I think he’s going to kiss me again, but instead, he turns me back around. “Check the water. Is the temperature okay?”

I dip my fingers in. The water almost feels soft, as if he put something soothing in it.

“Perfect. Are you getting in with me?”

He chuckles. “Have you seen me? I’d barely fit in that thing on my own. Go on and enjoy it though.”

I step into the tub, a happy sigh escaping me as the warm water caresses my calves. I’ve never been so thankful that we run the water heater on gas instead of electricity.

Then I turn back to Noah, still standing, and trail my hand down his arm to lace our fingers together. I tug him closer to the bathtub as I look up at him. “I think you’ve already proved that you can fit into tight spaces.”

His eyes flare with heat, and the small, private smile I get from him makes my heart give a heavy thud. “I guess I can, when it’s worth it.”

He climbs into the bathtub behind me, settling down into the water. It rises almost to the edge of the tub, and when he pulls me down between his legs—a *very* tight fit—it sloshes over.

“Oh shit,” I say, laughing.

“Don’t worry about that,” he murmurs in my ear, reaching for a bar of scented soap and rubbing it across my breasts. “It’s not the first mess we’ve made tonight.”

He’s right. And if I’m lucky, it won’t be the last one I make with this man either.

SADIE

“IT’S LIKE NAKED MUSICAL CHAIRS,” a deep voice says as I slowly come awake, surfacing from the *best* dream.

Another deep voice chuckles, and I suddenly remember where I am. Of course, the mountain of warm muscle I’m nestled against helps jog my memory a little too.

I open my eyes, still the little spoon to Noah. Except unlike last night when he tucked me against him after that luxurious bath, it’s not just the two of us in his room anymore.

Dex grins down at me, Mrs. Claws draped over his shoulder. “We missed you this morning.”

“Yeah. Waking up in bed with *this* one isn’t exactly what I was hoping for.” Cade nudges Dex but keeps his gaze glued on me.

“Oh, I don’t know,” I tease, letting my eyes roam over the unfairly gorgeous men who’ve turned my holiday completely upside down. “I’ve been dreaming about waking up next to Dex for ages now. Maybe I should be jealous.”

Dex’s eyes flare with heat, mixed with something a bit softer. “Maybe *I* should be jealous,” he tosses back, a hint of his old self showing through as he turns his attention to Noah. “You stole her away from us.”

Noah snorts, hauling me up with him as he sits up and leans back against the headboard. “No one stole anything. The way I remember it, I was invaded.”

I gasp in mock shock, playfully smacking his chest. “Excuse you! The way *I* remember it, I was the one invaded.”

His eyes burn as he looks down at me. “Fuck yeah, you were,” he murmurs.

He’s killing me, looking at me like he wants to eat me alive. But that’s *all* he’s doing. So I take the initiative and pull his head down, kissing him with no regard at all for either of us having morning breath.

“Oh, is that how it is?” Cade asks, watching us avidly.

“You’re the one who amended the deal,” I remind him a little breathlessly once I’ve had the taste I need.

He grins down at me, arms crossed over his bare chest and all that glorious ink on display. “And I’m pretty sure I showed you yesterday how happy I am that you decided to take me up on that amendment, dream girl.”

Dex snorts, shaking his head. “I was going to show her a few more times before letting her out of bed, but...”

He gestures toward Noah again, although despite his grumbling, I can tell he’s not angry at either his friend or me.

I arch a brow. “You were sleeping, and I didn’t want to wait.”

“You could have woken me.”

“Maybe two men just aren’t enough to satisfy me,” I tease, the thrill of this unconventional situation just as much of a rush as the heated look I get from all three men.

Dex seems to take my words as a personal challenge though.

“Is that so?” he asks, carefully removing Mrs. Claws from his neck and passing her to Noah.

Noah immediately pulls her against his wide chest, and the sound of her purring almost drowns out Dex’s footsteps as he stalks to the side of the bed and yanks me right out of it.

“I will *always* satisfy you,” he half-growls, holding me against him with one arm around my waist and the other

firmly on my ass. “You feel that? *That* is some superior, Grade-A cock.”

“It *is* nice,” I tease, biting my lower lip. “But I still don’t know if it’s quite *enough*.”

Cade and Noah laugh, and Dex drops his other hand to my ass as well, pulling me closer until there isn’t a millimeter of space between us. “Oh, it’s enough. It’s more than e-fucking-nough. And you’re going to admit it if I have to fuck that attitude right out of you.”

Before I can dare him to do just that, Noah throws a pillow at Dex’s head with impeccable aim. “Quit it, D. She took all three of us last night. Give her a little recovery time.”

Dex flips him off, his other hand still planted on my ass. He does look a little contrite though. “Are you sore?”

“No,” I lie, because I am, a little bit.

Dex smiles, and it’s the kind that will make me fall for him if I don’t watch myself. The kind that says he’s serious about wanting to fuck me again, but that that’s not *all* he wants. “Liar.”

I grin up at him, draping my arms over his shoulders. “How do you know?”

“You mean besides the fact that Cade and I fucked you through the mattress, and I’m assuming Noah did the same? You’re never going to have a poker face, kitten.”

“Hey! I might!”

“No,” he says, his eyes going soft. “Don’t change. I like reading you so easily.”

He dips his head and kisses me sweetly, then backs off.

I’m a little disappointed about that, but Noah was right. Even after soaking in that decadent bath with him, I can feel the after effects of taking all three of these men last night. Some recovery time is probably a good idea, especially since—if we’re really doing this, *all* of us—then I want to be able to live out all the fantasies I can come up with.

Cade chuckles, tugging me out of Dex's embrace. "What are you thinking about right now?"

I smile up at him, wide enough that I'm sure my dimples show. "Just that there are some very interesting possibilities with this deal you've come up with."

"I agree. And since we're all sharing you now, where's *my* morning kiss?"

I go up on my toes and give it to him, and it's hot enough that I almost want to say screw it about that recovery time. But I do need to have working lady parts to make the most of whatever time we all have together, so pacing myself is probably a good idea.

Besides, the choice is taken out of my hand when my stomach growls.

"Worked up an appetite?" Cade asks, breaking our kiss with a grin.

"Can you blame me?"

"Breakfast is actually why we came in here," Dex says, looking at Noah. "Are you okay with me switching out the generator set-up so I can power up all the kitchen appliances for a bit?"

Noah frowns. "Power's still out?"

I look around the room as Dex nods. It's harder to tell now that it's daylight, especially since Noah doesn't have anything electronic lying around his room to make it immediately obvious. The temperature *is* pretty nippy, now that I'm paying attention. It was easy to overlook at first, given that I've been wrapped in the arms of one or another of these three men ever since waking. But this far from the central fireplace, even the excellent insulation the lodge has isn't enough to have kept the room at a comfortable temperature overnight without access to electric heat.

Dex and Noah start discussing how to prioritize the power from the generator this morning, debating whether or not it's worth it to go fire up the big one out in the shed that will power the entire lodge. Cade is obviously paying attention to

me and not the conversation, because when I shiver, he pulls me close again.

“You should go get yourself ready for the day. I built a fire in your room before we came looking for you, so it should be warm by now.”

My heart trips. “You did?”

He tips my chin up and plants another kiss on me. A soft, tender one this time. “I told you I wanted to spoil you.”

He did tell me that, but I figured he meant in the bedroom, not everywhere else. I bite my lip to stop myself from saying something outside the bounds of our agreement, although I can't stop myself from thinking it. This man is as sweet and attentive as he is handsome. The complete opposite of the cold-hearted asshole billionaire I had him pegged as before we met.

In fact, all three of them have shown me sides of themselves that I was blinded to when we first got snowed in together, and my feelings are a jumbled mess as the guys all head downstairs and I take Cade's suggestion and head back to my room.

“Well, shit,” I murmur, shaking my head and putting my hand over my heart when I walk in. He was right about the fire. It's crackling cheerfully, and it's made the room—one that's always been one of my favorites here at the lodge—into a warm winter nest.

But it's not just the fire. The guys made the bed before they left, and there's a rose on my pillow.

I walk over to it, tender feelings welling up inside me that turn into a burst of laughter when I realize what it is.

“Dex,” I murmur, shaking my head as I pick up the delicate thing. It's a paper flower, an origami style that I saw him make again and again for his niece, Maddie, at various Blaine family events over the years. But this one is made from a distinctive red wrapper. The kind that came from the food stored in those crates he fucked me over in the pantry yesterday.

I grin. It's just like him to give me something sweet and a little sentimental with a raunchy twist. I love it, and set it on the mantel for safekeeping, then quickly shower and dress.

As I'm pulling on a pale blue sweater that's as soft as Mrs. Claws's fur, my phone pings with an incoming message.

LUNA: Merry almost Christmas, girl! Want an early present? Here it is: cinnamon buttered rum. You're welcome.

I grin as my phone's deep Australian accent reads it out to me. That does sound delicious, and I tell her so.

ME: Is that how you spent last night?

LUNA: Ugh, yes. So much yes. Which means now I can't hit the slopes until this hangover wears off.

I laugh.

ME: Sorry.

LUNA: Don't be sorry. Help me! I need deets! Hearing about all the amazing sex you're having up there is the only thing that will stop my head from pounding!

I snort at her ridiculousness, my cheeks hurting from smiling so wide.

ME: I'm not sure that's how it works. A Bloody Mary, on the other hand...

LUNA: Fuck your Bloody Mary! Tell me everything! Are you still living out the plot of some crazy romance novel?

I laugh at her predictable response, but I'm not mean enough to keep torturing her when she's feeling like shit.

ME: Actually...

Okay, maybe I'm not above torturing her a little. As far as I'm concerned, this is payback for a bachelorette party we both went to in Vegas, which we've pinky-sworn to never speak of again.

LUNA: OH MY god! You are! Are you? Say you are! How much dick are you getting right now?

ME: Let's just say things have gotten a little crazier since last night.

LUNA: How crazy?

LUNA: Seriously, Sadie! I need to live vicariously through you right now!

LUNA: Oh my fuck, who invented rum? I might actually want to kill them.

I laugh, then laugh even harder when her next text comes through right on the heels of the last one, in true Luna style.

LUNA: Or marry them.

She ends that one with a smiling devil of an emoji, followed by a bunch of alternating cocktail glass emojis and flame emojis.

LUNA: Ok, but seriously, back to you. Why are you torturing me like this? Tell me about the dick already! Has it really gotten even crazier than fucking your boss and your ex-boyfriend's older brother?

My cheeks heat up. I'm not embarrassed, and I know for sure Luna is a hundred percent supportive of me diving headfirst into this situation. But when she puts it *that* way, it sounds fucking scandalous.

I grin, then dictate a quick reply that I know will tell her everything.

ME: Definitely crazier than that. In fact, I'd probably call it *three times* as crazy.

I get back a shocked-face emoji followed by a whole series of gifs that do more to heat up my room than the fire Cade laid out for me.

Then, finally—

LUNA: Girl, but seriously. YOU'RE FUCKING ALL THREE OF THEM! Let me repeat: You Are Fucking Three Hot Men. Three! At once!

ME: Well, technically, not "at once."

ME: Yet.

I swear I can hear Luna's gasp in my head, even from thousands of miles away, probably followed by a loud squeal. It's the only explanation for the eight second delay before I see those three bouncing dots again.

LUNA: You know what this means, don't you???

LUNA: You're basically starring in one of those audiobooks you're addicted to!

I bite my lip, pretty sure my face is going to end up as sore as I am between my legs if I don't stop grinning so hard.

ME: I know, right?

LUNA: Daaaaamn, girl, good for you! Who ever gets an opportunity like this? I say, live it up!

My stomach flutters.

ME: Exactly my plan. I'm really hoping

My finger slips on the screen, and my phone makes the little "whoosh" sound that tells me the text sent itself before I was done dictating.

LUNA: What? You're hoping for what??? I need to know. Is this one of your romance novels? Do you... like these guys?

ME: If I didn't like them, I wouldn't be riding their cocks.

Luna sends back a row of laughing emojis, and I quickly finish dictating the message I'd actually been trying to send the first time, before she can press the issue of feelings.

Feelings isn't what this little interlude is about, and I'm fine with that. More than fine. Luna's right, after all—I'm currently living the kind of fantasy that a girl can normally only dream of, and I plan on taking full advantage of it.

ME: I'm just hoping the storm lasts a little longer. With three men at my disposal, there are still a lot of things in those books you're teasing me about that I haven't gotten a chance to try yet.

LUNA: !!!

LUNA: Get it, girl! And then tell me EVERYTHING.

My stomach flutters. It's still hard to believe this is actually real. Like Luna said, it feels like one of the books I love to get lost in. But even if this is a total break from reality, some kind of snow dream I can't seem to wake up from, I'm here for it.

I go to the window, pushing the heavy curtains aside to look at the white-blanketed landscape as Luna and I trade a few final messages, with her filling me in about her vacation too.

It's snowing again.

“Keep it coming,” I whisper to the blizzard. “Because even if I'm just dreaming, I'm not quite ready to wake up yet.”

The blizzard ignores me, but that's okay. There are three men waiting downstairs who definitely won't.

SADIE

I MUST NOT HAVE LATCHED my door completely, because when I go to spritz on a little scent, someone pushes it open.

“Oh, I see,” I tease when Mrs. Claws freezes with one paw inside the room, letting loose with a sneeze far too big for her tiny body. “You came here to criticize my taste?”

She bats at her nose, sneezing one more time, then daintily walks the rest of the way into the room.

I set the bottle of perfume down and scoop her up instead. “Is it too much?” I ask, nuzzling her soft fur. “I thought it was festive.”

She bats at *my* nose this time, then turns as if she actually understood me and gives the perfume a haughty look before ignoring it completely in favor of grooming her paw.

Cute and fluffy are irresistible, but add in some sass?

I laugh, falling a little bit in love.

“Fine, I’ll skip the scent,” I promise her. “But I do wish I’d packed a better wardrobe.”

She looks up at me as I carry her out of the room, tilting her head to one side almost as if she’s passing judgment on my sweater.

“I know, I know,” I agree with a sigh. “But in my defense, I thought I was coming here for work. It didn’t even occur to me to pack anything sexy.”

And packing as quickly as I did, the truth is I didn't even really pay attention. Half the stuff I brought is just whatever I randomly grabbed on my way out the door.

Ah, well. It can't be helped now.

“And I'll tell you a secret,” I murmur to Mrs. Claws as we finally make it downstairs. “I don't think my men actually mind what I'm wearing.”

What I really mean is that all three of them seem to prefer me wearing nothing at all, but obviously, I can't tell Mrs. Claws that. It's one thing to indulge fantasies I never thought I'd get a chance to live out. It's quite another to corrupt a young kitten with them.

The scent of biscuits and bacon draw me to the kitchen, and all three pause what they're doing and turn toward me as I walk in. Noah, making coffee. Dex, at the stove. And Cade measuring something into the blender.

“See what I mean?” I whisper to Mrs. Claws when their eyes light up with appreciation as if to prove my point. “They don't seem to mind at all. A girl could get used to this.”

Mrs. Claws meows, which I take for her stamp of approval, then scrambles out of my arms and leaps to the floor, heading straight for Dex. After giving me a heated once over, he immediately plucks some bacon out of the warming drawer and starts plating it for her.

“I'm not sure she's old enough for bacon yet,” Noah says mildly.

Dex drops to a crouch as Mrs. Claws pads closer.

“Don't listen to him, sweetheart,” he croons to her, breaking it into small pieces that she immediately starts scarfing down with little mewls of joy. “You deserve *all* the bacon.”

They start bickering about it, and I join Cade at the counter just as he finishes measuring two teaspoons of maple syrup into the blender that he's already filled with other things.

He holds out the teaspoon he just used, pulling it back a little when I reach for it.

“Lick it, dream girl,” he says, his voice husky.

I grin, swaying toward him. “You are bossy, aren’t you?”

“You like it.”

“You caught me. I do.”

I lean forward, keeping eye contact, and clean the little spoon with my tongue. The look on Cade’s face as he watches me is almost enough to make me want to lick *him*, but now I’m curious about what he’s up to.

“What are you making in there?” I peek over his shoulder as he tosses the spoon into the sink next to us. “Oatmeal?”

“Oat *milk*.” He nods his head toward Noah, who’s still fussing with one of the lodge’s professional-grade coffee makers. “For your pour over.”

“What?” I whisper, a warm feeling rushing through me. “Really?”

“Yeah. I didn’t stock any up, so I’m improvising,” Cade says, looking adorably proud of himself. “You can learn anything on YouTube, you know.”

“I know.” I laugh, still a little stunned that he went to all this trouble. “But really, you didn’t have to do that.”

He presses the button on the blender, making the contents rise up the sides of the glass a little as the blade whirls, and when he turns it back off, he shrugs. “I want to. If I’d known my dream girl was going to be here this week, trust me, I would have filled an entire whole fridge with the stuff.”

“The place sure as shit has enough of them,” Dex jokes, moving to the sink to wash his hands now that Mrs. Claws is done with her snack and curled up in the box Noah made for her again. He gestures to the row of commercial-grade refrigerators lining one wall of the lodge’s kitchen. “Does the resort really stay that busy?”

“It... did, yeah.”

Sometimes. Although if I'm honest, business had started to become a bit sporadic before John finally decided to sell. But I decide not to mention that, since it might make Cade feel justified about his plans to turn this place into a soulless investment property, and I don't want to argue with him about that right now. Everything feels too perfect to get into a fight about what may or may not happen in the future.

I clear my throat as he lifts the blender off its base and swirls it, peering proudly at the chunky-looking mix inside. "Is that it?"

"Yup," he says, giving me a wide grin. "Easy as fucking pie. Who knew? Have you got that coffee ready yet, Noah?"

Noah grunts, then hands him a steaming mug. Dex tosses Cade a handheld strainer, and Cade holds it over the mug and pours some of the fresh, homemade oat milk into it.

Then he passes it over to me. "There. Didn't I promise we'd all spoil you?"

"You did. And you really are." I wrap my hands around the mug, suppressing a grin at the expectant looks I'm getting from all three of them as they wait for me to take the first sip. "Thank you."

"What the fuck is oat milk, anyway?" Dex asks as I take a drink. "Like, basically oatmeal, but without the meal?"

"*Meal* isn't actually a thing," Noah says dryly as I choke a little, my mouth suddenly awash with gritty coffee-flavored sludge.

"Meal is a literal thing," Dex argues, pulling out four plates and starting to fill them with the fragrant breakfast he's cooked up. "In fact, I'm making one right now."

Noah scoffs, but I can see amusement in his eyes.

Cade, on the other hand, hasn't taken his eyes off me since he handed me the coffee.

"How is it?" he asks as his friends keep giving each other shit.

“Mmmmm,” I say with a closed-lip smile, trying to be subtle as I use my tongue to try to get what must be an actual oat out from between my teeth.

“Good?” he presses, forcing me to decide whether or not I want to build our relationship on a bed of lies or not.

Fuck it. This *isn't* a relationship, so the normal rules don't count.

Besides, there's no way I'm telling him how disgusting his sweet gift is. Not after he made it with his own hands.

I finally get the oat free and swallow it quickly, then nod enthusiastically. “It's great! Thank you so much. It was so thoughtful of you. I *love* oat milk.”

He stares at me hard for a moment, then cracks up. “You hate it.”

“What? No!”

He snatches the cup from my hands and steals a sip, his face contorting for a moment before he turns and sprays it out into the sink.

Noah and Dex both look over as Cade wipes off his mouth, laughing again as he shakes his head. “You are such a bad liar.”

“Why do you think I cleaned up in poker last night?” Noah adds, lifting a brow.

“Shut up.” I laugh, elbowing him gently in the abs.

He doesn't even flinch. Instead, he grabs the blender and peers inside, then gives Cade a wounded look. “You desecrated the coffee I made with this shit? If this is how you spoil her, no wonder she ended up in my bed.”

Cade rolls his eyes and flips him off.

“I vote we leave the cooking to me from now on,” Dex says to all of us, herding me and Noah toward the table but blocking Cade with a shake of his head. “Not you. Not until you clean out that blender and dispose of the evidence.”

Cade huffs. “We’ve got no idea how long we’ll be snowed in here. We shouldn’t be wasteful. Maybe I’ll just save it for Mrs. Claws...”

“No,” Noah and I both say at the same time, making Cade grin.

“Trust me, *bad things* will happen if you ever threaten the little fluffball with something like that,” Noah tells him menacingly, making my heart melt just a little bit more.

I know they’re just playing around and can tell they’ve got a certain dynamic between the three of them where it’s normal to give each other shit like this, but Noah jumping to the defense of Mrs. Claws?

Ugh, they’re killing me.

Once Noah gets us all fresh coffee, we settle in the great room with the plates Dex prepared, sitting close to the large fireplace again, since the rest of the lodge is still chilly with the power out.

I lean over to press a kiss to the corner of Cade’s mouth before he starts eating. “It really is the thought that counts though,” I whisper. “Thank you. I mean it. That was the best worst oat milk I’ve ever had.”

“My pleasure,” he replies, turning to me and taking a much more thorough kiss. *Much* more thorough. Then he gives me a cocky grin and adds, “And it’s going to be even more of a pleasure making it up to you.”

I shiver at the promise in his words, my mind instantly overflowing with dirty thoughts that I’m entirely sure Cade—or really, all three of them—will be happy to make good on. But as amazing as the sex is, the easy, comfortable feeling between all four of us over breakfast is almost better.

“What are you smiling about?” Noah asks me at one point, catching me off guard. I sort of zoned out of the conversation for a few minutes, sipping my coffee and just enjoying being with them like this.

“Wait, you have to *ask* what I’m thinking?” I joke, mostly to deflect the question. “I thought you all agreed I don’t have a

poker face.”

Dex snorts, shaking his head. “You don’t. Heart on your sleeve, for as long as I’ve known you.”

“Oh? So what’s she thinking about then?” Cade asks, a playful gleam in his eye.

Dex studies me, one eyebrow raised. “I’d think it’s obvious. Our girl was just thinking about...”

I hold my breath as he draws the word out, even though I know he’s teasing, a little frisson of anxiety in my stomach. The feelings that put that smile on my face are definitely pushing the boundaries of this no-strings agreement between the four of us, and I really don’t want Dex to call me out on that, even jokingly.

“Bacon,” he finally finishes, putting me out of my misery and making all of us laugh. “What?” he goes on innocently. “Doesn’t everyone get a dreamy look on their face when thinking about bacon?”

“If they don’t, they fucking should,” Noah says, snatching up the last of it. “Nothing says Christmas like bacon.”

“Uh, not to point out the obvious, but bacon isn’t part of any traditional Christmas meal I’ve ever heard of,” Cade draws.

Noah gives him a flat stare, unimpressed. “I’ve got one word for you. Ham.”

“Ham isn’t bacon.”

“Ham *is* bacon. In ham form.”

“Uh, that’s not a thing.”

“Actually,” Dex starts in, although I miss the rest of his words because I’m laughing too hard.

“What about you, sunshine?” Noah asks at some point, once the conversation has totally devolved into a bunch of outrageous Christmas-dinner ideas. “What kind of holiday meal are you going to be missing out on if we’re still snowed in here on the twenty-fifth?”

A flush fills my cheeks as my eyes meet Cade's. I guess he's the only one of them who knows I lied about trying to get down the mountain that first day so I didn't miss my "big Christmas plans," and for a split second, I'm embarrassed at the thought of admitting the truth to the other two.

But then I realize it doesn't matter. I may not know the three of them all that well yet, but I already trust these men not to judge me for having no one out there to be with on Christmas. I feel safe with them.

"I'm not actually missing anything," I say, lifting my chin a little. "My holiday plans were with the Hallmark channel and a few glasses of good wine."

Dex's forehead crinkles for a moment, then smooths out. "You used to spend holidays with us, back when you and Parker were together."

It's not a question. He's thinking it through. And he doesn't spell it out, but I can tell that he's putting the pieces together.

Being alone this time of year is nothing new for me. My mother is all the family I have, and she's never been there for me. Being able to spend Christmas with the Blaines was a treat, even once things started to sour with Parker.

"I haven't really celebrated Christmas in years," I admit.

"And yet you're the one who convinced me there was magic in it," Cade says, his eyes soft.

"Oh, there is! And I used to love the holiday, but..." I shake my head, feeling a little nostalgic at long-buried memories that have already started to blur at the edges. "That mostly ended when I was young." When my father left, but I don't go into that. "Later, it just wasn't really a thing my mother made time for. Sometimes I spend it with my best friend, Luna, but this year, I had to work."

I nudge Cade playfully, and he grins back at me. "I hear there are some on-the-job perks."

"So far, it's quite the benefits package."

Cade's eyes heat up and Dex makes a predictably suggestive comment about the packages they all have for me, but Noah doesn't seem to want to let the conversation about family go yet.

"Is your mother still around though?" he asks with a frown, his rumbling voice drawing Mrs. Claws into the room from her box in the kitchen. "Because if we're keeping you from her, maybe we can find a way to deal with the roads if we're still here on Christmas day."

The kitten weaves across the floor like she's still drunk on sleep, then claws her way up his pant leg and settles in his lap, purring loudly when he all but covers her with one of his big hands.

"Oh my god, no," I say, shaking my head. Then realize how that sounds and clarify quickly. "I mean, sorry, yes, my mom is still around. She lives in Denver. She's just not around here now. She's in... I honestly can't remember. A tropical island, somewhere? We were going to spend the holiday together, but she has a habit of blowing off any plans we make together when she gets a better offer, so..." I shrug, then quickly change the subject, giving them all a wide grin. "So what I'm basically saying is that this is already a better Christmas than I've had in ages. It must be the bacon."

"Obviously, it's the bacon," Dex agrees, letting me off the hook.

Cade gives me a look that's half tender, half assessing, and thankfully, Noah backs down too, giving me a little nod that somehow warms my chest even without words.

I think he gets that I'm not dodging the subject of my lack of a family life because of them. I actually feel like I could open my heart a little to these three and they'd keep it safe, no matter how casual we are. It's just that I don't want to waste the time we have together with stuff like that.

"I don't know," Cade says after a minute, tapping his chin thoughtfully. "A '*better*' Christmas? That sounds like too low of a bar."

Before I can ask him what he means by that, he scoots his chair back and pulls me onto his lap.

I laugh, clutching at him as he grins at me. “Better isn’t going to cut it, dream girl.”

“It’s not?”

He kisses me, hard and fast, then tucks me against him and exchanges glances with Dex and Noah. “I’d like to propose another addendum to our agreement.”

“If it involves bending Sadie over in front of this fireplace and fucking her while we wait for the power to come back on, I’m in,” Dex says, setting his plate aside.

Noah shoots him a look. “If it involves fucking Sadie at all, I’m pretty sure we’re all in, but she’s still going to need some time to recover, isn’t that right, sunshine?”

I press my thighs together, wanting to deny it, but the lingering ache between my legs means he’s probably right. We’ll all have more fun if I wait a bit before taking another cock—or three.

Cade waves off Noah’s question before I can answer it. “We’ll get to that. But right now, we need to focus on something else.”

Mrs. Claws perks her head up, as if she wants to get in on this new proposal too.

“Well? Don’t leave us hanging,” I finally say, smacking Cade’s chest playfully. “What else do you want to propose we do while we’re snowed in together?”

“Exactly what the season calls for,” he says, grinning at my look of confusion. “Magic.”

My breath catches as he looks at his friends again. “*Better* just isn’t good enough,” he tells them. “You guys both know that. None of us got where we are by settling for anything but the absolute best.”

Noah and Dex both make rumbling sounds of agreement, leaning forward in their seats.

“Where are you going with this?” Noah asks. “Because I’m in.”

“Good,” Cade says as Dex agrees too. “Because if we’re really going to spoil our girl here the way she deserves, we need to step it up.” He holds Dex’s gaze, then Noah’s, until he gets a nod from them both. “We’re not settling for fucking *better*. Sadie is ours for the duration, and we’re going to make this Christmas her best one ever.”

NOAH

MY EYES KEEP GETTING DRAWN to Sadie as we eat. Watching this woman could easily become an addiction if I let it, and it's not just because she's a walking wet dream. The way she grins and blushes at Cade's words draws me in just as much as the way she begged for my dick and then took every inch of it last night.

She's already shaking her head even though it's plain as day that she likes the idea of us doing up the holiday a little. "Oh, stop. You guys don't have to do anything extra on my behalf."

Dex laughs outright. "What part of 'spoiling you' did you miss? Give it up. This is happening."

He's right, and if Sadie had heard the way Cade went on and on about her after that first hotel hookup, she would know that there's no point fighting it. Not that I think she really wants to, what with the way she's biting her lip like she's trying to hold back a grin.

Finally, she gives it up, smiling so wide it makes my chest ache for a second.

"Okay," she says, glowing as brightly as the sun.

"Do you think we'll have power back in time for me to cook a full Christmas spread?" Dex asks.

Cade shrugs. "If not, the generator can handle it."

Dex rubs his hands together, looking excited, then launches into a rundown of everything the lodge has on hand

in the way of traditional Christmas foods.

I fork up another bite of the food he's already made, letting them have at it.

I do like the idea of going all out for Christmas if it's going to keep Sadie glowing like that. And I'm a hundred percent down with this no-strings sex rule Cade's set up for us too. But I can't let myself get distracted from my goals, no matter how appealing she is.

The three of them start throwing out increasingly outrageous menu ideas, but luckily, they're used to me just grunting my responses. I'd like to blame it on the bacon, and to be fair, the bacon is fucking fantastic and it definitely deserves some of the blame. But that's not the only reason I'm a little close-lipped at the moment.

Vacation or not, I've still got a shit-ton of work to do if I want to pull off the expansion into Japan. And yet there's something about Sadie that just sucks me in.

I'm not normally a people person, but I'd be lying if I said I hadn't been drawn to her from the start. Frankly, I don't particularly like most people that I meet, and it's rare as fuck for me to actually click with anyone the way I have with her. But she got me to talk about shit I normally don't share last night, and the terrible sleep I'm used to getting after one of those nightmares didn't happen with her by my side.

I'm not quite sure what to do with all that.

I'm sure as shit not in a place to have a relationship, even if it was actually on the table. Which, I remind myself firmly, it's not. That doesn't mean I can't enjoy the moment though.

"What do you think, Noah?" Sadie asks, nudging my leg with her fuzzy-sock-covered toes under the table. "Snow angels or sledding?"

I blink. I've lost the thread of the conversation.

Cade laughs, reading me like a book, and takes mercy on me. "We may be snowed in, but we don't have to *stay* in," he says, bringing me up to speed. "We're voting on the best

outdoor winter activities given all the inches Mother Nature has dumped out there. And... go!”

Oh. That’s easy.

“Snowboard—”

My words break off in a grunt when Cade elbows me hard in the ribs, and I glare at him.

“*What the fuck?*” I demand.

He grins. “Just trying to do you a solid.”

Next to Sadie, Dex is shaking his head and making slashing motions across his neck.

Sadie doesn’t notice. She’s too busy looking at me with narrowed eyes, her lips pursed. “Please don’t tell me you’re Team Snowboard.”

“We’re on teams now?”

She must catch sight of Dex’s kill-it signs out of the corner of her eye, because she turns to him with one eyebrow raised. He quickly drops his hand and gives her an innocent look. Cade leans toward me and whispers, “Skiing. Just say skiing.”

I cut a glance at him, folding my arms across my chest. “No.”

“Trust me on this one,” he says under his breath.

I snort. “Not happening.”

He subtly nods in Sadie’s direction. “It’s—”

“Boring as fuck,” I cut in. “No way am I headed down a slope on a set of skis when I’ve got better options.”

Sadie sighs dramatically. “I knew you were too good to be true.”

That startles a laugh out of me, something that usually only Cade or Dex can manage, and even then, it happens rarely.

Sadie’s eyebrows shoot up, a gorgeous grin spreading across her face. “It’s the first time I’ve heard you do that,” she says quietly.

It catches me off guard. Not her words, but the look on her face.

I haven't been doing her justice, calling her sunshine like I've started to. The sun has nothing on this girl.

Dex snorts before I get too lost in the warm gleam of her eyes. "What, you mean laugh?" He shakes his head with a grin of his own. "Don't get used to that. Noah is a broody-ass workaholic even at the best of times. Cade had to twist his arm just to get him to join us this week."

Cade nods solemnly. "I'll attest to that."

I hold my arm out to the side, twisting it back and forth a few times and not hating the way Sadie's eyes follow my muscle flexing. Then I look down at it too, crinkling my brow for effect, before slowly bending at the elbow as I bring it up with my middle finger extended.

"He can't have twisted too hard. It looks like my arm still works," I deadpan, flipping them both off.

Cade barks out a laugh, and Dex grins, wadding up a napkin and throwing it at me. Sadie's laughter rings out like a bell, and the sound shifts something inside my chest.

The truth is, Cade did have to poke at me a bit to get me to come. But the greater truth is that Cade and Dex are the only ones who can get me to step away like that, even if I'm never going to fully unplug. I am a workaholic, Dex isn't wrong about that, and taking time away from being vigilant—whether that's in regard to a business deal or with the safety of my loved ones—isn't something I have the luxury of allowing myself to do.

It's one of the reasons I did say yes to this holiday getaway. Dex and Cade both understand that about me and accept me as I am. Neither one of them expects me to let loose and live it up. This week was always meant to be way more low key than that, even before the storm. I just wanted to spend some time with my friends and knew I could have a good Christmas with the two of them.

I didn't expect Sadie, or the way I keep getting dangerously close to being distracted from my priorities by the feelings she stirs up in me.

Thankfully, my friends really do know me well, and they take the spotlight off me by asking Sadie about holiday activities the resort has hosted in the past.

I have some work to get through today, but I find myself lingering over the meal, grinning a little as they banter back and forth. It startles me for a second when I realize that instead of thinking about the work waiting for me, I'm totally content to sit here and enjoy watching Sadie dig into the omelet Dex made her.

I shift in my seat, reaching down to discreetly adjust myself. I've never had a feeding kink before, but I think I might be in danger of developing a *Sadie* kink if this storm doesn't let up soon. She ticks every one of my boxes, including some I didn't know I had.

When we finish eating, I leave the three of them discussing their favorite Christmas traditions and go grab my laptop, bringing it down to sit in front of the fire in the main room.

If I hadn't woken up with a bundle of warm sunshine in my bed, I would have already checked on the latest numbers we need to submit for the deal with Eiwa Izakaya Group. A few hours late won't be disastrous, but I don't like to think about how sideways shit might have gone if the resort hadn't been set up with the kind of backup system that ensures I've still got access to wi-fi.

Just like I don't want to think too hard about why I'm working down here—in the same spot I was sitting in when Sadie first kissed me with a kitten curled up and purring on my lap—when I have a perfectly serviceable desk in my guest room upstairs.

I push those distractions aside and focus on the numbers that my team uploaded last night, then initiate a video call with Becca to go over them.

“Noah!” she answers after a few too many rings, her cheeks a bit flushed.

I frown, hoping she’s not coming down with something. Christmas isn’t quite the same phenomenon in Japan as it is over here, so taking time off from closing the deal for the holiday was never on the table. My assistant understands that, despite the fact that I can hear the faint sound of Christmas music behind her. But if she’s ill, that’s another story.

“Is everything okay?”

“What? Yes! Everything’s great,” she says perkily.

I study her face for any other signs of illness. “You look overheated.”

She laughs, fanning herself. “Well, I didn’t have my phone on me, but when I recognized your ringtone, I came running.”

“Thanks,” I say, glad that she recognizes the importance of our call. Especially now, when we’re so close to finalizing the deal. “Can you pull up the latest numbers from the western region, please?”

She shares her screen with me, and as we review the numbers, I hear Cade, Dex, and Sadie still talking in the kitchen. I only realize I’m leaning a little too far out of my chair, trying to listen in, when it jostles Mrs. Claws. She squeaks at me, digging her tiny claws into the denim of my jeans to remind me who’s the boss here, and I soothe her with some petting while I refocus on what Becca is saying.

“How are we doing with turnover?” I ask, earning a quick frown from her.

“Uh, we just went over that.”

Shit. I really have been zoning out.

“Sorry,” I say quickly. “Bad connection.”

Becca gives me an odd look for a moment, then relays the information again as Cade’s rumbling laughter sounds behind me. I can’t hear what he says, but I hear Sadie’s response.

“Well, we don’t have a tree,” she tells him as I cup the kitten in one hand and take my laptop in the other. I move over to a different seat so I can see the three of them through the arched doorway. “We can make do without all the bells and whistles though. Christmas is about more than just decorations.”

Dex grins at her, leaning back in his chair and looking more relaxed than I’ve seen him in years. “Making do isn’t going to cut it. Isn’t that right, Cade?”

“Oh, fuck no,” Cade agrees. “I’m pretty sure I promised you the best Christmas ever, and everyone knows the first step to an amazing Christmas is the tree.”

Sadie looks around in an exaggerated way, the pure sass in her expression putting a smile on my face. “And just where are we supposed to get one of those? In case you haven’t noticed, the roads are still closed.”

“Noah?” Becca asks sharply, yanking my attention back to my laptop screen as Cade gestures toward the snowy landscape outside, making a comment about trees being the one thing we’re not in short supply of around here.

My assistant is frowning at me, her face visible in the little window offset in the corner of the screen.

Fair enough. I was distracted. Again.

I try to refocus on the report we’re reviewing. “It looks like sales are trending in the right direction.”

“Oh really?” Becca makes a surprised noise, then highlights a row on the spreadsheet. “I honestly didn’t think seeing *this* would make you smile like that.”

I frown. “Smile like what?”

She gives me a look. “Like you just were, Noah. You’re distracted. What’s going on over there that’s pulling your mind off business?”

At the moment, it’s the conversation I can’t tune out from the kitchen. It sounds like the three of them are gearing up to head outside and find themselves a Christmas tree.

I'm completely on board with Cade's plan to make this the best Christmas ever for Sadie, but I'm not entirely sure I trust any of them to go chopping down a tree and not end up chopping off a limb.

"We'll need to pick this up later," I tell Becca suddenly, making up my mind.

"Are you sure? We haven't gone over everything yet. I have time right now if you want to—"

"No, that's okay," I tell Becca as Sadie's laugh rings out again, calling to me like a siren song. "We'll finish this up soon. I've got a few other things I need to take care of first."

"Okay." She gives me a small smile and a confused look. "Well, I'll be here anytime."

"Thanks."

I end the call before Becca can say anything else, a trace of guilt running through me. I definitely should've finished going over everything with her, but it would've been pointless since I was barely retaining any of it.

Sadie looks up, catching my eye, and gives me a smile that almost knocks me on my ass. Fuck, I want to lick those dimples. I want to breathe in her honeysuckle scent again.

But for right now, I'll settle for making sure she gets the tree of her dreams, and that everyone comes back in one piece.

I lift Mrs. Claws off my lap and settle her on a throw blanket, then get to my feet. "If you're heading outside, I'm coming with you," I call out.

Dex and Cade look up with matching expressions of surprise, but Sadie just looks delighted. "Oh, can you?" She bounces over to me and launches herself into my arms. "I'm glad you got done with your work so quickly. It's vacation!"

I grunt as I catch her, not willing to lie but also not wanting to outright say that I've accomplished jack shit for work this morning.

It's probably not a great idea to put the Japan deal on hold like this, even if it's just for a few hours. But I also don't give a fuck. Not when Sadie wraps herself around me and kisses me, tasting like the sunshine she embodies and feeling like fucking heaven in my arms.

The minute she comes up for air, Dex hauls her out of my arms and into his.

"We're sharing," he mutters, clearly not wanting to be left out.

I don't blame him.

Sadie's happy sigh as he pulls her close goes a long way toward smoothing out the jealous lines on his face, and the hot-as-fuck kiss he lays on her does the rest of that job.

Cade takes his turn with her next, and the sight does something to me. Just Sadie on her own is something else. Sharing her with my two best friends though?

That right there is already making this the best Christmas ever in my books.

"Come on," Cade says once they finally break apart, directing us all out toward the back of the lodge once we get our winter gear on. "The resort has just about every tool you'll ever need out in the utility shed, so we should have all the supplies we need to get this done."

Sadie nods. "John had a contract with a forest maintenance crew, but being so remote, there were always things the staff had to keep up on too."

He grins at her. "Well, that works out well for us."

He leads us out to one of the small sheds, one I've already assessed during my initial perimeter check of the property. He reaches for an ax as soon as we enter, but I beat him to it.

Cade steps back and lets me, knowing there's no way I'll let anyone but me carry it.

"So what kind of tree do you want, kitten?" Dex asks Sadie once we start tromping out into the woods. It really is a

gorgeous day. Cold as a witch's tit, but the clouds have cleared for the moment, almost enough to let the sun shine through.

I stop for a second, taking in a deep breath.

"What is it?" Sadie asks, resting her hand on my arm and looking up at me.

I shrug. I'm not the poetic type, and I have no idea how to put what I was just thinking into words.

"I know, right?" She sighs happily, somehow sensing my thoughts even though I didn't actually answer. "It's so gorgeous up here. The city is great and all, but this is just..."

She trails off, and before I can figure out how I feel about her reading me like that, she looks over my shoulder and points a finger. "Oh! That one!"

"What, *this* tree?" Dex asks when I turn to look. He's grinning as he knocks some snow off the tall fir tree next to him. "Nah. Too scrawny."

Sadie laughs, her hands on her hips. "What? What are you talking about? It's gorgeous!"

Dex gives her an exaggerated once over. "I think we need something a little... fuller."

Her cheeks are already pink from the cold, but they flush even darker.

Cade slings an arm over Dex's shoulders and gives Sadie a hungry look of his own. "I agree. I like them full too. What do you think, Noah?"

I think their innuendo is about as subtle as mistletoe in a doorway, but they're not wrong. I like them full too. Full-figured and curvy in all the best ways.

I'm not generally a man of many words, but with Sadie, it's like I don't have to be. Even though I don't reply to Cade's prompt, she gives me a look that could melt all the snow off the mountain.

The guys keep gently teasing her as we tromp through the forest, and when my cheeks start to ache, I'm surprised to

realize it's because I've been grinning this whole time.

Eventually, we find the perfect tree, and Dex holds out a hand to me.

“Ax, Noah?” he prompts.

My hand tightens on its handle, and Sadie laughs as she nudges his shoulder. “Oh, come on,” she says playfully. “You know that's never going to happen.”

Cade grins. “Ah, so you're saying that you've caught on to Noah's control-freak nature already?”

Sadie glances up at me, squeezing my bicep. “Oh, I've caught on to something, that's for sure.”

She keeps lightly teasing me as I chop down the tree, and I'd be lying if I said her blatant ogling doesn't go to my head a little. But even better is the easy energy between the four of us, and as the tree finally topples, and I'm struck with the oddest sense that this is like... family.

It's not a feeling I've had with other women I've slept with. It's not a feeling I've had at all since my father died.

