



*Baby* FOR MY  
**BROTHER'S BEST**  
**FRIEND**

JOSIE HART

# **Baby for my Brother's Best Friend**

**An Enemies to Lovers Surprise Pregnancy Romance**

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**Josie Hart**

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## ALLY

“I’m sorry...” My voice trailed off. “You want me to *what?*”

Levi rolled his deep hazel eyes—as if his proposition was shocking. “You heard me loud and clear, Ally. It’s simple: just come to Rachel’s wedding and pretend to be my girlfriend.”

“You have a whole roster of women,” I argued, folding my arms across my small chest. “Give me one good reason why I should accept.”

“I’ll pay you ten thousand dollars.”

“I make twenty times that working as your mom’s CPA,” I threatened, raising an eyebrow at him. “That’s hardly appealing.” I mean, seriously, my brother’s best friend, who I just so happened to *abhor*, was going to pay me to play his girlfriend, it was going to be worth my time.

*Period.*

“Okay, but you get a free trip to the Caribbean.” Levi let out a frustrated sigh before rubbing his perfectly defined square jaw, dotted with a touch of black stubble. “What else do you want from me? I need to prove to my brother Lewis that I’ve matured since I was a reckless twenty-two-year-old.”

“Why?” I retorted, shaking my head in confusion. “You can’t seriously tell me you’re still in love with that salty, high-maintenance ex-girlfriend of yours.”

Levi’s jaw tensed, his face filling with irritation. “Why can’t you just accept the offer? You *never* go on vacation, Ally. I figured you’d accept for that reason alone. I need someone I can trust—and who has the ability to stay *mostly* together. You’re the best option I have.”

“Wow, I think that’s the nicest thing you’ve ever said to me.” I forced a smile, batting my thick eyelashes at him. “So if it’s not to win Rachelle and crash the wedding, then why do you need to prove to Frank that you’re not a grown-ass acting man?”

“Which we both know is a lie.”

“He’s selling CyberSecure, and I *need* to get my hands on that company. I’ve been watching it for years, and it’s finally my chance to make a name for myself outside of the Lombardi family trust.”

I pursed my lips, studying his face for a few long moments. His patience was waning, but playing with his impatience was more than amusing. “We’d never gotten along—mostly because he was an arrogant asshole who hated the world ninety-nine percent of the time...”

But whatever.

“That’s a multimillion dollar company,” I remarked, the wheels of my CPA brain spinning as I thought of what it could do for *me*.

“Obviously, I know that,” Levi snapped, rolling his broad shoulders.

“You’re starting to waste my time right now, Ally. I have things to do.”

“Ditto, Levi.” I snorted, before gathering up my courage. “I’d like to counter your proposition.”

“You can’t be serious right now. This isn’t a negotiation.”

isly tell I swallowed my nerves, ignoring his words. “Forty percent stake  
iend of company, and I accept.”

“Absolutely not.”

ou just “Fine then. Thirty-five.”

ept just Levi pursed his lips, his eyes narrowing. “Fifteen.”

eir shit Hope burst through my chest—I had a shot. “Thirty-four.”

“*Twenty.*”

igned a “Thirty or no deal.” I gave him my best poker face, flipping my  
el backhair over my shoulder.

ou’re a He let out a sigh. “*Fine.* Thirty-fucking-percent it is. You’re welc  
turning you into a millionaire.” Levi pushed his chair back, shaking h  
as he stood to his feet. “I’ll write something up.”

mpany. “No, *I* will do the write-up,” I challenged him, leaning back in m  
ame for chair. “Knowing you, you’ll put some stupid clause in there that will  
*actually* getting what you just agreed to.”

atience “Wow.” His eyebrows shot up, and for a brief—*very* brief mo  
for me. thought he might actually be a little hurt by what I was implying. “  
le who fuck you over if you don’t fuck me over, Ally. Plain and simple as that

I met his gaze, the deep green hue mixed with chocolate brown  
jolting, my heart skipping a beat. There was no doubt in my mind tha  
in my eyes swayed a lot of women right out of their clothes...

