

S H A Y L A H A R T



When
LOVE
&

HATE
Collide

Quote

“There’s a very thin, very dangerous line between love and
hate and it’s called lust....”

-Shayla Hart

PLAYLIST

Unwritten - Natasha Bedingfield

Wonderwall - Oasis

Destination Calabria - Alex Gaudino & Crystal Waters

Supermassive black hole - Muse

Cruel Summer - Taylor Swift

Animals - Maroon 5

She keeps me up - Nickelback

Chasing Cars - Snow Patrol

randevous - craig david

Nice & Slow - Usher

Maps - Maroon 5

I turn to you - Mel C

U got it bad - Usher

Sexy Bitch - Akon

mysterious girl - peter Andre

Listen to the Full playlist here [Spotify](#).

When
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HATE
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When Love & Hate Collide

SHAYLA HART

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Written By Shayla Hart

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The songs mentioned in this book belong solely to the artists.

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Thank You

Also by Shayla Hart

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the terrified twenty-four year old me, that spent hours and days on end writing this book while suffering through severe depression.

You did it.

Prologue

I'M NOT EXACTLY sure where I should begin.

I suppose I could start by introducing myself, right?

My name is Jeyla Jenkins, but my close friends and family call me Jey or despite my complete disinclination—Jeykins. I know, it makes me cringe too, but I've begrudgingly learnt to live with it.

I'm here to tell you my story, so I suppose I should start from the beginning. I'm your typical, average twenty-two-year-old girl blessed with a close-knit and loving family. I have a sister eight years my senior, Jessica, and an older brother, Jaden—who is the eldest at thirty years old and loves to remind us of that fact. Notice a pattern? Yes, my parents are indeed obsessed with the letter J. Their names are Jenna and Jason and apparently, they wanted to make it a tradition and have everyone's names start with a J. Actually, it was my mother's idea. My dad just went along with it to keep her

happy, as he always does. He's been with her long enough to know that once she sets her mind to something, there isn't a snowball's chance in hell he's talking her out of it.

His motto: Happy wife, happy life.

Yeah, they're hella cheesy, but it's also admirable. I aspire to be as happy and in love as they are someday.

Now, let me tell you about our neighbours—*The Reyes'*.

The Reyes'—Taylor and Nathaniel—have two sons and a daughter; the eldest Oscar but prefers to be called Oz, and the twins, Ashlyn, and Dean. Both families immediately hit it off when the Reyes' moved next door to us back in the early eighties. My siblings warmed to the other three almost instantly, and I hit it off with Oz and Ashlyn too, but Dean and I, not so much. Why? Well, here's what happened...

Seventeen years ago.

"Come on, sweetheart. Come and meet our new neighbours." My mother says pulling me toward the house across the street directly opposite ours. At five years old, I'm a very shy child and hide behind my mum who continues to drag me along with her.

"Mummy, I don't want to make new friends." I whimper tugging my arm out of her hand and crossing them over my chest with a pout. My mum looks down at me, her green eyes wide in warning, silently informing me to stop whining and be polite. I catch the look she gives me and sigh as we continue to walk across the street toward our new neighbours.

"Dean," The little boy's mother says perching down beside him. "This is Jeyla. She lives across the street. Say hello, honey." She urges, sweeping his dark brown hair out of his startling green eyes. Dean scowls, seemingly not pleased about meeting me either. I offer a faint smile and utter a timid 'hello' only to earn myself a blank stare in return.

"Jeyla darling, why don't you show Dean where the playground is and get to know each other?" My mother suggests smiling down at both of us.

I look over at Dean hesitantly, "Um okay," I reply taking a step back and walk off toward the playground just behind our house.

A few steps in, I peek over my shoulder and notice Dean is following me but is keeping a distance between us. I wait for him catch up and begin walking beside him, an awkward silence between us. "So um, how old are you?" I ask sneaking a look at him.

Dean shrugs without emotion. "Probably older than you," he utters somewhat frostily.

I frown. "How do you know? I could be older?" I answer, put out.

Dean suddenly stops and sighs just as we reach the gate to the playground. "Look, Jenna or whatever your name is. I don't play with girls, okay. I didn't want to move to this neighbourhood in the first place. I want to go back home to my real friends. I don't want to be friends with a girl. I don't need any more friends, and I don't need you. So, leave me alone." He asserts huffily and skulks off in the other direction.

"I... okay." I stammer, watching him walk away. My bottom lip trembles and tears begin to fill my eyes while standing at the gate all on my own.

"Hi," a small, girly voice chirps from behind me. I spin my head and look over at her, she's my size, with long dark hair and big bright green eyes, almost identical to Dean's. The smile on her face vanishes when she notices I'm crying. "Oh. Why are you crying?" she questions chewing on her lip.

I sniffle and wipe my tears away on my arm. "That boy said some mean things to me."

"Oh," she pouts. "That's my brother. We're twins. He's always mean to me too, but I don't cry, you shouldn't either. Dean's just mad at my Mum and Dad for making us live here now." She explains with a one shoulder shrug. I nod. "I'm Ashlyn, but everyone calls me Ash. What's your name?" she smiles again.

"Jeyla," I answer, nervously fumbling with my fingers.

“I like that name. Do you want to be my new best friend?” she offers with a grin.

I blush and chew on my fingernail, “I’ve never had a best friend before.” Ashlyn nods happily.

“Now you do. I like you and you’re so pretty.” She gushes, reaching out to touch a silky ringlet of my brown hair.

I grin back at her and nod enthusiastically. “Okay.” I chirp happily bouncing on the balls of my feet. “You’re pretty too, I like your dress,” I say, pointing at her pink fluffy princess dress. Ashlyn beams and twirls around once, giggling.

“Come on, let’s go play.” She says taking my hand and we both skip off to the playground together. “Dibs on the swing!” From that day on Ashlyn and I got on like a house on fire. We have been ‘besties’ ever since. We literally grew up as one. Same school, the same university, we even live together. Up till this day we are still inseparable.

Are you ready to hear the rest?

Okay, let me take you back to the summer of 2004...

Chapter 1

Jeyla

UNWRITTEN - NATASHA BEDINGFIELD

“JEYLA?”

“Hm.”

“Jey? Wake up. JEYLA JENKINS!”

I groan and peel my eyes open slightly to peer up at my best friend shaking and poking me. “Whaaaat?” I whine like a petulant child yanking the covers up and over me completely.

“Come on, get your arse up. We’re going to be late. We need to make a move and you take forever to get ready.” Ashlyn informs and yanks the covers back off me again.

I open one eye and glance over at the clock to look at the time, “Ugh! You’re such a cock. It’s six o’ clock in the morning, Ash!” I huff, turning over to my side with a groan and pull the covers up and snuggle further into my comfortable bed.

“Yes, Jeyla, thank you very much for pointing that out to me. I am fully aware of what time it is. We need to go. Like right now if you want to beat the traffic.” Ashlyn pulls me up by the arm.

“Sleep. I need sleep!” I whimper closing my eyes again.

“You are so lazy, get the fuck up! Right now, or so help me God, I will call your mother.” She threatens pulling me out of bed by the legs. My eyes open and I smile while clinging to my bed for dear life.

“You wouldn’t...”

Ashlyn glares at me, dropping my feet with a huff, “Damn straight I will. Now. Get. Up.” She yanks the pillow from under my head and hits me with it.

“Ow! Stop abusing me!”

“Shut up and get ready, you lazy tartlet.” Ashlyn throws over her shoulder, walking out of the room. “Don’t you dare fall back asleep!” She adds, poking her head back through the door when I lay back down on the bed and hug my pillow with a tired sigh.

“Five more minutes.”

The eager beaver that she is, Ashlyn is always the organised one... well *mostly*. We’re driving back home for summer break. An ten-week break from university. I’m thrilled and really looking forward to not studying or cramming for essays and exams for a while and rest. I’m even more thrilled to see my family again. Neither Ashlyn nor I have seen our families properly in two years, unable to go home between work and studying for exams. We both decided to go to the University of Manchester which is about a four-hour drive from London. We’re in our third year, studying to get our degree in biochemistry and microbiology.

Since leaving secondary school, we have grown up to be somewhat mature and moderately attractive young women. I still have my long hair that ends just above the small of my back. I stand about five feet four inches. I’m slim and curvy in

places I need to be and toned from exercising three times a week... not that I have a choice, I'm forced by Ashlyn.

Ash, on the other hand, has short black hair styled into a lob with slices of red lowlights in between making her jade green eyes stand out. She's slightly smaller than I am but has a gorgeous and lean physique despite her petite frame.

An hour later, we're on the road making our way back home to Kent, cruising down the motorway with the top down to my white Peugeot convertible and the music up. The sun burning high and bright in the clear blue sky emitting unbearable heat. There's been an insufferable heat wave for the past three days, which makes a change from the constant rain and gloomy weather we were used to in the UK. "I'm so excited to be going home. It's been such a stressful year. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone." Ashlyn claims excitedly, pulling down the visor to apply her make-up.

I nod keeping my eyes on the road. "Me too," I reply. "After the year I've had, I'm pleased to be away from Manchester for a bit." I admit with a sigh and glance over at her briefly before turning my attention to the road again. "I am bummed we cancelled our plans to go to Mexico though. I was really looking forward to going away. I can't believe you would rather go back home than to Mexico. I mean seriously, Ash, Kent over Cancun?"

Ash smiles and closes the visor, "Hey, you agreed! We can still go if you want, but we've both been complaining about being homesick, remember? How about this, we can go see them for a while then jet off to Mexico for a week. I just miss my family and everyone else we left behind." Ashlyn tells me while fiddling around with a CD player.

"*Everyone else?* Such as?" I intone suspiciously.

Ashlyn's lip curls but she avoids looking at me. "The usual crowd. You know, Courtney, Dax, Emily, Scott..." Ashlyn trails off.

I look at her sharply. "Uh-oh, Ash, please tell me you're not going there again?"

Ashlyn shrugs, "I can't."

I couldn't help but gape at her in disbelief, "What?! Ashlyn, come on. You cannot be serious. The idiot dumped you for that whore Samantha. How could you still want to see him after what he did to you? The guy is a tool!" I exclaim looking between her and the road.

"I know, I know, he's a class-A tosser. I just want to see the look on his face when he sees me and realises that he fucking missed out, you know now that I've had my glow up and all." Ashlyn points out with a gleeful smirk.

My frown disappears, and I smirk back at her, "Oh I see." I grin and poke her, "Ashlyn Reyes is out to get her own back. I love it. Do you think he's still with Whore-mantha?" I questioned curiously.

Ashlyn cracks up laughing at the nickname. "Damn straight. Last I heard he was. God, I hate that girl. You know she slept with my brother?"

I raise a brow, "No way. She slept with Dean?"

Ashlyn snorts, "No Oz. Dean wouldn't give her the time of day. Besides, she likes her men muscular, and Dean doesn't quite fit in that criterion."

"No doubt." I utter sourly.



A four-hour drive and two stops later; we finally arrive at our childhood homes with our respective families.

"Sweetheart, how's the studying going?" My mother questions while we're sat around the dinner table.

After a year, I'm having my first home-cooked meal. Oh, how I've missed my mother's cooking. I nod gingerly while chewing on my mouthful of delicious lasagne, "It's going good, Mum." I reply and stop to swallow. "I'll be in my last semester next year, so it's going to be even harder when I get back. Hopefully all the hard work will pay off when I get my

degree.” I told her once I shovel another bite of lasagne in my gullet.

“I can’t believe you’re in your last year already. Time has flown by, huh? It felt like just yesterday we were bawling our eyes out because you were leaving.” Jessica, my older sister says with an adoring smile.

“It has flown by. I’m thrilled it’s almost over, even though I am truly going to miss Uni, I’m excited for the next part of my life.” I claim blissfully.

I look over my shoulder when the front door opens and closes again. A second later, my brother Jaden walks into the dining room. “Squirt!” he grins upon seeing me at the table.

“Jaden!” I exclaim, jumping to my feet and run into my big brother’s arms.

“You finally found a way back home, huh?” He teases, “Welcome back, sis.”

“I know, it’s been too long since I’ve been home, and I’ve missed you all so much. But, oh my God, look at you! You finally took my advice and changed up your image!” I state excitedly with a grin while I examine him. Gone were the nerdy glasses, the ugly knitted sweaters, and skinny jeans, replaced with a tight fit azure t-shirt showing off his muscular arms and torso. Dark cobalt ripped jeans paired with a pair of stylish black Nike trainers.

“How are the ladies supposed to appreciate this breath-taking physique in those thick jumpers. I don’t put in all that hard work at the gym to keep these baby boys hidden,” Jaden jests with a charming grin while curling his bicep proudly, his brown eyes full of mirth.

“The ladies?” I intone. “You mean there’s been more than one?” I jest and he gasps and ruffles my hair playfully.

“You’re not too old for an arse whooping, Squirt.” Jaden chuckles when I slap his hands away with a playful frown.

“You can flash all the muscles you want but you’ll always be my goofy older brother.” I say with a snicker and eye him knowingly. “Tell me the truth, it’s a girl, isn’t it?” I coo.

Jaden laughs, “Nice try, not telling you diddly squat.” He replies pulling me into a headlock. I chuckle and hit him.

“Stop messing up my hair!” I complain in a huff, slapping his chest.

“You need to hit me harder than that if you want out weakling.”

I groan, “Mum, if you want some grandchildren by your precious son, you might want to tell him to let me go.”

“Jaden, let go of your sister.” My mother scolds him playfully. Laughing, Jaden drops a kiss atop of my head before he uncurls his arm and releases me.

“Welcome back, Squirt.” He winks and walks out of the dining room and into the kitchen.

“It sure is good to be home,” I sigh contently and re-join my parents and Jess at the table to resume my dinner.

After an hour catching up with my sister at the dinner table, she went off to meet with her friends and I was left to help mum clean up the kitchen.

“Mum, there’s no washing up liquid!” I shout out to her while rifling through the cleaning supplies she keeps under the sink.

“Oh sweetheart, I think we are out. I did tell your dad to get some, but clearly, he forgot again. Jason...” she says, giving him a chastising look to which he responds with a sheepish smirk.

“Sorry dear, I’ll run out and grab some.” Dad sighs looking longingly at the TV broadcasting a live football match of the team he supports—West Ham United.

I stare down at the pile of dirty dishes soaking in the sink. “That’s okay Dad, I’ll pop and get it.” I assure him and he smiles back at me gratefully. “I need to pick up some supplies I forgot to bring anyway.”

“You sure, sugar plum? I don’t mind going.”

“Yes daddy, I’m sure. Heaven forbid you leave for a minute and Defoe scores and you miss it.” I tease with a smile. Dad chuckles, blows me a kiss and turns his attention back to the TV and claps enthusiastically.

“That’s my girl.” He utters, pumping his fist in the air. “Come on you Hammers!”

“Nice to see some things never change. I’ll be back in a bit.” I chuckle and kiss my mother’s cheek before I make a beeline for the door.

The walk to the supermarket is less than ten minutes from our house. I was meaning to pick up a few things I forgot to pack and bring with me, like razors, dry shampoo and tampons to name a few.

Now the sun has set the street is dark and the road that leads to our house isn’t really lit well, but I know the area well enough to know it’s safe, even after hours. While I’m distracted texting Ash about what we will wear to the club later, I don’t see the black car driving in my direction as I step off the pavement to cross the road. The sudden screeching of tyres and the car braking to a halt a mere inch from my legs frightens the ever-living crap out of me. I gasp, my phone and bag of supplies fall out of my hands while I stare at the car, stunned for a few seconds, my heart thrashing wildly in my chest.

“Jesus! Are you blind?! Can’t you see I’m walking here!” I snap hotly gesturing to the road and glare at the driver when he rolls his window down and sticks his head out the window glowering at me—albeit very handsomely.

“How about next time you attempt to cross the road you use those things in your skull called eyeballs,” the driver fires back at me hotly. “You see that flashing orange light up ahead, it’s called a pedestrian crossing, use it or next time you might not get so lucky, sweetheart.”

I lean over and snatch up my phone off the ground before I pin him with a deathly glare. “Oh really? You see that big round sign over there with the number twenty on it, that’s

called a speed limit, how about you stick to it before you kill someone, you colossal *asshat*.”

We stare at one another angrily for a drawn-out moment and he revs his engine at me threateningly. “Do you plan on standing there gawping at me all night princess, or do you want to get out of my way?”

My scowl deepens and I feel the anger coiling deeper inside my gut to a point I wanted to throw every item I had in my bag at his beautiful head. “How about an apology? Oh, and I’m fine by the way.”

The driver’s eyes rake over me and he smirks, licking his lips, “You sure are, sweetheart,” he drawls and winks at me before he drives off disappearing down the street.

What a bonafide prick.

Chapter 2

Dean

WONDERWALL - OASIS



THERE IS no place like home and boy am I pleased to be back. The smell of my mum's cooking wafts toward me the moment I open the door and walk in. I drop my duffle back on the floor in the foyer and sigh.

“Nate, is that you?” I smile when I hear my mum's voice approaching from the kitchen. I've not told anyone that I'll be coming home for the summer and decided it would be a nice surprise to just show up. My poor mother still thinks I'm away at the airbase in Germany. I spoke to her this morning before my flight in, so she has no idea and boy am I excited to see her reaction— all of my family's reaction. I miss them all terribly—especially Ash—my twin sister. This is the longest we've ever been apart from one another, and I'd be lying if I said I haven't been feeling a little lost without her. Of course, we text back and forth but it's not the same. Between the intensive training and travelling for missions I've not really had the

chance to visit home over the last two years since joining the Royal Air Force three years ago.

Joining up to the RAF as a fighter pilot was the best decision I ever made. I found my calling and it's to serve and defend my beloved country. It's where I belong, soaring through the skies in my baby, my one and only love— my Typhoon FGR4. A beast of an aircraft that stimulates me like no other. When I'm ripping through the skies, there is absolutely no feeling like it. While the job has got its challenges and risks, I couldn't imagine doing anything else.

I smile at the photos of each of us along the wall on the stairs. Those fugly school pictures of Ash, myself and our big brother Oz proudly displayed on the wall.

“Dean!” I turn when I see my mother appear from the kitchen, eyes wide and her mouth ajar while she stares at me stunned, clad in her white ‘Your opinion wasn't a part of the recipe’ apron and a wooden spoon in her hand.

“Hi Mum.”

“Oh! Dean?!” She exclaims placing her hand on her chest, her brown eyes almost instantly pooling with tears. “My baby, you're home! Thank goodness!” She weeps. I open my arms for her when she comes flying at me and hug her tight.

Ah, mama, how I've missed you.

“Why didn't you tell me you were coming home?” she sniffles, dabbing her eyes with the cloth she's still got clutched in her left hand. “I would have cooked all your favourite foods, sweetheart.” I smile and shake my head. And that is precisely why I didn't, because I know she would make an enormous fuss.

“Because, I wanted to surprise you all and you already know I will eagerly wolf down anything and everything that you cook. Two years is two too many without your glorious cooking.” I tell her with a smile as I gather her hands in mine and kiss the top of them.

“I can't believe you're actually home.” She sniffles, going back to dabbing away the tears that spill down her cheeks with

the corner of her apron. “How long are you back for this time? Please tell me it’s longer than a day or two.”

“I’m back for the summer. You have me for eight whole weeks.”

My mother presses her hand to her mouth and smiles lovingly, her eyes watering. “Oh, that makes me so happy. All my children under one roof again.” She gushes, reaching up and caressing my cheek tenderly.

“Ash is back already?”

My mother nods, “Yes, she got back not too long ago. She’s in her room unpacking, she’ll be so happy to see you. Have you eaten? You must be hungry. Shall I make you something?”

I shake my head and brush a kiss on her temple. “No, mum, I had something to eat on the way in. I’ll catch up with Ash for a bit then I’m heading out to catch up with the boys. I’m looking forward to sleeping in the comfort of my own bed tonight though.”

“Okay, sweetheart. Your room is just as you left it, I’ll change the bed sheets for you while you’re out.”

I grab my bags and skip up the stairs. Before I make my way to my bedroom I stop when I reach the door at the end of the hallway and knock lightly. “Come in!” I hear Ash’s muffled voice reply. I push the door open and pop my head in.

“A little birdie told me my twin was home. Have you seen her by any chance?” I ask with a wide grin.

Ashlyn spins when she hears my voice and gasps audibly. The pile of neatly folded clothes goes flying out of her hands when she screams. “Ahhh! Dean!” she shrieks animatedly and comes running toward me, almost tripping over her suitcase. I catch her when she leaps into my arms, and we embrace tightly. “What are you doing here?! Mum said you weren’t coming home this summer?” she queries in a flurry. “I thought you were hauled up in some aircraft training or whatever.”

I set her down and nod, “Aviator training; I was, but it wrapped up earlier than expected. Also, my leave days were

just racking up and they kept hounding me to take them, so I thought I'd come back and surprise you all." I explain with a shrug. "Wow, Ash, look at you. You look amazing." I tell her.

I cannot believe how much she's changed. What happened to my goofy twin sister?

"Ah, thanks bro, but look at you! My God! Some beefy hunk has replaced my chub chub brother." She gushes clearly astonished by my change in appearance. I roll my eyes. I was indeed chubby for most of my childhood, nicknamed 'chub-chub' by my family wasn't exactly the greatest confidence booster. Once I got signed up for the R.A.F I had to go through intense combat and weapons training. Thank fuck for puberty, because long gone is the chubby kid, here I am now standing tall at six foot one, muscular build, my hair shaved on the sides and the top longer in length and styled messily.

"Well, getting your arse kicked for three years straight tends to have that effect on you," I inform her, taking a seat on her bed.

"No kidding." Ash utters picking up a top and folding it before she places it neatly in her cupboard. "I bet you have girls fawning all over you now. And if I know my brother, I can bet my life you've been making up for lost time," she teases while folding and packing her clothes away.

I grin, leaning back against the headboard, "Can't complain. So, how long are you home for this time? You've not been home in two years; Mum's been chewing my ear off over it on the phone every time I called." I point out to her with a smirk, and she smiles back at me sheepishly.

"I know, I know, I got it from her too, believe me. I planned to visit, obviously, but things got hectic with school —"

"In other words, you were avoiding coming home." I clarify and she throws an unamused glare in my direction. "The question is why?"

"It's a long story, one I'm too tired to share right now. Besides, we will have plenty of time to catch up over the eight

or so weeks we have together.”

I don't like the look on her face and despite the curiosity to know the reasoning of her reluctance to visit home, I know pushing for an answer will get me nowhere with her. I'll get it out of her one way or the other, so I nod and yawn rubbing my hand over my face. “Where the fuck is Oz?”

Ash's brows fuse briefly while she takes a long sip of the fresh lemonade sitting on her dresser. “Work, I think.” She answers after swallowing the mouthful of lemonade. “Last day before summer holiday. Hey, don't fall asleep on my bed, shithead.” Ash complains when I hug her pillow, my eyes growing heavy.

I groan when she hurls a stuffed animal at me. “Too tired to move.” I mumble into the pillow.

“Fine, but you should know that Jeyla will be over soon.”

My eyes snap open and I scowl, my blood immediately runs ice cold in my veins at the mere mention of *her* name. “Oh fuck, don't tell me she's back too?” I question distastefully and Ash laughs.

“She sure is, and I would really appreciate it if the two of you could bury the hatchet already. Don't you think your animosity for one another has gone on long enough?” She sighs, sitting at the end of her bed by my feet. “We're not kids anymore Dean, you're both grown arse adults now.”

I just scoff and roll my eyes, “Nope, no can-do sis, sorry. There are a handful of things I can't tolerate and she's at the top of that list. I can't stand the sight of her.” I admit sourly and sit up. Jeyla Jenkins—the bane of my existence. I have never detested another human being so much in my life as I do her.

“Dean, you haven't seen the girl since you took off for the air force three years ago,” Ashlyn expresses with a huff, and I shrug. “Can you please just try to be civil when you see her?”

I sigh. “I do try, but that shrew brings out the worst in me, Ash. I can't just flick a switch and suddenly be all chummy with her. It just doesn't work that way. If it hasn't changed in

the last seventeen years, it's not going to change now. I can't see the two of us being 'besties' anytime soon." I explain scowling.

Ashlyn glares at me. "You do realize that in all the years you've known her, you have never, not once said her actual name?"

I shrug apathetically. "Your point?"

A saddened look falls upon my sister's face. I know she loves Jeyla like a sister, and it kills her the two most important people in her life can't tolerate each other for longer than five minutes, but I just can't bear to be around her. Jeyla just rubs me the wrong way. "I wish you could both find a way to get along already. I'm honestly tired of constantly being stuck in the middle and having to pick sides." Ashlyn vents somewhat woefully. I don't know why, but I suddenly feel a pang spread across my chest. I'm not exactly thrilled putting her in a position where she has to choose or mediate between me and her best friend, but I also can't force myself to be friendly with her either.

Suddenly feeling uncomfortable, I clear my throat, racking my brain for something to change the subject. "Why are you all dressed up?" Ashlyn asks, thankfully ending the awkward moment. I glance down at my outfit. I'm wearing a black tight fitted Moschino t-shirt with light blue denim jeans and a pair of black Timberland boots on my feet.

"I'm going out with a couple of the boys. They're welcoming me back with a night of drinking until we're shit-faced." I express grinning toothily and dig into the front pocket of my jeans when my phone starts ringing. I flip it open and answer it. "Yo!"

"Yo!" Comes Kaleb's voice from the other end of the line. "You ready?"

"Yeah, I'm ready, bro. Are you on your way?" I ask, sitting up.

"We're about five out."

“All right, I’ll be out in a few.” I say and flip the phone shut again before turning my attention back to my sister. “Are you going out?”

Ashlyn nods. “Sure am, I’m going out with Jeyla and the girls.” She answers while rifling through her cupboard looking for an outfit to wear. She pulls out a skirt and holds it against her hips, humming.

“Okay, I’m off. Have fun, be safe and I’ll see you in the morning.” I say walking over to brush a kiss on her temple before walking out of her bedroom.

“It’s going to be a hell of a summer.” I hear her mutter as I’m closing the door.

When I walk outside, I see my boys, Kaleb, Joe and Alex already parked up in an electric blue BMW M3 series right in front of my house, the music thundering through the speakers. They all cheer and hoot when they see me. “Shut the fuck up, you bell ends.” I laugh opening the door and sliding into the backseat.

“Lieutenant,” They all salute pressing their hands to their temples, grinning like a bunch of morons. “Fuck, Kaleb turn the car around. I’m going to need to go home and change, because I’m not pulling shit tonight with this fucker standing near me.” Joe states jabbing his thumb in my direction.

The boys and I laugh, “Oh please, as if you were going to pull anyway. I’ve told you this many times brother, it doesn’t matter what you look like as long as you’ve got the gift of the gab, unfortunately for you though my friend, you happen to fall short in that department as well.” I express light-heartedly and Joe punches my shoulder playfully.

“Ahh, it’s good to have you back bro, you’ve been missed.” He cackles.

I sigh and nod, “It’s good to be back.”

Chapter 3

Jeyla

DESTINATION CALABRIA - ALEX GAUDINO & CRYSTAL WATERS

LATER THAT NIGHT, Ashlyn, myself and a few other girls rock up to Azure, the hottest club in central London. There's a line around the corner of people waiting to get in. Thankfully our friend Hailee has connections and got our names on the list. As I approach the entrance, I can feel the bass of the music inside vibrating through the floor under me. I had my doubts as we pulled up to the place because looking at the outside the club it looks like an old-fashioned Victorian style building, but once we step inside it's deceptively big and chic. The dance floor is filled with people grinding heatedly with one another.

The girls and I make our way over to the bar and ordered the first rounds of tequila shots before finding an empty table where we sat down and caught up with what's been happening back home in Ashlyn and my absence.

An hour and a half in, three of the girls are on the dance floor dancing with a few guys they met. Ashlyn hooked up

with a gorgeous blond guy and has disappeared with him to do God only knows what somewhere in the club.

An hour of dancing with random guys left me more than a little worn-out and my feet throbbing unpleasantly in the five-inch heels I'm wearing. "I'm going to go to the bathroom!" I shout to my dance partner over the music when his hands begin to wander under the white lace crop top I'm wearing. After I manage to use the bathroom, I push my way through the crowd toward the bar to get myself another drink. My throat felt so dry it was beginning to hurt each time I tried to swallow.

It took about five unsuccessful attempts to get the barman's attention to order myself a vodka red bull, but that first sip felt like heaven as the cool liquid washes down my throat. While I'm swaying to the music thundering through the speakers from where I'm sat at the bar, I gingerly sip on my drink people watching when my eye caught three guys walking over to the bar, each one as good-looking as the other. One of them notices me looking in their direction and quickly narrows in on me like a fly on hot shit.

Oh great.

I watch as he approaches me smiling handsomely. He's definitely a bit of me, so handsome my heart did a little flutter. That was until he opened his mouth, of course. "Hey there, baby. Here's ten pence," he drawls and drops a coin on the bar and pushes it toward me. "Call your mother and tell her you're not coming home tonight." He finishes, his dark chocolate eyes gazing lustfully into my green ones.

Oh, good God, is this guy for real?

I stare at him blankly for the longest moment, and I tried, I really did, but I couldn't contain the bubble of laughter that erupts from within me.

As attractive as he appeared to me a few seconds ago, he gave me the ick just as quick.

I force myself to stop laughing and look him in the eyes, "I'll tell you what, darling. Keep your money and buy yourself

some new pick-up lines because I'm sure that's the line my dad used to pick up my mum," I sneer with a chuckle.

His dark brow arches and he promptly turns his attention to another girl standing at the bar—who also laughs and walks off. Shaking my head amusedly, I peer into my drink, stirring the ice with the swizzle stick when I felt someone sidle up beside me. The woody and spicy notes of his aftershave surround me, momentarily scrambling my inebriated senses. I feel a pair of eyes on me, and it sent a mass of tingles cascading down my spine.

Well, that's new.

Despite the delicious scent of the guy standing beside me, I speak without bothering to lift my gaze from my glass as I speak, "If you're here to sprout unoriginal and tasteless pick-up lines you can save your breath and follow your little friend." I say jadedly.

"Actually," My ears perk at the sound of his deep mellifluous voice. "I was going to apologize on behalf of my friend," he finishes with a drawl instantly gaining my interest. "He's had more to drink than he's equipped to handle and unfortunately vodka tends to amplify the idiot in him when he's had one too many. He meant no harm."

I turn my head and look up at him and almost gasp. Jesus Christ, his eyes are the first thing that catches my attention and my breath. I swallow the gasp that was ready to slip out when our gazes lock. Why does he look so familiar? I see a frown appear on his face for a split second, almost as if he's a little taken back but it vanishes too quickly for me to scrutinize. "It's fine and no harm done." I answer, forcing myself to return my gaze to my drink.

Lord almighty, you sure took your special time with this one.

"Have we met before?" he questions and when I look at him sharply, he starts laughing holding his hands up in mock surrender. "Not a line, I swear," he promises, placing his hand over his heart. My gaze softens and I couldn't fight off the

urge to smile. “I feel like I’ve seen you someplace before. You seem *very* familiar.”

Funny, I was thinking the exact same thing.

Instead of voicing my thoughts, I shrug. “I think I would remember meeting you.” I reply with a smile when he grins, flashing me his perfect set of pearly white teeth, evidently satisfied by my response.

“I was thinking the exact same thing a few minutes ago when I saw you walking to the bar. I would *definitely* remember meeting you.” He asserts his eyes lingering on mine for a touch too long.

Dang. My cheeks start to burn under his gaze, so I quickly veer my eyes elsewhere and shrug indifferently. “Maybe I just have one of those faces.”

“Maybe,” he agrees, shifting beside me once more and clears his throat to draw my attention back to him. “Here alone?”

I smile a little, nibbling on my straw, “Nope, out with my girlfriends.” I utter, glancing around the bar. Sure, he’s effing hot, but I don’t want to come across too keen or interested. “I just got back this afternoon for the summer.”

“Oh?” he drawls intrigued, “So you’re not a Londoner, then?” he questions his emerald eyes narrowing slightly.

“No, I am, but I moved away for Uni a couple of years ago.”

“Nice, what are you studying?”

I turn my gaze to look at him and smirk, resting my arm on the bar. We hold eye contact for a moment and when I don’t say anything he chuckles amused, “Okay,” he utters leaning against the bar also. “Either you’re not much of a talker or you just don’t like to give much away.”

I lick my lips, smiling. I shouldn’t even be entertaining this. I’m absolutely not ready to jump into anything with someone new, but at the same time I’m in desperate need of a distraction and this gorgeous boy has the promise of giving me

just that. “Perhaps, or I’m just being vigilant and don’t want to share my whole life story with a complete stranger.” I tell him, taking out the swizzle stick and deliberately suck it clean. Sexy bar boy’s green eyes lower to my mouth and he watches me fixedly.

“I assume there would be no point in asking your name then?” He questions, leaning in closer to speak directly into my ear, his warm breath tickles the back of my neck making me judder a little inwardly.

“Your assumption would be correct.” I affirm, tilting my head back so I could look up at him when he draws away slightly. “Why don’t you pick a name for me?” I suggest, brushing the swizzle stick along my lower lip.

A dark brow lifts, and he licks his full lips while his emerald gaze scans my face pensively. “I don’t play games, sweetheart.” he points out evenly and I smile, lowering my eyes to my drink.

“That’s too bad,” I reply coquettishly and shrug. “Because I’m definitely in the mood to play and *you*...” I add suggestively, my eyes openly roaming down the length of him and back up again. “...strike me as the type that would make a terrific *playmate*.”

He regards me closely, the corner of his lips lift into a cocky smirk. “You’re spot on with your judgement there, baby girl. I am an exceptional playmate with impeccable stamina to boot.”

My neck starts to heat up when he drags the tip of his tongue along the pillow of his lower lip and the corners of his eyes crinkle slightly. *Keep your composure, Jeyla.* “Hm, I don’t know. I may require some more convincing.” I state roguishly. God, the alcohol must really be kicking in because I’m not usually this bold—especially with men I don’t even know.

“That can certainly be arranged.” He drawls sidling a little closer to me until his chest only just touches my bare shoulder. I quiver inwardly when he reaches up and brushes my hair over my shoulder. My brain fleetingly marvels at the firmness

of his pecs pressed against me. I mean, I'm no gym buff, but it's evidently clear to anyone with eyeballs the boy is in damn good shape and packing quite the muscle mass, not to mention definition under that tight t-shirt.

And I'd be the world's biggest liar, if I didn't admit I wasn't itching to find out what he's got hiding under that outfit.

My horned-up brain gets away from me for a moment, so I discreetly shake off the lewd thoughts that are flooding my mind. I inhale and his aftershave once again makes me want to moan aloud. Sultrily biting down on my lower lip, I lift my eyes up to his, "So, convince me then."

Those soft, tasteful lips curl into a sexy smile and his eyes scan the area before they veer back to look at me again. "Here?" he responds peering down into my upturned face.

"Right here," I reply and lean into his ear. "Unless of course you're just full of hot air like your little friend," I draw back a little and almost grin when I see the daring look in his eyes.

"Come with me." I stare down at his hand when he holds it out to me for a beat before I take it and follow him to the dance floor. We squeeze through the crowd of people dancing heatedly together, he pulls me in front of him, a strong arm snaked around my midriff while we move to the centre of the dance floor. The dance floor is so packed we barely have space to move.

The songs changes to Destination Calabria, and I gasp when he pulls me until my back is pressed against his solid chest. The main lights in the club dim and the blue and green neon lights rotate through the club. "How bold are you, baby girl?" he murmurs lazily in my ear while we slowly start to sway together to the beat of the music. The deep timbres of his voice combined with the heat of his breath against my ear causes me to quiver a little. "How far are you willing to let me go?" My eyes close and I bite down on my bottom lip when his fingertips skim over the exposed flesh of my midriff, leisurely moving to the dip of my waist.

“I’m going to finger you, right here on this dance floor, with all these people around.” He affirms, his fingers sliding down my upper thighs. “If you would like me to stop, now is your chance.” His fingers halt, his thumb drawing slow circles on my inner thigh, giving me opportunity to stop him.

My brain is scrambled half from the alcohol swimming in my veins and the other half from the desire budding deep within my groin. I can’t think straight, nor can I focus on anything but the way he’s touching me. My heart is racing a hundred miles a second, but I do absolutely nothing to stop him—if anything my legs audaciously, and on their own accord, widen for him.

The club may be dimly lit, but anyone around us can look over and see his hand up my skirt. A quivering breath escapes me when I feel his fingers brush over the silk of my underwear, which is now damp.

Bloody hell, Jeyla, what the hell are you doing? You’ve known this boy less than ten minutes and he’s got his hand up your skirt.

The rational voice in my head is screaming at me to stop him and I almost reach up to grab his hand but when he presses his finger against my clit and strokes in slow circles through the thin material of my thong, I lose all good sense and succumb to the pleasure he is gracing me with.

“Already so wet for me,” he groans gruffly, nipping at my ear teasingly. “I bet your pussy tastes fucking luscious, too.” My stomach flips and tightens at his affirmation. I rest my head on his chest when his fingers deftly push aside my underwear, and he slowly feeds a finger into me.

I still instantly and there is no containing the whimper that secretes from deep within me when that ripple of euphoric pleasure fires through me. A shiver cascades down my spine when I hear him hiss and suck in a breath through his teeth against the shell of my ear. “Oh, baby girl, that’s a tight little cunt.”

I come apart for him quicker than I have any other man. Each deep thrust of his finger and stroke of my g-spot sent me

hurdling toward the earth-shattering release I'm frenziedly questing.

"That's it, sweet girl, ride out that orgasm for me," he groans throatily, nipping at my ear while I helplessly quake in his arms, my fingernails digging into his forearm as the pressure builds and builds until I finally go over and climax with a muffled whimper.

"Oh God," I cry out, rocking my hips back and forth, riding out the orgasm until it slowly disappears, and I slump against his strong frame practically legless. If it wasn't for his arm that is currently wrapped around me holding me up, I would have crumbled to the floor, my knees are shaking that forcefully.

"Fuck, I wish I could have seen your face when you came apart for me. I bet you look just as sexy as you sound," he rasps, slowly drawing his finger out of me and lifting it to his lips to suck off my arousal. My jaw slackens and I watch him fixedly suck his finger clean, his green eyes close and he hums in appreciation, and I curse the damn music when I don't hear the sound but only feel the tremors travel right through me.

I absolutely won't sleep with him, but perhaps a little fun wouldn't hurt. I've been in such a funk and in desperate need of a distraction the last couple of weeks that I'm tempted to bite the bullet and have a little fling with him to aid that dull ache I've been trying to hopelessly quell.

Between the alcohol I consumed, the orgasm and the deep timbre of his erotic voice my brain is fried. I couldn't muster up two words in response. When my legs stop feeling so unsteady, I spin so I can face him and inwardly I'm squealing that he's a good foot taller than me. I'm five-foot six and if I had to guess he's about six-foot give or take an inch. Good grief his eyes are *so* beautiful—a captivating, deep jade green with flecks of gold around the iris, lined with thick dark lashes that are also naturally curled. *I want to cry, who gave you the right to have such pretty freaking eyes?*

God, I'm not even going to get into those full lips of his that are becoming more and more appealing to me with every

deliberate lick. It would be a dire shame if he's a terrible kisser with such tender and desirable lips. While I'm trapped somewhere between my lewd thoughts and my deliberations staring at his mouth like a star struck teen, his lips curl into a wayward smirk and it's not until he takes hold of my chin and tilts my head back a touch, forcing me to meet his heated gaze that I snap out of it.

My heart picks up in pace and starts to jackhammer against my ribs when his eyes lower to my mouth and he leans in closer, my own eyes closing when his mouth inches closer to mine.

I wait, lips parted for him to kiss me, but instead, I feel them graze along my cheek toward my ear. "There's someplace I want to take you. Will you come with me?"

No Jeyla, don't you even think about going off with him.

I shouldn't.

I'm all ready to say no and put an end to this recklessness; that is until he gently nips at the spot behind my ear and I visibly quake. "Yes." The damned word falls out of my mouth before I could catch it.

Well, I can't take it back now or he'll think me an idiot for going back on my word... besides, if I'm being completely honest, there isn't a fibre in my body that is contesting the idea of leaving with him.

My eyes snap open when his mouth vanishes from my flesh, and I almost groan in displeasure. I should tell Ash or one of the girls I'm leaving, but they're likely among the sea of bodies grinding on the dance floor.

While he stops to tell his friend something, I take out my phone and drop a text to Ash so she doesn't worry.

Me:

Ash! I've only gone and met a fucking stud! I'm going off with him. Pray for me cause bitch I'm going to need it. I'll drop you my location just in case he's a super-hot serial killer. L.U.

“Shall we?” I look up from my phone when he gives my hand a squeeze. I only nod in response and follow him toward the exit. “I don’t know about you, but I’m starving.”

I smile when he gives me a side long glance as we walk over to a blue BMW parked fifty feet away. I moan audibly and my stomach rumbles with the thought of food. “Oh, me too, I could murder a BigMac right now.”

My mysterious hottie laughs and unlocks the car before reaching over to the passenger side door to open it for me. I find myself instantly drawn to the sound of his deep-throated laugh. “That’s a good shout, I’ve not had Maccy D’s in a while,” he approves with an amused chuckle. The drive to the nearest all night McDonalds was around fifteen minutes. The conversation flows nicely with no awkward silences, which is nice. Once we park up and head inside we order our meals and take a seat in one of the booths and eat our food while conversing.

“So, are you still not going to tell me your name?” he questions before he takes a long sip of his strawberry milkshake.

I shrug sipping gingerly on my own diet coke, “Why are you interested in finding out my name?” I probe curiously after I swallow the contents in my mouth.

“Why are you so reluctant to tell me?”

Nibbling on the straw, I smile impishly, “Why does it matter? Let’s be honest, we’re never going to see each other after tonight. So, why ruin the mystery?” I express coquettishly.

He licks his lips, smiling, while he holds eye contact. “Bloody hell, you’re a tough nut to crack. Also, I don’t know whether I should take offence to that little remark there or not. I thought our first date was going so well.” He voices while standing up, taking both our trays and emptying the rubbish in the bin. I allow my eyes to drift downward to his behind and take an appreciative look. *Lordy, that’s a nice tush.*

“No offence intended, just pointing out facts is all.” I reply with a snigger.

“Come on then, mysterious girl. Are you ready to go?” he questions peering down at me with a knowing smile on his face.

Shit, did he notice me ogling his behind?

I feel my cheeks burn but nod with a chuckle. “Indeed I am.” I answer, taking his hand when he holds it out for me, I stand and together we walk out of the restaurant. The sexy stranger snakes his arm around my waist. A jolt of excitement passes through me when I feel the warmth of his fingers seeping through my top. We make our way back to his car, the car park is almost empty, only two or three vehicles occupied some spaces which I assume belongs to the employees. Oddly enough, I’m starting to feel nervous all of a sudden. Nevertheless, before my brain has time to obsess about it, I’m pressed up against a wall toward the back of the building.

“What are you doing?” I gasp, staring up at him, startled. You’d think I would be terrified being intimately caged by a stranger, but I’m unusually calm. There’s something reassuring about his demeanour and the way he’s looking at me that seems to quieten the alarm bells that should be going off in my head right about now.

His handsome face is barely a hair away from mine while he speaks to me quietly. “Something I’ve been burning to do since the moment I laid my eyes on you,” he whispers huskily, dragging his nose over the length of my mine.

My heart starts to race, but I manage to smirk and keep myself composed. “Is that right?” I breathe and he nods humming throatily in response. “And what might that something be?”

I’m not sure where this newfound prowess has sprung from because my hands skim up his torso and stop to rest on his strapping chest. I’m instantly gratified by the way his muscles twitch and harden under my touch. He tucks his long index finger under my chin and tilts my head up a touch. “Tell

me your name, beautiful,” he whispers, his breath hot against my lips.

I smile up at him and raise a brow, “You don’t give up, do you?” I question, our eyes fixedly staring into one another.

“No, not until I get what I want.” He replies, stepping closer until his hard body is flush against mine. I bite my lip and give up the fight within me and allow that overwhelming urge to consume me. Before I could chicken out, I kiss him. Jesus, this is so out of character for me, but it seems this gorgeous stranger makes me want to step out of my norm and embrace the wayward side of me. Without a word nor doubt, I lean forward, closing the already miniscule gap between our lips and press my mouth to his, lightly at first, but then his lips tenderly brush mine apart and his tongue dexterously seeks out my own, deepening the kiss until it becomes frenzied.

I’m not entirely sure how long we kiss, but I know it’s long when my lungs start to burn in protest. Begrudgingly we slowly draw back, panting, our foreheads still pressed together. “Damn,” he expresses breathlessly, while his thumb affectionately strokes my jaw. “You crafty girl, trying to throw me off with a kiss, are we?”

I grin and gaze up at him through my lashes. “Why are we wasting time asking inane questions when we could be using our mouths for things so much more...” I drawl suggestively, lifting my index finger I sluggishly trail it along his jaw, “... pleasurable.” I finish with a whisper and smile when his jaw clenches and his eyes light up with unruliness.

“There’s no arguing with that. How much have you had to drink?” He asks, pressing light kisses to my jaw.

“Just enough to let loose, but not so much you should feel like you’re taking advantage.” I tell him openly.

“That’s the perfect amount.” He responds grinning back at me roguishly when I laugh. Taking my hand into his larger one he tugs me toward the BMW.



Am I being reckless and irresponsible going off with a boy I just met a couple of hours ago? Yes, absolutely, and the sensible girl inside that I've locked up and gagged is kicking and screaming at me to not be so foolish and turn back before it's too late. Am I going to? Fuck no, but I have to put my heart back together again and if I need to be a little wild and reckless to forget the deep ache in my chest then so be it. While I'm silently battling with my inner thoughts, I don't notice the car pull up outside a house. "Wait, are we in... you live in Chelsea?" I finally ask, my brain snapping back to reality. I eye the well-lit street as we step out of the car. Nothing to be alarmed about, it's a normal London residential street, lined with two storey Victorian style houses.

"Nah, not mine. It belongs to a mate of mine, he's off on holiday for a couple of weeks, he asked me to keep an eye on the place in the meantime." He explains coolly and takes my hand, leading me toward the white front door. I nod and rest myself against the wall by the door while he tries to unlock it.

"Doing a fine job of it, I'm sure." I express, nibbling on my bottom lip. Smiling, he looks over at me before slowly moving closer until he's standing directly in front of me. "And your friend doesn't mind you inviting strange women back to his house?" I probe when he presses his firm body into mine.

"Well, first of all, you're the first girl I've ever brought here. Secondly, who says he has to find out?" He responds smoothly before dipping his head to kiss me, but I place my hand on his chest and stop him. Those green eyes snap up to mine and he stares down into my upturned face questioningly.

"Uhm, I don't want you to get the wrong impression of me." I start to say and lower my eyes to stare at the logo of his Moschino t-shirt. "I don't *do* one-night stands—in fact I've never..."

I peek up at him in time to see his dark brows rise slightly. "Wait, are you a... *virgin*?" he questions wide-eyed, looking a little stunned. I laugh and shake my head.

"God, no, I'm absolutely not a virgin. I just, I don't want you to think I'm some tart that jumps into bed with every guy

she meets, because I'm not."

A slow smile spreads across his handsome face and he bites down on his lip while his eyes search mine. "What? Why are you looking at me like that?" I ask warily and before I could acquire an answer from him, his hot mouth is drawing me in for another feverish kiss.

On a moan I part my lips for him, heartily granting him access to devour my mouth. Lips still fused, in the midst of our heated hiss, with no effort at all he lifts me into his arms and we enter the house. The door is kicked shut with his foot and we clumsily make our way through the house in the dark, only stopping a few times along the way for him to grind his throbbing erection against my pussy when I suck on his tongue.

My sexed-up brain doesn't even register my surroundings until my back hits a soft mattress. "You're so fucking beautiful and the fact we just met and my opinion of you means something to you just proves that you're different," he groans, dragging his lips down the length of my throat. "The moment I slid my finger inside your pussy and felt how tight you are I already knew right there and then you don't sleep around. I'm no expert, but I've had my share of pussy baby, either you've been sleeping with guys with pencils for dicks or there's not been more than two."

My eyes open, my jaw slackens while I stare up at him in astonishment. Well shit. I *have* only slept with one other guy, but how could he possibly know that by fingering me? My face and neck start to redden under his deeply penetrating gaze. "And judging by the stunned look on your face, I'm going to bet it's the latter." I swallow thickly when his hands lift my bare arms, pinning them above my head. He leans down, closing his eyes at the last second as he presses his mouth against mine, tongue flicking out requesting me to open up for him straight away.

I moan into his mouth when his knee nudges my legs apart and he grinds his engorged erection against me. The delicious heat of his tan skin on mine combined with his stiffness between my legs has my body quaking. Our fingers lace, and

our kiss grows hot and needful, making it bloody impossible to find an imp of self-control within me to put a stop to this before it goes any further.

That promise I made to myself about not sleeping with him is disappearing rapidly.

Those long fingers of his trail down my bare arms while the other hand unzips my skirt before pulling it down over my hips and off my legs, revealing the black silk thong I'm wearing underneath.

A breathy whimper escapes me when he draws back ending the kiss. The hand that is on my arm moves to my throat, his fingers curl and he pulls me upright, pulling my crop top off all the way and discarding it on the floor. His warm palm runs over my almost naked spine making me shiver visibly. My head tips back, moaning as his lips leisurely trace down my throat. I could feel his narrow hips digging against my own and I couldn't resist grinding against him.

"Fuck," he grunts, but it sounds more like a distress call. I raise my head and stare at him with wide lust filled eyes. His large hand slides up my back and I heave a shaky breath when his lips continue their journey down to the valley between my breasts. With one flick of his fingers my bra comes undone and my breasts fall free from their confines. His eyes widen and jaw tightens while he observes my bare tits. He draws his full lower lip into his mouth. Jesus, I'm not used to being looked at in that way—at least not for quite a while now.

A slow, sexy smile appears on his handsome face while he stares at me, the last thing I expected when he was so intense only minutes ago. The pad of his thumb grazes my hardened nipples, eliciting a gasp from me. When his mouth replaces his fingers and he sucks my nipple I whimper, biting down on my lip to keep from moaning too loudly, my head falls back. "Oh God," I hiss, fisting the covers. Slowly, he splays his hands out over my hips, sliding my underwear down my legs and tossing them aside. There I lay, completely naked and exposed to this beautiful stranger. I'm held captive under his heated gaze, I couldn't move a muscle even if I tried.

I watch him reach up and grab the collar of his t-shirt and pull it off. My mouth goes dry, and the sight of him towering over me like some mythical creature built with rippling muscles and exuding buoyancy has me wet and aching between the legs for him like never before.

Oh, fuck it, a little foreplay never hurt anyone...



Morning came around faster than I would have liked. I stir, waking from a peaceful slumber and find myself wrapped up in the strong arms of my mystery man. I observe him a little and smile when I notice the red love bite I left on his neck in the midst of our passion. I know, I know, I said I wouldn't sleep with him and only stick to foreplay but the things this sexy boy can do with his tongue is damn well wicked. Reaching over I gently trace his lips with the tip of my index finger, a warm feeling spreads over me starting from my toes all the way up to my head.

It's truly bizarre, but he doesn't feel like a random man I just met on a night out. There's something vaguely... *familiar* about him, but I can't for the life of me figure out what it is.

While I'm watching him he stirs at my touch. Hm, not a heavy sleeper. Those green eyes slowly open and he blinks a couple of times, allowing his eyes to adjust to the brightness of the room. His eyes find mine and his lips curl into a lazy smile once he registers his surroundings and the happenings of the previous night likely comes rushing back to him.

"Good morning," I greet quietly when he rolls over onto his side to face me properly. I smile coyly while he just gazes into my jade eyes. Suddenly I'm very aware of the fact that I'm very naked and probably look like absolute dog shit right now.

"It sure is," he answers smoothly, returning a handsome smile. My cheeks grow hot, turning a nice shade of pink. "Requesting permission to kiss you, Miss."

I laugh softly in response and nod, "Permission granted." Smiling, he reaches forward curling his fingers around my nape and drawing my face to his, once again claiming my lips. This kiss is different to the previous night's impassioned ones. This kiss is tender and affectionate. He's kissing me like he's exploring every crevice of my mouth, imbedding the taste and feel of my mouth against his.

Much to my dismay, the kiss doesn't last longer than a minute or two and we're pulling back ending the mind-blowing kiss. When I open my eyes I find him gazing at me, his dark brows slightly drawn together looking rather perplexed.

Oh crap, I was right. I probably do look a hot mess to him right now. What a memorable impression you're making, Jey, really. I could only imagine how rotten I must look to him right now with my make-up likely smeared under my eyes and my hair in a state of disarray from a night of wild sex and sleep.

Reflexively, I reach up and slyly smooth out my hair and shift to sit upright. "Uh, I should get going." I say in a flurry.

"Go?" he intones, his brows knitting together tighter while he watches me pull the duvet up to cover up my bare breasts. "It's..." he glances down at the silver watch on his wrist and blinks before he lifts his gaze to me again, "...seven in the morning on a Saturday. What's the rush angel? I have a better idea. Why don't you come back to bed, and we can chill here for a bit, have some breakfast and I can drive you home later?" he offers, wrapping a strong arm around my waist and pulling me back down on the bed. I smile when he feathers soft kisses down the length of my neck.

"I really, really wish I could, but I can't. I have a whole thing planned with my family this evening and my mother will chew me out if I'm not there to help her." I explain apologetically and grin when I hear him groaning as I pull away and slip out of the bed again. He rests his head in his hand and watches me stand and gather my clothes that are strewn across the walnut-coloured wooden floor. I somehow manage to dress myself under the bed sheet I had wrapped

around me without flashing my body to him. We may have had sex and I may be comfortable in my own skin but seeing me in the light of day? That's a whole other ball game.

"So, do I now get the pleasure of finding out your name?" he questions cheekily, sitting up himself and pulling on his white Calvin Klein boxer shorts.

I smirk and roll my eyes, pulling on my last boot. "As I recall you had more than enough pleasure last night." I say teasingly. "So no, you may not," I add with a coy smile.

"Oh come on," he chuckles while pulling on his jeans, not bothering to button them up. "You're killing me here."

"Good. I think I'll leave you wondering a little longer," I voice, standing from the bed, smoothing out my skirt and reaching over to pick up my clutch.

"Now why would you do such a thing?" he drawls, moving closer to me. I grin coquettishly at him and tuck my hair behind my ear as he nears me.

"Because, that way I will always be on your mind as the mysterious girl you spent a wildly passionate night with, instead of another random girl you picked up in a club." I justify, licking my lips. My eyes lower to his mouth when he steps into my space.

"Oh angel, I promise you, whether I find out your name or not I will not be forgetting you in a rush. And let me just clarify that I never, for one second thought of you as just *another girl*. I knew there was something about you the moment I set my eyes on you. If I had, we wouldn't be standing here right now having this conversation." He expresses, slipping his large hands around my small waist and drawing me against him.

Almost instantly I feel defenceless against his touch and fight off the urge to visibly quiver. I narrow my eyes at him and lick my lips, fleetingly drawing those jewel-like eyes to my mouth. "What?" he questions, eyes smouldering while they search mine. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

“Just wondering how many girls have stood in my position and actually fell for this well-rehearsed speech you’re trying to feed me.” I purr, smiling while dragging my index finger down the path between his pecs.

He laughs, amused and bites his bottom lip, his handsome face glowing with mirth. “Shit, you wound me angel. I was being completely sincere with you then,” he affirms, curling his fingers around my wrist he pulls my finger over his heart. “Cross my heart and hope to die.” He vows, using my finger he slowly draws a cross. Our eyes interlock and he inches closer until our lips are almost touching, “...to my lover I’d never lie,” he whispers and brushes his lips over mine, drawing me in for a slow and deep kiss.

I melt into him and a breathy moan escapes me when he pulls away breaking the kiss, leaving my lady parts throbbing and my mind in a haze. “You better believe I’ll be recalling that kiss, the intoxicating taste of you and the tightness of your sweet cunt when I’m in bed later fist over cock wishing you were beneath me begging me to fuck you.” He drawls, nipping at my bottom lip with a sexy grin making my heart rate soar.

Oh God. I swallow thickly, but my throat is suddenly so dry it feels like a spoonful of sand is shoved down my gullet. If I don’t get the hell out of this house, I’m going to wind up naked on that bed shamelessly begging him to feast on me.

Cheeks aflame, I somehow manage to find a shred of strength within me and pull away from his embrace. “Oh, I know you will,” I tell him boldly, raking my hands through my hair and hold his gaze. “Good pussy is hard to come by these days and you’ve been given a taste of the crème de la crème, baby.” I declare sultrily with a wink before I turn on my heel and head to the bedroom door to leave.

He catches my wrist before I could take two steps. “Where do you think you’re going?” he questions, his dark brows drawn together slightly.

I turn to look back at him over my shoulder. “Home.”

“Let me drive you.”

“Thank you, but it’s a nice morning, I’d prefer to walk.” I tug my wrist out of his hold and walk towards the door. As I go to open the door his hand comes up above my head and he pushes it shut again.

“Angel, do I look like the type of guy that will allow a girl to *walk* home? I brought you here, I’m driving you home.” He says in my right ear. The warmth of his breath and the deep silken tone to his voice in my ear almost knocks me off balance.

I turn my head to the left and raise my gaze to peer up at him. “Do I look like the type of girl that can’t take care of herself?” I reply, raising a challenging brow. He stares into my eyes and opens his mouth to say something but is interrupted by the ringing of his phone. Our eyes remain locked as he reaches for the device in his pocket and he answers it. “Yeah?” he answers and frowns. I’m standing close enough to hear that it’s a girl on the other line. “Hang on a sec,” he says and pulls the device from his ear to speak to me. “I have to take this. Don’t go anywhere, I’ll be right back,” he asserts, stepping around me he opens the door and disappears out of the bedroom.

I wait for him to move into another bedroom before I quietly slide out of the bedroom and rush downstairs and out the door. I hurry away from the house as quickly as I could in the heels I’m in and walk down the quiet street until I come to the busy high street. I see a black cab approaching and wave him down with my clutch. I could get on a train, but I absolutely did not fancy doing the walk of shame on public transport, nonetheless. Especially not after I get glimpse of myself in the reflection of the window as the cab rolls to a stop in front of me.

Oh, sweet Moses.

Chapter 4

Dean

NICKELBACK - SHE KEEPS ME UP



AS SOON AS I walk into my childhood home, my nostrils pick up on the delicious scent of my mother's freshly baked shortbread biscuits I love. I spot them on the cooling rack, lined up neatly and no mother in sight. I quickly swipe three biscuits off the tray and shove one whole into my mouth and moan when it instantly melts onto my tongue. "So good." I mumble appreciatively as I make my way upstairs to my room. I open the door, fully ready to strip off and jump head first into my mattress when I find my older brother Oz sitting on my bed on his laptop. His brown eyes lift to look at me and he frowns. "Well shit, golden boy has finally found his way home." Oz gibes playfully, picking up the pillow behind him and tossing it at me. "You forget how to use your fucking phone, you little dipshit? I've been calling you."

I roll my eyes, smiling and throw the pillow back at him. "I've been back not even twenty-four hours bro, give me a fucking minute." I answer, yawning and flop down onto my

bed after I yank my t-shirt off and toss it on the chair across the room.

“Where have you been?”

I sigh, rubbing my temples, “I went out for some drinks with the boys and ended up at Dante’s place.”

“Dante’s?” Oz intones and shifts to look back at me, his frown deepening. “Didn’t he go off for the summer?”

“Yeah.”

Realisation dawns upon my big brother’s face and he smiles knowingly. “Ah, so the fuck pad is clearly being made use of in D’s absence, then? And judging by the shit eating grin on your face you had quite the night.” He adds with a wide grin. “What’s the name of this bird that’s got you grinning like the fucking Cheshire cat?”

“I don’t know.” I sigh, rubbing my eyes. “She wouldn’t tell me her name, but fuck it was amazing—*she* was amazing. This girl had me rock hard all night and that’s fucking rare for me.” I explain, recalling images of the passionate moments I shared with her.

“Wow, will you be seeing this one again?” Oz questions curiously and slaps the cover to his laptop shut.

I shake my head sullenly, my mood deflating at the thought of never seeing her again. “Nah, I doubt it. I don’t know her name, we didn’t exchange numbers. She went and ducked out on me man,” I explain, sitting up and pushing my fingers through my messy hair in frustration.

Oz cackles heartily and I stare at him blankly, “No fucking way,” he continues to laugh. “She did a runner on you? Maybe you weren’t as gratifying as you seem to believe if she legged it out of there without a word, little bro.” He teases and shrugs when I glare at him unamused. “Don’t look at me like that, there are two reasons a girl would take off and not leave her number. One, she’s married or in a committed relationship and doesn’t want to be tracked down.” Oz points out holding up his index finger. “Two, you were not that great in the sack,

because I assure you little bro, women cannot resist a good dicking.”

I roll my eyes and whack him with my pillow again and he guffaws. “Fuck right off, look at the marks she left on my neck. And the way she was screaming and clawing at my back I know she was loving every sordid second of what I was giving her.”

“Maybe she’s good at faking it.” Oz suggests with a smirk before looking at his phone when it vibrates on the bed beside him.

“Get the fuck out of my room.” I utter sourly and Oz grins toothily, clearly pleased with himself for aggravating me first thing in the morning.

“Hey, no need to get all testy bro, it happens to the best of us. Remember, every woman is different, you can’t please them all and practice makes perfect.” I sigh and glare hard at him when he slaps my arm and snorts a laugh.

“Oz, get the fuck out or so help me God, I will put you in a choke hold.” I threaten and he grabs his laptop and hightails it out of my room laughing the whole time.

Fucking bell end.

Muttering under my breath I take out a fresh towel from my cupboard, toss it over my shoulder and walk out of my bedroom to the bathroom two doors adjacent to my room. My eyes are burning from lack of sleep, but I need a hot shower before I pass out for a couple of hours. I pass by Ashlyn’s bedroom and stop when I hear laughter filtering through her door.

“Yes!” I hear my sister exclaim. “Jeyle Jenkins, you better spill right this second!” I glare frostily at the wooden door when I hear *her* name. An unpleasant chill passes right through me and my muscles tauten with agitation at the mere mention of that she-devil’s name.

Of all the friends my sister made over the years, of course *she* had to be the one that stuck around. Ten other girls on our street and she chooses that bitch to be her best friend.

Why, oh why, couldn't Ashlyn have picked Samantha, Claire or what's her face... Yazmin, that's it. I don't mind them. I'm not particularly fond of them and sure they're annoying as fuck but they don't make me want to ram my fist through a wall every time they smile.

I tried every crafty scheme I could think of growing up to drive a wedge between Ash and Jeyla, so I wouldn't be forced to spend eighteen hours of my day looking at her haughty face, but they would argue, stop talking for a day and make up again. They're inseparable, have been since they were five and it doesn't help that our parents are good friends either.

Fuck me, the thought alone of seeing her this summer makes me sick to my stomach. I've successfully managed to avoid seeing her over the last couple of years. I just don't know what it is about her, but she's got this infuriating aura about her that makes my stomach burn with absolute rage.

Very few can get under my skin, and Jeyla Jenkins sits at the very top of that list.

Chapter 5

Jeyla

CRUEL SUMMER - TAYLOR SWIFT

“SHUT THE FUCK UP!”

Sprawled out on Ash’s bed, I giggle hysterically into her pillow. “Do it again.” I wheeze, wiping away the tears that stream down the side of my face.

Ashlyn lays on her stomach and flaps around demonstrating the comical thrusting of her sexual encounter the night before and pulling one of the most comical faces I’ve ever seen. I howl with laughter again and she giggles. “I’m serious, the entire time I just stared at up him utterly horrified. Honest to God, Jey, I don’t even think I was blinking.”

I use my fingers and wipe away the tears of laughter. “Oh Ash,” I gasp between peals of laughter.

“Bitch, I was shooketh. I was convinced he was having a seizure on top of me. Thank the lord it was over in less than two minutes.” She adds with a shudder.

“I think this is a clear sign that you should give your fanny a rest, love.” I state with a teasing smile, she snorts in response and sits up, crossing her legs.

“You must be joking. If anything, I need to find someone stat to screw me out of that horrid experience.” Ashlyn states matter-of-factly. “Anywho, enough about my disastrous night. I want to hear more about this sexy mystery man of yours.” She gushes grinning at me, her gorgeous jade eyes gleaming with curiosity

“He was...” I trail off, licking my lips when I recall the way his muscles rippled and flexed under my hands with every ragged thrust. “Mind-blowing, in every way possible.” I explain standing up.

Ashlyn watches me, “So, why didn’t you give him your number then?” Ashlyn questions, hugging the little white bear she’s had since we were ten to her chest.

I sigh and pin her with a deadpan look, “Like you don’t know. I told you, I want this summer to be as drama free as possible. The last thing I want is to jump into another relationship. I’m not ready, not after...” I trail off and Ash nods sullenly in understanding. It’s better this way. It was a fun night with a hot guy I’ll never see again. “I can’t lie there was a moment just before I walked out that I felt a little gutted I won’t see him ever again, but at the same time I enjoyed the anonymity of the whole thing. No expectations or waiting and wondering if or when he’ll call.” I mutter looking at my reflection in the mirror and combing my fingers through my hair.

“The boy literally said he wanted to see you Jey, of course he was going to call. What if this was your Mr. Right?” Ashlyn declares.

“No way,” I differ. “I mean, we had a great time and there was chemistry there but Mr Right? Pfft.” I snort with a shake of my head. “It was an unexpected hook up, a one-night tryst that I will remember fondly.” I explain and smile when Ashlyn makes an incredulous sound in response. “A guy that hot is no stranger to hook ups. He has that cocky, bad boy demeanour

girls just eat up. I promise you, he's not the type that can be faithful to one girl."

"Perhaps," Ashlyn voices, twirling her hair thoughtfully with her finger. "Or he could be the love of your life and now you'll never know, you divvo."

I roll my eyes dubiously, "Oh my God, now you're being ridiculous."

Ashlyn giggles, a twinkle lighting up her green eyes. "So... let's move onto the important stuff. How *big* was he?" she questions holding her two index fingers apart, her brows rising with intrigue, and she grins toothily while she waits for me to answer.

I stare at her horrified, my cheeks growing hot. "I'm a lady and a lady doesn't kiss and tell." I throw over my shoulder as I begin walking towards the door.

"A lady my left tit! Oi, where are you going?" Ashlyn calls out after me. "I want every sordid detail, you little tart!"

"I must pee!" I exclaim over my shoulder. Shaking my head and muttering profanities under my breath, I reach for the doorknob to the bathroom when it swings open and I'm swathed in a cloud of steam and heat which surges towards me as soon as the door is open, momentarily obscuring my vision. It takes a couple of seconds until it slowly starts to clear.

A tall, muscular figure appears in front of me, with a white towel hanging loose around his narrow hips. I force myself to drag my eyes up when they linger a little too long at the bulge under the towel. I marvel at the glorious sight before me until my eyes lift to his handsome face.

"Oh... God," I utter, not even making an effort to mask my current state of astonishment.

"Jeez, close your mouth kid, you'll swallow a fly." He teases with a deep throaty chuckle and tucks his long index finger under my chin and pushes my mouth shut.

I gape up at him wide eyed. "Oskie!" I squeal and throw myself into his arms. Ashlyn's oldest brother Oscar laughs and

wraps a muscular arm around my waist, effortlessly lifting me off the ground while we embrace each other tightly.

“Bloody hell,” Oz half chuckles, half groans, looking down at me after he sets me down onto my feet again and we pull apart. “What happened to my chipmunk Jeykins?” he jests playfully pinching my nose.