Cade and Dex fight me off when I start to heft the base of the tree up to start dragging it back to the lodge.

“Oh, hell no,” Cade jokes, elbowing me out of the way. “You're not the only one who gets to show off his muscles in front of our girl.”

“Hey now,” Sadie says in mock indignation. “I'm not here *just* for your muscles.”

“You sure about that?” Dex teases, striking a pose like he's some sort of male model.

Cade drops the tree and packs a snowball quickly, taking advantage of the easy target Dex is presenting and throwing the snowball straight at his chest.

Dex staggers backward half a step with a light “oomph,” and then he narrows his eyes.

“Oh, it's *on*.”

With that, he scoops up a double-handful of snow, letting two fresh snowballs fly. Cade dives behind the fallen tree, and Sadie's laughter rings out across the frozen landscape.

It's not long before she's packing her own ammunition, and when Cade and Dex share a silent look, then turn as one to team up against her, she darts behind me, using me for cover.

The guys let loose with a barrage of snowballs, laughing even harder when I let out an exaggerated sigh and cross my arms in front of my chest, presenting them with a solid wall as Sadie eggs them on, ducking down behind me with each new deluge.

"Seriously?" I ask dryly, looking down at my chest. "Are you guys twelve?"

My coat is now a solid mat of white, and when the next snowball hits my forehead and knocks my hat askew, Dex almost shits himself with how hard he laughs. I look up at the two of them and lift an eyebrow, taking one of my gloves off to carefully wipe it away before it blurs my vision.

Like Dex said, it's *on* now, and all I can say for my two best friends is that they've brought this on themselves.

I hold a hand out, and as if we've got some kind of psychic connection, Sadie plops an already packed snowball into it. "Get them, Noah! Take them out!"

"Oh shit," Cade says, his eyes going wide as I let the first one fly. "Remember that resort we stayed at in the Hamptons, when the off switch on the automatic tennis ball machine broke?"

This time, when I grin at him, I show all my teeth. "You're going down."

He dives for cover again, but it's too late. With Sadie keeping me well-supplied, I become a snowball throwing machine. It's not even a fair fight. When I want something, I go after it with a single-minded focus that nothing can derail, and while it's not in my nature to play very often, when I do, I play to win.

Cade and Dex, on the other hand, keep breaking ranks and tagging each other with snowballs too. It's... well, it's fun, actually.

When one of my friends gets in a lucky shot that skims past my shoulder and smacks into Sadie, my competitive nature takes a backseat to my protective one. She goes down with a breathless laugh, and I spin around with no regard to the open target I'm presenting by giving the others my back.

"Are you okay?" I ask.

"I'm perfect," she assures me, rosy cheeked and grinning, her blonde hair spread all around her like a halo.

She's not lying, even though I'm sure she doesn't mean it the way I do. Behind me, the guys are cracking up, peppering my back and ass with snowballs, but fuck. I can't look away from her, my eyes locked on hers like there's some kind of physical tie between us, holding me in place.

Then she shivers, and I thrust out a hand to haul her to her feet.

"Snow angels," I say as I pull her upright, catching her around the waist and holding her against me.

"What?" she asks, leaning against me as she brushes snow off herself.

"My favorite winter activity. I'm not Team Snowboard. I'm Team Snow Angel now."

Our gazes catch again, and the moment stretches out until Cade, the dickhead, manages to tag the back of my head with a perfect shot, cracking himself up in the process.

"Ow," Sadie says when the hit makes my forehead knock down into hers.

It doesn't manage to knock her grin away though. If anything, it turns her smile delightfully evil. She rubs at the red spot on her forehead, then reaches up to brush her fingers over the same spot on mine.

"Noah," she says with a mock seriousness that makes me grin. "You do realize this is war now?"

“Time to take them out?”

“Time to *destroy* them.”

CADE

MRS. CLAWS IS NOT IMPRESSED when we finally get back to the house, all four of us wet and cold from snowballs. At least, she's not impressed until she catches sight of the tree.

"You sure this is pine, and not made of catnip?" I joke over the sound of her excited mewling.

Dex laughs, shaking his head. "That's fir, not pine, city boy."

I raise an eyebrow. "I'm pretty sure you grew up in Denver. Last time I checked, that's a city too."

He flips me off with a grin, then says something about drying off as he heads up to his room. It's good to see him so relaxed for once. Between that and Noah actually letting loose a little, it's pretty clear this vacation is good for all of us.

Sadie is good for all of us.

It's a thought I can't shake, and after I follow the other three upstairs, my feet take me toward her room instead of my own.

Her door isn't fully closed, and when I tap on it, it swings open. "Hey, dream girl."

She's already started stripping off her snow-drenched clothing, and the sight of her half naked with her cheeks flushed makes me want to throw her down on the bed and ravish her.

Sadie turns and grins at me, making no effort at all to hide her lush body from me and she finishes changing into

something warm and dry.

“Hey, mystery man,” she quips back. “You got me a tree.”

The joy in her eyes makes something like pride swell in my chest. I fucking love that I put that happy expression on her face.

“Does the lodge have any Christmas decorations lying around?” I ask.

“Of course we do.”

As she speaks, she twists her gorgeous blonde waves up into a sloppy knot and secures it on top of her head. Loose tendrils hang around her face, the moisture from the snow melt making them curl, and she’s so fucking beautiful that it takes my breath away.

Sadie laughs as she notices me staring at her, tipping her head to one side. “Cade? Hello? Did you hear me?”

I grin, not even attempting to lie. “Nope. Tell me again, beautiful.”

“As you can probably guess from the weather out there, Whispering Pines was more of a spring, summer, and fall venue since the roads can be so unreliable during winter. But John did sometimes open it up for private events around the holidays. The Christmas decorations we used for those should be stored down in the basement.”

She saunters over to me as she answers my question, and once she’s close enough, I can’t help myself. I tuck one of those wayward curls behind her ear, pull her against me, and kiss her.

She smiles against my lips, then pushes me away. “You need to change into something dry.”

I slide my hand down her arm and interlace our fingers. “Want to help?”

She blinks up at me playfully, resting her free hand on my chest. “Why, Mr. McAllister, that’s what I’m here for, isn’t it? To provide you with any assistance you might need?”

My cock stirs. Even though we've agreed to set our working relationship aside while we're snowed in together like this, a thousand sexy boss-and-assistant scenarios flash through my mind.

Sadie laughs like she's reading my mind.

"I like the way you think," she whispers as she turns and pulls me down the hall behind her. "But first, we need to bring some Christmas magic to the lodge!"

I'm pretty sure she's already done that, but I don't fight it. I make quick work of pulling on some dry clothes of my own before grabbing a couple of flashlights and following her down to the basement to see what we can find.

"Wow." I let out a whistle once we make it down there, doing a slow turn to take it all in. "Tell me you're a hoarder without telling me you're a hoarder."

She laughs and smacks my arm. "Oh stop. I know it's a lot, but it's *organized*."

I'll have to take her word for that since Noah didn't hook up the overhead lights down here, and the limited circle of light we're able to cast in front of us makes it look like we're surrounded by virtual skyscrapers of crap.

"Lead the way," I say, giving her the benefit of the doubt.

She takes a few steps ahead, then pauses uncertainly. "Well, it's mostly organized. I think the Christmas things should be over there."

I'm not even sure how she can tell, other than the fact that she clearly knows this place inside and out. And to be fair, I can tell she's right about the organization. Everything our light hits that isn't too large for it is boxed up in plastic totes and neatly labeled.

But in defense of my hoarding joke, there are a *lot* of neatly labeled totes stored down here, enough that they're all crammed in together, stacked in such a way that in many places, the front ones will have to be moved to get at whatever is behind them.

Sadie leads us toward one of the far walls. “Around here, I think?”

“Let’s just move these out of the way,” I say, grabbing one that’s labeled *Conservation Compliance 2002-2006* from the top of a stack taller than Sadie’s head.

She bites her lip, then scoots out of the way. “We might be able to just get at them from the back,” she says, her voice a little muffled as she makes her way through the darkened maze, trying to come around the stack I’m working on from the rear.

Then she makes a startled little noise, followed by a short laugh, and curiosity gets the better of me.

“Did you find them?” I ask, stepping over the totes I just moved and weaving through the ones blocking her from my view.

I find her in front of a tall wooden support beam going from ceiling to floor. She looks up at me with a grin, shaking her head. “Not yet, but look at this.”

She shines her light on a spot about chest level for me, rubbing the beam with her finger.

She’s tracing something. A carving.

“SE + MK?” I read out loud. Then, making the logical jump, “Sadie Evans plus...?”

“Marty Kline,” she says fondly, a nostalgic look on her face. “Wow, I haven’t thought of him in *years*.”

“Good to know you’re not still pining,” I say, keeping it light despite a totally uncalled for surge of possessiveness.

“Hardly.” She gives an eye roll that soothes my inner beast. “I was maybe, what, fourteen when he carved this here? We were both at Whispering Pines for an outdoorsy summer camp that year.” She touches it again, then looks back at me with her dimples showing as two shadowed divots in her cheeks. “He was my first kiss, and it was horrible. Wet and sloppy and our teeth clacked so hard I think I bruised

something. But it also felt forbidden and fun, you know? So I'm glad we were able to commemorate it, even if..."

She trails off, her eyes soft and distant for a moment. Then she laughs ruefully and shakes her head.

"Even if what?" I press, the curiosity killing me a little.

Sadie looks away. "Even if I caught him kissing another girl the very next night. He spent the rest of the camp with her instead. My first kiss *and* my first heartbreak."

She says it lightly enough that I know she doesn't mean it. Or at least, doesn't mean it *now*. But I've got no doubt at all that her fourteen-year-old self was devastated, and I'm suddenly pissed at the hormone-ridden, pimply-faced little fucker who treated her that way.

"Marty Kline, you said?" There's a little growl to my voice, and I'm not going to apologize for it. "Is Marty short for Martin? Because I'd be happy to round up Dex and Noah and look him up for you."

Sadie tilts her head, a soft look on her face as she looks at me, then she goes up on her toes and kisses me. "Don't be silly," she whispers against my lips. "I'm over it."

"I'm not."

She lifts a brow, her lips trembling with suppressed laughter. "You *want* me to still be pining over Marty Kline?"

"What I want is to let the little fucker know he was an idiot not to appreciate how amazing you are."

"Oh, Cade..." she starts softly, something deeper than I should want to see in her eyes as she rests her hand on my jaw and gazes up at me.

I need to remember that this thing with her is casual. Fun and flirty and incredibly hot, but that's *all* it is. But when she lets her voice trail off without finishing that thought, tugging my head down for another kiss instead, I'm almost disappointed not to hear where she was going to go with it.

Then the kiss heats up a little, and I let go of the disappointment, pressing her back against the wooden beam

and making sure she forgets all about her first kiss by erasing it with a real one.

“Fuck,” I pant after our lips separate, letting my forehead rest against hers. “You’re addictive. If we don’t stop, you’re going to end up getting fucked against this beam, and we’ve got better things to do tonight than pick splinters out of your gorgeous ass.”

“Promise, promises,” she teases.

“Exactly. And if I remember correctly, one of those promises I made you was a fully decked-out Christmas tree.”

We break apart and keep looking, and while a lot of what’s stored here sounds like dull business records and practical supplies for maintaining the grounds, there are also little pockets of magic that make Sadie gasp in surprise or giggle with delight when we uncover them, each one prompting her to share another story of her past.

“You’ve got a lot of memories here,” I say once she finishes telling me about the bizarre set of circumstances under which the lodge ended up storing a six-foot hand-carved Bigfoot statue that’s lurking behind a stack of surplus flatware for the dining hall.

She nods, looking wistful as she strokes the statue’s monstrous chest for a moment. “I really do. In fact, the first time I ever—oh! *There* they are.”

Her eyes light up as she crows the last part triumphantly, skirting around me to push aside a storage tote intriguingly labeled with the word *shenanigans*.

I don’t even ask, because she’s right. She’s finally found the stash of holiday decor. Although the way her face lights up as she starts pulling boxes forward proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that I was right too. Christmas magic *is* real, and Sadie didn’t just bring it here to the lodge. She’s fucking glowing with it.

“Well, come on then. Let’s get these upstairs and get our holiday on.” I wedge my flashlight under my arm so I can grab a couple of the neatly labeled totes, and Sadie picks up a

wreath, a reindeer made of wire, and a sturdy-looking Christmas tree stand.

Then she gives me a smile so bright it almost blinds me. “I can’t wait.”

Holidays have never really been a thing I’ve gotten excited about before, but this one, for Sadie?

Neither can I.

SADIE

“MORE OMELETS?” Cade asks Dex when we reach the top of the stairs from the basement and step into the kitchen.

Dex shakes his head despite all evidence to the contrary—that evidence being a carton of eggs open on the counter in front of him. “Eggnog, so you’d better have some brandy on hand.”

Cade assures Dex that he does, and when Noah sees the tree stand I’m carrying, he swoops in and takes it from me as Cade and I deposit the rest of our haul in the middle of the great room, in front of the fireplace.

“What do you think?” Noah asks, following us into the room and putting his hands on his hips to survey the space. “Right there next to the couch?”

“Perfect,” I agree, although I’m not really talking about the placement of the tree. It’s these men, and the promise of something that feels like a real Christmas, and the way that—after the guys manage to wrangle the oversized fir tree into the room and get it secured in the tree stand—Noah’s first instinct is to go find Mrs. Claws and make sure she approves.

“You’d better not let her climb the tree once we get ornaments on it,” Dex warns as Noah cuddles the tiny kitten in his big hands. “She might choke on one of them or something.”

“Nah, she’s smarter than that,” Noah insists.

Mrs. Claws lifts her head and gives Dex a disdainful look, clearly agreeing with Noah. Then she gets all the way to her

feet, balancing on his arm, and curls her back into a high arch, opening her mouth wide to show off her tiny fangs as she stretches.

“But what if—” Dex breaks off with a laugh when the kitten leaps from Noah’s hands onto the nearest branch and promptly disappears into its foliage. “Oh shit. Should we, uh, save her?”

Cade looks up from where he’s started to unpack the totes we brought up from the basement. “Don’t you mean save the tree?” he asks as we all hear the sound of her clawing her way up the trunk.

Her head pops out of the branches up near the top, the narrow point where we’ll place a star swaying as she clings to it.

She looks down at Noah with wide eyes. “Meow?”

Even to me, her tone sounds a little nervous, but Noah just grins at her. “You’ve got this.”

She’s adorable, and I want to kick myself for leaving my phone up in my room. Luna would die of cuteness if I sent her a picture, and die of something else if I captured a shot of these three gorgeous men all staring up at the tiny kitten, bickering amongst themselves about whether it’s Mrs. Claws or the Christmas decorations we need to worry about.

After the little cat eventually makes it back down, Cade pulls out a long string of lights.

“We’ll be able to power these from the generator, right?” he asks Noah.

Noah nods. “I’ll switch it up a little once we figure out the setup we want. I’ll have to unplug something else, but we can make it happen.”

“Don’t lose the internet, though!” I beg him, realizing what’s missing right now. “I want to stream some Christmas music.”

He pulls out his phone, unlocks it with his thumbprint, and tosses it to me. “Go for it, sunshine.”

While I'm setting that up, Dex goes back into the kitchen to finish mixing up the eggnog, and Cade ropes me and Mrs. Claws into helping him untangle the Christmas lights.

I'm pretty sure only one of us is actually helpful, but I tactfully keep that to myself as she bats at the jumble of cords and then dives right into the middle.

"Thank you for your service," Cade teases, dangling the end of one of the light cords in front of her. She tries to pounce but is already too tangled up to get very far. She gives a pitiful meow and rolls onto her back, little paws waving in the air with a string of lights wrapped loosely around her belly and another draped over one ear.

Cade snaps a picture on his phone, then grins at me when I raise an eyebrow. "Mugshot. That much cuteness should be criminal."

I roll my eyes, because he's being ridiculous, but honestly, is there anything hotter than a man being won over by a kitten?

Noah hauls up another couple of Christmas totes from the basement, and by the time Dex comes back in with a tray full of eggnog and brandy, garnished with candy canes, the three of us have managed to untangle the rest of the lights and string them up on the tree.

"You going to share that?" Noah asks Dex, eyeing the frosted glasses.

"Ask me nicely," Dex says, making Noah snort and flip him off. Dex laughs. "That'll do." He adds a healthy slug of brandy to each mug, then passes them around, lifting his own. "Cheers to Christmas."

I laugh, but happily raise my glass along with the rest of them and clink them together, only to moan a little bit more suggestively than I mean to when I finally take a sip.

"Holy shit, Dex. This is amazing."

He shrugs, but I can tell the compliment means something to him. "Cade buys good brandy."

Cade elbows him in the ribs. “Not *that* good. She’s right. It’s delicious.”

Although Dex was right too. The brandy is top shelf, and by the time we finally get around to opening the totes full of Christmas decor, I can tell we’re all feeling a bit of a glow from it.

The playlist I pulled up spits out a Christmas classic that has us all singing along, and when Cade pulls a realistic-looking piece of plastic mistletoe out of one of the totes and holds it over my head, I’m not sure whether to laugh or swoon.

It’s like I’m living inside a Christmas movie—although definitely not one of those Hallmark or Lifetime ones. Not with the heated look Cade gives me as he leans in to take advantage of the mistletoe.

But Dex beats him to it, swooping in from behind and spinning me around to face him before stealing a kiss. I laugh breathlessly, clutching his broad shoulders for balance while Cade mutters a curse.

Dex finally lets me come up for air and grins at his friend. “You snooze, you lose.”

“How the hell was I snoozing? I’m the one who brought out the damn mistletoe.”

“Yeah, but you didn’t seem to know what to do with it.”

Cade splutters, and Noah snatches the mistletoe from him with a smirk, tugging me right out of Dex’s arms. “Well, I do.”

I start laughing at the expression on Cade’s face—like someone just snatched the last cookie out of the cookie jar, right from under his nose—but then my laugh turns into something else entirely when Noah holds the mistletoe above me and crushes his lips to mine.

“Yeah, you do,” I agree breathlessly when we finally break apart, smoothing my hands over his chest. “But...”

Noah’s eyebrows shoot up when I draw the word out to tease him. “But? Oh, hell no. There was no ‘but’ about that

kiss. That kiss was fucking top notch.”

“It was,” I soothe him, patting his chest as I try not to laugh. “I still think I need some comparison though.”

“Comparison?” Dex throws a puffy snowman decoration at Noah’s head. “What am I, chopped liver?”

Noah snorts, catching the snowman in one hand. “Not even *you* could make chopped liver taste good.”

“That... doesn’t even make sense,” Dex starts in as I slip out from under Noah’s arm and pluck the mistletoe from his hand.

“Cade?” When he looks up at me, I give the little piece of greenery a wave. “*Do* you know what to do with this?”

“Hell yeah, I do,” he says, then shows me that it’s true.

By the time he’s done proving his point, Dex is right there handing me a fresh glass of eggnog that’s more brandy than nog, and Noah is busy setting up a nativity scene on the mantel made up of snowmen and nutcrackers.

“Please tell me you’re not going to put a snowball in the manger,” I say, making a face.

He turns and grins down at me, and it’s the most lighthearted I’ve seen him look since we met. “Of course not.”

He proudly holds a walnut up in his hand, then pops it into the little manger to complete the set.

By the time we empty out the totes, I really am tipsy, and I’ve lost count of the kisses each man has stolen under the mistletoe. Mrs. Claws got bored with our antics long ago, retreating under the tree like the world’s most adorable present to nap when the men started dancing with me around the room, and I can honestly say it’s the best time I’ve had in... maybe ever.

“How are we doing so far?” Cade asks, coming up behind me as I place a few final ornaments on the tree. He slips his arms around my waist and rests his chin on top of my head. “Is it shaping up to be a good Christmas?”

“You have no idea.” I sigh happily as I take it all in. He keeps calling me that, his dream girl, but this whole day has felt like a dream. It’s like nothing I’ve ever experienced before, and I can’t remember the last time I felt so happy and carefree, not thinking about anything but the present moment or wishing I was anywhere but right here.

If this is how they intend to spoil me, they’re definitely succeeding.

“Oh shit.” Dex laughs once we’ve managed to find a place for every last ornament on the tree. He’s crouched down by the wall, shaking his head. “I forgot the power was out.”

I look over, and sure enough, he’s plugged the string of lights into the wall socket. I actually forgot too, until he reminded me. The room is warm and cozy, we have cheerful music playing, and even though it’s gotten dark outside the windows, there’s plenty of light thanks to the extension cords that Noah ran from the generator to the lamps set up around the seating area.

“I can hook them up to the generator as soon as we finish with the tree,” Noah says, holding Mrs. Claws firmly against his chest since she became a little bit too enthusiastic about ‘helping.’

I laugh. “I’m not sure how much more we can add to it when it’s already perfect.”

Not magazine-worthy perfect. Not by a long shot. But still, perfect.

“Looks like not much.” Cade holds up an empty tote. “Not unless you guys want to dig up some more stuff from the basement.”

“That tree’s going to topple right over if we try to put anything else on it,” Dex declares, leaving the Christmas lights alone and coming over to stand next to me. He bumps my shoulder with his. “Looks pretty good though, doesn’t it, kitten?”

“It’s perfect,” I repeat, grinning hard.

“Eh, not bad,” Dex says, just to be contrary.

I nudge his shoulder right back. “Quit being a grinch. You just said it looked good.”

“I think he said *pretty* good,” Cade adds, adding another splash of brandy to his now empty glass. “Unless I’m mistaken, that’s about one ornament shy of perfect.”

Noah nods, his big arms crossed over his chest. “Cade is right. It’s missing something.”

“You’re kidding. You can barely see the branches through all those ornaments!”

That’s my fault, but I wasn’t going for a “theme” the way my mother always insisted during the holidays we spent together while I was growing up. I didn’t want to leave a single ornament out, from the gaudy ones to the gorgeous.

Noah looks down at me, then finally cracks the tiniest smile. “I mean, you may be too small to see that high up, but...”

He uses the hand not holding Mrs. Claws to gesture toward the top of the tree.

I gasp. “We forgot the star!”

“Wait, do we even have one?” Dex frowns, heading over to the stack of mostly empty totes and rooting around in them before answering his own question. “Nope. Guess we don’t.”

Noah full-on grins. “I stole it for the nativity scene.” He nods his head toward the fireplace mantel where, sure enough, a gorgeous golden star is propped up behind the snowmen and nutcrackers positioned around the tiny manger. “I guess we can use it for the tree though.”

“Damn right we will,” I say, marching over and plucking it—carefully—off the mantel. “This Christmas is going to be *perfect*.”

I turn back to the tree and realize the flaw in my plan. It’s an eight-foot fir that reaches even higher in the tree stand. Me, on the other hand? Well, let’s just say my arms are *not* three feet tall, so there’s no way I’m going to get it up there on my own.

Noah chuckles, clearly reading the dilemma on my face. “Come here. Let me help with that.”

I walk over to him, shaking my head. “I don’t think even *you* are tall enough. Not without knocking off those ornaments you placed at the top.”

“You’re right.” He grins, then settles the now-sleeping Mrs. Claws on a throw pillow before turning me around so I’m facing the tree. He leans down, his breath tickling the back of my neck as he whispers, “But team work makes the dream work. Isn’t that what they say?”

Then he grips my hips and lifts me up like I weigh nothing.

“Are you sure?” I ask reflexively, clutching the star to my chest even though he’s already got my feet off the ground. “I don’t want you to, um...” No way am I saying out loud anything like *strain yourself*. “I mean, you could just do it yourself.”

He laughs, a low, sexy vibration. “You just told me I couldn’t. And do you really think I’m going to pass up a chance to get my hands on you while this arrangement we’ve got going gives me a free pass?”

I bite my lip, my cheeks heating up. But this time, not from anxiety or embarrassment.

He means it. He *wants* to touch me.

I brush aside the stupid insecurities I’ve been indoctrinated with and place the star on top of the tree, taking my time to make sure it’s secure. Noah’s arms never even tremble, and once it’s done, he sets me down gently but keeps his hands on me, pulling me back against his chest.

“Beautiful,” he murmurs, and even though he’s behind me and I can’t tell for sure, I get the distinct feeling he’s not looking at the tree.

None of them are.

“Nothing better,” Dex agrees quietly, his gaze locked on me. “You really do have the best ideas.”

That last part is directed at Cade, who nods, watching me with a soft, sexy smirk on his face.

I lick my lips as the silence stretches, heat and possibility building between all four of us. The whole day has felt fun and carefree and sweetly wholesome even with the constant undertone of sexual tension. But now the energy shifts.

“Sadie...” Noah starts to say from behind me, a low note in his voice that makes me squeeze my thighs together.

But before he gets any further, the lamps flicker for a split second, and then the tree lights up.

I gasp with surprise and delight. It’s not just beautiful—

“It’s magic,” I whisper, smiling so hard it hurts.

Cade chuckles. “Damn right. As promised.”

Dex snorts, but he’s grinning too. “I’m pretty sure you don’t get to claim credit for the power coming back on.”

Cade shrugs, his eyes sparkling. “I refuse to reveal my secrets.”

“But what happens at the lodge stays at the lodge, right?”

“That’s right,” I say, my heart racing as I step out of Noah’s arms and turn to face all three of them.

I know Dex was just joking, needling Cade a little the way these three tend to do with each other. But we *do* have a free pass here at the lodge, and the power coming back on is a reminder that it’s not going to last forever. Things will go back to normal soon enough, and like Noah said last night, if this is what we get...

“I don’t want to waste any time.”

They’re all looking at me with heated intensity, but none of them make a move, all three waiting to follow my lead.

Cade is the one who asks. “What *do* you want, dream girl?”

“I want you to fuck me.” I make eye contact with each of them, swallowing hard. Not with nerves, but with anticipation.

“All three of you. Together.”

SADIE

JUST SAYING it out loud makes my core clench with desire, and I don't even have time to let nerves overtake it before three sets of eyes—burning amber, midnight blue, and forest green—flare with a matching heat. None of the men move, and yet the reaction rolling off of them makes me feel more wanted than anything they could possibly do.

I suck in a shuddering breath, knowing it's a yes, even before they say so.

Better, I know it's a *hell* yes, and that each one of them wants this just as much as I do—not just me, but sharing me.

Dex steps forward, gripping my hair and tugging until my head tips back. He stares down at me for long enough that I'm almost panting before finally leaning down until his lips just barely brush mine.

“All that time, craving you from afar while you wasted time with my brother, I had no idea what a filthy fucking girl you were,” he murmurs.

My breath hitches. “Now you do.”

“I'm about to,” he corrects me. And then he kisses me, claiming my mouth like he owns it.

When I whimper, melting against him, he tugs my hair a little harder, making me gasp as he stares down at me.

“You want to get fucked like the dirty girl you are? You want all three of our cocks inside you tonight?”

I nod, my tongue darting out to wet my lips as my mouth goes dry. “Yes.”

The look on Dex’s face turns me on just as much as his words do, but it’s the intensity in Cade’s and Noah’s eyes as they watch that makes me feel like I’m going to combust before they’ve even really touched me.

Dex works his fingers deeper into my hair, massaging the back of my head with them as his other hand trails down my throat and Cade steps up behind me.

Cade moves my hair to the side, baring my neck, then leans down to kiss me right behind my ear.

A shiver goes through me, and his hands land on my hips. “This will be a lot. You’re jumping into the deep end here, talking about getting fucked by the three of us. Are you sure you can take it?” he asks, a challenge in his voice.

I press my ass back, rubbing myself against the thick line of his hard on.

“I can definitely take it.” I smile up into Dex’s eyes as I answer Cade. “And didn’t someone promise me the best Christmas ever?”

Cade chuckles from behind me, and Dex’s answering grin turns positively filthy as he grips my chin and pushes two fingers into my mouth.

I wrap my tongue around them and suck.

Dex groans. “Yeah, pretty sure someone did.”

He strokes the inside of my mouth, and my panties grow wet with arousal. It reminds me of the night I spent getting fucked by the two of them, but this is different. Better.

Because this time, Noah is here too.

I reach up and take hold of Dex’s wrist, sliding his fingers out of my mouth and turning my head toward Noah. I can feel his piercing dark blue eyes watching me, but he hasn’t said yes yet. He hasn’t said he wants this too.

“Noah?”

“What’s on the table?” he rasps, his protective, safety-oriented nature present even now. “What exactly are you up for, sunshine?”

“You,” I answer, biting my lip. “All of you.”

Cade’s hands flex on my hips. “For anything?”

“Yes,” I breathe, knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that no matter what I say, none of these men will ever give me more than I can handle.

“I need specifics,” Noah says, finally coming close enough to touch. Cade moves a little to the side, and Noah steps closer, one big hand snaking around my waist. “How do you want to be fucked?” His hand slides from my waist down to my ass and squeezes. “Where do you want to be fucked?”

I suck in a breath, my thighs clenching. “Yes.”

Dex laughs, and even Noah grins at me. “That’s not an answer.”

“I think it’s a great answer,” Cade says, pulling my sweater up. “But if you want specifics, Noah... dream girl? Do you want to be fucked naked?”

“Yes.”

I love their hands on me. Rough calluses dragging across my soft skin. The way each one of them is so much bigger than me and knows exactly how to be a little rough while still making me feel like they’re handling something precious.

Cade finishes taking my sweater off, and Dex unhooks my bra, filling his hands with my breasts after he drops it to the floor.

“These are so fucking gorgeous,” he says, gently kneading them as he rubs my nipples. “What else are you going to let us do? Tie you up?”

A shiver moves through me. “Yes.”

Noah stops squeezing my ass and flicks open the button on my pants, unzipping them and tugging them down. He leaves them around my thighs, which should feel awkward but

doesn't. Not with the distraction of his fingers stroking over the fabric of my panties.

"Spank you?" he asks, heat glinting in his eyes.

"Yes. God. Anything."

Cade rubs my ass, then pulls my panties to the side and slides his fingers between my cheeks.

I suck in a sharp breath, heat flooding my core when he circles one finger around my asshole, teasing the sensitive flesh and making me squirm.

"How about this?" he whispers. "Are we invited in here?"

I nod, my body flushing with heat. My breath stutters and my nipples harden under his gaze. I've never done anal before, but I can't imagine any way I wouldn't want these men to have me.

Cade and Dex both groan.

Cade pushes one finger slowly inside.

Noah keeps stroking his fingers through my wetness, teasing my clit and circling it, but not touching it the way I need him to.

It's enough to drive me crazy.

Dex leans down and sucks a nipple into his mouth. I thread my fingers through his hair, holding him there.

"Please," I whisper, even though I don't know what it is I'm asking for. I just want more. More of their hands on me, more of them filling me. More of everything.

Noah slides two fingers inside me, making me buck against him. He pumps them in and out a few times, and I start to shake. "What do you want in this pussy? More fingers? My cock? My fist? My tongue?"

Each suggestion works me up even more, until the coiling tension inside me has me shaking.

"Anything," I whimper, meaning it.

I get three predatory alpha-male smiles in return, and Dex straightens up again, dragging a thumb over my lips until I part them for him. “You’re opening up a lot of possibilities here. Between the three of us, I think we can fill you up real good.”

“Especially if anything goes,” Cade murmurs, his lips against the back of my neck and his finger easing its way into my asshole.

I gasp, and Dex’s fingers invade my mouth again as Noah finally eases my panties all the way down, then drops to his knees in front of me and finishes stripping me below the waist.

He frames my hips with his hands, then looks up at me with the burning intensity he brings to everything. “You look fucking fantastic like this.”

“Naked?” I ask as a shiver rolls through me. I instinctively spread my legs for him as Cade and Dex torment me with their hands, lips, and tongues.

“Wet,” Noah corrects me. “But...”

“But?” I prompt him breathlessly as his fingers dig into my softness.

He tugs me toward him, then looks back up at me with a wicked grin. “But I guarantee I can get you even wetter.”

My breath leaves me in a rush, but it’s cut short as Dex slides his fingers out of my mouth and kisses me again. His hand wraps around my throat, holding me firmly in place and making me melt even more.

Noah leans forward and swipes his tongue over my clit, and I can’t stop the moan that escapes. He groans in response, wrapping his hands around my legs and pulling me closer to him.

Dex moves his lips to my neck and sucks at a bruise there, and I lean into him, pressing myself against his chest as Cade slides his finger from my ass and pulls his hand away.

“How does she taste?” he asks Noah, his voice rough.

“Fuck, even better than I remember,” Noah rumbles, his tongue moving over me in long strokes. “Sweet like candy.”

Dex nips at my earlobe, running his fingers down my throat. “What a pretty picture you make. We could fuck every single one of your holes and leave you dripping with cum, couldn’t we?”

I can’t stop the whimper that escapes. “Please,” I gasp, the filthy image pushing me right to the edge as Noah laps at me.

He sucks my clit between his teeth, and the pleasure building inside me snaps. My legs wobble, a naked cry pouring from my lips as I fall apart.

“Now that’s fucking gorgeous,” Cade growls, pressed up against me from behind. “You just came all over his face.”

“Yeah, she did,” Dex murmurs, pulling my head back to stare down at me. “Do you have a few more of those in you, kitten?”

Part of me wants to melt down into a puddle of bliss, because the first orgasm was just that good. But the bigger part of me wants to lean into the moment and see how far they can push me. “Yes,” I manage, breathless. “God, yes.”

“Then I’m going to need a few more for myself,” Noah says, standing up and wrapping his hand around the back of my neck. He leans down and kisses me hard, the taste of me on his lips, then turns me toward Dex. “But not until I see what these two can get out of you.”

Cade moves away as Dex devours my mouth, threading his hands through my hair and tipping my head back with a groan. “I can taste your pussy,” he murmurs against my lips. “Gotta thank Noah for that.”

“I’m right here,” Noah says, his big hands wrapping around my waist from behind as he grinds his hard length against my lower back. “Thank me by giving her what she’s asking for.”

All three of them are still fully clothed, and the rough denim of Noah’s jeans as he grinds against me takes the

languid post-orgasmic bliss my body wants to fall into and turns it into something urgent and needy.

“I want you all to give me what I asked for,” I breathe out, loving the feel of being sandwiched between the two men like this. “I want everything you can think of tonight.”

“Then you’ll get it,” Dex promises.

“Me first,” Cade says, pulling me away from Dex and Noah and easing me down onto the plush rug in front of the Christmas tree. “Noah got your pussy wetter for us. Now I want to make it even sweeter.”

The multicolored lights reflect in his eyes as he leans over me, and it’s not until I feel the pressure of something slick and hard rubbing against my clit that I realize he means that literally.

“Is that... a candy cane?” I ask, an illicit thrill moving through me as I spread my legs for him.

It’s one of the things he stocked up on, and although we hung some mini ones on the tree, there were a few jumbo sized ones that Noah put up on the mantel. Cade must’ve grabbed this one from there, because it’s definitely not one of the tiny ones.

Cade gives me a dirty grin, then drags the sticky candy along my slit and pushes it inside me. “Sure is, dream girl. Let’s see which is sweeter.”

“No contest,” Noah says as Cade strokes it in and out of me a few times, making me whimper.

“I like them thicker,” I tease, panting a little as my inner muscles clench around the hard stick of candy. It’s much thicker than a regular candy cane, but it’s still got nothing on their cocks. “Long, and thick, and hard.”

Cade smirks. “It’s not the size. It’s how you use it.”

I moan, because he’s using it really, really well.

“Can’t argue with that,” Dex agrees, palming himself through his jeans as he watches Cade start to fuck me with the candy cane.

He doesn't give me any warning. Just slides it out and then fucks it into me smoothly, making my back arch off the floor as he pushes it inside me and hits my g-spot. Again... and again... and again.

"Oh shit," I gasp, my core starting to tighten again as something decadent builds inside me. My back arches, my fingers digging into the rug.

"Yeah," Noah rasps as I hear the sound of his zipper coming down. "That's what I like to see. Let yourself go. Give us another. Show us exactly how sweet that tight little pussy of yours can get."

His filthy words are the last thing I need to take me over the edge. I fly apart, writhing and gasping as a second orgasm overtakes me.

"Fucking beautiful," Cade murmurs, his voice low. He slides the candy cane out of me and holds it to my mouth, his eyes locked with mine. "But you made a mess. Now lick it up."

My heart beats wildly, but I part my lips for him, my thighs still trembling from the second orgasm, and let him slide the wet stick over my tongue the way he slid it into my pussy.

All three of the men groan, and it should be impossible for me to want them this badly with my body still lax from pleasure, but god, I do.

"Take it," Cade murmurs as he teases my tongue with the candy. "Suck it. Get it clean."

I squeeze my thighs together, needing pressure on my throbbing clit, and do what he wants. The candy tastes like a mix of peppermint and my arousal, and I can't help the moan that slips out as I suck on it, imagining it's one of the cocks I crave.

Cade's eyes blaze as he watches me, and when he finally pulls the candy cane away, he's panting as hard as I am. "I need to fuck you."

“Then fuck me,” I whisper, my eyes going from him to Noah to Dex. “I’m yours.”

Cade tosses the candy cane aside and rises to his feet, reaching behind his back to grab his shirt. He pulls it over his head, revealing enough abs and ink to make my mouth water.

“Not so fast.” Noah smirks as he holds up the last string of Christmas lights. “We’ve still got a little more decorating to do.”

Dex laughs, shaking his head as he strips down to reveal even more mouthwatering muscle. “Fuck no. We’ve done enough of that.”

“Gotta disagree.” Noah gives me a look that makes me want to beg for whatever debauched thing he’s dreaming up right now. “We’ve still got a little left to do. Sunshine? Lie back again for us. Arms over your head.”

The lights flicker as I do it, but the power steadies out again. Lying naked and spread out like a gift under the tree for the three of them—warmed by the fire as the light of its flames flicker over my skin—I’ve never felt sexier in my life.

“What are you going to do?” I ask breathlessly.

Noah’s lips slowly tilt up, his smile full of wicked promise. “Anything we want, sunshine. Actually, *everything* we want.”

SADIE

MY PULSE STARTS TO RACE, and I'm nodding, giving him permission before he even stops speaking.

“Good girl,” Noah rumbles. He’s the only one still dressed now that Cade and Dex have stripped down, and he holds up the string of lights in his hands. “Now let’s tie you up and see how many more times we can make you come before the storm lets up.”

“It’s a blizzard,” I say teasingly, earning a small smile from.

“Damn right it is.” He hands the lights off to Dex and pulls his Henley over his head. He’s already unzipped himself—I’m pretty sure he was stroking himself while Cade played with me—and it doesn’t take him long to finish undressing.

By the time he kneels down next to me, I can see all of him. Those thick thighs, his broad shoulders, his washboard abs. And that *cock*.

I lick my lips. I know what he tastes like now, and I’m dying for a repeat. But I’m not the one in charge here, and Noah has already said he has other plans for me first.

Plans that Dex and Cade are clearly on board with.

“So greedy. You want all your holes filled, don’t you?” Cade murmurs.

I nod. Somehow, he’s already learned to read me like a book, because I haven’t said a word.

He grins. “But you know what has to happen first.”

I lift my wrists.

“That’s right.” Noah takes the string of lights back from Dex as he kneels beside me. He turns my face toward him and kisses me hard, making it clear that no matter what’s about to happen, he’s still completely in control. They all are. The men are setting the pace. I’m just their plaything, and I love it this way.

“You think your pussy is relaxed enough to take my cock yet?” he asks as he starts to tie me up, binding me just tightly enough that I feel sexy and secure.

“I can take anything you give me,” I shoot back breathlessly, tugging against the restraints a little to test them.

He grins at me. “I know you can. But maybe we should have some mercy on Cade first. He looks like he’s going to blow if he doesn’t get inside this sweet pussy.”

“Besides, he deserves a reward for making this all possible,” Dex throws out, watching us with a fierce intensity that turns me on even more. “This whole arrangement was his idea, and I think we all owe him for that.”

“We do.” I nod, squirming on the plush rug. “I want him to fuck me.”

Dex gives me a ravenous grin. “Good. Besides, if he gets your pussy, that leaves your ass for me. I can’t wait to be the first one to take it. I’ve been dreaming of *that* for longer than you want to know.”

He’s already on his knees, and he reaches for my ankles, pushing my legs up toward my chest and spreading them wide, putting me on display for all three of them.

“Fuck, look at that sweet little pussy. You’re dripping.”

“Uh-uh.” Cade nudges him aside. “That’s mine right now, remember?”

“I could tie her in this position,” Noah says, stroking my thighs. “Give you easy access.”

He’s already got my arms fully bound, and even wound the string of lights around my chest, making my breasts stand out.

But Cade shakes his head.

“Nah. If we want to change positions, that might get in the way.”

“Do I get a say in this?” I tease, knowing for sure they’ll do whatever I need but loving the feeling of being at their mercy.

Cade smirks. “Do you want one?”

“I want you to make good on all of those promises,” I breathe out, my skin flushing with arousal. “Fuck me.”

Cade’s eyes darken, but Noah shoots him a quick look that holds him back.

“Does anything pinch?” he asks me, checking in with me as he runs his fingers under the string of lights in every place they’re wrapped around my skin, making sure they’re not cutting off circulation. “Any of this shit bothering you, sunshine?”

He makes this so much more than just a fantasy. He makes sure I’m safe too, which is probably why I can so easily let myself go so far with these three.

I nod at Noah, trying to hold in a smile when his eyes sharpen at my response, his whole body tensing up as he goes on high alert. His reaction makes my pulse speed up, until it’s thrumming in time with the throb of arousal between my legs.

“What’s wrong?” Noah demands. “Tell me. What’s bothering you?”

I give him a playful pout. “It’s bothering me that I still don’t have a cock inside me.”

I’m reminded of just how much Noah likes to watch when the concern on his face melts into a look of hunger, the change happening so fast that it leaves me breathless.

“Cade,” he growls without taking his eyes off me. “You promised our girl a good fuck. Time to get on that.”

All three men are kneeling on the rug around me, the Christmas lights playing over their hard bodies like art. Dex

and Noah move out of the way while Cade positions himself between my legs, wrapping a hand around his thick length and stroking himself.

“Don’t worry, I’ve got you,” he promises, leaning forward so that he’s hovering over me, settled between my thighs. “Is this what you want?”

I whimper and writhe against the restraints, desperate to get even closer to him. “Yes. Please.”

“You’re going to have to spell it out for me. What is it exactly that you want me to do to you? Stuff that sweet pussy full of cock? Fill you up with my cum to slick the way for my friends? Make you scream for us?”

“All of it,” I tell him, panting as the heat builds inside me. “God, you’re killing me.”

“Good thing I’m here to save you too, then,” he says with a hungry smile, finally slipping inside me.

Just the tip.

Noah grabs my bound wrists, keeping them pulled back high above my head, so I wrap my legs around Cade’s waist, trying to pull him deeper.

He grins down at me. “Is this what you want?”