But not me.

oulders. My brother’s best friend did *not* have that power...nope. Not over m  
” “I’m still going to write something up,” I stated, clearing my thr  
like to looking away. “I just think it’s in my best interest. Also, I think it’s o  
that I write up a few rules as well.”

He folded his arms across his chest. “Like what? No bumping uglies



I don't think you have to worry about that when it comes to me. Besides, I've already seen you naked—remember the Christmas party of fifteen? I can't *unsee* that.”

I rolled my eyes, pushing away the small pang of humiliation. “You see *all* of me. You just didn't knock before barging into the bathroom while I was taking a shower.”

“Um, because *most* people lock the door, Ally.”

“Right, but like you couldn't hear the water running on the other side of the door because the shower is *open*. I don't know how you didn't hear it.”

“That rain showerhead is really quiet...” His voice dropped off at that moment before he shook his head. “*Anyway*, it's fine to write up whatever rules you want, but we *will* have to have some PDA. It'll be weird if we don't at least desktouch each other at all.”

My stomach knotted up—Levi was more than known for his PDA appearances. “Minimal PDA. I have class, Levi.”

“Yeah, okay. Whatever. Just write it up and I'll mark out what I won't agree with. We'll go over it once we land on Friday.”

“Wait, *this* Friday?”

“Yep, get to packing, *baby*.” He shot me a wink and slipped out of the office, his laughter echoing down the hallway.

I let out a sigh, facepalming as I glanced at my computer screen, having completely lost my place in balancing Lisa's accounts.

*Damn it, Levi.*

My phone buzzed on my desk, and I looked over to see a text from my only fair friend, Linley, lighting up my phone.

*Got you lunch, can I stop by?*

“Absolutely, you can,” I muttered, texting back a quick reply. I need

es, I've the help I could get figuring out what rules to put in place between Yeah, I and Levi. Just as I hit the send button on the message, there was a knock on my cracked office door.

I didn't I looked up. "Oh, hi, Lisa," I greeted Levi's stunning mother, who while her hair was fashioned in perfect waves, cascading past her shoulders.

She gave me a smile, adjusting her dark rim glasses and shutting them behind herself. "So, Levi just swung by and told me he's taking her to the Rachel's wedding?" Her puzzled expression told me everything.

*He didn't tell her about the arrangement. You sly dog, Levi.*

I nodded. "Yeah, it's last minute, but I can definitely work remotely whatever keep up with the books."

She waved me off. "Nah, you don't have to worry about working if you're there. I just...I had no idea..."

*Right.*

"It's just a friend thing," I answered her, my voice coming out with the confidence that I hoped for.

"Are you sure *he* sees it that way?" Her brows furrowed, lines of concern growing on her face. "He made it sound like he was pretty excited about it. I don't want to be away with you."

*Is he seriously going to confront his own mother?*

"Oh, well..." I hesitated, having no way to work myself out of it. "I'm just trying not to get too excited over it."

That seemed to work, her face brightening. "I bet you'll have a great time. I know it might be a little early, but I just always thought the two of you would be so cute together. You're already basically family."

I swallowed hard. "Thank you, Lisa. I love all of you so much."

"Aw, we love you too." With that, she tapped the doorframe and I

myself around, disappearing down the hallway.

lock on *Ugh.*

Groaning, I laid my head down on my desk. Why the hell was Levi these days over on his own freaking family? I'd known them since I was a kid.

Levi and Josh, my big brother, had been lifetime friends. Lisa was practically my second mom, and now accepting the proposition might ruin all of you. I hadn't even asked Levi how he planned on explaining us *not* being together when we returned.

*Should've thought about this longer, Ally.*

Why? I mean, was he planning on conning Josh too? Because there was *hell* in my big bro was going to buy that Levi and I were suddenly going while seriously enough to jet off to some Caribbean wedding of his ex-girlfriend.