I swat his hand away, grinning, “Oh no. What in the hulk happened to *you*?” I state gesturing to his now brawny physique. “When did you become such a beefcake?” Oz laughs when I reach out and poke his left pec. “Last time I saw you, you were so thin you could have dodged rain drops so what gives.”

Oz shrugs, proudly flexing his pecs, “Have you met my mum? She’s been force feeding me carbs for two years straight. I had no choice but to hit the gym before I became obese.” Oz explains coolly and rests his shoulder against the doorframe. It doesn’t go unnoticed that his warm brown eyes rake over the length of me. “Growing up suits you, kid.”

I shift under his gaze and ignore the nervous pull at the pit of my stomach. “Oh, stop it.” I modestly wave off his compliment. “I’ve not changed that much, but you on the other hand look like a whole other man all together—not that you were bad looking before...” I point out and instantly regret it when his eyes lock with mine.

Oh my God Jeyla, shut the fuck up!

“Well, thanks I guess,” he utters with a chuckle and rubs the back of his neck. “I do try and work out when I can.”

I grin and shake my head, “Don’t be so modest. This isn’t a physique one gets by working out intermittently.” I express, raising a brow and pinning him with a knowing look. “To maintain a body like that I bet you work out religiously.”

Oz laughs and bites his lip, drawing my attention to his mouth. “If you weren’t five years younger and my sister’s best friend I would have been more than happy to *personally* demonstrate how I keep in such good shape,” he asserts, holding my gaze and inching closer.

Oh boy.

I stare up at him in bewilderment for a beat, unsure of how to respond to his flirty remark. The fifteen-year-old me is swooning hard right now. “Relax kid, I’m just playing.” He adds with a smirk. And I exhale a breath I didn’t even know I was holding. Rolling my eyes playfully I slap his bicep.

Oz and I have always been exceptionally close over the years. I mean, I may have harboured a teeny, tiny crush on him — all right fine, a big crush. How could I not, he was hot, skinny but still attractive. I remember the days he would drive Ashlyn and me around in his sports car and he always made me feel special and protected. A couple of years back when I was seventeen, I had a boy in my college harassing me relentlessly. I didn’t want to make a big deal out of it, but Ashlyn blurted it out in front of Oz and he went berserk. The next day he was waiting outside my college. Till this day he refuses to tell me what he said to him because the boy wouldn’t come within ten feet of me nor look at me for longer than five seconds at a time.

The last time I saw Oscar was over two years ago. Just before he went off to tour the world with his mates, just as Ashlyn and I finished up college and were enrolling for University.

While he’s good looking, he’s also kind, intelligent and a giant history nerd. He got his degree in teaching and began working at our old school as a history teacher. At twenty-seven years old, Oz cherishes his bachelor life and much to his mother’s dismay has no intention of settling down anytime soon. Two years ago, he was tall and lean with shaggy light brown hair and warm chocolate eyes. Now, all the hair is gone and he’s donning a buzz cut. He’s beefed up with bulging biceps and a chiselled chest. It’s clear he’s on gear to bulk but damn does he make it look good. I ogle the ropes and ropes of veins down his forearms.

What is it about those damn bulging veins that are so attractive?

I smirk. “You’re hot, but you’re still not funny, Oskie. Now, move aside and let a lady by.” I jeer impishly and he laughs.

“Oh, you’re no lady chipmunk.” He throws back with a wink and I flip him off before disappearing into the bathroom and closing the door.

While I wash my hands I stare at my reflection in the mirror and smile. Since this morning I’ve been getting flashes of the night before. Fucking hell, come on Jeyla, it was just sex, that’s all. You can stop looking all dreamy eyed now.

I shake off the thoughts running amuck in my head and head out of the bathroom. The moment I step out I’m greeted with music filtering through the door opposite Ashlyn’s room. *Dean’s bedroom*. A chill passes through me while I stare at the door frowning. Who’s in his room? Dean’s at the air force. Ashlyn said he wasn’t coming back for the summer because he was stuck doing some training and she would have told me for sure if he was back home.

“Jeyla!”

I jump out of my thoughts when I hear Ash hollering my name from her bedroom. I look back at Dean’s bedroom door once more before walking off into her bedroom and closing the door behind me.

“Fucking hell, if that was the longest piss in the world.” Ashlyn complains looking up from her phone when I walk in.

Minutes later Ash is chattering on about a party and I’m laying with my head in her lap while she places cooling under-eye gel patches under my puffy eyes from a night of drinking and lack of sleep. I’m adrift, deep in my thoughts. My fingers idly stroking my bare ring finger on my right hand. The giddy feeling of my steamy hook up moments ago vanishes and is almost instantly replaced with thoughts and memories of feelings I’ve been trying so hard to drown out over the past few weeks.

It’s partly the reason I’m back home, seeing my family was just an excuse. I needed to get as far away as possible from

school to heal and hopefully forget the lie I'd been unwittingly living the past year.

Through the ramblings in my mind, I couldn't even hear my best friend calling my name until gives me a soft smack on the forehead to get my attention.

I'd been so lost I didn't even notice my eyes are drowned in tears until I blink, and tears roll down my cheeks. Ashlyn takes one look at me and sighs. "Oh no, Jey, come on babe. You promised, no more crying," she pleads sullenly using her fingers to brush away the tears rolling down the side of my face. "You're ruining your eye patches over that good for nothing scumbag." She states peeling them off and setting them aside.

I nod and sit upright, drying my eyes with the tissue Ash magics out of thin air and hands to me. "I know, and I know he's not worth it, but I can't just magically erase him out of my head or my heart, Ash. It's just not that easy." I admit grimly and lower my gaze to the bunched-up tissue in my hand.

"I know it's not easy, Jey." She sighs taking hold of my hand and squeezing comfortingly. "It's going to take time to get over everything, but you will bounce back from this. That lying sack of shit doesn't deserve your tears, chickita." She asserts lovingly while combing her fingers through my hair.

I smile, albeit sadly and nod, waving my hand silently indicating I'd rather move on from the subject. "Ugh, I know. I'm just being an idiot. What were you saying before?" I ask, drying my eyes with the tissue.

"Oh! I was saying that you'll never guess who called me while you were taking the world's longest piss?" She says, eyes wide and bouncing with elation. "Shane!" She squeals, grinning so broadly she's bearing every single one of her teeth. "He's having a party tonight and he heard that we are back home and wants us to go. You down? Please tell me you're down!"

I groan inwardly, fully intending to say no, because I'm still hanging out of my arse from the night before, but when I

see the excitement gleaming in her eyes over seeing Shane, I just couldn't do it, I couldn't say no. Ash has been infatuated with Shane since we were kids. It wasn't until we were sixteen that he finally started noticing her and they dated on and off for a while.

Perhaps a party is just the distraction I need to drown out the chaos in my head. Then again, I said that about last night and look how that turned out. "Sure, I'm down. I do love a Shane Owens party, *but* I am not drinking tonight. I don't think my liver can take another drop of alcohol," I say, pointing my index finger at her with a playful scowl and she smirks back at me.

"Oh, boo thang, if I had a penny for every time I heard you say that I would be sipping a chilled glass of Cristal in my lavish eight-bedroom mansion right now." Ash points out and I chuckle knowing full well she's right.

"Excuse you, you're the alcoholic one out of the two of us, I'll remind you."

"And I'm fucking proud!" she exclaims jumping off her bed and walking over to her wardrobe. "Now, be a good bestie and help me find the outfit that will blow Shane's eyeballs out of their sockets when he sees me."

"Ash, don't go there again." I advise with a heavy sigh and she stops rummaging through her wardrobe to look back at me over her shoulder. "Boys like Shane don't change, and we both know when it comes to him you melt quicker than a chocolate teapot."

"Jey, come on, give me some credit babe. I'm not the same girl I was two years ago. Neither of us are. I just want him to see what he's missed out on, you know?" she justifies and all I see is the broken hearted girl watching him openly flirting with other girls, completely mugging her off when he's supposed to be dating her.

I'd like to believe that she will have the strength to withstand his charms, but I know my best friend and Shane Owens is her kryptonite. I guarantee she will wind up in his bed tonight and wake up hating herself for it in the morning.

“Just promise me you’ll be cautious, okay?” Ashlyn smiles warmly and holds her index and middle finger up and crosses them before she kisses them.

“I promise.”

Satisfied by her response I smile. “So, what time are we going tonight?” I ask while Ashlyn goes back to pulling out outfit after outfit from her closet.

“It starts at nine.” She replies holding out a red mini skirt to show me. I shake my head and Ashlyn looks at the skirt one last time before putting it back in her wardrobe.

“So... eleven then?” I voice and Ashlyn guffaws. I love her, but Ashlyn’s concept of time differs from the rest of the world—she’s yet to make it on time to *anything*. “Am I driving?”

“Nah, I’m thinking we take a cab. It’s not far and that way you can relax and have a drink or two.” Ashlyn responds showing me a baby blue mini dress with spaghetti straps. I scowl but nod in approval.

“Ash, I am not drinking tonight.” I state firmly and Ashlyn laughs again.

“Not even the devils kiss?” She questions, wagging her brows at me suggestively.

Oh lord, those little blue shots are scrumptious, but oh so dangerous. Each one tastes just like candy going down, but the aftereffects are lethal. I had three the last time and I couldn’t remember my own damn name the next morning. “Nah uh, no, no not after the way I suffered last time. I may have a beer... maybe.”

“Jey, as your best friend it is my duty to point out when you are being a killjoy.” Ash states, taking hold of my shoulders and stepping closer to me. “You’re shitting all over my vibe here, boo. What did we say before we came back home? We are here to have fun, remember?” I nod and she smiles drawing me in for a hug. “There’s my girl, now shake off that grandma inside holding you hostage and embrace your youth!”

“Ugh fine!” I gripe as we pull apart. “But you’ll have to pick your own outfit because I’m going home to take a long nap. Please be ready by nine. I’ll meet you at mine?” I say as I make my way to her bedroom door.

Ashlyn chuckles. “Yep, I’ll be sure to be on time.” She jests teasing me about my rhyming. I flip her off and walk out of her room, shaking my head when I could still hear her cackling to herself.

“Jeeeeeey,” I stop at the bottom of the stairs when I hear her call my name.

“What?” I reply leaning over to look up from where I’m stood at the bottom of the staircase.

“I forgot to mention,” I hear her voice before I see her head pop over the wooden balustrade, and by the look on her face I already know I’m not going to like what she’s about to say. “Dean’s back.”

See, I told you.

Fuck.

And just like that my good mood from before sours instantly at the mention of the devil’s spawn. I scowl up at her, a gradual torrent of annoyance travels from deep within my gut while she grins down at me. “What?” I grit out through clenched teeth. “You said he was stuck at base and not coming back till October?” I whisper shout so Aunt Taylor doesn’t hear me.

Ashlyn shrugs, smiling apologetically and looks over at his door and back at me again. “He *was*, he wasn’t supposed to be back, but he decided to surprise us all by coming home earlier.” She quickly elucidates and I roll my eyes, balling my hands to fists by my side.

Well, isn’t this just the cherry on top of my cake. There isn’t a snowballs chance in hell that I’ll avoid running into that cockhead for the entire summer.

“I love you.” Ash sings and I shake my head.

“Shut up.”



After a much-needed shower and a nice long nap, the throbbing in my temples finally eases off. Five minutes past ten that evening a cab pulls up on the very street I spent countless days hanging out with the kids I went to school with. Outside, the house is crowded, people everywhere and music thumping at a deafening volume from inside. How has no one shut this party down yet? Ashlyn and I step out of the car and look at the house and then each other. We smile fondly and coil our arms as we walk to the door together.

After way too much deliberating, I settled for a pair of white ripped shorts and a white lace crop top showing off my midriff. My long dark hair is curled and left to flow freely down my back. Ashlyn, had on a black denim button down dress, her hair straightened and pulled up into a ponytail.

Shane's place looks the same, only difference is the colour of the walls. Gone is the tacky sunflower wallpaper and replaced with brilliant white paint and modern furniture. Ash mentioned on the car ride that he bought his parents place after they decided to up and move to Spain to retire.

I could feel the eyes of the men around us, leering as we manoeuvre through the crowd of people toward the kitchen. I smile at a couple of the guys when they greet me with a nod. I'm already dreading the small talk I'll be forced to make throughout the night.

"Jeez, that's a lot of people crammed into one house." I point out as we squeeze through a group standing by the kitchen door conversing and drinking from their white plastic cups.

"Of course, it's a Shane Owens party, what did you expect? Oh shit, there's Shane. Fuck, how do I look?" Ashlyn says looking down at herself and then at me for validation. "Do I look all right?"

"You look to die for, chick." I assure grinning at her encouragingly. "Oh, uh, don't spaz out, but he's seen you and

he's making his way over here," I inform her discreetly and her green eyes grow wide.

"Ash T?" he intones, his blue eyes wide as he takes her in, inch by inch when she spins to face him.

"Shane," Ashlyn purrs sultrily up at the handsome brunette towering over her small frame. God damn, the rumours Ashlyn heard are absolutely on point. Shane has certainly grown into his looks. I mean, he was hot before, but puberty sure did wonders for him.

For a good thirty seconds neither of them says anything and only stare at one another smiling, seemingly having a silent conversation between themselves whilst I awkwardly stand behind Ashlyn trying not to choke on the sexual tension coming off them in waves.

"It's been a minute," Ashlyn finally says, her eyes openly sweeping over the length of him with absolutely zero subtlety in sight.

Shane's lips curl, flashing her his trademark grin, his eyes never leaving hers, "It sure has. You look..." He trails off smiling down at her and licking his lips appreciatively before his eyes lift over her shoulder, finally noticing me standing there. "Jeykins," he greets amiably, and I roll my eyes playfully at the nickname. "What a treat the two of you are to the eyes," he drawls flirtatiously, taking Ash's hand and brushing a kiss over her knuckles.

I grin while Ashlyn turns a lovely shade of pink. "Only the eyes?" she probes, and he grins, drawing his bottom lip between his teeth and pinning her with an unruly look that even gets me a little weak in the knees.

"You tell me," he burrs, pulling her hand until she's pressed up against him.

"Okay! I promised myself I wasn't going to drink, but now I need one," I pipe up eyeing them with distaste. "Or *five*." I shudder and excuse myself, leaving them to eye fuck one another in peace. I've lost her for the night anyway.

I walk over to the drinks laid out on the kitchen counter and couldn't help but chuckle to myself. You'd think she would at least make it a little bit of a challenge for him. Ashlyn isn't one to fall at some boy's feet heedlessly, but Shane for some reason short circuits her brain and she can't think straight.

I suppose, when you like someone so much it's easy to overlook your pride. I admire her though, unlike myself, she's the type that will go for looks over personality. As far as she's concerned if a boy doesn't make her eyeballs sweat with one glance, he's absolutely not going to make her moist between the legs. So far, that tactic has worked for her. I can safely say till this day she's never let any boy close enough to hurt her. However, I see something different in her when she talks about or is even around Shane Owens.

That boy has had her attention since we were all in school and hung out in the same crowd all through college. Ashlyn's no fool, she's always known Shane's a playboy, but that never stopped her from letting him know she was interested.

While I take a sip of my drink, I notice a group of my friends from college in the corner of the kitchen and make my way over to them.

Might as well mingle.

Chapter 6

Dean

ANIMALS - MAROON 5 

“CHEER UP BRO, fuck me, it’s a party not a funeral.” Oz jokes, slapping my shoulder while we walk through the front door to Shane Owens house party.

This stinking party is the last place I want to be, but Oz and the boys dragged me here anyway despite my refusing profusely. Years ago, this would have been my scene, but Shane and I haven’t been on good terms for a while now, not since he started fucking around with my sister back in college. I wouldn’t mind if he was a decent guy and treated her right, but the fucking cockhead leads her on until he gets what he wants then drops her when he’s bored. No one treats my sister like that unless of course they have a fucking death wish.

I roll my eyes and shake Oz’s hand off my shoulder irritably. “I wouldn’t bet on it. The night is young, it may just turn into a funeral if twat Owens so much as blinks in my direction.”

Oz chuckles glancing around the room, “Well shit, if it isn’t the pot calling the kettle black. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not exactly thrilled with the way Shane fucks around with Ash, but is it really any different to what you do with girls, bro? Aren’t you being just a little hypocritical?”

I stop walking and turn to pin my brother with a scornful glare, “First of all, the girls I *fuck* know the deal beforehand. I don’t fill their heads with promises I have no intention of keeping. Secondly, unless I’m looking to date them, I don’t fuck the same girl twice, so no, I’m not a fucking hypocrite.” I bite out and Oz smiles back at me which only adds to my annoyance.

Oz whistles lowly, his brown eyes focusing on something behind me. “Speaking of girls, there’s a smoking ten checking you out,” he gestures behind me with his brows. “Three o’clock.” he finishes nudging me with his shoulder. “Go get your dick wet, maybe then you’ll be more pleasant to be around.” I turn my head to look back and frown when a redhead smiles and waves at me flirtatiously.

I greet her with a nod and sigh before I turn to face my brother again, “Nah, not feeling her. I need a fucking drink if I’m going to be forced to endure this shit show you dicks call a party.” I utter, scanning the living room for a bar or drinks table.

“He usually keeps the drinks in the kitchen. You go and get those, and I’m going to go mingle with that redhead and her friend.” Oz states, nodding his head in the direction of the blonde smiling at him.

I shake my head and make a beeline for the kitchen, stopping to fist bump and chat with some old friends from college along the way. The house is so crowded, and I’m finding myself growing more and more irritable by the second every time I’m having to squeeze and push past people to get to the kitchen. When I finally make it to the kitchen, I find the drinks on the island in the middle and pour myself and Oz a Jack Daniels and coke. I take a long sip of my drink and sigh when the alcohol burns the back of my throat.

Fuck yes.

The RAF prohibits any alcohol consumption whilst on the training program. Whether you're on or off duty, if you're found with a drop of alcohol or any drugs in your system, your arse is out. It's been almost two years since I've had a drink, and when I tell you I've longed for the feeling of kicking back with a scotch or vodka lemonade.

Drinks in hand I once again make my way through the crowded kitchen toward the door leading out into the back garden. It's already so humid it's suffocating out, but it's disgustingly stifling in that house what with the hundred odd people jam packed into one space.

I stand outside and lean against the wall; setting the two drinks in my hands on the rattan dining table outside, I light up a cigarette and take a long pull, holding it in for a second waiting for that transitory buzz of epinephrine to hit me before I close my eyes and exhale, forcing the smoke out of my lungs.

When I open my eyes, I stare up at the clear sky and I sigh. My mind fleetingly wanders off to the mysterious girl I spent the night with. I've been kicking myself for not asking for her number. It's not an easy feat and takes a lot for a girl to leave such an exceptional impression on me. I groan inwardly when I recall the silkiness of her skin, her plump velvet lips, so damn perfect for kissing.

I shake my head, swiftly forcing away the thoughts of her. "Fuck," I grumble and flick the cigarette away after taking one last pull from it. I blow out the smoke and walk back inside and spot Oz necking off with the blonde he's been eyeing.

Pfft, and he's got the cheek to call me a player.

"Yo, D man, where the fuck you been?" Jonah Wiles, one of my old school friends questions, slapping me on the back.

I smile and fist bump him, "Was out back for some fresh air and a quick smoke." I tell him, shaking my head, politely declining when he offers me a bottle of beer. I hold up drink, "Nah mate, I'm good for now."

A roar of laughter coming from the corner of the room catches my attention from a group of four girls. I glance over at them, sitting on the L-shaped, brown leather sofa, each one looking as pretty as the last. However, there's one that has her back to me, I couldn't see her face but she's animatedly swinging her arms as though she's explaining something evidently humorous because they all double over in laughter.

Intrigued, I slyly move to the left of the room to get a better angle. Even through the loud thumping of the music I could hear her melodious laugh, but it's not until she turns and glances over her shoulder that I see her face and my suspicions are confirmed. "No fucking way," I whisper to myself, when her eyes veer and lock with mine across the room.

God has answered my silent prayers.

What are the odds that I run into her two nights in a row? Why is she even here? Does she know Shane and if we run in the same circles why have I not seen her before now?

The startled look on her pretty face tells me she wasn't expecting to see me again either. Those beautiful green eyes I've spent the last twelve hours daydreaming about are wide, and her full lips parted while we continue to stare at one another from across the room.

I've never been a believer of coincidences but I sure as shit am now. There's no way I'm letting her get away again. When I start walking over to her, she spins to look at her friends before she takes something from the redhead sitting on the sofa to her left. My eyes follow her when she gets up from the sofa and moves toward the kitchen.

Oh, where do you think you're dashing off to, little mouse?

I push my way through the crowd in the direction of the kitchen, keeping my eyes on her as she navigates through the party goers dancing or standing around talking. "Hi," I halt when the redhead suddenly steps in my way.

"Not now," I dismiss frostily and sidestep her, continuing my pursuit of the gorgeous brunette that's been plaguing my

mind since the very moment I had a taste of her.

If it's a chase she wants, I'll happily abide.

I'll chase her to the end of the earth just for another taste.

Chapter 7

Jeyla

CHASING CARS - SNOW PATROL

OH SHIT.

Shitting fucking hell, how did he find me?

When our eyes interlock across the room, I literally felt my heart jump right up into my throat and get lodged there. Sheer panic consumes me when he takes a step toward me and I grab a cigarette from Haden. I don't even smoke, but I'm desperate for an excuse to escape and that's all I could think up in that moment.

Have you ever felt your heartbeat in your nether regions? I have, for the second time in two days. There is no way this is a coincidence. Oh God, is he stalking me? Why must I always attract the ones with screws loose?

I look at the cigarette in my hand and sigh when I realise I don't have a lighter to light the damn thing.

Nice one, Jeyla.

“Need a light?” burrs that deep silken voice I never thought I’d have the pleasure of hearing again. I suck in a quick breath and swallow against the aridity of my throat before slowly turning to face him and my God there he stood, the lord of sexiness in all his six-foot glory.

Damn it, my mind did no justice when conjuring up images of him earlier in the day when I had dreams of all the filthy things I crave he was there to do to me.

He’s even sexier now than he was last night.

“I do,” I answer, watching him closely as he inches closer to me. I blink when he pulls a lighter out of nowhere and sparks up a flame in front of my face.

I ignore the nervous pull in my gut and peer up at him while holding the cancer stick to my lips. Our eyes meet over the amber flame while I light it up, drawing in the smoke and blowing it out seconds later.

The rush of nicotine charges straight to my head making me a touch woozy, but I manage to keep myself steady despite my knees trembling in warning. I am deeply regretting those jelly vodka shots I consumed earlier.

The lighter flicks shut, and he stuffs it back into the right pocket of the black denim jeans he’s wearing.

“Two encounters in twenty-four hours. Do I need to be worried?” I question, licking my lips and cocking my brow at him inquisitively.

A slow knowing smile spreads across his handsome face. “Keep licking your lips in that inviting manner and you’ll have plenty to worry about,” he elucidates in warning, his eyes peering down into my upturned face.

Smiling, I bring the cigarette to my lips and take another pull before blowing the smoke in his face. His green eyes narrow as he lifts his hand and takes the cigarette from my fingers, takes a pull and tosses it aside discarding it. I look over at my cigarette and then at him, scowling. “I was smoking that.”

“And now you’re not.” He states matter-of-factly before taking hold of my chin. “If you’re looking for a dirty habit to indulge in Angel, I’ll readily volunteer myself as a substitute.” He declares brushing his thumb over my lower lip, “I can think of far better uses for this perfect mouth than sucking on a cancer stick.” I feel my jaw slacken at his words and blink up at him. This boy surely can’t be real. Did my lecherous mind just conjure him up, or perhaps pluck him out of my dreams?

“Is that right?” I probe, holding his gaze steadily and he nods. On the outside I may be coming across confident and cool—at least I hope I am—but inside, his touch combined with his words feels like I’m burning slowly with the hottest kind of fire straight from the pits of hell. “Well, that sounds... intriguing, though I am still wondering what you’re doing here?”

“I’m doing what one is expected to do at parties. Having a drink and flirting with the most beautiful girl here.” He responds with a smirk and pins me with a look so sinful the devil himself would be proud. “Are you really going to stand there and pretend you’re not pleased to see me?”

I laugh and curl my fingers around his wrist to the hand that is still lightly gripping my jaw. “Oh sweetie, you don’t know me well enough to discern what pleases me. Though, it’s blatantly clear that you’re very pleased to see *me* again.” I answer boldly and pull his hand away from my face.

“Oh no?” There’s a challenge in that deep voice of his that matches the wicked look in his green eyes. “Would you like me to demonstrate right here and now the number of ways I know *exactly* how to please you?” He offers, brushing away a loose strand of my hair and tucking it behind my ear. “If I let my fingers wander down between your thighs, are you telling me I won’t find your sweet pussy completely soaked for me?”

Every orifice in my body is on fire and I can feel myself losing my cognitive functions one bit at a time.

For the love of Larry, keep your shit and your legs together, Jeyla!

Yes, he may be unbelievably sexy, but I refuse to give him the satisfaction of thinking he has some sort of power over me. “No,” I lift my gaze to peer up at him and slowly lick my lips. “I assure you; you absolutely will find me... *wet*.” I intone teasingly, inching a touch closer until our noses are almost touching. “However, that’s not really related to you specifically, I’m just one of those fortunate girls who happen to always be readily lubricated.”

This is absolutely not an odd conversation to be having at a party with a handsome stranger I spent the previous night doing wicked things with.

He grins suggestively and closes the small space between our chests tugging me against him, “Readily huh?” he questions, “Now Angel, why would you go and disclose something sexy like that when I’ve already spent all day thinking about how sinfully addictive and remarkably good you taste.”

“Ahh, so, a little mystery does pay off after all.” I point out and he responds with a smirk that practically melts my thong right off.

“I wasn’t so sure, but now I’ve had a taste of you, anonymity has never been more amatory,” he drawls taking hold of my chin again, his eyes lowering to stare at my mouth. “Listen, I don’t know about you, but I was ready to blow off this party and go hunt down a place, I could devour a kebab right now. Interested in joining or are you content staying back at this yawn-fest masquerading as a party?”

A moment passes between us and when he slowly lifts his eyes, all I could do is gaze into them utterly enthralled. The word *yes* lingers at the tip of my tongue, but I force myself to swallow it. “As enticing as a kebab sounds right now, I actually came here with my friend, and I can’t just up and ditch her.” I explain, swallowing thickly when he inches close enough that I could smell the woody and citrusy scent of his aftershave up close and personal.

He sucks in a slow breath and slowly exhales a second later, “Moral as well as beautiful,” he croons, brushing the

back of his fingers along my jaw. “Fuck, if you’re not becoming more and more attractive by the second.” I smile coyly and lean into his touch, my eyes closing when his lips start to descend upon mine. “How do I change your mind?” he whispers, his lips brushing mine lightly as he speaks.

“You can’t,” I breathe, my lips readily parting for him. A sudden clatter and shattering of glass reverberates from the direction of the kitchen, rudely interrupting the moment. We pull apart and I inwardly wince at the disappointment that spreads right across my chest.

“I beg to differ.” He counters taking a step toward me when I start slowly backing away from him.

“Do you now?”

His tongue darts out and I watch almost fanatically as he drags it across his lower lip, his eyes narrowing wickedly while he continues to advance on me. “Mhm, your lips may be saying no, but the impetuous look in your eyes is telling me a different story, Angel.”

My brows furrow, “And what story is that?”

“That you’re putting on a façade to appear impervious, but you’re not fooling anyone, baby. Definitely not with the way your pupils are dilated, and the way you keep staring at my mouth and licking your lips. Those are all evident signs that you’re craving another taste of what we shared last night,” he declares, reaching over and curling his long fingers at my nape and drawing me up against him again.

My heart nearly springs through my chest thinking he was going in for a kiss, but instead he lowers his head and presses his forehead to mine. “Just as desperately as I do,” he bald-facedly states and the wayward promise in his eyes ignites an irrepressible inferno deep in my gut—and *nether regions*.

“I can’t.” I murmur, swallowing thickly when I feel the warmth of his breath against my lips. “My friend...”

“Isn’t around,” he interjects. “We’ve been out here for the last twenty minutes, and she’s not come looking for you yet.” I open my eyes and look up in time to see him smiling. “If she’s

as pretty as you are, I assure you one of my boys are already keeping her occupied enough to not notice you're gone." I quickly swallow the moan that almost permeates past my lips when I feel the softness of his breath dragging along my jaw while he speaks to me in a low sensual tone.

I already know Ash isn't with one of his boys, there isn't a soul in that house that will deflect her attention from Shane—in fact I'm sure she's got him on his knees doing all sorts of immoral things to her I'll no doubt have the pleasure of hearing all about tomorrow.

I can't lie though, I feel my self-control slipping the closer his mouth is getting to my ear, and when he finally gets there, I will fold quicker than a wet newspaper. "Well, you do make a valid point and I am getting hungry. I suppose there's no harm in going for a quick bite to eat." I sigh when he nips at my ear, and my stomach does a somersault when I feel him smiling against my cheek.

When he draws back and our eyes meet, the devilry lingering behind his gaze and the grin makes me shiver inwardly—not at all in a creepy way, but in a manner that causes every nerve in my body to heighten and tingle with anticipation. "Shall we then?"

I nod and narrow my eyes before pressing my index finger against his strapping chest and jutting my chin to look up at him, silently hoping I'll come across unambiguous. "You can bear that sexy grin all you want. There will not be a repeat of last night. I'm not sleeping with you again." I state straightforwardly, and he lets out a low throaty chuckle at my candour and wets those full lips.

The fingers he has curled at the nape of my neck come forward and he brushes the loose strand of my hair and tucks it gently behind my ear, "No sleeping, roger that."

"You're incorrigible," I chuckle when he smirks boyishly back at me and holds his hand out. I lower my gaze to his hand and take it, following him out the back door and down the street to his car.

I stop walking when I see the black Lexus parked up. This isn't the car we left in last night. No, this car is identical to the one that almost ran me over yesterday.

“Wait, I thought you drove a BMW? Whose car is this?” I question, turning to eye him warily.

“This is my car. The BMW is my mates,” I pull my hand out of his and he looks down and back up at me, his brows fusing, “Something wrong?”

“Oh my God,” I gasp, staring at the gold L badge on the grill of the car. “I couldn't make out your face because it was dark, but the car, the car I will never forget.” I utter and turn to look up at him. “You're the guy that almost ran me over yesterday!”

For a moment he stares at me with his dark brows bunched together tightly until realisation dawns on him and his eyes widen. “Oh fuck,” he chuckles lifting his hand to rub the back of his neck awkwardly. “That's why you seem so familiar to me. You're the girl that jumped in front of my car and then called me a colossal asshat.”

I cross my arms over my chest and glare at him irritably. “I didn't jump in front of your car, I was trying to cross the road. You would have seen me had you not been doubling the speed limit.” I bite back hotly, and he grins back at me, further adding to my annoyance.

“Doubling? I was barely doing thirty, and you're standing there chewing me out when you're the one crossing the road while texting and not looking where you're going.” He justifies with a shrug while I continue to glare at him.

Okay fine, maybe he does have a point. I was texting and may not have been paying attention as I should have, but he shouldn't have been speeding on a residential road.

“Whether I was texting or not is irrelevant, because as far as the Highway Code goes, *you* as the *driver* have the obligation to protect pedestrians and I need to tell you, I wasn't feeling particularly protected with you almost running

me down and then criticizing me on top of it.” I point out, and scowl when he laughs.

“*Criticizing you?* You’re one that called me blind, I’ll remind you,” he points out, resting his arms on the top of his car and staring at me all cool and unfazed.

I roll my eyes incredulously, and take a step toward him, holding up my index finger. “First of all, I didn’t call you blind. I *asked* if you *were* blind.” I elucidate and hold up my middle finger. “Secondly, what sort of person almost runs someone down and doesn’t even have the courtesy to get out of their car and check if they’re okay and apologise for scaring them half to death?”

I scowl and force down the aggravation teetering at the surface when he nonchalantly shrugs again, “Well, you seemed perfectly fine, enough to stand there and hurl insults at me at least.”

I exhale slowly and count to ten in my head to calm myself before I take off my shoe and beat the beautiful buffoon with it, “You know what, I think this about concludes our evening. Try not to kill anyone on your drive back.” I utter snidely and spin on my heels to walk off toward Shane’s house when I feel a warm yet firm grip on my wrist and I’m hauled back against his strong frame, my back pressed against his brawny chest.

“Where do you think you’re going, Angel?” he burrs in my ear. Sodding Christ, the irritation I felt moments ago vanishes almost instantly and I’m practically swooning when I hear his deep voice in my ear. “If you’re waiting for an apology, you’re not getting one, because I’m not sorry that I almost hit you with my car. If anything, I’m pleased it was you. It also validates my suspicions that for some bizarre reason we were meant to meet and I’m not letting you walk away this time. Furthermore, it gives me another reason to want to do this.” He expresses and spins me around, dips his head and swallows my surprised gasp with a kiss so deep it makes my head swim.

My eyes close and I moan when his tongue dexterously glides over mine deepening the kiss. Much to my dismay, the kiss doesn’t last long when a car drives by and honks its horn

at us ruining the moment and we are forced to move out of the way to let him by.

“So, you still up for that kebab?” he probes, smiling adorably and pulls me toward his car when I nod.



Less than an hour later the two of us are sprawled out on the hood of his car overlooking the river Thames while we eat our kebab rolls— no onions, *obviously*. He brought us to a secluded spot away from the commotion of the city. The moon radiates brightly in the clear night sky and the lights from the London skyline ahead of us twinkle in the distance.

It almost feels like a setting right out of a cheesy romance novel or a movie, it is that perfect.

I heave a sigh and lift my gaze up to the sky. The music playing in the background from inside his car stops for a second as we both fall into a comfortable silence.

“What are you thinking about so deeply over there?” I hear him murmur from beside me.

“Do you ever wonder what else is out there?” I ask and from the corner of my eye, I see him shift his gaze up to look at the clear night sky.

“Aside from the planets and trillions of galaxies, you mean?” he questions, and I nod mutely. “Yeah, sometimes.”

“Doesn’t it fascinate you?” I ask distantly. “I mean, we have only discovered five percent of the universe, *five percent*. We are literally surrounded by a corpus of unknowns. There’s likely a whole other life out there that may never be discovered. Think about it, there could be two people sitting in the exact position we are in right now, doing the exact same thing.” I say, turning to look at him.

He smiles handsomely and turns his gaze to look at me also, “There could be, but do you think they’re having as good a time as we are?”

“I really hope so.” I reply breathily, holding his gaze. Chasing Cars by Snow Patrol starts to play from his radio. My pulse soars when his hand brushes mine between us and his long fingers lace with mine. The gesture is so trivial, but it fires tremors throughout my body.

Those darn butterflies take flight in my stomach and flutter wildly while I do my best to veil the blush I can feel forming on my cheeks. When he starts to affectionately play with my fingers my eyes drop to our hands intertwined.

Come on Jeyla, don't you dare go and get smitten this soon.

I look up a moment later and find him watching me intently. He's got me locked in his gaze and I couldn't look away if I tried. Our eyes remain interlocked for what seemed like an eternity until he slowly starts to lean forward and his eyes lower to my lips as he inches towards me.

My eyes slowly start to close and my lips readily part for him and just as his mouth is about to claim mine the shrill ringing of my phone interrupts the moment.

“Oh, that's me. I should...” I sigh as we start to draw back. I offer him an apologetic smile while I scramble to fish my phone out of my handbag. I see Ash's name on the caller ID and curse her inwardly. Of course, it would be her to ruin the moment. I mean, I've only waited a couple of hours to kiss him again.

“Hello?”

“Oh, she lives. Where the hell are you, bitch?” Ashlyn's voice reverberates down the phone through the loud music in the background. “I've been looking for you everywhere?”

Sitting up, I hold my index finger up to my date indicating that I'll be a minute as I slide off the car and move away to speak to Ashlyn privately. “Were you now? Did you have a tough time locating me down Shane's trousers? Did you manage to do a thorough search in his mouth too while you were at it?” I bite back sardonically and hear her groaning on the other end.

“Jeykins, I’m so sorry, how mad are you at me right now?”

“Royally and it’s going to take a shit ton of pleading to earn my forgiveness this time.”

“Nothing happened with Shane. I promise I was good... ish.” Ashlyn claims and I roll my eyes, smiling. She’s truly impossible.

“Nothing happened?” I iterate wryly. “You forget who you’re talking to? You lose all good sense when you’re around that boy, it’s been that way since you were sixteen.”

“It’s different this time, Jey... he’s different.” Ashlyn states jauntily and it’s almost impossible to ignore the mirth laced in her voice. I would be happy for her if I didn’t already know that this will end the same way it always does—with her heart broken when Shane tells her he would rather stay friends. The loud music and chatter in the background quietens when she likely takes the call outside to hear me better.

“I know you really want to believe that but repeating the same mistakes and expecting a different result is just foolish, babe.” I advise and hear her heave a sigh on the other end.

“Come on Jey, that silly, infatuated teenager that spent her days fawning over him is long gone. We’re playing on my terms this time and I have no intention of getting burned again, trust me.” Ash asserts and I lift my gaze heavenward, shaking my head incredulously. “Enough about me, where the hell are you? Did you hook up?”

I glance back at my date, standing a couple of feet away looking out at the river. “Uh, sort of.” I answer with a smile.

Ash squeals and I wince pulling the phone away before she bursts my ear drums. “Two nights in a row, you hoe bag! Who is it? Is it someone I know? I want every sordid detail first thing tomorrow and don’t forget protection! Safe sex is good sex!” She cackles down the phone.

I redden profusely when my date turns and catches me watching him. “Oh my God please stop talking, I’m hanging up now.”

“Wait! Don’t forget to share your location.”

“I will, now bugger off.” I murmur through clenched teeth and end the call.

“Sorry about that,” I apologise, brushing my hair away my face when the gentle breeze blows it in my face.

“Everything okay?” he questions, his eyes thinning ever so slightly while he observes me. I nod, moving to join him by the steel bar railings.

“Yeah, just my friend checking in when she couldn’t find me at the party.” I inform him with a coy smile which he returns. As the time ticks on into the early hours, the temperature starts to drop, especially combined with the cool breeze coming off the water. I wrap my arms around myself to shield off the chill when a shiver passes through me and goosebumps breakout over my skin. “Are you cold?” Despite the shivering, the way those startling eyes of his are staring directly into mine heats up my insides.

“Just a little,” I answer, veering my gaze from his to stare my feet. When I look up again, he’s looking at the watch on his wrist smiling.

“It’s almost five in the morning. The sun will rise soon, but if you’re cold we can go?” he offers, stepping closer to place his hands at the balls of my shoulders and draw me closer to him. He does nothing to mask the displeasure in his tone at the possibility of the night being over.

My brows rise in surprise. I mean, I figured it was late but staying up till almost dawn talking with a guy is a first for me. I glance over at the river again and smile. I wasn’t ready to call it a night just yet, so I turn my gaze back to him and shrug. “I would hate to miss out on a beautiful sunrise on account of being cold. I’d like to stay a little longer if that’s okay with you?”

His smile broadens into a full-on grin, “That’s more than fine with me. Besides, I may have a couple of ideas in mind to keep you warm.”

“Oh, I bet you do,” I laugh heartily. “I’m still not sleeping with you.”



“Here is good.” The car pulls over and rolls to a stop on the side of the street I’ve been to many times before throughout my childhood. I may have fibbed a little and gave him directions to a former friend’s address and told him I’m staying there for the summer. I’ve known this boy two days and I absolutely don’t know him well enough to give him my parents’ address. It’s not like we’re dating, it’s just a casual summer fling and I have every intention to keep him that way.

“So, this was fun.”

Smiling demurely, I shift in my seat to face him properly and nod, “Definitely not how I saw my night ending, but yeah it was most certainly memorable.” I express courteously. Our eyes interlock and we stare at one another, a knowing smile on both our faces. Jesus, those eyes and the meaningful looks he gives me does things to me—unspeakable things.

Clearing my throat, I force myself to break eye contact, because a second longer staring into those eyes I would have shamelessly hurled myself at him and attacked that beautiful mouth of his while simultaneously begging him to fuck me hard enough to split me in two.

Images of the night we slept together flood my mind and my clit pulses with need causing me to almost moan out loud.

Ugh! Since when have I become a sex crazed harlot?

I stare down at my handbag, mentally reprimanding myself for thinking such vulgarity.

I can feel his piercing gaze right through the side of my head while I pretend to look for my keys in my clutch.

“I really want to see you again.” I stop fumbling and slowly turn my head to look over at him again.

“You do?”

He nods and reaches over to take my hand into his and chuckles somewhat awkwardly before he lifts his gaze to

mine. “This might come as no shock to you, but I’m not really a relationship kind of guy. I honestly can’t remember the last time I had such an incredible time with a girl—one that didn’t wind up with sex.” He explains, licking his lips. “I like you. I like you a lot and I meant what I said to you that night we first met. This wasn’t just a one-time thing. I would like to continue seeing you, if that’s something you want, too?” I stare at him for a beat, too stunned to speak while I try to sift through my thoughts.

Do I want to see him again? Yes, *hell yes*. Am I terrified of getting sucked into another relationship before fully recovering from another? *Most definitely*.

“Um, y-yeah, I would like to see you again, too.” I say and lower my gaze to our hands clasped together before speaking again. “I just, I need be honest. I’m not looking for anything serious. I’m only back for the summer and I’ll be leaving in a few weeks for Uni and the last thing I need is to complicate my life further by adding an unattainable relationship into the mix. Do you understand?” I explain ruefully.

“Actually, I completely understand. I’m not looking for anything serious either. I’m not asking you to be my girlfriend or marry me,” he says with a chuckle. “We don’t even have to put a label on it. We can just hang out for the summer, as friends?” he finishes and I pin him with an incredulous look to which he responds to with a smirk.

“Friends?” I intone warily and he nods.

“Friends,” he repeats, smiling charmingly. “Honestly, I think I need a change. I’m tired of being around the same type of girls. I think you’re the change I’ve been looking for.”

I laugh. “Oh, come on, I’m sure a guy like yourself has a catalogue of women he can choose from.” I tease him and he shakes his head, grinning.

“Yes, but not one that isn’t always looking for or wanting more than I’m willing to offer, you know?” I purse my lips and narrow my eyes at him, and he chuckles amused, “What? Don’t give me that look, I’m not in the market for a wife or looking to settle down just yet.”

“Mhm,” I hum playfully, “Whatever you say, Casanova. This is probably a very bad idea, but hand me your phone.” He eyes me questioningly and reaches for his back pocket, pulling out his phone, unlocking it before handing it to me.

I take it from him and save my number as ‘?’ and hand it back to him with a smirk. “If you want to hang out again, give me a call.” I say reaching for the door.

“I’ll be sure to do that.” I hear him say and let out a throaty laugh a moment later. “Wait? Really? A question mark?”

Laughing, I slip out of his car and walk around to the driver’s side while he watches me. He grins when I poke my head in through the open window and brush a gentle kiss on the corner of his mouth.

When I draw back, we share a meaningful look, before I flash him a teasing smile, “I’ll see you, *friend*.”

I turn to walk off and just about take a step when I hear his car door open and he catches my wrist, stopping me. I glance back at him over my shoulder and gasp in surprise when he tugs on my arm and pulls me back into the car so I’m sitting in his lap.

“What are you doing?” I question, lifting my gaze to meet his mischievous one while fighting off the blush I can feel forming on my cheeks.

“That’s no way to say good night, Angel,” he voices and curls his long fingers at my nape and draws my mouth to his. The moment his lips touch mine I forget whatever sardonic remark I have lined up and melt into the kiss. Our tongues glide and duel heatedly evoking a deep guttural moan from deep in his throat when I suck on his tongue. When I start to pull away, he catches my bottom lip between his teeth and tuts. “Not enough,” he groans into my mouth and pulls me in for another prolonged kiss.

God damn, if he isn’t an incredible kisser. The boy can kiss life back into the dead with those skills.

We kiss until my lungs start to burn in protest and I pull my head back a little to end the kiss and catch my breath.

“Well, we managed to stay friends for all of two hours. That’s got to be a new record.” I sigh when he brushes his fingers through my hair and gazes longingly into my eyes.

“What do you mean? We’re still friends.” He states, kissing me chastely on the lips.

“Friends don’t kiss.”

He grins, brushing his lips against mine, “Who says they don’t?” comes his hushed response, “It’s our friendship, our rules.” My eyes close and I bite my bottom lip, my head lulling back when he starts kissing and nipping at my neck. “We can be friends that kiss,” he murmurs sucking the sensitive spot behind my ear while his free hand slowly inches up my bare thigh.

“Well, you do make it rather difficult to disagree with you when you do that.” I breathe lustily, basking in the mind-blowing commotion his mouth is currently causing between my legs.

“What? This...” he murmurs sinking his teeth into my neck and sucking hard until he leaves a nice red mark behind.

“Yes,” I lament breathless.

“Allow me to exhibit my power of persuasion a little more then, Angel.” he burrs, licking his way up my neck and stopping to nip at my ear.

When he dips the tip of his tongue in my ear, I lose all cognitive function and become a wet noodle in his arms. “Oh my God.”

“Now, tell me this isn’t the best kind of friendship?” he drawls, cupping a handful of my thigh and squeezes while he grinds that mammoth erection into my hip.

I manage to scrape up a speck of self-control and draw back enough to get some blood flowing to my brain again. “You’re a very bad man.” I chide him playfully and he grins back at me waywardly and brushes his nose down the length of mine.

“Would you like me to demonstrate just how bad I can *truly* be, baby?” I stare into his eyes, and do nothing to stop him when his fingers disappear between my legs. Even though my pussy is practically salivating at the mere thought of being touched by him, I curl my fingers at his wrist and stop him before he could push aside the opening of my shorts and get to my wet folds.

“As tempting as that offer is *friend*, I should be going.” I say and smile when he kisses my temple which elicits a yawn from me. “Seriously, if you don’t let me go, I’m going to fall asleep right here on top of you,” I warn him with a pout and he hums, his thumb tenderly massaging my neck.

“You won’t be hearing any complaints from me on that note, gorgeous. I’ll quite happily take you back to my bed and we can sleep together.” My eyes flutter open, and I raise a brow fixing him with a pointed look. He cocks his head to the side and licks his lips while he caresses my jaw affectionately. “Well, fuck, you’re not helping the situation in my trousers fixing me with an amorous look like that, Angel.” he defends unflappably while I do my best to appear impervious and bite away the smile tugging at the corner of my lips.

“I’m sure you’re well adept at taking care of your little situation solo, no?” I purr and provocatively drag my index finger over the length of his erection which twitches under my touch and educes a low hiss from him.

His eyes that are already dark go even darker with an almost feral like need. Reaching up he grasps my chin and stares intently into my eyes. “Oh, I certainly am, but baby girl, if you’re planning on making it out of this car and into your house in the next minute, I would refrain from provoking him and me.” There’s a dangerous glint in his eyes that sends an exhilarating tremor straight through to the pearl of nerves between my legs throbbing shamelessly for him. “Keep teasing me and you screaming for mercy while I fuck you in the back of my car will be your parents and the entire neighbourhoods new alarm.”

My jaw slackens and I gape at him stunned. An aberrant heat slowly creeps up my neck at the crude imagery my mind

invokes. A slow, knowing smirk spreads across his handsome face, lighting up those mesmerising eyes, “You’re picturing it, aren’t you?”

I blink and mentally shake out my reverie. “What? No,” I croak and shift in his lap to reach for the door. “I better go. You have my number, so I’m leaving the ball in your court.” I say opening the door and attempt to slip off of him, but he tightens his hold on my hips and stops me.

“I will call you.” He asserts earnestly before leaning in once again for a slow feverish kiss that I have no doubt left us *both* aching for more. When I pull back, I push my long hair out of my face and toss it over my shoulder. I couldn’t tell if it’s me or if it’s just getting a little too humid in the car, but I’m starting to feel really flustered.

I peek down when I see him grinning at something on my chest. “A?” he utters thoughtfully and cocks his head to the side, observing the letter dangling from the gold chain around my neck. “Your name begins with an A?” he says and I bite my lip. I could tell him it’s the initial of my best friend’s name and she’s wearing mine but I figure he didn’t need to know about that.

When I shrug and purse my lips, he rests his head back against the headrest and laughs. “Oh, come on baby girl, you might as well tell me now.”

Narrowing my eyes, I lean forward until our noses touch. “I don’t think I should. I’m becoming rather fond of you referring to me as angel and baby girl.”

“I’ll still call you both those things if you tell me your name.” He promises.

“Why are you so obsessed with knowing my name?”

His dark brows draw together, and he stares at me as though I’ve just sprouted a second head. “Why are you so reluctant on telling me? I’ll tell you mine. It’s—”

I press my fingers to his lips silencing him. “Don’t. You’ll ruin it. We agreed not to get too personal.”

He half laughs and half growls in frustration, “Fucking hell, you’re killing me.” I bite down on my lower lip to keep from laughing.

“You’re kind of hot when you’re all frustrated.” I tease him and he stares at me for a beat, then smirks.

“You’re not telling me, are you?” I shake my head again. “Why not? Wait, are you embarrassed by your name or something?” he queries raising an inquisitive brow and I laugh.

“Not at all. I love my name, it’s very pretty and unique and I’m sure it will sound sensational coming from these lips...” I whisper brushing my lips against his. “Unfortunately for you though, you’ll have to earn the pleasure.” I add pulling back again and he groans.

“You’re such a tease, but I’m going to get it out of you one way or another.”

“We shall see.” I press a kiss to his lips once more and pull away. “Okay, I really, *really* have to go now before my brother, or worse my dad leaves for work and catches us like this. I would hate for you to get your arse kicked.”

“I take it they’re overly-protective of you?”

I sigh, “Yeah, you can say that. I am the baby of the family, so they do tend to get protective even though I am by miles more mature than both my siblings combined. Also, witnessing your baby sister sitting in a car, in some random guy’s lap isn’t exactly going to look too decorous on my part and will do you no favours either.” I express and he nods slowly in understanding.

“Might want to shake a leg then, woman,” he jokes and chortles when I gape at him slighted.

“Fine, I’ll be off then, and that little remark just cost you a kiss goodbye.” I reach for the door, pull the handle and push it open.

“Like fuck,” he pulls me back when I go to climb out of the car and presses his mouth commandingly to mine, stealing a kiss as well as every drop of oxygen out of my lungs.

“I’ll see you, Angel,” He whispers, smiling gorgeously against my lips.

He’s so handsome it physically hurts.

“I’ll be holding you to that, Casanova.” I reply before slipping out of his car. We share one last look before I turn on my heel and walk off around the corner, waiting behind a tree until he drives off.

I’m aware I’m being a tad juvenile with wanting to keep things a mystery, but if this thing between us is going to be something casual, I don’t want to get too personal because personal leads to feelings and feelings is a gateway to heartbreak—something I’ve absolutely had enough of.

No, for this to work, the less we know about one another the easier it will be when it comes to an end in a few weeks.

The title 'Chapter 8' is written in a large, black, cursive font. The number '8' is significantly larger than the word 'Chapter'. Two detailed, black-and-white line drawings of wings are positioned on either side of the '8'. Below 'Chapter 8', the name 'Jeyla' is written in a smaller, pink, cursive font.

RANDEZVOUS - CRAIG DAVID

AFTER PARTING with my handsome Casanova, I make the twenty-minute journey back home and practically crawl to my bed and pass out till mid-afternoon. While I'm still dead to the world the door to my bedroom slowly opens and Ashlyn sneaks in bearing a devious smirk.

She presses her lips together before she throws herself on my bed, landing right on top of me, knocking the wind right out of me, "Soufflé!" I yelp starting from my state of sleep. Ashlyn frowns, a bewildered look on her pretty face.

"Soufflé? What the fuck were you dreaming about?" She laughs poking my sides.

I fully intend to glare at her, but when my eyes refuse to open, I opt for kicking her instead, "Ow," I groan, "Get off me, you chunky tart!" I grumble, my voice muffled from the face full of duvet and Ashlyn smothering me.

“Your arse is chunky, you hoe bag,” Ashlyn retorts sitting up on the side of the bed. I scowl at my best friend after I manage to pull the covers back.

“Least I have an arse, bitch.” I mumble, and Ashlyn flashes me a toothy grin, one way too bright for my liking, especially first thing in the morning. “Ugh, put those light beams you call teeth away, you’re blinding me.” I complain shielding my face using my bed covers.

Ashlyn chuckles and yanks the covers back from me before asking, “It’s almost one in the afternoon? Why are you still in bed, chick?”

I yawn and stretch, “Um, could it be because you’ve not let me rest since I’ve been back? I’m bloody tired. I didn’t get in till six this morning.” I mumble, snuggling into my pillow with a tired sigh. If it wasn’t for Ashlyn yapping on and incessantly poking my side I could have easily fallen right back to sleep. “What?” I whine, slapping her hand away from my ribcage.

“Wake up, I’m talking to you. I asked where you’ve been?” Ashlyn questions, shifting to sit cross legged on my bed. I sigh and toss onto my side, hugging the pillow to my chest.

“If I tell you, promise you won’t scream because I have a headache and I will kick you right off this bed without hesitation.” I forewarn her and she agrees with an enthusiastic nod, her eyes gleaming. “I was with that guy... the one I slept with the other night.” I wince, bracing myself for what’s about to follow my affirmation.

“WHAT?!” Ashlyn exclaims, grinning from ear to ear. I hiss at the shrillness of her voice and kick her straight off the bed with my foot and laugh when she tumbles off the bed in a heap of arms and legs.

“Ow, you cow.” I hear her grumble from the floor and giggle. Her head pops up from the side of the bed and she clambers back on the bed, rubbing her sore behind.

“Hey, I warned you.”

“Are you shitting me? Do you mean the hottie you met in the club? How? What? How the hell did you find him again? I thought you didn’t exchange numbers. Tell me everything, right fucking now,” she demands impatiently and crawls into bed with me, flopping on her side, facing me.

“Believe it or not he showed up at Shane’s party.” I explain shifting to give her room.

Ashlyn squeals and claps her hands together like an overjoyed seal. “Did you guys—”

“No!” I interject, “We did not have sex. We’re just friends who happen to enjoy each other’s company, that’s all.” I bite my bottom lip, recalling the heated kisses we exchanged.

“My left foot, something happened. You’ve got that gleeful after hook-up glow going.” Ashlyn teases poking me again. I slap her hand away, my face contorting into a deep shade of red and my best friend squeals again. “Aha! And you’re going all red like a lobster.” She gushes and reaches over to squeeze my cheek. “Spill it, sister.”

I groan and bat her hand away from my face. “Okay, fine, we kissed a couple of times which may have led to light petting.” I clarify and Ashlyn’s dark brows rise to her hairline.

“Friends my arse,” she chortles, and I grin, hiding my face behind my pillow.

“Oh, zip it, we are friends. According to him we’re friends that kiss occasionally.” Ashlyn shakes her head at me, still grinning like the cat that ate the canary.

“Sweet cheeks, that’s what they all say, but that’s not our issue right now. When are you seeing him again? And more importantly when am *I* meeting him?” She probes in a flurry while sitting up and crossing her legs again. “Oh! Why don’t you invite him tonight?” Ashlyn suggests, her eyes almost bulging out of their sockets with excitement.

“Tonight?” I intone incredulously and chuckle. “To Oz’s birthday party where my brother and sister will be present? Ash, we’ve not even exchanged names yet, I am not bringing a guy I barely know to meet my friends and family.”

“Wait? You haven’t exchanged *names*?” I shake my head and her face contorts. “Why the hell not?”

“I don’t know,” I huff, reaching over to pick up the stuffed bunny sitting on my bedside table and fumbling with its fluffy ears, “I’m just playing on the cautious side for now. The last thing I want is to get sucked in too deep too soon, you know? Also, a little mystery will keep him interested.”

Ashlyn snorts, regarding me closely, “Jeykins, it’s good that you want to play it safe, but if you keep withholding, that sexy ambiguity will quickly switch to boredom and he’ll lose interest, babe.”

I wince and lift my gaze to look at her, “You think?”

Ashlyn nods and leans back on her elbows, “Yes, keep him on his toes, but don’t drag it out too long.” I nod in understanding and chew on my lower lip contemplatively. I’ll tell him... *eventually*. “So, seriously, when am I meeting him?”

I roll my eyes, “You’re not!”

“Boo, you whore.” She gives me her signature put-out look and I smirk. “You do know I have to screen and approve him first, right? I mean, as the best friend it’s my sole right.” She claims with a fictitious ‘I’m so insulted’ tone.

“Um, no. It’s only your sole right to meet my potential *boyfriends*, not my flings. And seeing as this is not a relationship and completely casual you will not be meeting him anytime soon.” I inform her with my own toothy grin.

A un-lady like snort emits from Ash and I laugh. My lips part to speak when my phone starts to ring on the bedside table interrupting me. Leaning over I pick it up and glance at the screen, my brows pinching when I don’t recognize the number.

“Hello?” I answer. My frown deepens when I hear low music in the background and a moment later a very familiar voice that sends my pulse racing comes from the other end.

“Hi, Angel,” My eyes widen, and I place my free hand over the microphone and mouth, ‘It’s him’ to Ash who in a

flash is beside me. I close my eyes, willing my heart to stop thrashing wildly in my chest.

“Hi.” I reply and mentally smack myself when my voice, despite my grandest effort, quivers ever so slightly. I’m hoping not enough that he’ll notice, yet the deep chuckle that filters through the phone verifies my suspicion that he did indeed pick up on it.

Shit.

Way to be play it cool, Jeyla.

“I didn’t wake you, did I?”

“No.” I answer promptly, “No, I was already awake.” I add shimmying further into my comforter. Ashlyn observes me, smiling like a total goof. “I wasn’t expecting you to call so soon.” Ash shifts closer and presses her ear to the phone to hear his voice.

“I told you I would call, didn’t I?”

“Oh my God, he sounds hot.” Ashlyn whispers to me. I frown and press my finger to my mouth shushing her.

“What are you up to?” he questions, and I wince pulling the phone away from my ear when something clatters on his end, like he dropped the phone. “Sorry about that,” he apologises.

“Aside from having my ear drums blown out, I’m still in bed, only just woke up. What about you? Sounds like you’re up and out already?” When he laughs lowly, I suck in a deep breath to pacify the stupid butterflies that take flight in my stomach.

“Only just. I’ve got a couple of things I need to do, then I’m heading over to help a friend out,” he states casually.

I’m not proud of this, but the words just fell out of my mouth before I could catch them. “Help what friend, with what?” Ashlyn pulls her head back and gapes at me wide eyed while I grimace at how inquisitive I just came across.

I curse myself and shake my head when he guffaws, seemingly pleased by my interest. “Just an old friend of mine

that needs a hand moving some stuff into her new flat. I offered to help her move some furniture and boxes,” he explains openly, even though he really didn’t owe me any sort of explanation whatsoever. However, I couldn’t ignore that tiny niggle of envy twisting deep in my gut.

“How very gallant of you,” I utter, not at all bitter and he goes quiet on the other end and I could clearly hear the music playing in the background.

I frown, straining my ears to listen. “Is that... mysterious girl you’re listening to?” he lets out a hearty laugh and I grin.

“Yes ma’am, personally chosen just for you,” he admits charmingly, and I can picture him grinning and biting on his full lower lip in that swoon worthy manner. “My mysterious girl...”

I giggle, flushing a deep shade of red. “We spend one night together and you’re already declaring your undying love for me, Casanova? That’s so sweet. When shall I expect the ring?”

“Already picked out and getting sized for you, baby girl,” he states light-heartedly, making me giggle like a lustful teen flirting with her crush. Ash rolls her eyes and falls back on the bed with a sigh when I hit her with my stuffed rabbit. “Tell me something Angel, you’re not bothered that I’m going to help out another woman, right?”

“No,” I answer stiffly. “Why would I be bothered?”

“I don’t know, I sensed a little bitterness in your tone before when I mentioned it?” Wait, is he *fishing* for some sort of covetous reaction to him going off to meet another girl? “Detected a little jealousy there.”

I snort and make no effort to hide it. “Well, sorry *friend* but your sensors must be malfunctioning because I am not in the slightest bit jealous, in fact I couldn’t less.”

“Is that right?” He drawls, his tone deep and suggestive.

“Sure is. You can go right ahead and help your little friend move her things, hell, you can move in with her if you damn well want.” I tell him jauntily and he laughs again, fuelling that flicker of annoyance burning in my belly.

“You’re right, you don’t sound like you care at all.” He mocks playfully.

“Is that why you called me? To tell me you’re going to spend the afternoon with another girl to make me jealous. Because I must tell you, dear friend two can play that game.” I fire back.

“Oh, well I do love a good duel. Though, I prefer to use my tongue, it’s far more effective.”

I pinch the bridge of my nose, smiling. “Good, you can practice with your friend in between lugging her sofa.”

“Nah, you’re the only friend my tongue desires to duel with, baby girl.”

I grin, “Might want to get in line, then.”

I hear him snort and then chuckle in amusement, “I don’t share.”

“Neither do I.” A moment of silence lingers between us before he sighs and speaks again.

“Fuck, I really need to kiss you,” he admits lasciviously, and my stomach does a somersault. “I should be free in an hour or so, do you want to meet up?”

I pull the phone away from my ear, cover the microphone and whisper to Ash. “He wants to meet up.” Ashlyn sits up again and nods her head.

“Say yes,” she urges animatedly.

I sigh and bring the phone back to my ear, “Three days in a row? Well, aren’t you keen,” I say after a pregnant pause.

“Amongst other things,” he responds, the lewd undertone to his voice when he speaks only amplifies the excitement of seeing him again.

“Okay,” I reply airily, wasting no time in conceding. I could have said no, but who am I kidding, of course I want to see him again. “Where are we meeting?”

“How about I pick you up about two thirty? Same place I dropped you off this morning?” he suggests, and I close my

eyes mentally cussing myself out for giving him a false address. I suppose I could drive there, save me a cab fare.

“Yeah sure, that suits me,” I toss the duvet off me, already wondering what the hell I’m going to wear.

“I’ll see you soon then, baby girl.” My pulse speeds up a touch whenever he calls me that.

“You sure will.”

“Bye gorgeous.”

‘Oh my God,’ I mouth to Ashlyn who watches me, grinning like a wild cat. “Bye,” We hang up and I hold my breath for a beat before groaning out loud, “Fucking hell Ash, it’s only day three and I can already tell this guy is going to be trouble for me.”

Ashlyn sniggers, “Yeah, no shit.” I open my eyes and turn to give her a sidelong stare when she shuffles closer to me. “Look, just remember, he’s a rebound, a distraction for the summer, that’s all.”

I puff out my cheeks and exhale slowly, “Oh Ash, I don’t know if I’m cut out for the whole casual thing, you know? What if I start to get too attached? God, he’s crazy hot and the way I’m feeling it would be so easy to fall for him,” I affirm uneasily, and Ash takes hold of my hand and smiles tenderly, her green eyes sympathetic.

“Jeykins, we both know you prefer a relationship over a fling. Personally, I think you need this to help you get over your breakup with Paxton.” I sigh, nodding in agreement. Just hearing the rotten bastard’s name makes my chest ache. “Besides, the beauty of a summer fling is that its fleeting and there is no expectation on both parts, if you think you’re starting to grow attached then you break it off.” She states and cups my face in her hands. “Don’t overthink this and just enjoy it, babe.”

I nod, “Okay, yeah, you’re right. I mean, it’s six weeks, who falls for someone in six weeks, right?” Ashlyn nods and I force a smile on my face and shake off the anxious feeling sitting in the pit of my gut like a giant slab of lead. “I’m

meeting him in just over an hour. Help me pick something out to wear?”

Ashlyn practically flies off my bed before the words even leave my mouth, and she’s rummaging through my wardrobe pulling out various outfits, “I’ll pick out an outfit for you, you go and shower because we both know you take a decade and a half to shower.” Grinning, I nod and stand up, stretching my arms up over my head with a groan. “Wait! Are you going to be back for Oz’s birthday party tonight? You better be there,” she points her index finger at me and I smile walking over to my bedroom door.

“As if I’ll miss Oskie’s birthday.”

Satisfied with my answer, she goes back to rifling through my clothes, “That’s my bitch. Don’t forget to shave!” Ashlyn shouts after me as I walk out of the room. “We don’t want him to get cactus burn now, would we?” I throw my head back and laugh heartily.

“Fuck off, Ash, you know damn well I get waxed all over. You’re the one that shaves, not me.” I retort.

“That shit hurts, all right!” she shouts back defensively. “Some of us prefer not to be plucked like chickens. Besides, shaving suits me just fine, and I’ve never had any complaints thank you very much.”

“It’s sure a good thing that you’re a dynamite in bed then, boo thang.” I say poking my head out of the bathroom door and hear her cackle from my room.

“And don’t you forget it!”



Ashlyn wasn’t wrong when she pointed out that I take exceptionally long showers. What she neglected to acknowledge was that I have a hair care routine that I follow meticulously, and it takes time. It’s a small price to pay to achieve and maintain my long, silky hair.

Twenty minutes later I'm standing in my bedroom surrounded by outfits strewn across my bed and floor in a messy pile. "Ash, I'm not sure about this outfit. I'm getting Julia Roberts from pretty woman vibes."

Ash steps back to look me over before she smiles, "Yes," she concurs, combing her fingers through her hair. "Now that you mention it, I'm getting that vibe too, but then you always give off that vibe—" I throw a pair of folded jeans at her head. "Ow! I'm kidding!" she hisses glowering at me playfully.

"Be serious," I chastise her. "I don't have time for your antics right now. I know it's summer and all but I don't want him to take one look at me and think I'm some two-bit harlot that's trying too hard to impress him. I would like to maintain some decorum."

Ash snorts, waving off my comment, "What are you talking about, you look great, and that outfit isn't as revealing as you seem to believe it is. Now, stop being self-conscious and go blow his socks off." She adds with a snigger. I glance down at myself and her outfit of choice. A black mini leather skirt and white crop top. "Pun totally intended." I gasp, flushing crimson and throw my pink fluffy slipper at her, which she deflects with her hand and grins at me toothily. Shaking my head, I change the outfit I'm wearing to the previous one I tried on. A light blue button-down denim dress that ends at mid-thigh.

That's more like it, I don't plan to flash my vagina to the whole world. I move toward the mirror and look at my reflection. My stomach is in knots and as the minutes tick on by the nerves start to intensify. "Stop dillydallying and go already!" Ash urges, handing my handbag and sunglasses to me before she practically shoves me out the door. "Go and get a good fucking." She says and giggles when I turn and glare at her.

"Ash, I'm not sleeping with him." I insist, lowering my tone so my mother doesn't overhear as we walk out of the house toward my car.

“Jeyla, you do realise you’ve already sleep with him, right? He’s not going to think any less of you if you sleep with him again.” Ashlyn states resting against the hood of my Peugeot 206 convertible.

Well, she does have a point there, but a drunken hook up isn’t the same as sleeping with someone whilst sober. I’d rather things happen naturally, at a pace that I’m comfortable with and why should I just give it up to him. If he wants me, he’ll have to earn me.

“I know that. I just don’t want to come across like some desperate tramp that willingly spreads her legs to everyone that gives her a little attention. I want him to work for it a little, you know?” I explain and Ashlyn nods in understanding.

“I mean, that’s not how flings work, but okay boo, you do you. Now go and have fun, I’ll see you in a few hours.” I smile, opening my car door and slipping into the driver’s seat. I blow a kiss to Ash, and she makes a heart with her fingers as I back out of my driveway.