He starts to fuck into me with short, shallow thrusts that barely let me feel his piercings. Teasing me. Torturing me. Giving me just a few inches at a time and driving me crazy.

“Please, god, just... *Cade*,” I pant, writhing beneath him.

Noah chuckles, the sound dark and sexy. “She’s so fucking desperate for it. Two orgasms already, and this perfect woman is still begging for more.”

“She’s desperate for *us*,” Dex corrects him, running a hand down the back of my thigh to my ass, then playing with the tight bud back there again.

I gasp, the sensation even more of a turn on with Cade inside me.

“You want more?” Dex asks, stroking my hole as he stares down at me. “I’ll give you more. I can’t wait to fill up your luscious ass and show you just how fucking good it can be that way too.”

“Fuck, she likes that,” Cade grits out, surging forward to bury himself to the hilt. “Isn’t that right, dream girl?”

“Yes,” I gasp, rocking my hips up.

He drops down on top of me with his arms braced on either side of my head, grinding against me as if he can somehow get even deeper.

“Gonna fuck you hard,” he murmurs against my lips.

“Please. Do it.”

He kisses me first, and I moan, instinctively reaching for him. I want to bury my hands in his hair and hold him here, deepen the kiss and inhale his taste as he drives me closer and closer to the peak.

But I can’t. My arms are bound, and Noah still holds my wrist in place.

He tugs them back, stretching my body out as Cade breaks our kiss and finally starts to fuck me. Slow and deep for a moment, allowing me to practically count his piercings as they slide in and out, but then harder. Faster.

“Oh god,” I gasp, my body tightening around him. “*More.*”

“Her tits look fucking amazing like this,” Dex says, moving to kneel up by my chest. He runs his palms over my nipples as Cade’s thrusts make them bounce and shake, even with the bindings Noah wrapped around them.

“Fuck, that’s good,” Cade groans as my walls start to tighten around him, rocking back on his heels. He fucks me slower but deeper, rubbing my clit while he uses his other hand to push one of my thighs back. “Tighten up like that one more time. Milk my cock. Show me how much you want to be filled up and filthy with my cum.”

The dirty words make my body instinctively react, and when my inner muscles squeeze around him, Cade’s breath

turns choppy.

“That’s it. Like that. Your body was made for this. For all of us.”

Dex is still kneeling next to me, playing with my breasts, stroking and sucking them.

Noah leans over me from above, kissing my neck and then my mouth.

I moan into it, surrounded by them and already so close to breaking apart again that it almost feels like an out of body experience.

Then Cade picks up the pace, Dex’s calloused fingers rubbing and pinching my nipples just on the right side of pain, and I do break, twisting my head to the side to gasp and beg without any shame at all.

“Oh, god, yes, that, *please*. Make me come again.”

“Is that what you need, sunshine?”

“Greedy girl.”

“Well, since you asked so nicely...”

Dex is the one who gives me a wicked grin. Then he lowers his mouth to one nipple, sucking on it until I’m practically crying before biting down lightly. My whole body arches off the floor, a sharp cry of pure desperation ripping from my throat. I’m teetering right on the edge of another tidal wave of pleasure, and the only thing I want is to let it crash over me again.

But the men have other plans.

Dex pulls back and Cade slows his thrusts.

“Not yet,” Noah says, his big hand cupping my cheek as he stares down at me. “Not until you let Dex have your ass. Have you ever taken two cocks at the same time? Had both of your holes stuffed until you scream?”

I shudder, almost coming from the dirty words alone. “No,” I whisper.

Noah's smile is pure, predatory fire. "If you can take mine, you can take two. Especially in different holes." He looks up, making eye contact with Cade. "Flip her over."

Cade wraps his arms around me and rolls us so that he's beneath me. Dex helps me straddle him while Noah hooks my bound arms around his neck.

I may be the one on top, but Cade proves that he's still fully in charge when he flexes his abs to drive into me from below.

"Oh god," I gasp when Dex's hands land on my ass. He kneads my curves as Cade fucks me harder, the position they've got me in making my clit grind against him every time he thrusts.

"I can't..." I gasp, the friction so good I start to tremble. "I'm going to... I... oh god."

"Be good for us," Cade grits out, but it's too late. They don't want me to come yet, but I can't stop it. Cade fucks too damn well, and with all three of them watching me, touching me, there's no way to hold it back.

The orgasm slams through me, tensing my muscles and forcing a keening wail from my throat.

"Oh fuck," Dex groans, spreading my ass wide as pleasure rocks through me. "Fucking *look* at that. Look at how greedy that little hole of yours is. It's already clenching for me. Begging for attention. Getting nice and primed for my cock."

Cade groans, burying his face in my neck and holding me tightly against him. His muscles feel like steel bands wrapped around me as his shaft pulses, his entire body rigid beneath me.

"Fucking Christ," he grits out as he holds himself back. "Not... *yet*. You can't have my cum until you've got all of us inside you. That's the deal."

I whimper, his words slamming into me with another aftershock of pleasure that's almost as strong as the first one

Then he drags me off his cock, his hands on my ass, pulling my cheeks open.

“Get in there,” he grits out, looking at Dex. “Loosen her up.”

I melt into Cade’s body, pressed flat against him with my tits rubbing against his hard pecs.

“With fucking pleasure,” Dex says, running his thumbs down the crease between my cheeks and pressing them against my asshole. He rubs slow, sensual circles around it, relaxing it slowly.

Then he spits on it.

I gasp, the sensation filthy and lewd.

“No lube,” Dex murmurs. “I’ve gotta get you wetter back here too.”

“I’ll grab you some,” Noah tells him, getting to his feet as Dex continues rubbing those maddening little circles around my sensitive opening.

Dex grunts his thanks to Noah without letting up the attention he’s giving my ass, and he’s right. Now that he’s gotten it wet, it feels... different. Slick and sensual and sexy.

Then he palms, both my cheeks, leans in, and—

“Fuck,” I gasp when he swipes his tongue right over my asshole.

I shudder. The feeling is nothing like having my pussy eaten out. But it feels good in a way I never expected, and it turns my languid post orgasmic glow into a growing fire.

Dex chuckles, his stubble rasping between my cheeks. Then he does it again.

I moan, and Cade gathers my hair in one hand, wrapping it around his fist, and kisses me hard as this foreign new pleasure ripples through me.

My thighs shake with it, and before I even realize what I’m doing, I break the kiss and push myself up to my knees.

“More,” I beg, straddling Cade as I press my ass back toward Dex, my bound hands still locked behind Cade’s neck.

Cade grins up at me as Dex gives me exactly what I just asked for. He licks me again, firm and slow, before spreading me even wider and pressing the tip of his tongue against my softening hole like he’s trying to fuck me with it.

Cade’s eyes blaze when I gasp, and he palms my tits. “God, you’re fucking sexy. You like Dex’s mouth on you? You going to let him in back there? Beg him to fill up that virgin ass for you?”

SADIE

MY ONLY ANSWER is a needy whimper as my mouth drops open, the pleasure swirling and building inside me and my breath punching out in short, shuddering pants.

Whatever Cade sees on my face has him groaning. “Fuck, you really are a dirty girl. So damn good for us. A slut for all the cock we can give you. Ready to take it any way we want to give it.”

He releases his hold on my hair, letting it drop down around us like a curtain as he runs his hands down my sides, kneads my ass while Dex eats it out, then reaches between us and fingers me.

“Oh god,” I gasp, grinding down on the heel of his hand, driving his fingers in deeper. Then pushing back, needing *more* as Dex relentlessly licks and sucks and teases my asshole with his tongue.

Then Noah comes back, tossing the lube to Dex and then crouching down next to me and pulling my hair aside. He turns my face toward him, gripping my chin.

“We can all hear how much you like it, but do *not* come again yet.” He kisses me before biting my bottom lip. “If you do, there will be consequences this time.”

A shudder rocks through me, and all I can think of is the way he asked if they could spank me.

“You going to be good now and let Dex work you open so we can all take you together?” he asks.

“Yes. I mean, no. I mean, I—I won’t come,” I gasp as Dex pushes a slick finger inside my ass.

But I know it’s a lie. With him fingering my ass and Cade’s fingers still buried in my pussy, I won’t last. I can’t.

“Oh, fuck, you’re so damn tight,” Dex mutters, working his finger in and out, the sensation foreign and filthy. “I’ve got you all wet and soft back here, I can tell you’re still going to strangle my dick once I get inside you. Are you sure you can take it?”

My thighs tremble, my core clenching as a soft whimper slips out. “Do it. Please.”

“So goddamn greedy,” Noah repeats with a burning intensity that tells me he approves of that.

“Fuck yeah, she is.” Dex pulls away to drizzle cold lube on me, then pushes his finger back into me.

No, not finger. *Fingers*. Definitely more than one.

“Oh god,” I gasp, shaking. The stretch burns a little, almost painful. Then, as Dex slowly starts fucking me with them—sliding his fingers in and out, turning and scissoring them, lubing them up even more and finally adding a third—the burn turns into a different kind of heat.

“That’s it,” Cade encourages, grinding harder against my clit with three fingers deep inside my pussy. “Let him work you open back there. Fuck, I can feel him moving inside you.”

He groans out that last part, and the tension inside me pulls so taut that I feel like I’m going to snap.

“Fuck her,” Cade grits out, like he’s in the same boat. “Get in that ass, Dex.”

“I’ll come,” I warn, already so close I can taste it.

Noah tugs my hair, and a bolt of sensation cracks through me like a whip. “You remember what I said. There will be consequences if you do.”

I shudder, and he gives me a slow smile full of dark promises.

“But that’s what you want, isn’t it? Such a good girl, giving us everything. But you want to be bad too. You want it a little rough. Want a little punishment for letting yourself go like this. Okay, then. *Come*, sunshine. Do it. Give me a reason to spank you later.”

Like the three of them are somehow perfectly in sync, both Cade and Dex hit just the right spots when Noah gives the order, and the wave I’ve been holding back breaks over me like a tsunami. Their dirty words wash over me as I ride it out, the tension that’s built up in my core spreading out in a warm ripple that makes me feel relaxed and boneless and spoiled, just like they’ve promised me from the beginning.

I open my eyes, not sure when they closed, and Cade kisses me tenderly.

“Ready to give Dex your ass now?” he asks softly, stroking my lips, my cheeks, my jaw.

I nod, and a moment later, Dex pulls his fingers out of my ass and replaces them with a new, thicker pressure against my asshole. Even with my body completely relaxed, when he pushes the tip into me, it *burns*, and I whimper.

“Shhhh,” Noah says, smoothing his hand over my hair. “You can take it just fine. Bear down and let him in. Open up that beautiful ass and take him the way you were made to.”

Cade stares into my eyes as he reaches between us, stroking my swollen, oversensitive clit again. “Give her more lube.”

Dex pulls back out, and I feel the slick, cool drizzle dripping down the crease of my ass. It’s just one more sensation in a sea of overwhelming feelings as Noah starts touching me too, and then Dex’s cock is back. Rubbing against my hole. The pressure increasing as it lights up sensations I never knew were possible.

“You’re fucking gorgeous,” he rasps. “I’ve always wanted to dirty you up a little. Turn you into a slut for my cock.”

“Do it. I want to be dirty for you.” The filthy words trip off my tongue, all my inhibitions gone around these men now.

“Make me your slut, Dex.”

“*Fuck*,” he grits out, pushing into me again, then surging forward, fingers digging hard into my hips as I cry out.

The burn is real, almost too much for me to take. But it feels so fucking good.

Noah groans. “Look at her stretched wide around you like that. Give her another inch.”

Dex already feels enormous, bigger than when he’s fucked me before, and when he does what Noah suggests, sliding deeper into me with short, shallow thrusts, the sensation is so intense that tears come to my eyes.

I squeeze them shut, panting as I drop my head to Cade’s chest and try to breathe through it. I’m overwhelmed and right on the edge.

Cade runs his hand over my hair. “Good, dream girl? You can take it. You want him even deeper? You going to let him fuck you all the way open?”

I nod. It’s all I’m capable of.

Cade’s length is thick and hard, the tip smearing precum on my stomach each time it brushes against me, and as Dex works his way into me, he gets his wish. They’ve made me into a complete slut for cock. For their cocks, at least. Because I don’t just want Dex to take my ass, I want Cade back inside me too. I want them all to take me together, the way they promised.

“More,” I whisper, my ass throbbing with an overwhelming sensation that makes me feel owned and dirty and turned on, all at the same time. I lick my lips. “Fuck me harder. I won’t break.”

“Prove it,” Dex growls, taking me at my word and driving into me.

He bottoms out, punching a scream out of me that Cade swallows with a kiss. Dex takes that as permission to finally start to fuck my ass like he means it, raw and unrestrained.

“Cade, please,” I beg. “I want you inside me too. I want your cum dripping out of me. I want Dex to fill up my ass. I want... god.”

I pant, overwhelmed all over again when Cade grabs his cock and rubs it hard against my clit, his deep, vibrating groan telling me how much he likes the filthy things that have started spilling out of my mouth.

“Yes, that, inside me, *please*.”

“Anything you want.” He looks over my shoulder, sharing a look with Dex, and Dex’s hands tighten on my hips.

Then he stops moving, buried deep in my ass, his hard thighs pressed against the back of mine. “Do it,” he grits out, holding me still as Cade’s eyes blaze.

Noah’s hand steadies me, firm and secure on the back of my head as Cade guides himself back to my pussy. “Can you take us both?”

Noah answers for me. “Fuck yes, she can. Fill her up.”

Cade pushes his hips up, and even though I’m slick and wet, we both groan as he starts to work himself in.

“So tight,” Cade says between clenched teeth. “*Fuck*.”

“I can feel it,” Dex rasps, his hands flexing on my hips. “I can feel you pushing into her.”

Waves of heat roll through me as Cade slowly fucks into me, Dex holding himself rigid and still behind me. I can feel him pulsing in my ass, making me feel fuller than I’ve ever been as the two of them slowly take up all the room inside me. They get into a rhythm that leaves me panting, one thrusting while the other retreats.

“Oh god,” I whimper.

“You look so damn good like this,” Noah rumbles, stroking my hair. Then he wraps it around his fist and tugs my head back, my breasts thrusting out and my whole body going taut as the position pulls against my bound arms.

Noah stares down at me so intently that it almost feels like he's fucking me too, and I can't help but wonder what he sees. I feel dirty as hell, like the greedy slut they've been calling me, and I fucking love it. It's the sexiest I've ever felt, and I really do feel like I was made for this right now. For all of them. Made to be shared and fucked and pleased and spoiled.

And I want more.

I want Noah too. With the way he's looking at me like he wants to devour me whole, I'm pretty sure he feels the same.

"Kiss me," I whisper, and his blue eyes darken even more.

He drops his head to mine, trailing his nose along my jaw before settling his mouth over mine. The kiss as forceful as he is, tinged with barely restrained desire, like he's holding himself back from pouncing on me by the thinnest of threads.

I don't want him to.

I want that thread to snap.

I twist my head, breaking our kiss, and look up at him. "Fuck my mouth. I need all of you. Don't hold back, Noah. Spoil me."

Noah stares down at me, and both of the men already fucking me go still for a moment, the sound of our panting breaths syncing up as we all wait for Noah to move.

"Goddamn. Could you get any more perfect?" he growls, yanking my head back farther, somehow knowing exactly how to ride that pleasure/pain line to turn me on the most. "Open."

He keeps a tight hold on my hair and wraps his free hand around his shaft. The tip is slick and wet, precum welling from the tip as I stare at it.

I lick my lips and he gives my hair one quick, sharp tug. "No. Don't waste what I'm giving you. Use that tongue right here."

He pushes into my mouth, rubbing his tip over my tongue. Making my eyes almost roll back in my head with the salty flavor.

“Fuck her,” Noah tells his friends. “I want to watch her face when she comes with my cock in her mouth.”

Cade drives up into me hard, his cock hitting me just right, then Dex does the same from behind.

When Noah groans and pushes into the back of my throat, an orgasm slams through me without any warning.

“Fuck yeah, just like that,” Noah says, rubbing his thumb over my lips as I gasp around his thick length. “Now give us another.”

I don't think I have it in me, but they prove me wrong, the three of them fucking me in perfect sync, filling me in every possible way, until I come for them again... and then again. They're each holding back, muscles rigid with tension and hard bodies sheened with sweat, working together with me as their sole focus.

Noah has been fucking my mouth exactly the way I've always dreamed of, pushing me to take more than I knew I could. But when I ease back, he instantly lets me.

“Get me dirty,” I whisper, my voice hoarse from the way he's been using my throat, and my body trembling and boneless between them from my last orgasm. “Give me your cum. All of you. I want you three to make me your filthy little slut.”

I've never said anything like that to anyone before in my life, but in this moment, god do I mean it.

“Holy shit,” Dex grits out, pushing deep into my ass. “Cade, don't fucking move. Just... give me a minute.”

Cade exhales roughly and goes still, filling my pussy perfectly, and Dex finally lets loose, fucking my ass like he owns it.

“Oh god,” I gasp, certain that I can't come again but more than willing to be proved wrong.

“We've got you, sunshine,” Noah rumbles.

Then he fills my mouth again, sliding his cock back inside. I relax the muscles of my throat, my head starting to feel floaty

even as my body buzzes with rising pleasure.

This. This is everything I've ever fantasized about, except better. Instead of nameless figments of my imagination, it's three men who seem hellbent on spoiling me. Who make me feel cherished.

Dex grits out my name, folding himself over me as he pulses in my ass, finally giving me what he promised.

"Fucking hell, princess," he pants, planting a kiss on the back of my neck. "So good."

He draws out of me slowly, leaving me with an unfamiliar ache and emptiness as his cum drips down the backs of my thighs.

I shiver, imagining it dripping over Cade's balls before Noah captures all my attention.

"Deep breath in," he commands, holding my head where he needs it. "I want you to take all of me. Blink if it's too much."

I keep my eyes open, holding his gaze, and he pushes past the resistance at the back of my throat and chokes me on his cock.

"Fuck," Cade rasps as my body tightens around him and Noah pushes in deep, his eyes burning through me.

After three strokes, his shaft jerks, swelling in my mouth as his face contorts.

"So fucking good," he bites out, letting go of my hair abruptly to pull back as he starts to come.

It coats my tongue, and I swallow quickly, holding his gaze, trying to take all of it.

"That's it. Such a good girl," Noah says, stroking himself to give me the last few drops. "Fucking perfect. Nothing better than filling you up."

Cade pulses inside me. "My turn now. Ride me hard, dream girl."

Noah lifts my bound arms, freeing them from around Cade's neck, then rubs my shoulders for a second when I sit up.

My thighs tremble as I lean back a little, and I don't even realize I've moaned until Cade slips two fingers into my mouth.

"You fucking love this," he murmurs, staring up at me as I bite down on his fingertips and suck them. "Dripping for us out of every hole. Go on. Ride me. Take what you want."

He withdraws his fingers, then holds my hips and rocks up into me, but not too hard. Giving me control.

I brace my bound hands on his chest, the lights wrapped around them making my breasts jiggle and shake, and I do as he asks, riding him hard, grinding down against him, taking my own pleasure even though I've already had so much that I should be satisfied.

"Spoil me," I pant, fucking him hard. "Spoil me with more cum."

He groans and grabs me by the back of the neck, pulling me down for a kiss, his fingers tightening in my hair as his cock pulses and swells inside me, the base pressing against my g-spot.

"You first."

"Please," I beg, the pressure building and building until the friction feels like it might burn me alive. "Fuck. Cade, I need—please."

He wraps his arms around me, holding me tight against him as he grinds his cock into me and groans. "Take it. Come all over my cock. Nothing feels better than the way you milk me."

"Yes, oh god, yes, right there. *Fuck.*" My voice rises to a shout, my throat still raw from Noah's cock, but I can't stop. Then Cade gives one hard, deep thrust, and my orgasm hits like a bomb exploding.

I sprawl onto his chest once the first wave starts to ebb, panting hard as he takes over and fucks out the last of his own release, murmuring sweet, dirty things in my ear while he holds me close. Then they untie me, all of us collapsing on the rug under the tree.

It's fully dark outside now, and the crackling fire and colored lights really do make it feel like there's something magical about the night.

“Fuck, that was...”

Dex shakes his head without finishing the thought, resting a possessive hand on my thigh.

Noah snorts. “Fuck yeah, it was.”

“It always is with her,” Cade adds as I stare up at the ceiling with a grin on my face, feeling filthy and sated and too boneless to move.

DEX

IT TAKES all of us a while to recover from the exertion, and we sprawl out on the floor for a bit in comfortable silence, broken only by the sound of our slowly deepening breaths.

This day has been something else, and lying with Sadie and my two best friends, naked and blissed out after the kind of sex that puts porn to shame, I'm way too fucking close to catching feelings.

Ones that have no place in this arrangement Cade cooked up for us.

Sadie's stomach growls, breaking me out of my thoughts, and I glance over at her.

"Hungry, kitten?" I squeeze her plush thigh, then force myself to let go.

Noah chuckles, a sound I swear I've heard more today than in all the years I've known him combined. "Can you blame her?"

"I've got a lasagna prepped for baking."

"I love lasagna," Sadie says, resting a hand on her soft stomach and looking a little self-conscious at the way it grumbles again as she turns to grin at me.

I don't know why. Cooking is my happy place, and feeding her, watching her enjoy the food I make for her, is almost as good as fucking her.

Cade gets to his feet, tossing me the jeans I cast aside earlier and pulling on his own. "Want some help getting it

ready?”

I get my pants back on as Noah helps Sadie to her feet. He helps her get dressed like the caretaker he is before bothering to cover up his own bare ass, and even though I generally prefer to be left alone with my own thoughts while I cook, I find myself nodding at Cade.

“Make a salad while I get the lasagna in the oven?”

He raises an eyebrow. “We’re on vacation, and you want us to eat *salad* now?”

Sadie pouts up at me, and I want nothing more than to suck on that full bottom lip until she’s begging for me again. But vegetables are important, and her pussy has to be getting a little sore by now.

And, of course, other parts of her too.

I bite back a groan. The memory of her tight ass has my cock making an effort to rejoin the party, but it will be a while before that’s going to happen.

And I really do want to feed the three of them.

I grin at Cade. “We *are* going to have salad with our lasagna. Along with red wine, the garlic bread I’ve had proofing all day, and then, if you’re lucky, I’ll even make some dessert.”

“Oh god, stop or I’ll come again,” Sadie jokes, flashing her dimples at me.

She takes a minute to go clean herself up as Cade and Noah follow me into the kitchen, and when she comes back, I’m a little surprised by how comfortable and easy it is to have them in my kitchen, and how close and intimate dinner feels once we all sit down to eat.

“I literally can’t believe I’m saying this,” Sadie announces with a contented sigh as she pushes her plate back once we’re done. “But I’ll have to pass on dessert. That was delicious, Dex. I really am going to be spoiled by the time I have to go back to the real world.”

Cade looks around with mock exaggeration. “What, Whispering Pines isn’t real?”

Sadie wads up her napkin and tosses it at him. It misses, and he laughs, leaning back in his chair. “Need some basketball pointers?”

She rolls her eyes. “I’m usually a much better shot.”

Mrs. Claws wanders over, her little belly rounded out from the custom dinner I plated for her, and bats at Sadie’s leg until Sadie reaches down and picks her up.

Noah starts to say something, but he’s interrupted by a low buzzing sound from the other room. Someone’s phone is ringing, and with a jolt, I realize that none of us have been carrying our phones around since we got here.

Usually, mine is like another appendage, and with the corporate empires that each of my friends run, I know they’re the same.

Cade sighs. “That would be mine,” he says, pushing away from the table. “I knew I couldn’t get away with not working for the whole vacation.”

“I thought that was Noah’s line,” I joke, honestly a little surprised at how much time our workaholic friend has spent *not* working so far.

Cade goes upstairs to take care of his business call, and Noah and Sadie get into a debate about Mrs. Claws that leads to the two of them heading back down to the basement to dig up supplies to build a better nesting box for her. After cleaning up from dinner, I wander back into the living room and find myself alone in front of the Christmas tree.

The lights are mesmerizing, and they make me feel a little nostalgic.

Unlike Cade’s and Noah’s, my family does still do holidays together. Not that Parker always shows, but my parents like to do it up, and ever since my sister had Maddie nine years ago, I guess we all go a little overboard about making holidays into a thing.

Somehow, I've gotten in the habit of doing things for my favorite niece—a.k.a. my only niece—long distance over the last few years. I frown. My reasons may be different since my investments and passion for travel keep me out of the country more often than not, but I don't like the idea that I've followed my brother's lead when it comes to skipping out on family events.

It's not the first time I've had this thought, but with the warm, festive feel to this room—the fire crackling in the oversized stone fireplace and the scent of sex still lingering in the air along with pine and holly—it's the first time I've actually held myself accountable for it.

I go grab my own phone, and the soft sounds of Sadie and Noah working on their project for the kitten drift out of the other room as I hit the video call button for my sister.

Isabelle answers almost right away, a look of happy surprise on her face. "Dex? I didn't expect to hear from you tonight," she says warmly, her own Christmas tree visible behind her.

"What, I can't call my favorite sister to wish her a merry almost Christmas?" I tease, leaning back on one of the plush couches and propping my feet up on the coffee table.

Isabelle's eyes narrow, her lips curving into a wry grin. "I'm your only sister. Try again. What's up?"

I shrug. "Nothing. I spent the day doing, you know, Christmas shit. It made me think of you."

Her eyebrows shoot up, and I can tell she's trying not to laugh. "Christmas shit? Really? I figured the three of you would be man caving the hell out of that mountain getaway of yours."

I pan my phone around the room, giving her a panoramic view of the decorations we set up today and ending on the tree we just fucked Sadie under.

"Holy shit."

Isabelle's voice sounds tinny and small since I've got the phone turned away from me, so I flip it back and grin at her.

“Told you.”

“Who are you and what have you done with my favorite brother?”

I snort, shaking my head. “Careful. I’m *not* your only brother. You don’t want that to get back to Parker.”

She rolls her eyes. “You know I love him, but don’t spoil my mood. Tell me more about why you guys went all Martha Stewart at that lodge.”

“Have you seen a weather report?”

“What, for Denver?” She laughs, shaking her head. “I don’t make a habit of tracking the weather back there anymore.”

My whole family moved out of the area years ago. Isabelle and her husband left to be closer to a good Deaf school for Maddie, my parents to stay close to their only grandchild, and Parker... well, who knows?

“We’re snowed in. Power was out for a while, can’t get down the mountain.” I shrug. “Nothing else to do.”

Isabelle tilts her head, giving me an assessing look. “Really? Nothing else to do? You’re going with that as your explanation for the sudden burst of festivity?”

I am, and I’m not entirely sure why. Isabelle and Sadie got along great back when Sadie was dating Parker. But Sadie isn’t mine to keep, and I’m pretty sure she hasn’t kept in touch with my sister. I just don’t see the point in mentioning that she’s here to Isabelle, but since my sister has a way of seeing right through me, I decide to change the subject before she presses me too hard about decorating.

Or, god forbid, catches sight of the mistletoe Cade stuck over the mantel.

I angle the phone away from it. “So about that visit...”

“Oh, hell no,” Isabelle says, my diversion working perfectly. “You are *not* backing out of it. You promised you’d come see Maddie after your bro time up there in the woods is over.”

“And I will, but this blizzard is probably going to change the timeline for that.”

“So, you’re telling me to take it up with Mother Nature?” she jokes, even though I can tell she’s a little bummed.

“I’m telling you that good things come to those who wait.”

Isabelle leans closer to the camera, a playfully avaricious gleam in her eyes. “So I should expect some extra belated Christmas presents when you show up?”

“Sure,” I agree, laughing because my sister is the least materialistic person I know.

Isabelle’s face softens, her eyes narrowing slightly. “You seem happy.”

“I’m always happy,” I say, instinctively deflecting.

“If you say so.” She shakes her head, clearly not fooled at all. “But *relaxed* and happy? I’m just saying, this vacation must be good for you. I’m glad.”

I clear my throat, touched but also uncomfortable that she’s noticed. Or maybe uncomfortable that I’ve finally gotten something I’ve always wanted—Sadie in my bed—but now...

Well, I don’t know now what.

Now nothing. It’s temporary.

I clear my throat. “Yeah, it’s great. It’s been too long since Cade and Noah and I have hung out. But you don’t want to hear man cave news. Tell me about your holiday plans. Did you manage to get Maddie that hover ball thing she wanted?”

Isabelle looks back over her shoulder, then lifts her finger to her lips and moves her upper body backward.

I lift my eyebrows. It’s not just “shh.” It’s the ASL sign for *shut the hell up before you spill the beans*.

“Tell me Maddie’s not up this late.”

“Well, she’s not *supposed* to be. But she’s on winter break, so when I checked on her half an hour ago and found her

huddled under her blanket reading the latest book in that series you sent her, I let her be.”

I grin, glad Maddie’s not my kid. It means I don’t have to care that she’s up too late for a nine-year-old and can just bask in the pleasure of being the favorite uncle who feeds her addiction for stories of a certain middle-school-aged detective and her plucky group of misfit friends.

As if she’s been summoned by our conversation, the cutest kiddo wanders into the room behind Isabelle, her face lighting up when she sees me on screen. She waves hello at me while stifling a yawn with her other hand.

I grin when I see what she’s wearing, bringing my middle finger and thumb together and pulling them down and away from my chest, then adding the sign for pajamas.

Her hands fly in front of her as she teases me about liking them. *Of course you do. You sent them to me.*

I shrug, exaggerating the motion, and sign back, *I guess I have good taste.*

I repeat the question I asked her mother, asking about her holiday plans, and as Maddie enthusiastically tells me all about ice skating and baking cookies and the ornaments she made with her best friend, Mrs. Claws scampers into the room.

The kitten makes a beeline for the tree and scrambles up the trunk. Sadie is right behind her, but when she sees I’m on the phone, she skirts around the edge of the room as she chases the kitten, careful not to be caught by my camera.

She keeps her efforts to get the kitten out of the tree as quiet as possible, and by the time I end the conversation with my family—mostly due to Maddie not being able to keep her eyes open after all—she’s somehow managed to coax the little furball into her arms.

She’s watching me, and I realize that she’s not the only one who’s been quiet. Isabelle, Maddie, and I naturally fell into ASL once Maddie joined us.

“I got Maddie hooked on this new book series, *Codebreakers Club*,” I explain. “I just sent her the most recent

release, and she was telling me all about it.”

Sadie grins at me as Mrs. Claws scrambles up to her shoulder. “I know. *The Case of the Cursed Carnival*, right?”

I blink. “Uh, yeah. Wait, do you read kids’ books?”

She laughs. “Well, I haven’t checked if the series is available in audio, but Maddie sure made it sound exciting when she was describing it to you just now.”

“How would you know that?”

A pretty blush creeps up her cheeks. “I, um, know a little sign language.”

“You do? For work?”

I could see how it would come in handy if the lodge has Deaf guests now and then.

Sadie flushes even more, reaching up to pet Mrs. Claws’ fur. “No. I learned a few years ago. After I met Maddie. I’m not the best at it, but I’m pretty solid on the basics and I’ve... well, I’ve kept up practicing, and I guess I’m pretty decent.”

“You are if you followed along with my conversation.”

“I’m sorry! I wasn’t trying to eavesdrop.”

I wave that off. “Why did you learn it in the first place though? You and Parker didn’t spend a lot of time with Maddie, did you?”

She shrugs, looking a little embarrassed. “Not as much as I would have liked. But you’ve got such a great family. When Parker introduced me to everyone, it really meant a lot to see how loved and included you all made Madelyn feel.”

From anyone else, I might have considered the comment a little ableist and offensive, but Sadie’s not like that. From what she’s shared with us and what I already knew from her, it’s easy to figure out that seeing the kind of support system Maddie has showed her what Sadie *should* have had when it came to her dyslexia.

“Family matters,” she goes on softly. “I may not have really had one, not like you do, but I believe that. And if I’d

stayed with Parker, I just wanted to be able to be a part of that. Not ever make Maddie feel left out or looked down on the way...”

Her voice trails off, and I can't stand it. She's slowly come closer to where I'm sitting as we've been talking, but I reach out and pull her even nearer.

“The way you did?” I finish for her.

She nods. “I never want Maddie to feel that way. No one should.”

Something hits me in the chest. Those fucking *feelings* that keep creeping up on me.

I pull Sadie down onto my lap, and Mrs. Claws gives me an irritated little hiss before stretching tall. Then she hops from Sadie's shoulder to the back of the couch, then to the floor, stepping daintily across the rug to curl up in front of the fire.

“I agree,” I tell Sadie. “No one should ever feel that way. But most people just don't want to invest that much energy into making sure others don't.”

Her cheeks go pink again. “It doesn't seem like a lot to ask to help a little girl feel included.”

She's wrong. It is a lot. It's learning an entirely new language, and that's a hell of a lot more than anyone else who's come into Parker's or my lives have bothered with.

“You always surprise me,” I tell her honestly, tucking a long strand of her silky blonde hair behind her ear. “You deserved better than Parker.”

She bites her lip for a moment, then blurts, “What about you?”

“I definitely deserve better than Parker,” I joke quickly, ignoring the way her pointed question has my heart stuttering.

She puts her hand over it, like she somehow knows. “You're better than Parker,” she murmurs. “Better for me, at least.”

I swallow hard, but hold her gaze steadily. If she can be honest, so can I. “You definitely deserve better than me, kitten.”

She stares back at me as the moment stretches out between us. She doesn’t argue for more than I’m offering, but she doesn’t close down either. She lets me see right down into her soul.

Then she grins, shifting the intimacy into something lighter. “Well, I won’t argue that I don’t deserve the best, because I do. But for right now, I’ve got you, so I hope you plan on making it worth my time.”

“Oh, I’m definitely going to do that. All of us are,” I promise, the easy way she rolls with it making me fall for her a little more than I should. But we both know where we stand, and she’s right. For as long as the blizzard lasts, I’m all hers.

I kiss her, sealing that promise the best way I know how.

NOAH

THE SMELL of cinnamon and sugar start to overpower the crisp pine scent from the tree we set up last night, and when I notice it for the third time in the last hour, I consider heading up to the guest room I've claimed to get my work done today.

But fuck that. Dex and his obsession with baking today isn't going to force me out of the best seat in the house. My ability to focus is fucking legendary. I may be a workaholic, but I'm not a diva about it. I've never needed anything more than my laptop, an internet connection, and Becca on call to get shit done, no matter where in the world I am.

Nothing distracts me.

"Cookie?" Dex offers, popping out of the kitchen with a plate full of frosted snowman cookies.

My mouth waters, but I'm already falling a bit behind this week and I need to catch the fuck up.

I shake my head. "Maybe later."

He smirks. "If you're lucky. We'll see if there are any left over after I find Sadie and Cade."

"I think they're chilling back in the entertainment room."

He nods and heads toward the other end of the lodge with his plate of cookies.

This morning, Sadie talked Cade into some kind of holiday movie marathon that Dex ducked out of to bake. I had to pass because the expansion deal I'm trying to close with the Eiwa Izakaya Group has a hard deadline after the New Year, and it's

coming up fast. But I'd be lying if I said I've been able to stay completely focused.

Every once in a while, I catch the low murmur of their voices or the sound of Sadie's breathy laugh, and it's distracting as hell.

I need to get my head back in the game. What I should probably do is go upstairs and lock myself into the guest room I've claimed, but fuck. It's hard to find comfortable furniture for a man my size, and Whispering Pines' oversized couches definitely fit the bill.

My lip quirks up as I pull up the projections I need to review on my laptop. Comfortable furniture is my story and I'm sticking to it. I've never given two shits about holiday cheer—at least, not in years—so it's not that I'd prefer to hang out down here where the Christmas lights reflect annoyingly off my screen, just so I can sit in front of a crackling fire with the snow coming down outside.

I snort, shaking off the weird bout of holiday sentimentality, and buckle back down with my work. It's what I came for, after all, holiday or not, and I know for sure that neither Cade nor Dex ever expected me to do anything other than just show up this week.

By the time I get through the projections, I've managed to refocus, and over the next couple of hours, I make it through most of the important work I've been letting slide. Now I just need to touch base with Becca.

I stand and stretch for a moment, automatically assessing my environment. A plate of cookies has magically appeared on one of the side tables while I worked. These ones are reindeer, complete with bright red noses, and Mrs. Claws is curled up on a crocheted blanket near them. I can hear someone moving around upstairs, so the movie marathon must be over since Dex is still banging around in the kitchen.

I avoid the temptation to go shoot the shit with Dex or head upstairs and see what the other two are up to, but I do give in and swipe a couple of cookies.

Then I sit back down and initiate a video call with Becca.

“Hey, bossman,” she says cheerfully, picking up on the second ring. “How are things in the snow globe?”

“What?” I ask as I open my calendar and scan through the schedule she’s set up for me for after the New Year, tagging a few appointments that I’m going to need her to reschedule.

“You know, snow globe? Because it’s snowing, and you’re trapped, and...”

She grins, miming shaking a snow globe, and I bark out a small laugh.

“It’s fine. Still snowed in.” I hit the button to share a portion of my screen with her. “You’re going to have to clear this week,” I let her know, dragging my finger over the touchscreen to circle the dates I’m referring to. “I want to fly out to check on the western regional franchise office before heading to Japan.”

Becca nods, and we start to go over business. I’m flipping through the reports I reviewed before calling her, pointing out the areas I need her to take action on, when tiny claws dig into my calf, piercing my jeans.

“I want to get in touch with the marketing firm we used—”

I pause, grinning down at Mrs. Claws as she scales my leg, her mismatched eyes locked on mine with the same grit and determination that helped her survive the blizzard. I scoop her up, settling her on my lap, then turn my attention back to Becca as the kitten starts to make biscuits, finishing my interrupted thought.

“The firm we used when we opened up in Northern Ontario. We have them on retainer, don’t we?”

“What, Coleman Strategies? Yeah, of course we do.” She leans closer to the screen, her brows furrowing a little. “Is that a cat?”

On cue, Mrs. Claws turns up the volume on her high intensity purring, and I rest my hand on her head, careful not

to squish her. In retaliation, she rolls over and wraps her paws around my wrist, gnawing at my fingers.

“Yes, it’s a cat,” I admit, feeling a little silly. I usually don’t have pets crawling all over me during business meetings, even if the meeting is just between me and my assistant. “Who handles the Asian markets at Coleman? Is it Jason Vu?”

“What’s her name?” Becca asks. “Or is she a he?”

I frown. “Jason Vu?”

She laughs. “No, your new cat! Or I guess that would be your friend’s cat, right? Mr. McAllister? Oh! Is it a barn cat?”

“Whispering Pines is a resort. There aren’t any barns.”

“Well, it’s adorable. And it looks so small! Is it a kitten?”

I suppress a sigh. I know my assistant well enough to know that she adores furry animals of all kinds, so I quickly give her a summary of how we found Mrs. Claws.

“Oh my god, that’s such a sweet name,” Becca says with a laugh when I finish. “Which one of you came up with it?”

I hesitate, not interested in discussing Sadie with her. I’ve been trying hard not to let thoughts of Sadie intrude ever since I sat down to get some work done, and thanks to this conversation, she’s back in the forefront of my mind again. Usually, ninety percent of my attention is taken up by Keystone Culinary, with the other ten percent reserved for general vigilance. But now? It’s all I can do to slog through the details Becca and I are covering, because my mental real estate mostly belongs to Sadie these days.

I realize I’ve started to grin like an idiot again, and I quickly bring us back to business.

“We need a solid proposal on the integrated marketing opportunities before I fly overseas,” I tell Becca, schooling my face into a more neutral, business-appropriate expression. “Can you get Coleman Strategies on a conference call next week?”

She nods, finally dragging her attention away from Mrs. Claws as she promises to get it set up. We talk for a bit longer,

but now that I've let thoughts of Sadie creep in, it's all I can do to stay focused as my assistant breaks down the information she's collected on our marketing options.

I nod, but I'm not fully present, and that's a recipe for bankruptcy.

We're not quite done, but I decide it's probably best if I end the call and pick up again later when I can actually stay on task.

"That's enough for today," I say, rolling my shoulders a little.

"Alright." She hesitates, chewing her lip, then adds, "Sorry, bossman. I know it must be tough to be stuck up there with the roads closed. If you need anything..."

"I'll call you," I confirm. "I appreciate that. Goodbye, Becca."

I end the call and try to talk myself into refocusing on work, but Cade ruins that plan when he thunders down the stairs, dressed for the outdoors.

"Going somewhere?" I ask, shutting my laptop with a decisive snap.

Cade heads to the lodge's main entrance, pulling on a pair of gloves. "Just for a second. Sadie's worried about the birds."

I lift Mrs. Claws to my shoulder and get to my feet. "She's what now?"

"She says the previous owner used to set up winter bird feeding stations, but no one's been around to replenish them since he retired, so..." Cade shrugs his shoulders in a *what can you do* gesture.

I instinctively open my mouth to offer to help, but instead, something else comes out. "Where is she?"

Cade pulls a sack of something—bird food, I assume—out of a discrete storage area near the front doors. "Up in her room, last I saw her."

I nod, and he grins, slinging the sack over his shoulder before heading outside.

Mrs. Claws headbutts my face, her little claws digging into my shoulder. Obviously, she's asking me to find Sadie for her, and like Cade implied, what can you do?

I head up the stairs, hearing Sadie before I see her. She's singing.

When I give her door a quick knock, then push it open, I realize she's singing in the shower.

The kitten realizes it too, and as soon as she hears the sound of running water, she goes from loudly purring in my ear to leaping off my shoulder and scampering out of the room.

I guess I don't blame her, given how wet and cold she was when we found her, but the idea of Sadie in the shower has the opposite effect on me. She's singing Christmas carols. It makes me smile, although I'm not sure if it's the sweet enthusiasm that she brings to familiar words or the way that all that shit we did yesterday—the tree and snowballs and decorations, and of course the sex—actually makes me feel kind of festive.

Sadie's voice is nice. I can't say she's the most skilled singer, but even if she's not going to be selling any albums any time soon, it's the most beautiful sound I've ever heard, and it draws me toward her.

I consider knocking again when I get to the bathroom door, but just like her bedroom door, it's cracked open, not locked. And we *do* have an agreement.

I push it open, honeysuckle-scented steam billowing out, and catch her with her head thrown back, water cascading down her hair and plastering it to her back.

She's a vision.

She wipes the water out of her eyes as she opens them and smiles at me. "Noah!"

“Hey, sunshine,” I say, her easy response and the genuine joy in her smile doing something to me that I don’t think I have a name for.

I learned at a young age that life is fucking unfair, and that while hard work, grit, and determination can get you anywhere, the journey is a motherfucking grind. But being around Sadie almost makes me want to question whether I got that wrong.

Nothing feels hard with her. It’s like she really is a ray of sunshine, lighting up a whole new path. An easier, happier one.