In fact, if we *were* seriously dating, Josh might beat the shit out of him.

He had done it to my other boyfriends.

With less "What're you chuckling about?" Linley's voice interrupted my thoughts.

I jerked my head up from where it was resting on the desk. "Oh honey, your concern look *hot*." I wiggled my eyebrows at her sweatpants and oversized shirt to get "Working from home looks good on you."

"Oh my god, shut up." She laughed, handing me my pecan cranberry from Rob's Diner just down the street. Her blonde hair was pulled up in a loose bun on top of her head in the most adorable way, and her no-frills look just emphasized her natural beauty.

at time. My best friend was a stunner.

of you "I mean it, Lin," I said in my best serious tone. "Thanks for lunch."

"Anything for you." She kicked back, propping her Converse up on the desk. "So seriously, what's with the weird head-on-the-desk laughter?" I spun

you were doing when I walked in? Is there a manic episode in the work that inspired the funny cat meme I sent?”

pulling I shook my head, hesitating. Should I tell her about the deal with Levi, since would it be best to keep it on the down-low before having the details out publicly *he* was telling?

“That? I *Nah.*”

together “You’ll never believe what Levi wants me to do.”

She forked a bit of her own salad in her mouth, curiosity filling her face. “And what’s that? I can’t think of *anything.*”

no way “He wants me to be his date to Rachel Lewis’s wedding.”

“Dating? She nearly choked on her mouthful of kale and spinach. “No way—her friend’s real?”

“Of course not,” I laughed. “He wants me to do it as if like a business deal.”

“And why the fuck would he do that?” Her tone was already getting defensive. “What is he scheming up now? Because you don’t have a job, you’re a housewife, you’re a mom, you’re a friend, you’re a sister, you’re a daughter, you’re a woman, you’re a person, you’re a human, you’re a *thing*.”

“God, I love my best friend.”

“He wants to buy some business from her dad, and has to prove that he’s matured or some shit like that. He thinks that if he takes a girlfriend and lives with her, he can convince him.”

“And why you?” Her eyes narrowed.

I shrugged. “You’ve seen the kind of girls he surrounds himself with. Aspiring models, influencers, and actresses.”

“Exactly, and so to make it worth my time, I negotiated that I would get a percentage of the business that he buys.” I sat up a little straighter, perched on my business dealings.

“*Dayum* girl, look at you. You’re a freaking boss. But how do you

ks or ishe'll come through on the deal? We *know* how Levi is. He can be  
douche.”

evi? Or “He has to sign a contract, and you better *believe* I’m going to co  
of whobases. Also, Levi can be a real jerk, but he’s not like that. He’s alway  
loyal—think about everything he’s done for Josh. I don’t think he’ll  
me.”

She was quiet for a few moments, but then nodded. “That’s true. .  
er face.wouldn’t risk messing up his friendship with your brother over it. Josh  
his only close friend.”

“Yeah, because my brother has the patience of a saint,” I snorted, g  
like forfor my water bottle on my desk. “But anyway, let’s talk about rules I  
put in the contract. I don’t want *any* gray areas.”

deal.”

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he'll come through on the deal? We *know* how Levi is. He can be a real douche.”

“He has to sign a contract, and you better *believe* I'm going to cover my bases. Also, Levi can be a real jerk, but he's not like that. He's always been loyal—think about everything he's done for Josh. I don't think he'll bail on me.”

She was quiet for a few moments, but then nodded. “That's true. And he wouldn't risk messing up his friendship with your brother over it. Josh is like his only close friend.”

“Yeah, because my brother has the patience of a saint,” I snorted, grabbing for my water bottle on my desk. “But anyway, let's talk about rules I should put in the contract. I don't want *any* gray areas.”

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“**A**bsolutely *not*,” Josh roared, throwing his hands in the air. “You’re not jetting off with my sister thousands of miles away for your *ex*’s wedding!” He was pacing around my master bedroom, his shoes squeaking on the freshly polished dark oak floors.