Twenty-five minutes later I’m patiently waiting for him to arrive. I got a text message from him while I was driving informing me that he’s running ten minutes late. The late afternoon sun is beating down on me and I’m starting to sweat standing out in this heat. My feet are starting to ache in the open toe heel I’m wearing. My green eyes are hidden behind a pair of black tinted aviator sunglasses. With a frustrated sigh I begin fanning myself with my clutch.

I check my phone for any messages from him when men leer at me, whistling as they walk or drive by honking and catcalling.

“Hi beautiful,” A tall brunette sidles up beside me. I slowly lift my gaze from my phone to look at him.

“Hello.”

“You’ve been waiting here a while, which mug had the nerve to leave you standing around waiting in this heat, baby?” he questions, rubbing his bearded jaw and licking his lips. “It doesn’t look like he’s coming, but I’ll be more than happy to step in.”

My frown deepens and I cross my arms over my chest, “First of all, don’t call me baby. Secondly, I’d advise you to pay more attention to a woman’s body language. What part of me is giving you the impression that I have any interest in you whatsoever?”

The sleaze bag takes a step toward me, and I retreat, “Give me five minutes and I’ll show you more than one reason to be interested, baby,” he drawls, reaching up and running the back of his fingers down my arm.

I grimace and stare down at his hand on my arm, “It would take more than a lifetime and a cold day in hell before I ever give you the time of day,” I hiss coldly and bat his hand away from my arm. Those dark brown eyes of his darken further and I grimace when he grasps my arm and roughly draws me against him. “Get your filthy hands off me, you stupid prick.” I retort, struggling against him.

“Come on baby, I’ll pay a pretty penny for a night with you. Name your price.” I gear myself up to kick him right in the nuts when the sound of music momentarily distracts me. I glance over the pervert’s shoulder and see the black Lexus with gold rims pull up. Pony by Genuine tearing through the speakers in his car.

My mouth goes dry at the sight of him when he steps out of the car. All six-foot something of him swathed in black. A sleeveless vest, displaying those defined arms, a black pair of ripped jeans, timberland boots, completed with a pair of black, tinted sunglasses hiding those mesmerising green eyes of his.

When he pulls his sunglasses off, the murderous look in his eyes even made me shudder. I tear my eyes from him and look up at the idiot still holding onto my arm. “There isn’t enough money in the world, now get the fuck off me,” I utter

grimly, tugging on my arm but he tightens his grip on my arm making me hiss when he pinches my skin.

“Hey!” I peek over the brunette’s shoulder again at my date walking over to us, his hands clenching and unclenching at his sides.

The brunette turns his head and looks back at him standing commandingly tall and eyes almost black with fury. “Let her go,” he growls lowly, his eyes narrowing threateningly.

The brunette’s grip loosens, and I tug myself free of his hold and step back rubbing the tender spot where he grabbed me which is starting to redden.

“You okay?” my date asks, moving over to me and I nod. His eyes lower to my arm and when he notices its red, the anger from before amplifies. He veers his gaze to the tall brunette who is still openly checking me out. “Like what you see, mate?” he questions dourly and takes a step toward him.

“Mind your business.” The brunette utters staring him down. My date chuckles darkly and nods, biting his bottom lip.

“Mind my business?” he intones darkly. “*She* is my *business*. You just put your hands on *my* girl which now gives me the privilege and satisfaction to reach down your throat and rip your fucking spleen out.” The brunette looks over at me again and my date tuts. “Baby, go and wait for me in the car.” He tells me, his eyes never leaving the brunette’s. Shaking my head, I move to his side and curl my hands around his muscular bicep, which is twitching with agitation.

“No, please, he’s not worth it, let’s just go.” I plead fretfully, and he turns his angry gaze to mine and when I nod slowly, he exhales, yielding and looks at the brunette once more and catches him staring at me.

“The fuck you looking at? Turn and walk away, before I make good on my previous threat.” He orders callously and turns, wrapping an arm around my waist and leading me away toward his car.

“How much is he paying you sweetheart, I’ll double it?” The brunette leers after us when I start to pull him away. Before I could pull him back my date spins, takes three long strides and punches him in the face with such force he hits the floor like a sack of potatoes. I gasp and hurry toward him, when he leans over, curling his fingers in the collar of the brunette’s shirt and brings his face close to his while he speaks to him in a low and menacing tone.

“Want to say that again?” he hisses icily, “Go on, fucking say it again and give me another reason to shut you up indefinitely.” Blood seeps from the side of the brunette’s mouth and he shakes his head.

My date lets go of the grip on his shirt and shoves him backward to the ground before he rises to his full height, still glaring at him. “Let’s go, please,” I beseech, clinging to his arm and tugging him back towards his car.

While I struggle to pull him away, I can hear the brunette shouting threats after us. “Yeah, listen to your bitch and walk away, you pussy. I’m going to have you put away for this and then I’m going to find your little whore and fuck her!” He bellows, sitting up and wiping the blood seeping from his mouth and riling him up again.

“No!” I shout, pulling him back to me. “Stop, stop, please babe, let it go.” I beg, taking hold of his face and forcing him to look at me. I can feel the rage exuding off him in waves. “He’ll get you done for assaulting him. It’s not worth it, I’m begging you let’s just go, please.” His green eyes stare into mine, his chest rising and falling quickly with every enraged breath. I can see he fights with himself to not lose his control and whether it’s the fear or concern he sees in my gaze he instantly simmers and allows me to pull him toward his car. Looking back once, his jaw clenches and ticks with agitation while the brunette continues barking abuse after us. We walk to the passenger side, and he opens the door for me to get in.

I peer up at him and shake my head slowly. “Do you think I’m stupid? I don’t need you to be some gallant hero to protect me, so please, get in the car and let’s get out of here.” Despite his current state of anger, he smirks a little. I know his plan is

to lock me in the car, so I couldn't follow him and go and make good on the threats he made and get himself arrested.

Not on my watch.

I push up on my toes and caress his jaw, his stubble scratches my fingers. "How would you rather spend your day? Out with me enjoying yourself or stuck in a holding cell?"

"You, of course," he answers, reaching up, he pulls my hand from his cheek and presses the inside of my wrist to his lips.

I smile, "Then let's get out of here," I suggest. "I promise you, by the end of the day that idiot will be the last thing on your mind." He grins handsomely and brushes a kiss to my forehead.

"I'm going to hold you to that." He says, pulling away and walking over to the driver's side. I wait for him to get in the car and follow suit.

"So, where are you taking me?" I ask, tugging on the seatbelt and fastening it. He smiles and slides his shades back on.

"You'll have to wait and see, baby girl."

"The anticipation is killing me." I tease and he chuckles. I sink into the leather seats, smiling. When he starts the engine, the music comes tearing through the speakers. He reaches over to turn the volume down, but my hand darts out stopping him. He looks at me questioningly and I shake my head mutely expressing that the loud music doesn't bother me. In fact, I'm the same when I drive. Also, I think the music will help settle him down a little, he seems to be more relaxed now than he was a few moments ago.

The corner of his mouth tilts into a half smile, he laces his fingers with mine and places it on his thigh while he drives.

*"She is my business. You put your hands on **my** girl..."*

I bite my lip to keep from smiling. *Don't swoon, Jeyla.*

An hour later the pair of us are standing in a kitchen in south London with a confectionary chef. "A private chocolate

making and tasting masterclass?” I laugh, pulling the white apron over my head and tying the straps behind my back.

My date grins, trying his own apron on. “It’s different, no?”

I nod, grinning back. “Yes sir, you get an A for originality. Two of my favourite things, baking and eating chocolate.”

He laughs and hands me a spatula. I take it from him and set it beside the silver bowl in front of me on the workstation. “Maybe later we can combine two of my favourite things?” I eye him with an arched brow, and he smiles gorgeously, staring into my eyes.

“And what might those two things be?” I question curiously, peering up at him through my lashes when he shuffles toward me. I swallow thickly when his eyes lower to my lips before they lift to meet my gaze again.

“You and chocolate.” My eyes close when he leans in and speaks directly into my ear. “I can’t stop thinking about all the places I want to smear chocolate and take my sweet time licking it off.”

My body heats up at the thought of being laid out before him, covered in chocolate while he uses that dexterous tongue of his on parts of me that is in desperate need of his undivided attention.

I bite my lip to hold back the overwhelming urge to moan out loud when his velvet lips brush my ear while he speaks to me with that low, insanely erotic gruff tone. A quivering breathe escapes me as he presses soft kisses down the side of my neck, his hot breath on my flesh sends a mass of tingles down my spine. “Keep that up and I can promise you we won’t make it past the first five minutes of this class.”

“Baby girl, I assure you I don’t plan to behave in this class whatsoever.” I open my eyes and peer up at him when he draws back to look down into my eyes. “I’m fully intent on making a mess of you,” he affirms picking up a piece of the broken chocolate in the bowl behind me and holding it to my lips.

Opening my mouth, I don't take my eyes off his, waiting for him to feed me the chocolate, but just as I'm about to bite into it, he pulls it back and places it between his lips.

I stare at his mouth avidly, so invitingly close I'm unable to guise the need and desire that I'm sure is burning in my eyes. The attraction and sexual tension between us is unbearable. My pulse jumps when he starts to lean in, closing the miniscule space between our mouths. I part my lips for him and using his tongue he pushes the piece of chocolate into my mouth.

“Ahem.”

Damn it!

We jump apart when someone behind us clears their throat to get our attention. “Good afternoon,” A masculine voice chirps in a thick Italian accent. I spin to face the older gentleman in chef's attire who is walking through the kitchen toward us. “I'm Chef Russo and I'll be teaching you love birds the many different ways we can make chocolate.” He says with a smile, clasping his hands together. “Shall we start?”

We nod and stand side by side listening to him talk us through the process and all the health and safety jargon.

“Tell me, signorina, what is your favourite flavour of chocolate?” He asks me and I purse my lips thoughtfully.

“Uhm, I suppose it would have to be mint or milk chocolate with hazelnut.” I say, looking over at my date who smiles down at me.

“And yours, signore?”

“I prefer mint too or anything with nuts really.”

“Che bello!” Chef Russo acclaims animatedly smiling warmly at us both. “You have the same taste as your beautiful wife.”

Wait what? *Wife?*

We turn to look at each other at the same time. Oh, bloody hell, he thinks we're married. My date smiles and takes hold of

my hand and lifts it to his lips, his eyes interlock with mine as he brushes a kiss over my knuckles. “I certainly do.”

I feel a flush creep up my neck while he continues to gaze deeply into my eyes. Chef Russo moves around the kitchen gathering supplies and waffling on about the importance of married couples cooking together.

“It seems you’re stuck playing my wife for the afternoon, Angel.” He teases, taking my chin between his thumb and index finger.

“We can just correct him and tell him we’re not married.” I point out and he chuckles, brushing a loose strand of my hair away from my face.

“Where’s the fun in that?” I sigh, my eyes closing when he dips his head and presses a kiss to my pulse point. “If he assumes that we’re married we won’t have to be sneaky about touching and kissing in his presence.” I’m completely lost some place between his hot mouth discreetly sucking on my neck that my mind doesn’t fully apprehend a word of what he’s saying—only the pleasure that his mouth is granting and the pulsing between my legs.

What is this boy doing to me?

“God, you smell incredible,” he murmurs, burying his face into the crook of my neck and inhaling deeply. I smile, inwardly thanking Ash for showering me with our favourite body mist before leaving the house.

“Bene, piccioncini, let’s get started.” Chef Russo urges with a chuckle when he catches us in yet another intimate moment and claps his hands together to get our attention. Disgruntled, we pull apart again and try our damned hardest to focus on the rest of the class. “See those beans in your bowls, they are called cacao beans and they come from this beautiful fruit called baccello di cacao, also known as a cacao pod.” He explains holding up an orange fruit shaped like an over-sized papaya.

“Chocolate comes from a bloody fruit?” I snigger when my date leans in and murmurs in my ear.

“It seems so.”

“Once the beans are out of the pods it takes about seven days to ferment...” Chef Russo goes on to explain the process of roasting the cacao beans, peeling the skin, and crushing them to small nips, which then gets blended to a smooth paste. We follow his steps and create a paste as instructed. “Well done,” he praises leaning forward to check the consistency of the paste. “Now we move on to tempering the chocolate, which is key to achieve that beautiful smooth finish and delightful snap when we break it. Capisci?”

“Si Chef.” We both nod and he smiles and goes on to demonstrate how to correctly temper chocolate. “Go ahead and get to tempering your chocolate but remember to keep an eye on the temperature of the chocolate throughout. I’ll be back to check in on you in a moment and we can move onto moulding.” I continue to stir, and my handsome sidekick adds the butter. I continue to stir it in until the chocolate and butter are well incorporated.

“I don’t know why people are always crying about married life being such a drag. Look at us working together like a dream.” I laugh when he shifts to stand behind me pulling my hair over one shoulder to expose my neck.

I bite my lip, my head lulling back when he drags his lips down the side of my neck.

“I’m pretty sure there are far more complexities to a marriage than the art of making and tempering chocolate together,” I express breathily and feel his hand covering mine over the handle of the spatula I’m using to stir the chocolate. “Also, need I remind you that we’re not *actually* married.”

“No, but you certainly make the concept of a life married to you damn appealing.” I watch as he removes the spatula covered in warm chocolate and dips both my index and middle fingers into the bowl of gooey chocolate and lifts it to his lips and sucks them clean with a raucous moan. “Right now, I’m picturing myself coming home after a long day and spreading you out on top of the kitchen counter and eating you out in between every course.” My head whirls and I suddenly can’t

remember how to breathe, especially when dips his finger into the chocolate and brings it to my mouth.

“Open up, show me what that mouth can do, baby girl,” he murmurs gruffly in my ear. I don’t think twice or hesitate before eagerly parting my lips and sucking his finger clean while moaning as he leisurely thrusts his fingers into my mouth and continues to whisper absolute filth in my ear. “I want to taste you, right now.”

My eyes snap open and I crane my neck to peer up at him dumbfounded after he removes his fingers from my mouth, “You’re not serious? Chef Russo will be bac—” the rest of my sentence is swallowed when he presses his mouth firmly to mine and kisses me till I can no longer recall my own damn name.

“Spread those gorgeous legs,” he croons, nipping at my lower lip. “Let me feel how wet that cunt is for me,” I’m locked in his intense gaze, incapable of looking away or even thinking rationally. While I’m inwardly fighting with my morals it seems my body makes the decision for me, because my legs part for him when his fingertips graze up my inner thigh, inching toward my pussy while arousing every nerve in my body and leaving a delicious lick of fire in its wake.

My breath hitches in my throat when his fingers deftly push aside my now damp underwear and glide through my soaked cleft. “Fuck,” he breathes, pressing his forehead to mine. “If you only knew the battle I’m having within myself right now to not hit my knees and drink up every little drop that secretes from your perfect pussy.”

I didn’t have the cerebral ability to muster up two words to say back, I only mewl in response when he circles the pads of his fingers against my clit and leisurely caresses me. “Are you going to come for me before he gets back, baby girl?” I bite my lip, gently rocking myself against his fingers. I’m so aroused, literally teetering on the edge so it won’t take me long to orgasm—especially with the way he’s touching me.

“I... uh,” I grip the edge of the counter to keep myself upright when my knees tremble in warning as the pressure

deep in my groin steadily starts to build. “Oh *God*, yes,” I pant, resting my head against his shoulder when my head goes faint as he drives me into the arms of sweet rapture.

My body heats up rapidly like someone lit an inferno inside me, starting at the tip of my toes and flowing all the way to the roots of my hair. I couldn't focus on a damn thing but chasing that orgasm. “Shh, baby girl,” he murmurs, softly nipping at my ear. “You'll have to be quiet if you want to reach that orgasm before he gets back.”

“Ohhh yes, yes,” I whimper, digging my nails into the worktop when he presses down on my clit a little firmer. My body quakes while I rock my hips, grinding myself against his fingers until I'm pendent on the verge of release. One final stroke of his thumb and I go soaring off the edge, completely consumed by the euphoric carnality of my orgasm. “Ahh, I'm *coming...*” I manage just before I lose my breath and everything around me blurs. Fireworks explode behind my eyelids with every searing surge of pleasure that crashes over me.

It wasn't until my orgasm ebbs away and I fall limp against his chest that I notice he has his free hand clamped over my mouth.

“We need to leave,” I peel my eyes open and look at him, panting. “Right now.” I don't say a word, only nod mutely in response.

Do I feel bad for the way we just take off without a word, yes, but I don't have much time to dwell on it, because the moment we step outside my back hits a wall and I barely suck in a breath before he steals it with a hungry kiss.

I can't tell you how we make it to his car, but the half hour drive to wherever it was he was taking us felt like the longest drive in the world. We exchange kisses at every traffic light we stop at. The intense passion between us only escalating until we make it to our destination.

Epping forest—*lovers lane*, to be precise. A spot famously known for couples to pull up and ‘get frisky’ in their cars.

The windows to his Lexus are steamed up, and the sound of panting and moaning combined with the music playing lowly in the background hangs in the air.

“Mm, fuck, baby girl...” my insatiable lover groans, rolling his hips, feeding his engorged member into my mouth. The low throaty growl that emits from him each time the crown of his cock hits the back of my throat arouses me more. I can listen to that intoxicating sound tirelessly. “Look at me,” he commands between breaths and curls his long fingers in my hair. My eyes lift to peer up at him and the carnal look in his eyes, combined with the deliberate lick of lips makes my pussy ache and clench with need. “I’m coming,” he laments, drawing his lower lip between his teeth, he watches me hollow my cheeks and suck him hard. His cock grows thicker in my mouth and with a drawn out ‘ahhh baby fuuuck’ he shoots rope after hot rope of his seed down my throat and I greedily swallow every drop he delivers with a moan.

“Christ.” He pants, his head lulling back against the headrest of the backseat in his car.

Well, that’s new. I’ve never allowed anyone to come in my mouth before. The thought alone made my stomach churn, but with him I didn’t hesitate—not for a second, in fact I crave more.

I don’t know what it is with this boy. He’s brought out this new risqué side of me I never knew existed until now. I observe him, still crouched between his legs in the legroom between the driver seat and the backseat. Luckily his seats go far enough forward that I could comfortably fit in the space.

Eyes closed, he pants softly, and his legs tremble under my palms while he recoups from his orgasm. I smile a little, my ego swelling a touch knowing I’m solely responsible for his weakened state. As if sensing me watching, his eyes open and he catches me watching him.

I lift his vest up exposing his taut stomach as I kiss and trace my tongue over the ripples of muscles until I came across a tattoo. I draw back, staring at the words etched into his skin for a moment.

Defend & Honour.

The tattoo is just above his navel scripted in old English font across his abdomen. My gut goes tight for a reason unknown to me. I feel his fingers slip under my chin and lift my gaze to meet his. “Defend and Honour?” I question quizzically. “Why haven’t I noticed your tattoo before now?”

He smiles lazily, his thumb caressing my jaw affectionately. “Well, I think the last time you saw me naked, we were both too engrossed with one another to notice tattoos.”

“I like it. It’s very sexy.” I admit, tracing my index finger over the letters. I open my mouth to ask about the significance of the tattoo but before I could muster up the words, he pulls me up off my knees to straddle him.

“You’re the sexy one,” he murmurs while kissing up my throat. “And this mouth...” I couldn’t contain the moan that escapes me when his tongue trails along my bottom lip. “No girl has ever come close to making me cum the way you just did.”

Frowning, I draw back to look at him. “You’ve never come in a girls mouth before?” I ask surprised and he shakes his head, tilting his head up to gaze into my eyes.

“No, I have,” he clarifies. “Usually, I would have to beat off into their mouths. This would be the first time I’ve come without intervening at all and fuck it was something else.”

I smile, “Well, I’m actually pleased to hear that, because...” I trail off, and he cocks his head to the side, regarding me curiously. “I’ve never had anyone come in my mouth before.” I confess and I can immediately feel my face turning a deep crimson. I avert my gaze when he continues staring at me, an astounded look mirroring mine from a moment ago on his handsome face.

“Fuck,” he replies. “So, I’m your first?” I nod meekly, chewing on my lip and the look of surprise on his face before vanishes and is replaced with an eloquent grin. “What made you want to do it with me then?”

“Honestly? I don’t know,” I admit with a shrug. “Got caught up in the moment.”

The corner of his mouth lifts into a smirk and his green eyes narrowing, “Any regrets?”

“Only that it ended too soon.” I smile wantonly and trace my finger down the length of his throat.

The last two words barely leave my mouth before I’m on my back, laid out on his luxurious leather seats with his muscular body covering mine.

Like two indomitable forces coming together our lips clash and we kiss riotously. When his tongue skims over mine and sucks I moan audibly into his mouth and he responds with a throaty groan of his own.

Goddamn, those immoral lips of his should be deemed unlawful. Who kisses this good, *cheese and sodding rice!*

When his mouth is withdrawn from mine, the disappointment and discontent that engulfs me is unlike anything I’ve ever felt, so much so that I almost curl my fingers at his nape and drag him back to me. Don’t get me wrong, I’m no lip virgin, I’ve had my share of snogs, but I have never been kissed nor aroused to this magnitude by a kiss from anyone. If he kisses me long enough, I’m eighty percent certain I would orgasm—no exaggeration.

I make my displeasure known to him with a whimper and he smiles knowingly down at me, his eyes never leaving mine. My heart spikes each time he pushes a button through the hole unhurriedly unbuttoning my dress and exposing my silken flesh until I’m laid bare for him—save for the matching satin bra and thong I’m wearing under my dress.

“My turn,” My back arches when he leans down to kiss a trail down the flat panes of my stomach. “I’ve spent countless hours over the last couple of days dreaming about every dip, every crevice of this exquisite body,” he murmurs against my stomach, his large hands trailing down my sides, stopping to squeeze my hips while he nips at my heated flesh. “And diving

between these gorgeous thighs to feast on your pussy till I appease this insatiable hunger.”

“By all means,” I reply brazenly and spread my legs wider for him. “Dive in and indulge until you’re satisfied, baby, I’ll happily abide.”

Grinning devilishly at me, his eyes darken, and I draw in a quick breath when he swiftly and effortlessly tears my thong off like it was a piece of liquorice and discards it on the floor. “Ohhh, s-shit...” That first enticing lick through my cleft followed by the teasing circle of the tip of his tongue over my engorged clit makes my eyes roll to the back of my head.

Threading my fingers into his hair I roll my hips up, grinding my pussy into his mouth eliciting a low groan of approval from him. The vibrations of his moans while he fervently eats my pussy travels through me, adding to my mounting pleasure.

“Mm, fuck,” he groans between licks. My oh my, the sounds he’s making while he eats me out is driving me wild. “Christ baby you taste so *good*.” I gasp, my breath hitching, when he slides two fingers deep inside me. “Look at you so fucking wet and eager for me,” he drawls curling his fingers and rubbing against my gspot while his tongue teases my clit. “That’s it, good girl, set the pace baby, fuck my fingers. Make that pussy feel good for me,” I rock against his fingers, meeting every thrust of his fingers, my quiet mewls quickly turn into cries of pleasure. As the pressure begins to build deep in my groin I claw at his back, leaving red scores behind—though he didn’t seem fazed at all and kept his attention where I needed it... on me and the budding orgasm that’s about to split me in two.

I feel myself clenching around his fingers, an irrepressible heat starts to consume me as the pressure builds and builds until I’m teetering on the edge. “Ohhhh, yes, please, please, make me come!” I plead breathless. I don’t know what he does with that enchanting tongue, but whatever it is sends me soaring off the edge and I explode with an ear-piercing cry. My hips lift off the seat and my body tenses, then shakes with

every hot surge of pleasure that rips through me wreaking havoc over my body. “Oh baby, yes!”

I savour in every one of those astounding seconds of carnality before it ebbs away, and like a chocolate teapot on a hot summer day I melt into the leather seat beneath me, limbs weak and quivering while I bask in my post orgasmic bliss.

My lover nuzzles and presses affectionate kisses against my mound while my body calms before he slides his fingers out of me. I open my eyes and glance down at him, smiling up at me fetchingly, emerald eyes laced with such desire my stomach constricts. “That is one tasty pussy,” he murmurs, keeping his eyes locked with mine while he nuzzles my inner thigh.

I draw my bottom lip between my teeth and grin, “That is one gifted mouth,” I fire back impishly.

“You’ve not seen nothing yet,” he declares drily as he shifts from the undoubtedly uncomfortable position between my legs to lean over me. I peer up at him. “I’m going to ruin you.”

I narrow my eyes at him playfully, “Is that right?”

“It is,” he voices assertively, using his knee he pushes my legs apart wider and intimately grinds himself into me, giving me a feel of his engorged manhood throbbing perilously against the zipper of his jeans. “This pussy will never be the same again after I’m done with you.” My lips instinctively part when he leans over, his soft lips a breath away from mine. “I’m going to make certain no other man will ever be equipped enough to satisfy you the way I can.”

Smiling sultrily, I hold his intent gaze, “Well, I truly hope you’re planning to stick around then *friend*, because I’m not the type to settle for a mediocre sex life.” I express, tilting my head up a touch so my lips graze his as I speak.

“Fuck baby with a pussy this good, you’ll have a tough time keeping me away,” he murmurs sensually, using his lips to brush mine apart before he kisses me with a fervent need that makes a place deep inside me ache.

The tension between us sizzles and just as I'm contemplating breaking the promise I made myself and succumb to my inner nympho and let him have his filthy way with me, the ringing of my phone rudely interrupts the moment.

We pull apart panting, and I curse inwardly when I realise it's my ringtone. "Shit. That's me." I tap his shoulder, and he shifts to give me enough room to reach for my phone that's sitting on the centre console. I peer up at him and smile when he stares hungrily at my mouth.

"Hello?" I answer breathily, my eyes closing when he leans in close and brushes a tender kiss to my swollen lips.

"Bitch, where the fuck are you?!" Ashlyn's voice shrieks down the phone, her tone resembling that of an old scratched-up record. "You better be on your way!"

My eyes snap open and I wince, pulling the phone from my ear. "Fucking hell woman, burst my ear drums why won't you." I complain scowling while I rub my ringing ear.

"I'm going to hang you from your nipples you skank. It's past seven o'clock." Ashlyn gripes irritably down the phone. "According to my calculations we should be starting to get ready right now! Get your ass home, hoe!" I gasp, when I look over at the dash and see the time.

I should have been home an hour ago.

"Chick, I'm so sorry, I'll be home in twenty—" I start to say and my date shakes his head, a wicked glint in his eyes. "Forty minutes." I finish and he smiles, pushing me back down into the leather seat.

"Jey—"

"I'm coming," I say and snap the phone shut, moaning when his hot mouth descends on my aching mound once again.

"Not yet, but you certainly will be." he drawls roguishly licking through my slick folds.

“Fuck, you have five minutes.” I groan, biting my lip as I curl my fingers in his hair and rock my hips up into his mouth.



“Thank you for inviting me out today. I had a really nice time.” I say earnestly as he takes my hand and helps me out of his car.

“So did I,” he replies, wetting his lips as he places his large hands at my waist and draws me close till I’m pressed against him. I tilt my head up to peer up into his eyes. “Though, I really wish we didn’t have to end our day as abruptly as we did,” he admits, affectionately brushing the back of his fingers against my cheek. I close my eyes fleetingly and lean into his touch with a sigh.

“Me too,” I disclose regretfully and open my eyes to look at him again. “There’s a couple of things I wish we didn’t have to end so abruptly, but that is the least of my concerns right now, as I’m sure my best friend is currently plotting the many creative ways she can murder me, and make it look like an accident.” I explain with a smile when he watches me, his eyes gleaming with mirth while they dart between my eyes and my lips.

“Oh, don’t worry. I’m sure my neurotic sister is devising my demise as we speak also. She’s likely murdered and revived me in her head a myriad of times by now.” I snigger and push up on the tops of my toes, snaking my arms around his neck when he draws me closer so I’m flush against him.

“Well, it’s been a pleasure knowing you.” I tease, slanting my lips over his. “I’ll see you on the other side.”

“The pleasure was all mine.” He leans in closing the tiny gap between our lips.

This kiss felt different from the ones we’ve shared before. It’s slow and full of meaning. It wasn’t a kiss of hunger, need or even passion. It’s the kind of kiss that sends your entire world spiralling into complete chaos and confusion and makes your heart swell like it’s about to explode with gratification.

Even though we are both running late, our kiss went on for some time. Every time I go to pull away he would tug me back, or I would groan and kiss him again.

“Mm, I... really, really have to go now,” I sigh in between kisses. A distinctive sound of a grunt emits from him and after one last suck on my lower lip he draws back and regretfully ends the kiss. We share a meaningful look as I step back and he watches me back away.

“I’ll see you.”

“You can count on it, Angel,” he claims, his eyes still on me when I glance back at him as I walk away.

Chapter 9

Dean

MAPS- MAROON 5



MY PHONE RINGS incessantly on the drive back home. Ashlyn's pissed with me and I'm not even sure what I'm going to tell her. If she finds out I'm late because I was out with a girl instead of helping her she will castrate me. I make a quick detour to go pick up my shirt from the dry cleaners. After parking my car into the garage, I walk into the house humming to myself as I mosey over to the refrigerator and grab a bottle of water.

“Where *the hell* have you been?!” I hear Ashlyn's voice shriek behind me. I stop mid-sip and start coughing when the liquid goes down my windpipe. I turn to look at her standing by the kitchen door clad in her pink tank top and boy shorts and a head full of curlers... or is it rollers?

I wipe my mouth on the back of my hand and scowl at her, “Fuck,” I croak, clearing my throat to disperse the water.

“Where did you just spawn from?” I gripe, sending her a side glare as I close the door to the fridge.

“The same place as you, moron,” she snaps, placing her hands at her hips and glaring at me murderously. “Well?!” she demands hotly.

“Well, what?” I ask, picking up an apple and biting into it with a shrug. My twin sister throws her arms up in the air and lets out a string of very un-lady like curses.

“I need to ask mum if she dropped you on your head when you were a baby, because there’s something seriously wrong with you.” I lean against the counter, taking another bite out of my apple while she continues to chew me out. “You were supposed to help me with the decorations for Oz’s party, idiot! I sat here waiting for you for over an hour, Dean!”

I wince, “I know, my bad I got caught up,” I apologise, and Ashlyn’s scowl deepens and her eyes that are almost identical to mine narrow lethally.

“Oh, I know exactly where you got caught up— up some dirty skank’s skirt,” she retorts irately, and something in my gut pinches at her words. “Jesus Dean, you promised me you would be there!” she exclaims, her eyes wide and shooting beams of red-hot fury. “You’re so selfish, I can’t believe you up and ditched *me* to get your dick wet with some two-bit tart, who evidently is more important to you.”

I exhale and toss the remains of the apple in the bin. “Ash, come on, don’t be like that, it’s not that deep. I just lost track of time. Besides, I’m sure you managed to get things done fine without me, right?” Ashlyn exhales and lifts her eyes to the ceiling, her temper simmering somewhat.

“Of course, I did. When I realised you weren’t going to show I asked Shane and he was kind enough to help me get things set up.” She explains tersely and crosses her arms over her chest. “Did you at least pick up the cake and drop it off at the venue like I asked?”

Oh bollocks. I completely forgot about the cake she asked me to pick up.

When I stare at her like a deer caught in headlights, she pinches the bridge of her nose and groans, “Dean!”

“Shit, I’m so sorry, I’ll go right now and pick it up.” I express apologetically and drop a kiss to her temple before hightailing it out of the door.

“Don’t forget the candles!” I hear her shouting after me.

Nice one, Dean. What a time to get side-tracked, you idiot.

I turn my head and look back at the backseats of my car where I spent the last couple of hours with that majestic angel. The scent of her fruity perfume still lingers in my car and I draw in a deep breath, filling my lungs with it.

Next time I see her, which will be very soon, I’m finding out her name, one way or another.



Around eight-forty-five Oz and I are dressed and ready to leave the house. I was given the responsibility of getting Oz to the bar where we are throwing his impromptu surprise birthday party.

When I tell you I had to nag the old grumpy bastard for days to get him to agree to join me and the boys for a ‘couple of drinks’ to celebrate his birthday until he begrudgingly agreed. Oz isn’t the type to make a fuss of his birthday, he prefers a quiet family meal. Seriously, you’d think he’s turning fifty instead of twenty-eight.

“Wait, come again. You did what?” Oz shifts in the passenger seat to look at me.

“I found her,” I repeat, smiling like a giddy teenage boy. “Believe it or not we ran into each other at Shane’s party.”

“Shane’s Party?” Oz intones in bewilderment. “How bizarre that you keep running into her. She must be from our social circle then if she knows Shane.”

I purse my lips thoughtfully, mulling over his words before shaking my head. No way, she’s not the type of girl you forget

after meeting. “Nah bro, if she was someone within our circle, I would have remembered her without a doubt.” I tell him assuredly and he nods but keeps his gaze on me.

“She still hasn’t told you her name?”

“Nope,” I reply dejectedly and tap my thumb against the steering wheel. “It’s so fucking frustrating but she’s insisting on not getting too personal.” I glance over at my big brother briefly before turning my attention back to the road. “I get it, it’s a fling and she’s wary about getting too attached, but how is knowing each other’s first names going to change anything, you know?”

“Well, there are many reasons she may be keeping her name a secret. The most obvious one being that she’s in a relationship.”

Hearing those words felt like a sucker punch straight to the fucking gut. I didn’t even consider that to be an option if I’m honest. I mean, I’ve only really known the girl a couple of days, but I wouldn’t have pegged her to be the type to step out on her relationship. No, no, she seems too genuine to be capable of something like that. There’s not been an ounce of contrition in those gorgeous eyes whenever we’re together and do what we do. That can’t be the reason, but my brother’s gone and planted a seed in my head, and I’ll drive myself crazy trying to figure out her reluctance.

“So, you hooked up with her again?” I shake my head, pulling up to park the car in the empty bay that becomes free when the silver focus pulls out.

“Nope, things did get pretty hot and heavy between us, and it was definitely heading in that direction.” I express, checking my mirrors with a sigh and lick my lips ardently recalling the intoxicating taste of her pretty pussy and the sexy moans and soft breathy pants she makes when she climaxes. Jesus, my dick swells, and throbs against my jeans just thinking about it. “Unfortunately, she had someplace to be. Also, the mounting frustration I’ve been feeling over the past couple of days a quickie in the backseat of my car wouldn’t have cut it.”

Oz laughs heartily, opening the passenger side door and getting out once I'm done parking. "Wait, wait, hold the fucking phone! Am I hearing this right? What happened to the whole dick it and quit it approach you had going? Did you finally find a girl worthy of sticking around for?" Oz questions.

I smile blithely, shaking my head when he squeezes my shoulder, still laughing might I add. I send a quick text message to my sister informing her that we've arrived. "Maybe. She's definitely got my attention for now. Whether it will last and how long for, only time will tell," I tell him austerely, and punch his shoulder when he slaps the back of my neck playfully. "Don't fuck up the hair, dip shit." I reach up and smooth down my hair and he chuckles. "You'd know the pain of styling your hair if you had any."

"Oh, big talk for the one with a bald spot at the back of his head." I spin to look at him horrified, reaching back to feel around for any bald spots. Oz guffaws and shoves me in the direction of the entrance door. "Self-centred little prick."

Laughing, we walk side by side toward Loft Bar—the venue we hired out for his birthday. "Where are the boys? I thought we were picking them up?" I fist bump the security at the door in greeting and he nods back at me.

"I told them to meet us here." I tell him walking through the entrance, followed closely by my big brother.

"SURPRISE!!!" the crowd roars the second he steps inside and Oz jumps two feet in the air.

"What the fuck?!" he exclaims, eyes wide and darting from face to face.

"Happy birthday, bro," I grin, slapping his back. Oz shakes his head and shoves me playfully and wraps his arm around Ashlyn when she comes running at him.

"Happy birthday, you big lovable lug!"

"I should have known the two of you were up to no good." He tuts and kisses Ash's forehead and pulls me in for a hug. "Thank you."

While the birthday boy gets inundated with friends and colleagues wishing him happy birthday I squeeze through the crowd of people in the direction of the toilets. It's always a good idea to empty out your bladder before consuming alcohol, because once you break the seal, you'll be doomed to a night of pissing.

Some say it's a myth, others believe it's a mental thing. However, I know for a fact if I break the seal, I will be spending the night going back and forth. I weave through the throng of people standing around conversing with one another. I greet a couple of our friends, and fist bump my two cousins Jonas and Chris as I pass by. "I'll be back, I'm busting for a leak." I tell them when they ask where I'm going. The bar isn't the biggest, it's warm and intimate and fits around a hundred odd people. Which was exactly what we wanted. It's dimly lit with exposed brick walls and concrete floors and a range of recycled materials to give the bar a rustic loft like feel. The counters are a polished copper and amber glowing lights hangs low intermittently throughout the bar.

I see the sign to the toilets, turn the corner and walk straight into someone. The first thing I notice is the colour of her dress—a deep sexy maroon. And then, I hear a soft feminine gasp and instinctively lift my hands to take hold of her shoulders to steady her before she topples over.

"Shit, I'm so sorr—"

For the love of God, do not look at her tits. Even though they're right there looking mighty enticing don't be a fucking pervert, Reyes. My brain screams at me.

I swiftly shake off the voices in my head and raise my gaze until they lock with a very familiar pair of olive-green eyes—eyes I've become well accustomed to over the last couple of days.

What the actual fuck...



Chapter 10
Jeyla

HANDS TO MYSELF - SELENA GOMEZ

“SURPRISE!!!”

My eyes snap up while washing my hands when I hear the crowd shouting surprise back in the bar.

I only just missed Oz’s grand entrance on the account of my bladder almost erupting.

“Fucking shit balls!” I whimper, hurriedly washing the soap off my hands and using my elbow to turn the tap off. I look around for some towels, but the dispensers are all empty and there are no dryers to be seen. Letting out a string of profanities I shake my hands in an attempt to air dry them as I rush to the door.

Hopefully I can merge into the crowd without Oz or Ash noticing I was missing for his entrance. Ash did say I had five minutes before he arrived, but I held my pee in so long that it just kept coming and coming like a never ending downstream.

My foot barely steps out of the ladies bathroom before I collide into something solid and nearly get knocked back on my arse. I let out a surprised gasp, bracing myself for the fall, but a pair of strong hands curl around my upper arms, steadying me before I hit the floor. “Shit, I’m so sorr—” I start to apologise but the words die on my lips when I look up and lock eyes with the person I walked straight in to.

No bloody way.

There’s a long pregnant pause while we stand still staring at one another, a look of perplexity and surprise on both our faces.

“What are you doing here?” We ask at the same time.

I exhale slowly to compose myself and lick my lips before straightening. “Okay, this is seriously starting to get a little weird. Why do you keep showing up everywhere I go?” I question warily and his brows rise to his hairline.

“I was about to ask you the same thing?” he voices, his tone low and gravelly. “You stalking me, babe?”

I almost laugh out loud but catch myself just in time. Stalking him? Is this kid for real?

I snort and tilt my head back so I could look him directly in the eyes. “*Me? Stalking you?*” I laugh bitterly and fold my arms over my chest. “Why don’t we take a step back and re-evaluate the situation here, shall we? I’m walking out of the bathroom while you’re stood lurking outside said bathroom. Who appears to be the stalker here you think?” I point out, and he grins, licking his ruby lips and advancing toward me. Every step he takes, I retreat until my back hits a wall.

“I’m not lurking. If you must know, I was going to take a leak when you walked straight into me,” he corrects, lifting his muscular arms and pressing his palms to the wall on either side of my head, caging me in. I peek up at him through my lashes and when his eyes flitter to my lips, my stomach flips. “This is a private party Angel, what are you doing here?”

“I know it’s a private party. It’s my friend’s birthday, hence why I got the invite.”

“You know Oscar?”

“Yes, I know him.” I reply cagily, “I assume you know him, too?”

“I do,” he murmurs, inching into my space. The hoarse rumble of his voice combined with the scent of his aftershave constricts the air in my lungs when it surrounds me.

Sweet lord, he smells too good.

My knees wobble when I feel his hot breath lingering against my lips. “I honestly don’t care why you’re here. I’m just thrilled you are,” he drawls, brushing the back of his fingers along my jaw. “My night just got a whole lot better.”

“Wait,” I whisper, placing my hands against his burly chest when he leans in to close the space between our mouths. “We can’t do that here, my siblings and friends are all out there, someone will see us.”

He draws back slightly, his brows furrowing while he stares probingly into my eyes. “So?”

“So? What do you mean *so*?” I intone quietly, “Did you miss the part where I said my siblings are here? That includes my, at times unhinged, overly protective brother who will have absolutely no qualms about permanently carving the shape of his fist in your pretty face for touching his baby sister.” A slow wily smile appears on his face and he lowers his head so our eyes are almost parallel.

“Do I look concerned?” he drawls unflappably while he lightly drags his fingers down the side of my neck. I suck in slow unsteady breaths to alleviate the sudden spike of my pulse. The warmth of his touch fluently reawakens the desire burning deep in my belly since our little rendezvous earlier in the afternoon.

“No,” I whisper back, holding his heated gaze fixedly. “You absolutely do not and that’s what’s worrying me.”

“Allow me to help ease your worries then, baby girl,” he speaks to me in a slow and suggestive manner that progressively moistens my panties. “If I need to take a punch to the face for a taste of your lips, so be it.” Before I could

even muster up a response, he sweeps down and claims my lips with a tender toe-curling kiss. My ears pick up on footsteps approaching and I go to pull away, but he curls his fingers at the nape of my neck and deepens the kiss with a deep throaty moan making me forget all about whomever it is that's approaching.

When we pull apart, my entire body is wracked with tingles, especially when he bows his head and he starts kissing and sucking at my neck. I start to feel a little unsteady on my feet when his hand disappears under my dress and his thumb traces teasing circles on the inside of my thigh. "Oh, shit, we should... s-stop," I moan, biting down on my lip. "Ahh," I gasp when he strokes me through the lace of my underwear.

"You want to stop, baby?" he groans while he nips at my bottom lip. "How do you expect me to stop when you're rubbing that delectable pussy against my fingers like a hungry little slut?"

"I—*fuck.*" I moan, snaking my arms around his neck and pulling him closer against me leaving no space between us at all.

Foreheads pressed together he continues to stroke my swollen nub making me writhe against him. "Oh fuck, you want that orgasm don't you, Angel? He hisses, applying a little more pressure as he strokes me. "Look at you, you want it bad, don't you?" I absolutely do want it. In fact, I'm dying for it, but I'm incapable of stringing two words together let alone tell him to stop or care who sees us.

"Ohhh," I whimper quietly, my hips roll and buck demanding more friction as I grind my pussy against his fingers. My groin tightens and that liquid heat surges through me. I suck in a sharp breath before he clamps a hand over my mouth as I reach that enchanting peak, my nerves bunch together and I tense.

"Yes, there it is, come on baby, give it to me," he growls, the fervid need that laces his tone drives me over the edge and I explode, quaking in his arms as I ride out my third orgasm that day. "Oh, fuck yeah, that's my good girl." I slump against

him as I start to come down and he removes his hand where it's clamped down over my mouth and he kisses me.

"Jeyla?" I rip my lips away from his when I hear Ashlyn calling for me. We're both panting heavy to catch our breaths.

"Shit," I curse and go to pull away from him, but he steps back rather abruptly, and I look up at him quizzically.

"Jeyla?" he intones, eyes flaring while he stands stock still staring at me with his jaw set tight. I frown, noticing the sudden change in his demeanour. "Your name is *Jeyla*?" I nod affirmative, blinking up at him in bewilderment, not liking the bite in his tone. "Please, don't tell me your last name is *Jenkins*?"

The way my name rolls off his tongue almost as if it's saturated with a deadly poison makes me wince inwardly. Wait a bloody minute. How the hell does he know my last name? "It is," I answer cagily, "How did you..."

He starts to laugh but it's not one of amusement. "This is some fucked up prank, isn't it? Ash put you up to this to screw with me. Or was it, Oscar?" My brows fuse while I observe him pacing back and forth.

I grab hold of his arm while he paces to stop him, and he lowers his gaze to glare my hand... rather menacingly. "What the hell are you talking about? What prank?"

"You're not..." He utters and closes his eyes to swallow, his Adams apple bobbing in his throat. "You can't be... *her*." He finishes, putting a little too much emphasis on 'her' as if the word scalded his mouth or something. Opening his jade eyes to look me over he shakes his head, rubbing his forehead agitatedly. "Fuck." I let go of his arm, folding my mine over my chest and glowering at him.

"Her who?" I snap irritably, "Would you like to fill me in what the hell you're blathering on about?" We stand glaring hotly at one another in the small hallway that leads to the bathroom. My body has barely recovered from the orgasm he just gave me and now he's glaring at me with eyes full of red-hot abhorrence.

“You seriously don’t have an inkling as to who I am, do you?” he questions, his eyes searching mine.

I stare up at him and shrug, “No, but judging by your reaction I’m getting the feeling that I’m supposed to?”

The bleak sneer that permeates from him sends a frosty shiver down my spine. I shuffle back as he moves over to me until I’m once again backed up into the wall. “It seems I’m not the only one that’s changed over the last four years.” I narrow my eyes and swallow the dread that’s starting to rise in my throat. “Did you finally have those ears pinned back, *JJ*?” The blood running through my veins ices over when I hear my childhood nickname.

Only one person calls me JJ.

I feel the colour drain away from my face as we stand staring at one another. “No...” I shake my head in disbelief. There’s no damn way it could be him.

“Dean...”

“JJ.”

Chapter 11

Jeyla

U GOT IT BAD - USHER

“No, you can’t be. I would have known... you, you look so...” I stammer pathetically and look him over in absolute horror. Now I know it’s him, my brain is starting to pick up on the familiar mannerisms and features that seemed so familiar to me when I met him. Like his eyes, the dark curly lashes that I always said was wasted on him. And his smile, the dimples that appear under his eyes whenever he smiles—how did I miss all those things?!

Dean smirks and draws his lower lip between his teeth, “Different?” I press my palms together and bring it to my lips, praying to whoever is above that this is some sick, sick joke. “Losing three stone and packing on muscle mass can really transform a person.”

“Oh fuck,” My chest constricts and my mouth fills with saliva when my stomach churns unpleasantly. “No, this isn’t happening; this can’t be fucking happening.”

Dean looks at me sharply and narrows his eyes, images of us having sex, kissing and him making me climax moments ago floods my mind.

“I think I’m gonna be sick,” I utter, pressing my fingers to my mouth.

“Oh, there you bloody are!” Ashlyn exhales when she turns the corner and spots Dean and I standing by the bathroom entrance. When she notices the grim look on my face her smile falters, and she turns to look over at Dean scowling. “Oh no...”

I can’t breathe, I need air. “Excuse me.” I push past them both and hurry toward the exit leaving Ash calling after me.

The fresh air hits me and I lean over placing my hands on my knees and suck in several deep breaths to calm myself down. I’m having some sort of panic attack. My emotions are spiralling and I can’t get them under control.

I slept with Dean. Goddamn it, I slept with my best friend’s brother—my childhood nemesis. The boy I spent my entire life loathing. “No, no, no, no.” I whimper, shaking my hands while I pace back and forth. “Oh God... oh God.”

Oh Jeyla, what have you done? What the fuck have you gone and done, you foolish girl.

“Jeyla?” I spin when I hear my name and sigh in relief when I see Oscar standing there, a look of concern on his face as he walks toward me. For a split second I thought it was Dean coming out to torture me. “What’s wrong kid? Are you okay?”

I exhale and force myself to nod. “I’m fine.”

Oz cocks his head to the side and smiles sympathetically, his kind brown eyes glittering, likely from the effect of the alcohol he’s consumed. “What did I tell you about lying to me?”

“Oskie, I’m fine, I just needed to get some air.” I assure him with a phony smile when he throws an arm around my shoulder. “What are you doing out here, shouldn’t you be in there getting stinking drunk?”

“Oh, I am, I’m two jaeger bombs away from becoming blotto.” He states with a snigger and shoulder bumps me. “I saw you legging it out here like someone lit a firecracker up your bum and wanted to make sure you were alright. Ash was coming after you, but I told her I’d check in on you.” I opt for staying silent and lower my gaze to stare at my feet. “Who upset my Jeykins? Tell me, so I can go and rip their heads off.”

I shake my head mutely and blow out a long, frustrated breath. I wish I could tell him everything that has happened, but I can’t. I can’t stomach *anyone* knowing what Dean and I have done. “It’s nothing, I’m honestly fine.”

Oz shifts and moves to stand in front of me so he can face me properly. “Hey, since when have you not been able to tell me what’s bothering you?” He questions, his tone wounded. “Is it Dean?” My head snaps up so fast at the mention of his name that I almost give myself whiplash. The look of surprise in my gaze evidently answers his question and he nods in understanding. “I saw the two of you kissing earlier and now you’re all upset and he looks like he wants to murder someone.”

My mouth drops open and like a fish fresh out of water I gape at him, unsure of what to say. “You did?” he smiles, shoving his hands into the back pockets of his jeans while he regards me closely. I sigh, “Believe it or not I didn’t know it was him.”

Oz chuckles, “I know.”

When I give him a quizzical look he shrugs and goes on to explain. “Even I had a hard time recognising him and he’s my little brother. The little shit went and grew up and transformed into an action figure.” He jokes with a short laugh, and I smile faintly, shaking my head.

“Ugh Oskie, I feel really stupid, I should have seen it.” I whimper, rubbing my temples. “How could I be so blind?”

“Hey, come on, it can happen to anyone. Dean didn’t recognise you either. Besides, four years is a long time, people change as they grow up. Look how sexy I became over the last

two years.” I couldn’t contain my laugh. “I’m fucking irresistible.”

Yes, he in fact is very irresistible. The teenager crushing on him growing up inside me marvels mentally.

If ever there was a choice of sleeping with one of the Reyes boys, it would always without a doubt be Oz.

“You were always sexy to me Oskie, you’ve just become *sexier*.” I state playfully with a wink, and he beams proudly puffing out his now defined chest.

“Ahh, see, this is why you’re still my favourite girl.” I smile warmly when he draws me in for a tight hug. I melt into his embrace and sigh. “Everything is going to be okay. It was an honest mistake, only the three of us know, so bury it and move on,” he murmurs, burying his nose into my hair. I pull my head back and gaze up at him.

“Thank you, Oskie.” I pout. “I really love ya, you know.” I profess smiling up at him affectionately and his beautiful brown eyes light up with adoration.

Oscar murmurs, brushing a kiss to my forehead. “I really love you too, kid. Now, what do you say we have a couple of shots of something we’ll regret tomorrow and move this party to the dance floor?”

“I would say what the hell are we waiting for, birthday boy? Lead the way.” Oscar smirks, throws his arm around my shoulder and guides me back toward the entrance of the bar.

The moment we step inside, and we make our way toward the bar to get some drinks my body tenses all over again. Dean is leaning against the bar, nursing a bottle of Budweiser, listening intently to whatever his cousins are telling him. As we walk by them I can feel his eyes following me.

“Tequila good?” Oz leans in to speak in my ear so I could hear him over the loud music. I nod, repeatedly telling myself not to yield to the little voice in my head and look at Dean, despite feeling his gaze penetrating through the side of my head. I’m trying so hard not to think about everything that happened between us the last few days.

I wonder what he's thinking right now? Is he feeling as disgusted and conflicted as I am?

Fuck. I lose the very brief battle within myself, and my eyes shift in his direction and lock with his. Dean doesn't avert his gaze, he stares at me almost fixedly and I stare right back, ignoring the pull in my stomach.

"Jeykins." Oz nudges my shoulder and I break eye contact and take the shot of tequila Oz holds out to me.

"Happy Birthday, Oskie." I smile, we lick the line of salt and clink our glasses before downing the shots. The liquid burns my insides and I shudder, sucking on the lime slice Oz shoves into my mouth.

The DJ changes the song to Usher's 'U Got It Bad' and Oz takes my hand and pulls me toward the dance floor. I see Ashlyn talking with Chloe and Shane, she smiles when she sees me and mouths 'you okay?' I respond with a nod, and she blows me a kiss.

Oz pulls me against him and circles his arms around my waist and I snake my arms around his neck, resting my head on his shoulder as we sway together. I smile when Oz sings the lyrics to the song in my ear. My smile fades as quickly as it appears when I look up and see Dean being dragged to the dance floor by some leggy blonde with way too much make-up caked on her face.

I roll my eyes and shove aside the burning irritation that spreads across my chest. Dean has his forehead pressed to the blonde's but his eyes are on me. My limbs go stiff when the girl starts kissing his neck—the same damn neck that still has the love bite I gave him earlier.

I don't care.

I don't have a single fuck to spare for him or his stupid bimbo.

Why is your gut scalding you from the inside out with jealousy then?

I'm not jealous. I'm still processing. A couple of hours ago I was in his arms, he was a guy I was attracted to. I can't just

flip a switch and not find him attractive or remember the way he tastes or how good he kisses.

Fucking hell.

I'm going to need more tequila shots if I'm going to drown out the incessant chatter in my head.

The slow song comes to an end and a very familiar song from our childhood starts thundering through the speakers. "Oh my God, not this song," Oz complains with a chuckle just as Ashlyn pops up and I'm being dragged away from Oz to dance with her.

"Bitch, it's our song!" She exclaims excitedly.

We sing the lyrics to one another and dance like we did when we were kids. Ash wraps her arms around my neck, and we sway together. "I love you, you sexy bitch." She slurs drunkenly and I grin, tightening my arms around her.

"I love you more, you gorgeous tart."

"Jessssss!" Ash shouts when my sister joins us on the dance floor. "Look at my best friend, isn't she a sexy bitch? Oh, I should tell the DJ to play that song!" I laugh when she takes my hand and spins me around and dashes off toward the DJ's booth. Sure enough the song changes and she takes the microphone from the DJ. "Hello... Hello people," she taps the microphone to ensure it's switched on. "This song is dedicated to my sexy bitch bestie right there! Jeyla Jenkins!" she slurs drunkenly and giggles when I turn a deep shade of red when the crowd cheers. "And a very happy birthday to my big bro, Oskie." The crowd cheers again, holding up their glasses to salute Oz who takes a bow.

"Oh my God, she's one sip away from being white girl trashed. Don't give her anymore alcohol." Jess giggles watching Ashlyn heckling the DJ when he tries to take the microphone back from her.

"Nah, she's still got a couple more drinks in her, I think. Besides she won't stop until she barfs," I tell Jess who throws her head back and laughs at Ashlyn.

I manage to pry her down from the booth before we get kicked out of the place with Shane and Oz's help. Jeez, I forget how rowdy she can get when she's drunk.

After a few more rounds we're all on the dance floor, the lights are dimmed and the atmosphere is lit. Shane's dancing with Ashlyn, keeping an eye on her to make sure she doesn't drink anymore and get completely plastered and I'm dancing with one of Oz's colleagues from work. I believe his name is Daniel, or is it David? It didn't matter, the boy can dance and I'm here for it.

By the end of the fourth song my feet are throbbing unpleasantly, and my throat is parched beyond belief, "Another drink?" David—we'll call him David—asks as though he read my mind. I smile gratefully and nod.

"Yes, please!" I go to follow him out but stop when I see Shane carrying a drunk Ashlyn toward the exit. "Shane, wait up." I move toward them and look over my best friend. "Is she okay?"

"I'm A-kay." Ashlyn murmurs holding up her index and thumb attempting to make the perfect sign.

"Girl, you're smashed." I say with a giggle and she giggles back and presses her finger to her nose.

"I know... shhhhhh."

"I'm going to drive her home." Shane says, helping Ashlyn put her denim jacket on when she struggles to put her arm through the sleeve. "I think your sister is coming with us."

Shane gestures behind me with his head and I follow his gaze. I see my sister giving Oscar a hug before she makes her way over to us. "Okay, let me just get my things and I'll come with." I go to leave but Ash grabs my arm and stops me.

"No, no, you stay," she shakes her head and hiccups, "You have to stay, we can't both leave Oksie." I snigger when she drunkenly mispronounces Oskie. "Also, that bar guy is effing hot." Her green eyes go round and wide with excitement as though she suddenly devises the world's greatest idea. She

flashes me a boozy grin and stumbled toward me. “You should call soufflé. Oh, soufflé, Jeykins loves yooou!”

In a panic my eyes dart over to the bar where Dean is—or *was* sitting and sigh in relief when I see that his seat is empty. That would have been embarrassing. “Who the hell is soufflé?” Jessica questions, eyeing me curiously and hands Ash the bottle of water she’s holding.

“No one.” I wave off her question with a short laugh, “Take her home, *please*.” I urge Shane and he smiles, shaking his head when Ash nuzzles his neck muttering incoherently about him doing filthy things to her while he hauls her out of the bar.

I chuckle to myself, knowing full well she’s going to hate herself for drinking too much when that hangover hits her in the morning and I’m going to take great pleasure in torturing her.

Strolling back to the bar I see David is waiting for me with a tall glass of vodka cranberry. I climb up onto the bar stool and take a long sip, moaning when the chill of the icy beverage cools my parched throat.

“Babe, I’m going to the bathroom. Don’t you go anywhere because we’re heading back out on that dance floor.” David says with a wink, and I inwardly cringe when he called me *‘babe’*.

I finish my drink and order myself a bottle of water. When my head suddenly swims, I know I’ve hit my limit of alcohol consumption. From the corner of my eye I see Dean returning from wherever he disappeared to and taking the seat at the end of the bar which is facing me directly. I overhear him order himself a rum and coke.

I shouldn’t have, I know, but I blame my drunken stupor for being so damn weak. My eyes involuntarily veer in his direction and I’m not in the least surprised to find him watching me as well. With one muscular forearm resting against the bar top and the other leisurely stroking his jaw. His knuckles are bruised, likely from when he punched that guy earlier in the afternoon. The angel in me wants to reach out,

brush my fingers over each bruised knuckle and ask him if it hurts. However, the headstrong part of me swiftly pushes away those urges and for good measure mentally slaps me upside the head for being such a melt.

The way he's looking at me with that glacial glare tells me he would readily watch me drown in a teaspoon full of water and not lift a finger to help me.

Then again, I'm not one to hold back either. I can't take it. The feel of his eyes boring into my skull is maddening me. I shift in my seat so I can face him properly. "Are you trying to etch every crevice of my face into your brain, Reyes?" I snap irritably. "You should take a picture it will last longer."

For a good minute his facial expression doesn't change, not a damn flicker of emotion while he stares at me intently. "And risk your face cracking the lens of my new phone? I'll pass," he retorts frostily, and I draw in a deep breath to keep my flaring temper at bay. "Also, don't flatter yourself, I wasn't looking at you. I was trying to see around your giant head which is currently hindering my view." I turn my head to the left and see a pretty brunette sitting at the bar with her friend. Judging by the sultry glances she keeps throwing his way and the cringey manner she's nibbling on her straw while she converses with her friend it's clear she's more than a little keen. "If you don't mind," he mutters, gesturing for me to move out of his line of vision so they can continue eye fucking one another from across the bar.

I roll my eyes in exasperation, "I do mind." I throw back and he rests his forearms against the bar and leans forward, a ghost of a smile on his face.

"Why?" Dean asks, narrowing his eyes at me. "Did you like it better when you thought I was looking at you, princess?"

A rapid surge of heat rises to my face and my temples start to throb, "Fuck you, Dean."

"Not even if you paid me, darling."

We glare at one another vehemently for a long moment before I lean in closer, keeping my eyes fixed firmly to his. “You wouldn’t be worth a dime, *darling*.” I sneer and the corner of his mouth lifts into a smirk before he slowly licks his full lower lip and draws it between his teeth.

“That’s a lot of hot air for a girl who was on her knees sucking my dick a few hours ago.” My palm itches to slap the haughty look right off his face, instead I snort and smile.

“Says you who couldn’t stop picturing a life married to me so he could—what was it you said—oh that’s it, spread me out on top of the kitchen counter and feast on my pussy in between every course till your satisfied, right?” Those jade eyes darken and his jaw clenches tight.

Oh yeah, two can play that game you insufferable cantankerous git.

“Go right ahead and screw that girl, it will take more than the likes of her to erase the taste I left in your mouth.” I add with an arrogant smirk of my own. “I hope she enjoys the taste of me as much as you did.”

Fuck me, that felt good.

I slip off the stool and take David’s hand when he comes back from the bathroom and follow him to the dance floor.

I dance with David to a couple of songs when the DJ plays hits from the eighties. What I didn’t expect was ‘mysterious girl’ to start playing. My stomach takes a dive and for a second I don’t move. I look over at Dean who seems to have the same reaction as me while he talks to the brunette. Our eyes meet across the room, and I could swear I saw his fingers tighten around the glass of rum and coke he’s holding.

David wraps his arms around my waist, pulling me flush against him while we sway to the song. I’m not loving the way his hand keeps moving toward my arse and I’m running out of ways to slyly manoeuvre so he moves his hand away from my bum.

Also, I’m starting to regret drinking that vodka cranberry so fast. I’m starting to feel real unsteady on my feet and my

vision is blurring. “Shit.” I shake my head to clear the fuzziness and clear my vision but that only makes me dizzy.

“You okay, baby?” David asks, taking hold of my chin. I shake my head slowly and press both my hands against his chest to push him back but my arms feel like they have no power to them at all.

What the hell is happening?

“No, I uh, I don’t feel so good.” I stammer, pinching the bridge of my nose when my heart rate spikes.

“I think you’ve had a bit too much to drink. Come on sweetheart, I’ll drive you home.” I vaguely hear David say and I shake my head.

“No, no, I can...” I stammer, turning to walk off but my knees wobble and fall back against his chest. “I just need a... minute.”

Chapter 12

Dean

CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF YOU - CARY BROTHERS



“YOU’RE A FIGHTER PILOT? That’s so *fetching*.” Amber, the pretty brunette that’s been eyeing me from across the bar coos while flirtatiously playing with the dog tag chain around my neck.

I wouldn’t really consider dodging bullets and missiles as fetching. However, if you set aside the element of danger, the thrill and the fact girls go crazy for a man in uniform sure does make it worthwhile.

“It has its perks.” I utter, lifting the glass of rum to my lips and take a long sip. I’m getting annoyed with myself for not being able to focus. I’ve got this beautiful girl ready and willing to be the distraction I need, but I’m bored shitless. Not even the possibility of getting my dick wet is keeping me interested.

While she yammers on and on about something I have zero interest in, I allow my eyes to sweep the room and instantly

straighten from my leaning position when I see Jeyla struggling to hold herself upright and that fucker David Pollard leading her toward the exit.

What the fuck, she was fine ten minutes ago? Sober enough to run that venomous tongue of hers at least, now she's fucking legless.

I'm up before I can stop myself and stride over to them before they get to the exit.

"Going somewhere, Pollard?" I step in his way and the startled look David gives me when he sees me quadruples the infuriation I'm already feeling.

"Alright mate, I think she's had one too many and asked me to take her home," he says with a nervous chuckle. I tear my eyes from his to look at Jeyla who is barely conscious.

"JJ?" I call out to her, tipping her head up as I do and she forces her eyes open to look at me. Her pupils are dilated and her gaze hazy, and her skin feels clammy to the touch. I'm not liking the look of her. Something's not right.

"I think she just needs to sleep it off," David says, brushing away a strand of her hair that falls into her flushed face and I fix him a withering glare, my fists clenching by my side.

"Get your fucking hand off her before I rip it off and beat you with it." I utter lowly through clenched teeth and David takes one look at me and removes his hand from her face.

"Shit bro, I was only trying to help."

"I'm going to help you into an early grave if you don't let her go and get the fuck out of my face." I threaten gravely and take Jeyla's belongings from him. I draw her to me when he releases his hold on her. After he scampers off, I turn my attention back to Jeyla. "JJ, hey, look at me." I cup her left cheek and she opens her eyes and groans.

"Dean?" She mumbles, curling her fingers in my shirt when I pull her against my chest.

“JJ, I need you to tell me if you took something?” I ask and she shakes her head.

“No, I didn’t,” she replies quietly. I sigh, a sense of relief washing over me. “Come on, let me take you home.”

Jeyla opens her eyes again and scowls up at me, her button nose crinkling as she tries to focus on my face. “Why are you spinning me around?” I look down into her upturned face and resist the urge to smile.

“I’m not spinning you,” I answer indifferently. “That would be the effect of the vodka cranberry you were downing ten minutes ago.”

Jeyla inhales through her nose, her eyes closing. “I need to sit for a minute.” She says on her exhale and breaks away from me and almost topples over. I reach out and catch her, wrapping an arm around her waist to steady her.

“JJ, unless you want to face-plant to the floor, I suggest you keep still.” Jeyla glowers up at me and I take a second to revel in the beauty of her cat-like green eyes. Looking at her right now, I feel so foolish for not knowing it was her all along. Perhaps my mind just chose to block it out for some bizarre reason.

“Stop telling me what to do, *Lieutenant*.” Jeyla carps, and just like that the spell is broke and I’m reminded of all the reasons I can’t stand her. “I’m capable of perfectly standing on my own.” I roll my eyes and snort, loosening my hold on her when she pushes at my chest.

“You’re not even capable of stringing a sentence together let alone standing, JJ.” I take hold of her hand when she tries to sit on the edge of the pavement and her legs almost give out on her.

“See,” she utters, holding out her arms triumphantly when she manages to sit upright. “I’m sitting,” she groans, pulling her legs to her chest and drops her head in her hands.

“Drink this.” I perch down beside her and hold out a bottle of water for her. Jeyla lifts her head and stares at the bottle before she takes it.

I observe her while she takes small sips of the water. When she tilts her head back to drink from the bottle, I notice the love bite I gave her earlier becoming visible at the base of her neck. I groan inwardly, the taste and feel of her silky flesh against my tongue evokes something deep inside me.

“Are you okay?” I ask when she rubs her temples. I fist my hands when they almost reach out to rub her back.

“Stop acting like you give a shit, Dean. We both know you’d rather be with your little bar skank in there, so spare us both the headache and go,” she fires back tersely, and I pinch the bridge of my nose in agitation.

“And miss out on this glorious opportunity to torture you? Never.” Jeyla turns her head to give me a sidelong look of disdain.

“So, Dean Reyes would rather spend his night tormenting me than between the legs of some bimbo he spent the evening eye fucking?” She scoffs, “I can’t decide if I should feel flattered or burdened.”

I’m really starting to regret my idiotic decision to get involved. This is the price I pay for trying to be a good guy. I should have left her with David, maybe then she would have learned a valuable lesson of what a true bastard is capable of. “How about you mull over it in the car while I take you home, preferably in silence.”

“I’m not getting in a car with you.” She mumbles looking around as though in search of something. “I’ll catch a cab.” She adds with a huff. “If I can just find my phone.”

“Looking for this?” I hold up her absurdly small bag and she lifts her eyes to look at it and blinks. When she reaches out for it, I pull it back and she scowls.

“Give it to me.” She reaches again and I hold it further out of her reach. “Dean...”

“Take it and I’ll let you jump in a cab.” I offer with a smirk, and she lunges forward to grab the bag, but I draw it out of her reach. It’s not till I look down that I notice how close her face is to mine.

Jeyla's eyes veer from her bag and lock with mine. I swallow thickly, unable to look away I hold her gaze. My jaw starts to ache dully when I press my molars together to suppress the ridiculous urge to close that damn gap between our lips and kiss her until she's dizzied with the taste of me.

Don't ask me how, but I somehow find the strength within myself to draw away from her. Cussing myself out inwardly, I shake my head and stand up. "Come on, I'm taking you home."

I don't bother waiting for an answer, I take a hold of her upper arms and lift her to her feet. Compared to her state before, she appears to be a little more stable on her feet.

While we walk the short distance to my car I observe her closely, readying myself to catch her in case she falls.

Shit. Listen to me. I'm readying myself to catch Jeyla Jenkins. Me? Who wouldn't be caught dead in her presence. Fucking balls, kill me now.