A path which, honestly, I’m not sure I’m equipped to take.

Thankfully, she gestures me closer before I can overthink that shit. “Join me?”

“Need someone to wash your back?” I joke, already pulling my shirt over my head because there’s no way I’ll ever say no to an invitation from this woman.

“Oh, I’m already clean back there.” She turns away from me, presenting me with her perfectly round ass, and looks back over her shoulder with water droplets caught in her eyelashes. The grin she gives me is positively wicked. “I was more hoping you’d come in and dirty me up.”

Fuck.

I finish stripping down and step into the shower behind her, pulling her back against me. “This what you had in mind?”

She sighs happily, rubbing against me. “You have no idea. I have *so* much in mind.”

I’m not used to being around people who are so open, and it startles a laugh out of me. “Wanna tell me about it? Come clean about all the dirty thoughts filling up your head?”

“I don’t know if I have time,” she says playfully as I rest my chin on her head, filling my hands with her amazing breasts. “I may look sweet—”

“You do.”

She tilts her head back at my interruption, smiling up at me. “Flatterer.”

I snort back another laugh. “Yeah, not really. I’m a lot of things, but I’ve never been accused of *that* one.”

“Well, there’s a first time for everything,” she says, her breath hitching as I play with her nipples.

They harden under my fingers, and she makes a sound that has my already interested cock jerking against her wet back.

I groan, letting my head fall forward, and kiss the top of her head as I indulge myself and thrust against her softness a little more. Her soft, curvy body is fucking irresistible, and she’s so damn responsive that resisting is the last thing I’m interested in doing.

“You sure you’re up to getting dirty again?”

The three of us used her hard last night, and I’ve got no doubt at all that she loved every fucking minute. But at the same time, I don’t think this is a woman who gets fucked like that often.

Or hell, maybe *ever*, before last night. That thought pleases the possessive beast in me more than it should.

Sadie turns in my arms, sliding her hands up my chest and wrapping them around my neck as she looks up at me. “What I’m sure of is that this storm won’t last forever, and I’ve never had shower sex before. Is that fair?”

“It’s a goddamn shame,” I murmur, bending down to kiss her.

It’s not enough though. Fuck, every time I touch this woman, it feels like it will never be enough.

I slide my hands down to her generous ass, sinking my fingers into her curves and relishing the sound she makes in response.

“Maybe I should turn you back around and fuck this sweet ass,” I murmur, kneading her cheeks. Spreading them a little to let the water run down between them. “Did you like that? Did you like letting Dex have you that way?”

Her skin is already pink from the warm water, but she flushes a little more at that.

“I liked it,” she whispers, then turns in my arms all on her own, grinding her ass against me. “And maybe you should. I told you, I’ve got lots of ideas.”

I grin, running my hands over her wet curves. “And I’m pretty sure I told *you*,” I bend my knees a little so I can slip a hand between her legs. “I want to hear about every one of those ideas.”

I push my fingers into her, cupping the soft swell of her stomach as I slide them in to find the spot that makes her moan. Which she does—but first, she tenses up, just for a second.

“Too sore?” I ask, pulling my fingers out and rubbing her stomach gently.

She pulls my hand away with an embarrassed laugh. “No, sorry, that’s just not my favorite body part.”

I wait for the punchline, then realize she’s serious.

“What?” I turn her around to face me again. “You’re fucking perfect. You know that, right?”

She blushes again, looking like a vision with the water flowing over all those curves I doubt I’ll ever get enough of. “Like I said, you’re a flatterer.”

“No,” I insist, cupping her face. “I’m not. You’re perfect.”

She tries to shake her head, but I don’t let her. Instead, I kiss her hard, determined to make my point. But even when I push my cock against her, groaning into her mouth as I grind against her soft stomach, I can tell she doesn’t get it.

I pull back. “This is sexy as fuck,” I say, cupping her full hips.

She grins at me, but the sunshine in her eyes is dimmed. “*You’re* sexy as fuck.”

She’s deflecting, and her body is her own. It’s not really my business. But it still fucking bothers me. How can this

gorgeous woman actually think any part of her is unattractive? She's not just perfect, she's the whole damn package.

And as much as I'm dying to fuck her again, there's something I want a little more right now.

I want to prove it to her.

I lift her up, getting a startled laugh and then a sexy moan as she wraps her legs around me. But instead of pushing her up against the wall, I carry her out of the shower.

"What happened to shower sex?" she asks with an adorable little pout as the playful gleam re-enters her eyes.

"Oh, we'll definitely need to try that sometime," I say, forgetting for a second that this is a short-term deal. "But first, we need to do a little group activity."

Raising my voice a little, I call out for Dex and Cade to come to her room, and her eyes widen as a flush paints her cheeks.

"What are you doing?" she asks breathlessly.

Cade saunters in, his eyes darkening with interest when he sees her wet and naked in my arms. I let her slide down my body, setting her on her feet, as Dex joins us.

"I'd kinda like to know that too." He grins widely. "What's going on?"

"We've got a problem," I tell them somberly, cupping Sadie's tits as I stare down into her sea-foam eyes. "Our girl clearly hasn't figured out just how fucking sexy she is yet."

She shakes her head, blushing again. "Noah..."

"Hear him out, dream girl." Cade lifts his chin toward me. "If Noah says there's a problem, then I guarantee he's already come up with the solution to it."

"Damn fucking right," I agree. "Since she doesn't know it yet, it's up to us to show her."

SADIE

NOAH'S WORDS hang in the air between us, and Cade and Dex both nod.

There's an energy crackling between the three men and me that has my heart racing.

I'm used to Noah being firm and serious. His gruff nature turns his rare smiles and dry jokes into something to treasure. He's an intense man in every way, but there's something about the look in his eyes right now that takes all of that up to eleven.

He's not kidding around. He's not even really flirting.

He means it.

"Turn around," he says, gathering my wet hair up and pulling it back as I do. He holds it loosely in his fist, not letting any of it drape over my chest, so that I'm completely exposed.

I'm also facing the full-length mirror along the back wall of the room, and for a split second, before the life-long habit of shying away from looking too closely at my naked body kicks in, I'm struck by how sexy the scene is. All three of them watching me. Noah still naked from the shower too, and completely unconcerned about it.

My skin is still flushed from the shower, my nipples hard as the water drips from them in shining rivulets. Noah lets my hair fall down my back and steps behind me, reaching around to cup my breasts and catch the falling water in his hands.

I let my eyes drift close, leaning back against him.

“None of that,” he says, stroking my nipples with rough fingers. “Open your eyes. Good. Now repeat what you said to me in the shower.”

“I... what?”

He slides his hands down my body, and a shiver goes through me that’s only partially due to how good it feels. We look sexy together. I could watch him touch me all day.

He rests his hands on my waist, long fingers framing my soft, curvy stomach. “Tell Dex and Cade what you said.”

“It’s not my favorite body part,” I whisper, my hands instinctively moving to cover my stomach.

Noah captures them before I can cover up, circling both my wrists with one hand and pulling my arms away from my body. Then he splays his other hand wide over my stomach.

“You might want to rethink that,” he says, his voice low. “Because it’s sexy as fuck.”

I want to argue, but he’s right. At least, like this it is. With his hands on me and his big, hard body making me feel small in all the best ways.

Noah strokes my stomach, looking at Dex and Cade. “Tell our girl what you guys think of this.”

Dex steps forward, and another shiver rolls through me when I realize he’s already hard in his pants.

“I think it’s fucking beautiful. Every part of you is. But your curvy waist and soft stomach?”

Noah takes his hand away from my stomach and Dex’s eyes heat up as he stares down at it. Then he reaches out and drags his fingers from my navel to my clit.

“Your skin is like silk. Makes me want to do dirty things to you. There’s not a single part of you I can resist.”

I might not have believed him, once. Back when I misunderstood his attitude toward me. But now I can’t help but believe he means it.

“Tell us, sunshine,” Noah murmurs, releasing my wrists to push my hair aside again. He leans down to kiss the back of my neck, rubbing his cock against my back. “Tell us what else you see.”

“Um...”

I’m not sure what he wants me to say. I can see all my flaws, and I *do* feel sexy right now, even despite them. That doesn’t mean I want to talk about them.

“How about this?” Noah asks, his hands dropping to my ass. He squeezes it. “Do you appreciate it as much as we do?”

I laugh a little self-consciously, but Noah turns me sideways to the mirror, cupping and lifting my ass. “This is fucking phenomenal. Don’t you agree?”

I meet Dex’s eyes, my breath catching in my throat as I remember the feel of him filling me there.

“Sure,” I say a little breathlessly. And it’s even true for a moment. But somehow, I don’t want to lie to these men.

I shake my head. “Actually, I like it better when I wear my Spanx.”

Cade tilts his head to the side. “Your what now?”

I blush. “You know, shapewear? To contain my, um....”

I gesture toward my generous shape, and his lips slowly spread into a smile. He steps closer, tugging me in front of him and turning me back to face the mirror. “Please don’t.”

“Don’t what?” I ask, electric heat following his hands as he trails them over my curves.

“Don’t ‘contain’ any of this.” He rests his hands on my hips. “I fucking love it. You should always show this off.”

I bite my lip, color creeping up my cheeks. “I like showing off for the three of you, but—”

“No buts,” Noah interrupts, giving me one of those commanding looks that always gets me wet. “You’re fucking perfect.”

“Except my thighs,” I blurt.

All three men pin me with heated looks.

“No,” Noah says bluntly.

Dex smirks, shaking his head.

Cade raises an eyebrow, then slides a hand between my legs, nudging them apart.

I suck in a sharp breath, my body instantly responding to him. He strokes the inside of my thighs, sending zaps of sensation straight to my core.

“The only thing that would make these sexier is if they were covered with whisker burn.”

He leans down and kisses my shoulder, then rubs his jaw against my damp skin. He hasn't shaved today, and it's easy to imagine the rough scrape of his stubble between my legs instead.

Then his fingers finally find my entrance, wet with my arousal.

He dips them into me, then drags them back down, getting my inner thighs slick with it. “I could fuck you like this. Next time your pussy is too sore, just push my cock between these plush thighs. Keep my fingers here...” He pushes them back inside me, and the sight of it in the mirror is enough to make me moan. “And tell you to squeeze me tight.”

I can feel Cade's cock, thick and hard behind his pants, as he pulls me closer.

“The same way you fucked my tits,” I whisper, my arousal spiking.

He gives me a dirty smile. “That's right, dream girl.”

Dex steps up to my side and palms my breasts, making me gasp. “Oh fuck, I'm going to need to try that.”

“Yes,” I breathe, Cade's fingers driving me crazy. I squeeze my thighs tightly around his hand as I picture him telling me to do the same thing to his cock. “I want you three to fuck every part of me.”

Dex grins. “I thought we had, but I guess my imagination wasn’t big enough.”

“Sadie has plenty of ideas,” Noah rumbles, coming up to my other side and tilting my head toward him. He strokes my jaw, then grips it firmly, leaning down to claim a kiss. “Fucking good ones. But I’ve got a great idea too.”

“Anything,” I whisper, meaning it.

Noah turns my face back toward the mirror. “Do you see it? Do you see how fucking perfect for us you are?”

I bite my lip, letting my eyes play over my own body in the mirror. I like who I am, but I don’t think there’s a woman alive who doesn’t feel like she has room for improvement. Being snowed in with these men has felt a lot like living in a little bubble of pure fantasy, so it’s been easy to set aside my insecurities and let myself be uninhibited.

But maybe they’re right. I may never think I’m “perfect,” but right now, I feel perfect for them.

“I see it.”

Noah gives me a grin that’s almost feral. “You’re about to. Put your hands on the mirror.”

Cade and Dex share a look, something passing between them, then they both step away and start stripping off their clothes.

Noah slides his hand up my spine, under my hair, and wraps it around the back of my neck. Then he guides me forward until I’m close enough to the mirror to do what he told me to.

“You’re going to watch us fuck you, just like this,” he says, that firm grip still on the back of my neck as he leans down and kisses my temple. “I want you to be able to see how gorgeous you are. Naked and wanting. Nothing ‘contained.’” His lips quirk up in a sexy smirk as he teases me about my Spanx comment. “You’re going to have everything on display for us. Does that sound good?”

I nod, excitement already tightening my core. These men don't just give me my fantasies. They each push me beyond them.

Noah gives me a look of hungry approval. "Good. I want you to have a front row seat to just how fucking perfect you really are. I want you to see what you do to all three of us. All you have to do is keep your eyes open, okay? If you close them, we stop."

I nod, my breath hitching. His directions push me to the very edge of my comfort zone, but I want it. I want to be taken by all three of them again. I want the memory of this, the sight of each of them fucking me, to hold on to after we're done.

Noah steps back, lazily stroking his cock, and makes eye contact with his friends. None of them say a word, but they clearly don't have to. They know each other well enough to come to an agreement without a single word being spoken.

All three of them are naked now. All three already hard.

It's Dex who fucks me first though.

He slides into me, his eyes meeting mine in the mirror.

Noah is right. There's something incredible about seeing him fuck me like this. I can see how turned on he is. I can see his expression as he takes me. But mostly, I can see... me.

"Oh god," I whisper, watching my skin flush with arousal. Droplets of water glisten on my skin, and as Dex's fingers tighten on my hips, his thrusts starting out slow and deep, I almost expect them to go up in steam. "This is so hot."

Maybe it's a weird thing to say when I'm staring at myself, but it's true.

"*You're* so hot," Dex rasps, grinning at me in the mirror. There's a hint of laughter in his voice, even as his eyes darken, and I can't help it. When he picks up the pace, fucking me harder, my eyes flutter shut.

"Stop," Noah says sharply.

"Who fucking died and made you boss?" Dex grumbles. But he does it. He goes completely still, buried inside me, and

slides his hand around me to rub my clit. “Open those pretty eyes. You heard Noah’s rules.”

I gasp, my body tightening at the pressure on my clit, and my eyes flying open again. “Sorry.”

“Never be sorry,” Dex says, holding my gaze in the mirror as he continues to play with me. “Just follow the rules.”

I nod, but damn, it’s hard to do when he starts fucking me again. I want to get lost in the sensation. To drop my head forward and let the orgasm he’s driving me toward break over me and sweep me away.

But the men want me to watch, so I watch, and I’m so caught up in the vision we make that when my orgasm does hit, it feels like it slams into me without any warning.

“Oh fuck,” Dex groans as the pleasure rips through me. “I’m never going to get tired of feeling that. Jesus, kitten.”

“Get her good and wet for me,” Cade growls, fisting his cock as he watches. “I need to get in there, Dex. I’ll fuck your load into her nice and deep.”

“I can do that,” Dex grits out, his breath coming out in harsh pants. “I can fill her up all day long.”

I can barely catch my breath. I’m still coming down from my orgasm, but the dirty talk has my arousal spiking all over again as Dex’s rhythm stutters, his thrusts getting erratic as he starts to come.

“Fuck,” he groans hoarsely, burying his face against the back of my neck. “God, Sadie. You’re fucking magic.”

“My turn now,” Cade says as Dex pulls out, stepping up next. “Remember, eyes wide open.”

I can feel Dex’s cum dripping out of me as Cade teases me with his cock and then slides inside with a grunt. “Damn. How do you always feel so fucking perfect?”

“Like I said,” Dex murmurs. “She’s magic.”

Noah is still jacking himself off as he watches. I don’t think he’s looked away once. “You ready for Cade’s cum too,

greedy girl?”

“Please.” I nod breathlessly, my hands braced against the mirror, my body jolting forward with the force of Cade’s thrusts.

“Good, because I’m going to need that sweet pussy of yours nice and lubed up for my cock,” Noah says with a wicked smile. “I want to see cum running down your thighs. I want you ready to take everything I give you. And I want you to know you’re only getting it because of what you do to us.”

“Because you’re... fucking... *perfect*,” Cade says, each word sounding like it’s punched out of him as he fucks me hard.

Every other time we’ve been together, Cade has taken his time. Brought every single fantasy of mine to life. But this time? He’s taking me hard and fast, rough with an urgency that leaves no room for doubt about how much he wants this.

How much he wants *me*. And that knowledge sends me over the edge, another orgasm rolling through me in an unstoppable wave that feels like it goes on forever. Cade fucks me all the way through it before coming inside me with a shout.

“Jesus Christ,” he mutters roughly once he catches his breath, his forehead dropping to my shoulder. “I could happily die here.”

“Nope.” Noah’s voice is hard, although I can see the smirk on his face when I glance over at him. “You had your turn. Now it’s mine.”

Cade laughs, pulling out but not stepping away. “Fair enough, but there’s something I need to do first.”

He turns me around, and for a moment, it’s almost jarring to meet his actual gaze instead of the reflection of it.

He cups my cheek, staring into my eyes like he’s searching for something. Then he leans down and kisses me, a tender contrast to the hard fuck he just gave me.

“Perfect,” he whispers once he pulls back. Then he turns me back around to face the mirror. “Can you see it?”

I swallow hard, emotion clogging my throat as I nod.

“Good,” he says, stepping back and leaving room for Noah to take his place. “Keep your eyes on yourself. Let yourself see what we see.”

“And remember what I said,” Noah adds, his hands sliding up my back. “Eyes open.” Then he leans over and whispers in my ear, “You’re doing so well. I’m so fucking proud of you.”

I’m stripped bare and feel more vulnerable than I have in a long time, but also completely safe exposing myself to these men. Exposing everything. I don’t even mind that the mirror reflects every ounce of emotion on my face. The blush of my skin. My lips swollen from kissing, parted in a silent gasp as Noah’s thick cock slowly fills me from behind.

Because it’s more than the fact that he’s giving me what I need, which is to watch him fuck me.

He’s opening my eyes to the truth, and helping me feel bold enough to claim it.

“So well,” he says again, his voice rough as he holds me tightly. His lips graze my shoulder, and when he’s finally completely inside me, he wraps one hand around the front of my neck, not squeezing, just holding, and tips my head back so that he can kiss my cheek. “You’re such a good girl. Taking each of us so perfectly. Letting us make a mess of you.”

He’s right. My thighs are sloppy with Dex’s and Cade’s cum as Noah starts to take me in earnest. It’s an incredible feeling, and it gets even better when Noah moves the hand on my hip, sliding his fingers through the wetness coating my thighs.

“Fuck, I love this,” he groans, his fingers finding my clit. “Do you?”

“Yes,” I breathe, my legs shaking. “Oh god, yes. Please don’t stop.”

He fucks me harder, his fingers rubbing against me just the way I like, as if he's already learned all my secrets. And when I come again, I do it with his name on my lips and my eyes wide open, staring at myself in the mirror.

Noah grunts his approval, his thrusts stuttering, and then he's coming too, adding his own cum to the mix as he fills me up.

"Fucking gorgeous," he mutters, wrapping his arms around me when he pulls out. "Just like that. Stay still."

I'm not sure what he's doing at first, until his fingers dip between my legs, playing with the mixture of our combined arousals.

"So fucking sexy," he breathes. "Do you see it?"

He slides two fingers into me, and then pulls them out, a flood of cum following.

"Do you see how much you fucking want us?"

His fingers slide back in, then pull back out, more cum and wetness dripping down.

"Do you see how much we want you?"

Noah repeats the motion. Filling me. Pulling out.

"How much we need you?"

I nod, drunk on pleasure. My legs give out, but Noah is right there to catch me, turning me and effortlessly lifting me in his arms as Dex and Cade move closer, the three of them surrounding me.

"You smell like sex and honeysuckle," Dex murmurs, lifting my hand and turning it over. He inhales, then places a soft kiss on the inside of my wrist. "Perfect."

Cade does the same, only with my other hand.

"Perfect," he agrees, giving me a warm smile.

Noah presses his lips to my temple, holding me against his chest, and even though he doesn't say the word, I feel it. With them, I *am* perfect.

The four of us are perfect together.

“Let’s get you cleaned up,” Noah murmurs. The other two men stay behind as he carries me back to the shower, giving us a moment alone. “We didn’t really get a chance to finish in here,” he says as he sets me on my feet.

At first, I assume he means the shower sex we were joking about, but I’m wrong.

“Let me take care of you,” he says, adjusting the temperature of the water before pulling me under the spray to wash my hair.

“Thank you,” I whisper as his big fingers slowly massage my scalp, the scents of cum and lust slowly replaced with the soft, clean florals of my bath products.

“Of course.” Noah’s voice is gruff as always, but his touch is soft and careful as he works the shampoo through my hair, then rinses it out.

I’m facing away from him, letting him do all the work and take care of me, and I find myself suddenly blinking away tears.

Noah’s hands go still. I don’t even know how he knows, since he can’t see me.

“Okay, sunshine?” he asks gently.

I nod, stealing the word the three of them just fucked into my heart. “Perfect.”

Noah grunts, accepting my answer, and continues washing me—thoroughly and tenderly. And all I have to do is figure out how to accept that *perfect*, just like everything else with these men, is a temporary condition.

I’m falling too hard, and I shouldn’t. Especially not for all of them. I know that this moment, this whole fantasy, is the kind of thing that magical weeks in the mountains are made of, not real life. Not forever.

But no matter what I tell myself, there’s a part of me that really does believe in Christmas magic.

A part that can't help wishing it could be real.

SADIE

I WAKE up alone on Christmas morning, even though I went to sleep with all three men in bed with me. Another first for me, and one that was pretty damn incredible.

“Merry Christmas to me,” I whisper happily, stretching just to feel the faint hint of soreness in intimate places. It makes me smile.

I feel lazy and relaxed, a luxury I could get used to, and I roll onto my side and tuck my hands under my cheek, watching the snow drift down outside the window for a few minutes because for once, there’s nowhere I have to be.

My phone pings from the nightstand, and when I check the notification, it’s a picture from Luna.

I grin as I pull it up. She’s posed on a snowboard, the traitor, with a Santa hat on her head and a handsome man in ski pants standing behind her.

I tell my phone to read me the attached text, and then laugh and shake my head when it does.

LUNA: I decided to take lessons. Merry Christmas to me!

She could probably be *teaching* the lessons, but the guy is definitely attractive, and it makes me happy that we both apparently get to live out a fantasy for the holidays.

It also cracks me up that we used the exact same phrase, but I guess that’s what happens when you’ve been besties for as long as we have.

Another message pops up on my screen.

LUNA: Come on, girl, aren't you awake yet? I need to know if you liked your present!

Since she's out of town for the holiday, we exchanged gifts before she left, but agreed not to unwrap them until Christmas morning.

Before I can remind her that whatever she got me is still sitting under the twelve inch tall artificial tree I set up on my coffee table since I had no clue that I'd be stuck up on the mountain like this, she sends me another pic.

I roll onto my stomach, grinning hard, and dictate a reply.

ME: It looks great on you!

LUNA: I fucking love it.

I had a rose gold necklace made for her with not just her name, but her actual signature. Even without putting in the effort to make sense of the individual letters, the familiar loops and swirls of her extravagant handwriting make a pretty pattern against her skin.

ME: I'm glad. Yours is still back at my place, but I'll open it once the roads clear up.

LUNA: I can't believe you didn't bring it with you!

I laugh, rolling my eyes.

ME: It wasn't like I knew I'd be snowed in.

LUNA: Your voice-to-text must be glitching. I'm sure you meant to say "snowed in with three gorgeous men who all want to bone me."

I grin hard, then send her back a text that I know will have her shrieking over there.

ME: You're not wrong.

Sure enough, I get back a whole string of excited emojis before she demands to hear everything.

ME: You first. Who's the snowboard instructor, and how long did it take him to realize you'd played him when you asked for lessons?

She sends back an emoji with the lips zipped, then a laughing one, then she gives me the whole sordid tale, leaving me in stitches.

LUNA: Now you. Spill! What's happening with your harem of hunky men?

I bite my lip, glancing at the door. It's closed, and I've got no idea where the guys are right now. Hell, I don't even know what time it is other than late enough in the morning that I feel well-rested and totally spoiled for getting to sleep in. I'm just not sure I'm ready for them to walk in and hear me gushing about how amazing the sex has been.

On the other hand, this is my best friend. There's no way I'm not going to tell her everything that happened.

LUNA: Oh my god, where did you go?

I shake my head, grinning. Luna will never be known as the queen of patience. She immediately sends a couple more texts that make me laugh out loud.

LUNA: Don't tell me, your billionaire sex gods walked in and you're currently on your fifth orgasm, breathing too hard to answer your favorite bestie.

LUNA: Wait, I take it back. Definitely tell me if that's what's happening right now!

ME: You're not my favorite bestie. You're my only bestie.

LUNA: Ergo, I'm your favorite... duh!

I laugh at the eye roll emoji she sends that one with. She's ridiculous, and I love her.

LUNA: But enough about me. Quit dodging the question!!! Are you surrounded by naked men right now, or not?

ME: Not.

ME: ...but I was last night.

LUNA: !!!

I glance at the door again, then fill her in, blushing a little as I share some of the racier details.

Luna sends back a shocked face emoji, then a sweating one followed by a row of flame emojis.

Then she sends a candy cane emoji, and I crack up.

ME: Was that part too weird?

LUNA: Oh, hell no. Home-brew sex toys for the win!

LUNA: But seriously, marry them. Marry all three of them, right now.

I laugh, ignoring the little pang of longing when she adds a heart-eye emoji. I can definitely relate, but I shake my head as I text back.

ME: It's not like that. This definitely isn't about marriage. It's just some holiday fun.

LUNA: I know, babe. I'm just happy for you, whatever it's about. It's been way too long since I've seen you like this.

ME: Like what?

The three little dots telling me she's typing out a reply appear and disappear half a dozen times before her next message finally comes through even though it's not a long one.

LUNA: Happy. Confident. Relaxed. It's coming through loud and clear every time you talk about them, and I think it's great. You deserve that.

My throat gets tight, emotion swelling in my chest.

ME: Thanks. I love you, you know.

LUNA: I love you more. Always.

LUNA: Merry Christmas, Sades.

ME: Back at you, Lulu.

She signs off when her holiday man candy comes to collect her for Christmas brunch, and I get myself ready for the day and head downstairs. I can hear the low murmur of the men's voices coming from the kitchen once I get a little closer, but before I make it that far, my phone pings with another message.

I pause to let my phone read it to me, not that surprised when it's from my mom and is mostly about her.

What I *am* surprised about is how little it bothers me this time.

I send her a quick reply, wishing her a Merry Christmas and adding in a few vague pleasantries about her exotic vacation, but honestly, I'm not nearly as sad as I usually am when she ditches me to go do something that actually matters to her.

I pocket my phone and head into the kitchen, noticing as I pass through the main part of the lodge that the guys managed to put up more Christmas decorations while I was sleeping.

Everywhere I look, there are twinkling lights, fresh greenery, and glittering mementos of the season. Then I get to the kitchen and stop in the doorway, laughing with delight as I finally catch sight of my own trio of man candy.

"Merry Christmas, kitten." Dex turns away from the stove with a grin. It looks like they're all working together to make

breakfast, and each one of them is doing it in holiday-themed lounge pants and a Santa hat.

“It’s definitely starting out that way,” I agree, not even pretending that I’m not ogling them greedily.

Cade abandons the fruit he’s chopping and comes up to me, dipping me low in a dramatic kiss that leaves me both breathless and giggling, then points above my head. “Your fault.”

“What?” I ask, clinging to his shoulders for balance as he slowly straightens us back up.

I look up and see it as he explains.

“You’re standing under the mistletoe,” he says, his eyes sparkling as he looks down at me.

I nod seriously, then tug him forward, catching him just off guard enough that he stumbles into me.

I grin, then go up on my toes and kiss him back. “Now you are.”

Cade laughs, smoothing the hair back from my face. “I’ll stand under mistletoe for you anytime, dream girl.”

I let him pull me into the kitchen, my stomach giving an audible growl when I see everything they’ve already prepared.

“Good.” Noah gives me an approving look. “You’re hungry.”

“You guys should have woken me up to help,” I say, popping a slice of melon from Cade’s cutting board into my mouth

Dex turns and swats me with his spatula. “No way. We’re doing this for you. Giving you a great Christmas, remember?”

“I don’t think I’ll ever forget this,” I tell him with more honesty than I mean to.

Dex holds my eyes for a moment, an emotion I refuse to name passing between us, then cracks a smile. “Well, good. But since we wore you out yesterday—”

“And the day before,” Cade throws in, making me blush even though he’s not wrong.

“—you deserved some sleep,” Dex finishes, giving me a little push toward one of the tall stools near the counter. “Sit. We’ve almost got it all ready.”

I grin, then scoop Mrs. Claws off the stool and cuddle her against my chest as I steal her seat.

“What about her?” I ask the guys. “Does she get something special for Christmas breakfast too?”

“Do you even have to ask?” Noah says dryly, a faint smile playing over his lips as he nods toward a delicate porcelain plate at the edge of the counter.

I laugh. Dex really went all out, not just cooking up salmon, chicken, and liver for her, but cutting each piece of meat into a miniature holiday-inspired shape and garnishing the plate with something green too.

“Is that... spinach?” I ask.

Dex shrugs, his cheeks coloring just a bit. “It’s good for her.”

“In small amounts,” Noah says quickly, giving the three of us a stern look, as if he’s worried we might suddenly overfeed her on Popeye’s favorite. “And it has to be thoroughly cooked, or else it can cause her digestive problems.”

We all nod in acknowledgement, and he gives a satisfied grunt before going back to his task of making coffee.

“No oat milk,” he tells me once he gets four mugs prepared, frowning a little.

“That’s fine. Really. It’s an indulgence, not a necessity.”

Noah frowns even harder. “You *should* be indulged.”

I bite back a smile at how seriously he’s taking it, but it touches me. I wasn’t lying when I told Dex I’d never forget this. Not any of it.

Once everything is ready, we carry it into the dining room at Cade’s insistence. Dex turns some Christmas music on low

in the background, and Mrs. Claws makes herself at home on Noah's lap, graciously allowing him to hand feed her the tiny star-shaped pieces of fish and meat.

It's adorable, and I may or may not spend a little too much time sighing dreamily at the sight over the course of the meal. I've only ever seen this big, gruff man soften for me and our—I mean, *this*—kitten. It does dangerous things to my heart, but it's Christmas, so I decide I'm allowed all the feelings I want for today.

"Don't even think about it," Cade tells me when I reach for my plate after we've finished eating, intending to start cleaning up.

"What?" I ask, pausing mid-motion.

He pushes away from the table and comes around to my seat, then lifts me right out of it.

I laugh, startled, and cling to him.

"I said, don't even think about trying to do the dishes." He nuzzles his nose against my cheek. "You're not going to lift a finger today, unless it's to enjoy yourself."

"That's not fair. You guys cooked. I'm happy to clean."

They all reply at once, and I'm clearly out-voted.

"Nope."

"Not happening."

"We've got other plans."

Those plans turn out to be one of the most fun, relaxed days I've had in a long time. One of them managed to find all the old board games John kept in the basement, and I think we all lose track of time as we each pick out childhood favorites and laugh our way through multiple rounds.

At some point, Dex suggests playing for kisses, and even though there's a constant low hum of arousal between us throughout the day, even that stays innocent and lighthearted in a way that makes my heart feel like it has wings.

“You know, this really *is* the best Christmas I’ve ever had,” I tell them quietly later in the day.

Noah has just stoked the fire, and it crackles merrily as Dex hands me one of the mugs of hot cocoa—heaped with whipped cream—that he just brought out from the kitchen.

Cade is on the couch next to me, the cat in his lap and one arm draped loosely over my shoulders as we relax after an epic marathon of Settlers of Catan.

“I think you mean almost the best Christmas you’ve ever had,” he says, turning to kiss my temple as he pulls me a little closer. “It can’t be *the* best yet. Not until after presents.”

I flush with heat, assuming he means something sexual since obviously no one’s been able to go shopping, but then Noah nods, a serious expression on his face, and plucks something off the fireplace mantel.

Three somethings.

Three small boxes, all wrapped in Christmas paper and topped with large golden bows.

I blanche. “Oh, um, are you guys kidding? Because I... uh, I didn’t get you anything.”

How could I? I mean, honestly, how the fuck could *they*? We’re all trapped on top of a mountain.

“You’ve definitely given us something,” Cade says as Noah hands him one of the gifts, then hands the other to Dex.

I start to relax, figuring that *they’re* exchanging gifts, which makes sense. After all, they already planned on being together for the holiday. But then I realize that Noah is just distributing each one to the giver.

They’re all for me.

“Mine first,” Dex says, handing it to me. Each one is the exact same size, only the paper differing.

I take it, turning it over in my hands before looking up at him with confusion. “But how did you...”

I wave my hand in the general direction of the rest of the world, and all three of them laugh, understanding me with ease.

“It turns out that when you’re extremely wealthy, there’s always a way to get things done,” Dex says with a self-deprecating shrug. “At least, *most* things. You’ll actually get your gifts back in Denver. But we still wanted you to be able to unwrap something to let you know what they are.”

Heat floods my cheeks. Not because they spent money on me. Well, partially because of that. But because...

Well, just because.

I duck my head, not sure I’m ready for them to see everything that might be showing on my face. Then again, maybe I’m getting worked up for nothing, and I’ll just find a gift card to Target inside, like John used to get me each year.

“Oh,” I gasp once I unwrap Dex’s present, my heart skipping a beat. My hand flies up to cover my mouth, my eyes going wide.

It *is* a card, but not a gift card to Target. One side shows an artist’s rendering of a necklace—printed on some card stock I recognize from the Whispering Pines office—and the other has the artist’s details.

As I read through it slowly, I realize that he printed it in an accessible font. I blink back tears, touched by that small consideration almost as much as the actual gift.

“You had this designed just for me?”

Dex nods. “I told her I needed her to find a teal sapphire that matched your eyes.”

I blink fast, my eyes stinging again. “It’s beautiful.”

It’s a custom Sarah Littlefox piece. A local artist who’s made a name for herself in the jewelry world, but refuses to go into commercial production. She handcrafts each of her pieces, and they don’t come cheap, but it’s not the amount he spent on it that has me feeling so emotional.

“You knew that sapphires are my favorite gemstone?” I ask, my voice soft.

I told Parker that once in passing, but I learned quickly never to assume he retained details like that. He certainly never acted on them. Dex was there that day though. I remember the conversation, and I remember Dex being busy helping his dad with something on the other side of the room.

“I knew,” he says quietly.

“I didn’t think you were paying attention.”

He grins at me, a little lopsided. “I always paid attention.” Then he clears his throat, looking away, and nudges Cade. “You going to give her yours?”

Cade hands me his gift, the same size and feather-light weight as Dex’s, then says cryptically, “She’ll ship them to you in Denver.”

I unwrap the small box and pull out another one of the little blank cards we used to print seasonal greetings on and leave on the guests’ pillows. This one isn’t blank, though. The front has a *very* familiar image printed on it—the cover of one of my favorite spicy romance novels.

I blush, running my finger over it. “I’ve got this series on audio.”

I’d be embarrassed to admit how many times I’ve re-listened to these books if they weren’t so damn good.

“Yeah, I know.” Cade chuckles. “The author wasn’t easy to track down, but she’s agreed to have a set custom-printed in hardback for you. She told me she’s not interested in offering them in that format commercially, so you’ll have the only set in existence. Signed, of course.”

My mouth drops open. “A limited edition set... for me?”

“Nope.” He smiles, slipping the little card out of my hand and turning it over to show me the back. “An *exclusive* edition. She even agreed to customize the artwork for it, so you’ll truly have something one-of-a-kind.”

There's text on the back of this card too, but even though it's also printed in the accessible font that makes reading more manageable for me, I can't focus on that right now. I'm blown away. Not that he managed to make this happen. Dex is probably right about any one of them being able to get what they want with the kind of money they're able to throw around. But that the gift is so perfect. So personal.

It's one thing for Dex to choose something so perfectly suited to me, since we have some history. But I've only known Cade for a week. Maybe two, if you count our anonymous hookup at that hotel. It seems impossible that he could truly understand me this well in such a short period of time.

Or care enough to.

I swallow hard, my voice coming out rough with emotion. "Thank you. I... it's perfect, really."

"Anything for you," he says softly, holding my gaze.

Mrs. Claws breaks the sweet tension between us by pouncing on the bow I took off his gift, and when she bats it onto the floor and then leaps down on top of it like a mighty hunter taking down its prey, we all laugh. It also gives me a chance to surreptitiously wipe the moisture from my eyes.

"Now mine," Noah says gruffly, handing it over.

"Let me guess," I tease, hoping to mask how emotional this is making me. "I'll pick it up in Denver?"

He shakes his head, and since I can tell he's not going to give me anything more than that, I finish opening the box.

The logo for my favorite coffee shop, The Coffee Collective, is printed on the front.

I look up. "Thank you. I love their coffee."

Dex snorts, and Cade coughs—unsubtly using it to mask a laugh.

Noah's lips quirk up. "Glad to hear it, because they said you're going to drink there for free for life now that I've given them the capital to stay open."

My eyes go wide. “You... what?”

“I invested in it. You said you didn’t want it to close, so...”

He shrugs, looking a little bashful.

“They’re going to stay open now? Because of you?”

“Because of *you*,” he corrects me, something in his eyes that has my heart feeling too large for my chest.

“Thank you,” I whisper, completely overwhelmed by all three of them. “You really didn’t have to do that. None of you.”

“We wanted to,” Noah says, making my eyes well up with tears again. I blink them away, looking down and smoothing my fingers over the three cards they gave me. The boxes may have been small, but their gifts are huge.

I’ve never felt so seen.

I’ve never felt so much like I matter before.

I only wish I’d managed to get them something too.

Then I have an idea.

“I’ll be right back,” I blurt, hopping to my feet.

It doesn’t take long to prepare my “gift,” and once it’s ready, I ask them to come up to my room with me. Marty Kline and I may have snuck away to the basement when we did this before, but for Dex, Cade, and Noah, I wanted something more meaningful.

“This was always my favorite guest room,” I tell them, running my hand over the windowsill as I look out at the view. I can see the place where we cut down our tree from here.

“Because of the clawfoot tub?” Cade guesses, giving me a knowing smile.

I nod, grinning. “But now it’s because I have other memories in here too.” I clear my throat. “I want to commemorate that. Us. I want something that lasts.”

I suddenly worry that I'm exposing too much of how I've come to feel, or that they'll just think it's silly. But when I pull the curtain aside and show them where I've discreetly carved our initials—mine and each of theirs—into the wooden window sill, I can tell by their expressions that they get it. That I'm not alone in feeling like this arrangement has turned into something that will always be a special memory worth preserving.

Dex reaches out and traces the letters with his fingers, then picks up the small pocket knife I left sitting next to the carving and adds the date. "There. *Now* it's perfect."

Cade arches a brow. "And now you've both defaced my property," he jokes, making my eyes go wide. He chuckles, the tender look on his face calming my worries before they can fully form. "It really is perfect," he says softly. "Thank you for thinking of it."

He sweeps me into his arms and kisses me, and then passes me to each of his friends to do the same.

I can taste their arousal, their ever-present interest in me, but instead of taking me to bed, they take me back downstairs, giving me one last gift—a night of laughing and drinking and slow dancing by our tree.

By the time we finally make it to bed, it really has become the best Christmas I've ever had. The best one I can ever *imagine* having. But most of all, one that I'll hold in my heart forever, the memory carved there just as permanently as the marks I'll leave here at Whispering Pines.

CADE

I'M no workaholic like Noah, but the business world never sleeps. I knew from the get-go that I'd have to handle a few things during this holiday getaway—but then Sadie happened.

My priorities shifted the moment she agreed to the deal I proposed, but the morning after Christmas, there are certain things I can't put off any longer. I head to my own room and handle a few of them as soon as I wake up. The other three are enjoying the lazy, relaxed day they deserve, and I'm glad.

I'm also eager to join them.

“Fuck it,” I say, leaning back in my chair and scrubbing my hand down my face with a laugh once I realize I've spent the last ten minutes browsing steamy romance audiobook recommendations for Sadie instead of reviewing the tax documents my accountant wants me to sign off on before year end.

I close the lid of my laptop, tucking it under my arm, and head downstairs. I find Noah and Sadie in the living room with the large flatscreen TV on, a movie playing with some actor I vaguely recognize.

I lean against one of the rustic log beams that frame the doorway, watching them for a bit before either one notices me. They look good together.

Well, to be honest, Sadie looks fucking gorgeous no matter what, but right now? She's relaxed and casually sexy, dressed down in a pair of silky-looking lounge pants and a soft, oversized t-shirt with some kind of mascot on it—an angry-

looking feline in a gold and black jersey—tucked up against Noah’s side like she belongs there.

Noah’s situational awareness suddenly kicks in, that uncanny sixth sense he always has about his surroundings. Even though I swear I haven’t moved a muscle for at least five minutes, he looks up, catching my eye, and the chronically reserved motherfucker actually grins at me.

Okay, his lips barely curve up at the corners, but for Noah, that counts.

I push off the beam, taking a seat on one of the oversized chairs near the couch the two of them are relaxing on. “Having fun?”

Noah grunts, but Sadie looks up and gives me a real grin, complete with dimples and the same joyful glow that captivated me in the coffee shop.

“I’m making Noah watch rom-coms with me,” she says gleefully.

“All day,” he adds dryly, his voice carefully neutral but a tell-tale gleam in his eye for those of us who know what to look for.

He’s enjoying this shit.

And he will never, ever admit it.

Sadie smacks him playfully in the shoulder. “I can’t believe there are so many you’ve never seen!”

I laugh, willing to bet that “so many” is more like all of them.

“I can’t believe that surprises you,” I tease her. “Have you *met* Noah?”

“Well, he needs to understand how amazing they are,” she says with a dreamy sigh.

Noah rolls his eyes. “I’m just here for the popcorn.”

There is no popcorn.

“Shut up,” Sadie says, resting a hand on his thigh and her head on his shoulder as she watches the screen happily.

Noah wraps his arm around her, and despite his grumbling, he keeps his eyes on the movie too. He also looks relaxed and unwound, which isn't his usual MO.

I grin, opening up my laptop. I don't even think he did a perimeter check last night.

I pull up the tax documents I have to get through, glancing up at the movie now and then when Sadie giggles. It's nice. And I'd be the first to say it's weird that seeing the two of them cuddled up like that gives me a warm feeling instead of stirring up my possessiveness. But then again, Noah and Dex are closer to me than brothers.

They're the two people in this world who truly get me. Who always have my back.

And the only two I can ever imagine sharing Sadie, with.

So, maybe it's not so weird after all.

Even with the movie in the background, I actually do get more done now that I'm down here with the two of them. Well, three of them—sort of—since I can hear Dex pattering around in the kitchen too. I actually manage to get pretty focused for a while.

But then I hear a quiet, choked sound from the couch, and I look up just in time to catch Noah duck his head against his shoulder, wiping away...

I grin. “Are you crying?”

Noah turns a flat gaze on me, then chucks a throw pillow at my head. “Of course I'm not fucking crying.”