“Dude, relax,” I said, shoving more of my clothes into my suitcase and shaking my head. I turned to look at him. “It’s really not what you think. Let me explain before you give yourself a heart attack.”

Don’t get me wrong, I knew that telling my best friend was going to be a shitshow, but *this* was a little overdramatic—even for him.

“Have you slept with her?” he demanded, slamming his hand down on my suitcase, stopping me from continuing to fill it. He was *seething*, his complexion burning crimson as his icy blue eyes bore into mine. “Be warned: I will literally *murder* you if that’s what happened.”

“What? No.” I snorted, spinning around to grab my good blazer from my closet. “I have no desire to fuck your sister, Josh. Gross.”

*Well, maybe not gross.*

She did have the body of a goddess—but it was still a no. She was off-limits, and annoying.

Which is why she was perfect.

He jerked back, his eyes narrowing. “Then what the hell are you with her, Levi? I don’t like anything that’s coming out of your mouth now, but you better start talking, or my fist is going to.”

*Again, so fucking dramatic.*

“Bro, I told you about Frank selling CyberSecure. That’s all this is. I just want to prove to him that I’ve matured so I can buy his company.”

His demeanor didn’t change. “Cool, but that doesn’t explain my sister’s behavior.”

I let out a sharp breath, taking a step back from him—just in case he was swinging on me. “She agreed to be my *pretend* girlfriend.”

“*What?*” His eyes went nearly as wide as his face. “Why would she agree to such stupidity? How will that help you buy some company? About Rachel? Because—”

I shrugged and cut him off. “Their biggest complaint with me when I was dating Rachel was that I was too much of a flirt, and that I was immature when it came to handling my relationships. I mean, Rachel was a far more mature herself—and she *did* cheat on me with like three different guys before she went to Italy. But that’s not important,” I added quickly. “That’s *nothing* to do with her. I just want that business. If I show up as a successful, charming woman—who has everything going for her, I’ll present myself as the perfect boyfriend. Maturity reached...”

“You think *my* sister is those things?” Josh burst into laughter. “Levi and Ally *are* talking about Ally, right? The woman you’re talking about doesn’t sound like her. Ally is a firecracker.”

“Oh, come on,” I drew out. “Your sister has her shit together more than I do.”



beyond ninety-nine percent of the women we know. She's got her own place, a killer living with a steady smart-person job, and she's...you know, ugly."

Josh raised an eyebrow. "Are you indirectly calling my sister hot?"

I rolled my eyes. "I said she's not ugly. I'm not getting off to your side of my spare time or something."

*Okay, maybe a handful of times.*

That shower accident would be forever burned in my brain.

Sighing, I pushed the thought away. "The point is to just solely show I can manage a nice, successful woman as my girlfriend. I can be the guy that I'm supposed to be—the kind of guy that can land a multi-million-dollar company and keep it running profitably."

Josh was quiet for a few moments, his face contorted in a mixture of amusement and disbelief. "And you don't think *lying* about a relationship is a little immature?"

"Why are you being so fucking unsupportive?" I groaned, running my fingers through my hair. "You know that I'm more than capable of running a business like that. I've been working for my dad for nearly ten years now when I've proven my business capabilities."

"No, no," Josh said quickly. "I *do* think you're capable of running a business. I just really *don't* understand why having some fake girlfriend and especially my *sister*, is going to make the deal more plausible. Even Frank knows that you're a suave guy in the tech world. I don't see why we wouldn't be enough."

"Frank Lewis is all about family—he's the epitome of a family man."

That's *why*. Back when I was dating Rachel, he would always pick her over the family over the bachelor, even if the latter was more deserving.

, makes position.” I folded my arms across my Rolling Stones t-shirt, ignoring the irritation burning in my chest. I *had* to convince Josh that this was an idea...

He was the only person standing in the way of the plan. If he was sister inboard, then there was no way in hell I would go through with it. Not a company like CyberSecure was worth losing my friendship with him.