The music playing softly in the background during the drive drowns out the silence that stretches out between us. There's a dull ache in my temples, likely from having the same questions circling in my mind. Do we talk about what happened between us or is it best we squash those unanswered questions I know we're both burning to ask and try to move on?

The smart and mature option would be to talk but knowing us we'll only wind up in a screaming match like we always do.

I keep my eyes fixed to the road, a grim look on my face. Well, I attempt to at least, but my eyes defiantly veer in her direction every now and then just to make sure she's alive and not passed out on me. Jeyla stares out of the passenger side window, her hands resting in her lap while she toys with the ring on her thumb.

She's more alert now than she was half hour ago. Jeyla rolls down the window, her eyes closed, her chest rises and falls with every breath she draws in and exhales. The wind gently blows her long brown hair back and with it the smell of her shampoo and sweet tones of her perfume. I gnaw on my lower lip, desperately trying to ignore the way my body reacts to it and focus on something... anything else. I wonder if she's feeling nauseous. Last thing I need is her projectile vomiting all over my car.

"Are you going to be sick? Do you need me to pull over?" I ask, my eyes darting between her and the road.

"No, I'm fine," she replies testily. "You can relax, I'm not going to throw up in your precious car." My grip on the steering wheel tightens and my agitation peaks another notch.

Fuck me, she's maddening. I've always said it and I'm convinced that God created and plonked this petulant shrew into my life just to punish me.

"I didn't think it was possible, but you're even more exasperating when you're drunk." I mutter bitterly and from the corner of my eye I notice her head snap to my direction. "A little gratitude would be nice."

"Gratitude?" She iterates indignantly, "I don't remember asking you to help me, Dean?"

I glance at her briefly, my brows knitting tight. "Would you prefer I left you with David Pollard in your state? Because I assure you, JJ, nothing good would have come from that scenario." I express grimly and turn my gaze back to the road again.

"Sorry, have I missed something here? Since when, have *you* given a shit about my wellbeing? The last time you and I saw one another you looked me dead in the eyes and very clearly expressed your displeasure at my very existence, remember? 'Your mother should have done us all a favour and swallowed you.' Those were your words."

My stomach twists painfully, the same way it did four years ago when I maliciously uttered those words to her and

saw the wounded look in her eyes. I also recall very vividly the slap that followed.

We've done and said many things to one another in the midst of a heated argument, but that moment in particular sits high on the top of the list of things I regret to this day.

I just don't know what it is, she rubs me the wrong way and disables the filter between my brain and my mouth whenever I'm around her. She brings out the callous bastard in me and it seems I bring out the vindictive bitch in her as you can tell by her terse demeanour. Looking at us, you wouldn't think we were the same two people that spent the afternoon in the backseat of my car earlier exchanging bodily fluids.

"Still holding a grudge about that? It was four years ago, how about you get over it."

Jeyla glowers at me, "How about you get over yourself and apologise?"

It's my turn to scowl at her, "Apologise?" I sputter in disbelief, "How about you apologise for waxing off my eyebrows while I was sleeping?"

Jeyla snorts and turns to look out the window again, crossing her arms over her chest. "Dream on."

I shake my head. The pressure of my foot on the accelerator increases and the car shifts faster. I need to get her arse home so I can put an end to this godforsaken night. "You haven't changed a fucking bit."

"And you have?" she fumes, turning in her seat to glare at me. "You're still the same heartless prick just wrapped in a prettier package."

I indicate and pull the car over to the side of the empty road before I turn and face her, "Heartless?" I grit out through clenched teeth. "If your judgement of me is accurate and I am the heartless prick you seem to believe, why are you sitting in my car right now? Why did I stop you from going off with David and possibly getting yourself assaulted?"

Jeyla stares at me, "I don't know, Dean? You tell me, why did you step in and save me?" she fires back hotly.

I pinch the bridge of my nose and sigh, “You’re making me regret that decision more and more with every passing second, JJ.” I tell her grimly. “And before you jump on your high horse and start cantering away into silly conclusions, let me make it very clear that it wasn’t personal to you. I would have stepped in and done the same for any vulnerable girl in that situation.”

“Right, silly me, I forget that us fragile women are nothing but damsels in need of rescuing, right?” Jeyla sneers with a roll of her eyes. “I’m so sick of this male privilege bullshit.”

“Are you done with your little rant there, princess?” I snap shifting in my seat, and she throws me a deathly side glare.

“There is no level sufficient enough to ever gauge my abhorrence toward you.” Jeyla voices, her eyes reflecting her words. I watch her unbuckle her seatbelt, push the car door open and get out of the car, slamming the door shut behind her.

Why can’t this fucking night be over with already? Every second spent with this girl is absolute torture. With an exasperated sigh, I push my door open and get out of the car. Jeyla leans against the side of the car, her head back and eyes closed.

I just know she’s cursing our damn fate just as I’ve been doing since I discovered it’s her that I’ve been seeing.

I’m going to regret this royally, but the conversation has to be had so we can move the fuck on already.

“JJ,” I walk over to her, and she ignores me and keeps her eyes closed. “Maybe we should talk?” I suggest and her brows knit before her eyes open and she looks at me.

“Talk?” she chuckles sourly and licks her lips, “What would we possibly have to talk about?”

I sigh and shove my hands in my pocket, “Oh, I don’t know, how about the very evident topic that is lingering above our heads just waiting to be addressed, perhaps?”

Jeyla lowers her gaze to stare at her feet and shakes her head slowly, “There’s nothing to talk about, as far I’m concerned the last four days never happened.”

“It did happen, JJ.” I voice, pacing back and forth. “I’m not thrilled about this either, but whether we admit to it or not, we had sex.”

Jeylea winces and pushes herself off the car and curls her fingers in her hair. “Thank you for pointing that out, Lieutenant obvious.” Jeylea mutters sardonically. “I don’t think addressing it is going to solve anything. What’s done is done, I think we need to put it to bed and forget about it.”

Oh, how I wish it were that easy.

Jeylea continues, “I refuse to spend the rest of my summer butting heads with you—though if I knew you were coming back for the summer, I never would have let your sister talk me into coming home.”

I frown, “I wasn’t exactly jumping with joy to see you either.”

“Good, then how about you stay out of my way and try not to fuck up anymore of what’s left of my summer. Do you think you can you do that?” she questions snidely.

I scoff and fix her with an impassive glare, “I have absolutely no problem with that, but if you’re looking for someone to blame for this whole mess, I would turn that finger and point it right back at yourself.”

“Excuse me?” Jeylea’s green eyes narrow to slits.

“Had you just told me your name that night in the bar instead of playing stupid games with me, we wouldn’t be in this situation.”

“Hold on a damn minute. Why should I feel obligated to dish out my name to a total stranger? Especially when you were meant to be a one-night thing. I didn’t plan on seeing you again after that night, so what the hell did it matter if we exchanged names or not?” Jeylea retorts ardently and goes to walk off, but I step in her way. “Unlike you Dean Reyes, I don’t whore myself out to everything that moves.”

I throw my head back and laugh with gusto. “Oh really? Because I picked you up in less time than it took with others.”

I point out, advancing toward her. “You couldn’t spread your legs for me quick enough.”

Jeylea’s eyes grow wide with repulse, “Bastard.”

I groan lowly when her palm swiftly and forcefully connects with my left cheek with a slap.

When I turn my head to look at her, I’m certain she could see the intensity of my ire radiating in my gaze, but she nevertheless stands her ground, glaring at me with aversion.

Smirking, I rub my cheek, “The truth hurts, does it, JJ?” I taunt her smugly. “You can stand there and seethe all you want, fuck you can slap me until your hand falls off, but it won’t change the fact that deep down you are a cock hungry little slut.” Jeylea’s arm rises for another swipe, but I catch her wrist before it makes contact with my cheek. “Watch it,” I tut, licking my lips. “You got lucky the first time, but I assure you the second one will be a huge mistake.”

Jeylea tugs on her arm, attempting to yank her wrist free from my grasp, but I tighten my grip and pull her flush against me. She winces, her angry eyes boring into mine. “You make me sick.”

I smile and lean in a closer, “Do I?” I voice, lowering my eyes to look at those pretty pink lips. “Because your body language and the lustful look you’re trying so hard to conceal behind those hateful glances all tell a different story, JJ.”

“Go fuck yourself,” Jeylea hisses, her chest rising and falling with every enraged breath she takes.

Smirking I give my lips a slow lick and the action draws her hot gaze straight to my mouth. “Nah, I’m good. My dick has yet to fully recover from fucking that pretty mouth of yours earlier.” I drawl. Jeylea growls in aggravation and tries to slap me again, this time with her free hand, but thanks to my sharp reflexes I catch her wrist and in one fluent motion I fold both her arms behind her back and press her into the passenger side door of my car.

“Behave yourself.” I warn, staring into her upturned face with a smile.

“Get your filthy meat hooks off me,” Jeyla seethes furiously and squirms against me.

“I will, if you promise to be a good girl and stop trying to hit me?” I affirm, and she narrows her eyes at me before lifting her leg to knee me in his nuts. I already pre-empted her move and use my knee to push hers to the side and press myself against her fully.

A soft gasp escapes her. We’re so close that our noses are touching, and our bodies are pressed together tight enough that I can feel her heart beating against my chest. “You’re going to have to do better than that, JJ.”

Jeyla’s eyes close and her breathing shallows, “Let go of me right now, you swine.”

“Are you going to behave yourself?”

“Fuck off.”

“Wrong answer...”

“Ow, you’re hurting me.” She whimpers when my fingers tighten around her wrists. I can’t lie, having her in this position is rousing the beast in my trousers and boy does he want to come out and play.

“Behave yourself then and I’ll let you go,” I state firmly. “Or are you purposely playing up because you’re enjoying this?” I add, brushing my nose over hers. “Hating each other the way we do has always been our foreplay, hasn’t it baby?” Jeyla rolls her eyes squirming against me and while doing so brushes our pelvises together.

My jaw clenches when a jolt of pleasure surges through me when her hip brushes my now fully erect cock. *Fuck*. “Get in the car.” I utter, releasing my hold on her hands.

Jeyla straightens, rubbing her wrists that are tinged red. She shoves me away from her, scowling. “You’re a pig.”

“And you love it.” I state with a haughty smirk as I reach for the car door and open it for her. “Now get in the car so I can take you home already.”

Jeylea fixes me with a blank look, “I know you don’t expect me to get in a car with you *after* the way you treated me?” she questions incredulously.

“If you just stop provoking me, I wouldn’t have to manhandle you. Now stop acting like a prissy princess and get in the car.” I’m starting to lose my patience with her shit.

“I’ll take my chances walking, thanks,” she utters, turning on her heel to walk away but I catch her wrist and yank her back to me. Jeylea whimpers and glares up at me.

“Listen to me.” I hiss lowly, staring down into her large green eyes. “I’m done playing with you. You either get in this car by will or I throw you in by force. Either way, your arse is coming home with me. Understand?” Jeylea blinks mutely and I’m not sure if it’s the conviction in my voice or what, but she rips her arm out of my hold and gets in the car—cursing me to an eternity of damnation, but I’ll take it. A victory is a fucking victory.

Carping to myself under my breath, I get in the car and turn the ignition, ready to floor it the entire way home. The car lets out a couple of short beeps and goes dead. I try again. The lights come on, but there’s no power going to the engine. *Come on baby, come on, turn over for daddy, please, please.* I try again, praying inwardly she starts, but alas, I get nothing but an engine warning light flashing on the dashboard.

“Shit.” I groan and slam my hands against the steering wheel. This night just keeps getting better and fucking better.

Jeylea and I turn and look at each other simultaneously. A brow goes up and she glares at me hard. “You have got to be fucking kidding me?”

Chapter 13

Jeyla

PRAY - JRY + RUTHANNE / BEST THING - JANINE

THIS ISN'T HAPPENING. *This. Isn't. Happening.*

I cannot and will not be forced to spend another minute with this cretin of a man, let alone an hour!

“Stay put, let me check it out,” Dean huffs, reaching under his seat, he pulls the latch to release the hood and climbs out of the car. My eyes follow him and watch as he pulls the hood and hooks it up, so it stays open while he leans under it. Now, I can fit my knowledge of cars on the back of a stamp, but I can bet my life he won't be able to fix it. I smirk allowing myself the pleasure of picturing the hood of the car falling on his giant—but gorgeous—head while he's under there.

Muttering under my breath, I rifle through my purse to find my phone.

It will be a snowy day in July before I spend a night with him in this car.

I flip my phone open and pushed a button to find it dead. I close my eyes and rest my head back against the headrest. “Why?” I whimper, peeling my peepers open to look up at the roof of the car. “Why of all the people in the world did you have to lumber me with *him*?” I beseech to the ‘Big Man’ upstairs. “What have I ever done to you?”

With a sigh, I nose around the car, rifling through the middle panel to see if his phone is there and see nothing. Unbuckling my seatbelt, I lean over to check the side of the door when I accidentally press my hand against the horn. The loud sound of the horn startles me, and Dean too when he jumps and knocks his head on the hood of the car with a dull ‘*thunk*’ followed by a “Fuck!”

Whoops.

“JJ!” I see Dean’s head emerge from the side of the hood, his handsome face contorted while he glares daggers at me and rubs the back of his head. “What the hell are you doing?!”

I press my lips together to hold back the laugh that is just bursting to come out of me. “What? It was an accident!”

Dean rolls his eyes, lets out a couple choice expletives and drops the hood, still rubbing the crown of his head as he walks back to the car. “Please tell me you fixed it?” I ask hopefully, but all promise gets shot to hell when he scowls at me like he was about to reach over and rip my throat out.

“No, I didn’t bloody fix it, JJ.” He gripes irritably. “The alternator belt fucking snapped.”

I bite the inside of my cheek, “Well, call roadside recovery then. My phone is dead,” I tell him, and he reaches into his back pocket and pulls his phone out. I eye him while he flips his phone open, farts around with it for a second or two and grumbles under his breath.

“So is mine,” he slaps the phone shut again with a groan.

Laughing bitterly, I cross my arms over my chest and shake my head, snarling sardonically. “Of course, am I shocked? No, absolutely not because why would anything go right for me.”

Dean exhales from beside me. “Relax, we’ll just catch a ride with someone that drives by to a phone booth or service station.”

I give him a sidelong stare, “What ride nitwit? Have you seen one car pass by within the last half hour that we’ve been here?”

Dean turns his head to glare at me menacingly, his jaw set tight, so much so that I can see it ticking furiously even in the dark. “Are you incapable of keeping your mouth shut and not bitching for a goddamn second?”

My anger flares, “No, I’m fucking not.” I almost scream out of frustration. “In case you haven’t noticed, I’m frustrated Dean. You’re the last person in the world I would ever want to be stranded with.” Dean rolls his eyes for the millionth time.

“You’re frustrated? Have you met yourself? Do I look as though I’m elated about being stuck with you all night?!” he responds irately. “If you’re adamant on being a bitch about it, by all means, walk home and let’s see how far you get.”

I tap my foot tetchily. I’m feeling more aggravated than usual by him and this insufferable heat isn’t helping my mood either. I hate how bitchy and whiney I sound right now, I’m not usually this short-tempered. “If you maybe stayed on the main road we could have called for help by now, but no, you had to take us down some abandoned route.”

Dean taps his thumb against the steering wheel and stares out of the windshield. “It’s Saturday night, JJ. I wasn’t going to sit in traffic all bloody night. It’s chaos in the city during the weekend, you know this.”

He’s right. It’s an absolute nightmare driving through the city to get back home. People drunk in the middle of the road, out clubbing till the arse crack of dawn high on God only knows what.

We sit in silence for at least five minutes, not a single car drives by and not a soul in sight. Is it just me or is this car becoming an inferno by the minute? Also, I *really* have to pee. I start to fidget in my seat, in an attempt to distract myself I

start pulling out the gold hoop earrings I'm wearing. The sodding things are starting to feel like they're made of lead. I pull one out and Dean sneezes scaring the bejeezus out of me. The earring I'm holding goes flying out of my hand, hits the driver's side window and falls under his seat.

I turn to glower at him, unamused, "Sneeze louder."

"I think the term is 'bless you', but thanks," he utters, pushing his seat back further so he can stretch out his long muscular legs.

"Did you not just see my earring fall under your seat?"

"Yep."

"Aren't you going to get it?" I ask pointing at his feet.

Dean shrugs insouciantly, "Nope."

And there goes my annoyance boiling over again. "What do you mean, no? Just lean down and get it, please." I argue back.

"Nope." He responds coolly infuriating me further. Do you see why I get short with him? How am I supposed to act like a rational, mature adult when he behaves like this knowing full well it infuriates me?

"Fine." I relent. I refuse to spend the next couple of hours arguing with the prick. "I'll get it myself, you useless knobhead." I pull my boots off and tug my skirt down a little to cover my rear end as I shift in the seat. I lean forward, pushing his knees away toward the door so I could look, but I couldn't see a damn thing. "Can you please move your ogre feet, so I can see?" Dean sighs and lifts his feet. I lean over more to feel for the earring, but my fingers brush against something else. Reaching for it I pull it out and sit up so I can see what it is.

Oh. My. God.

Dean's gaze follows mine, and he smirks while I stare horrified at the thong in my hand... *my thong*. The one he tore off me amid our passion earlier in the afternoon. Shame fills

me and the heat I'd been feeling moments ago quadruples, leaving my face an embarrassing shade of red.

Dean stares at the thong, licking his lower lip, a rapt look in his green eyes. It doesn't take a genius to figure out what he's thinking about. Something deep in my stomach twists, and figments of the moment he tore this thong off me flash through my mind's eye. I'm not liking the things my body is feeling, so I swiftly shake off the improper thoughts that creep into my mind.

We look at one another at the same time and for the longest moment we say nothing. Those darn butterflies start fluttering in my stomach again and I'm not even going to get into the dull ache between my legs and the dampness of my underwear.

Why the hell am I wet right now?

"I'll take those." Dean plucks the torn underwear out of my hold, and my face twists with disgust.

"No, you bloody won't." I reach to snatch it from him, but he pulls it out of my reach. "You're not keeping my underwear, Dean."

"Yes, I am."

I gape at him, my eyes wide and cheeks flushed. "What the hell for?"

Dean licks his lips, his eyes darkening while he watches me intently. "To suck on them when I'm hungry." My jaw slackens and I gawp at him in absolute revulsion. He's got to be pulling my leg, surely.

"You're disgusting." I voice flatly and he smiles back at me wickedly and twirls my thong around his finger.

"You have no idea," he wags his dark brows at me suggestively, a dark glint in his eyes. "Maybe I'll frame it and hang it up on my wall like a plaque." I wince, picturing my worn thong hanging on his bedroom wall where his parents and Ashlyn will see it day in, day out. "Or maybe I'll keep it in my wallet, so I can recall the mind-blowing scent and taste of you when I'm back at base and need some mental stimulation to rub one out." A slow shaky breath pushes past

my lips, and I don't even know why my body is quivering with the thought of him stroking himself while thinking about me.

When I stare at him wordlessly, lips parted, eyes likely bulging and my heart beating in my vagina he laughs and tosses the thong at me, shaking his head amusedly.

The rotten bastard, he *was* having me on.

“Smarmy prick,” I utter, pushing his legs to the side and leaning over to continue looking for the earring my dad bought me for my sixteenth birthday. It's so dark I can't see a damn thing and it seems Dean is having a grand old time. Like the idiot I am I don't realise that while I'm rummaging under his seat, he's grinning like a div watching me between his legs. “I can't see a damn thing. Can you turn the bloody light on?” my voice is muffled, but the car's interior light flickers on a second later.

A couple of seconds later I sit upright with a groan, rubbing my ribs where the handbrake began digging into me. I should just leave it and have a look for it in the morning when it's light out, but I'm being stubborn. I shift, push myself up by placing my knees on the seat to avoid being poked in the ribs again. “Move your legs.”

Dean looks at me and then at his legs, “Where exactly would you like me to move them? We're in a car, JJ. We don't exactly have much room in here. Just leave it, I'll find it tomorrow.”

“No, I want it now!” I argue stubbornly. Dean curses under his breath and sits up straight, pushing his legs apart further to give me room to lean over and look. It would have been easier if I just asked him to get out of the car so I can get under the seat but I wasn't really in the right headspace to be thinking logically... evidently.

After casting Dean a dark glare, I lean over completely oblivious that he can now see up my skirt through the reflection of the window.

“You know, it's a good thing there's no one around because they would be getting quite the show right now.”

“What?” I groan, reaching further under the seat. My shoulder is going to pop out of its socket if I go any further.

“Not that I’m complaining, but you’ve got your peachy arse on full display,” he voices with a chuckle. I finally locate my earring poking out from under the mat and pick it up. Nice one Jeyla, just bear your rear end to him, and give him even more reason to think you’re a cock starved tramp.

“Well, I suppose it would have been too much to ask of you to be a gentleman and maybe avert your gaze to protect my modesty,” I mumble sourly propping my aching feet on the dashboard once I sit back in the seat.

“Earlier you were chewing me out about not needing to be saved and now you want me to protect your modesty. I can’t fucking win with you.” I sigh, closing my eyes. My temples are throbbing and I’m trying not to think about the need to pee. “Get your feet off my dashboard.”

I shrug. “My feet hurt.”

Dean glowers at me. “I don’t care. It’s a thirty-thousand-pound car, JJ. Get your feet off or you’ll find yourself sitting on the side of the road.” I yield and remove my feet off his dashboard. Instead of setting them on the ground, I twist my body around to face him before I drop my feet into his lap. Dean’s face contorts and I bite back the urge to laugh when he stares down at my feet. “Are you kidding me?”

I smirk. “No, I told you my feet hurt and if I’m going to be forced to spend the night with you in this car, I’m going to damn well make sure I’m comfortable,” I affirm, crossing my arms over my chest.

Dean doesn’t argue, instead he closes his eyes and sighs, “Fucking hell, your feet stink.” I hear him complain a moment later.

“No, they don’t,” I say affronted, wiggling my toes.

Dean glances down at my feet again, “I think I can smell them a little better since they’re right under my nose, JJ.”

“No love, your nose is just too close to your mouth.” I retort smarmily and his lips curl into an amused smile. I grin

back in triumph and for a very fleeting moment it feels like it did when we were hanging out a few nights ago. I jiggle my legs a little in his lap, and he blinks looking at me. “Rub my feet.”

His face contorts again, “No, get lost. I’m not touching your crusty feet.”

“Excuse you, but I do not have crusty feet. In fact, if I recall this afternoon you were the one kissing them and swooning that I have the most beautiful feet you have ever seen.” I remind him lifting my foot into his face and he moves his head back, curls his long fingers around my ankle and pulls it back down into his lap again.

“First of all, I don’t swoon,” he iterates, fixing me with a stern glare. “And secondly, I only said those things to you because I wanted to fuck you, so I wouldn’t let it go to your head. However, seeing as you’re so keen to recall things about this afternoon, let’s talk about that blowjob you gave me, shall we?” The arrogance in his eyes makes my stomach turn.

“Let’s not.” I shudder and pull my legs out of his lap and sit straight in my seat again.

Minutes pass in silence, and I begin squirming in my seat. My bladder is so full, almost at bursting point. “It’s so hot in here. Can’t you turn on the air-con or something?”

Dean opens his eyes and looks over at me fanning myself. “How am I supposed to put the air con on when there’s no power going to the engine?” Dean drawls condescendingly like I’m an idiot.

I raise a brow not liking his tone, “Don’t you fucking patronise me, Dean. I’m hot. I’m thirsty, and my bladder is minutes away from bursting.”

Dean rolls his eyes and sighs, “Then go take a piss. I don’t see anyone stopping you.”

I give a distasteful look and he blinks back at me. “Don’t be ridiculous. I am not going to piss on the side of the road like some barbarian.”

“Suit yourself. I’m going to empty my bladder,” he states, opening the door and stepping out. I watch him walk over to a bush and turn his back to me while he did his business. I squeeze my legs together praying for a miracle before I literally wet myself. Oh God, he will never let me live that down.

Dean comes back a minute later and slides into the back seat, stretching out and grinning. “Ah, so much better.” I shake my head and mutter profanities under my breath.

Another five minutes goes by, and I’m on the verge of wetting myself. I’m bouncing up and down and rocking back and forth to keep from peeing. “Damn it.”

“JJ, will you go and take a piss already? You can’t hold it in all night, and if you piss in my car, I will make you drink up every last drop.” Dean snaps from the back seat and I wince, chewing on my lip.

Even if I do go find a bush to pee in, how am I going to wipe myself? With leaves? “There are wet wipes in the glove compartment,” Dean says as if reading my mind.

“Bloody hell,” I grumble, opening the glove compartment and taking out the stupid wipes. I open the door and before I step out, I look back at him.

We share a look and when I give him a pleading look, he sighs and sits up to pull his trainers on. “Go on.” He gestures for me to go and follows me toward a small bush. I peer around, to make sure it’s safe and wrinkle my nose with distaste. Now, would be a good time to have a penis. God, why couldn’t we be created with the ability to pee standing up? “Sometime tonight will be nice, JJ.” Dean grumbles standing two feet away.

“Turn around and close your eyes. And you better not peep.” I warn, pointing at him and he rolls his eyes again and scoffs as he turns his back to me.

“Believe me, watching you take a piss in a bush like some cave woman is the last thing I would ever want to see.” I bite my bottom lip and do my business as quickly as I could. There

is no better feeling than the satisfaction of emptying your bladder after you've been bursting to go.

Though, I can't lie, wiping myself after with those wet wipes felt better than I would like to admit.

I don't know if it's because I held my pee in for so long or if it's because I'm trapped in close proximity with Dean, but my pussy is wetter than usual, and my clit is engorged and throbbing for some attention.

I wipe my hands with a couple of wet wipes and walk over to Dean who is stood looking ahead with his eyes narrowed. Leaning against the hood of his car I allow my eyes to wander down the length of him, stopping at his taut behind.

"Fuck." I hear Dean utter and jump right out of my improper thoughts.

I straighten, alarmed. "What?"

"I think there's a little motel at the end of this road." He expresses looking back at me.

"You're kidding me?" I utter, gaping at him. "Dean how can you only just remember that now, after two fucking hours?! And making me pee in a bush!"

Dean smirks, "It must have slipped my mind." I shake my head in disbelief. "I think it's a twenty-minute walk from here." He announces walking over to the car to get his keys.

I follow suit and grab my belongings out of his car before he locks it. "You better be right about this motel, because if you make me walk twenty minutes in these boots and there's no motel there your arse is carrying me back."

"I'm ninety percent certain and I am a hundred percent certain I will not be carrying you back, so you better be prepared to walk back barefoot."

"What happened to you?" I ask curiously, wrapping my arms around myself while we walk side by side down the unlit road in search of shelter.

"What do you mean?"

I sigh, “I mean, what did your parents do wrong when raising you? You and Ash are twins, but you couldn’t be more different.” I explain and Dean continues to look ahead. “She and Oscar are both polar opposite to you; they’re kind and warm but you, you’ve always been stony and miserable even as a kid.”

Dean draws his bottom lip between his teeth and narrows his eyes thoughtfully before turning to look at me, “Has it ever occurred to you that maybe I’m just that with you?”

“Not till recently.” I say quietly and sneak a look at him.

“Not everyone is built to get along JJ, if we did, the world we live in would be a very different place. We’d be shitting out rainbows and dancing with unicorns instead of fighting wars and killing one another. It’s the natural order of things.”

“I suppose you do have a point, as nice as it would be to live in a world filled with love and positivity all the time it would get pretty suffocating.” I voice, rubbing my hands over my arms when a shiver passes through me. “I read somewhere that hate is the catastrophic absence of love.” Dean looks at me, the corner of his eyes thinning. “You wouldn’t know or appreciate the significance of each one without the other.” Dean goes to respond, but the bush we are walking by shakes like something is about to jump out at us. I yelp and curl my arms around Dean’s bicep. Dean looks over at the bush, his brows fused ready to pummel anything that comes out at us, but his facial expression softens when a wild fox darts out and legs it across the road to the other side and disappears.

I release a breath of relief though my heart is jackhammering against my chest. I feel as though I’ve aged ten years tonight and it’s not even over yet. I should have let go of my hold on him but he’s so warm and the smell of his aftershave incites a stir of desire deep in my belly. When I finally lift my gaze, I find his emerald gaze watching me.

Oh God, the heat and austerity brimmed in his gaze moistens my already soaked panties. I’m not well in the head. I’m truly not. Who gets turned on by someone looking at them with such disdain?

Me. That's who.

I'm thankful it's dark and he can't see how deeply pink my cheeks are getting. I uncoil my arms from his bicep and step away, swallowing against the dryness of my throat.

Dean says nothing, only watches me as I walk on ahead of him. We walk another ten minutes in silence and sure enough there is a small motel at the end of the road. Three Daws Lodge.

We walk in, and I glance around the small reception area. There really isn't much to it at all and for some reason I expected much worse, but I'm surprised and pleased it's actually clean. The reception is painted a brilliant white with various pictures of flowerpots hanging on the walls and wood effect porcelain tiles.

"Hi, welcome to The Three Daws, how can I help you?" A young red-haired receptionist greets us, with a cheerful smile, her eyes lighting up a touch more when she sees Dean walking over.

"Hi, we were looking for a room for the night," Dean says flashing her that boyish smile of his that effortlessly melts the panties off every female with a pulse.

I clear my throat, "Separate rooms, please." I chime in from behind him, and Dean turns to look at me with a brow arched silently telling me to shut up. The receptionist looks between us, her brows pinching but that sugary smile on her face doesn't waver.

"Okay... let me take a look." She says and types away on her computer for a couple of seconds. When she looks up her face is apologetic. "I'm afraid we only have one double room left." She informs us with a polite smile, and I sigh pinching the bridge of my nose.

"Of course you do," I mumble under my breath sarcastically. Dean clearly overhears me and casts me a dark look and clears his throat.

"We'll take it."

I scowl, “What? I am not sleeping in the same room with you.” I hiss, looking up at him furiously, and a slow forged smile stretches across his face when he turns to look at me.

“Then good luck walking home,” he answers curtly while pulling his wallet out to pay. I’m sure I must be sleeping someplace and having a nightmare or suffering through some horrendous trip because this cannot be happening right now. I pinch my arm, hoping to wake up from this horrible nightmare but alas all I get is a jolt of pain and a nice red mark on my arm.

“Excuse me, are you sure you don’t have any other rooms? Like at all?” I ask desperately, and the receptionist shakes her head apologetically. “Do you have a room in your basement, because he can sleep in there,” I say jabbing my thumb toward Dean who continues to glare at me with red hot abhorrence.

“No, Miss. The rooms are all occupied I’m afraid.” I sigh in defeat.

“You know what, fine whatever...” I mutter, jaded and do a double take when I notice Dean and the receptionist making eyes at each other. My brows rise, and my chest goes hot and tight with agitation as I take a step forward.

“Excuse me. It appears this whole check-in is going to take a while if the suggestive eye contact you have got going on is anything to go by. Could you be a gem and hand me the key so I can be on my way, because I’m tired and these boots are killing my feet one toe at a time.” I express acidly, and both Dean and the receptionist both look at me with reverence before I throw Dean a cutting glance and walk out of the glass doors.

“Stupid fucking jerk,” I mumble incoherently to myself as I walk off. I look back and see them both smiling, and the receptionist hands him a small piece of paper. Dean winks before he turns and walks out.

Of course, he would take her number. Why the fuck would he not? The real question is why am I so bothered by it? So what if he calls the hoe-bag and they wind up sleeping

together? I feel another surge of indignation reverberate through me at the thought alone.

Chillax Jeyla, anyone looking at you would think you're dating the guy for fuck's sake.

“Hey,” Dean strides over to me, a vexed look on his handsome face. “What the fuck was that in there?”

I shrug, feigning ignorance like I don't have an inkling of what he's talking about. “What?”

“That bitchy little outburst, that's what,” he presses, taking a step closer to me. I take a step back and cross my arms over my chest and pin him with a surly look of my own.

“If you want to go around and stick your dick into everything that moves, you can do it on your own time. Better yet, give me the key to the room and go screw her over the counter for all I care.” Dean exhales, his jaw set tight while we stand glaring at one another. “I just want this night to be over with.”

“That makes two of us.” Dean agrees sourly and brushes past me. I close my eyes and exhale deeply before I follow him to the back of the building where I assume our room is located.

I stand behind him while he unlocks the door with the key. The door swings open and Dean steps aside to let me in first. Wow, look at that. He can be cultured if he really wants. I walk into the room and look around, taking in my surroundings. The room is just like any three-star motel. Give or take, with a double bed, a chair that's seen better days, a TV set and a bathroom. The walls are painted an eggshell colour and like the reception area the walls have picture frames of abstract paintings. Dean closes the door behind him after he walks in while I mutely stand in the centre of the room unsure of what to do with myself and very aware that I'm all alone in a room with him... with a bed and multiple surfaces that can be used for sex.

Our eyes interlock from across the room, and I quickly shift mine away and turn to sit on the edge of the bed to take

my boots off. Dean walks over to the table with the mirror and sets the key to the room, his wallet and phone on it.

Wincing I tug my boots off and rub my aching toes. Dean clears his throat and walks further into the room before speaking, "I was going to take a shower, but if you wanna take one first?" He offers, and I look up at him and shake my head.

"You go ahead, I don't think I can stand on my feet just yet," I reply dimly and fall back on the bed with an exhausted sigh. Dean nods and walks in the direction of the bathroom. My eyes follow him, watching as he reaches over and pulls his t-shirt off from the back of his collar and draping it over the chair.

I'm not sure I fully understand it but the way he just pulled his shirt off sends my lady bits into a frenzy. God damn, how am I supposed to sleep in the bed with all that lying next to me?

The erotic manner his muscles flex and stretch with every movement has my entire body tensing with nerves.

The bathroom door closes behind him and I squeeze my eyes shut tightly. While Dean showers, I wander around the room fanning myself with an old magazine I find in one of the drawers. Attempting to talk some sense and maybe get some control over my urges and my body which is betraying me in every way possible. I'm tingling from head to fucking toe, like every nerve in my body is on hyper drive and I can't fathom for the life of me what is happening.

Five minutes later I'm sitting on the bed flicking through the magazine about super cars when I hear the bathroom door open. My eyes lift over the magazine and my breath hitches in my throat. There he stands, all six-foot of him in nothing but a red towel hanging low on his narrow hips.

Oh mama.

My brain short circuits when I see the abdominal V and the vertical line of hair that runs just below his navel and disappears down to his...

I swallow thickly, a short lustful breath secretes past my lips at the delicious sight of him.

Dean of course, notices me staring at him like some lustful sappy div and his lips quirk. “I can take it off baby girl, all you have to do is ask.” I blink, snapping out whatever stupid spell I’m under and slap the magazine shut. My face ablaze with mortification.

“I’ll pass.” I utter dryly and clamber off the bed with as much decorum as I could muster. Dean chuckles, drying his hair with a smaller towel. “Uh,” I look around, raking my fingers through my hair. “I don’t have anything to wear to bed.”

Dean looks me over and licks his lips, “You’re wearing underwear, aren’t you?” he questions cocking his head to the side and regards me closely. “Or are they soaked?”

“W-what?” I stammer, eyes wide and unblinking.

Dean bites his lip and moves over to me, meanwhile my instincts are screaming at me to retreat but I stand still, unable to move an inch. “The way I see it, you don’t have many choices. You either shower and put your used underwear back on—which I know for a fact you will never do, or you shower and put your little dress back on, and lastly you don’t shower and sleep as you are.”

I shake my head, not liking the sound of any of those options. “Or I can give you my boxers and I’ll sleep naked.”

My hands fist by my sides and I heave a slow breath to calm the erratic racing of my pulse.

“No one is sleeping naked, and I sure as shit will not wear your dirty boxers.” Dean shrugs, turns his back to me and casually drops the towel. I gape at his shapely behind and quickly avert my eyes. “Damn it Dean, can you cover yourself up?”

“Why?” Dean questions coolly as he pulls his black boxers on. “Not like you haven’t seen it all before, right? I’m still wearing the scratches you left on my back from earlier.” My

eyes travel up his back and sure enough there are very prominent scratch marks along his shoulders.

I sigh, I'm way too tired and on edge for this. "I'm going to choose to ignore you and go shower." I spin around and head for the bathroom when I hear him call for me.

"JJ?" I turn and look at him and he throws his t-shirt at me. "Put that on." I catch it and stare down at the black t-shirt, frowning. "Don't say I've never done anything nice for you."

"Are you having a stroke?" I ask warily and Dean looks at me blankly. "You're willingly giving me your shirt to wear?"

"Do you want the shirt or not?" I observe him closely for a beat before signing. Oh, what the hell. I can wear his shirt and still hate him.

I stroll into the bathroom, close the door behind me and locked it. What a bloody night. Standing under the spray feels like absolute heaven. I figure having a cold shower will help ease off whatever tension I've got coursing through my body.

You know that feeling you get where just want to reach between your legs and stroke yourself just to ease off some of that aching pressure. I've been having that urge since Dean and I got stranded in his car and it's only getting worse.

Even after the shower my pussy is soaking wet, I'm talking trickling down my fucking thighs. Maybe if I orgasm, I'll relax and stop lusting after Dean like some nymphomaniac.

I jump when I hear a knock at the door. "JJ?" Dean's voice filters through the door and I chew on my lip. "You've been in there for half an hour. Are you dead?"

Damn him and that deep sexy voice of his. Is it bad that I want to hear him moaning my name over and over while he empties himself inside me?

What do I do? Do I go out there and tell him that for some bizarre reason I'm a randy mess or do I just keep my mouth shut and wait it out till morning. No, no you are not under any circumstance fucking him. Think about Ash, she will never forgive you. Once is a mistake, twice is just asking for trouble.

It's what, three in the morning? I can hold off for a few more hours. Hell, I managed this long.

After a quick breath, I unlock the door and see Dean standing at the door, a deep scowl on his face. An unnatural heat courses its way through my body and I dig my nails into my palms. Dean's eyes rake over me slowly, standing there in nothing but his t-shirt, my nipples hard like pebbles, poking out rather prominently. His Adams apple bobs in his throat when he swallows.

Brushing past him I place my clothes on the side and pick up one of the complimentary bottles of water they leave in the room and drink it, quenching the dryness in my throat. Dean observes me and walks over to me.

"JJ, what's wrong?" he questions standing behind me. The smell of his aftershave all over this fucking shirt is driving me crazy and I'm tempted to just rip it right off me.

Maybe if I pick a fight with him, it will remind me of all the reasons that I hate him, and these stupid urges will disperse.

"Nothing."

"You're mighty flushed for nothing?" he presses, taking hold of my arm he spins me so I'm facing him. "What's the matter? You've been more irritable than usual all fucking night."

"I just said nothing," I look up at him and he narrows his eyes. "Even if something were wrong, you're the last person in the world I would ever confide in."

Dean chuckles angrily and rakes a hand through his damp hair and turns his ireful gaze back to me again and as he steps closer to me he looks me dead in the eyes and growls, "You know what, fuck you, JJ."

He turns and walks off toward the bed, "You already did, remember? As you love to keep reminding me." I sneer, watching him rip the duvet cover back off the bed. "And you enjoyed every moment of it, too." Dean's head snaps back to

me and if looks could kill, I would be six feet under with him setting fire to my grave.

“I did enjoy it,” he snarls, walking over to me again, eyes burning with disdain. “But then again who wouldn’t enjoy fucking a dirty little slut.”

That should have hurt—but it didn’t. Instead, it only fuels the inferno already whirling inside me. “Who would know better than the man-whore himself.” I fire back maliciously. “Here’s a hot tip for you Casanova, fucking every piece of skirt that gives you attention doesn’t make you a God in bed.”

Dean’s face takes on a whole new level of rage. The way his eyes are burning into mine makes me want to shrink back, but I dig in my heels and keep my eyes on his. “This coming from the girl whose legs were shaking after every orgasm I fucked out of her, is it?” I squeeze my legs together to ease the pulsing between my legs. Oh, how I wish he would fuck an orgasm out of me now.

“I was faking it.”

Dean inches closer to me, forcing me to tilt my head back to look up at him. “You’re a liar.”

“No, you’re a lousy fuck.” I reply haughtily and gasp when he lifts his hand and curls it around my throat and forces me back until I’m pressed up against the door.

Dean bites down on his lip, his eyes staring at my mouth. “A lousy fuck?” he repeats gruffly. “I only gave you a measly five percent of what I’m capable of, JJ.” he turns my head so he can speak directly into my ear. “Unless you want me to rearrange your guts, don’t fuck with me.”

I chuckle and peer up at him, my eyes narrowing to slits. “Those are some big promises for a man who claims he will never touch me again. Did I bruise your ego by not singing your praises like you’re accustomed to with all your other sluts?”

Dean presses his forehead to my temple and smiles darkly, tightening his hold around my throat, momentarily cutting off my oxygen. “Not at all,” he intones lowly, dragging his nose

down the side of my cheek. “But perhaps I need to show you how I like to fuck dirty whores who are hungry for cock—just like you are for mine right now.”

When his fingers loosen around my throat, I draw in a slow deep breath, filling my lungs. “I can’t fucking stand you, or the thought of you touching me so why would I ever let you fuck me again, you witless prick?” I say, breathless.

“I can’t stand you either, but let’s see how much verity those disdainful words of yours hold, shall we?” Dean speaks low and slow while his fingers glide up my bare thigh, slowly inching toward my sex.

The harder I’m fighting not to allow my body to react to his touch, the harder it defies me, and goosebumps rise on the surface, causing every hair on my body to stand. My eyes close and I bite my lip in a desperate attempt to hold back the moan that is ready to burst out of me when Dean’s fingers glide through my slick folds.

I hear a deep, throaty groan emit from Dean. “You dirty little liar,” he murmurs lowly in my ear. “You’re so wet your pussy juice is dripping down your thighs.” My body visibly quakes, and I can no longer hold back my moan when he drags his finger over my wildly sensitive and engorged clit. “Look at that.” He withdraws his hand and holds up his fingers saturated with my nectar for me to see. “Open your mouth.” He commands and before I can stop myself my mouth falls open and he’s sliding his fingers into my mouth and I’m sucking them clean. “You taste that? That, is the taste of how desperately you fucking want me, you insatiable slut.”

My head whirls with blusterous desire. Every time he degrades me, I feel the hot urge to punch him, but at the same time I become that much more aroused.

I lick my lips when he withdraws his fingers from my mouth, “Would you like to discuss the raging erection you’ve also got pressed against my hip? Let’s remove your boxers and see how desperate you are for me, you cocky little shit.”

Dean stares down into my upturned face and licks his lips before speaking, “I’m a man baby; if there’s a hot wet pussy in

the vicinity my cock is naturally going to rise to the occasion.” He expresses, leaning in until our noses are almost touching. “It’s nothing personal to you, it’s just biology.”

“Bullshit,” I seethe, staring him directly in the eyes. “I bet you’re oozing precum just thinking about feeding your cock deep inside my hot, *tight* cunt.” Dean’s jaw clenches and his fingers tighten around my throat again. I move my hips so I can deliberately brush against his erection and his green eyes blacken with need, closing for a brief second upon contact before he exhales slowly to regain composure. “How many times have you beaten yourself off thinking about me, Dean?”

“Not once.” He answers fervidly, “Why would I ever beat off to the thought of a malicious bitch like you when I can think about so many other pleasant things that will actually get me off.”

I raise a brow, “And yet here you are in my space, my pussy juice all over your fingers and your cock throbbing against my hip. Where’s the verity to your words, Dean? Because from where I’m standing you look as though you’re ready to either kill me or fuck me right through this door.”

Dean sneers, “I know you’re hoping for option two, but you can keep dreaming. You’re pushing closer and closer to option number one.”

I shove him off me, he doesn’t go far, but at least he’s not pressed up against me. “Good, because I would rather die a slow tortuous death than ever let you touch me again.” I retort vehemently and push past him. There is no way in hell I am staying in this room with him. Dean turns and watches me lift and pull his t-shirt off before I hurl it at him. “Stupid fucking prick,” I’m so infuriated that I don’t even care I’m fully naked while I look for my clothes.

“You really are the Queen of contradiction.” He utters with a scoff. “What the fuck are you doing?” Dean asks, scowling at me while I pick up my dress, completely ignoring him and without even bothering with my underwear I pull it on, yes, my hardened nipples are prominently perking through the dress but in that moment I couldn’t care less. I have one

agenda and it's to get as far away from him as humanly possible. "JJ?"

I ignore him again and pick up my boots. "JJ, I'm talking to you?!" Dean walks over, takes my boots and throws them across the room.

"Do I look like I give a shit?!" I get up off the bed and gather my stuff and head for the door, stopping to pick up my boots that he so rudely hurled across the room, the asshole.

Dean follows me and just as I open the door, he presses his hand against it, pushing it forcefully shut again. "Where the fuck do you think you're going?!"

I spin, and glare up at him, seething, "As far as I possibly can from you!" I retort, pulling the door handle and opening it only to have Dean slam it shut again.

"The fuck you are!"

I turn and glower at him, my chest rising and falling with every angry breath I take. "Oh no? Watch me, and you can kiss my arse while I do, you insufferable dick!"

"You're not going anywhere, JJ!" Dean growls, his whole body is tense and exuding hot rage while we glare furiously at one another. The vein in his neck is throbbing, as are my temples.

"Really, Dean?" I fire back with a sneer. "What are you going to do to stop me?!"

Dean says nothing, and I scoff. "That's what I thought." I give him a final look of revulsion before I turn, pull the door open and walk out.

I have no idea where I was going to go, and I assure you this wasn't a well thought out decision on my part, but it didn't matter, because I barely make it three steps out the door, before I feel a firm grip on the back of my neck and I'm spinning around with Dean's hot *angry* mouth on mine.

I drop everything I'm holding, freeze for a second and when his lips push mine apart I rise up on my toes to kiss him back just as fervidly. We moan together, tongues duelling,

kissing like two maniacs preparing to kill one another and using our lips as weapons.

Dean lifts me into his arms, and I wrap my legs around him while he walks us back into the room still kissing and kicks the door shut with his foot and slams me against it. I moan between breaths when he bites and sucks my lower lip.

My hips rock and I grind my aching sex against his erection, eliciting a low guttural moan from him. “Is this what you want, hm?” Dean voices, lowering his boxers and rubbing the crown of his dick against me. “Is this what it will take to get you to calm the fuck down? Do you need me to hate fuck the bitch right out of you?”

I gasp, my mouth hangs open when he slides himself long and thick inside me. “Oh, fuck,” I moan, my head lulling back. “Oh, I fucking hate you.”

Dean groans, pressing his forehead to mine, “Ah, fuck, I hate you too, you vicious little bitch but I love how *good* your cunt feels wrapped around my cock.” He affirms, pulling his cock out and sliding back in again making me quake. I can’t even elucidate how good he feels filling and stretching me out every time he flexes his dick inside me.

Each time I roll my hips up he slams me back down impaling me with his cock and sending a jolt of pleasure thundering through me. Compared to the night we first slept together, this is vastly different. I now fully understand the meaning behind hate fucking. Obviously, I lied to him about being a lousy lover, just to get a rise out of him because he is by far the best sex I have ever had. Well, technically I’ve only slept with one guy, so not much to compare to, though having multiple, soul shaking orgasms most definitely sets the bar high for the next guy.

Dean curls his left hand around my throat while he continues to thrust into me with short hard thrusts. The grip on my throat isn’t so hard that he’s cutting off all my air supply, but just enough that I can still take short shallow breaths.

Our eyes remain interlocked the entire time; he watches me raptly while he impales me with one hard stroke after

another. “Fuck, that pussy is dripping,” he moans, pressing his forehead to mine. “Is this how you like it? You want to be used and fucked like my personal little cum dump?” I clench and flutter wildly around him, and he moans audibly. “Oh, you’re getting tighter. Oh fuck, you’re going to come for me aren’t you?” I whimper, my body tensing tighter with every brush of his cock against my g-spot. “That’s it,” he pants, watching me. “It’s happening, oh fuck yes, come on, give it to me, squeeze my cock, you whore.” With one final thrust I come, shaking, and withering against him helplessly while I’m wholly consumed by those fleeting blissful seconds of pleasure which is far more intense when you’re deprived of oxygen.

Dean pushes himself to the hilt into me while I climax and doesn’t move until that last spasm subsides. With him choking me, I couldn’t really be vocal, only pants and slow controlled breathing so I wouldn’t pass out.

But the sound of his moans is enough to set me off all over again with the low ‘oh yeahs’ and ‘that’s a good fucking slut’. There’s something about a guy moaning that’s just so erotic to me. My ex could just about string two words together during sex, let alone talk dirty to me. Dean releases his hold on my throat, and I suck in a quick breath to fill my deprived lungs as he moves us over to the bed, our mouths fused, kissing ardently.

Dean lays me down on my back and lifts my legs up on his shoulders, he delivers a swift hard slap on my left bum cheek, and I hiss, curling my fingers into the bed sheets when it stings like a bitch.

“You bastard.” I curse, glaring up at him. Dean smirks wickedly and leans down, bruising my lips with a kiss that steals every drop of air from my lungs.

“That’s it baby, you fucking love it,” he asserts, palming the spot he just slapped while biting and tugging my lip before he sits upright again. My back arches up when he lifts my hips and lowers his head between my legs to lick through my cleft. “Fuck, look how swollen and needy your clit is.”

“Ohhh, *fuck*,” I moan breathily and watch him flick his tongue against my clit and suck hard, his eyes never leaving mine.

“If you’re a good little whore and do as you’re told, I might just be inclined to reward you.” He mumbles, pulling back my clitoral hood to fully expose my swollen clit and kisses it softly. My legs tremble at the subtle contact and he smirks. “Oh, someone’s very sensitive.” I shudder and gasp when he runs his tip of his tongue slow and teasingly over my clit.

“Dean, please...” I breathe, rocking my hips up, my body mutely requesting more.

“Please what, JJ?” he whispers against my mound; his lips brushing against my clit as he speaks sends a mass of tingles shooting up and down my spine. “You want more?” he strokes his finger against my inner labia while he ghosts his mouth over my clit. “Do you think you deserve to be rewarded for being a little bitch and pissing me off?”

“Yes.” I moan, curling my fingers in his hair and rocking up against his mouth.

“I don’t,” he asserts and draws his head back, and I open my eyes and glare at him while he smirks back at me darkly. “You need to earn the privilege,” he adds and delivers a slap to my pussy.

“I loathe you and your very existence.” I whimper in frustration, and he nods, sitting upright.

“I know you do,” he affirms and feeds his dick inside me, filling me up once again. “And I love to fucking hear it.” He says, pressing the crown of his dick against my clit hard. “I’m going to edge inside you, I’m going to use this tight cunt like it’s my personal flashlight and you’re going to take everything I give you.” He declares, sliding himself long and thick into me. “With every orgasm I fuck out of you I want you to look me in the eyes and scream how much you hate me. Do you understand?”

“You’re a sick fuck.” I mewl and he smiles bleakly and licks his lips, curling his fingers around my throat again.

“And you’re a dirty whore.” We moan simultaneously when he starts to thrust into me with ravaging strokes.

After the third orgasm I lost track of how many times I climaxed. We fuck each other like it’s an act of war, hurling insults at one another the entire time. Dean’s body is glistening with sweat where he’s been edging for over an hour, not allowing himself to come. I’m currently straddling him, face flushed red while rocking back and forth building to another orgasm while he sucks and bites on my nipple, his green eyes watching me fixedly. The bed frame squeaks underneath us, the headboard hitting the wall with every wild thrust of my hips as I go over the edge.

“Oh, god, oh god Dean, I’m coming,” I pant, my vaginal wall clenching around him. Dean’s eyes roll back while he flexes his throbbing dick inside me. I dig my nails into his shoulders so hard I’m sure I drew blood.

“Fuck, I know you are, I can feel your hungry little cunt choking my dick.” He pants, “There you go, there it fucking is, oh fuck yes baby girl, come on daddy’s fucking dick.” Dean’s fingers fist my hair and he draws my mouth to his, kissing me almost violently while he thrusts up into me, his hips slapping against mine. Dean fucks me through the orgasm when I tense while my body is racked with pleasure.

After my orgasm ebbs away, he wraps an arm around my waist and flips me over onto my back and pushes my knees back as he penetrates me with hard strokes. “It’s my turn now,” he moans between pants, staring into my eyes like he wants to see into my soul. Dean takes my hand, licks my fingers and pushes my hand between my legs. “Play with your pussy while I come for you.”

I don’t waste a second deliberating, I’ll probably be full of regret after this is over, but in that moment with him, I didn’t think about the consequences, I couldn’t. I stroke myself, watching him while he thrusts himself to climax, using my body to pleasure himself.

Dean lowers his eyes to watch me stoke my clit and bites his lip. I can feel myself getting closer to orgasm and so is he if the way he's pulsing inside me and the way he's audibly moaning is anything to go by. "Fucking Christ, JJ, this cunt of yours is driving me crazy." He grunts, gripping my hips and pushing himself deeper into me. "I can't fucking hold back any more, you feel too fucking good." A couple more thrusts, and Dean pulls out of me, grips the base of his cock and sprays his seed over my stomach and breasts. All that pressure of holding back has his body convulsing with every surge of his climax. Honestly, the sexiest thing I've ever seen. "Ahhh, fuck, fuck JJ."

Watching Dean come spurs my own climax and I come apart under him, our groins juddering in unison until our orgasms slowly wash away and he collapses on the bed beside me, both our chests heaving to catch our breath.

Minutes go by in silence while our spent bodies calm. Our legs are still tangled like a pretzel. And there it is, while I'm lying there naked, covered with his cum, the flood of guilt comes crashing over me like a freight train tightening my chest and the back of my eyelids burn. Dean, gets up and walks to the bathroom. I hear the water running and he reappears a moment later holding a wet cloth. He crawls up on the bed, and I watch him warily as he uses the cloth to clean me up.

"What are you doing?" I question, my voice an octave above a whisper. I curl my fingers around his wrist to stop him and he lifts his eyes to look at me.

"I'm cleaning you up." He states matter-of-factly and I blink, taken aback and shake my head, my cheeks burning. Which I find absurd after what I allowed him to do to me.

"I don't need you to—"

Dean pulls his wrist out of my hold and continues to clean me up.

"Be quiet, JJ."

After he's done cleaning me up, he disposes of the cloth and comes back holding a bottle of water for me. "Drink this and go and empty your bladder." I stare up at him a little startled. Why is he being so *nice*?

I take the bottle of water and drink a good amount. I didn't realise how dry my throat is until that first drop of water hits my tongue. I go to the bathroom, close the door and run the tap so he doesn't hear me peeing.

I stare at myself in the mirror for a long moment while I wash my hands. My lips are swollen, my face still flushed, eyes rimmed red from lack of sleep and my hair is a tousled mess. If there's ever an award for the world's worst friend, I would win it without question.

What the hell am I going to tell Ash?

I brush away the tears that roll down my cheeks and straighten myself out before I walk out of the bathroom. Dean is already in bed, laying on his back, one arm tucked behind his head staring up at the ceiling. I bite the corner of my lip, wondering if he's feeling as shitty as I do right now for betraying his sister.

I walk over to the bed on my tip toes and after I climb in the light goes out, leaving the room in complete darkness. It's almost four in the morning, won't be long before the sun starts to come up. I lay down on my side, facing away from Dean, curling into the foetal position. The silence in the room is deafening, the tension suffocating. The bed shifts and my heart leaps when Dean wraps a strong arm around my waist and pulls me back until my back is pressed against his chest.

My body tenses when he nuzzles my neck, brushing soft kisses along my shoulder. "Dean," I whisper warily and his arm tightens around me.

"Be quiet and let me take care of you," he whispers in my ear. His tone isn't firm or full of malice like it usually is. Instead, it's soft, and dare I say full of affection. I close my eyes, and all tension leaves my body and I melt against him.

"Why?"

“Because we both need it after what we just did. You can go right back to hating me in the morning, but right now this is necessary.” I shift and turn to face him. It’s so dark in the room that I can’t see him, I can only make out his silhouette. Our legs tangle and Dean’s hand wanders over my body, caressing the bare flesh of my hip. My hand moves up his muscular arm and winds up on his face, caressing his jaw, tracing the outline of his lips with my fingertips which he kisses. Dean pulls me closer until I’m flush against him and our foreheads are pressing together. My lips replace my fingers, and we kiss languidly.

“I really hate you.” I whisper against his lips and feel him smile against mine.

“I know.”



The next morning, I wake up to an empty bed. I stretch out and groan when my body aches like it does after an intense aerobics session Ashlyn drags me to. I look around the empty hotel room with one eye. No sign of Dean.

I sit up in bed and glance down at my very naked body and groan, burying my face into my hands. “Shit.” An overwhelming amount of guilt hits me at the same time as a vision of everything we did last night does.

I look over at the digital clock on the other side of the bed and see it’s just after eleven. Dean and I fell asleep shortly after five and our lazy little make out session.

The hotel door opens suddenly, startling me to death and Dean walks in holding two cups of coffee.

I wrap the sheet around my naked body, covering up my modesty. “Morning.”

“Morning.” I mumble back quietly and pinch the bridge of my nose. Dean walks over and hands me a plastic cup of coffee.

“Latte, right?” I look up at him and take the coffee. Interesting that he remembers how I drink my coffee. I want to make a snarky remark, but I bite it back and just take the coffee, not having the energy to bicker with him so early in the morning.

“Thanks.” I take a sip and moan. That first sip of coffee just hits different, especially when you’re hanging.

Dean sits at the edge of the bed and sips his own coffee, black coffee with cream and two sugars no doubt. “The car is fixed so we can head out whenever you’re ready.”

We’re just going to ignore everything that happened? Okay that works for me.

“Okay, I’ll get dressed and we can go.” Dean nods and when I give him a pointed look he frowns.

“What?”

I sigh, “Um, I’m naked.”

Dean’s eyes narrow and they sweep over me, and he smirks licking his lips before he takes a sip of his coffee. “I’m aware.”

I try not to blush under his stare and avert my gaze. “Great, then perhaps you wouldn’t mind averting your gaze so I can get dressed?” Dean shakes his head and chuckles, turning his back to me.

“Trying to protect your modesty around me is rather redundant after what we did last night, don’t you think?”

I pick up my clothes and hurry to the bathroom and close the door. “No, I don’t.” I reply tetchily, glaring at the door while I dress. “Just because we had sex doesn’t automatically entitle you to see me naked whenever you like.”

I hear Dean chuckle through the door, and I roll my eyes. “I can absolutely see you naked whenever I like. Hell, I can close my eyes right now and conjure up an image of every dip and curve of that sexy little body.”

My cheeks burn with mortification, and I shake my head, paying no heed to the way my body reacts to his words. “I’ll

hold onto that image because it's all you're ever going to get." I pull my dress on and check I'm decent before I open the door and step out. Dean turns to look at me from his position on the bed and smirks.

"Well, don't you look a hot mess."

I roll my eyes and walk past him, "Fuck off, Dean."

"I thought I fucked that bitchiness out of you last night?" He utters walking toward me. I crane my neck to look up at him when he towers over me, his green eyes looking down into mine. "We still have fifteen minutes till we have to vacate the room if you require another round to disperse what's left of that pent up frustration."

I scoff and take a step closer to him, "Dream on."

Dean smiles and takes hold of my chin and tilts my head back, "We'll see."

I bat his hand away and fix him with a look of disgust. "Dean, listen to me and listen well. The moment I walk out of this door I'm going to forget everything that happened between us. What happened last night was a mistake, one I don't plan on repeating ever again." I tell him firmly.

Dean smirks and bites his bottom lip, "Make a mistake once and it becomes a lesson, repeat that mistake a second time and it becomes a choice, JJ."

I exhale slowly and shake my head, "A reckless choice I hope doesn't haunt me for the rest of my life." The amusement in the depth of his eyes quickly disappears and the stony glare I'm accustomed to reappears taking its rightful place. "I can find my own way home." I turn and walk out of the hotel room. I can feel my qualms about last night stirring in the pit of my stomach. However much I try to pretend like it never happened, Dean will undoubtedly hold this over my head forever as a way to torture me.

Way to go and make a clusterfuck of a mess of everything, Jeyla.

Chapter 14

Dean



NEVER LET ME GO - FLORENCE + THE MACHINE

I STAND STILL WATCHING Jeyla's retreating back and heave a heavy sigh. I can't say I disagree with her on never repeating what happened between us last night. It was a mistake on both our parts, especially mine. I don't know what the fuck I was thinking, I just remember surrendering to that all-consuming rage burning deep in my gut and in that moment, it was either punch a hole in the wall or use her as my outlet.

Obviously, the latter won, because before I could stop myself, I was following her out the door and kissing her like my life depended on it. When I went to check out of the room this morning the receptionist politely informed me that they received several noise complaints last night.

Am I sorry? Fuck no. I'll never apologise for having good sex.

I can't stand the vindictive bitch, but she is one good fuck and if I know anything about myself, now I've had a taste of

her I'll have a hard time kerbing the impulse of bending her over every time she fucks me off.

I follow Jeyla out of the room and pull the door shut behind me. Luckily, she's not going anywhere fast in those boots she's wearing so I manage to catch up with her in a couple of strides.

"JJ, stop acting like a child and get in the car so we can go home already." I say while following her and she shakes her head.

"I told you I can find my own way home." Fucking Christ, she is so exasperating.

I grab her arm and pull her back to me, "Oh yeah? And how do you plan on getting home, we're twenty miles away?"

"There are these things—I don't know if you've heard of them, they're called taxis. They come in handy when you're stuck in the middle of nowhere with someone you don't want to share a forty-five-minute journey with."

I glare down into her haughty face, unamused, "I'm not going to ask you again, get in the fucking car."

"Why won't you leave me the fuck alone, Reyes?" She hisses, trying to free her arm from my hold but I tighten it and she winces, hardening her glare.

"Oh, I have every intention to after I drop your arse home, Jenkins." I retort irritably. "At least that way my conscience is clear, and I don't have to worry about being blamed for anything that happens to you when I'm the last person you were seen with."

"Oh, you have a conscience?" She sneers, raising a brow and chuckles bitterly while shaking her head. "That's laughable." I roll my eyes.

"Last chance, get in the car."

"Never."

"JJ, I'm losing my patience."

“What Dean, are you going to throw me in by force?” She inquires sceptically, and when I raise my brows, she laughs. “I would love to see you try.”

“Suit yourself.” I say and in one swift move I grab her waist and hoist her over my shoulder.

“Hey! Put me down you piece of shit!” She shrieks, flailing about and slapping my back. “I’m not going anywhere with you, you stupid jerk, put me down right now!” She demands hotly. The reception staff come out of the hotel when they hear her shouting.

“Everything is fine, my wife can be a little overdramatic when she’s on her period.”

“Your wife?!” she sputters furiously. “You fucking wish, and I am not on my period! He’s taking me against my will, call the police; call the FBI!” she shouts at them, and they look at each other and back at us.

“JJ shut the fuck up or I will really give you something to scream about,” I tell her through clenched teeth as I pull the door open and stuff her arse inside. I flick the child lock switch so she can’t open the door from the inside and run off before I slam the door shut. I fix my shirt and walk around the car waving at the reception team still watching us. “My parents warned me not to marry her. I wish I listened.” I warn them flippantly with a shrug and they laugh and go back inside.

At least they didn’t take her seriously and call the fucking cops on me. That’s all I need, getting arrested for abduction.

I can hear Jeyla pulling on the handle trying to open the door, and smirk. “It’s locked.” I tell her and she glowers at me and slams her hands on the dashboard.

“Goddamn you, Reyes!”

“You should know better than to test me by now, JJ. If I say I’m going to do something, I’ll damn well do it.” Jeyla sends me a withering glare and folds her arms over her chest.

“Fuck off and die you bastard.”

I smirk and get in the car, “This is going to be a fun drive.”



The fifty-minute drive back home was, thankfully, spent in complete silence. Jeyla didn't utter a word, just kept her gaze out the passenger side window. I'm counting down the minutes until I get to have some peace and quiet. We finally pull up on our street and I have never been so happy to see my house. I park my car in the garage and kill the engine. I turn and look at Jeyla, and it's clear she was still furious with me. What else is new?

“Home sweet home,” I say, breaking the awkward silence and she turns her head and glares at me sideways.

“Home sweet home?” she intones, seething. “Do you think this is a joke?”

“I don't recall ever saying it was?” Jeyla unbuckles her seatbelt and turns to look at me, which only means one thing—she's about to chew me out again.

“Do you not care at all about the situation that we're in?”

I shrug and unfasten my seatbelt, “No, not really,” I lie. “It's just sex JJ. There's no need to overreact.”

“*Just sex?*” she repeats, pressing her hands to her mouth and shakes her head. “It would have been just sex and not a big deal had you been some random guy, but you're not Dean. You're my best friend's *brother*. Are you not at all concerned about how she will react when she finds out?”

I shake my head and shrug, “Who says Ashlyn has to find out anything?”

Jeyla stares at me for a long moment, “Things like these always find a way of coming out, Dean. Ashlyn and I don't keep secrets from one another, we've never lied to one another in all these years of our friendship; we have never betrayed one another. So, no it's not just sex. When she finds out what we did, she'll never forgive either of us.” Her voice is heavy with emotion, like she is fighting back the tears. We share a

look, one I couldn't place the meaning of. She shakes her head and goes to open the door and when it doesn't open, she closes her eyes and sighs. "Let me out," she whispers irritably, and I sigh. Stepping out of the car I walk over to the passenger side and pull the door open for her.

I watch her climb out of the car and she looks up at me, the anger and sadness in her gaze makes me feel some type of way. "Do me a favour and stay away from me."

I keep my eyes on hers and I nod, "Shouldn't be a problem." I reply and push the door to my car shut and she turns and walks out of the garage.

My eyes follow her, watching her walk away until the garage door closes, and I groan rubbing my hands over my face tiredly.

What the fuck are you doing Dean?



Seven days have passed since the night Jeyla and I got stranded. I've managed to successfully avoid her for seven whole days, and it's been a damn treat to say the least.

Have I woken up every night multiple times throughout the night with boners after having very erotic dreams of us? Maybe, but that's expected after you have wild sex with someone... *right?*

Nevertheless, moving on. On day eight, it's a Tuesday afternoon and I return home after spending a couple nights away with some of my boys kicking back, playing some PlayStation and having a few drinks.

The heat is fucking unbearable, scaling the high thirties. The news is referring to it as Furnace Tuesday. It's so suffocating and muggy out, but my baby needs a bath, so I turn up the classic R&B tunes, take my top off and wash her.

While I'm waxing my car, Jeyla steps out of her house, dressed in a pair of white jogging bottoms—you know those fitted ones that sticks to her like a second skin and hugs every

curve of her bum—and a matching crop top that shows off her smooth torso. It's weird, but it's like my body reacts a different way when she's around now. I can almost sense when she's around. The second she steps out of the door I look up at see her standing there. Jeyla's grip on the bottle of water in her hand tightens and even from here I can see she's swallowing thickly. I lower my shades, lick my lips and place my hands on the hood of the car while I stare back at her.

I can't lie, I have missed pissing her off so I pucker my lips and blow her a kiss. Jeyla's chest rises and then falls on an exhale, she rolls her eyes and takes off running down the street. My eyes follow her, biting my lip when my cock stirs in the jeans I'm wearing while I watch her sexy bum as she runs. I glance down at my cock and sigh, "Down boy, you might be fond of her, but I'm not."

Chapter 15

Jeyla

KISS ME - DERMOTT KENNEDY

“NOPE. NAH UH, NO CHANCE.”

“Jeyla—”

“I said no, Ashlyn.”

“Why are you being such a killjoy?” Ashlyn huffs, placing her hands on her hips, and I glare at her hard.