I catch the pillow in one hand and grin even harder. “No shame in it. Right, Sadie?”

“Aww, of course not,” she says, poking Noah's side until he cracks a small smile. “I'm glad to see you so invested in the characters though. I told you you'd like this.”

Noah clears his throat but tugs her closer. “I just got a cat hair in my eye.”

“Mm-hm.” Sadie hums, leaning into him happily.

Mrs. Claws pokes her head out from between the branches of the Christmas tree, looks between the three of us, then hops down and steps daintily across the back of the couch to curl up on Noah’s shoulder.

Shit, the scene is so cute that *I* might tear up if I’m not careful. Noah’s always been a bit closed off, but Sadie manages to break through all of that without even trying. She’s good for him, and I fucking love it.

A little voice in my head, one that’s been pestering me for days, points out that she’s good for me too. I’ve been ignoring it in favor of staying in the moment and honoring the no-strings agreement I made with her, and thankfully, before I have to consider the thought too deeply now, Noah’s phone interrupts us.

He pulls it out and looks down at it, his finger hovering over the reject button, but then he cracks a little smile as he reads the name on the screen. “Gotta take this.”

Sadie hits pause on the movie. “Work?”

“Nah. It’s my mom.”

“Oh!” She looks a little flustered as she tries to extract herself from the comfortable nest she’s made, nestled against Noah’s side. “Let me give you some privacy.”

Even from here, I can see Noah’s arm tighten around her shoulders, holding her in place. “No need.”

Before Sadie can argue with him, he accepts the call. A video call, I realize when Mrs. King’s face appears on his screen.

Noah angles it up, his face relaxing into an easy grin that I know for sure only his mother gets from him. “Hey, Ma. Merry Christmas. Sorry we couldn’t connect yesterday.”

“My fault, sweetie,” she says, her voice soft and a little tired, the way it’s been every time I’ve met her.

It's not that she has a hard life, materially speaking. Noah makes damn sure of that. But once, after we shared enough beer to make an elephant black out—otherwise known as just enough to give Noah a hardcore buzz—he told me that she's been that way ever since his pops died. She just never recovered, emotionally speaking, and I know it sends his protective instincts into overdrive.

“I just wanted to say hello,” I hear Mrs. King go on. “Are you still up at that cabin in the woods with your friends?”

Noah cracks another smile, and I quit even pretending to work, thoroughly entertained.

“Yeah. Still here in Cade's big-ass cabin in the woods.” He turns the phone around, pointing the camera toward me for a moment. “In fact, he's right here.”

I wave at the screen. “Nice to see you, Mrs. King. Did you have a good holiday?”

“I did, thank you,” she says, giving a wave back. “I hope you boys aren't getting too much snow.”

“Just the right amount,” I reassure her.

Noah turns the phone back to face him. “Dex is somewhere around here too.”

“In the kitchen, I assume?” she asks, giving me a momentary pang of something like envy.

It kills me that Noah lost his dad the way he did, but he still has his mother. She loves him, and it shows. Mine though? I doubt my parents even know the names of my two closest friends, much less their hobbies.

Of course, it's better that way, given how toxic they are. It's why I cut ties with them, which is something I'll never regret. Especially since I've replaced my real family with a better, stronger one if you count the close connection I have with Dex and Noah.

Mrs. King starts cooing over Mrs. Claws the moment she notices her sitting on Noah's shoulder. Then Noah turns the

camera on Sadie. “There’s someone else I’d like you to meet, Ma.”

Sadie blushes prettily, clearly a little nervous about the introduction, but Mrs. King is the sweetest, kindest woman I know, and it doesn’t take long before she puts Sadie at ease. When Sadie drops the news that she’s currently making Noah watch rom coms with her, I’m pretty sure Mrs. King wants to adopt her on the spot.

All three of them get into an animated discussion of whatever movie they’re currently watching—apparently, it’s one of Mrs. King’s favorites too—and I do my best to turn my attention back to the work I need to wrap up, determined to get through the last two reports so I can finally be well and truly done with this shit until after the New Year.

I almost make it when Dex wanders in from the kitchen. He stops in his tracks, and a strange sort of tension passes over his face as he looks from Noah to Sadie.

Noah is just finishing up his call with his mother, promising to be in touch again soon. As soon as he hangs up, Sadie slumps against him with a laugh.

“Oh my god, warn a girl!”

“What? She liked you.”

Sadie looks up at him, her smile so sweet and open that it makes something break loose inside my chest.

“Did she?” she asks softly, resting her hand over Noah’s heart. “Because I really liked her too.”

He covers her hand with his, holding it against him. “Yeah, sunshine. She really did.”

They stare into each other’s eyes, and it’s intimate enough that if it were anyone else, I’d feel like I was invading their privacy. Instead, I feel oddly connected to both of them, even though it’s got nothing to do with me.

Maybe because I care about both of them.

Noah cups the back of Sadie’s head, leaning down to kiss her, and I shoot a glance over at Dex, expecting to share a look

that tells me he feels the same way. It just feels *right* to have us all together, and after everything the four of us have shared over the last few days, I know he feels the same.

Except I'm wrong. Dex isn't looking at me the way I expect him to be. He's not looking at me at all.

Instead, the flash of tension I thought I saw earlier is back, and then some. He's standing rigidly, his jaw clenched as he watches them kiss.

They break apart, and Sadie catches sight of him Dex. "Hey!" she greets him happily.

His face goes hard, and instead of answering, he turns on his heel and strides from the room.

What the actual hell?

SADIE

I BLINK in shock as Dex storms off, the worst kind of déjà vu overtaking me. This is the old Dex. The one who constantly blew hot and cold. The one I could never figure out back when I was still dating his brother, and still fighting my own attraction to him.

The shock wears off fast though, because this may be the old Dex, but we have a new relationship now. Well, a new arrangement, at least.

This time, I'm not afraid to call him out on this shit.

And I'm definitely not afraid to go after him.

I pull away from Noah's side, getting to my feet.

"Do either of you know what set him off?" I ask, trying to give Dex the benefit of the doubt. But they both shrug, looking just as confused as I am.

Cade shuts his laptop, starting to get out of his seat, and I shake my head as I say, "I'm going to talk to him."

He snorts but grins. "Good. Tell him not to be an asshole."

That gets a faint chuckle from Noah, and as irritated as I am at Dex for copping an attitude out of the blue like this, I kind of love how it feels like we're all connected in this moment.

I don't linger to enjoy it. Even if we only have a little time left before the storm clears up, I want things to be the way they have been these last few days, so Dex needs to get over

whatever it is that's bothering him. Or at least talk to us about it instead of pulling this disappearing act.

Normally, the kitchen seems to be where he works his shit out, but he went the opposite direction, so I head up to his room.

He's not there, and seeing the empty space where I expected to find him hurts a little. It feels like unwelcome foreshadowing of the end of our deal, when we all go our separate ways, and it just fires me up all the more to track him down and make sure the time we have left isn't wasted.

The lodge isn't small, but I worked here for years and know it like the back of my hand. I finally find him in one of the unused guest rooms at the opposite end of the building, a barren one with the mattress stripped down and the vents all closed, so that it's almost chilly enough to see my breath in the room.

Somehow, that almost makes it seem less like he's gone off to sulk and more like he's punishing himself.

I frown, still a little pissed, but now also worried about him. We have history, and I can't deny that I've started to develop real feelings for him. But the truth is there's still a lot I don't know about Dex. A lot of years where we had no contact.

I honestly have no idea what's going on with him right now.

"Hey," I say softly, closing the door behind me and leaning back against it. "What's up?"

He's staring out the window, his back to me, and he doesn't turn around. He also doesn't answer me, which sparks my irritation again.

I care about him, but he pulled this on me for years while I was dating Parker, and goddammit, we already *talked* about this. Back then, it was because he was fighting his attraction. Now, he's got no call for that shit.

I stomp over to the window, propping my hip on the sill so that I'm in his line of sight. Then I poke his chest. "I said hey,

Dex. Are you seriously going to just stand here and ignore me?”

He looks down at me, his mouth tight, his eyes flicking from my face down to my chest and then back. “I’m not ignoring you,” he finally says.

I lift an eyebrow. “Really? The road is really that interesting?”

The rooms on this side of the lodge all face the parking area, and from there, the single road leading down the mountain. My throat tightens as I realize that.

Is that what this is about? Is he really that eager to be done with all of this and get out of here?

He just snorts and shakes his head in answer to my snark, and I’m fucking done. He doesn’t get to treat me this way. Even if this isn’t a real relationship, even if we don’t stay in touch after he leaves, we’re here now, and what we’ve been doing means something to me.

I poke him again, harder this time. “Tell me what this is about,” I demand. “You don’t get to pull the same crap you did when I was with Parker. Not now.”

He finally turns to me, his jaw clenched tight. “I can’t fucking believe you’re still thinking about Parker after all these years.”

“I... what?” I blink, a little taken aback. “I’m not. I just want to know what’s going on with you.”

“Don’t lie to me, Sadie.” His eyes narrow. “You’re practically rubbing it in my face!”

Hearing him use my actual name instead of calling me *kitten* feels like a gut punch. I still don’t know what the hell is happening right now, but if nothing else, I realize that what I feel for him is real. Temporary or not, and no matter how much I’ve been trying to keep perspective on this thing, I’ve started to actually fall for him.

And I still don’t even know why we’re fucking fighting.

“I’m not rubbing anything in your face! What are you even talking about?”

He grabs my shirt and tugs me closer, twisting the soft material in his fist. “Oh really? Then what the fuck is this?”

His knuckles brush against my breasts, and even though we’re arguing, my body responds to him, making my next words come out a little breathless. “What the fuck is what?”

“This!”

He yanks on my shirt even harder, and I hear one of the seams give out.

Oh, hell no. Not that I’m wearing anything special. It’s just a comfy old shirt I threw in my bag at the last second, not thinking I’d have any cause for sexy pajamas. But I want a real explanation, not this unreasonable anger over something I’ve done to offend him. Something I’m still not even fucking clear on.

I pry his fingers off my shirt and shove him back.

He doesn’t move, because the man is built like a tank, but he does let go.

“Take it off.”

I blink. “My shirt?” I look down at it, then back up at him. “What the hell, Dex! Quit being so fucking cryptic and tell me what the problem is here.”

“The shirt *is* the problem. It’s Parker’s, and I don’t want anything related to him touching your skin. Not ever again.”

“What are you talking about? This is just something I wear to sleep in.”

“It’s his,” Dex repeats, pulling the front away from my chest. “Parker got this when he was at UC Denver. I recognize fucking Milo. Take it off.”

I almost laugh at the venom in his voice when he spits out the college mascot’s name, but this isn’t about any hatred of Milo the lynx. It’s not even about collegiate rivalry, even though I know the brothers went to different schools.

This is something deeper. Something I thought we already cleared up.

“It’s just a shirt. I honestly didn’t even remember it was his. I’m not going to—”

“Yeah, you are,” Dex cuts in, his eyes burning into me with something possessive and dark that sends a visceral little thrill through me.

“Quit being unreasonable.”

“Then fucking listen to me!”

We’re toe to toe now, close enough that I can feel the heat of his body—a contrast with the chilly air coming off the window at my back.

“I *am* listening, but I’m not taking my shirt off. For one thing, it’s fucking cold in here! And for another, you’re not the boss of me.”

“I am about this,” he says with a burning intensity that steals my breath.

“No, you’re really not,” I whisper, my pulse thrumming in my veins.

“I’m fucking serious. Take. It. Off.” He yanks the loose neckline away from my skin. “*Now, kitten.*”

I don’t move fast enough for him. Hell, I don’t move at all, since his intensity catches me completely off guard. And then Dex takes the decision out of my hands.

He takes the collar in both hands and rips the old, worn material apart.

“Dex!”

I instinctively jerk away from him, my adrenaline surging, and he growls and pulls me closer again, holding me against him with one arm while he finishes tearing the shirt off me with the other.

I gasp at the shock of cool air on my skin, my heart pounding as he continues tearing at the material until it’s in shreds.

He drops the pieces to the floor and steps on them, all without letting go of me, then he finally looks up and meets my eyes.

“Dex?” I ask, not sure if my nipples are hard because of the cold or what he just did.

“Don’t put anything of his on your body ever again. My brother had his chance, but you’re fucking *mine* now.”

I shake my head. “I won’t. I didn’t—I didn’t even think about it. I—”

He hauls me into his arms, cutting off the words I’m stumbling over with a hard, possessive kiss that leaves me gasping.

I’m still pissed at him. Whatever his issues are, he needs to learn to fucking talk about them instead of falling back on this dickish behavior. But I’m also so turned on I can barely see straight.

“Fuck, I need you,” he mutters, trailing kisses down my jawline as he fumbles between us, unzipping his pants.

I feel just as desperate as I shove my pants and panties down too.

Dex finishes pulling them off me, then lifts my ass up onto the windowsill and hooks my knees over his elbows, leaving me open and exposed to him.

He rubs his cock against me, making me moan.

“Put me inside you,” he growls, his arms locked around me, the only thing between me and the icy glass.

I reach down and line him up, then cry out as he sinks in deep, filling me to the hilt with one thrust.

“Mine,” he growls, kissing me fiercely. He gives me a split second to adjust, then pulls back and slams into me again with possessive ferocity. “You’re already wet. You fucking want this.”

“Yes,” I gasp, clutching his shoulders.

“You need it.”

“Yes.”

“You never got this fucking wet for Parker, did you? He didn’t know how to fuck you. He didn’t *deserve* to fuck you. Say it.”

“He didn’t.”

“Who does?” he demands, his arms like iron bars around me as he drives into me like a man possessed.

The windowsill digs into my ass and heat races through me despite the chill in the room, and the answer to that is easy. “You, Dex,” I pant. “Just you, and Cade, and Noah.”

“Not my fucking brother,” he grits out, fucking me even harder. “He could never make you come the way I do.”

I shake my head. “No. Oh god. Just you.”

He slams into me, holding himself as deep as he can go as he grinds his hips against me as if it’s still not enough. “Your pussy feels so fucking good,” he rasps, resting his forehead on mine. “I need more of it.”

“It’s yours.” I rest my hand on his cheek, fighting for breath as we stare at each other. We both move at the same time, our mouths meeting without any finesse, teeth clashing and tongues greedy and forceful.

Then he abruptly pulls out, lifting me off the windowsill and spinning me around.

I brace my hands on the window, the entire mountain spread out in front of me as he slams back into me, gripping my hips and fucking me with a rough, relentless rhythm.

A moan tears out of me, and Dex lets out a husky, possessive laugh.

“You like that? You like getting fucked on display like this?”

There’s no one else on the mountain but us—no one outside to see what he’s doing to me. But his words still affect me.

“I like getting fucked by you, no matter where,” I manage to gasp.

His answering groan sends a fresh surge of wetness to my core, and he slides in even deeper, reaching around me to pinch my clit. “Good answer.”

My head falls forward, one of his hands landing between my shoulder blades and keeping me there as I moan again.

“Come for me,” he growls. “Come on my cock. Show me how fucking good it feels when the right brother fucks you.”

“*Dex.*”

He bites down on the curve where my shoulder and neck meet, and that plus the pinch of my clit and his cock stretching and filling me, sends me hurtling over the edge.

My cries fill the air, the thought of Cade and Noah hearing only pushing me higher.

Dex fucks me through it without letting up.

“Another,” he demands as I start to come down.

“I can’t,” I whisper, even as my body starts to tighten for him again.

“The fuck you can’t. You were made for this. Give me one more. Show me whose cock you crave,” he demands as he pounds into me.

Pleasure breaks over me in a rush, making me scream as I give him what he wants.

“Fuck, yes, like that,” he groans, slamming into me again and again as he chases his own orgasm.

He goes still a moment later, his grip tightening on my hips as his shaft throbs, spurting inside me. Filling me with his cum again.

I slump forward toward the window, gasping and panting, and Dex collapses against me, his heavy weight pressing me into the cool glass.

We stay like that for a few minutes, the energy between us softening bit by bit, until he finally straightens, pulling me upright and wrapping an arm around me to hold me against him.

He pushes my hair over my shoulder, then kisses the back of my neck.

“Sorry,” he says quietly, his touch still possessive, but gentler now too. “Seeing you in that shirt just set something off in me.”

His cock starts to soften, slipping out of me, and I turn in his arms to face him. “I won’t wear it again.”

“Uh, yeah. You definitely won’t.”

He huffs out a laugh, and I can’t help but join him as I look down at the tattered pieces.

Then I reach up and stroke his jaw. “I only kept it because it was so comfortable. I honestly didn’t even remember I got it from Parker, and I didn’t keep it to remember him by. I’ve been over him for years.”

Dex stares down at me like he’s searching for the truth in my face. Satisfied with what he sees, he kisses me, slow and tender.

“I think I already knew that,” he admits when we break apart. “You’re too smart to be hung up on my idiot brother. Honestly, it wasn’t just that. It...”

He hesitates, and my heart races, a sudden rush of nerves filling me.

“What?” I ask.

He swallows, still holding my gaze. But before he can speak, rapid footsteps sound outside the door, and then it bursts open.

“Dex? Sadie?”

Both Cade and Noah stand in the doorway, and the looks on their faces make it clear that they didn’t come up here to continue what Dex and I started.

“Shit.” Dex frowns, looking between them. “What happened?”

I shiver, and he shrugs out of his shirt, pulling it down over my head.

Noah looks grim, and Cade sighs, scrubbing a hand over his face and glancing away for a second before he tells us, “We’ve been outed to the press.”

“For what?” I glance between the three of them, hoping they’re not about to admit that they really are the corporate asshole billionaires I originally suspected Cade was.

Dex tucks me into his side, tightening his arm around me protectively.

“For this, dream girl,” Cade answers, gesturing between us. “Our relationship has been leaked. I have no idea how, but a shit-ton of news outlets are already reporting on it. It’s everywhere.”

My first reaction is some sort of feeling about the fact that he used the word *relationship*.

My second one is a cold dose of sanity and an even colder reality check.

This isn’t what we agreed on. It’s not the deal we made.

And none of them look happy about it.

SADIE

“SHIT,” Dex says after a beat of silence, resting his hand on my lower back. “Okay. We’ll be down as soon as we get dressed.”

He means me. All he did was unzip to fuck me, and I’m still a little caught up in the whirlwind of emotion from that. It felt like Dex and I teetering on the edge of something bigger, and a part of me wants to have a total tantrum about whatever that was being interrupted.

The bigger part of me is just stunned that this private bubble we’ve been living in for the past few days has gone public. I’m not sure how to process that, or what I even feel about it other than violated.

“We’ll be right down,” I say, licking my suddenly dry lips.

Cade nods, turning to go back downstairs, and Noah hesitates for a moment, his brow furrowing as his protective nature rises up. I’m sure he can tell this has thrown me, and he wants to do something about it.

“I’ve got her,” Dex reassures him.

Noah gives a single sharp nod, then follows Cade back downstairs.

“You okay?” Dex turns to me, cupping my cheek as he looks into my eyes.

“I—I don’t know,” I tell him honestly. “I guess we need to go see how bad this really is.”

He nods and helps me get myself put back together, then the two of us go down to join the others in front of the tree. It's probably time to take it down, since Christmas is over now.

I push away the pang in my heart at that thought, because now is the time for damage control, not nostalgia for something I always knew had an expiration date.

"It's all over the internet, but all the articles just rehash the same things," Noah informs us grimly once Dex and I take a seat. He turns his laptop toward us. "As far as I can tell, this is the original."

It's a TMZ website, I can tell that at a glance from the big logo at the top, but my brain is in no mood at all to try to slog through the text. I make a frustrated sound, and Dex puts his arm around me and starts reading it aloud without me having to say a word.

"Billionaire Love Triangle Heats Up: Winter Wonderland Romance Unveiled at Whispering Pines Resort. Hold on to your top hats, folks, because TMZ has just uncovered the juiciest billionaire love triangle in recent memory, and it's set against the snowy backdrop of a lavish Denver, Colorado retreat. What the fuck is this shit? It reads like some kind of cheap tabloid."

"That's basically what it is," I mutter, feeling a little lightheaded. "Just online."

"What I want to know is who the fuck leaked it," Noah says grimly.

"Does it say?" I look at Dex, wiping sweaty palms on my pant legs.

He goes back to reading. *"Our inside source spilled the piping hot tea that three of the world's most formidable billionaires have kindled a sordid affair with a single woman, and they're all cozied up at the newly-acquired Whispering Pines Resort just outside Denver thanks to an unforgiving winter storm."* He looks up. "What does that even mean, inside source? There are only four of us here. There *is* no inside source."

“I’m not sure.” Cade scowls. “But we all know predators like this gossip site pay big money for shit like this, and the information they’ve got is pretty fucking accurate.”

I swallow hard. “Does it name all of us?”

Cade nods.

“Even me?”

When he nods again, I shake my head. “But I’m nobody.”

Three sets of eyes snap to my face with varying degrees of ferocity.

“Don’t ever say that, sunshine,” Noah orders sternly.

“You know what I mean,” I whisper, feeling overwhelmed and bothered by the *sordid affair* label.

Noah’s eyes soften a little, and he nods. “Yeah, I do. We’re used to being in the public eye. You’re not.”

“What, um, what does it say about me?” I ask, looking back to Dex. “Actually, just... could you read all of it? I need to know.”

None of them give me any shit at all for needing to ask for this kind of help, taking my dyslexia in stride as if it’s just one more part of me that they accept completely. Dex nods, then reads through the remainder of the dramatically worded article in a flat, monotone voice that conveys his disgust with the gossipy tone better than any words ever could.

“*Meet the Cast.*” He rolls his eyes, but continues on because I asked him to. “*Billionaire Bachelor #1 - Cade McAllister: The real estate magnate who’s made it big in the property game. With a keen eye for lucrative investments, McAllister recently purchased Whispering Pines and is now the lord of this snow-clad manor.*

“*Billionaire Bachelor #2 - Dex Blaine: A finance wizard who’s conquered the world of high-stakes investments. Blaine’s strategic brilliance has propelled him into the ranks of financial royalty. He’s a jack-of-all-trades, flipping fortunes from tech startups to real estate ventures.*

“Billionaire Bachelor #3 - Noah King: The culinary maestro behind the Keystone Culinary empire. He’s spiced up the restaurant scene, leaving a trail of culinary masterpieces and five-star reviews in his wake.

“The Leading Lady - Sadie Evans: A former employee of Whispering Pines from its pre-Cade McAllister days, Evans is the woman who’s captured the attention of these magnates. What we want to know here at TMZ is just how she managed that when everything about her screams average.” The muscle in Dex’s jaw starts ticking. *“This is fucking bullshit.”*

“It’s alright,” I say, hating the quiver in my voice. “Just finish it, okay?”

He nods, his voice even tighter as he quickly reads off the rest of the article.

“Our source tells us that the three billionaires, close friends for many years, met at the resort for a private holiday getaway. What no one seems to know is how Sadie Evans ended up there with them. And are they actually falling for her hidden charms, or is the affair just a way to pass the time while one of the biggest blizzards in Colorado’s history keeps the foursome trapped inside? And juiciest of all, if any of these oh-so-eligible bachelors decide they want something more when the weather clears up, will this little nobody from Colorado ruin their friendship by pitting each man against the others for her affections?”

“Stay tuned to TMZ for the latest exclusive updates on this winter wonderland romance that’s leaving us all breathless.” Dex slams the laptop’s lid closed, then shoves it back at Noah. “I’m going to have my lawyers sue them into oblivion until they take that shit down.”

“You’ll lose,” I whisper, feeling a little light-headed. “None of it is actually inaccurate, and isn’t that how gossip sites make their living?”

“Inaccurate? Did you hear how they talked about you?”

“We all heard,” Cade answers Dex, the quiet fury in his eyes matching the anger in his friend’s voice. “They don’t

know shit about Sadie.”

“And they should fucking pay for how they slandered her,” Noah says flatly. “But the more immediate question is, who leaked it?”

My heart flutters, and not in a fun way. I’m trying to keep it together, but I’m not sure how well I’m managing that when I’m freaking out a little inside.

Living this no-strings fantasy out with these three men has been one of the best experiences of my life. It has truly felt magical. But it was always supposed to be a ‘what happens at the lodge stays in the lodge’ kind of thing. That’s what we agreed on, and knowing that played a big part in how free and uninhibited I’ve felt over the past several days.

But now, hearing how it’s being put out there to the public—just a salacious piece of gossip that cheapens how meaningful this time has been to me—makes it all seem so shallow and sordid.

And I hate the idea of everyone knowing our private business.

The men start throwing out theories—everything from John, the former Whispering Pines owner, having installed cameras to media sites sending in drones under cover of the storm—but honestly, that just feels like they’ve binged a few too many thrillers.

The article cited an “inside source,” and Dex is right. We’re the only four here.

My throat goes tight.

“I didn’t tell anyone,” I whisper, forcing the words out even though I imagine it will be hard for the guys to believe that.

They all lead such bigger lives than I do. I appreciate that they’re offended on my behalf at the way the article describes me, but it’s not exactly wrong. Who am I to catch the eye of one billionaire, let alone three?

They all stop talking and look at me.

“I *swear* I didn’t—oh god.” My stomach drops as I realize I’m lying. “Shit, no. I’m sorry. I did tell someone. My best friend, Luna. But I promise, she would *never* share my personal business with anyone.”

It doesn’t matter how much TMZ pays for its gossip, I can’t believe Luna would do that. It’s impossible. But I have no idea how to convince the guys that I didn’t betray their trust like this.

I blink fast, tears pricking my eyes, and Cade reaches over and hauls me into his lap. “I know. We all do.”

I shake my head. “They said an inside source. I haven’t even talked to anyone else. Well, except Noah’s mom.”

I give him a quick, tight smile, half expecting to find him glaring at me. And he does look grim, but not toward me.

“You wouldn’t have sold our story to the press,” he says flatly, like it’s not up for debate. “No one here thinks that, and believe me, we’re going to make them pay for violating your privacy like that.”

I look between the three of them. *My* privacy. That’s what Noah’s worried about. What they all are.

“And you’re right,” he goes on. “Communication has been kept to a minimum here, so if the place isn’t bugged, then... *fuck.*”

“What?” Dex demands, leaning forward.

Noah doesn’t answer. He opens his laptop again, his fingers flying over the keyboard for a few minutes as he stares at the screen with an intensity that’s almost frightening.

Then his hands go still, and he lets out another violent curse before schooling his face into a blank mask.

“Did you figure it out? Who was it, and how?” Cade bites out.

“This is my fault,” Noah says in a low voice.

Dex shakes his head. “The fuck it is.”

If possible, Noah's expression turns even more grim. "It was my assistant, Becca."

"Are you sure?" Cade asks, looking confused. "She's been with you for years."

"I'm sure." Noah turns the laptop around so we can all see the screen, although the diagnostics on it mean nothing to me. "Becca is able to access my computer remotely, and she's abused that privilege. The logs show that she's turned on the function several times recently, recording audio and, when I've left the screen up, video as well."

My gut clenches, ice filling my veins. "She recorded us having sex?"

"No," all three of them say at once.

"I've only seen you with your laptop in here, and up in your room, right?" Cade says to Noah. "So there's no way she would have caught that."

"Correct," Noah bites out. "But she obviously overheard enough to piece together what we were doing, and what Sadie means to us."

My heart lurches at his words, despite the worry slowly building inside me. What do I mean to them? What does *Noah* think I mean to them?

But now isn't the time to ask. Not when Noah's face is set in a stony mask and the other two look ready to kill.

"It was Becca," Noah says with finality. "She's the one who leaked the story to the press."

SADIE

“NOAH,” Cade starts. “If that’s true—”

“I’ll handle it,” Noah cuts him off, his face dark.

“I know. But none of this ‘it was my fault’ bullshit. If it’s true, this is on her.”

“We’re still the ones who have to deal with the fallout,” Noah says grimly. “And that wouldn’t be the case if the employee I trusted hadn’t accessed my system to out us.”

Noah flips his laptop back around, and the distinctive ringtone of a video call sounds.

“You want us to leave you to it?” Dex asks, offering him some privacy.

“No,” Noah bites out. “This affects all of us.”

A moment later, a woman’s voice answers the call, perky and upbeat. “Noah! How was your Christmas, bossman?”

“You turned on remote access without my authorization,” he says without any attempt at niceties. “And now my private business is on the internet.”

“Oh! Um, no, what? I would never!”

“I checked the audit logs,” he says flatly. “And you’ve not only accessed, but recorded a total of ninety-eight minutes and sixteen seconds of audio files, and twenty-three minutes of video files outside of our work calls over the last week.”

“There must be a glitch in the system files,” she says, her voice sounding high and strained. “You know I wouldn’t—”

“Don’t insult my intelligence.” He cuts her off again. “The logs weren’t the only thing I checked. You signed our standard corporate authorization forms when we hired you, Becca. I also accessed the keystroke files.”

There’s silence for a moment, and I exchange a glance with Dex and Cade. I agree with them completely. This isn’t Noah’s fault. But as someone whose worst fear is failing to be prepared for a threat, this must be killing him.

“I only wanted to…” Becca trails off. I don’t blame her for not bothering to finish that sentence, not with the furious look on Noah’s face. “I’m sorry,” she backpedals. “You’re right. It was me, but Noah—”

“You’re fired,” he cuts in. “Effective immediately.”

“What?” She sounds genuinely shocked, which might make me laugh with disbelief if I wasn’t still all twisted into knots about the whole thing. “You can’t!” she says desperately. “You need me.”

“It’s already done,” Noah says with no emotion in his voice. “Once I end this call, I’ll be deleting your access to all Keystone Culinary servers and changing the passwords. You’ll be hearing from my lawyer by tomorrow morning.”

She stutters out a few more pleas for leniency, but Noah doesn’t bend.

He ends the video call with his assistant and closes his laptop, then gets to his feet as he pulls out his phone. I half expect him to step out of the room when I realize he’s following through and calling his lawyer immediately. Instead, he starts pacing in front of the fireplace, and while it doesn’t surprise me that he’s comfortable handling his business around his two best friends, it makes me feel a probably misplaced sense of solidarity that he’s okay with having me here too.

“Jackson?” Noah says into the phone after a moment. “We’ve got a situation.”

My phone pings as he starts bringing his lawyer up to speed, and before I can check it, both Cade’s and Dex’s phones go off too.

Cade pulls his out and glances at the screen with a sigh, then kisses my temple. “Sorry, dream girl,” he says, gently shifting me off his lap. “My team must have gotten wind of it too.”

“No, of course.” I give him a little nod, catching sight of Dex’s phone as it goes off again.

I smile a little despite the situation. It’s his mother’s name on the screen, and while I’ve got no doubt at all that he’ll be getting damage control calls from whoever it is that helps him run his business too, I kind of love that the Blaine family immediately starts circling the wagons whenever there’s a threat to one of their own. As far as I’m concerned, the Blaines are everything that family should be. Not for the first time, I wonder if the chance to be a part of that, even just a little bit, is part of the reason I stayed with Parker as long as I did.

My phone pings again. Then again.

I look down. I can tell it’s a whole string of messages from Luna, but using the text-to-speech function to have my phone read them out to me while Noah is still on his call would be rude.

I look around, my heart sinking. All three men are busy dealing with the fallout of this, understandably distracted by the necessity of getting ahead of the leak. The peaceful, cozy lodge—my first taste of real Christmas magic in I don’t know how long, maybe ever—now feels chaotic and tense, the bubble of freedom and privacy we’ve been enjoying burst in a way that I don’t think we can recover from.

I get to my feet. All three of them immediately pause their conversations, their eyes zeroing in on me.

“Kitten?”

I shake my head, forcing a smile. “I’m fine.” I hold up my phone. “I’m just going to head up to my room and...”

I end that sentence on a helpless shrug, feeling the differences between us in a way that I just haven’t up until now. Their lives are so different from mine, and while they no doubt have some feelings about having their personal business

shared in public, the potential impact to each of them is so much greater, given the sphere of influence they each have.

Now that Dex is done reassuring his mother that everything is fine, they're all on the phone with lawyers, their boards of directors, and PR representatives. I just want to go to my room and cry on my best friend's shoulder.

"If you need anything..." Cade starts, frowning.

I quickly shake my head. "No, I'm fine. I know you've all got a lot to handle. Don't worry about me."

"That's not gonna happen," Noah rumbles, his phone held against his chest as his no-doubt thousand-dollar-per-hour lawyer racks up billable hours while I distract him.

I smile. "Really, do what you guys need to do. I'll be around when you're done."

They each watch me for a moment longer. Then, one by one, they nod and accept my answer, going back to their calls and finally letting me escape up the stairs.

My chest aches, but I'm not even sure what I'm mourning. The loss of my privacy? Honestly, I *am* nobody, as much as it irritated the guys to hear me referred to that way. It doesn't really matter what the world thinks of me. The abrupt end to our "arrangement"? That would be silly, since the storm is already easing up, and I knew it would end soon anyway.

Maybe not so abruptly though. This whole thing is just a huge reminder of all the uphill battles we'd face if this were actually real. If we ever tried to be together out in the world instead of in this private little bubble we created.

Not that anyone's offering that, of course. But if I ever let myself dream about it, this is a good reminder that these guys have lives that are very different than mine. They're semi-public figures the rest of the world considers newsworthy. They each have businesses which could be hurt if public opinion over their unconventional romantic choices were to turn against them, businesses that support their families and the families of literally thousands of other employees too.

I sigh as I reach my room, pushing open the door and just standing there for a moment, staring blankly ahead at nothing.

My gaze lands on the window where I carved each of our initials, a million jumbled thoughts cascading through my head.

It's telling, in an aching sweet way, that Dex's first call was from family. But it's also a reminder that his family includes my ex. Even if the stars aligned to somehow allow us to continue this thing between us off the mountain, do I really think his tight-knit family would ever accept him violating the "bro code" like that?

I know for sure that *Parker* wouldn't.

"Fuck. How did everything get so complicated?" I mutter to myself.

But the truth is, it didn't *get* complicated. It always was. That's why what we've been doing this whole time has felt like living out a fantasy.

Everything happening right now just illustrates some of the many reasons why the past few days can only ever *be* a fantasy though. A memory to cherish. Something I'll probably pine over when I'm at my lowest, and will definitely need some Ben & Jerry's fueled rom-com marathons with Luna to get over once she's back. But in the end, just a fantasy.

I sigh again, then step farther into the room so I can close the door behind me. Rather than having my phone read me all of Luna's texts, I just press the button to call her.

"Sadie!" she blurts, answering on the first ring. "Oh my god!"

I walk over and sink down onto the bed. "I know."

"Are you okay?"

I flop back on the mattress, staring up at the ceiling. "No."

"Girl, tell me. What can I do? What's happening right now?"

“I’m having a pity party, and you’re invited,” I try to joke, but my throat closes up with emotion and gives me away.

“Aw, sweetie,” she says softly. “You know any party you’re at is always where I want to be too. So what happened? How did the tabloids find out about you guys?”

Curling up on the bed with my phone tucked against my ear, I launch into the story.

DEX

“ALL I ASK IS that you give me a heads up next time, so that we can put our own spin on things before it goes to the press,” Claudette, my publicist, says, her voice coming through my earbuds.

I make a rude sound, chopping the vegetables I pulled out of the fridge for stress relief a little bit harder. Noah and Cade are still dealing with their own business teams in the other room, but by the fourth phone call I had to make, I ended up here in the kitchen.

“There is no ‘next time. This isn’t a habit, it’s a...”

I press my lips together. It’s not like I’m going to tell her about the agreement the three of us have with Sadie, but since that’s all it is, I can’t tell her anything else either.

It also pisses me the fuck off that this is even a conversation I’m being forced to have with my publicist, no matter how much I respect her. But I realized early on in my career that the more success I have, the less of a private life the world thinks I’m entitled to.

“Look,” Claudette says after a moment. “The bottom line is that your investors are going to want some reassurance that ___”

She’s interrupted by the tone of an incoming call.

I glance down at the screen. “Shit.”

Claudette laughs, throaty and low. “Well, yes, it is shit. But don’t worry, Blaine. Shit always happens. It’s why you pay

me. So I can make sure it doesn't stink when it does."

"Right," I say, already distracted. "I mean, thanks, Claudette. I've gotta go. My brother's calling."

Not that I want to deal with Parker's bullshit right now, but I also knew it was coming the minute that story hit the press.

I sign off with Claudette and click over to take Parker's call.

"What the fuck did you do, Dex?" he shouts before I can even get a hello out. "You're fucking my girl now, and you had to make a spectacle of it so everyone knows?"

"Your girl? I didn't realize you were seeing anyone."

"Shut the fuck up. I always knew you had a thing for Sadie. I just never thought you'd stoop so low as to steal her from me."

"She's not a thing someone can steal. She's a person who makes her own choices, and I'm pretty sure one of those was to kick you to the curb years ago."

"Was it though? Or were you two fucking around behind my back this whole time?"

I slam the knife down into the cutting board, point first, and leave it there. "Fuck off, Parker."

"So that's a yes?" he prods like the self-centered little shit he's always been.

"You know, I knew you were never serious about her," I grit out. "If you had been, you wouldn't be asking me that. You would know *her* well enough that you wouldn't have to. So no matter what's happening with me and Sadie right now, you've got no right to be pissed off about this shit."

"All I hear is you still not denying it."

"Fucking Christ, do you even care what this is doing to Sadie? If you're so damn worried about it, maybe think about how she's feeling right now. She's just had her private life exposed to the world, and unlike the rest of us, she never chose to live in the public eye."

“What I’m thinking about is the bro code, and the fact that you broke it. You just couldn’t stand me having something you couldn’t get a piece of, is that it?”

“Not even a little bit.”

Parker laughs, although there’s no hint of amusement in it. “You’re a goddamn liar. I know you always wanted her. And you’re a shitty excuse for a brother too. How do you think Mom’s going to feel when she finds out?”

I snort. “Unlike you, Mom was the first to check in and see how I was holding up with my personal life splashed all over the fucking internet. Thanks for all *your* concern though.”

He scoffs. “Didn’t you just say you chose this?”

“Fuck no, I didn’t choose it. But I accept I’ve got to deal with it.”

And I’d protect Sadie from it if I could, but if she’s going to be with us—

She’s not though. I’ve got to fucking remember that.

“Look, if you just called to whine, then I’ve gotta get back to actually dealing with this shit,” I say, suddenly too damn tired to fight with him over something that’s none of his business in the first place.

Of course, I’m not surprised when my sarcasm turns Parker nasty. “So fucking sorry to interrupt. Go on, then. Go back to enjoying my sloppy seconds. Oh, wait. Would that be thirds? Fourths? Since it sounds like your buddies got there first. Do you even—”

I hang up on him mid-rant, frustrated and annoyed that this is happening—and that my undeserving little brother was ever with Sadie in the first place.

I love him because he’s family, but I don’t always like him.

And I sure as fuck don’t respect him.

“*Dammit*,” I curse, yanking the knife out of the cutting board.

Noah leans his head through the doorway, looking in from the other room. “All good?”

I slant a look at him, and he snorts back a laugh, shaking his head ruefully. “Okay, yeah. This isn’t good. But we’ll deal with it. We always do. You’ve got good people to handle this shit, right?”

“Of course I do.”

And I should really call Claudette back. Instead, once Noah grunts his acknowledgment that I’m not losing my shit in here, I go back to chopping vegetables. I’ve got no fucking idea what I’ll cook with the minced mess I’m making of them, but it feels good to ruin something.

Then my phone lights up again. This time, it’s a text from my sister.

ISABELLE: I saw the news. What’s the real story?

I sigh, putting the knife down. I can’t ignore the text, even though it’s tempting. I know my sister, and she won’t let it go until she’s sure I’m okay. I send her a quick text back.

ME: Give me a second. I’ll call you.

I eye the minced vegetables, then decide to leave cleanup for later. I grab my phone and head upstairs to my room, not surprised when Isabelle answers the video chat I initiate on the first ring.

“Mom called me right after she called you, and Parker’s been blowing up my phone for the last ten minutes,” she says. “Are you okay?”

I’d give anyone else a *yes*, but Isabelle and I have always been close, so the truth comes out instead. “I think we were all a little blindsided by this. It was Noah’s assistant—former assistant—who sold us out. We’ve all got our PR people on it already.”

“All of you, huh?”

“Of course.”

Isabelle gives me an unimpressed look. “What about Sadie? She doesn’t have ‘PR people.’”

She puts it in air quotes, and I feel like an ass.

“No, of course not. I just meant—”

“I know, I know,” Isabelle interrupts, waving it away. “But since you brought her up, is it true? Parker seems to think you and Sadie have some kind of history.”

“Not any more than you and Sadie do. She was Parker’s girlfriend. You know I wouldn’t have disrespected that.”

“I know.” She hesitates for a second, then chuckles wryly and adds, “I almost wish you had though. Maybe we could have kept her as an honorary Blaine if she’d dated you instead of Parker.”

“You don’t mean that.”

She sighs. “No, I guess I don’t. But Parker had his chance, and if you want to take your shot now, he needs to get the fuck over it.”

I scowl, my earlier conversation with my brother pissing me off all over again. “Don’t let him hear you say that.”

She brushes that off. “Whatever. I love him, but he needs to move on.”

“What, you think he’s been carrying a torch?”

“No, definitely not. It’s been ages since they were together. Today is the first time I’ve even heard him bring her up, and that was more like a toddler having a tantrum when his toy gets taken away than a man who still has feelings for a woman.” She sighs, cocking her head. “You know you don’t owe it to him to stay away from her if you’re serious about this, right?”

I swallow, looking away. “It’s not like that.”

“Because of Cade and Noah? What’s that about? The gossip online makes it sound like some sort of group orgy happening up there.” She says it like a joke, but whatever she

sees on my face makes her eyebrows creep up in surprise. “Dex?”

“We’re all attracted to her,” I admit. “We made an agreement, just while we’re snowed in together.”

Isabelle purses her lips, studying me through the screen. “All of you?”

“Yes. And?” I challenge, feeling defensive.

She holds up her hands. “No judgment. I’m just trying to understand. So, you *are* all sleeping with her?”

“Are you seriously asking me to discuss my sex life with you?”

Isabelle laughs. “Oh, hell no. But if this is some kind of love triangle, or I guess a... what do you call a triangle if it has four sides instead of three?”

“I’m pretty sure that’s called a square.”

She puts her hand over her eyes, shaking her head as she laughs at herself. “Oh. Right. Can we just skip past the part where I forgot my basic kindergarten shapes?”

I grin, the first time I’ve truly felt like doing that since the story broke. “Nope. I’m holding on to that one forever.”

She narrows her eyes at me, then continues on. “My point is, is this relationship, agreement, whatever it is—is it causing problems with the three of you? Because I know how much Cade and Noah’s friendship means to you.”

I shake my head, and my sister raises her eyebrows as if she doesn’t quite believe me.