“And Ally *agreed*?” he finally said, letting out a sigh and rubbing his forehead. “Yeah, for thirty percent of the company.” My jaw clenched with that mention, but it was what it was. She was a hell of a negotiator, and she was also the *only* option I had. I needed her to agree. I could give up some million to her.

Josh laughed. “Man, I love my sister.”  
“Yeah, everyone seems to—which is why she’s perfect. I just have to get along with her for two weeks.” I grimaced. On paper Ally really was the ideal girl, but there was never a time when the two of us had seen each other in person.

I’ll just have to suck it up and keep my eyes on the prize.

“Okay, fine. Do it, but don’t mess with Ally—like you know,” he said, though his expression was more weary than anything.

“I don’t think you have to worry about that,” I assured him, awkwardly shifting my weight. “She’s not really my type anyway.”

“She better not be,” he grunted, side-eying me. “Ally deserves better than that.”  
*Ouch. But seriously?*

I tensed by jaw. “I’m not even going to go there with you—but I’ll never let your sister’s dating choices over the years, and I wouldn’t exactly call her the top tier. I mean, who was that one guy she dated for like three years? The biggest douche.”

ing the “Which is exactly why she deserves better. She has terrible taste  
a goodchuckled, and my shoulders dropped with relief. “I think you’re a so  
but your past with women is sketchy at best. Rachel was you  
isn’t onrelationship that lasted longer than a handful of months.”

even a “I was with Rachel for years,” I pointed out, furrowing my brow. “I  
lot more than a handful of months, so I *am* capable of maintaining  
s jaw. term relationship. I just...I realized after Rachel that I like to have fu  
at thethan I like to be nailed down.”

she was “And so now you’re going to convince Frank Lewis that you’re r  
e profitsettle down and be serious. Genius.” Josh shook his head and reache  
pair of my designer sunglasses. “Do you want these? Because you on  
like ten pairs, and I broke mine last week.”

e to try I glanced over to the black Gucci sunglasses—they were my fa  
lly wasbut... “Yeah, you can have them.”

1 eye to “Dude, you’re the best.”

“Consider it payment for letting me borrow your sister for a co  
weeks, though that sounds...*weird*.”

warned, “Really fucking weird,” he agreed, before bursting into laughte  
anyway, I know that Ally can hold her own. The woman negotiated  
wardlypercent stake out of you. That’s impressive.”

“Yeah, and my mom is convinced that it’s a real relationship, so  
r.” going to have to just play this off as that. I had to ask off for Ally last  
and I didn’t want to make her be the one who had to explain it. My m  
ve seena thousand questions, and it was hard to bullshit my way through—e  
ll themme.”

He was “So then I guess the two of you just *don’t* work out when you get ba  
“Yeah, and I think it might break my mother’s heart.” I rolled my e

.” Josh plopped down on the bed. “Like, I seriously had no idea that she was my little brother, after the two of us somehow ending up together.”

“Not only that, but she’s my only friend. I know she’ll be there for me, and she’s just because she’s, well, *Ally*. Everyone loves Ally.”

“That’s a good thing. Which is why she’s perfect for my fake girlfriend. I know she’ll be there for me, and she’s just because she’s, well, *Ally*. Everyone loves Ally.”

“I know she’ll be there for me, and she’s just because she’s, well, *Ally*. Everyone loves Ally.”

My stomach knotted up as I saw Ally’s face on the phone. *Great.*

“Hey sis, what’s up?” He put her on speaker phone.

“Uh, well...” Her voice trailed off, and I already knew she was faking it. “I’m packing. What’re you up to?”

“Hanging out at home with Levi, helping him pack for the wedding. What’re you packing for?”

“Uh...”

“So you caught the feelings for Levi?” The amusement in his tone was obvious. “But me? Not as much as Ally’s reaction.”

“Absolutely not. You can’t seriously tell me that he thinks he’s going to get away with lying to you about the arrangement? I swear he’s such a liar.”