“A killjoy? Are you being serious right now? I am not going anywhere with that cretin you call a brother.” I tell her firmly while folding my laundry.

Ashlyn sighs and plonks herself down on my bed and widens her eyes, giving me the pleading puppy eyes she knows I can't say no to.

“Jey, *please*, he's my brother. Please, don't make me choose between you. I can't do that.” Ashlyn pleads with a pout, and I stop folding my t-shirt and stare at her.

“I would never ask you to choose, which is why I’m saying you can go, and I’ll stay home. I refuse to spend over a thousand pounds to go on holiday and have it ruined because your shithead brother gets his jollies out of infuriating me.” Ashlyn growls in frustration and curls her fingers in her hair like she’s ready to tear it out.

“Alright, you listen to me Jeyla Jenkins if you value our friendship at all, you will come on this holiday with me like we’ve been planning. I’ve been putting up with you and Dean bickering with each other most of my life and I’m sick to death of it. You know Dean refused to come because he doesn’t want to ruin the holiday for *you*? Not me, *you*. I had to beg him for over an hour to finally convince him to come with us.” Ashlyn explains, and I hate the way my stomach flutters at the fucking mention of his stupid name. “Oz and Jess are both coming, how can you expect me to leave him behind? He’s my twin, I want him there, Jeykins.”

I close my eyes and exhale.

“If he pisses me off, even once, I will drown him and spend the best years of my life behind bars. I hope you’re prepared to come and visit me in prison and bring me cigarettes because the likelihood of that happening is high.” I elucidate gravely and Ashlyn claps her hands excitedly, bouncing on my bed before she lunges herself at me and we both fall onto the bed, knocking over all the clothes I spent fifteen minutes folding neatly.

“Oh my God, get off me, you psycho.” I laugh, pushing her off me, when she smothers me with her tits. Ashlyn suddenly gasps and sits up looking at me with her green eyes wide. “Oh my God, you should invite Soufflé!” She exclaims and I roll my eyes.

“No!” I exclaim sitting upright and pushing my hair out of my face. “You’re folding those.” I say pointing at the messy mountain of clothes on my bed.



One week later, myself, Ash, Jess, Oz and Dean are all packed and ready to take the evening flight to Mexico. Ashlyn and I have been talking about and planning our trip to Mexico since we were sixteen years old. The trip was supposed to just be the two of us but Ash being Ash has invited everyone to join us.

It's mid-afternoon, Ashlyn and I are laying out in her back garden catching some sun before our flight later.

"Oh shoot," Ashlyn mumbles from beside me and I push my shades down and look at her with a frown.

"What?"

"I forgot the sun lotion in my bedroom." She says looking up at the house. I look beside her and see a bottle sitting there.

"Ash, its right beside you," I point out and relax into my seat again with a sigh. Ash looks down at the bottle and shakes her head.

"No, that's the wrong one. I went and picked up the sun block by accident. Would you be a doll and run upstairs to get it for me, please?" I look over at her, she gives me a sugary smile and I sigh getting up from my lounge; not bothering to put my yellow flip flops on I tiptoe through the house barefoot. "It's a pink bottle!" I hear her shout after me.

I grin at Oz who is in the front room playing his X-box and shouting at the TV animatedly. I run up the steps, careful not to slip because I'm covered in tanning oil. I walk into Ash's bedroom and search for her lotion.

While I'm rummaging through her drawers looking for the pink bottle, the door opens, and Dean walks in. When I look back at him over my shoulder, he stops short and frowns.

"What are you doing in here?"

Dean ignores me and walks further into the room, pulls open the cupboard door and picks out a fresh white towel. We glare at one another other fleetingly until the bedroom door closes and there's a distinct sound of a lock being turned.

Dean and I look at one another and run to the door at the same time. I push the handle down and yank on the door but

it's locked.

“Ashlyn!” Dean calls out, thumping his fist on the door.

“Ash!” I shout, bashing my fist against the door just as hard.

“Yes?”

“What are you doing? Open the door right now,” Dean growls, glaring at the door irately.

“Nope,” Ashlyn replies stubbornly. “This door will not open until the two of you work out your issues.”

It's my turn to scowl at the door. “Ashlyn, you're being childish, open the door. You can't just lock us in here!” I exclaim angrily and pull on the handle again.

“I believe we just have.” Oz says with a laugh and I gape at the door.

“Oz?!” Dean and I both shout together.

“This isn't funny. Open this door right now! You can't force us to like each other by locking us in a room together, Ash!” I yell. “Oskie, please, open the door.” I try pleading with him, but he only titters.

“Jeyla, I'm sorry babe, we're only doing this because we love you both, and we're all sick of listening to the two of you argue. You're both adults now, it's time to nip this rivalry in the bud and at least try to be civil.”

“Yes, Oz is right.” Ashlyn chimes in. “I love you both more than life itself and if I mean anything to you both you'll work out your problems before we get on our flight tonight. We're not letting you out until you two call a truce.”

“Ash, come on,” I whimper, pulling on the door but I can already hear their retreating footsteps. I turn my gaze to Dean who is glaring menacingly at the door. “This is ridiculous! Break that door down!” I demand and Dean turns his gaze to look at me sideways, his dark brows knitting.

“How am I supposed to break down a solid wood door?” He questions sardonically.

“You’re the Lieutenant, figure it out G.I Joe?!” I snap hotly and he blinks at me. “What good are all these muscles if you can’t even knock down the door?”

Dean shakes his head incredulously, “I’m a fighter pilot! I fly planes and operate heavy artillery. I don’t really spend much time, nor do I specialise in breaking down doors!” He expresses gesturing to the solid oak door in front of us with his hands irritably.

“Of course, I don’t really know why I’m surprised. It’s you all over isn’t it, all show and no action.” I utter acidly and walk over to the bed.

Dean turns and watches me, his eyes hardening. “Oh, look whose talking. What happened to your spiel the other day about not needing to be rescued? Go on then, kick down the door and save the day.” He voices condescendingly while he leans back against the door, with his arms crossed over his chest watching me with his brows raised.

I roll my eyes, “Oh, do yourself a favour and shut up,” I retort sinking down on the bed with a heavy sigh. I’m going to kill both Ashlyn and Oz the second I get out of this room. My whole body is thrumming with vexation. Why is it the harder I try to stay away from him the stronger the force becomes and we’re thrust together again?

“Why?” Dean inquires plainly, “You’re so quick to run your mouth but you can’t take the heat when it’s given back to you, can you?”

My eyes snap over to him sharply and I narrow my eyes. “Oh, I’m sorry, did you expect me to burst into tears just then?” I retort sardonically and place my hands over my chest and feign sobbing. “Oh, Dean, your words have cut me deep.”

Dean stares at me and I stare right back defiantly, “How about you stop flapping your gums JJ, you’re boring me.”

I laugh sourly and nod, “Oh really? Why don’t you go look in the mirror and entertain yourself then? You self-centred, buffoon.” I drawl dryly and place my head in my hands.

“Damn it, what I’ve done to warrant this level of punishment, I’ll never know.”

Dean snorts, “The fact that you’re breathing is reason enough, JJ.”

“Stop calling me that,” I gripe, glaring hot daggers at him and he straightens.

“I’ll call you whatever I please.” Dean fires back and takes a step toward me when I stand up. “And you can’t do squat about it.”

“Why don’t you go back to hell where you spawned from, you fiend?!” I scream at him wrathfully.

Dean smirks, “How about I take you with me, you heinous shrew?”

I growl in a very ungraceful manner and hurl the first thing I come across—which happens to be the hairbrush sitting on top of Ashlyn’s bed. Much to my dismay the brush lands right in his hand and that only infuriates me further.

“Sharp reflexes, baby.” Dean drawls smugly and tosses the hairbrush to the side of the room.

“Kiss my arse.” I turn and plonk myself down on Ashlyn’s bed. I’m so angry with her I’m contemplating jumping on her bed until it breaks.

“Bend over, then.” This boy is fucking insufferable. I opt for staying silent and not engaging with him further.

Twenty-five minutes goes by at a snail’s pace and I’ve taken about as much as I can take.

“Oh, this is bloody ridiculous!” I exclaim, slamming my hands into the mattress to make a show of my frustration and startling Dean who has his eyes closed is just a bonus. Those green eyes of his snap open, clearly not expecting my sudden outburst. “Look, divvo, I don’t know about you, but I can’t take being locked in this room any longer. Can we just agree to be civil to one another for the duration of this holiday?” I suggest pushing myself up to sit straight.

Dean blinks, “Civil?”

“Yes *civil*, you cretin,” Dean rolls his eyes and lifts his gaze to the ceiling. “We just have to get through this holiday without killing each other. I’m sure we’re both mature enough to handle that, right?” I offer, pinning him with an expectant look and he sighs, licking his lips.

“I certainly am. I can’t say the same about you, though.” I bite the inside of my cheek to keep my scathing tongue at bay, but boy is it itching to come out. “Will you be able to keep that scathing tongue of yours under control?”

I stare at him blankly. I swear, sometimes I’m convinced this boy has the ability to read my mind.

“I will if you will.”

Dean chuckles and shakes his head as if he’s not buying a word of what I’m saying. “No fucking way, it won’t last. We’ll be at each other’s throats by the time we get to the airport, I assure you.” I press my head back against the wall and exhale to curb the frustration knotting up in my gut. I don’t buy it either, but what other choice do we have?

“You know what frustrates me the most, Dean? You are actually more than capable of being polite and civil when you want to. Those three days we spent together we actually did get along but for some bizarre reason your dead set on acting like a dick towards me. Care to explain why?”

Dean shrugs coolly and lowers his gaze to look at me. “I just find your whole personality grating.”

Excuse me? *My* personality is grating. He cannot be serious, has he *met_himself*? I’ve got my catty reply all lined up and ready to go. I chuckle and shake my head, “Oh my God, you find my personality grating? Can you imagine how I feel about your personality? You’re about as exciting as an iceberg lettuce.”

The corner of Dean’s lip curls in amusement while he distracts himself dusting off invisible lint from his white vest top. “I’ll take that over being an attention seeking princess any day.”

I gape at him, affronted. “I beg your pardon? I am not an attention seeking princess.” Dean lifts his eyes to look at me meaningfully and I just glare back at him.

“Yes, you are and a big one at that,” he insists placidly. “God forbid someone dares upset Princess Jeyla. The world goes into an uproar. Every fucking time I said something hurtful to you or we pulled pranks on each other, and you went running off in tears I got chewed out for it. But when the tables were turned, and you would do and say hurtful things to me everyone thought it was hilarious. You had everyone wrapped around your finger; you still do. Ashlyn, Oscar, *our parents*. You were always, always the victim in our little feud, and I was the bad guy whether it was my fault or not. To everyone else you’re this innocent angel, but to me you were, and you always will be a devious little bitch.”

I wince inwardly when I feel a pinch in my heart behind the austerity of his words. I don’t have a devious bone in my body, what the hell is he talking about? This whole feud between us started because of him. I tried countless times to be his friend, but he refused and actively went out of his way he to hurt me. I understand now why he holds such resentment toward me if that’s his perception but that isn’t the case at all.

“Is that really what you think?” I ask, shifting so I can face him properly. “Because that’s bullshit. All those times I ran off crying was because you genuinely hurt me Dean, not because I enjoyed playing the victim and trying to gain sympathy or get everyone to turn on you.” I explain openly. “You did that on your own with your moody standoffish demeanour. Everyone naturally chose to support me because they knew I didn’t deserve any of the shit you were giving me. I tried, I even offered you an olive branch, but you chose to continue with this stupid quarrel between us and here we are, almost twenty years later still at each other’s throats, so you can take your resentment and shove it.” I finish crossing my arms over my chest and resting my back against the wall again.

Dean doesn’t respond and the silence between us spans. “So, what do you propose we do now then? Are we just

supposed to ignore the fact that we hate each other and become best friends?”

I roll my eyes and continue to stare at the poster of high school musical that Ashlyn still has stuck up on her wall. “No, we just agree to be civil and stop doing and saying things to piss each other off every five minutes.”

“Fine.” Dean agrees jadedly and I give him a long distrustful look and he shakes his head. “What are you looking at me like that for?” I sigh, resting my head against the wall again.

“Good, so we’re in agreement.”

Dean smirks and nudges my leg with his knee. “Shall we kiss to seal the deal?”

I kick his knee away and shake my head, my face contorting to one of repugnance.

“Don’t make me sick. I wouldn’t even shake your hand in fear of not knowing where it’s been, let alone kiss you, Reyes.” I utter distastefully and Dean chuckles, nudging me with his knee again. I turn and look at him sharply and he licks his lips, his eyes holding mine.

“Don’t act like you’ve not been thinking about it,” Dean teases and pokes my side making me jump up. I swat his hand away and glare at him.

“Thinking about what?” I probe curtly and he smiles.

“The last place my lips have been.” My stomach goes tight, and I veer my gaze from his quickly and swallow thickly. Did the heat just go up a notch in this room? I’m in a damn bikini and I already can’t control my body around him as it is, the last thing I need is my nipples to start poking through the thin material. Damn him, now I can’t get the image of us kissing that night out of my head.

“I assure you *I* haven’t, but let’s not pretend you’ve not been obsessing about it.” I lie, my eyes floating around Ashlyn’s room, desperate to avoid looking at him while I feel my cheeks grow hotter.

Dean guffaws and I feel the bed shift when he moves to sit upright. “Is that why you can’t look at me?”

Never one to cower away from a challenge I turn my head to audaciously look him directly in the eyes and raise my brow feigning boredom. “Are you a little bit obsessed with me, Dean Reyes?”

I gasp when Dean wraps his fingers around my ankle and yanks me towards him. In less than a second I’m on my back and he’s hovering over me, trapping me beneath him. My heart rate skyrockets, while I stare up at him, utterly stunned. Thankfully, our bodies are not touching, because he’s on his knees, but our faces, they’re a touch too close for my comfort. I place my hands against his well-defined chest ready to shove him off of me.

I see the amusement pirouetting in his green eyes, and his lips twitch a little.

“If I was obsessed with you, you would know about it,” Dean drawls, staring into my eyes. My eyes lower to his lips when he inches closer. “Besides, I don’t obsess baby. I *possess*.” He whispers and I feel my neck heating up.

“The only thing you possess Lieutenant, is the ability to proficiently and incessantly piss me off.” I reply in the same manner, smiling sultrily. Dean watches me aptly, his eyes flittering between my eyes and my lips as I speak.

Dean’s tongue subtly darts out and he runs it along his lower lip before he bites it, drawing my attention back to his full velvet lips. “I have many abilities, some of which you’ve had the pleasure of experiencing.” He smirks, “And others a strait-laced princess like yourself isn’t equipped to handle.”

“First of all, you insufferable pig, sleeping with me a couple times doesn’t entitle you to presume what I can and cannot handle,” I hiss, narrowing my eyes up at him. “Secondly, why do you insist on taking every conversation back to us sleeping together?”

“Because I can, and knowing it makes you seethe inside is pleasurable as fuck for me.” Dean burrs, dragging his nose

over the length of mine. “With every word you claim I disgust you, but everything we did, all the things you allowed me to do to you proves the opposite. You can lie to me, but I know it’s on your mind, I know your tight little cunt becomes a hot sticky mess just thinking about it.” My mouth goes bone dry and I close my eyes. “Go on, say it,” Dean breathes and the warmth of his breath against my lips makes me quiver inwardly. “Open those big pretty green eyes and whisper to me how much you despise me.”

My eyes flutter open, and I stare up into his eyes, every orifice of my body aching and praying for his touch and I hate it. “I detest you with everything I am,” I tell him with pure vehemence, my gut twisting with anticipation while he smiles like the sick bastard he is. I’m starting to think he gets off on hearing me express my animosity for him. My conscience is screaming at me to not entertain this and shove his arse off me, but a wayward part of me, deep inside, is curious what he will do if I don’t stop him. It’s one thing sleeping with him, but to do it again and betray Ashlyn in her bedroom on top of her bed. I can’t. The lines between us have blurred significantly to a point it’s become non-existent and I’m hating myself more and more each day.

“And I love to hear it.” Dean voices, lowering himself down from his hands to rest on his elbows, decreasing the safe space between us while his knee nudges my legs apart before he settles himself in between them. I try my damned hardest not to react when I feel the hardness of his member pressing against my hip. *Damn it, Jeyla, what the fuck are you doing? Time to react! Stop this!*

“Dean—” Slapping some sense into myself I go to push him off but lose all cognitive function when those gorgeous lips descend to nibble on my ear. I’m a weak bitch. I bite my lip hard and muster enough energy to place my hands at his chest and push him back a little. “What’s gotten into you? Stop this,” I whisper, trying desperately to keep the tremor from my voice and appear pissed, but I fail miserably, and he picks up on it.

Dean drags his fingertips up my calves, leaving a trail of fire that slowly starts to consume me one bit at a time. “It seems we’re going to be stuck in here for a while so, I’m killing time.” I slap his hand away before his sneaky fingers disappear between my legs. “Also, I can’t stop thinking about pulling aside your bikini bottoms and licking up your delicious slut butter.”

My whole face burns hot, and he smiles when he draws his head back, peering down at me, those gorgeous green eyes brimming with red-hot lust.

“Jesus,” I whisper and close my eyes to gather up some sense. “Dean, I don’t—” The rest of my sentence is cut off when his lips come crashing down on mine. When Dean’s lips expertly ease me into the kiss, every ounce of fight I have in me vamooses and I’m kissing him back just as avidly.

I’m in such a haze that I don’t even hear the footsteps coming up the stairs, but it seems Dean’s sharp senses pick up on it in the midst of our heated make out session and he pulls back ending the kiss rather abruptly, leaving me panting breathlessly beneath him.

“Ash,” he whispers looking over at the door, eyes narrowed while pushing himself up and untangling our legs that are coiled together.

My heart leaps out of my chest when I hear the door’s lock click and voices on the other side of the door. I sit up and quickly fix myself up while Dean does the same, a deep scowl on his handsome face.

The door opens just as Dean sits back at the end of the bed looking all casual like we weren’t just sucking faces seconds ago. Ash and Oz walk into the room, her green eyes narrowed in scrutiny before she speaks.

“Oh good, you’re both alive,” she says crossing her arms over her chest, her gaze jumping back and forth between her brother and me. “Please tell me you didn’t just sit there in silence the entire time?”

Dean glowers at his twin and I suddenly remember that my bladder is exceedingly full so I get up from the bed, casting a look at Dean who ignores me. Shaking my head, I turn and walk to the door. “First I’m going to piss and then I’m going to come back and kill you,” I scold Ashlyn as I scurry past her and out of her bedroom.

Storming off into the bathroom I slam the door shut rather dramatically and press myself against it. What is wrong with me? I’m supposed to hate him, but for some bizarre reason I can’t seem to think straight or find a speck of common-sense any moment we touch or even share a look for longer than a second.

It is frustrating me beyond belief, and I have the strongest urge to ram my head into the tiled wall to knock some sense into myself. Since when have I been such a pathetic weakling? I don’t yield to Dean Reyes.

While I’m assessing my mental state in the bathroom, I can hear Ashlyn and Oz interrogating Dean.

“So, what happened?” Ashlyn asks.

“Nothing.” Comes his curt answer.

“What do you mean nothing?” Ashlyn sputters, her tone firm. “You were in here for two hours, Dean.”

“Two hours?” Dean intones in perplexity. “That’s it? Time sure does drag when you’re stuck with a soul sucking harpy.” I roll my eyes incredulously. Bloody moron. He didn’t seem at all bothered about time while he was shoving his tongue down my throat.

“Dean, watch your fucking mouth.” That’s Oscar, jumping to my defence. If only he knew the vile things Dean’s been calling me the lately, he would beat him to a bloody pulp.

“Dean, please, please tell me you’ve sorted things out with her?” Ashlyn probes, her tone hopeful.

“Grow up Ash, did you honestly believe that locking us in a room together would force us to bond and become best friends?” Dean throws back condescendingly, annoyance teeming in his voice. “We spent the whole time arguing, but

we agreed to try and be civil. At least until this holiday is over. I wouldn't hold my breath though, there's only so much of her I can take before I start mentally scheming the most excruciating ways I can kill her and get away with it." I glare at the door hard and almost walk out to give him a piece of my mind but hold myself back.

"So, you've both agreed to be nice to one another?" Ashlyn almost squeals.

"Nice? Fuck no. We agreed to be civil. That's all." Dean answers curtly. "Oh, and you pull a stunt like this again and you and I will change the rules, Ash."

When I open the door to walk out of the bathroom Dean is walking out of Ashlyn's room. Our eyes meet as he walks toward me. We watch one another closely while he strolls by in the direction of his own room.

I pull the door shut behind me and lean against it to let him by. A slow, wicked smirk appears on his face as we pass one another. I shake my head and tell Ashlyn I'm going home to take a shower and get ready for our flight.

Seven days and six nights with Dean Reyes in Cancun.

This should be interesting.

The title 'Chapter 16' is written in a large, black, cursive font. The word 'Jeyla' is written below it in a smaller, pink, cursive font. Two sets of white wings are positioned on either side of the text, appearing to fly outwards from the words.

Chapter 16

Jeyla

HERE SHE COMES AGAIN - ROYKSOPP, JAMIE IRESPRESSIBLE

“JEYLA! SHAKE A LEG WOMAN!” Ashlyn shouts from outside while she’s loading her suitcase into the taxi.

“All right! I’m coming!” I shout back, dragging my suitcase out of the house. “Can someone who is closest give her a slap upside the head, please?” Oz chuckles and walks over to take my suitcase from me and loads it in the boot.

“Jey, you’ve got your passport, right? Let’s not have a repeat of the Disneyland trip.” Jess teases me and I fix her with a dark glare to which she squeezes my cheek affectionately.

“One time I forget my passport and I get ragged for it every bloody trip. I have it, for the millionth time,” I gripe testily and climb into the minivan taxi.

Jess leans over to look at me, a scowl on her pretty face. “Calm your tits, I was only joking. What’s crawled up your

arse and got you so damn grumpy?”

“I’m not grumpy,” I utter, sitting back with a sigh. The car starts, and we begin our journey to the airport. Oz is sitting in the passenger seat conversing with the taxi driver about traffic. Sitting behind Oz is Jess by the left-hand side window, Ash is in the middle and I’m next to her on the right. Dean is lazily stretched out in the seat behind us listening to his iPod. My stomach grumbles and I’m starting to feel a little queasy with nerves.

“Do any of you have chocolate? Or something sweet?” I ask and they all shake their heads. I sigh in disappointment. I knew I would have gone to the shops to get some snacks but Ashlyn locking me and Dean in the room together squandered two hours of my day. I jump when a hazelnut chocolate bar drops into my lap. *My favourite.*

I blink, picking it up and turn my head to look at Dean. There’s a ghost of a smile on his face while he stares out of the window.

I peel open the wrapper and bite into the chocolate with a quiet moan. While the delicious treat melts onto my tongue I recall the day Dean and I went to that chocolate masterclass. It’s still hard to believe that my mystery guy was him all along. How he can so easily switch from that charming sexy guy to this uncouth, callous knobhead I’ll never know.

The drive to the airport took just over an hour. Thankfully, the traffic was light so we made it with plenty of time. While the five of us are waiting in line to check in, Ashlyn is panicking that the line is taking too long and we will miss our flight.

“Ash, for God’s sake stop stressing, the plane isn’t going to leave without us. All these people are also going to be on the same flight. It will probably be delayed anyway,” I grouse before I wash down two painkillers with my bottle of water.

“They’re opening another check-in desk,” Dean says gesturing to the line of Atlantis employees hurriedly checking in passengers. “Should move things along a bit quicker.”

“I can’t wait to lounge on the beach with a cocktail in both hands,” Jessica sighs longingly. “Let this be a warning to you all, I plan to spend ninety percent of this holiday drunk.”

Oz laughs and nods in agreement, “I’m seconding that,” Jessica grins and they fist bump.

I groan when my temples throb and rest my head on Oz’s shoulder as we shuffle along the queue. With a smile he wraps his arm around my shoulder and draws me against him. “Is your head still hurting, kid?” I nod mutely and he massages the back of my neck soothingly.

“Ash, can I please marry your brother?” I say with a pout and wrap my arms around his waist and Ash looks over at us hugging and rolls her eyes.

“No, as much as I love you, my brothers are off limits to my friends... especially you. You’re like a sister to me so it would feel like incest. And no, I don’t care how much you two adore each other, it’s sickening to think about my friends shacking up with my brothers.” She carps distastefully and I ignore the sting in my chest when my eyes veer over to Dean who is watching me.

“Don’t worry kid, we’ll elope and not tell anyone,” Oz suggests flippantly and Ashlyn turns her head to give him a deadpan look.

Forty-five minutes later we are checked in and gone through security. As I predicted our flight is delayed by thirty minutes.

I’m currently in the perfume section browsing through and smelling different perfumes when I hear a very girlish laugh behind me. I look back and surprise, surprise I see Dean flirting with a gorgeous brunette that’s hanging around the men’s aftershave section. I let my eyes wander down the length of her and even I’m impressed by her beauty. Long wavy almost black hair, warm honey-coloured eyes and a lean petite frame. You can absolutely tell she works out. There’s a deep sultry look in her eyes while she converses with him.

I can bet my life he's boasting to her about being a fighter pilot. That seems to be his stratagem with women, and they all pathetically eat it up every word and fawn all over him.

My curiosity gets the better of me and before I can stop myself, I'm slyly moving over from the women's to the men's section and strain my ears to hear what they are talking about.

"That's great, I'll be seeing you on the plane then, Angel." Dean burrs, grinning like a fucking patsy while they exchange numbers. *Angel? Fucking Angel? That's what he called me!*

I gasp and the two-hundred-pound bottle of aftershave I'm holding almost slips from my grasp when she pushes up on her tiptoes and presses her lips to his. Dean stills, his eyes remain open and even from where I'm standing, I see his jaw clenching. I hold my breath waiting to see if he will pull away or kiss her back. Of course, Dean being the swine that he is, doesn't put up much of a fight and instead places his hands on her small waist and draws her against him kissing her back.

My stomach rolls unpleasantly at the sight. It's not even been four hours since he was kissing me like that and now he's kissing some girl he's known five minutes. I shake my head in aversion, inwardly chiding myself for being so goddamn stupid and weak-willed enough to let the scum ever touch me and risk jeopardising my friendship with Ash.

"Hey," Ashlyn suddenly appears making me jump. I look at her and force a smile on my face. "It's almost time to board. Where's De—" The words die on her lips, and she scowls when she sees her brother snogging the brunette. "Ugh, look at him, not an ounce of indignity while he snogs some random bird in the middle of the airport. Oi, dickhead, we have a plane to catch." Dean draws back, ending the kiss when he hears Ashlyn's scathing remark. "Listen doll, I'm doing you a favour, you'll be forgotten in less time than it would take his disgusting drool to dry on your lips." Dean glares at her hard and she smirks back at him, hooks her arm with mine and pulls me out of the duty free with her.

You know what, I will not let him affect me. I don't know what he's playing at, but I refuse to be a part of his twisted

ploy any longer.

Much to my and everyone else's displeasure we all have to endure Dean and *Rachel* fawning over each other like two sickening lusty teenagers and I'll be lying if I said the whole exchange didn't make me want to projectile vomit all over them.

"May I see your boarding passes, please?" The air hostess asks with a sugary smile as we board the plane.

Oz, Jess, Ash and I show our passes first and move along the aisle toward our seats.

"Miss Jenkins, Mr Reyes you're both in aisle forty, A and B. And Miss... Thompson you are in aisle nineteen C."

Wait, *what?*

You have got to be fucking kidding me. I am not next to him for a ten-hour flight.

Dean and I both scowl at our boarding passes when the air hostess hands them back to us.

"Oh sweetie, I'm all the way at the front," Rachel whines with a put-out pout, and Dean nods.

"I'll catch up with you once we're airborne." Dean tells her while I'm struggling to reach the overhead bins to put in my carry-on bag. "Take your time, not like there's a queue behind us or anything." Dean utters jadedly from behind me and smirks when I turn my head to glare at him.

"Would move a lot faster if you helped."

Dean chuckles, "No, I like to watch you suffer." I roll my eyes, muttering every profanity under my breath while he smugly crosses his arms over his chest.

"Dean, stop being a dickhead." Oz scolds his younger brother and being the gentleman that he is, gets up from his seat, takes my bag and places it in the compartment and winks when I smile at him gratefully. This flight would be much more pleasant if I were sitting with Oscar instead of Satan's spawn.

“You were saying about not being a princess?” I hear Dean mutter icily in my ear and choose to ignore him after I ‘accidentally’ ram my elbow into his ribs. I smile when I hear him grunt and curse under his breath while I take the window seat.

Dean places his bag in the overhead bin and takes the seat next to me. We push each other’s elbows off the arm rest between us. I shove his arm off and he exhales slowly and pins me with a dark look that scalds my insides.

“Dean, I’m heading to my seat. I hope I’ll see you after we take off.” Rachel states with a suggestive smile as she walks by. She’s the last passenger to take her seat, but Dean catches her arm and tugs her down into his lap wedging me between them and the window, not to mention Rachel’s hair is all in my face.

“Where’s my kiss?”

She grins back at him and kisses him firmly on the mouth. Ah, hell no. I pinch Dean’s thigh hard, and he hisses and pulls away to glare at me.

“If either of you want to make it to Mexico alive and with your limbs intact, I would strongly suggest you get the hell off me,” I warn perilously. Rachel eyes Dean while we glower stormily at one another.

“Well shit, isn’t she just a big ball of sunshine,” Rachel scoffs and when I turn my glare to her, she gets off his lap.

“First of all, *she* has a name and if you’ve got something you want to say, I’m all ears. Don’t talk about me like I’m not here or I might just be inclined to make my presence known to you personally and I assure you it will be a lot less pleasant than this conversation.” I voice meekly and she gapes at me with her honey brown eyes all wide before she looks at Dean, likely waiting for him to step in and defend her.

She’ll be waiting a fucking while.

“You can go now,” I wave her off and turn to look out of the window. I don’t like being catty, but I don’t know what it is with these bimbos that Dean attracts who walk around all self-

assured trying to impress him like he's some God's gift to women. Yes, he's nice to look at, but bloody hell he's just flesh, blood and bones like the rest of us. It honestly makes me sick and added to the fact I'm a nervous flyer is making me even tetchier.

I can see Dean staring at me through the reflection of the window, but I resist the urge to look at him. The second we are in the air I am swapping seats with someone. I just need to keep my mouth shut until then.

The plane takes its place on the runway and the main lights go out in the cabin, ready for take-off. I hate this part. When the plane starts speeding down the runway my heart starts to race. I squeeze my eyes shut, inwardly muttering every prayer I know as soon as the wheels leave the ground.

The aircraft shakes on the incline and I gasp, close my eyes tighter and reach to grab the armrest between Dean and I. Of course, in that moment, as cliché as it sounds, I don't realise Dean's hand is there and I'm gripping onto it tight.

You'd think having a pilot sitting next to me would provide some form of comfort, but it doesn't—at least not until his fingers lace with mine. My eyes flutter open, and I glance down at our hands intertwined and momentarily forget all about the turbulence.

“Just breathe JJ, everything is fine. It's just a little clear air turbulence, we'll fly through it in a couple of minutes,” he assures me soothingly. I slowly lift my eyes to look at him.

Well, he would know, the man does fly planes for a living.

I'm frankly surprised to find his gaze empathetic. Sure enough, the plane stops shaking and levels out. I exhale slowly to slow the erratic pounding of my heart. I pull my hand out of his hold and look out of the window. I can't see anything but the lights down below until they eventually vanish.

Forty minutes into the flight I look over at Dean who is immersed in watching the movie on his screen. I nudge him with my elbow, he looks at me questioningly and takes the earphone out.

“I need to use the bathroom.”

Dean pauses the movie, removes both earphones and stands up to let me out. As I stand up I see Ashlyn leaning over, throwing up into a sick bag. I almost gag just looking at her. Every time we fly, even as a kid Ashlyn would get air sick. This is why I can't sit next to her while we travel because I will heave the whole time just being next to anyone that throws up. “Aww boo, you okay?” I ask her as I pass by her and she nods, sitting back in her seat with a sigh. Jess is already fast asleep in her seat.

Thankfully there isn't a queue to the bathroom because my bladder is so full I would have wet myself. I'm peeing more and more frequently than usual. Lately, whatever I drink just passes through me within seconds it seems.

After I empty my bladder, I stroll over to where Oz is sitting on the seats next to Dean and me. “Fancy sitting with your brother?” I ask Oz with a sugary smile, and he chuckles.

“Not particularly no.”

“Oskie, come on, swap seats with me.” I pout and he shakes his head and slyly gestures to the pretty blonde sitting next to him and wags his brows at me suggestively. I roll my eyes and sigh. Of course, why am I surprised. What is up with these Reyes boys and constantly thinking with their knobs?

“Even if I did, sweet cheeks, Dean would refuse to sit with me.” I look back at Dean who also looks up at the same time and shakes his head grimly.

“Don't even bother asking me, the answer is no.”

I groan. “Dean, *come on*,” I beseech, “You don't want to be stuck sitting with me any more than I want to sit next to you.”

Dean's brow rises and he smirks, “You do have a point, even though I would rather gouge my eyes out with a hot blunt knife than sit next to you, I would hate to sit next to Oscar who snores louder than a freight train even more. So, the answer is hell no.”

“See,” Oz expresses with an apologetic smile. “Also, I’m comfortable here, and these seats are not exactly wide enough to accommodate two muscular guys.”

I should have swapped with my sister before she fell into her coma for the night. Sitting next to Ashlyn while she barfs into a bag seems much more appealing than sitting next to Dean for the next nine and a half hours. I look over at my best friend, now also falling asleep, her head resting on a pillow and the blanket pulled up to her chin.

I throw Oz a beseeching look as I go back to my seat and he shrugs, smiling apologetically. I wait for Dean to get up so I can get back to my seat, but he just stares up at me.

“Are you going to get up or...?” I trail off, gesturing to my seat and he shakes his head back at me indifferently and I want nothing more than to slap that smug look off his perfectly sculpted face.

“If you think I’m going to keep getting up and sitting back down every five minutes so you can take a leak, you can think again.” I scowl at him, “You chose the window seat, I’ll remind you before you screw me out with that astringent look.”

“I’m fully aware that I chose the window seat, Reyes. I never choose to sit next to you though, did I? That’s the wonderful unremitting work of my hapless fate yet again. Now move, so I can sit down, people are staring at me.” I chastise him and he sighs and instead of getting up he sits up straighter and spreads his legs wider apart so I can climb over.

Stupid son of a...

“Come on, don’t be so coy, it’s not the first time you’ve straddled my lap now is it, JJ?” I close my eyes and start slowly counting to ten in my head to curb the urge to raise my voice and cause a scene in this plane while people are trying to sleep. Keep it together Jeyla, he’s trying to provoke you, don’t rise to it.

I throw my leg over his and shift to climb over but the bastard purposely pushes his leg wider, so my foot slips and I

fall into his lap. I draw in a quick breath, placing my hands on his chest to steady myself. Dean smirks, his large hands coming up to rest on my hips. There's a wicked glint in his eyes that even in the dim lighting of the aircraft I can still make out. I ignore his remark and go to move off him, but he grips my hips and discreetly rocks his hips up while pulling my hips down to grind himself against me.

My body judders when a jolt of pleasure fires through me and I almost moan but catch myself just in time. Like fuck I'm giving him that satisfaction. I press the heels of my hands into his gut as I shift off him. Dean groans and chuckles lowly as I slide back into my seat. The entire interaction is over in less than two seconds to anyone looking in, but to me it feels like minutes that our bodies are pressed together intimately.

“Jerk.” I mutter acidly.

Dean glances back at the others before he rests his head back against the headrest and turns to look at me. “I heard that.”

“You were supposed to, fool.” My eyes snap to the side to look at him and I shove his arm off the arm rest between us and put mine there instead. Dean glowers at me and pushes mine off before he lifts the arm rest up so neither of us can use it. I stare down at the now empty space between us— that's dangerous territory. The arm rest has been serving as a safety barrier of sorts and without it... well it doesn't make much of a difference really, but to me—as silly as it sounds—it feels like an entire wall of armour has just been removed, and I'm left defenceless against his carnal advances which I can sense are coming given the fiery look I'm detecting in his green eyes.

“Oh good, are we done pretending to be civil with one another already?” Dean questions piously, licking his lips when his eyes flutter down to my mouth and he slowly drags them back up to hold my gaze again. “Because I find you more tolerable when we're fighting,” he voices and smiles. “You and me, we're not cut out for civility.”

I press my lips into a thin line and harden my glare, “If only you knew how much it physically pains me to try and be civil with a cunning little prick like you. Especially when I’m forced to look at your piteous face, I want nothing more than to tear it right off and slap you with it.” I hiss lowly and he smirks back at me sinisterly.

“Oh, trust me, I’m all too familiar with the pain. I’ve been living with this revulsion burning a hole in my gut for the last seventeen fucking years.”

I sigh and reach up to the turn on the aircon or cooling system over the seat. I’m beginning to feel a little too warm and flustered.

“And you say I’m the queen of contradictory,” I utter sourly with a shake of my head. “Weren’t you the one just grinding you erection into me not even a minute ago?”

“Weren’t you the one moaning? Or are you going to sit there and refute that, too? Just like you’ll deny the fact that you’re soaking through your panties right now,” he fires back, raising a challenging brow at me when I go to snub him.

Instead, I smirk provocatively and lean in closer, keeping my eyes firmly fixed on his. “You’re wrong again, Reyes, because I’m not wearing panties.” I confess and Dean’s eyes narrow slightly, and I see his Adams apple bobbing in his throat when he swallows. “Did your mouth just water envisioning my bare, wet pussy?” I whisper, staring into his eyes. “You remember how good I taste, don’t you?”

Dean’s chest rises and falls evenly while he licks his lips. The main lights in the aircraft go out completely and the electric blue led lights come on to allow passengers to sleep more comfortably.

I think it’s high time I teach this prick a little lesson. Feeling brazen, I bite my lip and slide down my seat a little.

“You’re not wrong about my pussy being wet, though. It would be so easy for my fingers to wander into my bottoms to touch myself right here, under the concealment of this blanket.”

All signs of amusement vanish from Dean's face but those eyes, those eyes are blazing fire singeing every inch of my already flushed skin.

"As if *you* possess the bravado to pull off something as promiscuous as that," he expresses gruffly and smiles. "You're too chickenshit."

Indignity spreads across my chest causing my throat to go dry, and all of a sudden I forget how to swallow. As much as I hate that he's right, the urge to prove him wrong is so much stronger than my morals in that moment. "Watch me."

Dean's jaw tightens and he nods, "Fucking do it, I dare you."

Well, there's no turning back now.

"And if I do? What do I get?"

Dean licks his lips and exhales slowly, "My respect."

I purse my lips and shake my head, "That's worthless to me."

"What do you want?"

My lips curl into a devious smile, "If I do this, you don't hook up with anyone for the rest of the summer." I offer and Dean guffaws in amusement.

"Aw baby, does it bother you that much to see me with other girls?" He taunts me smugly and I roll my eyes in exasperation and smack his hand away when he reaches over to take hold of my chin.

"I couldn't give less of a hot steaming pile of shit who you shag, you filthy toerag." I utter frostily, "I just want to watch you suffer."

Dean looks at me contemplatively for a moment before he nods. "Okay, let's say I agree, what do I get if you chicken out?"

"What do you want?" Dean smiles roguishly.

Ah shit.

“I want you.” I blanch and again gape at him utterly stunned. *He wants me?* What the ever-loving shitballs does that mean? Likely noticing the surprised look on my face Dean goes on to clarify. “For the rest of the summer you’ll be my little slut, my fucktoy. I will use you as and when I please and you’ll take everything I give and thank me for it.”

My heart rate slows right down and I gulp. *Jeyla, don't you fucking dare agree to this.* What the hell am I getting myself into? It doesn't matter though, because I will see this through. I will.

“Fine.” I agree with a shrug and Dean holds out his pinkie finger to me.

“Pinkie swear?”

“I will break your finger.” I warn him with malice, and he chuckles, lifting the blanket off my lap he lays it over the both of us. When I give him a quizzical look, he shrugs.

“How am I supposed to watch you, I don't have x-ray vision. Besides, I don't trust you, how can I be sure you're not under there pretending and faking it?”

His lack of trust in me doesn't surprise me one bit, so I don't argue and let him have this one. I had no intention of faking anything anyway. I've never done anything this risqué before, so my nerves are running haywire. Add to the fact that I'm doing this with my best friend's brother who I can't stand and with said best friend sitting a couple of feet away. It's too late to turn back now, I will not become Dean's slutty fuck toy. The devil's spawn shifts in his seat, so he's got a better angle. Just picture yourself alone in your bed, Jeyla. Exhaling slowly, I slide my fingers into the waistband of my beige Nike tracksuit bottoms.

A soft quivering gasp of surprise emanates from my lips when I discover how wet I really am. “Eyes on me.” Dean demands hoarsely when I close mine.

“Fuck you, Dean,” I whisper, turning my head to look him in the eyes which are glowing with rampant desire. Dean wets his lips and smiles faintly.

“I bet you wish you could, you filthy slut.” He replies in the same manner. “I already know that sweet little cunt is ready and hungry for my cock.” I bite back the moan when I circle my fingers lazily over my clit. Dean’s eyes lower to watch my hand moving between my legs. Mellow waves of pleasure cascades, starting from deep in my groin throughout my body, causing me to tremble while I rock my hips back and forth, creating a pleasant rhythm as I build the pressure. My head goes faint, and I couldn’t contain the soft whimper that escapes me when I slide two fingers inside me and my walls flutter and clench around my fingers.

“Oh... s-shit.” I breathe, biting my lip to keep quiet. I slide my fingers out and thrust them back in, curling them to stimulate my g-spot while my thumb continues to circle my clit, building the pressure and slowly pushing me closer to orgasm. The intent and fiery look in Dean’s eyes while he observes me feeds and heightens my pleasure. We’re locked in each other’s gaze, and in those impassioned moments nothing but the two of us exists. Not the hundred odd passengers, not our siblings asleep less than two feet away.

“Dean,” his name unwittingly flows past my lips in a breathy plea, an impious call of urgent need, one I know he’s aching to respond to. Instead, he closes his eyes and draws in a deep breath.

“Don’t...” he breathes, opening his eyes to look at me again, “...you make me crazy when you say my name like that, JJ. I’m already fighting to tame the unruly beast inside me and if you keep that up, I’ll lose it and drag you on top of me and fuck you right here in front of all these people including our siblings without an ounce of remorse.” Dean expresses gruffly, lowering his gaze to stare avidly at my mouth.

My body tenses and arches as the pressure builds and I’m slowly consumed by that stupefying heat as I reach the apex of my climax.

“I’m coming,” I pant quietly, thrusting my fingers in a couple more times until my vaginal walls tighten around my fingers. My body shudders and I’m biting down on my lip so

hard to keep from moaning that I taste blood. Dean presses his forehead to mine, and I hear him growling deep in his throat. Through the blood rushing through my ears and the wild beating of my heart I hear him whispering filthy things to me, calling me his filthy little slut and how desperately he wants to see me down on my knees while he fucks my mouth and watches me choke on his seed.

As the last wave of pleasure ebbs away, my body sinks into the seat, my chest rising and falling to fill my burning lungs. My fingers are completely saturated with my honey when I slide them out of my aching pussy. My stomach twists when Dean takes hold of my wrist and lifts my hand to his mouth and sucks each finger clean with a raucous groan. I brush my fingers across his lips and smirk.

“I would savour every drop if I were you, because that’s the closest you’ll ever get to tasting me again, Reyes.” I tell him with a smirk and Dean’s green eyes flash before he licks his lips and flashes me a dark grin of his own.

“We’ll just see about that.” He murmurs, dragging his nose over mine. “I’ll have you down on your knees sucking my cock by the end of this holiday.”

I laugh softly and ghost my lips over his, “You can keep dreaming.” I draw away and pull the blanket over myself while he watches me in bemusement.

Two hours down, only eight more to go.

Chapter 17

Dean

DEMON TIME - AARYAN SHAN



WHAT THE *FUCK* am I doing?

The more I try warning myself to keep my distance, the harder it's becoming to resist her. I can't for the life of me make sense of this situation I'm tangled up in with her. I hate her with a deep passion, but for some bizarre reason I'm also attracted to her sexually. Is it possible to hate someone but still want to fuck them? I don't understand it. My body craves her like no other, but my mind detests everything about her.

That little stunt she just pulled with me has my cock perilously hard and throbbing. I can't get the sensational taste of her out of my mouth and the sound of her saying my name is still reverberating in my head.

I stare at the little screen in front of me intently, pretending to watch the movie, but my mind is running amuck. I'm feeling agitated and my cock's incessant throbbing and straining against the zipper of my jeans isn't helping matters.

I've tried everything to lose the erection, but my boy is charged and in need of some serious TLC. Especially now I've gone and lost the bet. I can't get my dick wet for the rest of the summer, which is just fucking peachy.

It's not going to happen, though. I'll find a loophole.

While the passengers are mostly asleep, should I go and rub one out? It won't take me long with the image of her still fresh in my mind and the taste of her still lingering on my lips. There's no way I'll make it another eight hours like this. It's fucking torture.

When Jeyla shifts in her seat, she rests her head on my shoulder. Frowning, I glance down and see she's asleep. Immediately, the sweet notes of her shampoo and fruity scent of her perfume surrounds me and I groan inwardly. Why must she smell so damn good all the time. I glance back and see Ashlyn, Oscar and Jess all fast asleep before I yield to the overwhelming urge and press my nose into her soft hair and inhale long and deep, filling my lungs with her intoxicating scent.

When Rachel kissed me earlier at the airport, my first instinct was to step away, especially when the first thought to cross my mind was Jeyla. I hesitated for a moment, and then panic coiled deep inside my gut. If I'm not cautious and I don't continue to keep her at an arm's length and keep reminding myself of all the reasons I loathe her, she'll get under my skin and shit will start to get more complicated than I'm prepared to deal with.

The fact I'm fucking around with her is already starting to screw with my head. Look at me, I'm sniffing her damn hair!

The next time I open my eyes is when the flight attendant gently shakes me awake. I peel my eyes open and look up at her smiling at me prettily. "Sorry to wake you sir, would you and your girlfriend like something?"

I blink up at her bemused. What? *Girlfriend?* I turn my head to look at Jeyla still asleep, curled up against me with her face buried in the crook of my neck and our fingers laced

together. Of course she would think we're together. I look over at the window and frown. It's still dark out.

"JJ," I whisper to her, and she replies with a soft 'Mm'.
"Do you want something to eat?"

Jeyla's eyes flutter open, and she blinks up at me sleepily.
"What?"

"They're serving breakfast." Jeyla looks up at the flight attendant smiling politely and winces, and then she looks down at her hand laced with mine and frowns.

"Uhm, sure," she yawns and straightens, untangling her hand from mine and shifting back to her own seat.

Most of the passengers are now up and eating their breakfast. I rub my eyes and look over at Ash and Jess still asleep and Oscar wolfing down a wrap. When he notices me watching him, he smirks back at me smugly and wags his brows in a suggestive manner.

Smarmy bastard.

He's evidently seen the way Jeyla and I fell asleep wrapped up in one another and is now donning the smuggest look ever known to mankind. Great, I'll never live that down. I'm just relieved it wasn't Ashlyn. All hell will break loose if she ever finds out Jeyla and I have slept together, not once, but on multiple occasions.

With only four hours of the flight left, Jeyla and I do what it seems we always do after an 'encounter'; we ignore each other, though it's a little tougher to do when she's right next to me, but we manage not to say a single word to each other.

I'm determined to finish watching Die Hard before this damn flight lands in Mexico. I've barely gotten a quarter of the way into the film. Jeyla pokes me to get my attention and I sigh, pulling out my earphones again.

"I need to pee."

I scowl at her, "Again? You just went not even thirty minutes ago."

Jeyla's frown knits together tightly, "Are you keeping time stamps on how many times I go to take a piss now?"

"You might want to get yourself checked, because the amount you piss isn't normal." I grumble getting up to let her out. She throws me a distasteful look as she steps out into the aisle. I walk over to Ashlyn to check in on how she's feeling. "Are you feeling okay?" I ask and she smiles up at me when I press the back of my hand to her forehead.

"Yeah, I'm avoiding all food until we land, hopefully the plane won't shake anymore because I've got nothing else to bring up." She informs me with a pout, and I smile in understanding.

"Only four more hours to go, try and sleep it off. It will be late in Mexico when we land so you can rest once we get to the hotel." Ashlyn nods and smiles when I kiss her forehead.

"Thanks bro."

I go to walk off back to my seat but stop when Ashlyn calls me back.

"D, you and Jeyla are okay, right? You've not spent the whole flight being horrible to one another?"

Oh Ash, if you only knew what we've been getting up to behind your back you'd hate us both. The guilt that swells across my chest makes me wince inwardly, but I force a smile on my face and shake my head.

"No, we're sticking to our agreement and being civil to one another as promised."

Ashlyn raises a brow before she takes a small sip from her bottle of water. "So, you're ignoring each other, then?"

I nod, rubbing the back of my neck. "Exactly that."

"Dean?" I turn when I hear my name and see Rachel standing behind me smiling prettily. "I've been waiting for you to come and see me like you promised?" she purrs, curling her hand around my bicep, the same arm Jeyla was sleeping on moments ago.

Speaking of the devious princess, Jeyla chooses that exact moment to come back from the toilet and her face turns sour when she notices Rachel hanging off my arm.

“Excuse me,” she utters icily and goes to squeeze past me back to her seat. Our eyes meet as she passes by me, “I hope she likes the taste of me,” she murmurs quietly enough that only I can hear. Every impulse in my body wants to grab her arm and yank her back to me so I can kiss that haughty look right off her face.

I have no interest in Rachel, she’s nothing more than a momentary distraction. A decoy to keep me far away from what I truly desire... *her*.



Four hours later we finally land, and we are currently waiting at baggage claim to collect our luggage. Jeyla has been conversing with some bloke she met on the plane. Julian, I think his name is. They’ve been talking and laughing for ages; he even whisked her away to join him for a drink in first class. Turns out his father owns the airline and he’s next in line to inherit and run the family business.

“I’d really like to see you again, Jeyla. There’s a seafood restaurant that serves the best lobster and oysters. It would be a crime to come all the way here and not try it. Let me take you tomorrow night?” Jeyla smiles warmly and tucks a strand of her hair behind her ear flirtatiously.

“I’d love too.”

I’m seething on the inside at the thought of her going off anywhere with him. Which I know is absurd, because why the fuck should I care who she decides to date? We’re nothing to each other so I’ve got no right to be this possessive over her.

What a pretentious prick.

While I’m standing waiting for our luggage to come around, Rachel is talking my ear off and I’m doing my best to

avoid looking at Jeyla and Julian, but my eyes involuntarily keep veering over to them.

“He’s so damn hot. Doesn’t he remind you of that actor, Liam Hemsworth a little bit?” Ashlyn gushes to Jess who nods in agreement.

“That’s it!” Jess gasps, her brown eyes wide while she looks over at the six foot something blond swathed in an expensive suit, grinning charismatically at her baby sister. “That’s who he reminds me of. I’ve been racking my brain trying to figure it out since we saw him on the plane.” Ashlyn grins and gives Jeyla the thumbs up when she looks over at us.

Her tired green eyes find mine very fleetingly before they turn to look at Julian again. Are her cheeks *flushed*?

“Can you imagine if it works out between them? Jeyla will be married to a millionaire,” Jessica says with a smile, hooking her arm through Ashlyn’s.

“Jeyla’s not fazed or drawn to a person for their wealth or materialistic things. She’s one of those girls that is attracted to personality above everything else. If he treats her right and is loyal and honest, that’s all she really cares about.” Ashlyn tells Jess, who smiles.

“Sometimes I can’t believe we’re sisters. We couldn’t be more different. Give me the life of luxury any day over a dweeb that opens doors for me and buys me flowers and shit. If it doesn’t sparkle, I don’t want it,” Jess says with a laugh.

“Oh, so you’re openly admitting to being a gold digger?” Oz inquires, leaning against the luggage trolley and she smiles.

“Excuse you, I am not a gold digger nor am I looking to be a kept woman. I’ve always envisaged being this power couple with my husband. I want a life where we both work together to build our empire. A relationship where we both hold equal power... unless it’s in the bedroom, then he can throw my skanky arse around.” Jess goes on to explain with a giggle. Ashlyn and Oscar both laugh.

“Yes, exactly that! What’s unfortunate is that men like that don’t exist outside of fictional romance novels. Seriously,

Jeyla has a whole collection of all these erotic books she likes to read, and the unholy things the male characters do to these women,” Ashlyn expresses fanning herself. “She made me read one and I’ve been hooked ever since. What sucks now is that no guy compares to those fictional men. Why is it so hard to find a guy that’s confident and dominating in the bedroom? I want a man to be a man in the bedroom. Like don’t be afraid to pull my hair and give me a spank here and there.” Ash states and both Oz and I fix her with a glare, which she completely flouts.

“Ash!” We scold her, and she rolls her eyes in exasperation. “That’s way too much information.”

“Can you two knuckleheads please grow up and stop treating me like I’m five years old? I’m twenty-three years old, I do have sex, the same way you two do with every skank that shows you attention,” Ash fires back and looks over at Rachel who stares at her affronted. “No offence, I’m sure you’re lovely.” Oz’s face contorts and he shakes his head.

“As your brothers, we don’t need to hear the details of how much you love to be spanked, okay? You keep that *shit* to yourself.” I tell her firmly and pull my arm out of Rachel’s grasp when my arm starts to get clammy.

Ashlyn smirks and stretches her arms over her head with a groan, “Maybe you should both pay attention, you might learn a thing or two about what women like.” I go to respond but stop when Jeyla re-joins the group. “Ah, here she is. The princess of smut herself.” Jeyla’s eyes grow wide, and she throws a glare at Ashlyn who grins. “I was just telling these guys about the filthy books you like to read.” Jeyla’s cheeks fill with blood, and she affixes my sister with a *‘I’m going to kill you’* look.

I’ll be safely storing away that information to torture her with later. Though, I did wonder why she enjoys being choked while I fucked her and how much wetter her pussy gets when I degrade her. It all makes sense now. Little miss perfect is not so innocent after all.

She has a degrading kink.

“They’re not filthy books Ash, they’re romance novels.” Jeyla quickly defends, and when Ashlyn gives her a pointed look she sighs. “Okay fine, erotic romance novels. There’s nothing wrong with reading explicit books. Just as men watch porn and react to the visual aspect, we like to read erotic books that stimulate our imagination. It’s not just about the sex, it’s the slow build up, the chemistry and passion that comes with it that incites our arousal.” Jeyla explains tranquilly and I notice she’s avoiding my gaze.

My body reacts and heats up instantly at her words. My cock starts to twitch and swell as the words *chemistry*, *passion* and *arousal* flows past those gorgeous lips.

“I think I should start reading more of these books,” Jess admits shoulder bumping her sister who smiles adorably.

“Oh, there’s my suitcase.” Jeyla shuffles over to the rotating belt to collect her case. When I see her struggling with it. I walk over to give her a hand.

“I got it.” Jeyla looks back at me when I lean over her to pick up her suitcase. Our eyes linger a touch too long when my hand covers hers on the handle. I squeeze my fingers around hers and she draws in a quick breath.

“Let go.”

Jeyla pulls her hand back quickly and steps away so I can lift it off the belt.

“Oh my God, I think we’ve flown into an alternate universe. Dean Reyes just helped Jeyla Jenkins with her bag. Everyone else saw that too, right?” Ashlyn gushes, looking around the group who are smiling at us. I roll my eyes and reach over to pick mine up that came in right after hers.

“Don’t wet yourself, Ash. I’m only helping her because she’s too much of a weakling to do it herself and is currently blocking me from retrieving my own bag.” I throw over my shoulder as I lift my case off the belt and set it on the floor. “You’re welcome.” I smirk at her, and she rolls her eyes.

“All right, Hercules, pipe the fuck down no one asked for your help.” Jeyla retorts pulling the handle up on the case so

she can pull it. “As per usual, you’re all show and no go.”

“Oh honey, I have plenty of go. I just choose not to waste it on a shrew like you,” I snipe back and Jeyla snorts.

“Oh, how lucky for me. You can save that shit for those brainless twits who just love to hang on your every word and feed your already enormous ego, you narcissistic knobhead.” There she goes again with that venomous tongue.

“Hey, who are you calling a brainless twit?” Rachel pipes up from behind me and Jeyla turns her angry gaze to her.

“Oh, sweetheart that wasn’t a dig at you personally but if you take it upon yourself, which you evidently have, then that’s your problem.” Jeyla expresses, her tone snarky while she glares hot daggers at Rachel.

“Ugh, what a condescending bitch,” Rachel utters, crossing her arms over her chest and glowering at Jeyla who drops her backpack on the floor, her face contorting to one of anger as she takes a step toward Rachel.

Okay, that struck a fucking nerve. I turn and glare at her myself. Who the hell does she think she’s talking to?

“Excuse me?” she hisses lowly, her green eyes narrowing. “Do you want to come over here and try that again so I can rearrange your fucking face?”

“Whoa,” Ashlyn steps in to stand beside a livid Jeyla. “First of all, cake face, no one calls my best friend a bitch; secondly, here’s some food for thought, if you’re going to get insulted for being perceived as a cheap desperate skank, stop acting like one and hanging off my brother’s arm like some leech begging for attention.”

Rachel turns her hazel eyes to me, expecting me to step in and defend her. “Dean?”

“You heard my sister. I think it’s time for you to go.” I notice her face fall but then she looks over at Jeyla and narrows her eyes.

“She’s not wrong about you,” she asserts and looks at me again. “You really are an asshole.”

I smile and rub my jaw gingerly with a short nod, “Then why are you so affronted? Looks like she did you a favour and you dodged a bullet. Enjoy your holiday, Rachel.” I dismiss her frostily and with one last look she spins on her heel and skulks off.

Good riddance. She was really beginning to get on my nerves.

“Well damn, that was both entertaining and dramatic,” Jess sighs, resting her head on Jeyla’s shoulder. “I’m almost sorry I didn’t get to witness my sister ripping her hair out, but can we please go already? I’m dog tired.”

We all nod in agreement and walk to the exit after collecting all our luggage. While we walk behind Ash, Oz and Jess, I look over at Jeyla and she does the same. We share a meaningful look before she rolls her eyes and looks ahead picking up her pace a little so she falls into step with my sister.

Jeyla may be a bitch at times, but she’s *my* bitch and no one calls her that but me.

The title 'Chapter 18' is written in a large, black, cursive font. Two sets of white wings with black outlines are positioned on either side of the text, appearing to fly outwards. Below 'Chapter 18', the name 'Jeyla' is written in a smaller, pink, cursive font. At the bottom of the title block, the text 'FAHRENHEIT - AZEE' is written in a simple, black, all-caps sans-serif font.

Chapter 18

Jeyla

FAHRENHEIT - AZEE

I FALL BACK on the bed with a tired sigh and stare up at the ceiling. We finally make it to the resort and check in to our rooms, and I feel like I've been traveling for a year just to get here. Initially, Ashlyn and I were going to share a room, but because we left it so late and what with it being summer, they had no twin rooms with two beds available and I am not sleeping in the same bed with her, she flaps around in her sleep like a fish out of water. There's also the hook up factor, if everyone has their own rooms there will be no quarrels over who has the room and where the other is going to go. Ashlyn and Jess' rooms are next to each other and mine is further down the corridor and the boys are one floor below us on the sixteenth floor.

Finally some much needed peace and quiet.

The hotel from what I've seen so far is stunning. The rooms are decorated white and pale blue with a cream-

coloured carpet. A couple of pictures on the walls.

With a sigh, I get up and move over to the balcony and pull the door open to step out and check out the scenic view. The ocean stretched out before me, even in the dark is gorgeous and I cannot wait for the morning to take in that clear blue ocean. The night is warm, a gentle sea breeze hits me as soon as I step outside. I close my eyes and inhale that fresh salty air, filling my lungs with it.

I'm tired but too wired to actually sleep. I have a million questions causing chaos in my head, ones I can't seem to find the answer to. The sun will come up soon; while everyone is asleep and everything is quiet I can sit on the beach or go for a swim while the sun comes up and try to get my thoughts into some sort of intelligible order before I lose my mind.

Yes, that sounds more than appealing to me right now. Better than tossing and turning in bed all night. I walk back into the room and change into my white bikini with shells on it and pull some shorts on with my flip flops and make my way out the door, mindful not to make too much noise and wake anyone.

"Morning Miss," an employee greets me as I walk out of the elevator into the lobby area.

"Hi, which way to the beach, please?" I ask and he points to the back of the hotel.

"Through those doors, you need to walk past the main pool, take the stairs and it will lead you to the beach." I nod, thank him, and make my way to the doors he directs me to.

Thankfully, there are signs everywhere so it's impossible to get lost in this hotel. I easily navigate my way to the beach and sigh pleasantly when my feet touch the sand, still warm from soaking in the sun throughout the day.

I drop the towel I'm holding on one of the sun loungers and walk toward the shore and allow the tepid water to wash over my feet. The sky is clear and scattered with twinkling stars while the full moon sits high in the sky, its stunning orange-ish hue illuminates over the water.

I'm barely there five minutes and while I'm blissfully basking in the melodious sound of the waves gently lapping over the shore I feel someone's presence behind me. I look back and the peace I felt moments ago vanishes and like a giant ball of lead, my stomach drops.

"Bloody hell," I utter irritably when I see Dean standing a couple of feet behind me looking every bit as delectable as he always does in nothing but a pair of shorts. That muscular chest and those sexy veiny arms on full display.

I can't catch a damn break. I'm convinced this boy is stalking me just to screw with my head.

A shiver passes through me when the late-night breeze blows over my sweat-dampened skin. When I say nothing, Dean takes a step toward me, and I watch him warily as he nears me. My heart rate spiking with every step. *Please just walk by me, please. I don't think I have the strength to fight or resist you right now.*

"What are you doing out here? I thought you would be in bed fast asleep." Dean says, pushing his hands into the pockets of his shorts and narrowing his eyes at me in scrutiny.

"Well, you thought wrong," I reply despairingly and let my hair out from the messy bun I have it in. "I couldn't sleep so I came out here to clear my head."

"Yeah, me too," Dean sighs and looks over at the ocean thoughtfully. "I always go running or hit the gym when I need to clear my head, but when I looked out from my balcony and saw how calm the water is I thought I'd come out for a swim instead."

My eyes lift to his and I nod, "Well, by all means, knock yourself out. I'm sure the ocean is big enough for the both of us. Just go and clear your head and do whatever it is you need to do far away from me." Dean watches me push my shorts down my legs and walk off into the water. I hear him whistle behind me and without looking I give him the finger and hear him laugh.

Idiot.

The water is cold when it first hits my bare skin until I'm completely immersed in it. I lay back, floating on the surface of the water, rocking with each wave while staring up at the star filled sky.

The entire purpose of me coming down here is to sort through my feelings and thoughts, but I can't focus for shit knowing he's close by. I'm on edge and my eyes keep scanning the area in search of him. Maybe for once he did the decent thing and let me be.

That thought is short lived when I feel something brush against my leg and my heart leaps out of my mouth. I'm not deep enough for a shark... am I? Panic fills me when I feel something brush my other leg. Oh God, something under there is circling me. I look around for Dean, but I don't see him and my panic triples. Oh hell, I didn't come out here to be shark food on the first night.

"Dean?! Fuck thi—" I yelp when I'm suddenly pulled under. I flail and kick my legs back up to the surface in a panic, coughing to clear the salty water out of my airways. Dean suddenly emerges in front of me and shakes the water out of his face, a stoic look on his face.

"You," *cough, cough*, "bastard." I wheeze, glaring at him menacingly. "What the fuck are you doing? You scared the shit out of me!"

"Good. Have you lost your mind? You should never swim at night, let alone on your own, JJ. It's dangerous, especially when you're inexperienced and in tropical waters. You can't see what nocturnal wildlife is lurking below you. Let this be a lesson to you, now get back to the shore."

"You came out to swim, what the fuck?"

Dean glowers at me hard and brushes the wet hair out of his face, "I'm an experienced swimmer; I have to be doing the job that I do. Water survival is a key requirement, so I've been trained to swim in most conditions, day and night in case my plane ever gets shot down."

“If you were so concerned you should have stopped me before I got in, not try and drown me and scare me half to death.”

“Would you have listened?”

“No.”

Dean nods and follows me out of the water when I swim back to shore. “Exactly, there you go then, some people unfortunately need to be taught a lesson in order to understand the consequences of their actions, you’re one of those people because you don’t listen the first time and always go with what you believe is right.”

“Why do you care whether I drown or become shark bait, huh?” I spin to look at him furiously once we’re back at shore. “You can’t stand me, remember? So why are you going out of your way to teach me a life lesson, Dean? What the hell do you want from me?”

“I want you to stop and think before you put yourself in dangerous situations, JJ. First with Pollard, now this, if you just used your brain occasionally, I wouldn’t need to jump in and save you, would I?” Dean expresses grimly, his dark brows fused tightly, and his jaw clenched tight.

I place my hands on his chest and shove him back when he steps closer to me, “Did I look like I needed saving? There was no danger and I’m not yours to save, Dean!” I exclaim furiously and go to step back and gasp when both my feet suddenly sink into the sand, and I lose my balance and topple backwards. Dean reaches out, grabs my arm and pulls me toward him forcefully and my body crashes into his hard, knocking him backward. Dean lands on his back and I fall on top of him, our heads colliding on impact

“*Fuck,*” Dean groans, wincing while I rub my throbbing forehead. “You were saying?”

“What the hell just happened?” I hiss, and Dean stares up at me.

“Quicksand.”

I blink down at him, too stunned to speak. Maybe he does have a point about me constantly, but inadvertently attracting trouble.

“Oh, sorry, would you have preferred I left you to get swallowed up by the sand because you’re too proud and not *mine* to save?”

I hold his gaze, and while I do something dawns on me. “You didn’t come out here to clear your head, did you?” I ask him and he remains silent, but I don’t need his words, I can see the truth staring back at me. “You followed me out here.” I search his eyes for any sign of animosity but see nothing. *Come on, Dean, don’t do this to me.* “Why?”

The frustration inside me is mounting bit by bit with every second he stays silent and doesn’t answer me. I need to make sense of his actions.

“I don’t understand you, I don’t. One second you’re looking at me like you want to kill me, the next you’re all over me,” I tell him, not bothering to veil my frustration as I shift to get off him. “And then after we have sex, just like that you’re back to hating me again and kissing some other girl. And now you’re standing there giving me a speech about my safety and suddenly want to protect me. What is it you’re trying to do to me, Dean? Is this some sick game you’re playing? Or is it your soul mission in life to fucking drive me crazy!”

Dean gets up and dusts himself off, his face twisted in displeasure while he cleans the sand off his hands.

“I’m driving *you* crazy?!” he barks back at me furiously. “What about you JJ? You’re quick to point out all the confusing shit I’m doing to you, but let’s turn the tables and shine the spotlight on you for a second, shall we?” Dean snarls advancing toward me. “You tell me you hate me at least ten times a day, but then I’ll catch you looking at me with those fucking desirous eyes of yours. Not ones that scream you hate me, no, it’s the ones you’re giving me right now that are begging me to fuck you.” I crane my neck to look up at him when he towers over me. “You say you don’t want me, then you turn into a catty little bitch with any girl you see me with.

I'm not even going to get into that stunt you pulled on the plane." He growls, his face inching closer to mine. "I wish I never walked into that bar and slept with you that night, because all you've done since then is screw with my fucking head."