“No, really, it’s not a problem. I see why you might think it would be, and I think...” I shrug. “Well, I can’t really explain it, but there’s no jealousy between us. It’s actually...”

Better, somehow, than any relationship I’ve had before, even though it’s *not* a relationship. And it’s better not despite the fact that we were all sharing her, but because of it.

I’m not sure how to explain that to Isabelle, but she doesn’t ask me to. She just looks at me for a minute, then

smiles.

“I always liked Sadie. Do you think it will last?”

“No. Like I said, it was just something we all agreed to while we were here at the lodge.”

Isabelle scoffs. “Oh, come on, Dex. I remember how you always used to look at her. Tell me the truth. Do you think this can become something real?”

“No,” I answer quickly.

There’s a long, loaded pause as we stare at each other in silence. Then she finally says, “Do you want to try that answer again?”

I sigh, knowing she sees right through me like she always has. “It... could be real.”

If I were someone different. If I hadn’t already failed when it came to building something lasting and long-term.

But Isabelle doesn’t let me wallow in those thoughts. She just leans a little closer to the screen, empathy in her eyes. “It’s okay to want that, Dex. It’s even okay to think you can have it.”

I shake my head. “No. Sadie’s too important to fuck shit up the way I did with Anna.”

My sister makes a face. “You didn’t fuck shit up. And just because you tried something once and it didn’t work out, that doesn’t mean it isn’t worth putting yourself out there again. Anna expected you to be someone you aren’t. She wanted the lifestyle of being wealthy, but she never truly appreciated you for who you are. Sadie isn’t like that. If you feel like there’s something there, don’t give up on it. Trust your gut.”

I nod, still feeling uncertain and unsettled as we end the video chat. It would be nice to just let myself believe that Isabelle is right, but no matter how tempting the idea of something real with Sadie is, something that lasts beyond the storm, I’m not sure if I’m ready for it.

I haven’t had a serious relationship since my divorce, and if I tried now, I’m pretty sure it would change me entirely.

My phone pings again, and even though I know Claudette is still waiting for me to call her back and I still need to touch base with my legal team, I'm incredibly tempted to just chuck the thing out the window. But when I check the screen, it's not a call from my publicist. It's a notification from the local weather alert app that I installed once the blizzard hit.

The storm has fully cleared, and they've already started sending plows up the mountain.

"*Fuck,*" I curse softly, giving in and hurling my phone across the room after all.

This is it. The end of the road.

I swallow hard, scrubbing a hand over my face. Whether my sister is right or wrong doesn't matter anymore. The agreement we all made had a definite expiration date.

And we've just reached it.

SADIE

I'M NOT REALLY surprised that I end up sleeping alone the night after the story of our arrangement breaks online. Not that the guys have been cold to me, they've each just been busy dealing with the fallout. Still, everything feels different in the lodge now.

I sleep uneasily, tossing and turning all night, and feel tired enough when I finally wake in the morning that I shuffle downstairs in my pajamas instead of bothering to get dressed.

“Morning, sunshine,” Noah rumbles, handing me a cup of coffee as soon as I wander into the kitchen.

I sip it gratefully. I'm even more grateful for the easy way he pulls me into his side and kisses my temple though. It's not really sexual, just tender, but it makes it feel like some of this has been real, at least.

Dex looks up from the industrial griddle he's got breakfast going on, both bacon and French toast. “Hungry?”

I nod, my throat getting a little tight as I think about the fact that this might be one of the last times he cooks for me.

Then Cade walks in, Mrs. Claws scabbling after him from the other room and pouncing on his feet the minute he stands still. He glances around at all of us before he announces, “They've finished clearing the roads.”

For a second, it feels like all the air has been sucked out of the room. No one moves or responds to his words.

Then Mrs. Claws smells the bacon and gives up trying to gnaw through Cade's boot in favor of leaping toward the hot griddle with an excited meow.

She's far too small to make it all the way up there, but Noah lurches forward anyway, catching her mid-jump.

"None of that," he tells her sternly, his big hands gentle as he tucks her against his chest. "Uncle Dex will have your plate ready in a minute."

Dex snorts. "I'm the uncle? What are you, then?"

Cade and I look at each other, then both grin as we say in sync, "*Daddy*."

Dex cracks up, and Noah actually goes a little pink.

"I just didn't want her to burn her paws," he mumbles.

"Of course you didn't." I give him a smile as Dex plates up the food—including, as promised, some kitten-sized pieces of bacon on a saucer.

Noah lets me take Mrs. Claws from him as he helps carry everything to the table, and I nuzzle her close, brushing my cheek against her soft fur. She's as playful and energetic as always, not seeming to notice the different, more subdued vibe in the air between the four of us, and I'm grateful for that.

There's nothing to be upset about, after all. It's been great, *truly* great, and the fact that it's over now isn't some big surprise. We all knew this was coming.

Noah's phone pings as we all sit down to eat. He glances at it, then frowns and puts it away.

"Everything okay?" Dex wants to know.

"Fine," he says shortly. "Just the early check-in notification for my flight."

"Oh." Dex freezes, his fork stopped in mid-air. Then he nods. "Yeah, I was thinking we might have to change them if the storm didn't let up, but I guess it all worked out, didn't it?"

He smiles, but it doesn't reach his eyes, and for a moment, I almost let myself believe that they're feeling what I am. That

they don't really want this to be over either.

But then Cade clears his throat. "Now that the roads are open again, I contacted someone to come help get your car out of the ditch," he tells me. "He'll let us know if it's safe for you to drive it back down the mountain, or if it needs a tow."

"Thank you," I murmur, pushing the last few bites of French toast around my plate. It's one of my favorites, but honestly, I'm just not hungry anymore.

Noah is frowning again. "You think she might have broken an axle?"

Cade shrugs. "I didn't see it, but better safe than sorry."

They go back and forth for a minute, talking about the damage my car might have taken when I slid into the ditch, and it soothes some of my sadness over the end of this magical interlude. They're all so sweet to me in their own unique ways, and it feels good to know that they're still looking out for me, still feeling protective, even as they prepare to send me on my way.

It's tempting, once we're done eating, to linger at the table over coffee and squeeze out a few more minutes of closeness with the three of them. I've always been more of a rip the Band-aid off kind of girl though, so instead, I jump up when Dex does. "I'll help you clean up."

"Nah." He plucks my plate out of my hand. "You're still on vacation."

I laugh. "So are you!"

His eyes go soft. "Yeah, but you're the one we want to spoil, remember?"

I don't know what to do with that. Whether he's running hot and cold or doing whatever this is, he confuses me. And as much as I feel for him, I'm not sure I can trust my own emotions when he looks at me like that.

I'm saved from having to figure it out by the distinctive sound of a large vehicle approaching outside, something none of us have heard for days.

Noah instantly goes on alert, tucking Mrs. Claws under his arm, and Dex gets to his feet. “Probably the service I called for your car.”

We all follow him to the lodge’s entrance, and when he opens the front door to allow the tow truck driver inside, it feels all kinds of weird to have another person in what’s started to feel like our own private sanctuary. A silly thought, since this is a public resort and has been for years.

“Which one of you drives the baby blue Subaru in the ditch?” the guy asks with a wide grin, his eyes immediately zeroing in on me.

Fair enough.

Then he winks, and I swear it sounds like someone behind me growls a little.

I step forward. “Did you have a chance to take a look? Is it drivable?”

“Sure is! You got lucky, ma’am.” He gestures behind him, toward the front of the lodge. “I went ahead and towed it up here for you. Now, I can drop it right here and let you take it down the mountain at your leisure, but it might be safer to keep it attached to the rig.”

His gaze flicks downward for a second, and I suddenly remember that I’m only wearing pajamas—a silky pair of shorts and a cami that are a bit revealing.

“You can ride back down with me in the cab,” the driver says, his focus returning to my face. “I’ll set your car down once we’re clear of the switchbacks at the bottom of the mountain.”

“Are you saying the roads are still dangerous?” Noah demands, staring at the guy intensely enough that the driver seems a bit taken aback.

He pulls off his hat, slapping it against his thigh. “Uh, no, they’re good. Well, they’re plowed at least. But it’s still a bit slick out there, you know?”

All three of my men are glaring at the guy like he's the enemy, but even if he did just check me out a little, I don't get a creepy vibe off him. He's just trying to do his job, and looking out for me like a true Colorado gentleman. But I'm still not really eager to ride down the mountain with him.

"I've been driving these roads for years," I say quickly, since all three of the men are starting to bristle. "I'll be fine. Do you want to warm up with a coffee or something before you go though?"

He grins at me. He's not even bad looking. He's just not... well, he's not Dex, Cade, or Noah.

"I wouldn't say no to that," he says, stomping the snow off his boots and then coming farther inside. He holds up the clipboard he's been carrying. "Got some paperwork for you to go over if I'm going to drop the car here for you anyway."

"Follow me." I lead him back toward the kitchen, then almost choke on a laugh when I hear Dex mutter to the others.

"You two up for helping me bury a body?"

I roll my eyes when Noah grunts in agreement and Cade gives him a quiet, "Hell yes."

"Behave," I whisper as I pass them, hoping the driver didn't hear them.

None of them promise to do that, and the heated looks they give me as I pour him a cup of coffee and start going over the paperwork about my car make my heart ache a little.

They care about me. I know they do. But any hope I was holding on to that we might turn this into something more, even after the mess it's become online, was dashed last night when I overheard Dex talking to his sister.

"I'll just need you to sign here, and then initial here," the tow truck driver says, handing me the pen.

I nod, silently berating myself for not paying more attention. I try to do that whenever anyone goes over a contract with me since it's so much effort to read through it on my own, but this time, my mind has been wandering.

I scribble my name where the driver indicates, my thoughts returning to what I heard last night. I didn't mean to eavesdrop on Dex's private conversation. I was just walking by his open door at the wrong time. I slowed automatically when I recognized his sister's voice, and then my feet froze in place when she asked him if what we've been doing here is something real.

"One last place." The driver points to another small line, and I add my initials.

Dex's "no" was quick and decisive. Not something he had to think about. Not something he sounded unsure of. Just... no. It isn't real to him. It isn't anything more than any of them ever told me it would be.

No strings. No commitment. Nothing that lasts once the roads are cleared.

I'd be lying if I said it didn't hurt, but I'm a big girl. I knew what we were agreeing to at the outset, and I'm the one who didn't stick to it.

I promised Dex I wouldn't fall for him, so that's on me. He was upfront from the very beginning. They all were. And no matter how incredible this has been, or what feelings being with the three of them has stirred up for me, there was never any illusion that this thing would last forever. Now it's coming to an end, and I have to be okay with that.

"Are you okay, Ms.... Evans?" the driver asks, glancing down at the paperwork for my name and then giving me a concerned look.

I realize he's holding his hand out for the pen, and I have no idea how long he's been waiting for me to give it back to him.

"Oh, yeah, of course." I give him a distracted smile. "Sorry about that. Thank you for coming all the way up here."

"Thanks for the coffee," he says, handing over my keys and then leaning back against the counter like he's settling in. But before he can get too comfortable, all three of my men stride into the kitchen.

Mrs. Claws is perched on Noah's shoulder, her little claws digging into his shirt, and each one of the guys stares the driver down, a possessive warning written across their faces. He gets the message immediately, his face blanching before he hands me back the half-empty coffee mug and makes a quick escape.

As he's walking out, Noah's phone goes off again with another reminder for him to check in for his flight.

Then Dex gets a similar notification.

There's no more avoiding it. The fun is officially over. The roads are clear, I've got my car back, and it's time for all of us to clear out.

"Are you flying straight to Japan?" Cade asks Noah as we all head upstairs to pack.

Noah frowns. "Becca was making those arrangements. I'll have to check with her replacement."

They continue talking about Noah's upcoming business deal as we each separate to go to our rooms, and it takes me far less time than feels right to pack away every sign that I was here.

Well, every sign except the ones I carved into the windowsill.

I hear the men all heading back downstairs as I trace our initials with my finger, smiling a little because at least this will stay here. I'll be able to come up any time and—

"Shit," I whisper as it hits me. I can't believe I forgot. As far as I know, Cade is still going to tear the place down.

My eyes sting, but I blink quickly and grab my suitcase, then head downstairs to find everyone congregated by the entrance.

Noah has Mrs. Claws cradled against his chest, a box next to him packed with all the makeshift things we've put together for her. "You should take her, sunshine," he says, his big hands reflexively tightening around the little kitten as he speaks.

I grin, the adorableness doing a great job of banishing some of my melancholy. “I don’t think so.”

All three men frown at me, but I shake my head, stepping up to Noah so I can nuzzle my nose against the tiny kitten’s face. She bats at me, then I get a quick, rough lick to my cheek before she settles back against Noah’s chest, purring loudly.

I look up at him. “See? She knows you’re her daddy.”

A faint dusting of color rises above his trim beard. “I don’t do pets. I travel too much.”

I arch a brow. “Weren’t you three the ones who insisted that money will basically get you anything you want?”

He stares at me intently for a moment. “Not everything.”

“But I’m sure it can pave the way for traveling internationally with a fuzzy little companion.”

He finally cracks the smallest smile. “Yeah. I guess it can.”

“She’s attached to you,” I say softly, reaching up to slide my fingers through his beard, then cup his jaw. I barely restrain myself from admitting that I am too. “Please don’t leave her behind.”

“You’re right,” he says after a minute. “I’ll take care of her.”

“Good. Now kiss me. Give me a sendoff to remember you by.”

His jaw tightens a little under the scruff of his beard, the muscles in his throat working as he swallows. Then he hands off the kitten to Cade and pulls me against him, cupping the back of my head and kissing me until my toes curl.

It’s full of heat, but it also feels like goodbye, and the sweet ache I felt earlier fills my chest again.

“I won’t forget you,” he rumbles once he lets me go. “Stay safe.” Then he gives me one of his rare smiles. “And think of me whenever you get one of those fancy coffees.”

“I will,” I promise, my throat tightening at the overwhelming reminder of what he got me for Christmas.

Something that matters to me. Something that shows his true colors no matter how stingy he might be with words.

And maybe, just maybe, since he's investing in The Coffee Collective, he'll come back to Denver now and then to check on it?

I don't ask, and when he lets me go, Dex passes Mrs. Claws back and pulls me close.

"I never thought I'd run into you again," he admits. "I'm so fucking glad I did though."

"Me too."

We stare at each other for a moment before he moves his hands in front of his chest, making the ASL sign for *kitten*. Then he touches his chest, his chin, and... he doesn't finish it, but I think I know what he was going to sign.

I'll miss you.

I'll miss him too.

I blink fast, willing tears not to fall as I go up on my toes and kiss him. "I'll think of you when I wear the necklace."

His fingers stroke my throat, right where the gem will sit. "You should always wear it, then."

"Okay," I whisper, wishing he meant that the way I'd like him to.

But I'll never regret this, even though it's all I'll get.

"Be good, kitten."

He kisses my forehead, then turns me toward Cade.

"You gave me the most incredible Christmas of my life," I tell the gorgeous, tattooed man as I step closer. "Thank you. I'll never forget it."

"That makes two of us, dream girl."

"Three," Dex rasps.

"Four," Noah rumbles. Then, when Mrs. Claws headbutts his jaw from her perch on his shoulder, his lips quirk up as he corrects himself. "Four and a half."

We all laugh, which lightens the mood a bit. Still grinning, Cade sweeps me into his arms and gives me one of his epic movie-moment kisses, bending me backward a little.

But then it truly is time for goodbye, and I don't know how to make myself say it.

I look at each of them, and I can see it on all their faces. Each one looks like he's on the cusp of saying something. Probably something sweet, or tender, or if it's Cade, some joking remark to help ease the tension. Something that will make me fall for them even harder, and I just can't handle that.

So I speak first, picking up my suitcase and squaring my shoulders. "This has been the best Christmas ever. Thank you for that. All of you. But that's the thing about Christmas magic, isn't it?" I keep my voice light as I smile at each of them. "That kind of magic doesn't exist in the real world. This would have been impossible anywhere but here, but at least we'll always have Whispering Pines."

They each pull me in and kiss me hard, one last time, then I finally turn and go.

But as I walk out the door onto the chilly front porch, I can't help but feel like what I just said was a lie. Those three men *made* it feel like a lie.

Because with them, for a while at least, it truly felt like anything was possible.

SADIE

I MAKE myself leave before I can lose the will to step away, doing my best to keep my face easy and relaxed. My heart feels like it's breaking, and none of them deserve the weight of that. They did everything they promised, and more. The last thing I want is for any of them to think I can't hold up my end of the agreement too.

It's not until I pull away from the lodge and make it a couple of miles down the winding mountain road to the first turnout that I pull over for a moment, letting my façade crack. Just once. Just for a moment.

"Oh god," I gasp, resting my forehead on the steering wheel as I blink fast to keep the tears from blurring my vision. Then I straighten with a determined snuffle and wipe them away.

I'm not sorry, not for any of it.

"But definitely no more no-string sex agreements," I whisper to myself as I pull back out onto the road. "I'm not built for it after all."

The radio station I've got on is still playing some belated Christmas music, and I quickly change it, finding something upbeat and optimistic that doesn't match my mood at all.

But maybe it will help to change it, so I leave it on and even turn the volume up higher, singing along at the top of my lungs as I drive back down the mountain carefully.

The tow truck driver was right. It's still slippery. But it's not my first time driving on icy roads, so I do just fine, taking

it slow and steady.

By the time I finally get back home, I'm sorely tempted to hole up with a pint of ice cream and have that pity party I invited Luna to last night, but I don't. For one thing, I'm pretty sure my freezer is out of ice cream, and for another, I'm not going to mope. This past week was one of the best experiences of my life, and I'm not going to ruin the memory of it by treating it like some big, bad breakup.

"Nope. What I'll do is unpack right away," I tell myself as I roll my suitcase up the steps and unlock the door, nudging aside a few packages waiting for me. "Throw everything in the laundry, get back to normal, and get on with it."

I reach down to pick up the packages, trying to remember what I ordered as I push the front door open.

My steps falter as I walk inside my unit, glancing around. I've lived in this apartment for a few years now, but it feels all wrong somehow. Everything is exactly the way I left it, including the empty mug with a used teabag that I forgot to put in the sink before I left, waiting for me near my favorite armchair. But the apartment seems strangely unfamiliar now, like even if *it* hasn't changed, I have.

I'm not the same person I was when I left here a week ago.

A little pang twinges in my chest as I finally step over the threshold.

I was right to say no when Noah told me I should be the one to take Mrs. Claws. It was obvious to all of us that he's her cat daddy. But selfishly, I can't help thinking that my apartment would feel a lot less empty right now if there were four scampering paws racing in ahead of me.

I sigh, then shake it off, dragging my suitcase in far enough to get the door closed. And I immediately break my promise to myself about unpacking before doing anything else when I recognize the sender name on the smaller of the two packages that was waiting on the doorstep for me.

Sarah Littlefox Studios.

Dex's Christmas gift.

My breath hitches, my eyes stinging again. But this time, as I quickly open the outer packaging to find an exquisite box inside, one of the trademark silver-and-turquoise ones that the artist has made just as much her signature as a Tiffany & Co has with their trademark blue, I'm smiling.

And when I open it, my smile turns into a little sigh of awe. The necklace is exactly like the drawing, and also a million times more stunning.

I pull it out, remembering Dex's parting words to me. The gifts each of them chose for me already felt incredibly special, but I'm touched that they did whatever it took to have them waiting for me today.

Unfastening my coat and unwinding my scarf, I walk over to the mirror I keep near my entryway and put the necklace on, gazing at my reflection.

Dex was right. It does match my eyes.

I know the other box must be the signed book series Cade got for me, but I also know that if I open them right now, I'll cry. So instead, I dive into unpacking.

While I'm in the middle of that, my mom calls.

"Hey, Mom," I answer, popping in my earbuds to talk hands-free as I sort out my delicates for the laundry. "Back from Bali?"

Her laugh trills through the phone. "Oh honey, I am having *too* much fun with Vincent to head back to dreary Colorado this soon."

Of course she is.

"So you had a nice Christmas?"

"The absolute best," she gushes before launching into an incredibly detailed description of all the things she and her boyfriend did.

I shake my head as she talks, stifling a sigh, and manage to get the first load started in the wash and all my toiletries put away before she pauses for breath.

Not once does she mention the story that broke about me and the guys, and I've got no idea if that's because of her perpetual state of self-absorption, or if it hasn't spread out of the country. Or maybe, the small, hurt voice that still lingers from my childhood says, she did see it and just doesn't care.

But then I realize it doesn't matter. She's never going to change. Even when she finally remembers to ask how my holiday was, it comes across as an afterthought.

"Did you and Luna get up to anything fun for Christmas?"

I roll my eyes. There's no point in bothering to remind her that Luna is out of town, or that I've *already* mentioned those plans to her. "It was nice."

"Oh good," she says quickly, no doubt convinced her maternal duty has been satisfied. "Oh, sweetie, you'll never guess what Vincent wants us to do for the New Year!"

She's right. I never will, and I don't have to. She's more than happy to tell me.

I sigh quietly as she effuses about plans to tour Asia, wondering if I'll ever truly stop wishing she was someone I could confide in. The kind of mother I could ask for advice or lean on at a time like this, when my heart feels a little raw.

I flash back to the way Dex's mom was the first to reach out to him, offering her support when the article broke. And to those moments with Noah, when he so comfortably invited me to meet his mother while he chatted with her, and how sweet she was.

"Mom, I've got to go," I say, interrupting her mid-sentence.

"Oh!" She sounds startled and a little put out. "Well, if you're too busy—"

"Thanks for understanding. Enjoy the rest of your vacation. Bye!"

She huffs a little but lets me go.

If I weren't feeling so emotionally fragile, maybe I could have done what I always do and let her go on and on, but I just

can't right now.

What I really want right now is to talk to my best friend, so I shoot Luna a quick text message, inviting her over. She got back into town today too, and less than thirty minutes later, she rings the buzzer and I press the button to let her into the building.

She barely has time to knock on my apartment door before I fling it open, and her gaze drops immediately to my throat as her eyes go wide.

“Holy shit, look at that bling!”

“It's from Dex.”

Her eyes get even bigger, and her mouth opens and closes before she shakes herself out of her stunned state and holds up a coffee carrier with two cups in it.

“Okay, let me in already and take my offering,” she says, shifting her weight from foot to foot. “I definitely need more details. What's happened since we got off the phone last night?”

I move aside so she can enter, taking the carrier she's balancing in one hand so that she can set her purse down and take off her coat and boots. The familiar logo of The Coffee Collective is on the two disposable cups, and the sight makes me smile.

“Pour over with oat milk?”

Luna gives me an impressive eye roll. “What, did you think I'd forget what your favorite drink is because of jet lag? Newsflash, it's only a one-hour time difference.”

I grin. “Of course I didn't think you forgot. But you have no idea how much I needed this. Did I tell you Cade tried *making* me some oat milk while we were snowed in?”

“No! Was it good?”

I laugh. “Not even a little bit.”

Luna gets a speculative look on her face.

“And Dex gave you this?” She taps my necklace, a slight smile on her face. “It matches your eyes.” I instantly tear up, and her smile drops away. “Oh, honey.”

“No, it’s fine. Sorry. God, just give me the coffee already. Clearly, I’m suffering from caffeine withdrawals.”

Luna gasps but hands the cup over. “They deprived you of caffeine? Bastards!”

“No,” I admit, smiling fondly. “They really didn’t deprive me of anything.”

“Except oat milk.”

“Except oat milk,” I agree with a chuckle.

“Well,” Luna says after a second. “I’ve got some good news that will cheer you up! Guess what I heard at The Coffee Collective?”

“Something juicy?” I tease as we both settle in on the comfy overstuffed chairs where we’ve shared so much gossip over the years.

“Yup.” She pops the ‘p’ and pauses for effect, but I know she has no patience. I wait for a moment with one eyebrow raised, and sure enough, she breaks before I do. “Fine, I’ll tell you! You know how they’ve been struggling? Well, not anymore! Some angel investor popped up out of nowhere, apparently, and they’re not just going to be able to stay open. They’re going to expand!”

I grin, sipping my drink a sweetly painful ache spreads through my chest. Somehow, it doesn’t surprise me in the least that Noah didn’t just save the coffee shop. He decided to help the owners realize a long-held dream that all of us regulars have been hearing about for years.

Luna cocks her head as she notices the lack of surprise on my face. “Wait, you already knew? But how... ohhhhhhhh.” She grins. “Was one of your men the investor?”

“They’re not *my* men,” I remind her quickly, my throat tightening.

Her grin fades, and she looks at me carefully. Then she puts her drink down and pulls me up into a hug that I desperately need.

“Hey,” she murmurs into my hair as I finally let go of my emotions a little and squeeze her back. “This was a lot more than some wild fun for you, wasn’t it?”

I bury my face in her shoulder and hold on for another second. Then I take a shuddering breath and let her go, nodding.

She gives me a sympathetic smile and wipes my cheeks before picking my drink up and pushing it back into my hands. “Sit. Spill.”

I told her a lot last night, but our conversation was mostly focused on the article that leaked and how invasive that felt. Now I tell her the rest.

“We all agreed from the beginning that it was just a short-term thing,” I say when I finish filling her in on the details she hasn’t already heard.

She nods. “No strings. No commitments.” She waggles her eyebrows suggestively, making me laugh. “No holding back.”

I nod, but then feel my face crumple a little. “I caught feelings though.”

“For which one?”

I look up at her. “For all of them.”

“And you don’t think they feel the same?” she asks carefully, giving my necklace a pointed look.

I laugh, my fingers instinctively reaching up to find the intricately patterned white gold wrapped around the sapphire Dex chose for me. “No, I don’t think they feel the same. Don’t get me wrong, they’re each amazing men. They treated me better than anyone *ever* has, and I don’t just mean this.”

I tug the necklace, then gesture toward our coffee cups and the package I still haven’t opened. The signed book series Cade gifted me with.

Luna follows the movement with her eyes, hers sparking with interest. “Oh? And what’s that?”

“We were snowed in, but they each managed to get me the most amazing Christmas gifts.”

“The necklace and—oh my god, the coffee shop? That was a gift to *you*?”

I nod, grinning despite myself. “From Noah.”

She shakes her head, her mouth falling open. “Girl, do you not remember the part where I told you to marry them? Why don’t you listen to me?” She waves a hand, not even waiting for an answer. “No, never mind that. What’s in the box?”

“Let me show you.”

I open them carefully, not wanting to risk damaging the books. But of course I shouldn’t have worried. They’re packaged as if they’re precious gems, and when I pull the first one out, Luna gasps reverently.

“Holy motherfucking shitballs of glory! Is that what I think it is?”

I nod. We’re both huge fans.

“I didn’t think they were even available in hardback!”

I blush. “He got ahold of her—”

“Her? Her who? Oh my god, you mean Claire Riverton? He knows her? I thought she was some kind of recluse!” Then she cracks it open and gasps, flipping the open book around to face me. “It’s signed!”

“I know.”

Luna carefully sets it down, brushing her hand over the gorgeous cover, then lifts an eyebrow at me. “So, you were saying? Something about your billionaire sugar daddies not feeling the same?”

My flush rises all the way up my hairline. “They are *not* sugar daddies.”

Her smile softens. “I know.”

“They never said anything about wanting more than what we agreed to.” I shake my head. “And even if they did, let’s be real. It could never work out. It’s over.”

“Hmm.” Luna purses her lips, still stroking the book. “Is it though?”

I laugh despite the ache in my chest. “Yeah. It is. I just need to accept that.”

“Maybe it’s not *that* over.”

I chuckle even as I shake my head. Just like the initials I carved into the windowsill at the lodge, I know their gifts are just a reminder of our time together, not a sign of the future. That was clear when none of the men stopped me from leaving Whispering Pines this morning.

“Sadie?” Luna says after a moment, leaning back in her chair and tucking her legs under her.

“Yeah?”

She takes a long sip of her drink, eyeing me over the top of it. “I think you’re wrong.”

“And *I* think you’ve read too many of these.” I point to the steamy romance series we both love.

“Impossible.” She shakes her head in mock seriousness. “You can never read too many Claire Riverton books.”

Well, she’s right about that, at least.

Too bad she’s so far off base about my men.

DEX

IT'S BEEN a few days since I got back to Chicago, but I swear the crisp mountain air of Colorado still clings to my senses as Isabelle opens the door to her cozy Chicago home.

“Hey, stranger,” she says with a welcoming smile.

“Hey, little sis,” I greet her, stepping inside and getting a warm hug the minute the door closes behind me.

I hear the patter of little feet from behind her, and a moment later, small arms wrap around my waist. Isabelle laughs, letting go of me so I can swoop my niece up.

I hug her tight, then shift her so I'm supporting her weight with one hand and use the other to greet her.

She giggles when I turn her name sign into an excuse to tickle her belly. My favorite sound.

I kiss her cheek, then set her down so I can have both hands free and ask her about Christmas.

She immediately launches into a detailed description of every single toy she got, her little hands flying as she gushes about how much fun she's been having with them, and how much she loves the mint-green instant camera I got her.

Have you taken any pictures yet? I ask her in ASL.

Isabelle laughs. “So many,” she says as Maddie answers enthusiastically, then grabs my hand and drags me toward the kitchen where the front of the refrigerator is now covered in the miniature photos that print out of it, showcasing everything

from their family dog, Milo, to a *very* up close and personal picture of what I'm guessing is her mother's chin.

Can I take one of you? Maddie signs. When I tell her yes, she makes an excited sound and hugs me again before turning to race off toward her room. Just before she leaves the kitchen, she turns back to quickly sign. *You can give it to S-A-D-I-E.*

She finger-spells Sadie's name, and I raise my eyebrows at Isabelle once she leaves the room. "You told her I was spending time with Sadie?"

"She saw some of the pictures online."

I grimace. "Fuck."

Isabelle shakes her head, bringing her hands together in front of her to chastise me for my language.

I open my hand and circle it in front of my chest. *Sorry.*

She waves it off. "It's fine. Habit. Maddie's getting so damn good at lip reading that we've all had to be more conscious of it. But honestly, don't worry about the pictures."

"I'm definitely going to worry if that bitch invaded our privacy—sorry—but what, are they screen grabs from Noah's webcam?"

"Nothing like that," Isabelle reassures me quickly. "You know how these gossip sites are though. They dug up some pictures of Sadie from who knows where. Maybe her social media? And Madelyn recognized her."

"She remembers Sadie?" I ask, smiling despite myself.

Isabelle grins back. "Those two always got along like a house on fire whenever Parker brought her around. Maddie really missed her after they split, and she was super excited when I explained that you two were—"

I raise my eyebrows, and Isabelle laughs.

"*Friends,*" she finishes. "Oh my god, what did you think I would say to her? I just told her she was spending Christmas with you guys up on that mountain."

The reminder has my chest suddenly feeling like a vise is tightening around it. Watching Sadie walk away from us at the lodge felt like getting my guts yanked out. I've dealt with that by not letting myself think about it. The agreement is over, so there's no point.

But not thinking about Sadie doesn't seem to be an option at the moment.

Isabelle grins. "Maddie's a little obsessed with her, if I'm being honest."

I chuckle, the sound coming out rough. "I get that. It's pretty easy to feel that way."

Isabelle cocks her head, studying me, but before she can press me, Maddie runs back in with her camera and a Santa hat.

Pose, she demands like the nine-year-old princess she is.

I slip on the hat, a smile playing over my mouth as I remember Noah's gruff insistence that we wear them on Christmas morning after he dug them out of one of one of the boxes in the lodge's basement.

Maddie snaps a picture, patiently waiting as the little camera slowly spits out the photo and then waving me over to watch it develop with her.

You look happy, she signs. *Is it because of Christmas?*

I tweak her nose, making her giggle. *It's because of you.*

Should we put this one on the fridge? Isabelle asks, reaching for the photo.

Maddie shakes her head vehemently, holding it out of her mother's reach. *It's for S-A-D-I-E.*

Isabelle grins, shooting an I-told-you-so look my way, then shoos Maddie off toward the other room. *Sadie's not here right now, honey*, she signs, *so why don't you go work on your new Lego set while I talk to your uncle?*

"Coffee?" Isabelle asks as Maddie scampers off. She's already popping a pod into the machine and wastes no time

interrogating me while it starts to brew. “So, what happened?”

My knee-jerk reaction is to clam up. I know my sister isn’t asking for salacious details, and it’s not really my style to talk about things like feelings. Besides, technically, nothing did happen.

But something shifted for me while we were snowed in, and the emotions that got stirred up in Colorado have refused to settle back down.

I realize I *want* to talk to Isabelle about them. Outside of Noah and Cade, she’s the person I’m closest to. And although Noah, Cade, and I are as close as brothers, we haven’t talked about what went down with Sadie since we all left Whispering Pines.

“Did you know you were going to see Sadie when you flew out there?” Isabelle asks, handing me the coffee black and then leaning back against the kitchen counter. “Have you been in touch with her since...”

She waves a hand.

“Since she broke up with Parker? ‘Course not.”

“Hm,” she says, looking at me steadily.

“What? Is that what he thinks?”

“Of course it’s what he thinks,” she says dismissively. “I’m not asking for him though. You know that. You caught feelings.”

It’s not a question, but after a moment, I nod anyway.

Isabelle’s jaw falls open, then she snaps it shut, clapping a hand over her mouth. She clearly didn’t expect me to confirm her suspicion, and curiosity gleams in her eyes as she peels her palm away from her mouth.

“Okay, I need more details,” she says, her tone more serious now. “How did this all happen? How did she end up at the lodge with the three of you?”

I give her a little background, telling her about Cade buying the lodge and the working vacation he’d planned, with

Sadie as the previous owner's representative. And then the storm.

Isabelle raises a skeptical eyebrow. "And then she just randomly fell into bed with you three?"

"She had some, uh, history. With Cade."

"They dated?"

"They... met."

Isabelle grins. "That's adorable. Just say they hooked up, Dex! I'm not a prude."

I laugh. "Fine. Yes. They'd met once, briefly—"

"How brief?"

"Not my business."

"Well, it must not have been *too* brief," she jokes. "Or she wouldn't have wanted a repeat."

I snort. "I'm not going to sit here and speculate on my friends' sex lives."

She grins, turning around to stick a pod into the machine for herself. "Why speculate, when you can participate?" She turns back to me as her coffee starts to brew. "Now, tell me more about this sharing thing. There really wasn't any jealousy between the three of you?"

I scrub a hand over my face. "There was. At first. When I thought she just wanted Cade, it gutted me, even though I tried to deny it."

"Just like you did when she was dating Parker," she says softly.

I hesitate, then nod. "After we got snowed in, Sadie and Cade agreed to a no-strings fling for the duration. I tried to be happy for him."

"But you wanted her for yourself. You always have."

I nod, then shake my head. "I wanted her, but not just for myself. Even in the beginning, when I envied Cade for having

the right to touch her, kiss her, all of that—I was still happy for him. He’s good for her, and Sadie deserves someone like him.”

“And Noah?”

“Yeah. And Noah too. She brought out a side of him that I doubt anyone else could have. And he was good for her too.”

Isabelle smiles. “So, it really worked, then? Sadie got to enjoy, uh, you know. Everything.” Her cheeks go a little pink, and she quickly moves on. “And the three of you really were okay sharing one woman like that?”

I nod, sipping at my coffee. “We were fine with it. No, better than fine. I’m not denying I’m the jealous type—”

“No shit,” she laughs.

“But that’s the thing. Not with those two.” I shrug. Opening up to her is one thing. Actually being good at communicating when it comes to all this emotional shit is something else. “Maybe it’s because they’re my best friends. I mean, it’s not like I could stand seeing her with anyone else. But Noah and Cade? I love them too, so seeing how good Sadie was for each of them made me actually *like* seeing them with her.”

Isabelle just keeps smiling at me, peering at me over the top of her coffee mug.

“What?”

Her smile turns into a full-blown grin. “The arrangement worked, because you love Cade and Noah *too*.”

“I just said that.”

“Uh huh.”

“Okay?”

“Oh my god, Dex.” She laughs. “Are all men seriously this obtuse? If you love them *too*, then that implies that you love someone else *besides* the two of them. So who is it, hm? Any guesses?”

I stare at her.

“Who do you love?” she presses me, her voice softening.

My eyes widen as I realize what she’s saying.

Isabelle shakes her head, still grinning. “You’re an idiot.”

“It was a slip of the tongue.”

“Uh huh. And your tongue slipped for a reason.”

I’m about to deny it, another knee-jerk reaction, when it hits me like a Mack truck.

She’s right. I may suck at it, and I certainly don’t deserve it, but I love her.

I’m in love with Sadie Evans.

“Shit,” I whisper.

Isabelle gives me the one-handed version of *watch your language* as she cradles her coffee in her other hand, and I scrub a hand over my face, laughing ruefully.

“Parker—” I start.

“Nope,” she cuts me off quickly. “He doesn’t get a say about this.”

I snort. “I think we both know he’ll have plenty to say.”

“Well, he’ll get over it. He’s a grown-ass man, even though he doesn’t always act like it. And the bottom line is that this isn’t any of his business. It’s between you and Sadie.” She smirks. “Or maybe you, Sadie, Cade, and Noah. But definitely not our little brother. If Parker respects or cares for you or Sadie at all, he’ll let you feel the way you feel, and back the fuck off.”

Language, I sign at her, making her laugh. I’d be lying if I said her support doesn’t have my throat feeling a little tight though.

“But seriously, Dex,” she says, giving my arm a squeeze as she looks up at me. “If Parker thinks he has some lasting claim on Sadie just because they dated once upon a time, he’s wrong. She’s a person, not an object. She gets to make her own choice.”

“She chose to walk away.”

That supportive squeeze she was giving me turns into a shove, accompanied by an eye roll. “Oh my god. *Men.*”

“What?”

“Did you ask her to stay?”

“Of course not.”

She shakes her head at me again. “Are you going to do something about that besides mope? Because you get a choice in this too, you know, and she wasn’t the only one who walked away from that mountain.”

I suck in a sharp breath, something cracking open inside my chest.

“What’s *your* choice?” she asks softly.

A burning urgency wells up inside me, a deep, sudden certainty filling up the empty ache I’ve been trying to deny ever since I left Whispering Pines.

I grin, setting down my half-empty coffee mug hard enough that it sloshes over the rim, and pulling my sister into a rough hug. “Gotta go, sis,” I say as she laughs, planting a sloppy kiss on her cheek as I turn and race for the door.

Then I turn back, realizing I forgot something important, and swoop up my niece for a quick hug and goodbye too.

Where are you going, Uncle Dex? she signs, giggling when I give her cheek one of those sloppy kisses too.

I set her down, crouching down to look in her eyes. *Somewhere important.*

With two pit stops along the way to see if my best friends feel the same.

NOAH

“Do you understand what we’re here to accomplish today, Ms. Campbell?” my lawyer asks Becca once we’re all seated around the conference table.

We’re holding the meeting at the Keystone Culinary headquarters, and even though I’ve been back in Philadelphia for a few days now, the familiar surroundings rub me wrong, and I keep telling myself it’s because I should be on a plane to Japan already.

I’ve got meetings scheduled with the Eiwa Izakaya Group just after the New Year to finalize the expansion deal, and I already have housing lined up in Tokyo since I plan on being based there for at least a year to get the new franchises off the ground.

It’s not Japan that I keep thinking of though.

Becca has her own attorney with her, and I’ve got a team of four from the law firm I keep on retainer for the business. It’s Becca’s attorney who answers for her.

“We understand that the terms of my client’s employment need to be reviewed in light of recent events,” he says smoothly.

My lips tighten, but I pay my team well, and they don’t disappoint.

“You’re mistaken,” says Sherry Lords, my lead council, with an easy smile. She slides a piece of paper across the table to him. “You were provided with a copy of this agenda the day that Ms. Campbell leaked her allegations to the press. She is

no longer employed by Keystone Culinary, so there are no longer any terms of employment. We're here to discuss the application of the termination clause in Ms. Campbell's contract, and the legal repercussions for her actions."

Becca shakes her head. "No. Everything I did was for the good of the business. You were losing focus, Noah! We can still save the deal with the Eiwa Izakaya Group."

She gives me a pleading look, but I keep my face expressionless. She's been invaluable to me over the years, and she's done good work for Keystone. But none of that excuses the way she violated my privacy, or the privacy of the others.

"The deal isn't at risk," Sherry replies briskly. "Nor is it any of your concern anymore, Ms. Campbell."

"That's not fair!" Becca bursts out, ignoring her attorney's attempts to shush her. She does calm herself though, sitting straighter and adjusting her blouse before giving us a tight smile. "We've been working on this deal for a long time. There's no way it would have gotten as far as it had without me. But while Noah, Mr. King, was in Colorado, I could tell something was taking his attention away from work. He was distracted!"

"It's called a vacation," the most junior member of my legal team mumbles under his breath, almost making me crack a smile.

"I think what Ms. Campbell is trying to point out," her attorney cuts in, "is that the deal is very close to being finalized, and she was concerned that it might be jeopardized if Mr. King's unconventional liaison were to—"

"Were to come to light in the press?" Sherry interjects, raising a single eyebrow. "Which is, in fact, exactly the tactic Ms. Campbell deployed?"

Becca's attorney opens his mouth, but Sherry doesn't let him get a word in edgewise.

"Regardless, Ms. Campbell's reasons aren't in question today. We already have the facts. She doesn't deny violating

the privacy clause in her employment contract to access Mr. King's computer. Outside of the steps already laid out for such a violation in her original contract, we have the following terms regarding the personal suit Mr. King is bringing against her."

Sherry slides another document over to them.

Becca's attorney glances down at it, shaking his head. "Wait a minute! Even if you terminate my client's employment —"

"I already have," I point out.

"Noah!" Becca says, leaning forward. "You can't mean that. What about our place in Tokyo?"

I look at her. "What place?"

"The house we bought!"

She made all the arrangements for my stay there, so I assume she's referring to the house that the company purchased. I'll stay there, it's true, but we decided to get a place large enough that other executives could stay if they needed to fly over during the initial integration phase.

"Is there a problem with it?" I ask, confused. "You told me the purchase already went through."

"What Ms. Campbell is trying to say is that she's already made arrangements to relocate to Tokyo for the next year, at considerable personal expense to her, for the good of the company," her attorney clarifies. "If she's to be terminated, then the severance package needs to be amended to compensate her for those expenses."

My brow wrinkles. "What are you talking about? There was no reason for Becca to relocate."

"No, we talked about it, remember? When we bought the house. I'll be staying there too. We got it so we could be there together."

Something about the way she says *together* gives me pause. I look at her, feeling like I've never seen her before. We did talk about her staying at the house, in the same context of

any Keystone employee from our American headquarters staying there. For the first time, it occurs to me that Becca had a very different idea of her role than I did.

Did she expect something to happen between us? Is that why she did all of this when she realized I was with Sadie?