"Well, I should have fucked your little friend instead," I reply forcefully, narrowing my eyes at him. "He would have been less of a head fuck, and I would have saved myself a lot of self-loathing."

Dean's eyes flash while we glare heatedly at one another.

"He doesn't have what it takes to satisfy a little whore like you," he drawls, gripping my face with his hand he tilts my head back. "No man will ever fuck you the way that I do," Dean whispers bleakly. His forehead pressed against mine, he drags his thumb over my bottom lip.

"We'll see about that after my date with Julian tomorrow night, won't we?" I'm not going to sleep with Julian, but the satisfaction of seeing the anger twisting Dean's face with the thought of another man touching me is more than enough.

"Try not to think about me too much."

I smirk and lower my eyes to his mouth which is hovering just over mine.

"You're already forgotten." I reply, deliberately brushing my lips over his as I speak before I pull away, bat his hand away from my face and without saying another word I walk off back to the hotel leaving him watching me.



Morning comes almost as soon as I lay my head on the pillow and closed my eyes. I'm barely in the cusp of sleep when I hear a light knock at my door. I ignore it at first, thinking its housekeeping, but the knocking becomes louder forcing me to open my eyes and groan reluctantly, dragging myself out of my bed and yanking the door open to a chirpy Ash and Jess.

"Morning sunshine!" they both exclaim simultaneously.

“No!” I groan and drag myself back to my bed. “It’s too early,” I mumble sleepily and yawn before I bury my face into the softest pillow I’ve ever had the pleasure of sleeping on. I sigh, my eyes drifting shut again, allowing sleep to take me when something slams into my head causing my ears to ring. “Ow!” I whine, throwing the pillow I just took to the head back to Ashlyn who is standing over my bed grinning.

“Come on Jeykins, wake up, we’re in paradise and you’re still sleeping.” Ashlyn urges, filling a cup with water and holding an empty one in her other hand.

“Ash, I love you, I do, but in the nicest possible way, fuck off and let me sleep. I am begging you, I’m so tired.” I whimper, my eyes still closed.

“You have five seconds Jeyla Jenkins, otherwise you know what I’m going to do.” Ash sings. I ignore her. “Fine, have it your way,” I can hear it when she starts pouring the water from one glass to the other with long slow streams. I poke one eye open to see my sister watching her with confusion and Ashlyn smiles. “Wait for it,” she giggles.

The sound of the streaming water instantly triggers off my need to pee.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake Ashlyn! One day I’m going to drown you in one of those glasses.” I mutter, kicking back the covers and rushing to the toilet.

“Works like a charm,” I hear Ash gloat with a satisfied smirk while I sit on the toilet emptying my full bladder.

“That’s genius,” Jess laughs high fiving Ashlyn as I walk out of the bathroom grumbling under my breath.

“Your sister has a very weak bladder, especially in the morning. I figured that out the summer of ninety-nine baby.”

“I hate you, bitch,” I gripe, sitting on my bed, looking a little fresher after washing my face.

“And I love you, too. Now get your sexy bum out of bed and into a bikini because we have some rays to catch.” Ashlyn says pulling back my curtains, flooding the room with bright sunlight. I hiss and close my eyes when my eyes sting. “Look

how stunning it is out there and you're wasting it sleeping. We still have to get breakfast, the boys are up and getting ready. Vamos!"

Oh lord, she's doing that thing when she starts to use random words she picks up of the native language of whatever country we are in.

"Why don't you vamoose out my room so I can get ready, you sleep hater," I utter as I fish through my suitcase for a bikini.

"Jeyla, you can sleep when you're dead. We're in fucking Cancun!" she shrieks excitedly and I wince, rubbing my temples. Of course she's full of energy, she slept throughout the flight and last night. I on the other hand am running on less than five hours of sleep.

"Yes, okay I get it. Might as well kiss goodbye to my sleep because something tells me between you and jetlag, I won't be getting much of it." I hold up a plain blue bikini to the girls, and they nod in agreement.

"You have ten minutes to meet us at the breakfast hall. Don't make me come back up here." Ash says, pointing her finger in my face. When the door opens the smell of food wafts into my room, my stomach turns, and my mouth suddenly fills with saliva. As soon as the door clicks shut, I run to the bathroom and throw up the breakfast wrap I had on the plane. Oh no, I really hope I've not gone and got food poisoning. I sigh and rest my head against the toilet seat waiting for the nausea to ease before getting up.

Well, I feel like absolute shit. This is going to make the day much more pleasant. I stare at myself in the mirror for a moment and sigh. My eyes are red and sunken from lack of sleep and my face is pasty, likely from not consuming any food or drink properly over the last twelve hours and throwing up the little I did have in me. All the back and forth with Dean isn't helping either.

I'm hungry, but at the same time the sight and smell of food is making me want to hurl.

Begrudgingly I make my way down to the breakfast hall where everyone is waiting for me. Oz, Ash and Jess are all smiles and full of life while Dean is resting against the wall by the restaurant, his shades on and a grim look on his face looking as pleased as I am to be there.

“There she is,” Oz announces with a grin when he sees me walking toward them. “About time kid, I’m starving.”

“You’re always starving, Oskie,” I point out with a tired sigh, and he stops me when I go to walk past him.

“Hold it,” he pulls my shades off and looks me over, his concern glowing in his brown eyes. “Are you okay? You’re looking very pale and unwell.”

“I’m fine Oskie, I’m just tired.” I give him a kiss on the cheek. “I’ll catch up on some sleep on the beach and be good as gold for tonight.” Oz eyes me warily, clearly not convinced by my words but doesn’t argue with me.

Just walking into the breakfast hall the smell of the different types of food lingering in the air makes me want to heave. Oz piles a little bit of everything he comes across at the buffet onto his plate. Ash chooses a waffle and Jess goes for a Spanish omelette. I sit at the table staring at the plate of mixed exotic fruit I picked up waiting for my stomach to settle before I eat. Dean isn’t eating anything either, he’s sipping on a coffee while scrolling through his phone.

“Why aren’t you eating anything?” My sister questions, pointing her fork at my plate of fruit.

“I’m not hungry.” That’s a lie. I am hungry, I just can’t stomach anything at the moment. I don’t want to tell them I’m feeling poorly and ruin their day, so I just keep my mouth shut, sip on my bottle of water and pretend it’s just jetlag.

“Dean, why are you not eating? It’s an all you can eat buffet; you should be wolfing down your third plate right about now?” Ash probes and Dean shakes his head, not bothering to lift his eyes from his phone.

“I’ll have something later, I’m not hungry right now.” He replies taking a long sip of his coffee.

“Listen, the two of you better perk the hell up. We have a whole day of activities planned.”

I groan and bury my head in my arms. I was really hoping for a lazy day on the beach to rest.

“Ash, can we not just take it easy today? I’m tired from all the travelling. You refuse to let me bloody sleep, I honestly don’t have the energy to be running around doing activities today.” Dean carps, setting his phone down on the table and rubbing his hands over his face.

“I hate to say it, but I have to agree with your brother, Ash. I don’t have the energy for activities today. Can we please just relax on the beach?”

Ashlyn sighs and nods, “Okay, fine, you two can hang on the beach if you want, but I’m going snorkelling.”

Thank heavens. I’m so relieved and grateful I have to hold back the urge to jump across the table and hug Dean for getting us out of the day’s activities.

After breakfast we all head down to the beach. It’s still early enough that there are plenty of sunbeds available. Ashlyn and Jessica go off to sign up for the snorkelling and Oz went off to check out the gym facilities.

Dean is sprawled out in the sun lounger beside mine. While I’m slathering myself in sun tan lotion, I notice the line of cabanas further up the beach. I hit Dean’s leg and he jumps, pulling his sunglasses down to scowl at me. “What?”

“Have you seen those cabanas on the pier?” I ask pointing at them, and Dean lifts his head to look at them and shakes his head.

“Mm,” he answers curtly and pulls his shades on again and lays down, throwing his arm over his eyes.

“They look so much more comfortable to sleep on. My chair is digging into my back,” I complain with a pout. Dean ignores me and I roll my eyes and lay back down again muttering under my breath. “Jackass.”

“Bitch.” Dean grunts from beside me.

I watch Dean from behind my shades while he sleeps. My eyes leisurely wander over the length of him and for a moment I picture what it would be like if we weren't Jeyla and Dean, but two people who are attracted to each other and go out on dates and flirt openly without a worry of who is going to see.

With that thought in my mind I drift off to sleep and the next time I open my eyes it's late afternoon and I'm in one of the cabanas all on my own.

How the hell did I end up in a cabana when I fell asleep on the lounge?

And then I remember complaining about it being uncomfortable to Dean before I fell asleep. *He* must have moved me here after I dozed off.

Ugh, this boy is going to make me lose my damn sanity.

The title 'Chapter 19' is written in a large, black, cursive font. The number '19' is slightly larger than the word 'Chapter'. Two black line-art wings are positioned on either side of the '19'. Below 'Chapter 19', the name 'Jeyla' is written in a smaller, pink, cursive font.

WHEN LOVE AND HATE COLLIDE - DEF LEPPARD

AFTER WAKING up alone in the cabana I sit there a while, looking at the clear blue ocean contemplating my feelings toward him. I don't remember ever being this baffled by one person in my life. I'm honestly exhausted with the back and forth between us. I think it's time we sit and talk to find some sort of common ground, because I simply don't have the mental capability to fight with him any longer. With that thought in mind I go on the hunt to find him.

I find Oz lounging in the spot I was in before I fell asleep. "Oskie, have you seen Dean?" I ask and he lowers his shades to give me a quizzical look. "I really need to talk to him."

"He was by the Coco bar getting a drink the last time I saw him." I nod and make my way over to the beach bar in search of him.

How odd that I've come on holiday with my best friend and I'm spending more time with her brother and she's off

with my sister snorkelling. What the hell is happening? As soon I talk with Dean I'm going to put this thing between us to bed and focus on having the holiday I always dreamed of with my best friend.

Just like Oz said, Dean is at the bar all right. I stop dead in my tracks when I see him talking intimately and laughing with a girl. Just when I start to change my opinion of him, he goes and proves me right—he's never going to change and we're going to keep going around and around in the same vicious circle.

I want to scream and throw everything I can get my hands on at him until he understands how much he's frustrating me. Every time I see him with another girl it hurts that little more.

While I'm standing there like an idiot, Dean looks up and our eyes lock across the bar. I press my molars together to keep the tears of anger that are threatening to fall at bay and while doing so I feel the last shred of credence I have left inside me crumble away. I'm wasting my time with him, he's not even worth the energy I put into hating him anymore.

I'm done with whatever game we've been playing.

With a shake of my head, I turn and walk off. I barely get ten feet away when I hear his voice calling my name and then his hand firmly gripping my arm to stop me.

"What?" I ask, pulling my arm out of his hold and crossing them over my chest.

"What do you mean 'what'? What was that look about back there?" Dean questions, his eyes searching mine.

I shake my head calmly, "Nothing, it doesn't matter. Don't keep your little fan club of girls waiting on my account." I go to walk off again, but he grabs my wrist and tightens his hold so I can't break free.

"JJ."

I stare up at him and lick my lips slowly, "I came to find you hoping that we can actually talk without fighting about whatever the hell is going on between us. But every single time I start to believe that we can work past the issues we

have, you do something to prove me wrong. It's clear that things won't change, and I'm honestly too damn tired to try and figure you out, so I give up."

"You give up?" He intones, his dark brows knitting in bemusement. "What's that supposed to mean?"

I pull my hand out of his grasp and look at the sand under my feet as I gather my thoughts and keep my emotions in check.

"It means I'm done fighting with you or trying to figure out what these mixed feelings are that I feel toward you. You're not even worth the energy it takes for me to hate you." I look up at him and shrug, "As far as I'm concerned Dean, from this moment on you don't exist to me anymore and this silly little feud between us is over."

We share one last look before I turn and walk off back to our sun loungers. This time he lets me leave, and that just confirms to me that I'm right.

"Hey kid, did you find him?" Oz asks when I slide onto my sun lounger.

"I did."

"And?" Oz probes, pulling his shades down to look at me quizzically. I shake my head and relax into my sun lounger to soak up some of that afternoon sun.

"And nothing," I sigh putting my shades on. "I'm done fighting with him."

Oz fixes me with a wary look before he chuckles and shakes his head, pushing his sunglasses further up his nose. "You two are far from done Jeykins, but if right now that's what you need to believe then fine, have at it."

I am done.

I will not allow another deceitful, womanising arsehole into my heart to hurt me.



Later that evening I'm supposed to go out on a date with Julian, but I called and asked him if we could move the date to Wednesday as I'm still feeling rough after the travelling. The gentleman that he is agrees and says he will move things around so he can see me before his flight to New York the following day.

Now that's what I consider a good man. Someone who has absolutely no qualms about moving his meetings around just so he can see you for a couple of hours. And then you've got immature boys like Dean who gambols from girl to girl just to get a fucking rise out of me.

There's a reggae party down at the Coco beach club and that nausea I've been feeling all day finally subsides enough that I can start enjoying myself a little bit. I manage to catch a couple more hours of sleep after we all retire back to our rooms to shower before dinner.

"To Mexico baby!" Ashlyn toasts, holding up her piña colada served in a fresh pineapple. We all hold our cocktails up before we clink them together.

I'm swaying to the music while sipping my cocktail when Dean sidles up next to me. I don't even acknowledge him and continue watching couples dancing. I ignore the pull in my stomach and the way his aftershave makes my head go faint.

"How long are you going to keep giving me the cold shoulder, JJ?" Dean says before he takes a sip from his beer, his eyes looking ahead.

"I'm not giving you the cold shoulder," I answer, taking a sip from my drink. "This is what me not caring looks like. Get used to it." I push off the bar and walk over to Oz. "Come on Oskie, dance with me." Oz smiles, sets his beer down and takes my hand, leading me to the makeshift dance floor.

The DJ plays a set of slow wine reggae songs. I wrap my arms around Oz's neck, and we dance rather sensually together. There is no other way to dance to songs like these, so that will be my justification. Like the idiot I am I go and look at Dean over Oz's shoulder and when I find him watching me intently, my stomach goes all tight and I can't look away.

“Are you okay, kid?” Oz murmurs in my ear and I nod. “What’s with the frosty vibe between you and Dean?”

I pull my head back a little so I can look up at him, “When has it ever not been frosty?” Oz smiles and spins me, so my back is pressed against his chest. We sway together to the slow rhythm of the music when he wraps an arm around my waist.

“Nah, this is different. Usually the tension burns hot between the two of you, but now it’s ice cold and my little brother is looking at me like he wants to reach into my throat, tear it right out and strangle me with it.” Oz murmurs against my ear, smiling.

I rest my head back against his shoulder and laugh. “I doubt that, give him five minutes he’ll be all over the next girl that catches his attention.”

“The only girl that’s got his attention is right here in my arms. I promise you, right now, he’s burning inside that he can’t be the one dancing with you.” Oz explains and I sneak a look at Dean who is glaring at the bottle of beer he’s holding so hard I’m surprised it hasn’t shattered in his hand. As if sensing me watching him he lifts his eyes, catching mine and fuck the intensity of his gaze makes my throat go dry.

I don’t understand him, I really don’t. I’m starting to get the feeling I’m nothing but a plaything to him, an inconsequential toy he keeps around to entertain himself with until the next girl comes along, and like a fool I’ve been playing into his hands giving him exactly what he needs. But no more.

I sigh, tearing my eyes from his.

“I promise you Oskie, your brother just loves to screw with my head, there’s nothing more to it than that.”

After our dance, Oz and I join the rest of our group at the bar, we order a couple more rounds of cocktails. Another group of youngsters from the states that are at the party join us. Three boys and three girls, all roughly the same age, definitely the same mentality. I can’t recall all their names, but I do remember one girl’s and one boy’s, Sasha and Ruby. We

sit around a bonfire on the beach and enjoy some more cocktails until the early hours talking about random things. When my head starts to feel fuzzy, I stop drinking and switch to water.

“Oh my God, you have to sing us a song,” Ashlyn slurs drunkenly, pointing at the guitar sitting beside Ruby and Sasha.

“Ahh, don’t look at me, that’s all Sash, he’s the musically gifted one in the group.” Ruby smirks at him, resting back on her elbows when he rolls his eyes. “He’s even in a band back home in Texas.”

“You have to sing for us now,” My sister jumps in, smiling at him suggestively. “I’ll start chanting if you don’t.”

Sasha laughs and picks up his guitar. “Please don’t chant, I’ll sing for ya’ll,” he replies with his smooth southern accent that makes my sister melt into a puddle. She’s always been a sucker for boys with an accent. Sasha looks thoughtful for a moment while he strums the strings to the guitar, likely wondering what to sing. I pull my knees to my chest and rest my chin on my knee. Sasha starts playing the guitar and I can’t make out the song he’s playing.

At first, I thought it was *Iris* by Goo Goo Dolls, but when he starts singing the lyrics my heart clenches and sinks to the pit of my stomach. *When Love and Hate Collide* by Def Leppard. Dean is sitting opposite me, the flame to the bonfire flickering between us. Our eyes meet and it takes every bit of strength I have to hold back the stupid tears that threaten to gather in my eyes while we look at one another. Why am I getting so emotional? There’s nothing between us, nothing but a stupid mistake neither of us can take back. I want to get up and walk away, but I can’t. I’m stuck staring into those gripping eyes of his wondering what he’s thinking or if he’s feeling the same things I am.

When I feel the tears coming, I quickly drop my gaze from his and stare at the bonfire. It seems Dean has the same inclination as I do because he gets up and without a word walks off. Lacing my fingers together I press them to my lips

and close my eyes waiting for these alien emotions to subside and stop suffocating me.

I'm drunk, that's why I'm feeling so overly sensitive to whatever these stupid feelings are.

"Where's he going?" Ashlyn questions, watching Dean walk away.

"Probably gone to take a piss." Oz answers taking a swing of his beer and casting me a look. I sigh and shake my head sullenly and he smiles back at me sympathetically. After the song ends, I excuse myself; no longer in the mood to party, I feign a headache and head back up to my room before Dean comes back.

As soon as I'm in the confines of my room I strip off the denim shorts and the bikini top I'm wearing and run the shower. I stand under the cool spray for a while, my head back, eyes closed. My head is swimming from the alcohol, and I have one thing on my mind, and I hate myself for it. I hate that my lips crave the taste of his, and that my body aches for him the way it does despite telling myself I can't stand him. When did I allow him close enough to affect me like this?

I curl my fingers in my wet hair in frustration. "Get out of my head," I sigh despondently.

The knock at my door distracts me from my thoughts, I ignore it and press myself against the tiled walls of the shower. The knock sounds again and I open my eyes and stare at the bathroom door.

At the third knock, I turn the water off and pull the robe on tying it as I walk out of the bathroom to answer the door and tell whoever it is to kindly fuck off and let me be.

I pull the door open scowling and go still when I see Dean standing there. My eyes wander over the length of him in a pair of plain white shorts and a black wife beater. That's not what has my breath hitching in my throat, though. The man is glistening with sweat, his chest rising and falling like he's just run a damn marathon. I swallow to dampen my throat that goes dry the moment I see him.

I can't find the words to portray the look in his eyes or his demeanour while we stand there wordlessly looking at one another. I can't tell if he's here to fight or fuck, but I know it's going to be one or the other.

The silence stretches between us, and I wait for him to say something.

"Are you lost, Reyes?" I ask, raising an inquisitive brow while taking in his appearance. Dean licks his lips and takes a step into my room, forcing me backward with his hefty frame. Fuck me, the ardour that is exuding off him has me speechless. Dean's got me locked in his gaze while he advances toward me and kicks the door shut behind him. "Did you hear me invite you in?"

Dean hooks his finger into the tie that's holding my robe together and yanks me roughly against him. I gasp, staring up at him dumbfounded.

"Kick me out then," he emits gruffly, pressing his forehead to mine while he pulls open the tie to my robe. His long fingers grip my face, and he tilts my head back, looking me directly in the eyes as if in search of something. "Tell me to get out," he demands, closing his eyes, his lips ghosting over mine. "Spew your fucking hate for me."

Damn.

"Dean—" I gasp when my robe is pushed off my shoulders. It falls and pools around my feet leaving me completely bare for him. My heart is pounding against my ribcage like it's ready to bust through and slap me out of whatever spell he has me under with this fuckery. I can't make shit of what the hell is happening. I only know one thing and it's that I'm momentarily incapacitated and couldn't find a sliver of fight in me to resist him. I know what he needs to hear, and it's clear he's also struggling to make sense of whatever this thing is between us. We're both fighting to hold onto the one clear component in our relationship—our animosity for one another.

I should have kicked him out, and I'm foolish for surrendering and giving it to him, but in that moment I tell him

what we both needed to hear, what we needed to believe. “I *hate* you.”

As the last word leaves my lips Dean’s hot and enraged mouth comes crashing down on my mine. We kiss like two feral animals wrangling for power. Lips still fused, Dean lifts me into his arms and throws me down onto the bed. Panting, I push up on my elbows to watch him reach up and tug his vest off and toss it aside. An unnatural heat courses through my veins when he pushes his shorts down and stands naked before me. Thank the lord that took his precious time creating such an exquisite specimen of a man. My pussy is slaving in gratitude while he towers over me all fierce and muscular.

Dean’s eyes lower to my sex and he licks his lips avidly before he reaches down, grabs my ankles, and yanks me to the edge of the bed. I draw in a slow breath when he drags a single digit through my wet folds.

“Who is this cunt wet for, JJ?” I stare up at him mutely and he hardens his glare, silently coaxing me to answer him. “Answer me,” he grits through his teeth and slaps my pussy.

I whimper and glare up at him, my chest rising and falling furiously. “Fuck you.”

Dean smirks, but it’s a far cry from one of amusement. “In a minute,” he affirms, dragging his fingers over my clit and making me shudder. “Is this pussy wet for my brother?”

“Maybe.” I retort, raising a brow at him in defiance, taunting him and relishing in the way his eyes flash perilously. I lean up on my hands and look him over. “Is that not what you want to hear? Were you hoping I would say you and beg you to eat my pussy like I know you’re dying to?”

Dean lowers himself until he’s at eye level with me, placing his hands on the mattress he leans in closer. “Is that why you’re laid out before *me*, with your legs spread wide, ready and so fucking eager to have your cunt feasted on.”

“Spreading my legs is no strife for me because I’m such a slut, right Lieutenant?” I croon, gazing up at him through my

lashes. Dean bites down on his lower lip and curls his fingers at the back of my neck and draws my face to his.

“That’s right,” he answers curtly. “But you’re *my* slut.” I gasp, my breath hitching with surprise when he pushes himself long and deep into me. “This pussy is mine to eat.” He draws his cock out, leaving me groaning in displeasure when I’m left empty. “It’s my mine to fuck.” I cry out, fisting the covers when he grabs my hips and pulls me down his shaft, impaling me. Dean moans, flexing his cock inside me and rocking his hips to stimulate my g-spot. “You’re mine to ruin and don’t you ever forget it.” I arch up and bite my lip when his tongue circles my erect nipple. “Now be a good girl and spread those gorgeous thighs and let me take care of what’s mine.”

I stare up at him and let my legs shamelessly drop open for him, “I’ll never be yours, Dean Reyes.”

Dean crawls up on the bed, his large body covering mine as he lifts my arms over my head and his mouth descends on mine. “No? You sure feel like mine right now,” he avows, biting and tugging on my bottom lip. “Now shut the fuck up and kiss me,” he brushes my lips apart and sinks his tongue into my mouth, kissing me hard and deep until the very last breath leaves my lungs.

There’s a wild untameable fire whirling inside of me, and this infuriating man is the cause— and the only cure.



“Jey? Are you okay?”

“I think I might have sunstroke,” I groan, flushing the toilet and watching my breakfast disappear. I pull myself up off the floor and look at my reflection in the mirror. “And the alcohol isn’t helping.” I rinse out my mouth with her mouthwash and sigh before I walk out of the bathroom to find her leaning against the wall waiting for me to come out.

“Maybe sit in the shade today, though you don’t look sunburnt, unlike me who resembles an overcooked lobster.” Ashlyn complains walking over to her suitcase to pick out a

bikini. I sit on her bed and pull my knees to my chest, groaning when my breasts ache. I'm going to kill that rotten git when I see him. My nipples are so sore after the onslaught of his teeth last night. I reach over and pick up a packet of white chocolate biscuits Ashlyn has on the bedside table and eat a couple. "Should you be eating those if you've got a bad stomach, chick?"

"I'm hungry." I express, my mouth full, and she shakes her head, grinning. My stomach flips when I notice how much she resembles Dean when she grins like that. I shake off all thoughts of him and scarf down a couple more biscuits.

I'm so conflicted over my feelings for him. I didn't even know it was possible to hate and want someone so much at the same time.

"Jeyla?!" I jump out of my thoughts and look at Ash.

"Huh?"

"Which one?" I look between the black and the blue bikini she's holding up and point to the blue one in her right hand.

"Blue, it makes your eyes stand out." Ash looks at the bikini and smiles, pleased with my choice. I fall back on the bed with a sigh and stare at the white ceiling, chewing on my lip warily. I'm dreading seeing Dean. It's all well and good when we're wrapped up in sex, but I'm always unsure how I'm supposed to act after.

"We're on holiday together but I feel like I've not spent any time with you, Jey." Ash points out while she changes into her bikini. I sigh inwardly and nod. There's a reason for that and it's because I'm suffocating under the weight of my betrayal of our friendship.

I'm the worst friend in the world and I honestly feel sick to my stomach over it but I'm terrified of telling her and ruining our friendship over nothing. It's not like Dean and I are in love, and we have something worth fighting for— what we have is sexual. Sooner or later when we eventually screw the sexual tension out of each other, it will be over, and I would

have lost Ash over a couple of nights of meaningless passionate sex.

I'm so ashamed of myself that I can't even look at her. I'm not worthy of her friendship and I don't think I can live with this guilt day in day out. I have to tell her the truth and face the consequences.

"Jey? Hey, what's wrong?" I look up at her when she crawls up on the bed and sits next to me, a look of concern on her pretty face. I didn't even realise that I'm crying until she reaches over and wipes my tears. "Why are you crying, babe?" I shake my head, a strangled whimper escapes me and I cover my face with my hands, sobbing into them. Ashlyn pulls my hands away from my face, tugs me up and hugs me which makes me cry even harder into her shoulder. I try to pull away from her, but she tightens her arms around me.

"Jeyla, what's going on?" Ashlyn probes, brushing her fingers through my hair comfortingly. She pulls back to look at me, her dark brows fused with worry while she brushes my hair away from my face where it's sticking to my damp cheeks. "Has Paxton been in contact with you again? Did you unblock him?" I shake my head, wiping my eyes with the back of my hand.

"No, no, it's not Pax." I cry, staring at my hand, not having the nerve to meet her gaze. I need to tell her the truth. All the lies I've been telling her are eating me up inside. "Ash, I've done something really, really stupid."

Ashlyn bows her head to look me in the face, but I keep my eyes cast down. "What is it babe? Whatever it is it can't be that bad surely."

I bite my lip hard, tears of despair streaming down my face. I'm fighting with myself to find the courage to tell her, but the words get lodged in my throat. "Ash, I sl—" A knock sounds at the door and Ash tears her eyes from me to look at the door.

"Hold on." Frowning, she slides off the bed and walks to the door to open it. When I hear my sister's voice coming from the door, I quickly wipe away the tears and dry my eyes. I

don't want her seeing me like this and I sure as shit don't have the energy to deal with her firing questions at me too.

“Why aren't the two of you ready yet? The boys are on their way up.” Jess huffs, walking into the bedroom clad in a black bikini and a knitted neon pink cover up over it. A beach hat on her hair and a bright yellow beach bag hanging off her shoulder. “We only have the jet-skis for an hour and they're both getting testy with me for making them wait.”

Ash looks over at me, her gaze apologetic and I shake my head meekly, forcing a smile on my face. “Have you been crying?” Jess gasps and rushes over to me. “What's wrong, Jey?”

I feel my emotions bunching again and I shake my head, standing from the bed. “No, nothing, I'm fine. I was just sick. I think I have heat exhaustion or sunstroke.”

Jessica pouts and presses her hand to my forehead. “Are you sure you're okay? Maybe you should stay out of the sun today and rest?”

“I'll be fine, I'll wear a hat and sit in the shade.” I assure and we walk to the door. Just as Ash opens it, the boys appear. Like two magnets, my eyes interlock with Dean's and when I'm inundated with memories of the night before and all the things we did, another wave of nausea hits me. I shift behind my sister and lower my gaze to the floor as I scurry past him, avoiding his watchful gaze while we make our way to the elevator.

The others talk animatedly about the foam party and concert the hotel is having later in the evening. I stay quiet and walk into the car first and lean against the wall, Dean and Jessica walk in after me followed by Oz and Ash.

I lift my eyes to look at the numbers at the top left and stiffen when I see Dean watching me through the mirror from his position at the opposite side. Something happens to my heart *and* my body whenever this boy looks at me with such unease and tenderness in his gaze. I'm not accustomed to getting looks like that from him and it makes me nervous.

An hour later we're all in our life jackets ready to go jet skiing. "All right, keep it safe out there and stay within the perimeter that's roped off, understand?" The instructor says and we all nod. "You all know how to ride?" Ash, Oz and Dean all nod, but Jess and I look at one another and shake our heads. "Okay," the instructor chuckles, "I wouldn't recommend going on alone then girls. Jump on with one of the boys."

"I call Oz!" Jess chirps and runs over to him, laughing. I gape at her and then look at Dean who smirks.

"Oh, come on!" I exclaim crossing my arms over my chest like a petulant child. "Why can't I ride with Ash?"

Ash grins and climbs on her jet ski, "You can do baby, hop on." I smirk at Dean and walk over to Ashlyn and climb behind her.

"Don't kill me, bitch." Ashlyn laughs and starts the engine, and we start moving. Five minutes in and I understand why the instructor recommended I get on with one of the boys. I love Ash, but her small frame isn't really the sturdiest, especially when our arses lift off the seat every time we go over a wave. I see Jess holding onto Oz for dear life and ducking behind his muscular frame to keep the water from splashing in her face.

One moment I'm pushing a wet strand of hair out of my face and the next I'm flying off the jet ski when Ash makes a sharp turn. I barely have time to yelp before I'm hitting the water surface hard at high speed and sink under. The shock of the fall and the angle I hit the water feels like a hard slap to the face and I'm momentarily disoriented so it takes a couple of seconds for my brain to acknowledge that I'm submerged under water. Thankfully, the life jacket pushes me up to the surface and I suck in a greedy breath, filling my deprived lungs. My vision is blurred, and my eyes are stinging from the saltiness of the water. I cough out the water from my windpipe.

"JJ!" I blink up at Dean when he appears next to me on his jet ski, his arm stretched out for me, "You all right?" I nod

mutely and take hold of his hand so he can pull me up on the jet ski behind him.

“Jey, I’m so sorry, are you okay?!” Ashlyn shrieks and I nod, coughing.

“Yeah, I’m fine, really it’s my fault.” I assure when I notice the worry in her gaze. Dean looks back at me, his eyes narrowed.

“Thank God Dean noticed and came back for you. I didn’t even realise that you fell. I’m so sorry,” Ashlyn apologises woefully as Oz circles around and joins us.

“Ash, please, can we not make a big deal about this, I’m fine. You’re acting like I almost died, I got a little dazed but I’m fine now.”

“Are you sure? Let me take you back to shore so they can check you over.” Ash says holding her arm out to me and I shake my head and laugh.

“Absolutely not, you’ve been looking forward to this all day. Also, I am never getting on a jet ski with you again. I’ll take my chances with Dean, thanks.” I tease and she smiles, her nose crinkling a little.

“I love you.” She coos, cocking her head to the side.

“I love you more, now scram.” I shoo her away with my hand and she cackles and revs her engine before she speeds off. Oz gives me a silent ‘are you sure you’re okay’ look and I nod back at him, smiling reassuringly.

When he rides off with my sister, Dean looks back at me.

“Hold on to me, I’m taking you back.” I hold his gaze and his eyes lower to my cheek that is stinging like I just got bitch slapped in the face where I face planted the water and then back up to my eyes again.

I don’t argue with him and nod, my ears are ringing, and I feel sick enough I might actually hurl again.

It doesn’t take us long to get back to shore. I keep my eyes closed and my head pressed against Dean’s back when my head goes faint as we slow and eventually stop. It’s not until

I'm off the jet ski and my feet touch solid ground that I realise how unstable I feel. Dean helps me with the life jacket and lifts me into his arms.

"Hey, can I get a bottle of water and an icepack please?" He asks the lifeguard as he sits me down on an empty sun lounger and kneels in front of me. I lean over, burying my head in my hands. "JJ, look at me."

I shake my head, wincing when my stomach lurches.

"No, no, I feel sick," I breathe fighting the urge to throw up all over him, not that I have much in my stomach. The lifeguard comes back holding a bottle of water and an ice pack and hands it to Dean.

"I know you do," he says lifting my head up and brushing my hair away from my face. "Drink some water." I take the bottle from him and take small sips until the nausea subsides and my head stops whirling. "Feel better?" I nod, closing my eyes when he presses the cool compress against my cheek. When the stinging eases I peel my eyes open, and I find myself lost in his gaze.

"For someone who claims they hate me you're awfully attentive, Lieutenant." The corner of Dean's lip quirks and he nods.

"I can hate you and still want to take care of you, JJ."

I close my eyes and sigh, "No, you take care of something you love, and let go of what you hate." I whisper and he pulls the cold compress away from my cheek and licks his lips.

"Not necessarily," Dean interjects, "Just because I don't like you or we don't get along doesn't mean I would ever want anything bad to happen to you. I've known you my whole life and whether I like it or not you're a part of it, JJ."

I chew on my bottom lip pensively and nod, "I know, but I just never imagined us being..." I trail off and gesture between us, "...this."

Dean takes my hands and helps me up to my feet. "It's just sex JJ, and we're pretty fucking amazing at it. Let's just leave it at that and stop overanalysing it."

I let go of his hands like they scald me and fix him with a repulsive glare. It's moments like these that I really want to throttle him.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” I shove him away from me. “You do realise every time we *fuck* we're betraying your sister, right? You might not care, but I fucking do.” I remind him and his gaze hardens, the affectionate Dean from moments ago vanishes and the unyielding bastard I know takes his rightful place. “Oh, and seeing as you're so *amazing* at it, how about you go and fuck yourself, you obnoxious little prick.” I shove the compress at his chest and push past him, storming off back to the hotel muttering every profanity I can think of in my wake.

It's just sex? Who the fuck does he think he is

Chapter 20

Dean

I NEED YOU TO HATE ME - JC STEWART



I STAND stock still watching Jeyla storm off down the beach, likely cussing me out the whole way back to her room, as she does at least ten times a day.

Well done, you dip shit.

Way to go and put your size eleven foot in that one. Fuck me, for the first time in my life, I'm completely and utterly bewildered. I don't know what to make of my feelings or my actions. Only one thing is clear to me and it's this unwavering attraction I have for her, and for the life of me I can't stay away. There's something drawing me to her, like an invisible force that's got me gripped in her web and refuses to let up despite my best efforts to break free.

I say she's mine, but she's not, and the reality of it is she never will be. Every time I wind up sleeping with her, I feel worse about myself, riddled with guilt for betraying my sister's trust, but I just can't stop or quit her.

Jeyla Jenkins is the drug I never knew I needed, and now I've gotten a taste of her I can't give her up. This thing between us is heading nowhere good. Despite what I told her, it's not just sex and I'm fully aware of that—agonisingly aware—but I can't allow myself to get sucked in more than I already have. I'm already teetering at the final line and if I'm not careful and cross this one too, these feelings of abhorrence will turn into something much more ruinous. 'Things' I have no business feeling for my sister's best friend, the bane of my very existence.

Which is why I need to keep being a callous bastard to her, let her believe that she's nothing more than a pastime, a frivolous fuck toy to me. My conscience is screaming at me to go after her, but I kerb that urge. Shaking my head, I make my way back to the hotel, to the safe confines of my room. I could go to the hotel gym again and go a couple of rounds with the boxing bag like I did the previous night—before I somehow found myself at her door at two in the morning and we spent the night hate fucking all over her room.

Whatever this *thing* is between us is starting to stretch a little too far out of my comfort zone. I thought after sleeping with her, this sexual charge between us would have vanished, but she is becoming a very bad habit—one I'm finding myself beginning to grow a little too fond of.

I spent the rest of the day avoiding her as I'm sure she's doing with me. I need some time away from her where she's not in my face twenty-four seven. Some space to sift through and make sense of all these confounding feelings and find some form clarity to ease the chaos in my head. I went for a long run at the hotel's gym, pounding every ounce of frustration I'm feeling into the boxing bag. When I'm done my limbs are shaking and my heart is beating like it's about to rip right through my chest.

It doesn't matter what I do to distract myself, she's there, she's always fucking there lurking in the corner of my mind with her beautiful eyes, those tasty lips I'm aching to kiss and her exotic scent that makes me silly with desire.

If she were any other girl and not my sister's best friend or the greatest pain in my backside, fuck me there'd be no force strong enough to keep me from her... but she's not, she's the girl I've despised since that very first day I saw her in that frilly pink dress and her braided pigtails.

There's got to be a way to get her out of my head. I know it sounds crude, but I don't sleep with the same girl twice, and I've fucked her on three occasions already and something tells me if things don't change, I'm going to keep going back. I even kissed Rachel hoping it would distract me from Jeyla, but the kiss was flat, lacklustre at best. Not one fucking spark, unlike when I kiss JJ, where I feel like my soul is ablaze and I can't get enough.

As juvenile as it sounds, do I just bite the bullet and sleep with someone else for the hell of it just to fuck her out of my system? No, sex isn't the answer. Besides, I can't even stomach the thought of another girl. I'll just have to steer clear, we only have three days left of the holiday. Once we're back home and I'm not forced to see her every minute of every day things will get better.

Right now, I need to stick to the plan, keep being the indifferent asshole I've always been with her and hopefully that will diminish the insufferable chemistry between us.

When I head down to dinner to join the rest, I notice Jeyla isn't around. My stomach sinks into a pool of disappointment deep in my gut. Twenty minutes later, she's still not down and I'm burning to ask where the fuck she is, but just as I'm about to ask, Oz beats me to it.

"Where the hell is Jeyla?" he questions, his brows fused as he lifts his pint of beer to take a sip.

"She's gone out for dinner with that guy she met at on the plane. Uhm, what's his name..." she clicks her fingers to jog her memory.

"Julian," Jess pipes up and Ashlyn nods, smiling. My fork halts mid-air as I go to take a bite of my salmon. I stare down into my plate for a moment letting that news sink in.

What? She's on a fucking date with that tool?

And just like that, what little appetite I had is gone. Shame too, because this salmon fillet is to die for. I set my fork down, wipe my mouth and chug the beer I'm drinking before ordering another from the waiter loitering by our table. When I finally look up, I catch Oz watching me, I stare back at him stoically and he smirks, shaking his head and shoves a mouthful of rice down his gullet.

My right leg shakes aggressively under the table while my body is slowly consumed by agitation with the thought of her out with another man. The chatter and noise of the other diners around me fades while I picture that fucker kissing and touching her. I almost pound my fist into the table and storm off out of the restaurant but catch myself and fist my hands under the table so hard my knuckles almost split instead.

Christ, JJ. What are you doing to me? I can't even stand the thought of being around another girl and she's off out on a date with some silk-stocking asshole.

Fuck.

I can't sit there and listen to everyone's chatter about what they think Jeyla is up to on her date, I excuse myself and leave the restaurant, I need a smoke. I find a gift shop that sells cigarettes, buy myself a packet and sit outside overlooking the beach and smoke three, one after another, to calm the storm that's whirring inside of me.

Why do I care so fucking much what she gets up to? She's not my girlfriend, I'm not her boyfriend. We owe each other nothing, yet I feel like she's out there cheating on me when that's not even the case. Jeyla Jenkins is nothing more than a glorified fuck hole, so why is it jarring me so much that she's out with another bloke and not here with me where she's supposed to be?

Rapping my knuckles against the wooden balustrade I stare ahead at the ocean, my jaw clenched so tight it starts to ache. Three cigarettes and four shots of tequila later, I'm feeling less agitated and more than enticed to screw that salacious bitch out of my system.

The foam party is in full swing by eleven o'clock and Jeyla Jenkins has been shoved back into the deepest, obscurest corner of my mind. I'm staring into my glass of brandy, searching high and low for the answers I'm in desperate need of as if their at the bottom of the glass as my brother comes over and takes the seat beside me, slapping my shoulder and squeezing affectionately.

"D-Man, why so glum?"

I don't bother lifting my eyes from my glass and lick my lips, "Not glum at all, just people watching and enjoying my brandy." Oz orders himself a double brandy also and rests his forearms on the bar, regarding me closely, his brown eyes narrowed.

"She's got you, hasn't she?" He states knowingly and I sigh, feigning ignorance and take a sip of my drink and swallow, closing my eyes when the smooth liquid glides down my throat, leaving a pleasant burn in its wake.

"What are you on about? Who's got me?" I reply after swallowing and give him a sidelong stare. My brother smirks and thanks the barman when he sets the brandy in front of him.

"Don't play stupid with me, bro," he says, lifting the glass to his lips and taking a sip. "I've seen the way the two of you look at each other when you think no one is watching. How Ash and Jess haven't picked up on it yet I'll never know, but let's hope for both your sakes Ash remains oblivious, at least until the two of you figure out your feelings."

I bite the inside of my cheek and wince inwardly when that pinch in my heart returns at the mention of my sister.

"What's to figure out? I think our feelings are pretty clear and have been for the past seventeen years, bro." Oscar laughs and spins in his stool to face me properly.

"Fucking hell, you're swimming deep in sea of denial, aren't you? You're really going to sit there and deny that you're sleeping with her?"

I shrug indifferently and sip my drink before replying, "Yeah, I fucked her, so what? It's just sex, last time I checked

we're both adults fully capable of making our own choices." Oz stiffens beside me and when I look at him, I find him glowering at me. The more I drink the more flagrant the bastard in me becomes. "Oh, sorry bro, did I ruin your picture-perfect perception of your little princess?" I snarl with a smug smirk. "She may look all innocent, but I assure you when those gorgeous long legs of hers are spread, she's anything but."

Oz glares at me hard, and I can taste the anger coming off him in oscillations. If I were any other guy and not his brother, he would sock me right in the mouth, hell so would I, but fuck it I'm in no mood for pleasantries and a heart to heart.

"Watch your fucking mouth, Dean." He warns dourly, his fingers tightening around his glass, likely to stop himself from lashing out at me. "I think you're getting Jeyla confused with those bitches you're used to fucking and disposing. She may not be blood, but she's as good as family, so you watch your mouth when you talk about her."

I run my tongue over the front of my teeth and snort, "Not all of us are pussy whipped by your little golden girl, *Oskie*. She's a good fuck, but that's about all she's got that interests me." I knock my drink back when I see a redhead across the bar giving me some serious fuck me eyes that will serve as a very nice distraction. "So, you can sit here and keep pathetically pining after her like you stand a chance while I go and cry my woes into the chest of that tall glass of sin over there." I give him a wink and slap his back in the same manner he did mine earlier and walk around the bar.

Yes, I'm a prick, but in that moment, I didn't want to hear her name, let alone listen to my brother sing her fucking praises to me like the sap that he is. I sidle beside the redhead and smirk.

"I hope you taste as good as you look, sweetheart, because I'm starving." I murmur in her ear, and she smiles sultrily, turning her deep chocolate eyes to peer up at me.

"Oh, I do, and you won't find a taste that's better than me, big boy." *I already have*. I groan interiorly and bite back the

urge to cringe. I'm going to need more alcohol.

Ten minutes of light petting with Nicshe—that's her name, pronounced 'Nee-shey'—I'm inebriated enough to not overthink the situation. I'm doing what I do best, avoiding my feelings. She's the complete opposite to my usual taste but the fiery red hair and the tattoos on her thighs have me intrigued. I take her hand and lead her to the hotel.

I'm leaning against the wall by the elevator and she's kissing my neck. I don't feel a thing, not a trace of interest in me or my cock which is only semi-hard. Fuck! I can't do it. I can't fucking do it. I grab hold of her shoulders and gently push her back. I open my mouth to tell her that I'm not feeling it when my peripheral vision picks up colour and I'm momentarily distracted. Across the lobby I see Jeyla standing there in a dark green mini dress that hugs her body in all the right places and makes her eyes stand out.

Standing beside her is that rich prick, his hand resting on her lower back while she watches me, and I watch her. Are they on their way up to her room? God, I feel sick. Jeyla's eyes veer to Nicshe who has her hands resting on my chest. My eyes search hers and I swallow thickly when I can't decipher the look in her eyes, there's no anger, no resentment or jealousy she only shakes her head meekly, lowers her eyes from mine and laces her fingers with Julian's as they walk toward us.

I push myself off the wall, my gaze fixed on her while she passes by me. The elevator bell dings, and the doors swing open. Julian nods at me in greeting and I almost lunge at him right there and then. Jeyla walks into the elevator and he follows her in and my stomach burns with rage.

"Are we going up?" Nicshe asks and I nod, placing my hand on the door when it starts to close and gesture for her to go in. Jeyla's eyes snap up to mine, she looks stunned when I walk in with her and press the button to my floor.

The air in the elevator is thick with tension, so thick it's stifling. Jeyla averts her gaze from mine to look up at Julian who smiles at her affectionately. My eyes narrow to slits, my

hands fisting and un-fisting by my sides. Who the fuck do you think you're smiling at? You priggish prick.

The elevator slows and stops at my floor. Jeyla looks at me as the doors open and I can't fucking take it anymore. I reach out, curl my fingers around her forearm and pull her out of the elevator with me. Jeyla gasps, surprised when I pull her in front of me forcing her out into the corridor.

"Hey! Whoa, what the hell—" I hear Julian pipe up behind me and take a step toward us to get to Jeyla, but I spin and square up to him glaring forebodingly.

"Back the fuck off asshole or I'll fucking bury you right here." I threaten him grimly.

"Dean!" Jeyla exclaims trying to free her arm out of my hold. "What are you doing, let go of me!"

"Dean, what the hell is going on? Who the hell is that girl?" Nicshe questions, eyeing Jeyla from behind me while she holds the elevator door open, I ignore her and keep my attention on Julian who is glowering at me.

"You heard her, she said let her go," he voices firmly.

I inch closer, my eyes narrowed. "Yeah? Well, that's not what she was saying last night when I had her on her knees fucking that pretty little mouth."

"Dean!" Jeyla shouts furiously, hitting my back with her free hand while still trying to rip her other arm out of my hold. Julian's eyes flitter over my shoulder to look at her and I tut. "Get your filthy hands off me, you stupid twerp!"

"Did you get a good taste of me, mate?" I sneer, licking my lips and Julian shakes his head and holds his hands up, backing away. "Yeah, that's exactly what I thought."

Jeyla gapes at him and shakes her head in disbelief when I turn to face her.

"Jeyla, I'm sorry, I think you're amazing and I had a great time with you tonight but it's very clear there's some unfinished business between the two of you and I have no

interest getting involved in something so messy and frankly this dynamic is far too dramatic for my taste.”

“As if you ever stood a chance.” I utter with a roll of my eyes when he steps back into the elevator. When I turn back to Jeyla again, she is seething and judging by the murderous look in her eyes she’s weighing her options on the best and most painful way to kill me.

Jeyla crosses her arms over her chest and fixes me with an acerbic look. What is wrong with me? I had a girl sucking on my neck and whispering lewd things in my ear and felt nothing, but one disdainful look from Jeyla and my body is aflame with need.

The elevator doors close behind me taking Julian and Nicshe away, leaving just the two of us standing in the otherwise empty corridor. Jeyla turns to walk off in the opposite direction toward the stairs, but I grab her arm, stopping her before she can take two steps.

“Let go of me, Dean!” She shoves me away from her irately. “What the hell is wrong with you? What do you want from me? What?!”

“We’re going to talk.” I go to pull her with me toward my room, but she digs her heels into the ground and pulls her arm out of my hold.

Jeyla shakes her head slowly, a look of despair flashes in her eyes but it disappears just as quickly. “Talk?” She intones scornfully, “Since when do we fucking talk, Dean? And you’ve lost your mind if you think I’m going anywhere with you.”

We’ll see about that. “Oh no?” I take a step into her space, place my hands at her waist and hoist her over my shoulder.

“Hey!” She flails, slapping my back while I carry her down the corridor toward my room. “Dean, you better put me the fuck down right now or I swear to god I will scream for help as loud as my lungs allow.” She threatens and I smirk.

“Go ahead, scream for me, baby.”

“I’m not your baby, you dipshit!” she hollers, kicking her legs trying to straighten but I tighten my arm around her legs to keep her still while I swipe my card to unlock the door. “Put me down, right now, I am not playing with you.” Pushing the door open I walk in and kick it shut behind me before I set her back down on her feet. Jeyla pushes her wavy hair out of her face and lours at me. “What the hell do you think you’re doing? What is it you want from me Dean, what?!”

The words ‘I want you’ almost come flying out of my mouth but I quickly swallow them and rub the back of my neck with agitation.

“That’s what I’m trying to figure out, JJ!” I shout back and she blinks up at me. “I want...” I bite my lower lip so hard I taste blood, and she shakes her head.

“What?” She snaps irritably, looking up at me, waiting for an answer. “Let me tell you what you want Dean, shall I? You want a fuck, you want a plaything that excites you, because those girls you pick up don’t cut it anymore, right? You want the heat and passion that we have, but you can’t seem to find it with anyone else and it’s driving you crazy. Am I right?” I stare at her mutely and she nods as if she’s already certain she’s got her answer.

“Partially right, yeah.” I concur, keeping my eyes locked on hers while I take a step toward her lessening the space between us. “I can’t stand that I want you, but I fucking do.” I take another step, and she retreats. “I hate that I lay in this bed night after night when I’m not with you, fisting my cock tight and beating off twice, sometimes three times a night to the thought of all the things I long to do to you but can’t.” I voice hoarsely, slowly inching toward her until she’s wedged between me and the wall. “Tell me how I can still hate you as fiercely as I do, but at the same time burn inside at the thought of another man touching you.” Jeyla stares up at me, her eyes searching mine. I lift my arms and place my hands against the wall on either side of her head and bow my head so I’m at eye level with her. “Make it make sense to me JJ, because however hard I try I can’t and it’s making me crazy.”

Jeylea licks her lips and lowers her gaze from mine fleetingly as if she's sifting through her thoughts trying to find the right thing to say. I watch her for a long moment, silently observing her.

"Well, you might want to figure it out," she replies, her tone mousy with no trace of the anger she held in her tone moments ago.

Jeylea's eyes lift to mine again, only this time they're swimming with tears. My chest goes all tight when I notice the despair behind her gaze and lower my hand to caress her cheek.

"I'm pregnant, Dean."

And then she says that, and my world stills and for a full minute I don't blink nor breathe.

The title 'Chapter 21' is written in a large, black, cursive font. Two pairs of white, feathered wings are positioned on either side of the text, appearing to fly outwards. Below 'Chapter 21', the name 'Jeyla' is written in a smaller, pink, cursive font. Underneath the name, the text '3AM - JANINE' is written in a simple, black, sans-serif font.

Chapter 21

Jeyla

3AM - JANINE

THERE'S a sour taste in my mouth as I spill the news of my pregnancy to Dean, who suddenly goes stock-still and pales while he processes the news. I hold my breath, waiting for him to say something, or react in any way but he only stares at me unblinking for the longest time while I slowly and tortuously stew in anticipation.

That was the very same look I had on my face when I found out eight hours ago. Hell, I'm still trying to process it and I'm sick to my stomach with apprehension. I sat in that bathroom for over forty minutes numbly staring at the line of positive tests on the floor.

"Dean?" I can feel myself choking on my emotions and I fight off the tears I can feel coming.

Dean finally blinks and takes a step back, he lifts his arms and places his hands atop his head while he paces back and forth.

“We... we used protection.”

“Not every time.” Dean stops pacing and looks at me sharply, his brows fused tightly. “That night at the hotel when we got stranded. We didn’t use anything.”

“I pulled out!” he shouts furiously, and I start, not expecting his sudden outburst.

“The pull-out method isn’t effective protection and doesn’t always work, Dean! Surely you know this!” I fire back and he shakes his head, walking over to me.

“Bullshit! It does when it’s done right!” he bellows in my face. “And it’s never, not once, let me down before. I find it hard to believe that a method I’ve used for over a year with other women—who I slept with more times than I have with you, works perfectly fine, but one night with you and you’re up the fucking duff?” I gape up at him in disbelief, and the back of my eyelids prickle at the accusing undertone lacing his voice.

“What are you insinuating here exactly?” I narrow my eyes in scrutiny. “Because I sure as shit didn’t crawl on top of myself and get pregnant, Dean, and I would be very careful with what comes out of your mouth next.” Dean’s jaw tightens and throbs while he glares hot daggers at me, each one more painful as it pierces right through my heart. I can see as clear as day what he’s thinking, and in that moment, I want the ground to open and swallow me whole.

“I don’t know who else you’ve been spreading your legs to JJ, but that baby isn’t mine. We used protection and that night I pulled out with more than enough time to be safe.” He claims, determinedly.

My heart snaps and takes a deep dive into the pit of my stomach while I stand staring at him, my vision blurring as tears gather in my eyes. My hand is already up before my mind acknowledges it and I slap him hard across the face. My hand stings and Dean’s head snaps to the side from the force of it, his eyes closed, jaw set tight.

“I didn’t expect much from you, but I never would have imagined you could be *this* heartless and uncouth, especially regarding a sensitive matter like this. I can’t even find the words to express the devastation and repugnance I have for myself for ever letting you touch me, you spineless asshole.” I sob, shaking my head in disgust, “You can stand there in denial and spew your hateful words at me all you want, but deep down you know you’re the only person I’ve slept with. This baby is yours, Dean, whether you want to accept it or not doesn’t change that fact.” Dean opens his eyes and slowly turns his gaze to look at me. When he takes a step toward me, I retreat, shaking my head.

“Don’t!” He stops, his hands fisting by his sides. “You’ve made your feelings on the matter perfectly clear. This is my problem, so I’ll deal with it on my own and you can go to hell where you belong.” I express bleakly. “You’ve ruined my life.” I whisper, my voice breaking before I turn and hurry out of his room when the lump in my throat grows, constricting my airway and I feel my emotions building and building to a point it’s ready to explode out of me.

I have one thought on my mind and it’s to pack up my stuff and disappear. My knees wobble and I sink on the third step of the staircase, bury my head in my arms and sob.

What the hell am I going to do now?

How am I supposed to explain this to Ash? To my family? If I tell them that it’s Dean’s baby and he’s refusing to take any responsibility they’ll be at each other’s throats and almost twenty years of friendship will be ruined all because I couldn’t keep my legs closed. If I lie and tell them it’s from a random hook up, they’ll be so disappointed in me. I’ll have to quit school, move back home and raise this baby on my own.

I can’t have this baby. How can I have the baby of a man I loathe with every fibre in my body? How can I want a man who isn’t even mature enough to step up and face his responsibilities?

My despairing sobs reverberate in the empty stairwell; I cry and cry until I have nothing left in me and my eyes feel

like they're about to fall out of their sockets.

I don't go back to my room in fear of him showing up. Instead, I head down to a hidden part of the beach and lay on the sand, staring up at the clear night sky, beseechingly searching for the answers or any other solution that doesn't end with me terminating my baby or destroying everything and everyone around me.

I don't know how long I lay there, but it must have been a couple of hours because my body starts to tremble when the sand beneath me cools as the temperature drops and slowly seeps into my bones or I'm just shaking with trepidation. I honestly couldn't tell.

When I finally force myself to head up to my room, the sun is starting to peek up from the horizon. I round the corner and stop when I find Dean sitting on the floor, his back against my door, his knees up and his head in his hands looking as distraught as I feel.

When he senses me there, his head lifts and his eyes snap up and lock with mine. Just when I think I've cried myself dry, a fresh batch of tears well up in my eyes, obscuring my vision for a second before they spill over and stream down my already tear stained cheeks. Dean gets up when I take a step back, ready to turn and walk away, not having the strength nor the stomach to deal with him. In two strides with those long legs of his, he's already in my space and I'm sobbing, backing away from him.

"No," I place my hands at his chest and push him back. This time he doesn't back off, his arms envelope me, taking every hard blow of my fist against his chest while I sob. "No, don't fucking touch me. I hate you, I hate you!" I cry, fighting in his hold.

"I know, *I know*," Dean presses his forehead to the top of my head. "I'm sorry, JJ. I'm so fucking sorry." My face is buried into his chest, my body shaking with hoarse sobs while he holds me tight against him. "You're right, I am a spineless asshole, and you didn't deserve a reaction like that, I'm so sorry." My woeful cries simmer to quiet whimpers when he

draws back and lifts my head so I'm looking up at him. "I'm sorry." His thumbs brush away the tears that flow freely down my face. "I was already angry, and I'd been drinking. You caught me off guard, dropping it on me like that, and I didn't know how to react, so I went on the offense. It's no excuse nor does it justify those cruel things I said to you."

I push his hand away from my face, lowering my eyes before I speak, "No, it doesn't. And just because I consented to you calling me those crude things when we slept together doesn't give you the right to treat me like I'm some common slapper that spreads her legs to everything that moves." I lift my eyes to look at him again. "Not that it matters, but I've only slept with two guys, one was my ex-boyfriend and the other is *you*."

A sullen look overshadows Dean's gaze, and he nods. "Just because I say those things to you doesn't mean that I actually believe them to be true, JJ." Dean confesses sombrely, his gaze searching mine. "What I said before was way out of line. No woman, despite the number of men she's slept with deserves to be spoken to in such a manner. I promise you. I regretted it the moment the words left my mouth."

The sincerity of his declaration appeases the horrid sting of his harsh words before. I still feel the weight of our situation sitting on my chest like an elephant waiting to be addressed. Just because he apologised for the way he reacted, doesn't mean we're all good, nor that I forgive him for being a colossal bastard about it.

Stepping away from him, I walk over to the door to my room and swipe the key card to open it and walk in. Dean follows me in, quietly closing the door behind him. I sink on the bed, my eyes cast down, fumbling with the gold ring on my index finger.

"What are you thinking?"

"I don't know," I sigh, closing my eyes. "I've got a hundred questions circling in my head and I can't find an answer to any of them." I answer honestly and he nods,

leaning against the dressing table. “Everything is such a mess.”

Dean walks over to me and perches in front of me, “I know, but we’ll figure it out one way or the other.”

My eyes dart up to meet his, “How?” I ask hastily, “How are we going to explain this to Ash? To our families, Dean?”

Dean rubs a hand over his face and sighs, “I don’t know, JJ, I haven’t really thought that far ahead, I’m still processing the fact that *you’re* carrying my baby. First, we need to figure out what we want and then we can worry about everyone else.”

I chew my lip when he lowers his eyes to my stomach and his brows knit.

“Scowling at my stomach isn’t going to intimidate the baby into fleeing, Dean.” I point out and he lifts his eyes to stare at me unamused.

“How far along are you?”

I sigh, wetting my lips. “I’m not sure, a couple of weeks maybe. It’s been what thirteen days since that night we got stranded so...”

“Is it possible the test could be wrong?” Dean questions, a speck of hope flashes in his green eyes and I shake my head.

“One maybe, but I took three; all positive.” Dean shifts and sits next to me on the bed and we both stare down at the beige carpet.

“Fuck.”

I nod, “Yeah.”

Dean and I turn to look at one another, each of us searching for the answers we’re seeking in the other.



Dean and I stay up the entire night trying to come up with a solution and instead we came up with the bright idea to take a

couple of days to process and make a pros and cons list to weigh our options. As much as I was looking forward to this trip, I am thrilled it's over and we are on our way back home. Dean and I spent the final three days avoiding one another. The ten-hour flight back home I sit with Oz this time and Dean sits with a random passenger.

When we finally make home it's afternoon. Ashlyn, Oz, Jessica, Dean and I all pile out of the Taxi.

"Damn, anyone else just been struck with the holiday blues?" Oz utters sourly, setting his suitcase on the floor, a glum look on his handsome face.

"I hate London." Jessica groans, pulling the handle to her suitcase up so she can drag it. Our front door swings open, and both set of parents come rushing out, greeting us like we just got back from fighting a war.

"Darlings, you're back! Oh, we've missed you!" Aunt Tay exclaims beaming at us while she hugs us all one by one.

"How was the trip? We want to hear everything." My mother gushes, hugging my sister and I. "Oh, but first, Jeyla, you have some serious explaining to do young lady." I feel the colour drain away from my face and my heart rate slows drastically. I sneak a look at Dean who's frowning also. "There's someone special here to see you," she announces, a glint in her soft brown eyes. I give her a quizzical look and she grins back at me like an over-enthused teenager.

"Hi Jey."

A shiver rolls down my spine when I hear that all too familiar drawl from behind me. I glance over at Ashlyn, who is gaping at the person the voice belongs to, and my horror is confirmed when I turn and lock eyes with the tall, six-foot-three, dirty blond with baby blue eyes walking over to me.

What the fuck?

"Pax?" I stammer, downright astounded to see my ex standing before me after we broke up three months ago. "What are you doing here?"

Paxton smiles at me handsomely, but it doesn't quite reach his eyes. "I tried calling you a couple of times, but your phone was off. When I didn't hear back from you, I got worried and came to check in on you to ensure you were okay." I watch him guardedly while he moves over to me, looking just as good as I remember.

The gloriously beautiful bastard.

"Um, well, as you can see, I'm perfectly fine." My eyes catch my best friend's, and she shakes her head at me slowly. "You really shouldn't have come all this way," I say, giving him a pointed look, which he dismisses completely.

"Darling, you're my fiancée, it's no bother. Besides, I'm allowed to be concerned about you." My eyes grow wide when he coils an arm around my waist and kisses my forehead like we didn't break up three months ago. Has this man gone and lost his goddamn mind? *His fiancée?*

While Paxton's lips are pressed against my temple, my eyes find Dean's and the perplexed look on his face causes my stomach to clench uncomfortably. The intensity behind the probing looks he's giving me is making me wish I could shrink to two feet tall, so I can scurry away from them both.

Someone up there is fucking with me.

The anger and hurt I've been feeling over our break up all comes back and I want to scream at him for coming after me like he didn't wreck me with his lies only two months ago. I want to tell him to go fuck himself and let me be. But I can't, I can't muster up the bravado to say anything in front of all these people. Whatever happened between Paxton and me is a private matter, one I'd rather keep between us. Besides, how am I going to tell my mother and the people closest to me that I had an affair not only with my professor, but a married man to boot?

In my defence, I didn't know Pax was married. I'm not a homewrecker.

Seeing him now, brings it all flooding back to me.

When I met Paxton two years ago, it was at my first year at uni. The first professor I had assigned for my English literature course was originally Professor Keller— a sweet fifty-year-old man with greying hair and a beer belly. Three weeks into the year he suffered a stroke and medically retired, unable to teach any longer.

The following week, when I strolled into class with Ashlyn in tow, standing in front of the class writing on the blackboard was Paxton or Professor Welling, as he introduced himself to us that day. What baffled me was that he was only twenty-seven years old. All the females that zone out during the lectures with Professor Mitchell were all fully alert and listening intently to every word that flowed past those soft full lips of his.

Pax is tall, and strong standing at six-foot-three and even though he wore a suit to class, it's easy to tell he packs quite the muscle mass under all those layers. Whenever he removes his jacket at the start of each class, his biceps bulge, and the muscles in his back flex under the shirts he wears. His eyes a breath-taking ocean blue, lined with long dark blond lashes matching his golden hair that he keeps longer in length at the top and swept back.

The man looks like he just waltzed out of one those romance novels I'm obsessed with reading, with his roguish good looks and cocky grin.

The first three months, unlike the other girls in his class I wasn't fazed in the slightest. Yes, he's very attractive, but I never understood why Ashlyn and all the other girl's tripped over themselves to get his attention. I was too swamped with research and ten-page essays and such to focus on the colour of his suits or how his eyes crinkle at the corners whenever he smiles.

Until that night when everything suddenly changed between us.

A late Friday afternoon in the middle of November. I remember it was pouring out, standard British weather. The occasional rolling thunder grumbled outside while Paxton

spoke about our essay. I was taking notes when the bell sounds signalling the end of class.

“All right guys, that’s it for today. Remember to do your research and please keep in mind you have less than two weeks to complete this essay, so go easy on the partying. Have a good weekend.” I briefly heard him say while staring at the blackboard my pen flying over my notebook.

“Jey, I’m brewing for a pooing. I’ll see you back at home.” Ashlyn whispers to me in a flurry. I nod distractedly my pen flying over my notebook before he wipes it off the board. The room falls silent, so quiet I could hear my pen scratching against the paper as I wrote.

“Miss Jenkins,” I jump and peer up to see Paxton smiling at me. “Everything okay?”

I nod, “Yes, Professor. I’m sorry. I’ll be out of here in just a second.” I apologised, writing the last few words down and dropping my pen with a sigh. “Okay, I’m done,” I started gathering up my books and pens when I clumsily knocked my file over. “Shoot.” Inwardly cursing myself for being so darn clumsy, I perched down to pick up the pieces of paper that were haphazardly scattered across the floor. Paxton perched down to help me and as cliché and cringe-worthy as it sounds, we both reached for the last piece of paper at the same time, his large hand covering my own.

My initial reaction was to jerk my hand away, but something inside stopped me and he didn’t move his hand either. I stared at our hands for a moment before I slowly drew my eyes up and looked him directly in the eyes.

And for the first time in the three months that he’d been teaching us, I finally *saw* him. It was like a curtain was lifted and as cringe-worthy as it all seems now, I was spellbound. My palms started to get all clammy, and my throat dried up like I just swallowed a fist full of sand.

Paxton watched me, and I found myself mesmerised by the green flecks in his eyes before I snapped out of my trance and slowly pulled my hand out from under his. Smiling coyly, I pushed myself up to my feet, uttered a bye and got the hell out

of there as fast as I could, leaving him staring at my retreating back.

Of course, I told Ashlyn about the entire exchange, and Ash being Ash started filling my head with all nonsense. According to her, his eyes always lingered on me longer than they did on other students while he talks to the class. I'd never noticed, and I choose to ignore her for the most part, but then the next couple of classes with him I started to understand what she meant.

I found myself to be a bag of nerves each time I had a class with him. I sat right at the back in an attempt to hide myself, but every time I looked up, I caught him looking in my direction.

Sometimes I would avert my eyes quickly, whereas other times I deliberately kept eye contact to see how long he would take to break it. All the signs of attraction were there, the secret looks, sly smiles, and he even called me out more and more during class as an excuse to talk to me.

Eventually, I accepted the fact I had an innocent crush on my teacher. We flirted in the empty hallways or whenever I stayed behind to take notes at the end of class, deliberately writing slow to linger so I could talk to him.

A month after the initial exchange, we both crossed the boundaries of student and teacher relations. One afternoon after class, Paxton asked me to his office after I'm through with my classes for the day to talk about a writers programme I enlisted to.

I was so nervous, I'd never been alone with him in a place no one could see or walk in. I exhaled slowly before knocking on the door and glance at the time on my watch. It was gone six in the evening, and the hallways were empty, near enough all students had retired to their homes or accommodation blocks.

The door to his office opened, and he smiled upon seeing me.

“Miss Jenkins, come on in,” he gestured with his head for me to enter. I nodded and walked into his office, looking around warily while he closed the door.

I observed his space, a classic office with a dark mahogany desk in the centre of the room with pupil’s papers piled up on the side waiting to be graded. Hanging on the wall behind his desk were his diplomas.

“Take a seat.”

I sat in the chair opposite his desk, and he walked around and took a seat in his leather chair. Nervously I rest my hands in my lap while I waited for him to begin speaking. Paxton looked down at the piece of paper in front of him and looked back up at me again.

“Miss Jenkins, I—” he began, but I interjected before I could stop myself.

“Jeyla. Please, you can call me Jeyla.” I insisted with a smile, and he chuckled, a deep throaty rumble that sent a mass of tingles cascading through me.

“Jeyla,” Paxton repeats as if assessing how my name would sound rolling off his tongue. Damn, it sounds good. Grinning, he continued. “I’m surprised to see your application to join my creative writing program next term? I wasn’t aware you had any interest in creative writing.”

“I didn’t either, but I love to read and it’s certainly something I’m eager to explore.” Paxton nods, wetting his lips as he rests his arms atop the desk and regarded me closely.

“It’s an intense eight-week program, are you certain you’ll be able to cope with the workload?” I nodded enthusiastically. “You’ll have assessments and more work from your other classes.”

“Yes, Professor Welling, I’m confident I can manage with the level of work involved otherwise I wouldn’t have signed up.”

Paxton smiled, satisfied with my answer and signs the application. “Very well then, consider your application

approved. I'll look forward to seeing you in another one of my classes."

My cheeks grew hot under his gaze when he lifted his eyes to look at me, and I shifted in my seat.

"Thank you for the opportunity."

"No, thank you. You're an excellent student. As I've mentioned before, this is my first year teaching, and I'm elated to see that I've had somewhat of a positive effect on some of my pupils." Paxton expressed looking me directly in the eyes.

I smiled and tucked a loose strand of my hair behind my ear. "Well, I really enjoy your class. I think you're doing a wonderful job. And I'm not just saying that to be polite. Your teaching technique is so diverse compared to other teachers. You don't dictate; you encourage your students and I think they all appreciate that. Your lectures are never dull because you always keep the atmosphere light by making jokes or remarks or simply making fun of yourself. They're all really fond of you." I noticed his cheeks reddening and I bit back the urge to grin.

"And what about you?" He probes, cocking his head to the side, watching me intently. "Are *you* fond of me?"

I swallowed thickly, briefly stunned and unsure of how one should respond to such a question, "I don't think I would enjoy your class as much if I wasn't." I replied with a nervous laugh and Paxton's blue eyes lit up. My cheeks were aflame, as I kept my eyes cast down, staring at my tightly clasped hands.

"I'm glad to hear it."

I forced myself to look up at him and my body heated when I saw he was watching me intently.

"If that's all, I should be going," I offered with a half-smile and stood up with the intention of leaving after he nods, confirming there was nothing further to discuss. When I made it to the door, he stood to walk me out. As I reached for the door, I glanced back at him over my shoulder one last time.

“Thank you for accepting my application, Professor,” Paxton nods again, and as I went to turn the handle of the door, he reached out and caught my wrist.

I went stiff, every muscle in my body tensing while my heart started pounding erratically against my ribs. Slowly, I turned and met his waiting gaze. We stared wordlessly at one another until he tugged me forward, so I was standing directly in front of him with my face upturned. Paxton leant in a little, his blue eyes lowering from mine to my lips that were parted a little.

“Is this okay?” he whispers, his mouth ghosting over mine. Well, it’s not but it sure didn’t feel wrong. With my nod of affirmation, it was blatantly clear by the look on his face that he’d inwardly debated his next move, but whatever battle he was having within himself dwindled because he leant forward, closing the already too small gap between our mouths.

My eyes slid shut when he brushed his lips over mine tenderly before pulling back to gauge my reaction. My eyes opened and I peered up at him. Our eyes barely come together before we leant in again and this time going in for the kiss we were both yearning for. The last thing I recall is my bag slipping off my shoulder and hitting the floor with a dull thud. Pushing up on my toes, my arms circled his neck, and he gripped my waist, keeping my body against his.

God, the moment our tongues touched we lost all control, he backed me up against the wall beside his office door, and we made out zealously.

I mustered up the strength to stop him before things got too out of hand and we both did something we would regret later. It’s not like he’s a random boy at the school, he’s a teacher, a member of the faculty with his career on the line.

“This isn’t smart.” I whispered against his lips and felt him smile softly.

“No, it absolutely is not,” he agreed, pulling away to put some space between us. “Shall we talk for a minute?”

That talk lasted a total of ten minutes before I was straddling his lap and we were kissing heatedly again. We spoke for a while in between kisses, and then he asked me to meet him for drinks that evening at a bar away from campus.

I did, and from then on, we started seeing each other discreetly. Keeping our relationship off campus wasn't easy, but we managed to keep it off the radar and no one was any the wiser.

Our relationship progressed quickly and a couple of weeks after I tell Ashlyn about us and she made her disapproval of our relationship very clear, but when she saw how much I liked him and how happy he made me, she conceded.

"I can tell you now that this isn't going to end well Jey, but promise me you'll be careful?" I gave her my word, and she smiled and urged me to tell her all the sordid details.

And then one by one the red flags started to pop up. Paxton and I spent most of our time together at mine and Ashlyn's place. I did wonder why we never went to his place, but I never thought to question him about it. I figured when he was ready, he would invite me. Months go by, and we get so much closer, especially after I slept with him for the first time. I'd always said I wanted to wait for the right guy to have sex for the first time, but with Pax it felt right, and I was falling for him hard and fast and every time we spent together it became harder to resist him. It helped that he never pressured me, he was always a gentleman and stopped when he thought we were going too fast.

Our relationship went on for almost two years, minus the break ups and fights in between. I was so in love with him, and I believed he felt the same for me. How could I not when he whispered it to me in such intimate and heartfelt moments.

I was living the fairy-tale and he was my handsome prince charming; my forever.

One night he showed up at my door, dripping wet with a diamond engagement ring and asked me to marry him. I burst into tears, ecstatic and accepted his proposal, throwing myself into his arms. How lucky was I to find the right guy the first

time? Not very it turned out, because there's no such thing as a perfect man or a fairy-tale ending which I brutally found out three weeks into our engagement. We planned to announce our engagement during the summer break, I was going to bring him home, and finally introduce him to my parents.

One day I called him after hours and a woman answered. "Hi. I'm looking for Paxton?"

"He's in the shower right now. Who is this?" she questions bleakly.

"I'm Jeyla. And you are?"

"Tasha." I sigh in relief, my muscles that had bunched up with tension relaxed and I smiled, feeling foolish. Of course, his sister.

"Oh, right, you're his sister."

"Sister? No honey, I'm his wife."

The devastation that crashed down over me in that moment when I heard those words was unlike anything I'd ever felt. I was left stunned like someone had just dumped a truckload of freezing iced water over my head. I opened my mouth to speak, but no words came out.

"Hello?" I hear her voice again. "Sorry, who are you—" I hung up the phone and for a while sat on the sofa in the living room, processing. I couldn't even bring myself to cry from the absurdity of it all, not until a half an hour later when it all started to sink in. I was left completely distraught and humiliated for ever trusting him.

Looking back at it now, all the signs were there but I was too stupid and blinded by my feelings to see through the lies he told me. All the excuses he fed me about turning off his phone so he could work and not be distracted by the urge to call me, and why he couldn't spend most nights with me or the reason he didn't invite me to his place not once throughout our relationship.

I felt sick to my stomach with the thought of him going back home to his wife after being with me. That night, Ashlyn walked in and found me bawling my eyes out on the sofa.

When I told her he was married, she couldn't believe it.

Paxton broke me, I cried for weeks on end, enduring my first ever heartbreak. I couldn't face anyone, wasn't sure how to cope with the constant ache in my chest. So, I holed myself up in my room, not talking to anyone and skipping my classes so I wouldn't see him. Poor Ashlyn brought back my essays and notes so I wouldn't fall behind in my studies. She was honestly my rock throughout the whole ordeal.

For the weeks that followed our break up he called me incessantly, sent an array of bouquets apologising, even showed up at our door begging Ashlyn to speak to me.

"She doesn't want to see you." Ashlyn scolded angrily trying to close the door. "Stop hounding her or I'll call the police and have you arrested for harassment." I stood by my bedroom door listening to him argue with Ashlyn.

"Ashlyn, please I love her. If she would just listen—"

"Listen to what? More lies and excuses? I think she's had enough." Ashlyn exclaimed hotly. "If you truly loved her like you claim you do, you wouldn't have kept the fact that you're married from her. You chose to string her along for two fucking years, you piece of shit."

"I tried, so many times but I couldn't bear the thought of losing her. She can hide in there all she wants, but I'm not going to give up, I love her. You hear me, I love you!" he shouted so I could hear him. "I'm not going to give up on us, Jeyla!" Ashlyn told him to go fuck himself before slamming the door shut in his face.

I slid to the floor by my door and broke down in tears. I was hurting and had no outlet to vent my frustration, so I buried it and made a promise to myself that day to never let a boy wreck me the way he did. For two months, I avoided him like he was the plague, slipping into his lectures just as he was starting, taking my notes and ducking out before he got a chance to talk to me.

The week before our summer vacation I mustered up the strength to face him again. I sat in my usual seat and waited

for the other students to leave. I saw the surprise on his face when he noticed me lingering. The room eventually emptied, so I slid out of my chair and slowly made my way over to him at the front of the lecture hall.

We stood still for a moment just looking at each other. I fought back the tears and was doing well in keeping my emotions in check and appearing headstrong. Wordlessly, I reached into the front pocket of my jeans and pulled out the engagement ring he gave me and placed it on the table behind him.

Those sorrowful blue eyes followed my hand and he swallowed hard when he saw the ring on the table.

“Jeyla...” he whispered, catching my hand when I turned to walk away. “Please, just give me a minute to explain.”

I pulled my hand out of his hold and shook my head. “No, there is nothing you can say that will ever make this okay.” I didn’t even spare him a glance before I walked away.

“Jeyla, please, I love you.” He called out after me. I halt very briefly, my heart quivering hearing those words from him. I shook my head, opened the door and walked out.

All the feelings I’ve tried so hard to bury for months come crashing down on me all at ones. Our entire relationship, the fights, the good times and the heartbreak all flashes before my minds eye as I stand looking into his eyes.

“Please, baby, let’s just talk,” Paxton whispers in my ear. I nod mutely not having the option to do much else. I wasn’t about to cause a scene with everyone around. I’ll hear him out and maybe then he’ll give up on us.

“Okay, let’s talk in my room.” I tell him and go to walk off with him when I hear Ashlyn call out for me

“Jey,” I stop and look back at her. We share a meaningful look and I nod, silently assuring her that I’ll be okay before I turn on my heel and walk to my house with my ex-boyfriend, ex-fiancé, former love of my life in tow.

Minutes later, I sink on to my bed and sigh wearily. I could really do without this right now. It seems like everything is piling on top of me all at once and I don't know what to focus on first. Paxton walks in after me and sets my suitcase on the floor before he closes the door and moves over to me.

"Jeyla," I keep my eyes cast down, fumbling with my fingers. "You're not even going to look at me?" When I shake my head, Paxton reaches over and gently cups my cheek, lifting my head so I could meet his gaze.

"You have every right to hate me, I know I fucked up and there is no plausible excuse for what I put you through," he explains, combing his fingers through my dark hair. A shiver passes through me, and I fist my hands in my lap. "I know it was wrong and I swear I intended to tell you about Tasha, but every time I tried the thought alone of losing you stopped me. Tasha and I weren't happy long before you came along, Jeyla. I wouldn't even consider what we had a marriage. We're more like two strangers residing together out of convenience."

I bat his hand away from my face and scowl up at him, "I don't care whether or not you were happy. It doesn't change the fact that you were still married, she was still your wife, Pax."

"Jey, I made a mistake."

I stand from my bed, narrowing my green eyes to slits.

"A mistake?" I hiss. "You lied to me endlessly for two years. Not one day, not a month but two whole years, Paxton! We were in a relationship; we were in love! You asked me to marry you while you were still married, what kind of twisted person does that to someone they love?!" I shove him away from me, those deep scars that were slowly starting to heal are now wide open and bleeding like the day he cut me.

"I wasn't expecting to fall in love with you, Jeyla. Despite the broken state of our marriage, I had never been unfaithful to her until I met you. I proposed to you because you're the one I want to spend the rest of my life with, you're the one I envision my future with, the one I want to count down minutes throughout the day to come home to," Paxton affirms, taking a

step to me and cupping my face in his large hands, his woeful eyes searching mine. “I swear to you Jeyla, I never touched her after you and started seeing each other, we slept in separate beds. You were all I wanted. You still are. The only thing tying me to Tasha was a piece of paper, that’s all. It’s over now, I’ve left her.”

I shake my head out of his hold and take a step back. “You’re two years too late, Pax. If you had any respect for me, or our relationship you would have been honest with me, not strung me along for two years making me believe that we had something.” I state, not bothering to mask the hurt straining my voice. “I asked you that night when I saw her name on your phone, and you lied to me. You looked me in the eyes and told me she was your sister! So don’t stand there and act like you never had an abundance of opportunities to tell me throughout our relationship, because you did. Instead, you chose to make an absolute fool of me. All those excuses about you not being close to your family and not talking to your parents. It was all a lie you spun so I wouldn’t ask questions.”

Paxton pinches the bridge of his nose, and exhales. “I was a coward okay, I panicked, baby. I couldn’t bear to see that betrayed look in your eyes and blurted out the first thing that came to mind. I wish I told you everything. Believe me, I am full of regret for messing everything up but I’m still crazy about you,” he declares, reaching out for me again. This time I don’t move nor push him away.

“What am I supposed to do with that information now? Do you want a pat on the back or a round of applause for finally admitting that you’re a fucking liar and a coward, what?” I ask sardonically. A look of hurt flashed in his blue eyes, and I feel heavy with emotion, but I refuse to let him see me cry. “Am I supposed to be grateful that you left your wife *after* getting caught and lying to me for two years? What did you expect coming here? That I would jump into your arms, and we’d just pick up where we left off and live happily ever after?”

“Jesus Jeyla, of course not. I came here because I needed you to hear me out and know how sorry I am for everything. I’m not going to stop fighting for us, I know you still love me

just as much as I do you, and I'm willing to do whatever it takes to fix this... fix us." Paxton professes, taking hold of my shoulders as he stares down into my upturned face. "I would never intentionally hurt you babe, and I'm truly disgusted with myself for everything I've done to you. My relationship with you was more real than my six year marriage to Tasha. Physically and emotionally, I was always yours, I still am."

"You really hurt me, Paxton. I loved you more than anything and you broke me with your lies." I admit sorrowfully, the tears I've been fighting to hold back are now streaming freely down my cheeks. "There's no fixing this now. I don't think we will ever be the same because the damage is already done. I don't even know if I'll ever trust you again."

Paxton wipes my tears away, his doleful eyes glistening. "Don't say that." He utters quietly, pressing our foreheads together. "As long as we love one another we can figure the rest out. I'm an idiot, I know, and I understand if you tell me to fuck off, but my proposal still stands. I still want to marry you. I've been a wreck without you, Jey," he pleads, pulling back he holds out my hand and presses the engagement ring he gave me before into the centre of my palm. "Just think about it, please?" I nod, looking down at the diamond ring sitting in the centre of my palm. "I'm staying at a hotel nearby for a couple of days." Paxton informs me and brushes a kiss to my forehead before he walks out, leaving me alone in my bedroom.

Chapter 22

Jeyla

ONLY LOVE HURTS LIKE THIS - KIESA KELLER

AFTER PAXTON DRIVES OFF, I stand in my room, staring down at the ring between my fingers. My head is an even bigger mess than it was before I came home. I'm taking one hit after another from every angle, and I honestly don't know how much more I can take before I have a full-on nervous breakdown. I can't breathe, I feel like I'm suffocating between these walls, so I leave the house and take a short walk to the playground behind our house. Ash called me after Paxton left to check in; I told her I wasn't in the mood to talk and I needed some time alone to process, and she kindly understood, leaving me alone to lick my wounds.

I slowly rock back and forth on the swing, sifting through my thoughts and feelings that are currently a tangled mess inside my head.

I start out of the trance I'm in when I hear someone behind me. I look back over my shoulder and sigh when I see Dean

leaning against the tree, his hands stuffed in his pockets looking at me with those glacial eyes of his that cause every hair on my body to stand.

I close my eyes and exhale slowly before speaking. “If you’ve come here looking for a fight, I’m really not in the mood.”

Dean shrugs in response, kicking away a broken piece of a branch from the tree he’s leaning against.

“You’re just one big cliché, aren’t you, JJ?” I stop rocking and look up at him, frowning.

“Excuse me?”

Dean licks his lips and wanders over to me, hands still in his pockets. “Sleeping with your married Professor. Don’t you see the irony of the situation you’re in? You’re upset with your ex for lying to you and not telling you he was married, yet you’re spinning one lie after another to everyone around you. Hypocrite much?” I stand up and move closer to him.

“Right, because you’re the pilgrim of honesty, are you Reyes?” I ask, placing my hands on my hips and glaring at him hard. “I don’t see you running off and telling your sister that you fucked and impregnated her best friend. Go ahead, go tell them all the truth and let’s see what a shit storm that will cause.”

Dean’s entire demeanour tenses; I shake my head, veering my gaze from his to look at the see-saw opposite me.

“What are you pissed about now, Dean? My past with Paxton has nothing to do with our situation, so why are you here wagging your venomous tongue at me again?”

“Are you getting back together with him?” Dean asks, crossing his arms over his chest, his expression grim.

Closing my eyes, I tilt my head back and heave a sigh, “I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?” Dean’s eyes narrow questioningly, and he takes a giant step toward me. When I open my eyes, I’m surprised to find him in my space, all heated and oozing

agitation. “You’re actually considering taking him back after he mugged you off for two years?”

“It’s not that simple, Dean. I was in love with him. We were in a two-year relationship, we have history, I can’t just disregard everything I felt for him and just move on, it doesn’t work like that,” I fire back at him hotly.

“You don’t sleep with someone if you’re still in love with someone else, JJ. If you’re still in love with him as you claim to be, why the hell have you been sleeping with me?” Dean demands, inching closer to me.

“You’re acting like us sleeping together was ever premeditated. I didn’t come crawling into your bed in the middle of the night, Dean. Every encounter we’ve had was either because we both had too much to drink, or we’re fighting and need to vent our frustration. We don’t sleep together, we fuck.”

Dean’s brow arches and he nods, wetting his lips while he looks me dead in the eyes. “Did you tell him that you’ve been *fucking* someone else?” Dean grips my jaw and brings my face close to his. “Does he know that he was nothing more than a distant memory while I was stretching your tight cunt and you were begging for more, crying *my* name?” My pulse spikes and a quivering breath pushes past my parted lips. Dean’s thumb drags across my bottom lip, “I wonder if he will still want you if he knew in just how many ways, I’ve ruined you.”

Goddamn it. Why are my limbs refusing to move? I need to push him away and put a stop to this, but it feels like my arms and legs are locked in place.

“Dean, stop it.”

Dean’s lips brush over mine as he speaks to me in a low, deep tone. “Stop what?” My eyes close when his tongue replaces his thumb, and he sucks my bottom lip softly and groans deep in his throat. “Mm, you still taste like me.”

Finally finding my senses I place my hands on his chest and push him back. I open my eyes and peer up at him. “And you taste like you’re threatened.”

Dean chuckles throatily and slowly licks his lips, drawing my eyes down to his inviting mouth. “JJ, you’ll be bored with him now you’ve had a taste of me.”

“Then it’s a good thing I want someone who has more to offer me than his prised cock and a quick fuck.” I point out to him in the same haughty manner, and the smile on his face falters, “Let’s say I don’t end up getting back together with Paxton. What will that change for us, Dean?” I ask him earnestly. “Can we just stop digging each other out and be real for a second? Do you honestly see us being good parents to this baby given the way that we are?” Dean straightens, and his dark brows pinch causing a deep v to form between his brows. “I’m terrified Dean, I made that list like we discussed. Here, take a look,” I take the folded up piece of paper I slid into my back pocket and hand it to him. Dean unfolds it and his eyes scan the writing across the paper. “The cons column has over nine reasons why we shouldn’t have this baby. Look at the pros column. Nothing. I couldn’t think of a single reason to keep this baby.”

“Are you saying you want to... terminate?” Dean expresses cagily when he looks up at me again.

I shrug and shake my head slowly, wiping away the tears that roll down my cheek. I start pacing back and forth. “I can’t see any other solutions, can you?” Dean looks down at the list again and sighs. “Are you honestly ready to be a father and quit your dream job to come back home to work in a job you hate and try to co-parent with me?”

“Of course I’m not, but I’m not thrilled about aborting my kid either, JJ.”

“Neither am I!” I exclaim, sinking onto the swing and burying my head in my hands. Dean moves over to me and perches down in front of me.

“JJ, look at me.” I shake my head and Dean takes hold of my wrists and pulls my hands away from my face so he could see my face. “What do you want to do?”

“I don’t know,” I whisper. “I feel like I’m going crazy trying to figure out a solution that doesn’t end with us both

burning our futures to the ground.” I look at him imploringly. “If we tell our families, you know what they’ll do.”

Dean nods sullenly, “They’ll force us to get married.”

I nod, chewing on my lip thoughtfully, “Can you see us married and trying to make it work with a kid? Putting aside the sex, which let’s face it, the passion will eventually burn out and what then? We’ll just resent each other forever and that toxicity between us will bleed into the child’s life. When I pictured myself having a baby someday it was with a man who loves me is excited to build a happy home with me for our family.” I explain desolately and gesture between us. “Not like this.”

Dean sighs and stares down at the ground pensively, “No you’re right, I can’t see us working beyond the sex either.”

I close my eyes and ignore the squeeze in my heart, “So, we’re in agreement. We’re not keeping it.” Dean pinches the bridge of his nose and shakes his head wordlessly before he stands. “It’s still early enough that I can medically terminate, I’ll need to make a doctor’s appointment.”

“Okay.” I peer up at him and he watches me attentively. “I’ll take you when you’re ready.”

I rise from the swing and nod. I should feel relieved, but I don’t, if anything I feel worse, and that giant gaping hole of dread just grows. I have the overwhelming urge to curl into a ball and cry. Dean doesn’t say another word; he turns and walks away, leaving me standing in the playground watching his retreating back.



I manage to get an appointment with a specialist family planning clinic three days later.

“All right Miss Jenkins, your test results are back, and you are indeed pregnant.” I look over at Dean who is sitting in the chair opposite the bed I’m lying on, his head hung low, hands laced together tightly. “I’ll need to do a quick ultrasound just

to make sure there's definitely a baby in there. Because the baby is still small, we'll have to do an internal scan. Bend your knees for me and just let them relax and drop to the side." I do as I'm instructed, and the doctor slides the receiver inside me. I draw in a sharp breath and grip the side of the bed when an uncomfortable ache shoots through me. Dean's head snaps up and he looks at me, concern shadowing his handsome face.

Thankfully he's not in a position where he can see the probe being inserted. As if this whole ordeal isn't hard enough as it is, the last thing I need is him seeing my vagina laid bare and being probed.

"Sorry lovely, bear with me, it can be a little uncomfortable at first." She says and I keep my eyes fixed firmly to the wall and don't dare look at the monitor. The scan is over within a couple of minutes, and I sit up after she removes the probe and hands me a wipe to clean the gel off. "Okay, I'm legally obligated to ask once more. Are you absolutely sure?" she asks, smiling at me warmly. I sneak a look at Dean who is staring hard at the floor again.

I exhale and nod, taking the pill from her. "Okay, so, you need to take both pills for the abortion to be effective. The first pill is a pregnancy hormone blocker, after you take this, you need to take the second twenty-four to forty-eight hours after. Once the second pill is taken, within four hours you'll start cramping like you would during your period and start to bleed like you would when going through a miscarriage. Do you have any questions?" I shake my head.

"No, thank you."

"There's a number on the leaflet if you require any further support and if you find you're bleeding too heavily or are in too much pain please seek medical attention immediately." My hands and legs are trembling uncontrollably as I pop the first pill in my mouth and wash it down with water.

God, please, please forgive me.

On the drive back home Dean and I barely say two words to one another. I can see him from the corner of my eye every so often looking over at me, looking like he wants to say

something but thinks better of it. I discreetly wipe away the tears that just keep coming. I'm dreading the next twenty-four hours. The waiting and apprehension in-between pills feels like slow torture. Dean pulls up around the corner from our street so I can walk the rest of the way, the last thing I need is Ash seeing us together and asking questions neither of us can answer right now.

"Are you going to be okay?" Dean asks when I take my seatbelt off. I force down the lump forming in my throat and blink away the tears.

"Yeah," I answer quietly and reach for the handle to open the door and get out, but Dean reaches over and grabs my arm, stopping me. I turn my head to look back at him. I can't look him in the eyes—the sadness he's holding behind his gaze is making me ache profoundly.

"JJ, if you need anything at all, please call me and I'll be there."

I smile sadly and wipe away the tears with my fingers, "Yeah? And how do you plan to explain that to everyone?" Dean sighs and rubs his forehead with agitation. "I'll be fine, but thank you for being there today." When Dean nods in response, I push the door open and get out of the car, closing it behind me. Dean bows his head and looks at me through the window, we share one last look before he drives off.

The next twenty-four hours, as I expected, felt dreadful. Every hour that passes by my dread grows thicker to a point it's suffocating me. Am I doing the right thing? How will I live with myself, with this guilt for the rest of my life if I go through with the termination? My brain is working strenuously with the overthinking and whatever I do, however hard I try, I can't seem to pacify the thoughts in my head or stop the tears.

I pick up the phone to call Dean at least ten times, but at the last minute, I change my mind and set the phone down and continue pacing my bedroom like a lunatic. I stand in front of the mirror looking at my flat stomach.

By hour twenty-six I'm sitting on the floor in my bedroom, staring down at the little pill sitting in the palm of my hand,

gnawing at my lip fretfully.

I can't do it.

Why should an innocent life pay the price of our mistake? Dean and I are responsible for the mess we are in and now it's up to us to face the consequences, whatever that may be. I drop the pill in the toilet and flush it away.

Well, I guess I'm having a baby.

I'm having *Dean's* baby.

Holy cow, now there's a sentence I never thought I'd say. Our parents are going to kill us, well my parents will definitely kill me and then Ashlyn will likely never forgive me.

It's past midnight and the Reyes household is dark. I poke my head out of the window and see Dean's window is open, though his room is dark, which means he's gone to bed. I should wait till the morning to tell him that I couldn't do it, right? Then again, I don't think I can make it to the morning. I could call him, but I want to see his face when I tell him. Ugh, sod it, I'll crawl through his window. I done it a million times when we were kids.

I sneak out of my house and jog across the eerily quiet street, praying I don't get attacked by one of the wild foxes that are always roaming the streets after hours. I scowl up at the window and my stomach swims at the height.

Why is that window suddenly a lot higher and more intimidating than it was when I was younger?

If I fall and break my neck at least I won't have to face everyone and tell them what a royal fuck up I am. It feels like I've gone back seven years to my fifteen year old self, sneaking into Dean's bedroom to re-arrange his room just to piss him off.

Ah, I'd give anything to go back to those days. To a time when my feelings for him were crystal clear and my only concern was what prank he would pull or what hateful remark he would hurl at me next.

Carefully I climb the metal wall trellis, mindful not to step on any of Aunt Taylor's beloved flowers. I utter a silent prayer when I manage to safely reach his window and as quietly as I can climb through. Dean is in bed, laying on his side, his back to me. When I slowly pull the covers back and slip into bed behind him, he lifts his head and looks back at me over his shoulder, even in the darkness of the room I can make out his scowl. Dean rolls onto his back and looks up at me quizzically. "JJ?"

"I couldn't do it." I whisper, and he just looks at me vacuously for a second as if letting my words sink in before he exhales and leans up on his elbow. "I've spent the past twenty-four hours going over every possibility and I know myself, Dean. I don't think I'll ever forgive myself if I went through with it. I'll hate myself." I explain, my eyes cast down, staring at my fingers fumbling with the corner of my over-sized t-shirt. "This is our mess; an innocent baby shouldn't have to pay the price for our mistake. We were careless, and now it's up to us to step up and face the consequences, whatever that may be."

Dean nods, licking his lips. "I agree," my eyes lift to look at him, taken aback. Well, that's certainly not the reaction I was expecting from him. "As terrifying as it is, I've had this gnawing feeling in my gut since we made the decision to terminate. I'm relieved you didn't go through with it." My shoulders slowly fall and all the tension and anxiety I've had cooped up inside washes away and I'm flooded with an overwhelming sense of relief.

I puff out my cheeks and exhale, laying down beside him, "Are we going to regret this?"

Dean shrugs and lays down also and we shift, turning to face each other. "Probably."

There's a long moment of silence between us.

"Dean," I mumble into the darkness of his room when my cold feet somehow entangle with his toasty ones.

"Hm?"

I nibble on my fingernail nervously and heave a slow sigh. Oh God, my head is such a mess. I don't remember ever feeling this confused or out of touch with myself. I can't make sense of a damn thing, not my thoughts, not my feelings, everything is all over the place. There is only one thing that is crystal clear—in nine months, whether I'm ready for it or not, I'm going to be responsible for another human being. I can barely take care of myself. How am I going to care for a child? My entire body starts to tremble, and I can't seem to stop or control it.

Sensing my apprehension, Dean wraps his large hand over mine and squeezes. I'm suddenly very aware that I'm in Dean's bed and our bodies are edging closer. I close my eyes and swallow thickly, willing my heart to stop fluttering madly like it's about to surge out of my chest. This is not good.

"I should go." I tell him quietly but make no move to actually get up and leave. Dean nods and utters an almost inaudible 'mhm' showing absolutely no intention of letting me go, especially with the way his muscular arm circles my waist and I'm drawn closer until I'm pressed up against him.

Our legs entwine and I sink into his warmth, the woody scent of his aftershave that he wore early in the day still lingers on his skin, fusing perfectly with the fresh manly smell of his deodorant and his natural fragrant scent. My head goes faint, and I lose my bearings when I feel his lips ghosting mine. Something happens to my body whenever I'm close to this boy. The air around us sizzles, our breathing slow and shallow while we linger, savouring in that desperate need that is flaming between us while we battle with ourselves to resist the urge to surrender to one another.

"Dean," I breathe, shamelessly rocking against him when he lifts his thigh and presses it against my burning sex. Christ, why is it I can never resist him? What is this unrelenting power we hold over one another that makes us so damn defenceless against each other. It's one thing us fucking in hotels, but doing it in his bed, under the same roof where his sister—*my best friend*—is asleep across the hall feels so immoral, but for the life of me I can't find the strength to resist

him. “Dean, we need to stop, we’re being reckless. We both know this isn’t heading anywhere good.”

Dean’s hand moves from my waist to comb his fingers through my hair. Our foreheads are pressed together, lips a hair apart. Dean rocks himself against me and a surge of pleasure ripples through my body eliciting a breathy moan from me.

“Do we?” Dean groans, brushing his soft lips over mine. “Because that moan sounded like it came from somewhere pretty damn good.” Feeling the hard and throbbing length of him pressing against me quells the very last shred of fight I have left in me. Dean’s lips close around mine and the moment our tongues glides over each other there’s no stopping us. We moan together, kissing amorously. Dean rolls me onto my back, his large, burly body covering mine when he shifts his weight so he’s on top of me, and my goodness I love feeling his weight on me, pressing me deeper into his mattress. My fingers rake up his back, tracing every dip and ripple of muscles I could reach. Dean groans quietly into my mouth, sucking my tongue when I flick it over his.

One by one our clothes disappear, not that we’re wearing much. Dean is in a pair of boxer shorts and I’m in an oversized shirt and booty shorts. Dean presses himself against my entrance and pulls back to look down at me as though seeking assurance. The moonlight filtering through his window offers just enough light that we can see one another. My legs snake around his waist, silently giving him the affirmation he’s in quest of and I keep my eyes on his when he slowly feeds himself into me. My lips part and I draw in a slow breath as he little by little fills me until he’s completely immersed. The silver dog tags around his neck hang between us and I reach up, curl my fingers around it and pull him down to my waiting lips.

The previous times we’ve had sex has always been intense and fiery, but this time we’re not fucking, there’s not a trace of anger or hate between us—there’s only passion and a perilous need for each other that neither of us understands but also can’t seem to get enough of.

Every thrust, stroke and kiss held meaning, one my body responds to urgently while I reach climax, shaking in his arms, holding back the urge to cry out with every rush of pleasure that crashes over me pushing me to the edge. “Let it come baby, let it come, I’ve got you,” Dean whispers, pressing his forehead to mine and thrusting into me with sluggish strokes, sweeping the crown of his cock over my g-spot again and again until I can no longer hold back and my body tenses when I hit that enchanting peak and free fall. Dean pushes himself into me to the hilt and keeps himself there while I clench and flutter around him.

“Fuck, *fuck*, you’re coming so hard,” he pants, his brows fusing while he edges himself and holds back the urge to climax. When I rock my hips back and forth, riding out my orgasm Dean moans, biting down on his lip. When my orgasm ebbs away and I’m no longer squeezing him he sits up and lifts me into his arms, my body coils around him, our lips fuse and we kiss slow and deep, rocking against each other, building to another release, this time I’m taking him with me. My head lulls back and Dean presses open mouthed kisses down my throat.

“S-shit, oh, I’m going to come.” I pant when I feel the pressure building again not even two minutes in. I press my forehead to his, “Come with me.” I plead breathlessly.

At my request Dean grips my hip with one hand, rocking himself up into me, his other hand is curled at my nape while his mouth dexterously attacks mine. I’m aching to feel him throbbing and pulsing inside me while he fills me with his hot seed. “I’m with you,” he pants, nipping at my lower lip, “Fuck me, milk me dry, baby.”

Every time he calls me ‘baby’ my stomach flips with exhilaration. Grinding and gyrating my hips against his until that pressure consumes me and I explode around him. Top to bottom fireworks wring through me rapidly. Dean follows me over and the deep timbres of his moans, combined with the feel of him pulsating and spilling rope after rope of his warm cum inside intensifies my pleasure. My toes curl, the legs I have wrapped around him quake while he slowly thrusts into

me fucking me through my release until I sink against him panting, my body aglow with the post orgasm rapture.

We remain in that position for a couple of minutes, Dean's face is pressed against my throat, his soft lips brushing soft kisses against my pulse point. My fingers gently stroke the back of his neck as our bodies calm, eliciting a melodious sound of appreciation from him.

Dean lifts his head, and he looks at me. I hold his gaze, my eyes closing when he brushes a kiss to my lips as he lays me back. God, he's such a good kisser I almost whimper in protest when he pulls back ending the sensual kiss and leaving my mind in a haze. The post-coitus part with us is always awkward, because neither of us really know how to act or what to say. When things get hot and heavy and we're hate fucking usually it's raw passion in its purest form, but what we just did was unlike anything we've ever shared, which has now left me feeling even more frustrated and confused than I was before. While I'm busy trying to navigate through my musings, Dean gets up and comes back a moment later with a clean wet cloth for me to clean myself up with.

Thank goodness it's dark in his room and he can't see the deep shade of mortification on my face. When he's busy cleaning himself up and pulling his boxers on, I get myself dressed. "Uhm, I better go." Dean looks at me over his shoulder, brows knitting when I move over to the window.

"Don't even think about going out of that window, JJ." There's a serious edge to his tone that stops me in my tracks.

"Why? I've spent my childhood crawling in and out of that window." Dean moves over to me, and I crane my neck to look up at him questioningly when he towers over me with his six-foot frame.

"Not while you're pregnant you're not," he asserts sternly, and I sigh.

Oh, right. Of course, I'm pregnant.

"Well, unfortunately I haven't quite mastered the ability to teleport yet, so the window is the only way out." I try to justify

but he shakes his head.

“You’re not going out of the window. I’ll sneak you out the back door.”

I roll my eyes, and shake my head incredulously, “Well, there’s a sentence I never thought I’d hear from you. Dean Reyes sneaking me out of his bedroom in the middle of the night. Who would have thought?”

The corner of his lip lifts, “That makes two of us, then again, hearing the words, ‘Dean I’m pregnant’ still sits quite high on the list of things I never imagined hearing from you.” It’s my turn to smirk. “Come on, lucky for you I’ve become a master of sneaking girls out of here over the years.” I glare up at him and smack his arm with my hand. “Ow,” he chuckles, rubbing his upper arm where I punched him.

“You better be joking, Reyes or I’ll kick your whore arse straight down those stairs, I don’t care who hears.” I warn him grimly and he flashes me a grin so sinful it would melt my panties right off... if I were wearing any that is.

“Aww, are you getting all possessive over your baby daddy?” he drawls teasingly and reaches over to squeeze my chin affectionately. I bat his hand away and glare up at him unamused.

“You’re not funny and if you call yourself that one more time, I will throttle you.” I warn pushing him toward the door while he guffaws quietly. Dean opens the door quietly and looks around before he reaches back and laces his fingers with mine. My eyes drop to our hands fleetingly and I quickly shake off that giddy flutter that effervesces inside me.

I follow him on my tiptoes through the corridor, avoiding looking at Ashlyn’s door as I pass by on our way toward the stairs. Thankfully we make it to the ground floor and through to the kitchen where the back door is located.

“Wait.” Dean looks back at me quizzically. “Why can I smell pie?” I gasp, “Does your mum have any of her banoffee pie in the fridge?” I ask, my eyes all wide and hopeful.

Dean frowns, straightening. “Probably, she was baking something this afternoon, but how the hell did you just sniff that out, you weirdo?”

I shrug and my mouth salivates at the thought of Aunt Tay’s delicious banoffee pie. “How can you not? The magnificent smell of her biscuit base and the scent of caramel is everywhere.” I tell him quietly while moving over to the fridge. Dean watches me curiously, and sniffs.

“It really isn’t, and my sense of smell is quite sharp.” He tells me in a hushed voice.

“Shut up and hand me a fork, will you?” Dean opens the drawer in the island in the middle of the kitchen and hands me a fork as I take out the already half-eaten pie.

Oh baby, come to mama.

I cut out a slice and dig in. When that first piece touches my tongue I melt into a pile of goo, “Oh my God.” I moan, taking my time chewing the luscious dessert and savouring in the sweet yet decadent taste.

Dean watches me devouring the pie one piece at a time and moaning in gratification from his position leaning against the island. Sucking the fork clean, my eyes lift and lock with his. “Want some?” I offer with a soft smile, and he licks his lips and moves over to me. I cut off another piece with my fork and hold it to his mouth when comes over. Dean glances down at the fork briefly before he looks at me again and eats the pie. “So good, isn’t it?”

Dean licks his lips and smirks, “You taste better.” Blood fills my cheeks almost instantly and we hold eye contact. I’m almost certain he’s going to kiss me until we hear a door open from the first floor, followed by footsteps. We both look up at the ceiling and I almost drop my fork in a panic, but Dean catches it. “Time to go, come on, I’ll save you a slice to eat tomorrow.” I blink at him, but before I have time to process, I’m being pulled to the back door. Dean unlocks the door soundlessly and pulls it open, his green eyes scan the area, and when he’s convinced it’s safe to go, he steps aside to let me out. I step out of the house into the garden and go to walk off,

but Dean catches my wrist when I pass him and pulls me back. His fingers curling at my neck, he draws my mouth to his and gives me a short but dizzying kiss. “Go.”

I sneak through their garden and open the back gate as quietly as I can and scurry back to my house. Dean watches me the entire time, until I make it to my front door and go inside. I close the door and lock it, pressing myself against it I exhale slowly and touch my lips that are still tingling from Dean’s kiss.

Fuck me, I think I’m starting to like the idiot.

Chapter 23

Jeyla

WITH EVERY HEARTBEAT - ROBYN

“JEYLA?”

I’m staring down at my phone at a message I sent Dean and hiss when Ashlyn smacks my arm to get my attention. “Ow *bitch*, what?” I rub my arm while scowling at her.

Ash gives me a ‘what the fuck’ look and I sigh. “What is wrong with you lately? You’ve been really spacey like you’re off in your own little world or something? Is it because of Paxton?”

Paxton, Dean, the baby I have growing inside me, the fact I’m lying to you and my entire family on the daily. It’s a wonder I’m still functioning with the current confuzzled state of my head at the moment.

“Yeah, I wasn’t expecting him to show up like that, so it’s thrown me.” I groan, shifting on my bed to sit up straight and rub my hands over my face. “What am I going to do Ash? I’ve

got my mum asking every five minutes to meet him, he's still waiting for me to make a decision on whether or not we can try again and I'm somewhere in the middle freaking the fuck out about it all."

Ash shifts so she's sitting beside me, "Do you see yourself being with Paxton? Can you trust him to not hurt you again? It's clear you're still in love with him and he's obviously not willing to give up on you." I look up at her sullenly and she takes my hand. "You know how much I hate him for hurting you the way he did, but I'm also a sucker for a happy ending and that man loves you enough to come all the way down here and fight for you, Jey. You were the happiest you've ever been when you were with him." The back of my eyelids prickle and I blink away the tears that start to gather in my eyes.

What about your brother and our baby? Will Paxton still want to fight for us when I tell him that I'm carrying another man's baby? A maddening man I have very mixed feelings about. Speaking of Dean, I've not heard or seen him in three days, since that night in his bedroom. I sent him a text message yesterday informing him that I have my first appointment this afternoon with my midwife, and he's read the message and didn't bother responding.

Nothing peeves me off more than someone reading and ignoring my messages, especially when it's concerning something so important and Dean the jackass is fucking notorious for it. I'm itching to slyly ask where he is because he certainly hasn't been around.

"What if we get back together and can't get back what we've lost, Ash?" I question, my tone laced with doubt, and she shrugs. "You know what they say about trying to hold together something that's already broken. Eventually those cracks will cave, and it will all fall apart again, and I don't know if I have the strength to go through that heartbreak all over again." I admit, closing my eyes remembering the heartache I suffered throughout our break up. "Getting over him wasn't easy."

"You're not over him though, are you?" Ash points out, smiling softly. When I stay quiet and lower my gaze, she

squeezes my hand. “The good news is he will never have the power to break your heart like he did the first time.”

“I think I need some time to sort through my feelings, I don’t want to jump in hastily, you know?”

Ash smiles and gets up from my bed, “So take your time, make him sweat it out. In the meantime, we can go out and have some fun, because I’ve been cooped up in that house with my folks the last two days and I’m losing the will to live.”

Ah, and here’s my opportunity to pry a little without raising suspicion. “With your folks? Where are Oz and Dean?”

Ash stretches her arms over her head and groans, “Oz is seeing some girl I think, he’s walking around the house whistling and being all disgustingly chirpy and Dean, well he’s off being the man-whore that he is. Hasn’t been home in two days, likely hauled up with some skank or another knowing him, although mum did mention she thought she heard a girl’s voice in his room the other night.” My heart thumps against my ribcage and panic fills me. Holy shit, they heard us. “Maybe he has a secret girlfriend, because I know Dean and he would never bring his booty calls home.”

I bite the inside of my cheek and force myself to nod and appear disinterested, but I am indeed *very* interested and infuriated. If he is ignoring me because he’s up some girl’s skirt, I will literally rip his head off and shove it right up his arse.

Later that afternoon I wait and wait for Dean to come back to my message, but when he doesn’t, I go to the appointment alone. I’m sitting in the waiting room with the posters of all these pregnant women and babies surrounding me. A voice deep inside keeps telling me that I should probably get used to being alone, because I don’t see Dean sticking around to play the dutiful father role and support me with this child.

The midwife that is assigned to me, Shannon, does the routine tests and checks and I already know that I’m in the very early stages of the pregnancy but when she mentions that the next appointment will be when I’m twelve weeks along,

which will be in nine weeks' time, it hits me that I'm due back at Uni in six weeks.

I sit there numbly listening to her talk and talk and I can feel the panic growing more and more inside me with every word that leaves her mouth.

My emotions start to suffocate me until I burst into tears. A whole three seconds the midwife just gapes at me stunned, unsure of how to react when I suddenly start sobbing.

"Oh sweetie, are you okay?" She asks worriedly, handing me a tissue and I shake my head taking it from her.

"I'm sorry, I'm just overwhelmed," I sniffle, wiping away the tears that keep coming. "It just hit me that I'll be doing this all on my own." I sob into the tissue. The midwife reaches over and rubs my shoulder soothingly which causes me to cry even more.

"The father isn't in the picture I take it?" I close my eyes and shake my head.

"I don't know, he is and then he isn't. He doesn't even care enough to be present at the appointment and is likely off fucking his next whore." I wail helplessly. "Even if he is remotely interested in being around for the baby, he's a fighter pilot for the royal air force which means he'll be gone months at a time."

Shannon's brows furrow and her mouth forms an 'o' while she listens to me venting about Dean.

"What about family?" She probes and I shake my head, angrily wiping away the stream of tears.

"My family are great, but they don't know yet and I'm terrified to tell them, not only will they be disappointed in me for the mess I've made of my life, they'll pull me out of school and I'll be stuck living at home with a baby and no career. I can't take a couple of years out. It will set me back so much and I've worked so hard to get to where I am academically." I cry and she nods sympathetically and rubs my knee.

Shannon's brown eyes are comfortingly warm when she regards me sombrely, "Sweetheart, I have had many girls just

like you sit in that very chair fretting about their future, but they've all gone on to become wonderful mothers with successful careers. Now, don't get me wrong, it's not going to be easy, but there are so many support groups out there for young mothers like yourself should you need it. It's scary and can be very overwhelming, but you chose to keep this baby for a reason, right?" I exhale slowly and nod, the sobs ebbing away until only silent tears roll down my cheeks. "We're stronger and more resourceful than we like to believe and when you hold that little baby in your arms nothing else is going to matter, I promise you."

"Thank you." I sniffle and she smiles and squeezes my shoulder. When I leave the clinic I wander around aimlessly, welcoming the time alone to think and figure out what the hell I'm going to do. It's abundantly clear I can't rely on Dean, which shouldn't surprise me one bit.

While I'm sitting at a small boutique café, staring hard into my steaming cup of coffee I sense someone approach and look up.

"Hi."

I blink and Paxton's handsome face appears before me. "Pax," I utter quietly and he cocks his head to the side, his blue eyes narrowing while he regards me closely for a moment.

"May I?" he gestures to the empty seat opposite me, I wordlessly nod, and he pulls the chair back to sit. "You're staring into that cup of coffee so hard like you're certain you'll find the answers to all your problems. Any luck?"

I wrap my fingers around the tepid glass and sigh, "If only, it'll take more than a cup of coffee to sort through the chaos in my head." I admit, lifting my eyes from the cup and look at him. Paxton was always good at helping me navigate through my qualms. Whenever I felt like I wasn't good enough or giving up I could always rely on him to soothe my apprehensions, and he'd find a way to remind me that I'm more than capable of finding the solutions to whatever it is that's troubling me. One of the many reasons I fell in love with

him. Of course, it doesn't hurt that he's gorgeous as well as intelligent and kind.

"What's troubling that beautiful mind of yours, pretty girl?" Paxton inquires, leaning his elbow on the table and resting his chin in his hand waiting for me to spill all to him.

I really wish I could.

"More than I can manage this time, Pax." I sigh glumly, lowering my eyes, unable to look him in the eyes when I feel another onslaught of tears coming. The pained expression on Paxton's face while he reaches to take hold of my hand hurts me.

"Jeyla, you know you can always unload onto me, baby." Tears rivulet down my cheeks and he lifts my face, so I'm forced to meet his probing gaze. "Hey, please tell me I'm not responsible for these tears. You know how much it pains me to see you cry," he says, brushing my tears away with his thumb.

"Not entirely no, I'm just really overwhelmed with everything and honestly I've never had so many people around me and felt so alone and scared in my life." I confess to him and Paxton's brows draw together in perplexity.

"Alone?" he intones. "Jeyla, what are you talking about, you're surrounded by people who love you. You are not alone and what have you got to be so frightened of?"

My bleak future? The baby I have growing inside me. My conflicted feelings for the asshole that fathered it. My unresolved feelings for you. The list just goes on and on.

"I know I am, but it makes no difference if they're there or not when I can't talk to anyone about the shit I'm going through, Pax. I made a stupid mistake and now I have to spend the rest of my life facing the consequences of it."

"Jeyla, you're really starting to worry me. What mistake would have you facing consequences for the rest of your life?" I heave a slow breath and sink back into my seat, my fingers fumbling with the spoon sitting on the saucer. My leg shakes under the table, and I chew the inside of my cheek, fretting the next words that come out of my mouth. "Jeyla?"

I close my eyes, “I’m pregnant.”

I can’t look up, my eyes are fixed to the table, my vision blurring with a fresh batch of tears when I feel him go stiff opposite me.

There a long pain filled silence that hangs between us while he lets my words sink in. “Is it...”

I shake my head, wordlessly answering his question. Pressing my lips together I lift my gaze to look at him and I’ll never forget the wounded look on his face.

“Who... who’s the father?”

“It doesn’t matter, it was a... meaningless hook up.”

“Wow,” he utters, pressing his hands against his mouth and shifts in his seat. “You hooked up with some random bloke and didn’t use a condom?”

Wincing, I place my elbows on the table and bury my head in my hands. “Of course not, he’s not some random bloke Paxton, he’s someone I’ve known my whole life. Someone I never in my wildest dreams thought I’d be in this situation with.” I explain calmly and he stares back at me in disbelief.

“Who is it?” he demands, leaning across the table and taking hold of my wrist. Those blue eyes that used to look at me with such devotion are now tainted and I can’t bear to look him in the eyes.

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Of course it matters!” he shouts, slamming his hand against the table angrily. Everyone in the café turns and looks over at us and I look away. I grab my bag, push my chair back and walk out of the café.

You’re an idiot, Jeyla.

I just want to curl up into a corner and scream until my lungs implode. My chest is aching, so heavy and full with emotion like it’s ready to cave in and I can barely catch my breath. I walk down the bustling street, sobbing.

“Jeyla!” I hear Paxton’s voice calling out to me, but I keep walking. I feel his hand close around my arm, but I pull it free and keep walking. “Jeyla, stop,” he grabs my arm again, this time pulling me back till I’m pressed up against him.

“Don’t Pax,” I whimper, fighting in his hold. “Don’t, don’t love me, I don’t deserve it!” I cry into his chest when he wraps his arms around me, his lips against my temple.

“I can’t,” Paxton repeats, “I can’t fucking stop; I wish knew how to, Jeyla but I love you with all your imperfections and your mistakes.”

“Pax, I can’t be the girl I was with you before, I can’t,” I cry, and he cups my face and brushes my tears away. “I don’t even like the person I’ve become.”

If he knew all the lies I’ve been telling everyone, how many times I’ve betrayed Ashlyn, he would never stomach touching me again.

“You’re still that beautiful intelligent girl I know and love Jeyla.”

Intelligent? I can’t scrape together an iota of my intelligence if I tried. Would an intelligent girl make the same mistakes again and again without purpose? No, she would learn the first time and not go back there knowing nothing good will come of it.

There’s a darkness inside me that is hopelessly drawn to the toxicity between me and Dean, despite the deeply infiltrated abhorrence I feel for him there’s a flaming connection between us that I just love to burn in, and it’s not healthy.

How am I supposed to bring a child into such a hate fuelled, toxic relationship—no, it’s not even a relationship, it’s a disaster, like a volcano meeting a tornado and wrecking everything in its wake. Destructive, that’s Dean and me.



Paxton drives me home after we spend a couple of hours talking and honestly, I'm still stunned he's willing to fight for us. I thought he would have run for the hills the moment he found out I'm pregnant with another man's baby. Like, seriously, how much more noble can the man be?

"Think about what I said, okay?" Paxton says, and I nod mutely. I get out of the car and so does Paxton, leaning against the hood of his black Range Rover, he hugs me. "I forgot how good you smell," he mumbles, burying his nose in my neck.

I smile, albeit sadly, and press my nose against his shoulder. He smells like he always does, fresh linen, and his sporty body spray. Unlike Dean, Paxton doesn't wear aftershave often. Which is a shame, because for me, when a guy walks past me and the smell of his aftershave lingers in air, it's arousing as hell. Also when they drive with their palms, that's also an odd kink that gets me all hot and bothered.

I open my eyes when I hear the rumble of an engine approaching. A sound I've become very accustomed to over the last few weeks.

Bloody hell, of course he would choose that exact moment to come home. I catch his gaze as he drives by toward his garage and veer my gaze, stepping away from Paxton.

"Thank you for driving me back home, Pax. And I'll let you know about my mum's dinner invitation later."

Paxton smiles and lifts my hand, brushing a kiss over my knuckles. I hear a car door slam shut and my insides clinch, making me wince inwardly, "I look forward to it."

Avoiding looking in the direction of Reyes manor I make my way into my house, close the door and lean against it for a minute to gather my thoughts. It's stiflingly hot and muggy outside and I want nothing more than an icy cold bath to cool myself down... externally and *internally*. The house is empty, everyone is still at work which means I can enjoy some peace and quiet before I'm coerced to go out with Ashlyn tonight to some party or another.

It's going to be fun trying to avoid drinking all night. I run the bath and while the tub fills up I stare my reflection in the mirror on the wall. My mascara has run where I've spent the day sobbing. Using my sister's make up remover that she's always leaving around in the bathroom drawer, I remove what little make-up I have on. My ears pick up on a creak which sounded like it came from the stairs, so I move to investigate. Poking my head out the door I strain my ears to listen out for any noise to indicate anyone is home.

Nothing.

"Get a grip, Jeyla." I utter under my breath and get undressed while the bath fills. My breasts and nipples are so sore that when I remove my bra, they ache enough to make me hiss. Glancing down at my bare breasts I notice the love bite that Dean left on my left breast that night at his place is starting to fade away. I brush my finger over it, images of that night flashes through my mind. The feel of his lips on my flesh and the way my body shook and arched up into him.

I've got to find a way to resist him, because not only are all these mixed feelings for him starting to worry me, I also don't know how long I can keep going around in this vicious circle with him.

"Jeyla, I love you and I really believe we have something worth fighting for. You don't have to quit school, sweetheart. I can help you with the baby until you graduate and get your degree. My proposal to you still stands. I want you in my future, and the fact you're pregnant doesn't change the way I feel about you."

I sigh, closing my eyes when I replay the conversation I had with Paxton earlier in his car. I would be foolish to walk away from him, especially when he's willing to step up and support me with this baby, a baby that isn't his. What man in this day and age would ever accept another man's unborn child as their own? He's a good man with a good heart and I know I'll always be loved and secure with him, he's the stability I need in my life. It's easy and uncomplicated... sort of. The only complexity with him is that he's my professor, but he mentioned many times before that if he informs them of our

relationship, it wouldn't be a problem. I'll only need to transfer out of his class for the next term. And of course he's married, but not happily, and that won't be an issue for long.

And what about Dean? The biological father of the baby? Where does he fit into this picture-perfect life you're envisioning?

I sink into the free-standing bathtub, the warm water swirls around me while I lay back immersing myself in the water and stare up at the ceiling pensively. I'll never stop Dean from seeing or being involved in his baby's life. I just have to keep him out of mine, because there is not a snowball's chance in hot hell he and I will ever be anything romantic.

We absolutely will not.

I lay in that bath contemplating deeply and weighing my decision for over forty minutes. When I finally force myself to get out—before I shrivel up like a prune—I'm no clearer on what I'm going to do than I was when I got in. The floral scent of my bath salts lingers in the air while I wrap the big blue towel around myself and walk out of the bathroom, rubbing my neck in frustration.

Walking into my room I kick the door shut with my foot and yelp when I see a reflection through the mirror on my dresser. Dean is standing in my bedroom behind my door, burly arms crossed over his chest, leaning against the wall beside my wardrobe.

“Jesus Christ!” As I spin to face him I press my hand to my chest to calm my poor terrified heart that is thrashing against my chest. “What the hell are you doing in my room?” I hiss irritably when he straightens and continues to watch me intently, his jaw ticking, those deep green eyes stern, clearly agitated about something again.

“Having a picnic,” he drawls condescendingly, “I'm waiting for you, you're lucky you came out because I was starting to lose my patience waiting for you.”

I hold the towel tightly against my body just in case he decides to be a dick and pull it off like he's done in the past.

“Oh, well excuse me for keeping you waiting, I wasn’t aware that you were lurking in my room like some psychotic stalker.” I throw back with an incredulous roll of my eyes. “How the hell did you get into the house anyway? I locked the door.”

“Back door key, your mum still keeps the spare taped inside that ugly frog ornament.” He elucidates jadedly and takes a slow step toward me. The way my heart leaps into my throat has me retreating. “If you’re satisfied, it’s now my turn to ask questions.”

Oh, here we go.

“I know exactly what you’re going to ask, and I wouldn’t waste my breath if I were you.” I say, crossing my arms over my chest and glaring at him. Dean takes another step toward me and this time I don’t move, I raise my brow in defiance.

“JJ, you know better than to provoke me by now.” Dean warns lowly, staring into my eyes with such intensity that it momentarily cripples me.

“And you know better than to threaten me. I’m not one of your air-head bimbos that obediently yield to your every command, *Lieutenant*.” Dean licks his lips, his eyes narrowing menacingly. In a flash his hand curls around my throat, I’m not even able to suck in a breath before I’m being drawn to him until his forehead is pressed to mine.

“No? Would you like me to prove to you right now how quickly I can and will make you yield to me, baby girl?” That inconceivable sensation flares in the pit of my gut while I’m looking him in the eyes.

“Get your hand off me,” I tell him evenly. “I’m done taking part in whatever twisted game you think you’re playing here, Dean.” I bat his hand away and step away from him. “I’m not some plaything you can pick up and drop whenever you’re horny or bored. I’ve no doubt you have a line of girls at your disposal ready and willing to fall to their knees and worship you, but that’s not me, and it never will be.” I express to him austere while we continue to glare at one another. “So go and get your jollies off with them and leave me the fuck alone.”

Dean rubs his jaw and nods, a cocky smirk stretches across his face, “What if I can’t?” He takes a large step, shrinking the space between us again. “What if they don’t get my jollies off the way you do?”

I roll my eyes, shaking my head in disbelief. This boy is so beyond frustrating I want to tear my hair out. “You’re unbelievable! Is that all you care about? Getting your fucking dick wet?!” I shout angrily, my temper flaring as I place my hands against his chest and shove him away from me. “In case it slipped your puny brain, I am carrying your child. Instead of focusing on who is going to service your cock the best, how about you explain where the fuck you were and why you couldn’t be bothered to make it to the midwife appointment this afternoon?”

“Yeah, I couldn’t make it, I was... busy.” I stare up at him utterly taken aback by his blasé response.

“Busy?” I intone almost inaudibly. “So, whatever you had to do was more important than attending our first appointment with me for our unborn baby?” I ask, narrowing my eyes. The anger inside me at boiling point. “The same unborn child you told me you were relieved we decided to keep and raise together? Are you fucking kidding me?!” Tears burn the back of my eyelids but I blink them away. “I knew I couldn’t trust you, I knew it. You’re already bailing out on me.”

“I’m not bailing out JJ, I just needed some time to—”

“Time to what, Dean?” I ask hotly, “We don’t have much time to figure this shit out. Whether we’re ready for it or not this baby is coming, and it will not wait around for you to get your shit together and neither will I!”

Dean scowls, his angry eyes searching mine. “What the fuck is that supposed to mean?” When I shake my head and turn back to him, Dean grabs my arm and turns me around so I’m facing him again. “Answer me!”

“It means I don’t have time nor the stomach for your bullshit excuses. It means you’re free to go off and pursue every fucking slut out there willing to spread her legs for you, because that seems to be all you care about, and I sure as shit

am not having a child with a golden fuck-boy that can't keep it in his trousers for more than five seconds.”

“I know you don't think I was balls deep in some girl instead of being at that appointment with you. What the fuck do you take me for, JJ?”

“Weren't you?”

“No!” he bellows, shoving a hand through his hair and muttering a string of expletives under his breath. “I wanted to be there.”

“Wanting isn't good enough! You weren't there, Dean, and if you can't be bothered to make this child your priority or be there for appointments, how will I know if you'll be there for the birth? Or all the shit that will follow afterwards? I only have the strength to raise one child, not two and I don't see you growing up anytime soon to take on this responsibility with me.”

“Don't give me that horseshit, like you're so fucking perfect? Weren't you the one in your ex-boyfriend's arms a couple of hours ago? You've got the audacity to stand there accusing me of sleeping with other women when you're off doing God only knows what with that prick!”

“First of all, what I do and who I do it with is none of your concern. I don't give a hot pile of shit who you screw Dean, what I care about is the fact you didn't even bother to acknowledge the message I sent you regarding a matter that concerns us both. You read the message and just ignored me, not an acknowledgement, didn't even have the decency to tell me you weren't coming. You left me sitting here waiting for you!”

Dean throws his hands up, “It was *one* appointment, JJ! *One*, you're going on like I missed the birth or something, relax.”

“Don't tell me to fucking relax! Also, once again you're missing the point. It's not about the appointment you dimwit, it's your dependability that's the issue!” I shout back furiously. “I need a *man* who gives me his word that he will be there and

means it. Not some adolescent boy who'll be out chasing skirt and avoiding his responsibilities every other night.”

“You don't know me as well as you seem to believe, JJ. I do not cower from my responsibilities, if I did, I assure you I wouldn't be standing here.” Dean snarls, his hand that was wrapped around my throat moments ago is fisting by his side. “You're not the only one that's scared and overwhelmed. You decided not to take that pill and terminate, the power was all yours. If you were so certain that I wouldn't step up, why did you change your mind?”

I lower my gaze to my feet and sigh. “I already told you the reason, but I should have listened to my gut when it was screaming at me that I was making a mistake by trusting you, and I would rather save myself a truckload of grief now than to jump into this with you and be constantly let down later along the road.” Dean watches me walk over to my wardrobe and moves over to me.

“So, what are you saying, JJ? You're going to have the baby and raise it on your own without me in picture? Is that what you're telling me?” The bite in his tone when he utters those words cut me someplace deep.

I shake my head and busy myself pretending to search through the pile of neatly folded clothes on the middle shelf. “No, no matter our differences you're still the father of this baby and that's not going to change. If you want to be a part of your baby's life then that's your right and I won't stop you, but as far as we go...” the rest of the words just die on my lips, and I force out an exasperated breath.

Even though I'm facing away from him I sense Dean shift behind me, and every hair on my body stands while I dig my nails into my palm to mask the nervous pull when he steps closer.

“As far as we go *what?*” I stay quiet, gazing down at the plain pink t-shirt in my hands, electing my words carefully. Dean's warm fingers curl around my upper arm and he spins me to face him. “As far as we go what, JJ?” he presses impatiently.

“Let’s not pretend that we’re both thrilled at the prospect of being forced together or are even capable of providing a happy home for this child, because we aren’t, Dean. I think it would be best for all of us if we keep all our communication to a minimum and focus our energy on co-parenting.”

“All of us?” Dean repeats, the v between his brows deepening. “Who exactly is part of this *all*, because I only see two of us?”

“It won’t just be the two of us, Dean. Eventually you’re going to meet someone, and I’ll be with—” Dean steps closer into my space and I look up at him. The stormy look in his eyes sends a shiver cascading through me.

“You’ll be with...?” He trails off, his eyes narrowing in scrutiny. “Go on, spit it out JJ,” The ire laced in his tone combined with the fire that ignites in his eyes makes me hesitate.

We stare at one another intently, like a storm that’s slowly brewing between us the air grows thick with tension. “Paxton.” There, I said it. I hold my breath, waiting for the wash of relief but for some reason, the weight I thought would lift when I finally made the decision only intensifies and my chest feels like it’s about to cave any minute under the pressure. Especially with the way he’s looking at me. “I told him about the baby and he says he loves me enough to want to make it work still.”

Dean chuckles darkly and rubs his fingers against his unshaven jaw, his eyes bouncing around my bedroom. “Fuck me, you’re getting back together with him,” he shakes his head and steps away from me, turning his back to me he rakes both his hands through his hair. “Looks like you’ve got it all figured out, haven’t you?” he expresses sourly and spins to look at me. “At what point did you plan on filling me in with this brilliant plan of yours, JJ? When exactly did you make the decision to get back together with him? Was it before or after you slipped into my bed in the middle of the night?”

My eyes lift to look up at him and I swallow the lump forming in my throat. Dean holds my gaze and for a moment

the anger in his eyes falters, and I see a glimmer of hurt staring back at me.

“Do you seriously expect me to stick around and watch another man play dad to *my* fucking baby?!”

I shake my head, “No, my relationship with Paxton has nothing to do with our baby, Dean! If you want to be involved with its life then you can, I’m not stopping you.”

“You are!” He shouts irately, “Who do you think the baby will know as its dad, someone who is there twenty-four seven raising him, making all the decisions with their mother or the mug that has them on weekends and holidays?”

“What does it matter, Dean? What does it even matter when we both know that you’re not going to be around for months at a time anyway?!” I bellow, grabbing his arm and turning him to face me when he tries to turn his back to me.

“So, what the fuck am I standing here for, JJ?!” He shouts back, taking a step closer to me. “If your plan was to get back together with your fiancé and build some bogus fairy-tale life together, why the fuck did you tell me about the baby? Why even get me involved if you had no intention of giving us a chance to figure this out?” He adds, pressing his index finger against his chest.

“I did give you the chance by choosing to keep the baby, but you decided not to show up. Which to me speaks volumes of your intentions, Dean. This isn’t something we can try and then walk away from if it doesn’t work. A baby needs a stable home, with parents who can actually tolerate each other for more than five minutes at a time. Look at us, we can’t agree on anything or go thirty seconds without ripping into each other. Does this look like a relationship that is sustainable or will work to you?!”

“You think you’re going to be happier with *him*?!” Dean shouts, extending his arm and pointing to my window.

“Yes!”

A look of surprise flashes across his face and for a long time we stare at each other wordlessly before he nods.

“Then don’t let me keep you from your charlatan prince charming.” Dean mutters dryly, a look of disdain glowing in his green eyes. “To hell with you.”

“To hell with me?” I hiss, “Don’t act like you ever had any real intention of being in this with me, you’ve had one foot out the fucking door waiting for an excuse to bolt.” I shove him back. “Go on, here’s your opportunity, do what you do best and fucking walk, Dean!”

“You know what, fuck you, JJ!” Dean growls hotly before he turns and without looking back walks out of my bedroom.

“You already did! You well and truly fucked me and my damn life!” I retort and slam the door shut behind him. I press my forehead to the door and finally allow that dam that has been mounting and mounting inside me to break free. I sink to the floor, curling my fingers in my hair and scream.

Chapter 24

Jeyla

EVERYTHING I WANTED - BILLIE EILISH

“CAN I do anything to change your mind?” Ashlyn questions from her position lying on my bed. I smile sadly while I’m folding my clothes and packing them in my suitcase, shaking my head in response to her question. “It really sucks that you’re going back so soon. We still have another three weeks before we’re due back.”

“Sadly no,” I sigh, “I think Pax and I need to go back and try to figure things out there. There’s too much going on here. I mean, you see my parents clucking around us. Who throws a pre-engagement party?”

Ashlyn smiles, albeit sadly and helps me fold up my clothes. “You know how much your parents love to throw parties and entertain. I think it’s adorbs.”

“Pax and I very briefly discussed getting engaged later on, maybe six months or a year down the line, not yet, but they’re insisting that they throw a party and announce our pre-

engagement. Which I'm certain isn't even a thing." I express glumly and drop the clothes in my hand in the suitcase.

"He's given you a ring and you're wearing it, so..." Ashlyn points out, her eyes lowering to my left hand where a white gold princess cut diamond promise ring is sitting on my ring finger.

"It's a promise ring, *not* an engagement ring." I insist, looking down at the ring and sigh.