Fuck.

I clench my jaw as Sherry gets us back on track, steering the conversation back to what we discussed ahead of time. Unfortunately, nothing we do here today can put the genie back in the bottle. Dex, Cade, and I will all ride out the publicity. That's inconvenient, but not truly a problem. Sadie, on the other hand, never agreed to live in the public eye, and for that alone I'll never be able to forgive Becca.

Or myself, for being blind to her motivation, and failing to protect Sadie.

Eventually, the attorneys wrap up the negotiations, and Becca leaves after agreeing to an iron-clad gag order when it comes to anything to do with Sadie in the future, as well as the other termination clauses my legal team suggested. She gives me one last pleading look over her shoulder as she goes, but I don't even glance her way.

"Need a break?" Sherry asks once that part is over with.

"Nope."

We still need to iron things out for the franchise deal since I'm leaving in less than a week. Becca wasn't wrong that she's been an integral part of setting it up. But ultimately, she's not indispensable, and after another couple of hours going over the final details, I'm confident that everything can still proceed smoothly with the expansion into Asia.

"Good," Sherry says briskly, closing her laptop and nodding at her associates as they start to gather up the documentation we just went over. "In that case, you're all set to head to Tokyo. I'll have the final contracts ready for your signature in the morning."

I nod automatically, but Becca's words keep playing over in my head.

She's right. I was distracted up at Whispering Pines. The franchise expansion has been my sole focus for the last year or so, but she's not wrong about my attention straying from it while I was at the lodge. And not just my attention, but my drive.

It doesn't excuse her actions, but it does give me pause.

"Mr. King?" Sherry asks. "Was there something else?"

"No." I shake my head. "Yes. Maybe."

She huffs out a little laugh, her professionalism cracking and a bit of humanity showing through. "Well, which is it? Not that I'm rushing you since I'm more than happy for the billable hours."

I chuckle ruefully, rubbing the back of my neck. The Japanese have a business philosophy, *kaizen*, that means change for the better by continuous improvement. Hiro Tanaka, my counterpart in the Eiwa Izakaya Group, explained it to me over sake during one of our initial meetings, and it resonated with me because it's the same principle I've applied to honoring my father's memory.

Constant growth. Constant expansion. Constant improvement.

But Pops never asked for that, and I'm not even sure he would have wanted it. His dreams were smaller and closer to home. They were all centered around family, and the ones he loved.

"Mr. King?" Sherry prompts me.

"Scrap it," I tell her, a weight lifting off my chest.

Her eyebrows go up, and she exchanges a look with her team. "Scrap... what exactly? Which clause do we need to revisit, Mr. King?"

I shake my head. "I'm not talking about the contract. I mean the whole deal. We're pulling out."

"You're saying no to expanding the Keystone brand through a partnership with the Eiwa Izakaya Group?" she asks carefully. "You'd like me to cancel negotiations?"

“I’m not moving to Japan,” I tell her, the epiphany something of a relief.

“Okay,” she says slowly. “We can work with that. It doesn’t mean we have to shut down the whole deal.”

She’s wrong. Despite all of our growth, I still *am* Keystone Culinary, but I understand why she’s grasping at straws. We’ve put a lot into this, and we’ll lose money by pulling out. The bottom line is that it’s not a smart business decision.

But there’s more to life than business.

I can’t leave Sadie. It already sucked to do it once, when we all left the lodge. But there’s no fucking way I’m willing to be in a different country than her for the next year. Hell, it’s only been a few days that I’ve been in a different city than her, and I’m already done with that too.

I want to sleep beside her, every damn night, and wake up next to her each morning. Being near her gives me a sense of peace like nothing else I’ve ever known. Having her in my bed is the only time I can remember in recent history when the nightmares that always plagued me were truly banished, once and for all. And yes, we had an agreement. We all honored it, and I respect that.

But it’s not over. I don’t want it to be, and that’s one negotiation I’m not willing to back out of.

“I appreciate all the work your team has put into this,” I tell Sherry sincerely. Then I crack a smile, I can’t help it. “But think of all the billable hours you’ll get untangling the contracts we’ve already signed.”

She laughs, and we end the meeting on a positive note despite my abrupt one-eighty. When I walk out of the conference room, I feel infinitely lighter and decide I’m actually done for the day.

Done working, at least. I’ve still got my own personal ray of sunshine to reach out to, to re-open negotiations.

I get in the car, already planning what to pack once I get back to my house. I automatically start to tell my Bluetooth to call my assistant to make travel arrangements back to Denver,

then roll my eyes at myself when I realize that I'm temporarily without an assistant.

No matter. I can handle that shit myself.

My mind is racing so fast that I barely pay attention to where I'm going, navigating the familiar streets back to my house on autopilot. But as I pull up into my driveway, movement in my periphery catches my attention, and I realize there are two people standing on my large front stoop.

Dex and Cade.

My pulse kicks up a notch in my chest as I glance over, my gaze meeting theirs. I shut off the car and slide out, and Cade gives me a little nod.

A grin tugs at my lips, a weight I didn't even realize I was carrying lifting off my shoulders. Despite the fact that none of us have spoken since we all left Colorado, I can guess exactly why my two best friends are here.

They must've come to the same realization as I have. We can't let Sadie walk out of our lives.

We need to get her back.

And then we need to keep her.

SADIE

IN A PERFECT WORLD where no one had bills to pay and holidays truly did retain their magic, I wouldn't have to go back to working the temp position at the real estate office while my heart is still bruised. But this is the real world, so the best I can do with New Year's Eve just a day away and a backlog of administrative tasks to handle before then is treat myself to my favorite coffee before I go in.

I push open the door to The Coffee Collective, a little thrown by the lack of Christmas decor. It makes sense, of course, but I've still got a snapshot in my head from the last time I was here.

My steps falter for a moment, and I swallow as I look around, then smile past the lump in my throat. Noah did an amazing thing, and the high energy and good spirits of the staff as they bustle around the shop and cheerfully greet their customers tells me all I need to know about how much his gift means to them.

The door opens behind me, letting in another gust of wintery air, and I realize I'm blocking the entrance.

"Are you in line, Miss?"

"Yes, sorry," I say quickly, stepping forward and pretending not to notice the way the older woman's gaze lingers on me a few beats too long.

I refuse to speculate about whether or not she recognizes me. For my sanity's sake, I haven't been paying too much attention to any lingering press about the "sordid affair in the

mountains,” and I’ve deliberately blocked out the gossip from online tabloids and questionable friends on social media alike.

I don’t want to hear other people’s speculation about me and the guys, and I’m not sure I can handle reading their comments online. Not because I think they’ll be hurtful, although I’m sure some of them are, but mostly because I don’t want a reminder of what I had while losing it still feels so raw.

The line isn’t long, and when I reach the front, it’s the same perky barista who helped me the last time I was here. When I first met Cade.

“Oat milk pour over, right?”

“That’s right,” I answer, unreasonably disappointed that Cade’s deep voice doesn’t interrupt me from behind, teasing me about my expensive taste.

Of course he’s not here though. Why would he be? He told me from the start that he was only in Colorado temporarily. Just because he owns Whispering Pines now, that doesn’t mean he’ll be around. None of them will.

I mumble something that hopefully passes for a pleasantry and stuff far too much money into the tip jar, then I take my pity party to the end of the counter to wait for my drink—where I discover that they haven’t actually removed *all* the Christmas decorations.

“Isn’t that cute?” the barista steaming my oat milk says when she notices my gaze lingering on the stylized snow angel ornament hanging from the back of the espresso machine. “Our mystery angel investor gifted it to us. I know the holiday is over, but we’re going to keep it up anyway, for luck.”

“I love it,” I tell her sincerely, brushing my finger over the snow angel Noah gave them. It means more than the barista realizes, and I’m touched at the silent nod to our time together.

But damn, everywhere I look since I left Whispering Pines, I’m hit with reminders of the time I spent there. I’m trying to let it go and move on, but it’s hard. All three men keep invading my thoughts, night and day, and the worst part is that

even though I tell myself I want to get over them, I know it's a lie.

I have to though. And isn't that what real life is about? Doing the things we have to, even when we don't want to.

I thank the second barista for my drink, my hand straying to my throat to stroke the necklace Dex gave me as I leave the coffee shop. True to my word, I haven't taken the necklace off once, and don't plan to. Another choice that isn't making it easy for me to move on.

I sigh, then straighten my shoulders.

"The fantasy is over," I remind myself under my breath when I arrive at the real estate office. "Time to get back to the rest of my life."

I push the door open, nodding a greeting to a few of the front office staff. They're polite enough, but I can feel people glancing at me as I head back to my desk, and not in the congenial *how did your holidays go* kind of way.

I flush slightly but hold my head up. They can be as curious as they want to, and I'm sure a fair number of them have read all about me online, but I'm not going to let it get to me. Being judged by them is nothing new. No one here has ever really become a friend, and every last one of them has been at least a little condescending about the accommodations I've needed for my dyslexia.

Screw them though. I need this job for the moment, but I'll find something better after the New Year.

"Get anything good for Christmas, Sadie?" the woman who handles the billing asks, wagging her eyebrows suggestively as I settle in at my desk. "I bet you had a *great* holiday."

Her innuendo is clear, but I grit my teeth and ignore it. I may be willing to share details of my sex life with my best friend, but Cheryl and I aren't even friends at all, and she has no right to my private life, no matter what she thinks.

"It was fine," I say curtly, turning my computer on and angling my chair away from her as I get to work.

I'm here to do a job, and for a little while at least, I manage to push aside my jumbled emotions and the not-so-subtle attention I'm getting from the rest of the staff and start to make some headway on the projects that have piled up during my time off.

"Sadie, can you pull the Harrington files?" my boss asks me near the end of the day.

"Of course." I nod, pushing away from my desk before heading back to the antiquated file room.

"Need some help with that?" My least favorite coworker, Arnie, saunters after me.

"No, thank you."

He smirks, leaning against the doorframe as he watches me hunt for the file. "You know they're sorted alphabetically."

"I remember."

"Won't it be hard for you to find the right one then? Or do you still know the order of the alphabet?"

I don't bother to answer. He's always been an ass about my dyslexia, and if I respond, it'll only feed the fire.

"So," Arnie drawls, not taking the hint that I'm busy. "Was that your first foursome? Just kidding. What happens on vacation, stays on vacation, am I right?"

I quit ignoring him, crossing my arms over my chest as I turn to face him. "I'm really not comfortable with this conversation."

He rolls his eyes. "Really? Because I didn't take you for a prude. Not after what I read about your little holiday getaway."

"Is that really your business?"

"It's everyone's business. It's called the internet. So, which one are you going to pick?"

"Which one of what?"

"The billionaires you're leading on." He flips his phone around, showing me the familiar TMZ logo at the top of the

screen. Then he laughs and takes it back. “Sorry, I forgot. Do you want me to read it to you?”

I give him a cool look and turn back to the files, determined to brush off his rudeness and not let it get to me.

“Have you thought about pitting them against each other, *Hunger Games* style?” he asks, chortling at his own joke.

“Not even once.”

“And she’ll never have to,” a deep voice says from behind him.

Dex.

I whirl around to find Arnie looking like he’s going to shit himself. Dex is standing just outside the door to the file room, looking pissed, with Noah and Cade flanking him on either side.

“Hey, kitten.” Dex’s voice is still hard as he glares at Arnie. “Was this guy bothering you?”

“No,” I whisper, my heart racing. “Just judging me.”

“What? I was not!” Arnie scowls. “But seriously, *three* men?”

“You do realize how outdated judging non-traditional relationships is, don’t you?” Cade asks in a dangerous tone.

“Almost as outdated as being a dick and not making allowances for someone with dyslexia,” Noah says flatly, crossing his arms so that the thick muscles bulge.

My coworker pales a little, his gaze darting from them to me as if he’s somehow hoping I’ll save him from their wrath. When I don’t speak up, he mumbles something between an apology and an excuse and slips away, looking cowed.

Behind my men, I can see everyone else in the office watching from their cubicles, but for the first time since our story broke on the internet, it’s easy to ignore their attention. Dex, Cade, and Noah are here, and they have *all* of my focus.

“What are you doing here?” I ask, my voice shaking a little.

Cade answers first. “We realized we left something here.”

“At my office?” I blurt.

He chuckles, the sound deep and warm. “No, dream girl. In Colorado.”

I instinctively reach my hand up, my fingers finding their way to my necklace, and Dex’s eyes follow.

“You’re wearing it,” he murmurs.

I swallow. “Of course I am.”

The men all step into the file room, standing shoulder to shoulder in front of me, and Cade smiles. “The three of us have talked, and that week with you? It was the best of our lives. I know we had an agreement, but we aren’t ready to let it go.”

“We don’t want to walk away,” Noah rumbles, his face more open and vulnerable than I’ve ever seen it before.

“We want something real,” Dex adds, his gaze locking with mine. “All of us.”

Hope starts to build inside me, but I shake my head, not ready to let myself believe it. How can I? It sounds too much like every single thing I’ve wanted to hear, and doesn’t that mean it *can’t* be true?

“We’re too different,” I whisper. “It’s not really practical, is it? Trying to be together? You three don’t even live in the same cities. And aren’t you moving to Japan, Noah?”

“No.”

I wait for more, then laugh because this is Noah. I should know better.

“Just no?”

A smile tugs at the corners of his lips. “Just no. I have other priorities right now.”

I look between the three of them, giddy joy starting to flutter inside me. I’m still not sure I trust it though. I’m scared to.

“What about the public fallout from our relationship getting leaked? That couldn’t have been good for your businesses.” I look between the three men as they all move closer to me, surrounding me on all sides.

“We handled it,” Cade said with a careless shrug, as if they don’t each have billions on the line.

Dex smirks, tucking a strand of my hair behind my ear. “Besides, didn’t you hear what Cade told that asshole just now? Getting judgy over a little polyamory is an idea past its prime. No one but Neanderthals like that one will give it a second thought.”

He jerks his thumb over his shoulder, in the direction where Arnie scurried off to.

Cade grins. “Some people probably will judge us, but you know what? It’s none of their fucking business. And my PR team tells me that there’s been a surprising amount of public support since the story broke. For every one who gets offended, there are two more who like seeing a more non-traditional relationship out in the open. If anything, it might be good for business.”

I shake my head, stunned and completely overwhelmed.

Next to me, Dex goes still. Then he gently strokes the backs of his fingers down my cheek, and when I turn my head, I see so much vulnerability in his eyes, his emotions laid completely bare, that it makes my breath catch. “Don’t say no.”

My eyes go wide. “I wasn’t! I wouldn’t. I mean, I’m not even sure what you’re all saying, but if you don’t want it to be over...”

Tension flows out of Dex’s body, and his lips quirk up. “We don’t want it to be over.”

“But how would that, um, what would we... how long are you guys in town for?”

“We’re relocating,” Dex says.

“I did just buy a resort out here,” Cade adds. “And there have been a lot of inquiries about bookings at Whispering Pines since we were outed.”

“Oh! That’s amazing.”

He grins. “I think so. It will give you a lot to do.”

“Me?”

“You’re not staying here,” Dex says, his voice going hard as he gives the office around us a dismissive look. “They don’t deserve you.”

Warmth swells in my chest. “I don’t really want to,” I admit, keeping my voice low. “But what will I—*oh*.”

Cade pulls out a document I recognize on sight. The last time I saw it, when John had me drive him into town so he could sign it in front of a notary, she chastised me for letting a tear fall onto the paper, smudging the ink.

It’s the deed to Whispering Pines. John signed it over to Cade, and now Cade is holding it out to me.

“You’re going to do whatever makes you happy. The resort is yours, if you want it. I’m not changing a thing about it, because I’m giving it to you.”

My fingers tremble as they brush against the paper. His signature is already on it.

Tears well in my eyes. “Why?” I whisper, looking between the three of them.

I don’t just mean the resort. Why did they come back for me?

Noah cups my jaw, turning my face toward him. “I think you know why.”

His dark blue eyes pierce right through me, and the little flutters inside me grow into a storm, my chest feeling too small to contain it all.

“Tell me,” I whisper. “I want to hear it.”

Noah smiles, slow and warm. “Because, sunshine, our story isn’t done yet.”

SADIE

THE SECOND THE words are past Noah's lips, he leans in to kiss me. As naturally as breathing, he turns me to face Dex as soon as we break apart, and Dex claims his own kiss before passing me over to Cade, reminding me in the space of just a few moments how amazing it feels to be shared by them.

They're all here. They came back. For *me*.

"Is this real?" I whisper. I've got the deed to Whispering Pines in my hands, but I'm not even close to wrapping my head around that huge gesture from Cade. Not yet.

But that's not really what I'm asking about, and they know it.

"We're not done," Dex says, repeating what Noah said as he stares down at me. "We want more."

"You mean you want... strings?" I ask, my heart pounding.

He nods, breathing out a laugh. "Yeah. Forget about that no-strings bullshit. We want all the damn strings. We want everything."

"Do you?" Noah asks in a low voice as they all watch me, waiting to hear my answer.

My pulse is pounding so hard that I can feel the heavy thud of it against my ribs, and my tongue darts out to lick my lips.

I'm scared to make the leap. My feelings for these three men grew so big, so fast that I know the smart thing to do would be to protect my heart and play it safe.

But after spending the past few days thinking things were over and trying to forget about them, trying and failing to stifle all the emotions they awakened inside me, I know I'm more scared *not* to try.

Fuck safe. I want love.

"Yes," I whisper, my pulse racing. "I want more."

All three of them grin, and Cade swings me around with an actual whoop. When he finally puts me down, I'm laughing—and the whole office is staring at me through the door to the file room.

"She quits," Dex announces, grabbing my hand. "Effective immediately."

I can't help but laugh, nodding to affirm his words. These men really do play on a whole different field, but for once, I don't want to do the responsible thing.

I want to let them sweep me away.

"Where are we going?" I ask as they lead me out of the building.

"That depends," Cade says, tucking me against his side as they lead me to a sleek Range Rover parked in front of the real estate office. "Do you have plans for New Year's Eve?"

"Not really." I grin, already knowing Luna will forgive me for bailing on the plans we made. "Luna was trying to talk me into going to a party, but it isn't really my scene."

"Good. Because there's somewhere we want to take you," Noah says, his hand resting low on my back as he ushers me into the backseat of the Range Rover.

Cade takes the wheel, Dex gets up front, and I want to ask Noah what he means, what they're planning, but I get a little distracted again by the fact that they're *here*.

Here, and in touching, kissing distance.

Noah pulls me close, looking like he's missed me just as much as I missed him. He kisses me like a starving man, and

by the time I come up for air, we're on the other side of Denver.

I look around. "Are we heading to the airport?"

Dex twists around in his seat to face me. "Yup."

Adrenaline spikes through me. It's the kind of romantic grand gesture I love in those rom coms I made Noah binge with me, but my innate fear of flying has my stomach twisting into knots.

"I, um, I don't have a bag packed," I whisper, excitement warring with my nerves as it sinks in that they're really planning on taking me somewhere. Then a thought occurs to me. "And what about Mrs. Claws?"

Noah presses a tender kiss to my temple. "I left her with my mom for a bit. She's being well taken care of."

Cade meets my eyes in the rearview mirror. "And we'll take care of the rest."

I lick my lips, my heart starting to pound. "Where are we going?"

He grins. "We're taking you to Paris to celebrate the New Year."

I blink, stunned.

Noah pulls me against him. "We know you're afraid of flying, but trust us. Let us give you this."

"But what about my passport?"

He chuckles. "It's taken care of. Luna helped us get it from your place."

I bite my lip, loving the fact that they recruited my bestie to help them, then grin. I'm not about to let fear stop me now. And the truth is, I *do* trust them.

"Okay. Take me to Paris."

"Oh, *hell* yeah," Dex says as butterflies erupt in my stomach.

Holy shit. I'm going to Paris.

I half expect that we're going to run into a problem at the airport. I've got nothing with me but my purse, and surely it can't be as easy as this to completely turn my world upside down.

I'm wrong though. We bypass the public entrances and head to a restricted parking area they've got a pass for, and from there, to a private plane.

"Oh, wow," I whisper as I follow them into the luxurious cabin. "I guess there's plenty of legroom."

The guys all laugh, and Cade flops down on one of the plush armchair-like seats, pulling me onto his lap. Dex and Noah take seats near us, and I look around in awe, feeling more like I'm at some sort of private club or lounge than on a plane.

It's gorgeous, and totally over the top, and it does a great job of distracting me from my fears.

The nerves only return when we start to get ready for takeoff. Cade must feel me tensing up, because he sends Dex a look. After one of those moments of silent communication that they've mastered, Dex strides over to a cabinet built into the wall.

"Should we celebrate a little?" he asks, pulling open a camouflaged mini fridge and taking out an expensive bottle of champagne.

I shake my head in wonder. "Wow. You guys really have thought of everything."

"Well, with three of us, I should hope so," Cade jokes, sending a flush through me.

I accept a glass from Dex. It's delicious, and it *does* help. But as the plane's engine kicks on, my nervousness rises again.

I reluctantly leave the comfort of Cade's lap and take the empty seat between Dex and Cade, my pulse quickening as I glance out the small window on the other side of Dex. We're still on the ground, but we won't be for long, and then...

“Sadie,” Noah says softly, drawing my attention away from the view of the tarmac. He’s seated across from the three of us, facing me, and I lock gazes with him, using the steadiness in his tone as a lifeline. “We’re not going to let anything happen to you.”

“He’s right. You’re safe with us,” Cade murmurs.

Dex, on my other side, gets a devilish gleam in his eye. “Safe? Always. But I’m not sure I can get on board with ‘not letting anything happen.’” He takes my other hand, turning it over and lifting it to his mouth. He kisses my pulse point, teasing it with his tongue, then sucking, and a shiver rolls through me as his voice drops to a husky rasp. “I can think of a few things I’d love to make happen for you on this flight, kitten.”

The sound of the plane’s engines suddenly surges, and my adrenaline spikes again, the arousal that was starting to coil inside me doused by another icy spike of fear. “Are we taking off?”

“Soon.” Cade leans closer, squeezing my hand.

“Spread your legs, sunshine.”

I look at Noah, locking gazes with him again as I try to get my breathing under control. “Um, what?”

Cade shifts in his seat, half turning to face me. “I like this look you chose for the office,” he says, letting his eyes rake over me with an admiring glance. “Very sexy librarian.”

“I was trying to look professional.”

“You look amazing.” Dex grins, dragging a finger over the skirt I’m wearing. “And I definitely approve of this.”

He places my hand on the armrest, letting me clutch that instead, and runs his hand up my leg, pushing my skirt higher. Letting his calloused fingers trail up the inside of my thigh.

“Oh,” I gasp, automatically parting my legs to invite more of his touch.

“Good girl,” Noah rumbles. “That’s what I want to see.”

Cade kisses my fingers, still twined with his, then puts the hand he was holding on the other armrest and helps Dex push my skirt up even higher.

“You’re so fucking beautiful,” Cade murmurs, spreading my legs wider. “I’ve been dreaming of you.”

“So I’m still your dream girl?” I joke a little breathlessly as Dex trails his fingers higher, rubbing the fabric of my panties.

“You’ll always be my dream girl.” Cade kisses me deeply just as Dex’s fingers slip under the thin silk.

“I love how fucking wet you get for us,” Dex growls, stroking me lightly. “But these need to go.”

I lift my hips as the guys work my panties off, then they hook my knees over the armrests so I’m on full display for Noah. His eyes darken with lust, and my whole body flushes with arousal at the look he pins me with.

Dex tosses him my panties, and Noah snatches them out of the air with one hand.

“Fuck, I’ve missed that pussy,” he growls, his hand dropping to his growing bulge as he brings them to his face, eyes still locked on me.

My breath hitches as I watch him watch me, and it hits me all at once.

These men really are mine now. All three of them.

“Oh god,” I gasp, heat flooding my core as goosebumps break out on my skin.

Dex and Cade both slide their hands back between my thighs, teasing my opening before each man works one finger inside me. Cade teases my clit, and Dex curls his finger, stroking a spot inside me that makes me gasp again.

Dex grins wickedly, stroking harder. “I’m going to need at least one orgasm from you before liftoff, kitten.”

The reminder that we’re about to be launched into the sky, nothing holding us up in the air, should terrify me. Instead, all I want to do is give Dex what he asked for.

I nod, my voice a whisper. “Yes. Please, make me come. Keep touching me, Dex. Please, oh please, Cade, keep—fuck! Oh my god. Oh god, don’t stop. Please, right there, *yes.*”

It rocks through me, and I instinctively try to close my legs, tightening everything to prolong the pleasure.

Cade doesn’t let me, holding my thighs apart while Dex keeps fingering me. “Not yet.”

I shudder, letting my head fall back against the headrest. God, I’ve missed them. And I’ve definitely missed the way they take charge of my body and make it sing.

Then I realize it’s not just me shuddering. The plane is shaking a little too.

“Oh god,” I gasp, my head popping back up. “Is that—”

“Just takeoff,” Dex murmurs, rubbing my clit. He’s already learned my body so well. He knows exactly the right pressure to use after it’s already swollen and sensitive from coming once before.

I moan, letting my eyes drift closed as I feel the plane start to leave the ground. The fear is still there, right below the surface, simmering on the verge of eruption. But for once, it feels like fuel instead of just terror, sending my arousal higher, faster, as Cade and Dex start working my body over again.

“Once we level off, these seatbelts are coming off,” Noah growls as I start to pant, writhing against the restraint as my core tightens again. The feel of his eyes on me is like a heated caress, and between the three of them, I’m already spiraling toward a second climax.

This is a much better distraction than the champagne.

Cade rubs my clit faster, and I cry out, my hips lifting off the seat. I clutch the armrests, trying to stay grounded.

I hear Noah’s zipper come down, and everything inside me clenches tight. I force my eyes open to see him stroking his cock, still watching me intently.

I want it. I want him inside me. I want to ride him. I want all three of them to take me, over and over, until I truly believe

I'm theirs again.

"Now," Noah rasps, his jaw clenching. "Come for them. I need to see it again."

"Fuck, she's close." Dex's hand moves faster. "Come, Sadie. Come for us."

He strokes me inside, and Cade flicks his finger over my clit. It's enough. It's too much. It's everything.

I'm not aware of anything else—not the plane, or the altitude, or the fact that I'm screaming their names, not even the way my entire body convulses with the intensity of the climax rolling through me.

The only thing that matters is the three men who came back for me.

And when the world finally comes back into focus, all three of them are grinning, looking smugly pleased and very proud of themselves.

"Holy shit," I murmur, and they all laugh.

Cade kisses my shoulder. "We did miss that."

"And now we're safely at cruising altitude," Dex adds, making me gasp for an entirely different reason.

I look out the window and see nothing but clouds. He's right, and that means the seatbelts can come off now.

I click mine open and , then turn and kiss Dex hard. Then I do the same to Cade. "Thank you for distracting me."

"Believe me, it was entirely our pleasure," Cade says with a wicked grin.

I want more of it. I want to taste that smile and then taste other parts of him. I want to thank him and Dex too, in an entirely more enthusiastic way. But first, I need Noah. Something about the way he watches me always gets me going, and seeing him slowly jack himself off while his friends got me to my peak, over and over, has left me with a burning need for him that can't wait.

The plane lurches, hitting a little pocket of air or something, and I gasp, stumbling into him.

He catches me, and I crawl onto his lap, sliding my fingers through his short, soft beard and kissing him hard as I straddle him.

“I need you,” I murmur against his lips. “I want you.”

“Then ride me, sunshine,” he growls, his big hands finding their way under my skirt and onto my ass as he guides me down.

My eyes roll back in my head, the sensation overwhelming as I slowly sink down onto his cock. It’s the first time I’ve taken him without a lot of prep, and while my pussy is swollen and wet from coming twice in a row, his size still leaves me gasping.

“Goddamn,” he grits out, the cords standing out on his neck as his muscles all go rock hard under me.

“I forgot how fucking big you are,” I breathe.

He chuckles. “I forgot how fucking perfect this pussy is.”

“It’s yours,” I gasp, finally fully seated. It feels so good to be filled like this again that tears spring to my eyes, and I have to blink fast, not wanting him to misunderstand them.

But he must see something in my face, because one of his hands comes up to cup my cheek, guiding my gaze back to his.

His dark eyes are serious. “Are you okay?”

“So good.” I kiss him again, rocking my hips. “I just can’t believe you’re really here.”

He smiles. “We’re all here, and we’re never leaving you again. Now, take what you need.”

I start to move, grinding against Noah as Cade and Dex both unfasten their seatbelts and come up behind me, stroking my hair, kissing my neck, and teasing my breasts until I’m left gasping. Noah grips my hips, urging me to move faster.

“Ride me hard,” he rumbles, the deep sound of his voice resonating through me. “I want to feel you come on my cock.”

“God, Noah,” I choke out, barely able to speak anymore.

But I do what he says, taking him deeper, faster, chasing the orgasm building inside me. Bouncing on his lap until my thighs burn, and a thin sheen of sweat covers my body.

“You look fucking incredible with a cock inside you.” Dex bunches my skirt up, holding it at my waist as he caresses my ass. “Look at your pussy, taking all of him. Swallowing that cock like the greedy little thing it is. You’re getting exactly what you need, aren’t you? Working for the cum you crave. Riding Noah like you’ve been desperate for it.”

I cry out, shuddering hard. I have been desperate for it. Desperate for Noah’s rough fucking and Cade’s wicked ways and the dirty things Dex whispers in my ear. Desperate for all of them, and now they’re mine.

Noah suddenly spanks my ass. “Answer Dex. He asked you a question.”

“Yes,” I gasp, grinding down hard. “Please, yes.”

“That’s our girl.” Cade turns my head to kiss me, stealing the groan from my lips. “Now give Noah what he wants. Come for us. Let him feel what that sweet pussy of yours can do.”

“Oh, fuck!” I cry out, his words pushing me over the edge.

My inner muscles clamp down around Noah, milking his shaft as I grind down on him, riding him faster, taking him deeper, losing myself to the bliss until I don’t even know which way is up.

I’m still recovering from the intensity of the orgasm when Noah surges to his feet, still buried deeply inside me. I gasp, wrapping my arms around his neck even tighter.

“Fuck, just like that,” he grits out, his big hands on my ass working me up and down on his cock, moving me like a sex toy for a moment. Then, with a groan, he goes still, nodding toward the back of the plane. “Gonna take you in there and fuck you right. We made sure the jet was fully stocked before takeoff.”

I have no idea what he's talking about until he follows Dex and Cade through a discreet door at the back of the plane, carrying me into a suite. It's huge, and nicer than any hotel I've ever stayed at, and there's an oversized bed in the middle of it, definitely big enough for all four of us.

Dex closes the door, then pulls my hair out of the way and leans in to kiss the back of my neck.

"Ready for some fun?" he murmurs. "Because we plan to keep you distracted all the way to Paris."

SADIE

MY STOMACH FLUTTERS at the promise in Dex's words as Noah lays me out on the bed, still buried deep inside me. His cock is throbbing, and I expect him to take me hard since I can feel the urgent need tensing up every muscle of his body.

But instead, he frames my face with his hands, slowly rolling his hips, grinding against my clit as he kisses me like he's been starving. I'm breathless and writhing beneath him, and it only takes a minute or two before I'm hit with another climax that comes on in a slow wave and takes me completely by surprise.

"Oh god," I gasp, clutching him to me.

Noah buries his face in the crook of my neck. "I'm never going to get tired of that," he groans, fucking me through it.

Then he pulls out.

"What about you?" I ask, propping myself up on my elbows as Noah stands at the foot of the bed, his cock jutting out, still angry and hard.

He strokes himself, smiling down at me. "Trust me, sunshine. *All* of this is for me."

He moves to the side, making room for Dex. I didn't even notice that Dex had gone to the sex toy cabinet, but now he approaches the bed with something in his hand that makes my jaw drop open a little.

My heart starts pounding, excitement and nerves warring inside me. They're nipple clamps, the kind I've only heard

about in the filthiest of the romance novels I love to listen to. The two small clamps have black rubber tips, and they're attached to each other by a long, shiny chain.

He looks at me with heat in his eyes. "I think you'd look beautiful in these, kitten. But only if you want to."

I nod, my stomach fluttering.

"Good girl," he murmurs, sitting beside me on the bed. He urges me to lie back down, draping the chain over my waist and taking my breasts into his hands. "Love your tits. They're incredible."

"I love it when you play with them," I whisper, arching into his touch. "It *feels* incredible."

He gives me a wicked grin. "I know. That's why I think you'll like these so much."

He leans down, teasing my pebbled nipple into a tight bud, then sucking on it hard enough that I yelp. When he pulls back, roughly rubbing over my wet nipple with his thumb, a low whine escapes me.

"Fuck, baby." His voice is a low rasp. "Don't worry. We'll take care of you."

As he speaks, he wraps his hand around my breast, making my hard nipple jut upward, and attaches the first clamp.

"Oh shit," I hiss, the sensation unexpectedly overwhelming.

Dex lightly tugs on the chain, and I squeeze my thighs together tightly as pain turns into something so much hotter, ramping my arousal up into the red zone.

I squirm on the mattress, clutching his wrist, and he leans down to kiss me. "Goddamn, you're stunning like this," he murmurs against my mouth. "Can I do the other one?"

I whimper softly, nodding, and he grins.

"Dex is right. You look fucking amazing decorated like that." Cade's voice is almost reverent as he and Noah watch Dex attach the second one.

My body jerks, and I arch off the bed, moaning.

“How does that feel?” Dex asks, tweaking the little chain again. Then again, but harder.

“Ahhh!” I gasp, writhing as Cade teases my clit again. “It feels—good. So *intense*. Holy shit. Please, I need...”

My words trail off. I can’t even find the air to breathe, much less the brain cells to form a coherent sentence. But the guys seem to understand anyway, because Noah nods and Cade grins. Dex gives the chain one more gentle tug, then slides off the bed, heading to the cupboard full of sex toys.

“Do you trust us, Sadie?” Cade asks.

I’m still panting and moaning, the pressure on my nipples keeping me hovering right at the edge of another orgasm, but that question doesn’t require thought.

“Yes.”

I’ve never been more sure of anything.

“Good girl,” Noah rumbles. “Because we want to share you in a way we never have before. But first, we’ll need to get you ready.”

My breath catches, and my entire body trembles as a new thrill races through me. I’m not afraid. Whatever they want to do to me, they’re going to make sure it feels good. I know that, deep in my soul.

And the truth is, I want whatever they have planned.

Noah hands something to Cade, and I hear a cap snap open, followed by the sound of lubricant being squirted out. Then Noah kneels beside me, and a moment later, he’s easing the tip of the dildo into me.

I gasp, my inner walls immediately trying to clamp down on it, but it’s a struggle even with the extra lubrication.

“Breathe,” Noah orders, and I let the breath out, relaxing as he works it deeper. “There you go. Just like that.”

He eases the thick toy in and out of me. It’s even bigger than he is, and I can’t imagine what it is the men think I’m

going to need more preparation for.

“Oh god.” A full body shudder runs through me. I can feel myself stretching around the toy, adjusting to its girth, but it’s a lot.

“Relax, kitten. You can take whatever we give you, isn’t that right? You were fucking made for us.”

I nod almost desperately. “Yes.”

Cade reaches between us and starts stroking my clit, and it’s just enough to distract me.

“I can’t—”

My words break off, but as if he knows exactly what I was going to say, Cade rolls his thumb across the sensitive bud at the same time Dex gives the chain dangling from my nipples another tug. Without any warning, another orgasm hits me.

Noah pushes the toy in and out of me, ramping the pleasure up even higher, dragging it out until I scream. I’m still shaking with the aftershocks when he pulls it out and tosses it aside.

“Now roll over, sunshine. Hands and knees.”

I do it, my limbs a little shaky, and all three men groan once I’m in position.

“You’re amazing,” Dex murmurs, running his hand down my spine. “Can we decorate you a little more?”

“Anything,” I whisper.

I hear the snick of the lube bottle again, and Dex shows me a jeweled plug that matches the color of the teal sapphire he chose for my necklace.

“Is that—”

“Real?” he asks, grinning. “Of course. Only the best for you. And it’s going to look gorgeous in that beautiful ass of yours.”

“Oh god,” I murmur, my heart pounding. I don’t know if it’s the sight of the toy or the idea of having something else

inside me, or just the fact that with the three of them, I know they'll always push my boundaries. Always give me more than I expect but never more than I can handle.

Dex massages my ass, then drags the tip of the jeweled plug down the center, teasing my asshole with it. "Ready for this? Once it's inside, I want to fuck you just like this. I want to see it filling you while you take my cock."

"I'm ready," I breathe. "Please."

I arch my back, spreading my legs wider, and all three men respond to the sight.

"Fucking perfect," Noah growls, palming his cock as he watches.

"She loves being a filthy slut for us, doesn't she?" Dex adds, slipping the toy between my cheeks. "Look at her, spreading her legs, begging for more. She needs all her holes filled, all the time."

He rubs it over my asshole, coating the tight ring of muscles with lube, then slowly eases it in.

"Oh fuck," I pant, fisting the sheets as I let my head hang low. "Oh my god. Oh fuck."

"That's it. Good girl," Cade murmurs, leaning in and kissing me. "Fuck, I love watching you like this."

"There we go." Dex's voice is gentle as he eases the plug the rest of the way in. He rubs his thumb over it, shooting little sparks through me, and I suck in a sharp breath.

Noah tucks his finger under my chin, guiding my gaze back up to his. "It's not too much, is it?"

I shake my head.

"Do you want more?"

"Yes," I gasp. "Yes, please."

"Such a good girl," Cade whispers in my ear, trailing one hand down my throat, then hooking a finger in the chain dangling between my breasts. "You heard her, Dex. She wants more."

He tugs the chain at the same moment Dex slides into me, and the dual pleasure is almost too much.

“Oh god.” I clutch the comforter as he fills me inch by inch. The sharp zing from the nipple clamps and the fullness from the plug turns it into a full-sensory experience that has me reeling.

Dex pulls back and thrusts forward again, hard, and I moan. Cade twists the chain a little, and I gasp, writhing.

“God, yes, like that,” he growls. “Look at you taking everything we give you, dream girl. Taking it like the greedy little cock slut you are.”

I whimper as Dex fucks me to the brink of another climax—but before I can come, he stops, leaving me teetering right on the edge.

He pulls out, tapping the jeweled plug. I suck in a breath as bolts of pleasure spiral through me, leaving me shaking, and when Dex murmurs words of praise as Cade takes his place, fucking into me hard, the orgasm that’s been threatening finally breaks.

Noah cups the back of my neck as pleasure crashes through me. “Look at me.”

I lift my eyes to his, and his gaze burns straight into my soul.

“That’s our good girl,” he rumbles. “I love seeing you fall apart like this. Can you take a little more?”

I don’t know.

But I want to try.

“Yes,” I gasp.

Noah shares a look with Cade over my shoulder, and when Cade draws out, he pulls me upright, my back to his chest and his hand around my throat, holding me steady.

“Do you know how perfect you are?” he murmurs in my ear as Noah positions himself on the bed, fisting his cock.

“You’re a dirty little slut for us, dream girl. *Our* dirty little slut.”

“Yes.” My pulse throbs against his palm as I nod. “Yours. All of yours.”

Noah’s eyes darken with lust, and Cade reaches around, rubbing my clit. “We know, and you’re going to show us. You’re going to show us how much you want this. You’re going to ride Noah, and before you come again, you’re going to take me too.”

He guides me onto Noah’s cock, and Noah wraps his hand around the back of my neck and pulls me down, kissing me deeply as I sink down onto his thick length.

Cade kneels behind me, slipping his hand between my legs and teasing my clit as Noah slowly starts to fuck me from below. I moan into his kiss, every slow thrust causing my clamped nipples to rub against his chest, overloading me with sensations.

“Oh god,” I moan when Cade starts kneading my ass. I expect him to remove the jeweled plug and fuck me there, but when Noah goes still, Cade slides his fingers over my pussy, feeling where it stretches around his friend.

“I want to fuck you here,” he says, his voice husky. “Slide in right alongside Noah’s and take you like that.”

My eyes widen as realization floods me. “Both of you... in my pussy?”

He hums a confirmation as he presses a finger inside me, making my breath catch. “Think you can handle that?”

I hiss through my teeth, my body tensing around the intrusion even as a gush of wetness soaks Cade’s finger and the base of Noah’s cock.

His chuckle is like velvet. “Seems like your body wants it. Do you?”

I nod, barely able to breathe.

“Good girl.”

He presses his finger a little deeper before withdrawing it, and then he replaces it with his cock, carefully working his shaft into me alongside Noah's.

"Breathe," Noah grits out, reminding me that I've completely forgotten to inhale and exhale. "Relax for him. You can take it."

I focus on my breath as Cade slowly eases into me. I can't feel his piercings as well like this, but it hardly matters. The sensations are so intense that I'm not sure I'd notice anyway.

"Fuck, that's the most incredible thing I've ever seen." Dex groans as he watches us from the foot of the bed. We lock eyes as he slowly strokes himself, and the look of raw desire on his face almost sends me over the edge again.

"Jesus," Cade grits out from behind me. "So fucking tight. You're strangling my cock like this."

I nod, panting, too overwhelmed to respond. My body is completely overloaded, and I have no idea if it's too much or not enough. I just know I don't want it to end.

Then Noah rolls his hips, and Cade slips the rest of the way inside, and the world explodes.

"Oh god, oh fuck, oh my god," I sob, my body shaking uncontrollably as a wave of ecstasy crashes over me. And then another.

The guys keep working me over, their breath as ragged as mine as they grit out dirty words of praise and pleasure, alternating their thrusts and working me to the edge of ecstasy again and again, until I almost feel like I'm floating.

"Come for us," Noah finally grunts, driving deeper, and I cry out as his words send me hurtling toward another orgasm. "Just one more time, and then we're both going to fill you up."

Cade thrusts in hard, his thumb pressing against the plug, and it's enough to make me detonate.

"Holy shit," he gasps as my pussy clenches around them.

I don't hear anything else, too lost to the sensations flooding my body. All I can do is gasp and cling to Noah as

my body convulses around them, pleasure crashing over me in waves.

“Good girl,” Noah rasps, pulling me tight and holding me close as he grinds his hips and finally spills deep inside me.

I collapse against him, totally spent, and a moment later, Cade finds his own release, groaning his pleasure into the curve of my neck.

He pulls out, and Noah eases me onto the bed, rolling me onto my back and kissing me deeply. “You’re incredible.”

I blink my eyes open, catching sight of Dex. His amber eyes glint darkly, and his shaft is still rock hard, the thick length of it pulsing in his fist. He talked me through taking both of his friends, his filthy praise mingling with Cade’s and Noah’s, and everything they’ve promised me—the idea that this could truly be real—solidifies in an instant when I see the look on his face.