Ashlyn blinks up at me, her perfectly shaped brows knitting while she regards me closely, "Jey, what's going on with you? You've not been yourself since we've been back home. I thought you were still hurting over Paxton but you're back with him and you're still miserable, babe." I wet my lips and shake my head meekly, swallowing the emotions that bubble up inside me. "You might be good at putting on a façade for everyone else, but I know you. You look like you'll fall apart if anyone dared touch you." She takes my hand and my eyes well up. I've got so much I want to tell her, but I can't and it's killing me.

"I'm fine Ash, I'm just..." I lower and shake my head, tears spilling down my pale cheeks. I'm suffocating with all these mixed emotions. I don't know what I'm doing, am I making a mistake getting back with Paxton when I have all these unresolved feelings for Dean. Maybe I'll be able to get a little clarity if I'm far enough away and not forced to see him. I don't think I can manage another three weeks of this. I can't.

Ash pushes my suitcase to the end of the bed and pulls me down on the bed with her. "Come here." We lay down together and I rest my head on her chest and cry while she holds me. "Since when have you not been able to talk to me, Jey? What's going on?"

Don't ask me questions Ash, please. Don't make me lie to you any more than I already have.

"I just really need to be alone to sort through all these feelings and doubts in my head. I'm really overwhelmed with everything at the moment." I admit woefully.

I feel Ashlyn sigh and she continues to stroke my hair while I sob into her chest. “Okay, shhh, do what you need to do, just please stop putting all this unnecessary pressure on yourself. If getting back together with Paxton doesn’t feel right, then clearly your heart isn’t in it, Jey.”

Truth is, I don’t know where my heart is at the moment. All I know is that I feel wretched inside, like everything good about me is slowly rotting away from the inside out.

I’m not a good person and I’m crumbling under the pressure of all the lies I’ve been telling the people I love. Especially Ashlyn. She’s never going to forgive me for betraying and deceiving her.

After the fight Dean and I had two days ago, I called Paxton and told him I was ready to give us another chance to make it work. He took me out to dinner that night.

It’s been six days since we went out to dinner that night he gave me the ring—a promise that we will get through this together and be better than ever.

Since the day Dean stormed out of my bedroom, I’ve not seen him around. Oz mentioned briefly in conversation that he packed a small bag and took off without a word, likely to go and booze it up with his military buddies. Am I surprised? Absolutely not. And this is the guy I’m supposed to rely on to be there?

Five days go by, and there’s still no sign of him. I shouldn’t care, so why am I still slyly trying to find out where he is?

Sunday came as quick as a blink of an eye, Paxton and I agreed to stay until the party on Sunday and then leave after. The days leading up to the party I spent near enough every day with Paxton. It felt comfortable and familiar being with him again, but however hard I try I couldn’t shake the doubts gnawing at me or the little soul that was growing inside of me.

Sunday afternoon I’m sitting with Ashlyn in her bedroom. She insisted on helping me get ready for this ridiculous party—which is being held in my parent’s garden by the way.

Paxton has gone off to have his hair cut and shave, which gives me the opportunity to spend some much needed time with my best friend.

“I can’t believe you’re deserting me,” Ashlyn voices while she wraps a piece of my hair around the curling iron.

“I know and I wish I didn’t have to, but this is something I need to do, Ash,” Ashlyn nods in understanding and I hear her sigh.

“I get it, I do, it’s just disappointing because we made plans to make this summer our bitch and since we’ve been back home you seem to be in your own little world or disinterested. After you started seeing Mr hottie no name or as I like to call him *Souffle*, you’ve just been detached. Did something happen with him that you’re not telling me about?”

I swallow the dread that rises from my gut and shake my head. “No, we just lost interest and it fizzled out, I guess.” The lies scald my tongue as they leave my lips while I distract myself by nervously fumbling with a make-up brush that’s lying on her bed.

“Oh, well that’s a shame, you seem to really like him.” Warm tears of despair roll down my cheeks and I quickly wipe them away before she notices.

“He was just a distraction who served his purpose and we moved on. That’s all there is to it.” When she’s done curling the piece that she’s holding, I shift, “Sorry, I really need to pee.”

Sliding off her bed I hurry over to the door and open it. I walk to the bathroom, turn the handle to the door and walk in. I’m engulfed in steam the moment I step inside the small bathroom. It’s like a freaking steam room, I couldn’t see a thing. Oz must be back from the gym and just finished showering. I close the door and lock it when the shower curtain is suddenly pulled open. My heart leaps as I spin and face the person stepping out of the shower. My throat goes dry when I see it’s Dean, standing before me, fully naked and dripping wet.

Of course. Of course, it would be him, why would my damn luck change for the better now. You would think I'd pick up on the scent of his body wash the moment I walk in, but my brain just assumed that it was Oz as Dean hadn't even come home when I came over earlier. We both look equally surprised to see one another, neither of us look away and the two by four bathroom suddenly feels that much smaller. Bloody hell, why does he have to look so damn *good*. Resisting him would be so much easier if I didn't find him so attractive or didn't know how soul quaking his kisses are.

"Shit, sorry, the door was unlocked, and I didn't hear the shower running. I'll just..." I turn to leave but Dean shakes his head.

"It's fine, I'm done," he replies bleakly. "Mind passing me the towel?" he requests casually gesturing to the white towel hanging on the rail beside me.

I reach for the towel, pull it off the rail and hold it out to him, keeping my eyes cast down the entire time, "When did you get back?" I ask, staring at the marble tiled floor.

"Ten minutes ago," Dean replies curtly, wrapping the towel around his waist, a deep scowl on his handsome face. I've never known anyone to make brooding look so damn attractive. "Just in time for the party, it seems." The derision laced in his tone makes me wince internally.

"It's not a party," I correct, fixing my gaze on the decals on the wall opposite to avoid looking at him. "Just a small get together my parents insisted on."

"And so they should, after all their little princess is engaged to the love of her life, right." He drawls, not masking the bitterness in his tone. "Clearly you have yet to share the news that you're expecting *my* baby with them all or are you planning to lie some more and pretend it's his to save face?"

I look at him sharply, "Shut up, Dean," I hiss affronted, and he smirks. "I don't see you running to your family to claim the baby as yours. You know what I saw? Your back when you walked away and once again disappeared for days on end." I retort, pushing myself off the door I step closer and

when I do I notice the bruise on his left cheek bone. My first instinct is to pull him to me and check him over for more bruises, but I curb that urge. My eyes travel from his cheek to his hands where I see his knuckles are bruised too. “What happened to you?”

Dean’s hand fists and he goes to sidestep me but I step in his way, looking up at him expectantly. “Nothing.”

I shake my head and point to his face. “That doesn’t look like nothing to me. You’ve been fighting. Is that where you’ve been this whole time?”

Dean turns his gaze to mine and steps closer, forcing me back until my back is pressed against the sink. “What do you care what I get up to, JJ? I thought you didn’t give a hot pile of shit?”

I go still when he leans into me. The foolish girl inside is rattled by the warmth his body is emitting when he steps into my space. Dean reaches behind me to retrieve his chain sitting on the side of the counter.

“I don’t.”

He doesn’t move, instead he speaks quietly into my ear. “You’re a liar.”

My eyes flutter shut when the warmth of his breath against the shell of my ear sends sparks through me, and I grip the side of the counter to keep my body in check.

“But what if I told you I was off living up to your expectation of me? My friends and I were tearing it up in the city, drinking, fighting, fucking an array of sluts who go crazy for officers in uniform.” I know he’s only telling me this to get a reaction out of me, so I bite my tongue, but fuck, the searing fire and annoyance the thought of him with other women ignited was unlike anything I’ve ever experienced in my life.

I lift my gaze to peer up at him, “And I bet not one of them could gratify your appetite the way I do.” Dean’s eyes lower to my mouth and I deliberately lick them.

“You didn’t even incite a thought in my mind.”

I cock my head to the side, holding his gaze when he suggestively drags his eyes up. “Now who’s the liar?”

“Oi you tart, have you fallen into the toilet?!” We hear Ashlyn’s voice call out from her bedroom and we both look over at the door. I place my hand on his chest and push him back so I can slip away but he grabs my arm and pulls me back.

“I’ll see you at the party.”

I frown, “You’re coming?” Dean nods, pulling his bottom lip between his teeth, his jewel-like green eyes narrowing.

“Of course, why would I deny myself the pleasure of taking part in such a joyous occasion?” His voice is saturated with disdain to match the look of animosity glittering in his eyes.

I pull my arm out of his hold and fix him with a glare, “If you’re only coming there to stir shit up and piss me off, I wouldn’t waste my time.”

Dean smiles frostily, “Pissing you off is my second favourite pastime.” He expresses, taking hold of my chin. “And fucking you like a savage is my first.”

I roll my eyes and bat his hand away from my face. “And then you wonder why I’m fretful of having this child with *you*. Why don’t you try growing up a little bit, Dean?”

When I go to leave, Dean steps in front of me this time, his eyes stormy and his face thunderous. “This thing between us is far from over, JJ. You can keep deluding yourself into believing that over-refined knobhead is what you want, but deep down you know who you belong to.” He asserts firmly and takes hold of my chin and leans in again until his mouth is ghosting mine. “Both of you.”

When his thumb skims across my jaw, my eyes close and a slow breath pushes past my lips. “I’m not some temporary thrill you can pick up and drop whenever you feel like it or whenever you feel threatened by another guy, Dean. One of us has to take accountability. It’s clear to anyone with a smidgen of common sense that you are not ready for the responsibility

that will come with this child. So, do us both a favour and stop kidding yourself, because we both know you won't be around to help with this baby and there's no point hurting the people we love over something that will never last."

Dean stands silently, watching me. "We'll see about that."

I couldn't keep the tremor from my voice when I spoke my next words, "We will, and if I were you, I would get used to the idea of Paxton being around." I tell him bluntly and step back. "Now if you'll excuse me, I need to pee."

"I wouldn't bank on it." And with that he turns and walks out of the bathroom, stopping to make sure no one is in the corridor before he walks out, closing the door behind him.

I inhale a deep breath, leaning against the basin in front of me. I stare at my reflection in the mirror at myself for a beat before I empty my bladder that is threatening to burst at any given moment.

Hours later, I'm in my bedroom, clad in a red midi dress with my hair curled and cascading down my back. I didn't go too crazy with the make-up, I'm already tan from Mexico so I opt for some blush, mascara and red lipstick to match the dress. I'm due to go down and greet the guests but I can't bring myself to face anyone. I'm sitting on my windowsill, my hand resting on my flat stomach, gazing out the window. I lower my gaze to my hand where the promise ring is sitting on my finger, and I let out a frustrated breath. Dean's words from before keep replaying in my mind.

"This thing between us is far from over, JJ."

I should be happy; I've made the right decision. I'm celebrating my reconciliation with the man I'm in love with, but... something inside doesn't feel right. Or am I just overthinking this?

Speaking of the bane of my life, Dean follows his parents and Oz toward our house. Ashlyn's already here, helping my mum and Jess downstairs. I told her I would follow her down fifteen minutes ago.

He's in a crisp white shirt that fits him perfectly, the sleeves rolled up to his elbows and a pair of black trousers. My stomach goes tight with nerves which intensifies when he looks up as if sensing me watching him. We keep eye contact, and that short walk from his house to mine feels like it takes hours while our eyes remain fixed until he disappears out of sight.

I wish I could just hide in my room the entire night, but I can't. Just a couple of hours and I'll be out of here and far away from him.

With that thought in mind I draw in a deep breath, hold my head up, and walk out of the room making my way downstairs to find my soon to be fiancé.

The house is bustling, so many people standing around and chatting. My aunts, uncles, cousins they're all here to celebrate with us. The scent of food hangs in the air. I smile and thank those who congratulate me on the announcement of my engagement. Even though it's not an engagement. I didn't have the energy to correct them. I spot Paxton standing out in the garden talking with my brother and Dad, a glass of champagne in his hand.

I sashay over to him. On my way, passing by Dean who is leaning against the kitchen counter. From the corner of my eye, I notice his green eyes scanning my entire body before meeting my eyes. I throw him a frosty glare on my way over to Paxton.

"There's my girl." Paxton beams, holding his arm out for me to step into.

"Hi." I greet, closing my eyes when he kisses my temple. His arm circling my waist drawing me closer to him.

"You look sensational, sweetheart." I smile, placing my hand on his chest, I look up into his eyes.

"Thank you." My eyes take in the cream suit he's in. "You don't look half bad yourself, Professor. You already know I get a little weak in the knees and moist between the legs whenever

you wear a suit.” I purr, smiling sultrily. Paxton grins broadly, flashing me his pearly white teeth, his baby blues lighting up.

“Don’t I just, Miss Jenkins,” he croons leaning down a little, his forehead pressing to mine. “I can’t wait to get you out of that dress and devour you,” he groans, his lips brushing against mine tenderly as he speaks.

Paxton leans in to kiss me but I draw back, smiling teasingly, “Mm, keep that up and I’ll whisk you upstairs.”

I grin seductively, biting my lip. “We are in the presence of family, we can’t be making out in front of them, it’s impolite.” I point out, dragging my finger down his chest.

“The thoughts you’re inciting wandering around looking as good as you do in that dress is unjust, baby.” Paxton mumbles, dragging his nose against my jaw. “I forgot how much of a tease you are.”

I wink at him and draw back. “Later. I’m going to go mingle before my mother tells me off for being rude. I’ll see catch you in a bit, lover.” I press a chaste kiss to his cheek before sauntering off.



“Have you eaten sweetheart? Look, I got all your favourites.”

I’m standing in the kitchen with Ash and Oz an hour later when my mother pushes a tray of sushi under my nose. My stomach lurches at the sight and smell that wafts around me. My mouth filling with saliva when I feel the fruit I consumed earlier rising. With a shake of my head, I push it away, wincing.

“No, I’ll have some later, mum.” I utter, swallowing thickly and she smiles, moving the tray of raw fish that I would customarily devour. I’m sure my midwife mentioned raw fish is a no go in pregnancy.

“Here you go, chick. Can’t have the future blushing bride-to-be without a drink in her hand.” Ashlyn hands me a glass of champagne and panic fills me while I scramble to find an

excuse to decline the drink. If I tell her I'm not drinking she will know something is up, because I love champagne and will never turn down a glass. When I look across the room, I notice Dean talking to my cousin; he must have noticed the panicked look in my eyes because he looks down at the glass in my hand.

Ashlyn gestures me to follow her outside and when I follow her, Dean excuses himself from the conversation with my cousin Danny and moves toward me, knocking back his glass of champagne. I wasn't sure what he was doing until he deliberately walks into me. The champagne glass in my hand is skilfully switched with his as we squeeze past each other. I peer up at him and he stares into my eyes, his fingers brushing mine at the exchange which triggers the butterflies in my stomach. It's really not helping that I can smell his stupid aftershave everywhere.

Goddamn it, what the hell is he playing at.

Tearing my eyes from his quickly I follow Ashlyn outside, all the while telling myself not to look back at him. By nightfall the party is in full swing, friends and relatives dancing to the music playing melodiously. I manage to dodge anymore alcoholic drinks, telling everyone offering me a drink that I've had plenty or that I'm driving back to Manchester after the party.

I am gutted I can't drink, because I'm in desperate need of something to alleviate the heaviness that's sitting on top of my chest or smother the voices in my head.

"Are you okay, kid?" Oz questions when he hears me heave a weighty sigh. I nod slowly, sipping my bottle of water. My eyes wandering the garden until they find the pair of eyes I'm searching for.

"I'm fine, just mingled out." Oz follows my gaze and when he finds Dean and I watching one another he smiles.

"How exhausting it must be for the two of you to keep fooling yourselves into believing you hate one another." Oz points out, fixing me with a knowing look when I look at him questioningly.

“I assure you there is no deceiving ourselves; we absolutely do hate each other more than ever.” I answer bitterly and Oz laughs.

“Jeyla, come on, those secret looks you’re both giving one another when you think no one is watching are not looks of hate, babe.”

I snort and roll my eyes, “No? What are they then?”

Oz smiles and glances over at his baby brother who is now staring into his glass of Jack Daniels ominously. “Passion, desire, *love*.”

I choke on the water I’m sipping and half cough, half laugh at the absurdity of his theory. Dean and I in love? Is he crazy?

“You’re not serious, Oskie?” I probe, clearing my throat of the water that went down my windpipe. “I’ve been in love, hell *I am* in love, and I assure you what your brother and I feel for another is not love. It’s hatred, in its rawest form.” I express, my eyes veering over to the man in question.

“Is that why you’ve spent the night watching him instead of the man you’re supposedly so in love with, Jeykins?”

I frown, shaking my head, “What are you talking about, I haven’t—”

“You have, and he’s been watching you, and when he’s not, he’s glaring murderously at your fiancé, like he’s ready to pound his fist into his pretty face until it caves in.” I pinch the bridge of my nose and shake my head.

“Oz, stop it.” I snap tetchily, “The notion alone of Dean and I being in love is absurd. I can’t stand him nor stomach the thought of him let alone fall in love with him.” I admit sourly and scowl up at Oz, who smiles at me as though he’s not buying a word of what I’m saying.

Across the garden, I notice Dean walk by Paxton who is coming in the opposite direction and accidentally bumps Dean’s shoulder when he looks over at me and smiles loving as he walks by.

“Watch it.” Dean hisses, his green eyes ablaze.

“Oh, my bad, I’m sorry, my man.” Paxton apologises, tapping Dean’s shoulder, smiling politely.

“How about you look where you’re going?” Dean snaps, glaring at him forebodingly. Paxton arches a brow, clearly not liking the manner or tone he’s being spoken to.

“I said I was sorry, mate. There’s no need to get rude.”

Dean swipes his hand off his shoulder, “I’m not your fucking mate and I’d think twice before you put your hand on me again.” Dean utters, squaring up to Paxton.

Paxton narrows his blue eyes, “What the fuck is your problem?”

“You are.” Dean barks dangerously, taking a step closer to him.

Oh God.

“Step off mate, I’m warning you.” Paxton warns, his patience waning.

Dean’s eyes narrow, “Oh, you’re warning me? And what are you going to do if I don’t?”

I grab Oz’s arm in alarm and gesture to Dean and Paxton when Paxton shoves Dean away from him.

“Oh fuck, bad move, mate.” Oz hisses and by the time he could react Dean’s fist is already striking Paxton straight in the jaw, knocking him back. Paxton shakes off the blow and swings his own punch catching Dean’s temple. I gasp and follow Oz when he runs over to Dean, who is swinging to punch Paxton again but is quickly dragged away by his brother.

“Dean, whoa, easy.” Oz urges and drags him back.

“Get the fuck off me!” Dean growls, fighting against Oz, who is restraining him with my brother who runs over when he sees the commotion. “I’ll bury you, you fucking prick!” He threatens furiously.

I rush over to Paxton's side and hold his arm, pulling him back, but he rips his arm from my hold forcefully which knocks me back as he lunges for Dean again, but Jaden jumps in front of Paxton. When I hit the floor, Dean looks over at me and his eyes flash, his face taking on a whole new level of rage.

Paxton breaks free of my brother's hold and goes for Dean at the same time as he shoves Oz off him and storms over to Paxton. Paxton swings for Dean but he dodges it, grips him by the collar and head butts him in the face.

"Fuck!" Paxton shouts, holding his face.

I clamp my hand over my mouth and watch helplessly. Ash runs over to me and crouches beside me. "What the hell is going on? Dean what the fuck are you doing? Stop it! Oz get him out of here!"

"Dean! Come on," Oz shouts wrapping his arm around Dean and dragging him back again. "Come on bro, calm the fuck down. Let's go."

I push myself up off the floor and move over to Paxton who has blood pouring out of his nose and his left cheek under his eye is swollen. "Pax, are you okay?" I ask, taking Paxton's face into my hands.

"Do I fucking look okay?" he rebukes furiously, and his tone stings enough to make me wince visibly. "I think the dickhead broke my nose!"

"Hey, you better watch your fucking tone when you talk to her." Jaden warns Paxton, pointing his index finger in my direction. "Or I'll break more than your nose, you little trollop."

"Jaden!" I throw him a glare in warning, and he shakes his head.

"Don't Jaden me. No one talks to my sister like that, he's lucky I haven't laid him out for pushing you before."

"He didn't push me; I lost my balance!" I argue back, and Dean scoffs and shakes his head.

“Bullshit, don’t stand there and protect him, he fucking pushed you, I saw him!”

“Why would I push my fiancée, you imbecile?!” Paxton retorts, spitting out blood. The cream suit he’s wearing is now splattered with his blood.

“Are you still talking?! Let me shut your fucking mouth indefinitely.” Dean shouts, going for him again. I gasp and I’m swiftly pulled out of the way by my brother before they both hit the floor. I cringe when Dean pounds blow after blow into Paxton’s face.

“Dean, stop it!” I scream, stepping forward to stop him, but I’m held back while Oz, my brother and now Uncle Nate—Dean’s dad—rush over to pull a livid Dean off Paxton. I fall to my knees beside Paxton.

“Oscar, get your brother out of here now!” Uncle Nate shouts, glaring at him.

“Dean Reyes!” Aunt Tay shrieks when she sees the state of her son. “What in heaven’s name do you think you’re doing?”

“Let go of me.” Dean ignores her and shakes off his brother and storms off. I’m sat watching his retreating back as he walks off. My entire body is shaking with anger. I look up at Oz who shrugs in a ‘I told you’ manner.

“Do we need to take him to the hospital?” I ask my mum fretfully. She’s a nurse and hurries over to assess him.

“I don’t need a hospital, I’m fine,” Paxton grunts, spitting more blood onto the ground.

“Let’s get you cleaned up first so we can see the damage. Hold your head back for me, darling. Jaden, Jason can you help him inside?” My mother instructs and both my brother and dad come over to help a dazed Paxton to his feet and they carry him toward the house.

I stand up and move over to Oz. “Give me your house keys,” I demand.

Oz shakes his head, “Jeyla, now is not the time to go over there. Let him cool off. Trust me, he’s blinded with anger right

now, he will lash out at you.”

Every word that leaves Oz’s mouth goes in one ear and comes out the other without registering. “Give me your damn keys!” I almost scream at him. With a sigh, he drops the keys in my hand, and I storm off toward the back door.

“Jeyla, wait!” I hear Ashlyn calling after me. She catches up with me, taking hold of my wrist, trying to stop me, but I shrug her off me. “Let me come with you.”

“No, stay out of this, Ash.” I snap irately. “He’s gone too fucking far this time,” I pull the back door open and walk out, slamming it shut behind me. The gate rattles and shakes on its hinges behind the force.

“Jeyla, stop for a minute, listen to me, this is not a good idea. Do not provoke him. We all know to leave him be when he’s this livid.”

“I don’t care Ash, he’s not the only one that’s fucking livid!” I bite out. “Who the hell does he think he is going at Paxton like that? He could have killed him! I’ve had it with his fucking shit and either way, this strife ends tonight,” I look up and notice the light is on in his bedroom.

“Jeyla, let me go and talk to him.” Ash offers but I shake my head and turn to face her before I reach their front door.

“No, please just leave us to battle this out, okay. It’s been a long time coming and it’s well overdue. Do me a favour and keep an eye on Paxton until I’m back.” I can see the concern in her eyes, but she nods anyway and walks back toward my house.

I march toward the front door. Using the key, I unlock it. My hands are shaking with rage as I push the door open and walk in, closing the door behind me. I hurry up the steps and push the door open to his bedroom only to find it empty.

I can hear water running and follow it to the bathroom. I push the door open and find Dean standing there attempting to tend to his wounds. Blood staining his formerly pristine white shirt which is unbuttoned, revealing his muscular chest.

The moment I lay my eyes on him, my anger triples, and simmers in my veins. I step into the bathroom and Dean straightens when he sees me. We glare at each other, his eyes burning with such wrath if I wasn't so furious with him it would have aroused me.

I take two steps toward him and slap him hard across the face with such force the sting travels up the length of my arm. I'd imagine it didn't feel much better being on the receiving end of it.

Dean's eyes snap to me, his chest rising and falling quickly, evidently trying to keep hold of his anger. "Have you lost your fucking mind?!" he barks dangerously, his voice raising a couple of octaves. "I'm not in the mood to fuck with you right now JJ, get the fuck out!"

"Nah, I'm not going anywhere until you explain yourself." I shout back in the same manner. "What the hell were you thinking attacking Paxton like that? You almost fucking killed him!"

"The fucker is still breathing, is he? I might have to go back there and finish the job."

I gape at him, flummoxed. "Has a screw gone loose in your fucking head?!" I ask vehemently. "What the hell has gotten into you, Dean?! What the fuck were you thinking?!"

Dean angrily swipes the contents on the counter around the basin causing them to fly all over. "What are you so pissed about?!" he roars red-faced, the veins in his neck throbbing. "This what you fucking wanted right? This is the reaction you were hoping for while you were draping yourself all over that cunt, provoking me. What the fuck did you expect?!"

My anger flares. "Jesus Christ, do you hear yourself?!" I shout, taking a step toward him. "I wasn't provoking you Dean, and that cunt you speak of is my boyfriend, the man I made a promise to marry. What, do I now need your written consent to allow my own boyfriend to touch me?"

Dean places both his hands on the basin and closes his eyes in annoyance. "Seriously JJ, get the fuck out of my face.

You're the last person I need on my case right now," he growls, gripping the counter top so tight his already split knuckles ooze fresh blood. "Run along and make sure your pussy boyfriend isn't wailing like a bitch."

"He's taken care of, and he's not a pussy," I snap in agitation. "Which is more than I can say for you. Attacking someone and beating them to within an inch of their life doesn't make you big man Dean, it makes you an immature little boy who isn't capable of controlling his emotions and throws a tantrum when he doesn't get his way." Dean's head hangs low and he closes his eyes while shaking his head. "You had no right lashing out on him like that, and you know it. If you're pissed at me, you take it out on me, don't involve Paxton. He's the innocent one in all of this."

Dean's head snaps to me and he glowers at me. "Innocent?" He intones lowly. "He's innocent?!" He laughs out of anger and straightens. "Right, he's the innocent one and I'm the fucking mug," he claims walking toward me, stopping less than a foot away. "You show up here and turn my life upside down and that bastard's the innocent one?"

"I turned your life upside down, did I?!" I ask heatedly and push him back. "I gave you the option to walk away, didn't I? You get to walk away from the mess we made Dean, but I can't! Whatever option I choose doesn't end well for me, don't you see that?!"

"I never wanted to walk, JJ, you kept pushing me away because you're convinced I'm not good enough!" Dean yells, kicking the toothbrush holder which is on the floor from when he swiped it off the counter moments ago.

"Do you blame me?! Look at you!" I argue. "Look at *us* Dean, we're toxic! How are we supposed to raise this child when we can't agree on a damn thing? We don't make sense."

"But you and him make sense, do you?!" Dean vents, "You're so quick to paint me as the bad guy, but he talks to you like shit in front of everyone and pushes you knowing full well you're pregnant and he's still the fucking saint?" I watch him as he moves over to me. "He's lucky you and the baby are

not hurt or tonight would have ended with me behind bars for manslaughter.”

“Don’t worry, it still might if he presses charges.” I point out and Dean rolls his eyes. “Also, how did you expect him to react, you broke his nose and left him a bloodied mess Dean, you would have reacted the same way if you were in his position,” I explain exasperated, and Dean shakes his head again.

“Don’t you fucking dare compare me to that fucker! If you were my girl, I would have never spoken to you like that in front of your whole family, and despite all the times we’ve fought, I’ve never lifted a finger to you.” He growls, his temper flaring again. Dean’s jaw starts throbbing the harder he clenches his teeth together. “The fact is, we both know the moment he showed up here, you and I never stood a chance because in your head, you already forgave him for all the bullshit he fed you; you were just biding your time.”

I shake my head in response, “That’s not true, I didn’t forgive him, in fact I’m not convinced I have fully forgiven him now, but what right do I have to judge him for lying to me when I’ve been doing the same to everyone around me. I may be a lot of things Dean, but I’m no hypocrite.”

“Really? Because you certainly preach like one to me.”

“It’s not easy to walk away from a two year relationship Dean, we have history.”

“So do we!” he points out matter-of-factly. “You may have two years’ worth of memories with him, but you and I have *seventeen years*. I would think that would have precedence over your wanker of an ex-fiancé. In the space of four weeks, you and I have done things I know for damn sure you’ve never done with him.”

I avert my eyes, a light flush spreading from my neck to my face.

“If a relationship was based on sex alone, you and I would have no problem, but it’s not, it requires communication, and

honesty and loyalty and more importantly some form of affection for one another.”

Dean steps closer to me, “You want affection?” he voices, traces of anger still lingering in his voice. “Because I remember there being plenty of affection between us at the start.”

I sigh, closing my eyes to scramble together some sense before I lose what little I have left. “What is it you want from me, Dean?”

“You, Jeyla, I fucking want you!”

I stare up at him, mouth agape and eyes wide. I know it may sound trivial, but this is the first time he’s actually used my name. I’ve always been JJ, he’s never said my name in all the years I’ve known him and for some reason it felt like a really big deal in that moment.

“Now? You want me now?! Why didn’t you say something before, Dean!” I shout back, “You wait for me to get back together with Paxton to confess that you want me, when every other day you’re telling me you don’t care. It’s too late now.” I press my hands into his chest and push at his chest. “Why is it you only want me when you can’t have me, Dean?!”

“Fucking hell, I’ve always wanted you! For seventeen fucking years, Jeyla! There has never been a version of my life that hasn’t had you or some fantasy of us in it. I spent my teenage years watching you with one boy or another and you never saw me, not once; so I started resenting you. You were the pretty popular girl that all the boys wanted, and I was your best friend’s chubby brother that everyone teased. Hating you was far better than ever confessing I had feelings for you and being rejected by you!”

My eyes well up while we stand looking at one another.

“I’ve been in love with you for as long as I’ve known myself.”

I gasp, hearing those words from Dean feels like I’ve been struck by a tidal wave of emotions. I’m unsure of how to react or what to say back while I stand there utterly speechless.

Dean shakes his head, looking defeated and goes to turn his back to me. “Just get out.”

I shake my head and take hold of his wrist, turning him to face me again. “No.”

Dean looks down at my hand wrapped around his wrist before he lifts his gaze and glares at me. “I’m not asking you, JJ, I’m telling you. Get the hell out, forget I said anything and go back to your perfect boyfriend.”

“I said no.” I utter stubbornly. “You can’t just drop a bomb like that on me and kick me out. What the hell is wrong with you?”

“Fine, you stay, I’ll fucking go.” I watch him walk out of the bathroom and follow him to his bedroom. What the hell? Who tells someone they’re in love with them and then tells them to get out?

Dean grabs his jacket, keys and wallet that is on his nightstand before making a beeline to the door. I step in front of him, kicking the door shut and leaning against it blocking his exit. Dean glowers at me. “Jeyla, I’m warning you, move.” I ignore his threat and stand my ground, not moving an inch.

I turn the key, locking the door and removing the key from the lock, “If you want to walk out of this door you’re going to have to get through me first.”

Dean angrily tosses his jacket across the room and slams his hands on the door, his arms on either side of my head. On the outside I don’t even flinch, but inside my heart is thumping wildly against my chest.

“Christ! Are you having fun tormenting me? Are you getting pleasure by watching me suffer?” he growls lowly, and I shake my head.

“You think you’re the only one suffering?” I ask, looking him directly in the eyes. “I was doing just fine before you came along. I was finally in a place where I was beginning to be happy and one night I sleep with you and my whole world turns into chaos. You confuse me, Dean. I don’t know if I want to hit you for being such an asshole or kiss you half the time.”

Dean blinks, the anger burning in the depths of his simmering. “We’re so horrible to each other, it’s hard to believe that you and I can ever feel anything more than animosity for one another, but somewhere amongst all this chaos, I fell for you.”

Dean watches me closely, “I thought you were in love with him?” he probes, his voice now softer and all traces of anger gone.

“I am,” I admit quietly. “I can’t just switch my feelings off for him Dean, but that doesn’t mean what I feel for you isn’t as strong or substantial. It was easier denying my feelings for you because then I wouldn’t be forced to choose between you both and I believed you hated me anyway. On one hand, with him everything is simple and easy, he’s familiar and then I look at you and you drive me fucking crazy half the time, but I feel...” I close my eyes and sigh.

“Feel what?” Dean presses, urging me to continue.

“Alive.” I whisper. “I feel alive and excited again. Even though I don’t know where we’ll be tomorrow or even if we’ll last at all, with you I like not knowing.”

“Then choose me, JJ.” Dean urges, tucking his finger under my chin and tilting my head up a little. “Who says we have to make sense if we’re both willing to try and deep down we both know that us being together is what’s right for our baby.” Dean explains, combing his fingers through my hair.

I bite my lip contemplating his words, his green eyes pleading with me to give us a chance. My heart squeezes a little. The man takes my breath away and I can no longer deny that I’ve fallen for him. I still can’t believe it, Dean Reyes is in love with me and I’m crazy about him, too.

How surreal is that?

“What if it doesn’t work, Dean?” I ask apprehensively and he presses his forehead to mine, licking his lips.

“JJ, if it doesn’t work between us then I swear to you, I will be by your side until the day I die helping you raise our baby.” My eyes search his and those beautiful green eyes shine with such devotion and sincerity it makes me ache deeply.

“Okay.”

Dean bites his lower lip and smiles handsomely, his eyes closing.

“Okay?” He whispers, “We’re doing this?”

I smile, licking my lips. “We’re doing this.” I affirm, my eyes closing when I feel his lips hover over mine. I wait for him to close the gap and kiss me, but when he doesn’t I open my eyes and peek up at him.

“Take the ring off.” He demands, dragging his nose over mine. “I’m not kissing a girl that’s promised to another.” I don’t argue and remove the promise ring. “Now go break up with him and come back to me so I can kiss you.”

I sigh, resting my head back against the door. “Dean, I can’t break up with him tonight, not after what you did to him, that would be really cruel.” Dean lowers his eyes to my lips and nods. “We were supposed to leave tonight after the party, I highly doubt he will want to travel now.” Dean frowns, drawing his head back to look at me.

“Leave where?”

“Back to Manchester,” I tell him, playing with the tags on the chain around his neck. “I couldn’t stand being around you anymore, I couldn’t think clearly, I was on the verge of losing my mind, so I thought if I left and put some distance between us I would see that I made the right judgement in choosing Paxton.”

“You’re not going anywhere with him. If you do, I’ll come after you, drag you out of that car kicking and screaming.” Dean expresses somberly. “I’m not losing you tonight or any other night for that matter.” Smiling, I nod, wrapping my arms around his neck, hugging him and his strong arms envelope me. “I’m so sick of letting you go,” Dean murmurs into my neck.

“So don’t, Lieutenant.” I whisper, pressing my lips to the base of his neck. “Don’t ever let me go.”

When Dean draws back to look into my upturned face, I notice the wound on his brow is oozing blood. I place my

hands against his chest. “Come on, let me clean you up.”

Dean nods, and steps back to give me room to unlock the door. I notice a white fluffy bear sitting on his bed on top of a pile of papers and I side step him to walk over and pick it up.

The adorable little bear is holding a yellow heart that has the words ‘Daddy loves you’ written across it. My eyes burn with unshed tears before I turn to look at Dean who is watching me. “Did you buy this for the baby?”

Dean nods, his Adams apple bobbing in his throat when he swallows. “Yeah, I got it that day I missed the appointment and was going to give it to you, but then I saw you with him and I didn’t.” I look down at the bear again and press it to my chest, tears streaming down my cheeks.

“You were never going to walk away, were you?” Dean pushes his hands into his pockets and shakes his head glumly.

“No, those three days you accused me of being balls deep in another girl I was with my superiors discussing the possibility of me stepping down from my rank so I could be there for you and the baby. Again I was going to discuss it with you but you went and got engaged, so...” he shrugs and gestures to the pile of papers on his bed. “Those are the papers, already signed.”

I have never felt so imprudent in my life than I did in that moment. All the times I called him immature and insisted he wasn’t ready to take on the responsibility of being a dad, and he’s there moving his whole life around to be there for us.

“Dean, I’m so sorry,” I cry, “Why didn’t you tell me?” Dean walks over to me and cups my face with his large hands and brushes my tears away.

“I tried, but you never believed me, JJ.” I sob and he presses his lips to my forehead. “Hey, shh, shh come on, it’s okay. You’re both where you belong now.” He murmurs affectionately, his fingers combing through my hair.

“Dean?! Jeyla?!” Ashlyn’s voice suddenly comes from downstairs followed by the door slamming shut. Dean and I

jerk apart, and he smiles at me sexily. “Oh God, tell me you haven’t killed each other!”

Chapter 25

Jeyla

LOSE MY MIND - JAMES ARTHUR FT JOSH FRANCESCHI + YOU ME AT SIX

TWO DAYS FOLLOWING the disastrous party is another delightfully bright and suffocatingly hot Tuesday and once again my household is empty where everyone has left for work, leaving me to sleep peacefully or at least, I planned to.

Let me lick you up and down, till you say stop.

I groan and stir from my slumber when loud music suddenly filters through my open window. My green eyes peel open and I let out a string of curses beneath my breath. “Who in the devil is playing music so loud this early?!” I grumble, pulling the pillow over my head in a desperate attempt to block out the music, but no such luck as I can still feel the bass thumping in my brain. Seriously? *Freak Me* by Another Level? What kind of cheesy bastard listens to a song this cringe-worthy.

Let me do all the things you want me to do...

One should not be this angry first thing in the morning. I sit up and angrily kick the covers off before I crawl out of bed, my bum hanging out of my midnight blue silk nightdress. I yank the curtains open and hiss at the sheer brightness that blinds me momentarily.

'Cause tonight baby, I wanna get freaky with you...

Once my vision clears, I stick my head out the window to see where the music is coming from. When I tell you the sight before me had me almost passing out. The cheesy bastard is Dean, a topless Dean washing his car with the music thundering out of the speakers of his car. A pair of shades covering his emerald eyes while he's sponging it down. "Damn," I breathe, my mouth watering at the delightful sight of him.

The entire scene looks like a cheesy eighty's music video and I'm not ashamed to admit I'm loving every second of the show he's putting on. I admire his tan body which is glistening with sweat under the sweltering heat. My entire body is tingling and that familiar ache of want starts to stir hot in my belly. Biting down on my bottom lip while I continue to shamelessly gawk at him, inch by inch taking in every ripple of muscle on that gorgeous body.

I absolutely want to lick his body up and down.

With a devilish grin, I rush over to my bedside table and pick up my mobile sitting on the dresser where it had been charging overnight. I dial his number and press the phone to my ear. A few seconds later Dean stops washing his car, dries his hands on the cloth and takes his phone out of the back pocket of the jeans he's wearing.

A slow smile spreads across his face when he looks at the caller I.D. "Afternoon, baby girl," he answers, his sexy voice laced with glee.

Grinning, I lean against the window and watch him. "Are you trying to drive me and every female in this neighbourhood insane?" I purr sultrily and he chuckles.

“Now why would you say something like that?” he responds resting himself on his car while he speaks to me.

“Every woman in the vicinity with a pulse is glued to their window or door right now ogling you,” I tell him, “Poor, Mrs Henderson has been watering her ‘gnomey’ instead of her rose bush for the past ten minutes.” Dean throws his head back and laughs heartily, looking back at Mrs Henderson who almost trips over her hose when Dean lowers his shades and waves at her. “Though, I’m certain you’re watering the bush between her legs, too.” I giggle.

“That’s a real disturbing thought. I don’t want to be thinking about Mrs Henderson’s bush, thank you very much.” Dean drawls, looking up at my window and grinning when he sees me. “Now there’s a sight I’m delighted to see. Now tell me, am I watering your bush?”

“I don’t have a bush and you’re fully aware of that, but I can confirm that you certainly have caused a stir between my legs with your little show.” Dean lowers his shades, so I can see his eyes, radiating such desire.

“I know and fuck I love your pussy, and right now I want nothing more than to come up there and clean up the mess I’ve made between those gorgeous legs with my tongue.”

I sigh lustfully and bite my lip.

“That’s a shame,” I reply quietly, and Dean watches me sit up on the windowsill, lifting my legs to rest my feet on the wall. Giving him a nice view of my nightdress that doesn’t hide much at all. “The house is empty...” I trail off suggestively, twirling my hair between my fingers.

“Fuck,” he groans, swallowing thickly. “Have you broken up with him yet?”

“Not yet,” I sigh, and notice Dean’s shoulders sink. “I’m seeing him later this evening, I’m doing it then.”

Dean nods, his eyes never leaving mine. “Good, until then, you keep that tight cunt nice and wet for me, because tonight baby, I’m going to ravish you.”

“What if I can’t wait till tonight?” I say, nibbling on my finger. “What if I can’t take the ache between my legs anymore and my fingers start to wander...”

“JJ, stop it baby, you’re fucking killing me.” Dean groans down the phone. I move away from the window and close the blind.

“Do you want to hear a secret?” I hear Dean hum affirmative on the end while I walk over to my bed. “Do you remember Shannon’s sweet sixteen birthday party, when we played spin the bottle and it landed on us, and they forced us to kiss for ten seconds?”

“Yeah.”

“I couldn’t stop thinking about that kiss, in fact, when I came home later that night, I kept thinking about it and while I did, my fingers started to wander between my legs, and I masturbated to the thought of you.” I admit, laying down on my bed, staring at the ceiling.

“Fucking Christ, so did I,” Dean admits, his voice heavy with arousal. “I held onto that kiss for a very long time, had me waking up to many, many wet dreams.”

“Mmm,” I moan breathily, my fingers grazing up my inner thighs toward my burning sex.

“Jeyla?” My eyes snap open when I hear Paxton’s voice from somewhere in the house.

“Who’s that?” I hear Dean ask on the other end of the line.

“Shit, that’s Paxton. Why didn’t you tell me he was here?” I whisper, sitting up right.

“I didn’t see him, how the fuck did he get in? I thought you were seeing him later?” Dean questions, and I shrug, straightening myself out.

“I don’t know, the spare key maybe. I have to go; I’ll talk to you later.”

“JJ, please baby, I can’t take it anymore, now he’s there this is your chance, just end it with him already.”

“I will, I’ll call you after,” My heart beats that much harder when I hear Paxton’s footsteps approaching.

“Put something on, I don’t want that dickhead ogling what’s mine.” I shake my head and utter a bye just as the door opens, revealing Paxton.

“Hi.”

“Hey, I’ve been calling you, didn’t you hear me?” Paxton questions curiously, placing the white plastic bag in his left hand on the floor by the door. Paxton’s face is still bruised and swollen after the fight. My parents by some miracle managed to convince him to not press charges against Dean over the entire ordeal.

“I heard you, but I was on the phone with my sister.” I lie, tossing the phone on my bed and pulling my pink robe on, tying it up at the front. “What are you doing here? I thought we were meeting later?” Paxton smiles and walks over to me and brushes a kiss to my forehead.

“The day is almost over and you’re only just waking up? It’s passed two in the afternoon,” he points out and I shrug indifferently.

“Early stages of pregnancy can cause fatigue; I suppose I’m just more worn out than I realise and needed a lie in.” It’s really sickening me how easily I can lie to people now. I honestly hate myself more with every lie I’m forced to tell.

“I had an early brunch with my sister this morning. We discussed the interior of the new place, she had some pretty great ideas. I have some things I’d like to show you, which I think you’ll be very pleased with.” He claims, smiling while he pulls out a big bag of books and magazines for decorating and wedding planning.

My eyes grow wide in alarm as I take in each cover to the magazines and books strewn across my unmade bed. “Uhm, what is all this?” I question warily. Pax folds the bag and takes a seat on the bed.

“Well, firstly, I thought I would get a jump on redecorating my place so that it’s ready for you to move in. My sister

designed the baby's nursery, she suggested we go with more natural tones, which I think is a great idea."

Hold on a damn minute. They designed my baby's nursery without even consulting me? What the ever living fuck?

I shake my head while he continues to drone on and on about the colour scheme of the nursery.

"Whoa, Pax, whoa, whoa, let me stop you right there," I hold my hand up scowling. "When did we decide I was moving in with you? Because I don't recall us ever having that conversation. Also, we never discussed you telling your family about the baby. And why is your sister designing my child's nursery and deciding on colours and themes without my knowledge or input?" I inquire, pacing the small floor space in front of my bed. Paxton watches me, placing the book down he gets up and touches my cheek affectionately.

"Darling, I thought you would be pleased. I mean, the last thing we want is for you to stress about unnecessary things in your condition." Paxton justifies, grating on my nerves further. "I don't want you stressing, we have it all under control."

I scowl up at him and push his hand away from my face, "No, Paxton, this isn't something you get to decide with your sister. I appreciate you trying to make my life easier, but I don't need you to think and makes choices for me. I have a brain and a mouth that are both fully functioning." I pick up a book about wedding planning and my stomach churns when my anxiety suddenly spikes. "Is your sister planning our wedding too? Because I thought we agreed to wait a year before we even discussed getting married." I sputter, holding up the book.

"Jeyla, do you really want to wait a whole year or two to get married babe?" he asks, confusion evident on his handsome face.

"Yes!" I exclaim, "I told you; I want to focus on my studies while I can before the baby comes. I can't get ready for the baby, study, and plan a wedding all at the same time. Besides, you're not even divorced yet." I don't even know

why I'm arguing with him like I'm not gearing myself up to break up with him.

"I will be, in a couple of months," he assures me confidently like that makes a fart of a difference to me. "It's all smooth sailing with the divorce, so it should take no more than two months at most." Paxton adds watching me get up off the bed and frantically pace the room again.

"Pax, can... can you please just pack away the books, we need to talk." Paxton nods and gathers the books off the bed and places them back into the bag he brought them in before he turns to face me.

"Okay, books are gone," I stop mid-pace and look at him. "What do you want to talk about?" I sigh, pinching the bridge of my nose in frustration. "Where's your ring?" Paxton asks when he notices my finger is bare. I look down at my hand fleetingly and then over at my dresser where I placed the ring back in its box two nights ago.

My stomach is physically hurting from the thought of breaking his heart, but I can't put this off any longer because I'm worried about hurting him, if anything, dragging this out is making this worse. I walk over to the dresser and open the first drawer and take the little black velvet box out. I exhale slowly, ignoring the knots forming in my gut when I turn and walk over to him.

I hold out the box to him and he just looks at it blankly. My throat goes all dry while I stand still watching him, and he lifts his eyes to mine, those blue eyes glowing with interest.

"I think we may have been a little hasty with our decision to get back together."

Paxton blinks and for a full five seconds doesn't respond.

"What?" He stands and moves to take hold of my shoulders. "Jeyla, what on earth are you talking about? We both had a discussion and you agreed to give us another chance, and now you're telling me that was a mistake? What's brought this on all of a sudden?" he queries, "Are you getting cold feet or something because that's okay."

I shake my head slowly, stepping out of his hold. “No, Pax, it’s not just one thing, it’s a number of things. I agreed to give us another chance because I was feeling overwhelmed with the thought of going through the pregnancy and raising this baby on my own.”

“So, what are you trying to tell me here, Jeyla? That you suddenly changed your mind, and you don’t want to marry me now?” His tone is wounded, and I feel like I just kicked a defenceless little puppy in the gut. I bite the inside of my cheek, and as much as it hurts me, I nod.

“I don’t want to lie to you Pax, the baby’s father reached out and told me he wants to be a part of his baby’s life and wants us to try and make it work.”

Paxton frowns, “And what about you? Do *you* want to be with him?”

I nod, “I do, we owe it to the baby to at least try and be a family, and if it doesn’t work then at least I know I gave it a go and won’t spend the rest of my life wondering if I made the right choice.” I explain truthfully with a shrug.

“Do you love him?” Paxton asks, stepping closer to me, his tone thick with dejection.

“I do,” I admit quietly and look up at him. “My feelings for him are complicated, but I know I’m in love with him, and it wouldn’t be fair to you or myself to deny that and pretend like I feel nothing for him when I do.”

A look of hurt flashes in his eyes and I’m sure I saw him well up. “Jeyla, I’m crazy about you.” He affirms, reaching up to caress my cheeks. “You said you loved me.”

“I do,” I tell him earnestly, placing my hands on his chest, “Pax, a part of me will always love you, and you were so understanding about the baby and willing to fight for us, but I can’t give you what you want. I told you, I can’t be the same girl I used to be, not after what you put me through and especially not when I have love for another in my heart. I tried to ignore my feelings for him, but I can’t, and I don’t want to

choose you simply because you're the safer choice. You deserve better than that."

"So, that's it then?" I nod sullenly, take his hand and place the little black box holding the promise ring he gave me. Paxton was never the type to show weakness, but looking at him now, I see straight through the façade he's trying to put on and know his insides are bleeding.

"I truly am sorry for everything. The last thing I want to do is hurt you, I hope you understand that and forgive me." I apologize.

Paxton bites his lip and nods, closing his fingers around the box, "You don't have to be sorry, Jeyla. If I had just been straight with you from the start, maybe things would have been different now." I shrug and nod sorrowfully, blinking away the tears that gather in my eyes. "I'll see you."

"You will." I push up on my tip toes and drop a quick kiss on his left cheek.

Pax reaches up and brushes his fingers across my jaw line, his eyes on mine. I can see he's deliberating about kissing me, but I step back before he can even try. I hurt him and I feel awful about it, but we've had our chance and it didn't work out. Paxton will always hold a special place in my heart, he was and always will be my first love.

I watch him gather up his things and walk out of my bedroom. I hold my breath until I hear the front door click shut and finally exhale. Sinking down on to my bed, I bury my head in my hands and groan.

That fucking bit.

Chapter 26

Dean

NOT ABOUT ANGELS - BIRDY 

I STAND AT MY WINDOW, chewing my lip nervously, my eyes fixed to Jeyla's front door watching like a hawk, waiting for her ex to walk out.

“What’s taking so fucking long?” I utter, rubbing the back of my neck agitatedly. Every minute he spends with her alone in that house is making me more nervous. What if the sly git convinces her to be with *him*? He’s done it before, who’s to say he won’t again? Not that Jeyla is naïve enough to fall for his bull or be swayed again... especially now she knows how I feel about her.

Fifty-one minutes...

Fuck me, come on JJ. Tell him to get lost already so I can come over there and kiss you like I’ve been burning too. Yes, I know, I’m an insensitive bastard, but can you blame me for being impatient? I’ve waited almost seventeen years to have the object of my affection and I want her to be mine and mine

alone. The front door finally opens, and I quickly straighten, my brows fusing while I watch Paxton walk out of the house looking like his whole world just came crashing down around him.

It wasn't that long ago I walked out of that front door feeling that exact same way, and I can sympathise, I even feel bad for all of five seconds until it vanishes, and I'm left feeling elated beyond belief.

Paxton gets into his Range Rover, starts the engine and drives off down the street. I don't waste another second, I scurry... I damn well *scurry* over to Jeyla's and use the key her folks keep hidden and unlock the back door, slipping in quietly, straining my ears in case anyone but her is home.

Coast is clear.

Mission kiss the soul out of my woman is on. I skip up the steps and walk down the corridor to her bedroom. As I approach, I see her sitting on the bed, her head buried in her hands. The door creaks when I push it open and she looks up, eyes rimmed red like she's been crying. If that fucker did something to her, I will rip his throat out. I walk over to crouch in front of her, sliding my hands up the sides of her silky-smooth thighs. "What happened?" I question, already dreading the answer.

Jeyla lowers her hands from her face and licks her soft pink lips. "It's over." She tells me, her tone almost inaudible. "I broke up with him." A hefty weight lifts off my shoulders and I sigh inwardly.

"How did he take it?"

"As well as expected," Jeyla answers, dropping her gaze to her hands resting between us. "I think I blindsided him, he came over here so excited to talk about the baby's nursery that his sister is designing and started talking about a wedding and I just lost it."

Designing a nursery for *my kid* like I ever had any intention of stepping aside to let him play dad to my baby.

Fucking twat.

“I feel like a real bitch for hurting him like that.” She laments, running her fingers through her long dark hair. “You should have seen the look on his face when I told him I was in love with someone else.”

My chest swells when I hear those words coming from those gorgeous lips of hers.

I sigh and take hold of her wrists and lower my head so I could look her in the eyes, “Yeah, it’s no picnic hearing those words from the one you love, but you did the right thing, it would have been a lot worse if you just strung him along and later on decided you were making a mistake.” I explain, rubbing the pads of my thumbs against her pulse point on her wrists.

“I know, I did the right thing, my heart wasn’t in it, but I still feel bad for him.” I nod in understanding and lift her hands to my lips. I press a kiss to each of her fingers and she watches me, captivating me with those deep green eyes I love so much.

“Do you want me to go? I’ll understand if you need some space and time alone to process.” Jeyla shakes her head and leans forward, pressing her forehead to mine.

“No,” she whispers, trailing her fingers along my jaw, “Just kiss me.”

Licking my lips, I smile and brush her hair away from her face and close the gap between our mouths. We both moan the moment our lips touch. I kiss her slow and deep, savouring in her intoxicating taste.

Fuck, I’m hooked on her. I’m like an addict that’s gone far too long without his fix and now my head is dizzy with exhilaration at the thought of making her mine, only mine, for always.

I grip the back of her thighs and yank her hips toward me. Jeyla gasps out loud when she falls back, her back hitting the mattress. I kiss up her thigh, one hand untying the robe she’s wearing.

“Dean...” she moans breathily, her toes curling when my mouth inches between her legs. I push her robe open, revealing the sexy night dress she’s wearing under it, the one she was teasing me with earlier.

Using my hands, I push it up to her midriff, exposing her matching thong. I’m aching to bury my tongue in her juicy cunt and drink up her honey until I’m drunk on it.

But first...

I lean up over her and she whimpers when the warmth and feel of my lips vanish from between her legs. Jeyla opens her eyes, and she stares up at me, her plump lower lip clasped between her teeth. She curls her fingers around my chain hanging between us and she draws me down till our lips are less than a hair apart. “Take me to the stars, Lieutenant.”

I smile, crawling up on the bed, my body covering hers. “Yes, ma’am.”



“Dean, come on! The film starts in ten minutes!” I hear my sister scream from the bottom of the stairs.

I roll my eyes, spraying my aftershave on my neck and look at my appearance one last time before I walk out of my bedroom. “Keep your hair on, I’m coming.” On my way down the stairs, my eyes lock with my girl’s, she’s watching me, eyes aglow as I descend each step.

What I wouldn’t give to openly pull her to me and devour those luscious lips right here in front of everyone.

“Ready Princess?” Ash scolds me with a scowl, and I smile squeezing her cheek affectionately.

“You can’t rush perfection.” I quip with a smirk, and she rolls her eyes and slaps my hand away from her face.

“Could you be any more up your own arse?” I chuckle, tucking my phone into my pocket.

“Says the one who started getting ready three hours ago.” I retort playfully and she huffs. Jeyla is leaning on the wall opposite the staircase, I wink at her and she veers her gaze, a nice pink touching her cheeks. Before I could stop myself, I reach over and tweak her adorable button nose. “No hello, JJ?” Jeyla bats my hand away and pushes me, her eyes glowing with mirth while she tries her best to act like she’s maddened.

“Bite me, Reyes.”

“Careful what you wish for, Jenkins, I bite hard.” I drawl and Jeyla narrows her eyes at me when I blow a kiss at her.

Ash smacks my arm, and I hiss, scowling at her. “Stop being a dick and move.” She scolds me, taking Jeyla’s hand she pulls her out the door and I chuckle, following them out of the house. If only she knew that I had her best friend on her knees begging for my cum less than two hours ago.

“Okay, people. There are seven of us, so we need to split into two cars.” I lean against my car, scrolling through my phone while they discuss who is going with who. “Dean, you take Claire and Yaz.” I groan inwardly and look over at Jeyla who is glaring at the girls whispering and cackling with one another, throwing flirtatious looks my way.

Jeyla snorts, shaking her head. “Jey, Me and Jess will go with Oz.”

“I call shotgun!” Claire suddenly exclaims sauntering over to the passenger side, followed closely by Yazmin.

“Nah uh!” My insides clinch at the very thought of driving ten whole minutes with these airheads. I throw a beseeching look at Jeyla who shrugs helplessly. I need to find a sly way of getting Jeyla in my car.

“Come on girls,” I drawl, walking around to the driver side, smirking. “How about a little detour? Ash, if we’re late go in without us, we’ll catch up.” I say, looking over at Claire, wagging my brows suggestively.

“Dean, I will literally kill you if you so much as think about dicking my friends.” I smirk and shrug off her comment.

“For fuck’s sake, Jeyla go with him and make sure he keeps it in his pants.”

Jeyla looks over at Ash, wide eyed. “Me?!” she sputters pointing at herself. “Why are you sending me with him? If you’re so bothered about him shacking up with those harpies you go with them.” Jeyla scowls, crossing her arms over her chest and throwing a distasteful look at the girls.

Ashlyn pulls Jeyla to her and speaks to her quietly and Jeyla looks over at me and rolls her eyes, relenting.

“Ugh, whatever. Your brother isn’t the only Reyes I hate now, I hope you know that.” Jeyla utters bitterly and walks over to the passenger side of my car, she shakes her head at me but I can see the glee twinkling in her eyes.

“I love you, chick,” Ash gushes playfully. “Play nice.”

“Shut up,” Jeyla throws over her shoulder. “Excuse yourself. I’m sitting in the front,” she utters sourly, and I smirk rubbing my jaw.

Claire scoffs, “I don’t think so, I called shotgun, you can sit in the back, love.” She replied cattily.

Jeyla’s brow goes up and my dick goes stiff, “Do I look like I give a toss what you called? Unless you want to walk to the cinema with your two front teeth missing, I suggest you take your cheap perfume and your fake tits along with your horsehair to the back where you belong, *love*.” I press my lips together to smother the smile.

My girl is savage.

“My tits are real, thank you very much. Ask Dean, I’m sure he’ll be more than happy to corroborate,” she sneers haughtily and Jeyla’s eyes veer to me.

“Oh really?” Jeyla drawls and turns to look at me. “Dean?” she presses, glowering at me.

Oh, bloody hell. “Stop bickering or I’ll sit you both in the back and sit Yazmin in the front.” I warn them and look over at Yazmin who is leaning against the car watching the girls argue with interest.

“No, please, let them continue, this is far more entertaining than the film we’re going to watch.” Yazmin states with a grin, her hazel eyes glowing with amusement. “My money is on Jeyla.”

I roll my eyes, uttering a string of curses under my breath I close the driver side door, “JJ, get in the car. Claire, move to the back or you can walk there.”

I walk around the car, reach around Jeyla and open the door for her to get into the passenger side. “Get in.” I demand, staring into her eyes. Jeyla doesn’t argue for a change and slides into the passenger seat.

Twenty-five minutes later we are at the cinema standing in a queue chatting idly while we wait in line at the confectionary kiosk to buy our snacks. My eyes wander over to Jeyla who is at the arcades opposite us playing PacMan with my brother, laughing and playfully nudging each other. I’d be lying if my insides didn’t twist with envy. I’m so sick of hiding my feelings for her and sneaking around, lying to my sister. I should be the one she laughs like that with. I should have the ability to freely walk over and pull her into my arms and kiss her, tell her I love her for all of them to hear. I want them all to know how crazy I am about her.

Instead, I swallow the resentment and sigh. Jeyla and I are on opposite ends while we watch the movie. Ninety long minutes of this movie I was ready to blow my brains out. Your typical, cliché chick flick. Girl gets cheated on, moves to the big city, meets a guy at a coffee shop she works at who she later discovers is her best friend’s boyfriend.

Big shock.

The premise however did hit a little too close to home, so much so that Jeyla and I would exchange glances when the main characters would sneak around behind the best friend’s back to have sex, or when they swear they will walk away and somehow find themselves drawn to each other again, until the best friend catches them and all hell breaks loose.

I feel like I’m watching myself on the screen, the longer the movie plays the deeper my guilt goes and I notice the

similarities between the main characters and my situation with Jeyla.

Just like theirs, our relationship will end in disaster if we don't come clean to Ash soon and she somehow finds out. I love my sister, she's literally one half of me and I'm not proud of myself for betraying her, but when everything you've ever wanted is right there in front of you, how can you possibly find the strength to resist or stay away.

I couldn't, I still can't. Even at the expense of my sister.

After the movie, we go to the restaurant adjacent to the cinema to get something to eat before we hit the bar that's opening tonight. My buddy Jake is managing the event and got us on the list.

Sitting on a round table, we eat our meals while the girls discuss the film.

"I can't understand the appeal, but how could you stomach betraying your best friend like that? It's unforgivable." Jess states, stuffing a fork full of Caesar salad in her mouth and chewing.

"Oh, absolutely, what's the number one rule of girl code?" Ash asks the girls.

"Hoes over bros." All the girls answer and Ashlyn smiles, sipping her drink. All but Jeyla. I look over at her, pushing her food around her plate, a troubled look on her angelic face. I know she's feeling just as shit as I am right about now and I really want to walk over and kiss the saddened look off her face.

"Jey, you're quiet, what did you think?" Ashlyn probes, bumping her shoulder with Jeyla, starting her out of her trance.

Jeyla's eyes dart around the group, completely avoiding mine. "It was a good film. A bit long winded, but enjoyable."

"If you call yourself my best friend and then you go off and sleep with my boyfriend, or my ex or hell even a guy I'm interested in you're no friend, you're a fraud." Ashlyn says, dipping her French fry into the pot of ketchup and popping it into her mouth.

“What about best friend and siblings?” Jessica questions and both Jeyla’s and my eyes snap up at the same time.

Ash shudders, wiping her hands on a napkin. “Ugh, that just creeps me out. I can’t imagine having to watch my best friend who is like a sister to me slobbering all over my brother. No, that’s the biggest ick for me, especially if it’s my twin. There’s also the factor of it not working out and nine times out of ten, it never does, which leaves the other party in the middle trying to choose sides.” Ashlyn shakes her head, sitting back in her chair. “No, thank you.”

There’s a pregnant pause that stretches between us. “Lucky for me, I don’t have to worry about that. Do I bitch?” Jeyla looks over at Ash and smiles.

“Oh, I don’t know Ash, you know I’ve always had the hots for Oskie.” She teases, trying to mask her disappointment with a joke. Oz quickly catches on and joins in on the banter.

“Come over any time and I’ll put that fire out for you, babe.” He croons with a wink, making her blush. I resist the urge to kick him under the table and opt for a glare, which he catches and stops grinning like a fucking mug.

My sister’s face contorts to one of disgust, “Please stop, just picturing that scenario is making me want to projectile vomit.”

“I get it can be uncomfortable, but don’t you think you’re being a tad bit over dramatic, Ash?” Jess asks again, stirring her drink with the straw.

“Not at all, you don’t fuck with your best friend’s family.” Ash claims, setting down her glass and rubbing her flat belly, satisfied.

I stare at the meal sitting untouched in front of me. Playing out every scenario in my head and with each one I either lose Jeyla or I lose my sister. Neither of which I’m okay with.

Come eleven o’clock, we pull up at the bar. There’s a queue around the corner of people waiting to get in. The inside is absolutely packed out with people. The music thumping at deafening volumes. I’m bursting at the seams to talk to Jeyla,

the drive to the bar was quiet and stiflingly awkward with the two in the back.

“Can we talk?” I discreetly speak in her ear when the others aren’t looking and she shrugs, keeping her eyes cast down.

“Sure.”

“Meet me out front in five.” I tell her before I walked off. “I’m going to go find Jake!” I tell Ash who nods and gives me the thumbs up before I disappear into the throng of people. That will buy me some time with her.

Leaning against the wall, I patiently wait for Jeyla to come out. When I finally see her, I gesture for her to follow me, and we walk across the road to the side of an old building that’s seen better days.

“We don’t have long.” Jeyla sighs, wrapping her arms around herself. The misery etched across that gorgeous face makes me ache.

“Come here,” Placing my hands at her waist I draw her to me and press my forehead to hers. “What are you thinking?”

Jeyla’s eyes close, a quivering breath emanating past her lips. “She’s never going to forgive us, Dean. You heard her yourself, she’ll eventually forgive you, you’re her brother, but my friendship with her is as good as done.”

“JJ, come on, you know that’s not true. I’m not saying she won’t be livid, but she’ll understand in time, I know she will.” I explain, caressing her jaw with my thumbs. “You’re having my baby, Jeyla. There’s no walking away from that, even if you and I are not together we’re still having a baby together. Ash will eventually find out the truth, and if she’s going to act like a brat and kick up a stink that’s on her.”

“Dean—”

I shake my head, my arms tightening around her waist. “—No, I’m done worrying and putting everyone else’s feelings above ours. We’re not silly teenagers fucking around for the fun of it. I’m in love with you and I’ll march in there and tell

them all right now.” I express firmly, and she looks up at me forlornly and sighs in defeat.

“I’m not sneaking around anymore, I can’t live with myself, I’m suffocating under the weight of all the lies I’ve told her. Let the chips fall where they may. There’s no point in dragging this out anymore, we’ll tell her together, tomorrow.”

I smile and nod, pressing my lips to hers. “Tomorrow.”

“I better go back before she wonders where I disappeared to.” Jeyla says, kissing me one last time before she turns and walks back toward the bar.

“JJ?” Jeyla looks back at me over her shoulder. “I love you.”

“I love you,” she avows and we stand watching each other for a beat. Grinning, she shakes her head and turns to cross the street. I watch her retreating back. My heart beating in my ears.

Through the thrashing of my heart, my ears pick up the engine of a car approaching. I take my eyes off Jeyla for a second to look over at the car that’s speeding down the street. “Jeyla!” I shout and run to stop her, but I’m too late.

Jeyla steps off the pavement and looks back at me once more, her gorgeous eyes glittering. She doesn’t see the car, only me running toward her in a panic. “Look out!”

The tyres screech deafeningly when the driver slams his foot on the brakes and Jeyla’s head spins to look at the car just before she’s struck. I stand frozen, everything around me slows as I helplessly watch the woman I love hit the windshield of the red Audi with tremendous force and fall to the floor.

“NO!” I scream and run to her side. “Jeyla!” I hit my knees beside her and look her over, “No, no, no! Baby, baby, look at me, please, come on open your eyes, Jeyla, open your eyes! Call an ambulance!” I shout at the crowd that’s forming around us while I cradle her body in my arms. Blood streams from the corner of her mouth and I pull my hand back from the back of her head when I feel something warm on my hand.

“Oh my God.” I stare at my hand saturated with her blood and my stomach turns. “Hang on, baby. Please, just hang on. You’re going to be okay, please, just hold on, baby, don’t you leave me!” I bury my face into her chest and scream as loud as my lungs will allow, “Jeyla!”

To Be Continued.....

Thank You

Hi, Love!

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my book. I cannot put into words how much your support means to me. I wrote this book back in 2009, when I was going through severe depression and couldn't express to anyone what I was feeling, it felt easier to pour my thoughts and feelings on to paper—so to speak.

I discovered my love for writing years before, but only wrote short stories, fanfics about various shows and posted them online anonymously...until one day I fired up my laptop and wrote this book.

I published this previously and then unpublished it as it felt a little bit too personal to me. And when my readers discovered the book and requested I release it, I figured why not?

I've had to revamp it, simply because I wrote this when I was young and still an amateur writer, however, the premise of the book is pretty much the same, just amplified the heat and sprinkled a little bit of Shay's love dust and here it is!

Part two, I'm hoping to have released early spring, if life permits.

Any-who! Thank you again for reading, and please do drop a review as your feedback means the world to me and reviews are us authors bread and butter.

Love Always,

Shayla Hart

Also by Shayla Hart

[The Accidental Wife](#)

[Love Me Again](#)

[Cuffed by Love](#)

[An Assassins Oath](#)

[Hook, Line, Professor - Part I](#)

[Hook, Line, Professor - Part II](#)

[Hook, Line, Infinity](#)

[The 7 Day Stand](#)