There’s none of the jealousy that used to cause so much tension between us, only a fierce, primal desire from having watched his friends fuck me.

“Dex,” I whisper, reaching for him. “Please. I need you too.”

“Then come here.” He lifts his chin, patting the edge of the bed. “Hang your head off for me. Let me have your throat.”

Noah and Cade help me get into position, and the sight of Dex standing over me, his shaft hard and dripping, makes my whole body tighten all over again.

“Open for me,” he commands, rubbing his tip across my lips. I do, and he slides his cock over my tongue, filling my senses with the musky taste of his precum. Making me greedy for more.

“Fuck, look at you,” Cade murmurs, trailing his fingers between my legs as Dex starts feeding me his cock in short, shallow thrusts. “Filthy with our cum.” Cade dips his hand lower, pressing on the plug in my ass. “And still hungry for more.”

Noah kisses my forehead. “You’re so fucking gorgeous. Do you want Dex to fuck your mouth, sunshine?”

I moan, nodding as best as I can with my head hanging off the bed and a cock buried halfway down my throat.

“If you need to stop,” Noah murmurs, twining our fingers together. “Squeeze my hand. Do it once now, just to show me.”

I do it, my heart swelling at the way these three men let me live out the filthiest fantasies, but always make taking care of me their first priority.

“I fucking love your mouth” Dex clenches his jaw, sliding the rest of the way inside. When he hits the back of my throat, I gag a little, and he groans, pulling back. “More?”

I nod, and he does it again, letting his crown hit the back of my throat, then pulling back. He keeps going, and all the warm, languid pleasure inside me starts to build again.

Dex traces my lips with his finger. “Touch yourself. Spread yourself open so I can see what a mess you are.”

I spread my thighs and dip my fingers into myself, then circle my clit with a mixture of Cade’s and Noah’s cum.

Dex groans, pulling out and teasing my lips with the tip as he watches.

“Fuck me,” I whisper, my voice coming out a little husky. “Fuck my face.”

“She can take it,” Noah assures him, squeezing my hand again as a reminder that I’ve got an out if I need one. I won’t though. I want this. I want to feel him use my throat. I want to taste his cum.

Dex gives me what I want, sliding in again and thrusting deeper than before. He groans when he meets the resistance at the back of my throat, then pushes past it.

I swallow around the intrusion, and he sucks in a sharp breath. “Oh fuck.”

“That’s it. Breathe through your nose,” Cade murmurs, still kneeling between my legs. He covers his hand with mine, encouraging me to play with myself the way Dex told me to. “Touch that greedy clit. Show him how you love taking his cock.”

My fingers move faster, circling the little nub in tight, fast strokes as Dex pushes deeper.

“There you go,” Noah says. “Such a good fucking girl.”

“Our beautiful, dirty girl,” Cade adds. “You look perfect covered in cum.”

“I’m about to give her some more,” Dex groans, picking up his pace. He fucks my face with long, deep thrusts that have my tits bouncing, making the clamps tug on my nipples until I can’t think.

“Are you going to swallow him, dream girl? Let him fill your mouth and throat with his cum? Because that’s the sexiest fucking thing I’ve ever seen,” Cade says, and I moan around Dex.

“God, fuck.” Dex’s rhythm stutters. He pulls out and grips his shaft, pumping it harshly.

“No, please,” I rasp, squeezing my thighs around my hand as my clit throbs, my core tightening. “Come down my throat.”

“Goddamn. Anything for you, kitten.”

He surges forward, his cum flooding my mouth, spilling everything down the back of my throat.

I swallow it all, grinding against my own hand. It feels incredible, but I’ve already come so many times that my body is gluttoned on pleasure.

“Give us one more,” Dex rasps, sliding back so I can breathe, then pushing into my mouth again. “I want you to come with the taste of me on your tongue.”

“I can’t,” I whimper, squirming on the sheets.

“You can.” He sounds so certain, smiling down at me as he strokes my throat.

Then lightning shoots through my body when Noah leans over me and unclips both nipple clamps at once.

“Oh fuck!” I cry out, writhing as blood rushes back into my tortured nipples. And then I’m coming, sobbing, shuddering, as my body goes some place it’s never been before.

All my men are right there, stroking my hair, rubbing my skin, praising me, telling me how beautiful I am. How perfect. How much they love watching me fall apart like this.

I’m completely limp by the time the last tremor quakes through me, and they clean me up a bit, then settle on the bed around me.

The plane hits a tiny patch of turbulence, and with a start, I remember that we’re in the air. Then Noah pulls me against his chest, tilting my chin up and kissing me, and I forget again.

I sigh, melting against him. “You should keep fucking me.”

He chuckles, pushing my hair back from my forehead. “Let’s take a little break and get some rest first. This is an overnight flight, and we should get some sleep, since we have a lot planned for after we land. But don’t worry, we’re not done with you. Not by a long shot.”

“Promise?”

“Always,” Cade vows, twining our fingers together. “You’re ours now.”

SADIE

I WAKE up to a gentle kiss on my temple.

It makes me smile even before my eyes are open, and I stretch languidly against a hard body, finally opening them to find Cade smiling down at me.

“Hey, sleeping beauty,” he says, dragging his thumb gently over my bottom lip. “We’ve nearly reached Paris. We took a longer route so we wouldn’t arrive in the middle of the night, but we’re getting close. We need to get back to our seats for the landing.”

I blink slowly, still feeling sated and relaxed. My men have found the perfect antidote to my fear of flying, and even now, as I sit up and catch sight of the beautiful morning sky outside the row of small, round windows, I only feel a small fraction of the nerves I felt before we took off.

“Come on,” Cade says, helping me to my feet.

The guys are already dressed, so I clean up and throw on some clothes, and then they lead me out of the luxurious suite into the main cabin we started in. I sit between Noah and Dex, and after I buckle in, they each take one of my hands.

“I can’t wait to show you the city,” Dex murmurs as the plane starts its descent, bringing my knuckles up to his lips and kissing them.

Noah chuckles, squeezing my other hand. “He means, he can’t wait to feed you. The last time we were here, Dex called the cuisine orgasmic.”

Dex shrugs. “And was I wrong?”

Cade buckles himself in across from us, shaking his head with a grin. “Not even a little bit.”

They keep regaling me with all the things they want to spoil me with once we touch down, and as the plane circles above the city, it hits me that I’m—mostly—not afraid.

Probably partly because, despite a good night’s sleep, I really am too worn out to get lost in my usual fears, but mostly because of the three men I’m with.

“What has you smiling like that, sunshine?” Noah murmurs, stroking my hair.

“You,” I tell him, then look to my other two men. “All of you. I don’t think it’s possible to be afraid of anything with you three by my side.”

Noah smiles. “Good. Because we always will be.”

“Look, kitten,” Dex says, as the plane tips, banking hard enough to make me gasp.

He points toward one of the little windows, and my heart almost stops when I see the snowy cityscape below. It’s unbelievable. Right in the center of the view is the Eiffel Tower.

I’m really in Paris.

“I can’t believe this is real,” I murmur, leaning as close to the window as my seatbelt will allow. “It’s so beautiful.”

“It truly is,” Dex agrees.

But when I look back at him, he’s not looking at the view. He’s looking at me.

I flush, my heart stuttering. He holds my gaze, a slow smile spreading across his face. The wheels touch down on the tarmac with a jolt, and I gasp, startled out of the intimate moment. Then I laugh, almost giddy with relief.

We’re on the ground, all in one piece.

In *Paris*.

We go through what I'm sure is a separate version of customs than what commercial passengers use, and then the men whisk me out to a luxurious private car.

"Where are we headed?" I ask, craning my neck to take in as many of the sights as possible outside the window.

Cade grins at me. "Shopping."

"What?"

"You don't have any luggage, remember?"

"And we did promise that we'd take care of that," Noah adds, something possessive in his voice. "I can't wait to see you dressed in what we buy you."

"What do you want me to wear?"

"Anything you want."

"Make that *everything* you want," Cade adds, giving me a grin that's pure alpha male. "We're all just going to enjoy knowing we put it there."

I blush. "You know you guys don't have to buy me stuff."

Dex snorts. "I mean, if you want to stay naked in the hotel for the entire trip..."

I laugh, smacking his chest playfully. "Okay, fine. I guess I need at least a few changes of clothes."

We drive for a while longer, and when we arrive in what looks like some sort of shopping district, the car pulls over to the curb. Noah takes my hand and helps me out of the car, and I glance around, my heart stuttering.

"Chanel?" I hesitate as I look up at the luxurious storefront before us, shaking my head. "I don't need something like this."

Cade steps forward and holds the door before turning back to face me. "You don't have to need something for us to want to give it to you."

His words are simple, but they hit me right in the chest. I nod, my throat going a little tight as I allow the guys to lead

me inside.

Stepping into the chic boutique is like entering a fashion dreamland, and the elegant sales associate who glides over to greet us holds out her hands to me warmly, as if I'm an old friend.

“Bienvenue chez Chanel, quelle belle silhouette vous avez! C'est un plaisir de vous habiller.”

I blink, then blush when Cade leans close and murmurs in my ear, “She’s right. You do have a gorgeous figure. She’s looking forward to helping you find clothes to showcase it.” He turns back to her. “She can have anything and everything she wants in this shop. There’s no budget.”

The sales associate perks up a little at that, switching to heavily accented English. “Ah, American! Of course, sir. Come, *ma chère*, let us find you many beautiful things!”

She tugs me away from my men, and I laugh, still feeling a little out of my element, but also a bit like I’m shopping with an old friend. Together, we sift through racks of gorgeous clothing, and she pulls out piece after piece that she thinks will be *très magnifique* for me.

“I really only need a few things,” I tell her. I’m not sure how long we’ll be staying in Paris, but I’m positive that if I look at the price tags, I’ll faint.

She laughs as if I’ve said something adorably misguided, and from across the sales floor, Cade shakes his head at me with a grin. He whispers to Dex and Noah for a moment, then beckons me over, slipping something into my hand when I reach them.

I look down and suck in a soft breath. It’s a black American Express card.

“I meant what I said. There’s no budget,” he tells me with a smirk.

Flustered, I try to hand it back. “Cade! I can’t. That’s not—I don’t need—”

“Get used to it, sunshine,” Noah rumbles. “This is only the first of our stops today, and if Cade is footing the bill here, then Dex and I will want our turns too. If we have our way, we’ll have spent a million dollars on you by the time we head back to the villa.”

I shake my head, my stomach swooping at the casual way he drops that number. *Holy shit.*

Dex steps closer, probably recognizing the stunned look on my face. “It’s okay, kitten. We have the money. And we want to spend it on you.”

“But...” I bite my lip, a sudden flash of worry coursing through me as I remember the whispered conversation we had in bed after our first night together, while Cade slept beside us. “I don’t want you to feel like you have to. I’d care about you all just the same no matter how much money you had. We could’ve done a staycation and never left Denver, and I’d still be so fucking happy to be spending New Years with you guys. You know that, right?”

Something burns in his eyes, and he palms the back of my head, resting his forehead against mine.

“I know,” he whispers. “I know you’re not Anna. I know you don’t care about the money. And that’s why I know we have a shot at this, Sadie. A shot at something real. Because you *see* me—you see us—just like we see you.”

A shaky smile pulls at my lips, and I nod. “I do. I really do.”

He kisses me softly. “Then let us spoil you. You’ve got three billionaires who adore you. I think we’re allowed to spend some money on the things that make us happy, don’t you?”

My heart thumps. He means me. *I* make them happy.

I let out a slow breath, the truth of what they said to me earlier sinking in a little more. This is real, and my life is never going to be the same.

“Okay,” I breathe.

We separate, and as Dex leans back, I find Noah and Cade watching us with satisfied expressions on their faces.

The men insist I buy every single thing I try on at Chanel, then we hit Dior, Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Gucci. They also take me to several boutiques that sell designer clothes so rare and expensive that I've never even heard of them. It's ridiculous, but now that I'm over my initial apprehension and certain that it won't make Dex doubt my feelings for him, I can't help but love it.

It's truly more than I could ever possibly need. But what girl doesn't want to feel like a princess, at least once in her life?

"Don't wrap up this one," Dex murmurs as we leave the final shop, plucking one of the bags off the counter. The rest will be delivered. "We'll carry this out."

"Is that what I'll wear to ring in the New Year tonight?" I ask.

He brushes his fingers over the necklace he gave me. "Yes. It'll go with this."

Oh. It's *that* dress. I remember having the exact same thought when I tried it on.

I smile, then go up on my toes to kiss him, and he places his hand on the small of my back as we all head to the waiting car.

All three men have been to Paris before, and they spend the ride to the villa they've rented pointing out various sites and regaling me with anecdotes from past visits.

I gasp when we finally arrive at our destination.

"We're staying *here*?"

Cade grins at me. "Do you like it?"

I nod, speechless. We're in the heart of Paris, but behind the wrought-iron gates surrounding the luxurious home, it's like stepping into a winter fairytale. The villa itself stands tall, its ornate balconies and ivy-clad walls seeming to whisper secrets of centuries past.

“Wow,” I whisper as we step inside, following my men through an intricately carved wooden door into a space that feels both bright and welcoming, and romantically timeless.

The floors are marble, and floor-to-ceiling windows framed by thick, tasseled curtains reveal a sprawling terrace overlooking the Seine River, with the Eiffel Tower standing proudly in the distance, as if someone put it there just for us.

“This is incredible,” I tell them, shaking my head in awe.

“This is only the beginning,” Noah promises, leaning down to kiss the top of my head. “But if we’re going to properly romance you before the ball drops, we should get dressed to go out.”

He steers me away from the amazing view, leading me into a bedroom that’s got yet another amazing vista laid out beyond the window. I sit down on the huge bed in the middle of the massive room, running a hand over the soft duvet.

“What’s next?” I ask. Our shopping spree took up most of the day, and it’s early evening now, the sun just starting to set.

Dex grins. “Put on that sexy little dress and let us show you.”

Noah snorts, amusement glinting in his eyes. “Dex just wants to impress you with some French cuisine.”

They start giving each other shit, joking around as we all get dressed, and my jaw drops as I get a glimpse of them in their bespoke, tailored suits. They mostly dressed casually at the lodge, but holy fuck, they clean up well.

“Wow,” I breathe, unable to keep the awe out of my voice.

“Right back at you, dream girl,” Cade tells me.

Their eyes simmer with heat as they look me over, and I find myself flushing from the attention, although I should be getting used to it by now, since they never make me feel anything but beautiful.

Tonight is something different though. Something more.

“You look stunning in that dress.” Dex steps closer, tracing the neckline where it dips down between my breasts before pulling me in for a kiss.

Cade and Noah follow suit, each letting me know how sexy they think I look, and by the time we arrive at the elegant restaurant they’ve chosen, I truly do feel like I’m living a fairytale.

But what will our happily ever after look like?

That thought keeps circling through my head as we eat. None of us talked specifics when they showed up and swept me off my feet back in Denver, and I can’t help but wonder how the practicalities of us being together will actually work, especially since they all live in different cities. Will we do long distance? I suppose their access to private jets would help with that, but I hate the idea of not being able to see them every day.

“What is it, sunshine?” Noah asks, picking up on the pensive expression on my face. He subtly waves the waiter away as we finish our meal, which has been just as amazing as Dex promised.

I bite my lip, not sure how to ask what’s on my mind.

“Everything has been moving so fast,” I start, instantly earning their undivided attention.

“Too fast?” Cade asks, frowning. “Because if you need—”

“No,” I cut in quickly. “I want this. All of it. But you’ve just given me Whispering Pines, and I know none of you live in Denver. I’m just not sure what that will mean for us once we get back home. Will we even get to see each other all that often? I know you all travel a lot.”

Noah is already shaking his head before I get any further, and Cade is studying me with a smile hovering around his lips. Dex watches me with something blazing in his eyes that makes my breath hitch.

“Kitten,” he says after a moment. “*You’re* our home now.”

“What?” I whisper, my heart thumping.

“We do travel a lot,” Noah acknowledges. “Some of it has been for fun, but most of it has been for work. We all have houses in various parts of the country, but none of us have roots.”

Cade nods, his expression serious. “With as much as I’ve invested in real estate, I’ve lived in a lot of places over the years. None have ever felt like home though. Not until last week. Not until you.” He pauses, then cups my cheek. “Noah is right. We haven’t had roots, but we’d like to start putting them down. And if you’ll have us, we’re all in agreement. We want those roots to be in Denver.”

My eyes start to sting, and I blink fast. “I’m not sure what to say.”

Cade grins. “Well, that’s easy. Say yes.”

I laugh, a feeling of joyous relief blooming in my heart. “You really want to move to Denver? All of you?”

“We’re all in,” Dex tells me. “Wherever you are, that’s where we want to be. I’ve already asked my assistant to start looking for houses.”

Noah clears his throat, a faint blush on his cheeks. “I’ve already bought one.”

Cade shrugs. “I have several real estate investments in downtown Denver. I figured I’d stay in one of the penthouse suites while we sort everything out, if that’s okay with you, dream girl.”

“Yes,” I breathe, smiling so widely that my cheeks ache. “It’s *so* okay.”

The men beam back at me, and Dex orders us all dessert to celebrate. I’m pleasantly full by the time we leave the restaurant, and Cade assures me that all the carbs we just consumed will give me the perfect fuel for what comes next: dancing.

They take me to a gorgeous, exclusive nightclub, and the three of them aren’t shy at all on the dance floor, holding me between them as we move to the music. They surround me on

all sides, their touch possessive, as if they want every single person in the place to know I'm theirs.

By the time we finally leave the club, I've worked up a light sweat, and the cold air feels nice on my skin. Cade and Noah each wrap an arm around my waist, one above the other, as Dex leads us back to the car.

It's getting close to midnight now, and Noah instructs the driver to take us to our final destination for the evening.

The air outside the car hums with energy as both Parisians and tourists crowd the streets to ring in the new year. Knowing my men, I half expect them to take me to the top of the Eiffel Tower at midnight, but Noah shakes his head when I laughingly joke that we're headed in the wrong direction for that.

"I think you'll like this better," he promises.

I shoot him a curious look, but it doesn't take long for us to get where we're going, and I gasp as I realize what he meant.

They've rented a hot air balloon.

"You're not scared of these, are you?" Cade asks, a hint of worry in his eyes as he leads me toward it.

"No," I tell him. "Just planes. And maybe not even those anymore. But does one of you know how to pilot this thing?"

"I do," he admits. "It's silly, but I've landed a few business deals thanks to being able to show off a bit for potential investors."

I laugh as he ushers me onboard the large basket beneath the balloon, and the two other men pile in alongside us.

We lift off, and my heart races a bit as we drift upward.

The whole city is lit up below us, but just like when the four of us were snowed in together at Whispering Pines, we're in our own private bubble as we slowly drift above it. The basket we're riding in is heated and cozy despite being open to the night air, and the world below us looks like a magical wonderland.

“It’s beautiful,” I breathe out as the clock counts down, the Eiffel Tower blazing with light in the distance. Then the clock strikes twelve, and fireworks explode in the air, lighting up the dark.

Each of my men claim a kiss, and the feelings that have been growing inside me ever since they showed up in Denver finally spill out.

“Thank you,” I whisper to them, blinking away tears. “This has been the most amazing day of my life. I...” I trail off, almost losing my nerve, then blurt out, “I love you.”

Despite the lingering fireworks in the distance, the world seems to go completely quiet as all three men react to my words.

Then Cade cups my cheek, looking deep into my eyes. “Thank fuck, because I love you too.” He smiles wryly. “Hell, I think I started falling for you the moment I heard your voice in that coffee shop. I never really believed in love after watching my parents fake their way through it for years, secretly hating and belittling each other. I didn’t want to become like them. But you’ve made me believe in magic. And isn’t that what falling in love is?”

I hold his hand against my cheek, turning my head to kiss his palm. “I think so. You really love me?”

He smiles. “With all my heart. And even more, knowing that it’s something I can share with my two best friends.”

“I couldn’t believe it was really you when I saw you walk into Cade’s new resort,” Dex says, pulling me into his arms. “I’d been dreaming of you for so damn many years, it almost felt like I still was. Except, for every one of those years, I was convinced I’d never have you. And now that I do...” He shakes his head, his voice growing rougher. “Sadie, I used to think I couldn’t do this. That I wasn’t cut out for relationships. But now I know I’m just not cut out for anyone but you.”

He kisses me, slow and deep, pressing his hand against my heart, two fingers curled down and three extended.

I love you.

Then he passes me to Noah, and I gaze up at the tall, broad-shouldered man in the darkness. I know he isn't a man of many words, and that's okay. He shows me how he feels with every action, every touch.

But Noah surprises me, gathering my hair off my neck, then wrapping one of his big hands around the back of it. Keeping me secure and stable and grounded, even a thousand feet up in the air.

"I've dedicated my whole life to building something in my Pops' memory. To honoring him by continuing his legacy, the legacy that was cut too fucking short." He makes a quiet sound, leaning down to rest his forehead against mine. "But I was honoring the wrong legacy," he says after a moment, drawing back to meet my eyes. "His real legacy was how much he loved us. How much he did for his family. *That's* the legacy I should have been focusing on."

"Noah," I whisper, sliding my fingers through his soft beard. "What you've built in his memory is amazing. He would be so proud of you."

His lips tilt up on one side in a beautiful, crooked smile. "He would, but not for what I've done with Keystone. For *this*. For you. For pulling my head out of my ass and finally falling in love. I love you so damn much, sunshine."

He wraps me up in a tight hug as Dex and Cade move closer on either side of me, and the beautiful view of the Eiffel Tower blurs a little as tears fill my eyes.

"Happy new year," I whisper.

And I have a feeling it truly will be.

EPILOGUE

SADIE

One Year Later

HAVING the lodge decorated for Christmas again has been bringing up warm memories all day. But unlike last year, the place is packed with our families for the holidays. “My” room—the one I stayed in last Christmas when one of the worst blizzards in Colorado’s history completely changed my life—is always reserved for me and my men though.

Over the summer, the guys and I all moved into a gorgeous house in Denver, but I still like to have a place here at the lodge where we can get some privacy whenever we’re all up here. I never book any guests into it, preferring to keep it just for us.

I can hear the sound of voices and laughter from downstairs, and it makes me grin as I walk over to the window, pushing the curtain aside and looking out at the snowy landscape.

Unlike last year, the skies are clear and blue, and the whole world sparkles back at me. Tracing my finger through the initials I carved into this same windowsill last Christmas, I can’t help but smile.

When I left these marks here last year, I wanted it to be something permanent, some piece of what happened between us that would always last.

I ended up getting so much more than that.

Strong arms wrap around me from behind, breaking me out of my thoughts.

“What are you smiling at?” Cade murmurs, pushing my hair to the side and kissing my neck.

I turn in his arms, grinning up at him. “Do you remember these?”

“Of course I do,” he says as he looks down at our initials, something both tender and possessive flashing through his dark green eyes. He pulls me closer, his hands sliding down to my ass. “Our Christmas present. That was the best day of my life.”

“I’m pretty sure you said the same thing this morning,” I tell him, raising an eyebrow.

He shrugs. “Every day with you is the best day of my life.”

I shake my head, but I understand what he’s saying. Because I feel the same way about him, and about Dex and Noah too. *Every* day is the best day, and I fall more in love with each of them the longer we’re all together.

As if my thoughts have summoned them, I hear Noah’s and Dex’s voices out in the hallway. A moment later, they join us.

“We figured we’d find you in here, sunshine.” Noah’s voice is a low rumble as he pulls me out of Cade’s embrace and tilts my chin up. “Fuck, how are you so beautiful?”

He leans down and gives me a tender kiss that quickly starts to deepen, and I can feel the atmosphere in the room shift.

“Dammit, why did we invite so many people here again?” Dex mutters, crowding up against me from behind. His hands start to roam a little, and I gasp into Noah’s mouth, pressing my ass back against Dex as Cade chuckles.

“Those aren’t ‘people,’ they’re family. And I’m pretty sure it’s called the holidays.”

“But do we actually care about those?” Dex turns me toward him, making Noah mock growl at him, and cups my

face as he kisses me. “I want to spend all week fucking you, dirty girl.”

“We *do* care about the holidays,” Noah says, leaning back against the windowsill and crossing his arms over his chest as he watches us.

Dex huffs a breath. “You sure about that?”

“Sadie cares, so we care.” Noah pauses, then adds softly, “And my mom is thrilled to be here. She missed her grandbaby.”

Cade snorts, shaking his head, and I grin. Noah means Mrs. Claws.

Ever since Mrs. King pet sat our feisty little kitten when the guys took me to Paris last year, she’s all but adopted the little furball as an honorary granddaughter. She even knitted Mrs. Claws a sweater this year, which I fully expect to show up under the Christmas tree in a few days, along with the excessive number of cat toys and scratching posts we’ve already wrapped for her.

Dex finally lets me go with a groan, giving in. “So you mean we can’t just stay up here for the next few hours and rip Sadie’s clothes off?”

“Hey!” I smack his chest playfully. “I *like* this dress.”

He gives me a lascivious smile, his hand sliding up my thigh and pushing the skirt up with it. “Believe me, so do I.”

“Noah is right though,” I remind him, chuckling as I push his hand away. “We do have guests downstairs, and they’re waiting for us. But we’ll have plenty of chances to be alone later tonight...”

I let my voice trail off, looking up at him through my lashes, and Dex grins at me.

“I guess I can be patient.”

“*And* not rip my dress,” I remind him.

“No promises.” He traces the neckline of the dress, then brushes his fingers over the necklace I never take off. “I can

always buy you a new one.”

“Hey now, don’t get too hasty,” Cade jokes. “She *does* look pretty damn good wearing nothing at all.”

I press my lips together, although it’s impossible to contain my smile. “You’re not helping.”

He smirks unrepentantly. “Not trying to.”

“Cade does have good ideas from time to time,” Dex points out. “I mean, it worked out for us last year.”

Noah grunts. “Yeah, but if all the people we’ve got in the lodge right now get snowed in with us like last year, I’m not going to be happy.”

I laugh. “I promise, that won’t happen. There aren’t any big storms forecasted this time.” I hold up a hand quickly, knowing exactly what he’s going to tease me about and beating him to the punch. “And no *blizzards* either.”

They all laugh, and we leave the room.

Noah has a fire crackling in the massive stone fireplace downstairs again, and the tree we chose this year is even bigger than the one last year. It gives the main room a festive, cozy feel that’s even sweeter since so many people we care about are here to enjoy it this time.

I look down at the scene from the upper floor, shaking my head in wonder. Cade isn’t close to his family, so his parents didn’t come. And my mother, as usual, had a better offer come up for the holidays. But Luna and her parents are here, along with Mrs. King and all the Blaines other than Parker, who’s spending Christmas with some Instagram model he’s dating in Vermont.

It’s family. By choice, even if not blood, and it fills my heart with joy.

“You’ve done well, sunshine,” Noah says quietly, standing next to me.

“Thanks to all of you.”

“Nah.” Cade shakes his head, rapping his knuckles on the well-worn railing at the top of the stairs. “None of this would be here if it weren’t for you.”

I’m pretty sure he’s talking about more than just the lodge, although in a strictly practical sense, I can’t deny that he’s right about the building itself.

Once he signed the resort over to me, he fully supported my plans to renovate a few things but keep the rustic feel that has always made the place so special. It meant throwing the original business plan he’d come up with when he bought Whispering Pines out the window, since I didn’t want to make the kinds of changes he’d had planned and turn it into a high-end resort.

The guys all warned me that that might mean Whispering Pines never became profitable again. But they also quickly reassured me that it didn’t matter at all, not if it made me happy, and supported me every step of the way.

For once, they were wrong though.

The past year has been amazing. I’ve made running the resort my full-time job, and I’ve loved every minute of it. I’ve managed to stay true to the original vision and preserve all the memories that have always made it so special to me. And much to all of our surprise, the publicity Whispering Pines got thanks to Noah’s assistant leaking our relationship last year actually ended up bringing in a whole new clientele—people who wanted to support a business that was inclusive of alternative relationships and that embraced a “love is love” philosophy.

In the end, that’s been one of the biggest gifts of all. Not just loving my men and getting to be a part of our unconventional relationship, but the way we’re able to be open about it too.

“I love you,” I whisper, pausing on the top step before we head downstairs. “All of you. So much.”

They all turn to smile at me.

“We know,” Cade answers softly.

Dex grins. “And it’s the best fucking gift we could ask for.”

“Love you too.” Noah puts his hand on the small of my back, protective as always, and keeps it there as we continue down the stairs.

”There you are!” Luna rushes up to me, a huge grin on her face. Mrs. Claws is draped over her shoulders like an orange scarf, purring loudly enough that she almost drowns out my bestie’s enthusiasm. “Look what your niece has been teaching me!”

She brings her hand up and hesitantly signs, *I’m looking forward to destroying the Christmas tree.*

I bite my lip to hold in a smile, but Dex doesn’t have the same restraint, and he bursts out laughing.

“Oh, shit.” Luna makes a face, scrunching up her nose. “What did I do wrong this time?”

“You’re doing great!” I tell her quickly. I love that she’s been starting to learn sign language too, just because Maddie is in my life now.

The sweet little girl comes running up a second later, grinning from ear to ear, a cookie firmly grasped in one hand while the other flies through a one-handed version of ASL that pushes the boundaries of my skill to follow.

Did Luna show you what I taught her?

She did, I sign back. But we might want to keep her away from the tree.

Dex translates out loud in a low murmur, including the others in the conversation. Cade and Noah have also started learning ASL, but they aren’t very fluent yet.

Luna laughs, glancing between us. “Okay, come clean. What did I just say?”

“I think you were trying to say decorating,” Dex says, demonstrating. “But what you actually signed was that you want to destroy our Christmas tree.”

Her mouth falls open, then she laughs sheepishly. “Oops. Well, I promise, your tree is safe with me.”

Maddie tugs on my arm, getting my attention. *Can we eat now, auntie?*

I get a warm glow in my chest when she closes her fist and circles her thumb near her chin and immediately nod my fist back at her. *Yes.*

Just like Luna referring to Madelyn as my niece, every time Maddie calls me “auntie,” I’m reminded of how completely Dex’s family and Noah’s mother have accepted me into the fold. Along with my men, they’re all the family I could ask for. A more *real* family than I’ve ever had.

Oh good, Maddie signs back dramatically. *I was starving, but Mom said we had to wait to sit down for dinner until you and my uncles came back downstairs. You guys took forever.*

Dex snickers as he follows along with the conversation, then schools his face into an innocent expression when his niece sends him a questioning look.

It was Sadie’s fault, he tells his niece, throwing me under the bus with a devilish gleam in his eyes. *She was being distracting.*

Maddie throws me a calculating look. *How?*

Don’t listen to Dex, I sign quickly. *He’s just teasing you.*

Maddie looks between the two of us, then shakes her head. *He’s not teasing. He’s talking about kissing you. But no more kissing until after we eat!*

She scampers off, leaving me laughing, and the rest of us follow her into the main dining room. Unlike last year, when the four of us would just cozy up around the fire or sit around in the kitchen to eat during the snow-pocalypse, this year we have enough guests that it wouldn’t be possible.

And despite how much I love to be alone with my men, I wouldn’t have it any other way.

“You’re smiling again,” Cade whispers in my ear, holding a chair out for me and then kissing my temple once I take a

seat.

I shrug helplessly as he takes the one next to me, and Noah seats himself on my other side.

“I’m happy,” I admit, which still catches me by surprise sometimes. Not that I was particularly *unhappy* before, but this soul-deep feeling of contentment that’s become my new normal? That’s new. And I love it.

Where’s uncle Dex? Maddie signs from across the table, looking around a little impatiently.

Isabelle, who’s sitting next to her, chuckles softly. *Be patient. You know he likes to be helpful and supervise in the kitchen.*

Madelyn rolls her eyes, and Cade and Noah chuckle, so I guess their ASL is coming along a little better than I realized. Isabelle is probably right though. It’s a good thing the chef I hired isn’t temperamental because I’m pretty sure Dex still secretly considers the lodge’s kitchen *his* domain.

The hum of cheerful conversation swells around the table, and eventually, Dex and some of our lodge staff come out with the food. The meal is delicious, of course, but as far as I’m concerned, it’s the company that makes it even better. Everyone is talking and laughing, and Noah’s mother and I end up having a spirited debate about one of our favorite rom-coms as Isabelle teases Dex on my other side.

Dessert comes next, and it’s even better than dinner. The mood mellows out as the adults sip mulled wine or whiskey, and after a while, Madelyn starts to yawn.

Isabelle wishes us all goodnight and takes her daughter back up to her room, and after another hour or so, everyone else starts to trickle up to bed too. Luna is one of the last ones to go upstairs besides me and my men, and she gives me a big hug goodnight.

“Merry Christmas, Sades. Love you.”

“Love you back.”

“Tonight was incredible. Thanks for inviting me and my folks. They loved it too.”

“Of course. Your family is my family. And you know they always have a room here.” Then I nudge her as I add, “And if you ever want to bring a guest of your own, maybe invite some lucky guy up for snowboard lessons, you know we’ve got extra rooms for that too.”

“Oh please, how lucky would he be if he had to stay in his own room?” she jokes. Then she sighs a little wistfully and glances toward the fireplace where my men have all gathered. “It does sound nice though. Having someone, I mean. But this fairytale you’re living has set the bar pretty high.”

I grin, watching my men for a moment too. In honor of last year’s decor, they’ve put together an even more outrageous nativity scene, and Dex’s dad—an engineer—is over there with them, enthusiastically trying to help them get the manger to somehow light up in sync with the Christmas music.

I laugh, shaking my head. “I’d pretend to be humble, but you’re right. I’m the luckiest girl in the world.”

Luna gives me one last hug and then heads up for bed, and the men give up on their engineering project for the night as the time difference catches up with Dex’s parents and they troop up to their rooms too. After closing everything down and waiting for Noah to do a final perimeter check, I’m more than ready for some alone time with my men.

“Should we go upstairs too?” I whisper as we reconvene in the now quiet common room.

“Soon.” Noah gives me an inscrutable look. “First, we’ve got something to show you.”

“What is it?”

Cade shoots me a lopsided grin. “A surprise.”

I roll my eyes because that much is obvious, but I don’t ask any more questions as they lead me toward the doors at the back of the lodge. A rush of winter air greets us as we step outside, and I bite my lower lip, barely able to contain my

curiosity as they lead me a short distance away from the building.

Then my jaw drops. “Oh my god, you installed a hot tub?”

Steam rises toward the stars as Noah and Dex remove the cover, and I gape at them in shock, remembering a late night conversation a few months ago that I’d almost forgotten about. I mentioned to the guys that I’d love to be able to sit naked under the stars at night without getting cold—and now they’ve made it possible.

Dex pulls me close, kissing my temple, and repeats the words I hear from these three often. “Anything for you.”

“We picked the location because it’s not too far from the lodge, but it also can’t be seen from any of the windows,” Cade tells me. “So what do you say? Wanna try it out?”

I nod enthusiastically, and we all strip down, leaving our clothes on the little bench the men had put in next to the hot tub. Then we ease down into the warm water.

“Oh my god,” I groan, letting my head fall back against the edge of the hot tub, my hair floating around my shoulders. “This is heaven.”

We spend several moments basking in the luxury of the large hot tub as the guys regale me with the story of how they managed to get it installed without me finding out. I’m laughing as they finish, my muscles warm and relaxed, and the grin on my face so wide that it feels like it might be permanent.

“This is perfect,” I breathe. “Thank you.”

“I can think of one thing that would make it better,” Dex says cryptically, sharing a look with the other two men.

I sit up a little, tilting my head to one side. “Something that can beat a hot tub? Really?”

He chuckles. “We hope so, but that’s up to you.” His expression turns a little more serious, something burning in his eyes that I can’t quite decipher. “Do you know what tonight

is? It's the one year anniversary of when this all began. A year ago today, you walked into our lives—”

“Well, technically, I met her a week earlier,” Cade throws in.

Dex clears his throat. “Yeah, but *technically*, I met her a few years earlier.”

“I still say our anniversary should be the night we all fucked for the first time,” Noah says in a serious tone that tells me my men have actually spent some time debating this subject. “But even though that's just a few days from now, I can't wait that long.”

“Wait for what?” I ask, my pulse picking up. I don't know quite where they're going with this, but the way they're all looking at me has butterflies flapping in my stomach.

Noah gets to his feet, water streaming off his naked body.

“For this,” he says, lifting me out of the water and setting me onto the edge of the hot tub.

I shiver, but it's not from the cold. My skin is still plenty warm from the jacuzzi, and the chill air actually feels good as it brushes against me. But the moment Noah sets me down, the three men move in sync, each going down on one knee on the long bench seat below me.

“What... what are you doing?” I whisper, barely able to speak.

Noah holds up a ring, his gaze locked on mine. “We love you so fucking much.”

Dex holds up a second ring, and I cover my mouth, tears springing to my eyes. “More than anything.”

Cade holds up a final ring, the moonlight glinting off the large, cut diamond in its center. “So much that none of us can imagine life moving ahead without truly making you ours. So we've got a proposal for you.”

I laugh, shaking my head as he grins at me. “No way. I'm not agreeing to another no-strings arrangement.”

His green eyes soften. “Good. Because we don’t just want strings. We want you to wear these three rings for the rest of your life. We want you to marry us, Sadie Noelle Evans.”

“We want to be your husbands,” Noah adds. “We want the whole world to know that you’re ours in every way that matters.”

Dex pulls my hand away from my mouth, turning it over and kissing the tips of my fingers. “Say yes. Say you’re ours forever, kitten. Let us love, honor, and cherish you for the rest of our lives.”

I don’t even have to think about it. I’ve never wanted anything more.

“Yes,” I blurt out. “Oh my god, yes, yes, *yes!*”

My heart swells as Dex slips his ring onto my fourth finger. Cade adds his next, and finally, Noah slides his onto my finger too.

The moonlight washes the color out of the precious metals, but each one is a slightly different hue, crafted in the distinctive style Sarah Littlefox brings to all her custom jewelry. Three separate rings designed to fit together like pieces of a puzzle, locking into place and creating something bigger, more beautiful, greater than the sum of its parts.

It’s the perfect representation of our love. It’s *everything*.

“Yes,” I repeat in a choked whisper, nodding over and over. “All the yeses. Oh my god, *yes!*”

I’m laughing and crying at the same time as it really hits me. This is forever. And when another shiver racks my body—one that *is* caused by the cold this time—my men pull me back down into the heated water, surrounding me on all sides, and give me a taste of exactly the kind of forever they plan on giving me.

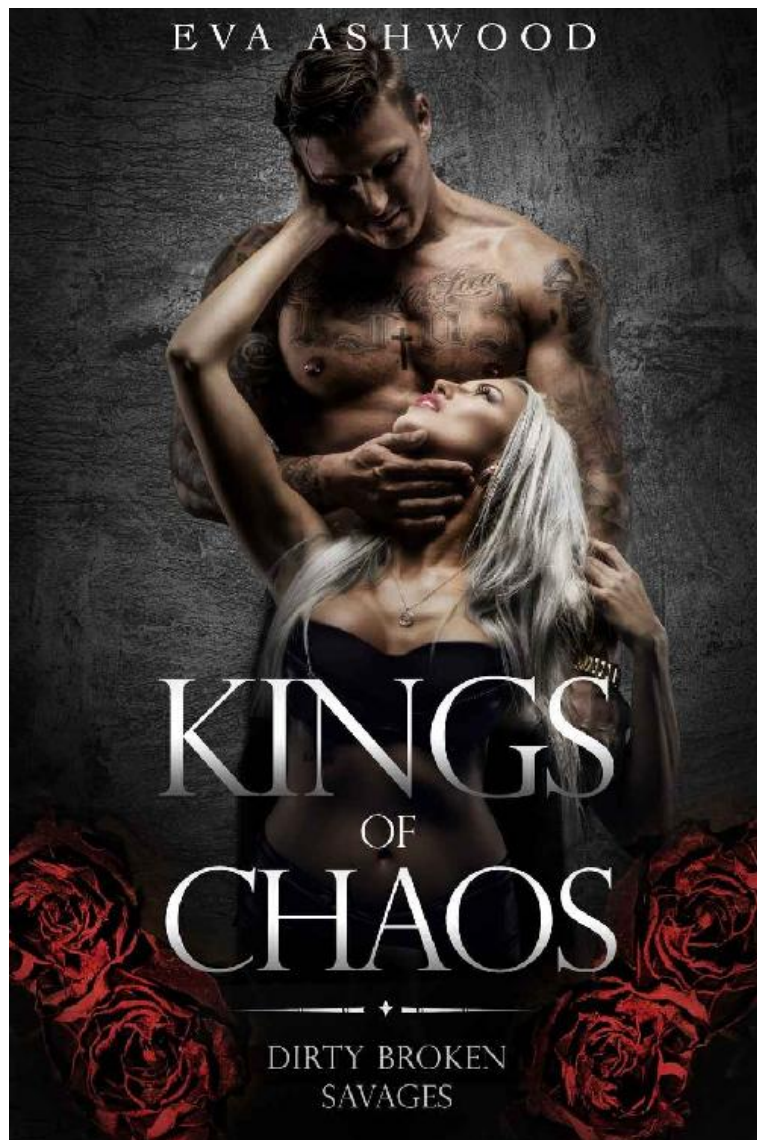
One that really does make all my dreams come true.

Thank you so much for reading *Unwrapped by Them!*

I wasn't quite ready to be done with Sadie and her men, so I wrote them a bonus epilogue that's sweet and steamy and shows a peek into their future. If you'd like to read it, click [HERE](#) to join my newsletter and claim the free bonus scene, or copy and paste this link into your browser:

<https://BookHip.com/WDJNXPD>

And if you want more spicy reverse harem with a slightly darker twist, dive into my completed *Dirty Broken Savages* series, starting with [Kings of Chaos!](#)



I was a good girl once, but now I dance with devils.

Some people wear their heart on their sleeve. I wear vengeance like a suit of armor.

I've got a list with six names on it. Six people who wronged me, who hurt me, who took everything from me. Six people who turned me into the monster I am now.

And I've crossed off every name but one.

One more name. One more death. Should be simple, right?

Yeah, you'd think so. But it turns out revenge is a messy business, and when I end up in the wrong place at the wrong time, I royally piss off four brutal, twisted, gorgeous men.

Gage, Priest, Ash, and Knox.

Lucky for me, the last name on my list is someone they've got their own grudge against, so instead of killing me, they offer me a deal. They'll give me a chance to exact my vengeance, and in exchange, all they want is...

Me.

I'm not stupid. I've played this game before. Even though they've agreed to help me, I know they want to punish me too. They want to toy with me. To let their demons loose on me.

But maybe these Kings of Chaos have let my pretty face fool them.

Because I'm just as vicious as they are. And I've got demons of my own.

[Find it on Amazon HERE.](#)

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(college-age enemies to lovers series)

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