“I’m right here,” I cut her off, chuckling. “Careful what you say. In thirty minutes, for you to lose that thirty percent of CyberSecure before we’re even out of the room had wheels up.”

She groaned. “You’re insufferable.”

“We all know that, and if it wasn’t for the fact that you’re going to be a millionaire once the deal is sorted, there’s no way in hell I would be here.”

...pinning you do this. I hope you know that,” Josh said, running a hand through his hair.

...ought it “Well, first of all, I’m a grown-ass woman and I can do whatever I want. And secondly, there’s no way in hell *I* would be doing this. But since you’re so charming right there, I have some questions for him.”

I cringed. “Yeah?”

...ed the “On a scale of one to black-tie affair, how formal is this wedding? ...n. “Oh, the beach, right? I don’t know what I’m supposed to wear.”

“Uh, whatever women wear to a wedding—so anything but white would be fine. Just buy a nice designer dress of any color that’s a little beachy and you should be fine.”

...hing to “I hate to break it to you, Levi, but I can’t afford a dress like that—I’m not spending thousands of dollars on a dress that I’ll only wear once.” ...edding. I shrugged. “No problem. I’ll buy you one then. Just text me your measurements.”

There was silence on the other end of the phone, and Josh and I exchanged a look.

“Ally?” Josh asked. “Are you still there?”

...oing to She let out a sigh. “Yeah. I just...yeah, I’ll send over my measurements—” ...but *nothing* slutty, Levi—I mean it.”

...I’d hate I burst into laughter. “The less material, the better. I got it.”

...er even “I’m serious,” she snapped.

“Don’t worry,” Josh spoke up, shooting me daggers. “I’ll make sure I pick something that you’d like.”

...to be a “I wish you were coming,” Ally said on the other end.

...letting Josh smiled. “You’ll be good. If you have to take a cheap shot to keep your spot in line, I’ll back you up when you get back.”

ugh his “Hey!” I called out, instantly covering myself. “Not cool, man.”  
Ally’s laughter echoed through the room. “Deal. This is gonna be fu  
I want. “So fun.” I feigned a smile, wondering what the fuck I had gotten  
Levi is into.

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“Hey!” I called out, instantly covering myself. “Not cool, man.”

Ally’s laughter echoed through the room. “Deal. This is gonna be fun.”

“So fun.” I feigned a smile, wondering what the fuck I had gotten myself into.

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### 3

## ALLY

*I* t's not a heart attack, it's just anxiety.

I leaned back in the seat of the private jet, my heart literally *pc* in my ears. I shut my eyes, trying not to panic—or check my Apple w see just how fast my heart was going in my chest. Gripping the arm took a couple of deep breaths.

*You've got this, Ally. It's just a plane. You've been on them before.*

But honestly, I wasn't sure if it was the small private jet that was ge me, or the fact that Levi and I were completely *alone* on said jet figured his parents would be attending the wedding...

But surprise!

They weren't.

“You want a barf bag or something?” Levi's amused voice broke i thoughts. “You seriously look like you might vomit—and I don't real to be the one who cleans that up.”

“Shut up and leave me alone,” I snapped, peeking over at him. H were bright with pure humor and his lips curled up in a smirk.

He was eating this up.



“We haven’t gone over your rules,” he continued, ignoring my protest. “Could you at least hand over the book of papers that I know you wrote? I’m bored as hell, and you’re clearly not in sound mind.”

I groaned, my stomach lurching. “You’re literally so annoying.”

“And you’re a peach, yourself. I need to go over those conditions we land so I know what we can or can’t do. It’s already obvious that you’re not getting to join the mile high club.”

My eyes fluttered open at the comment, and I whipped my head around. “Don’t be so vulgar, Levi. That’s going to make Frank think you’re immature.”

He rolled his eyes and slipped across the aisle to take a seat next to me. “I’m aware that I’m going to have to put a filter on, Ally.” He held out a hand to me, and I eyed it, not sure if he wanted a handshake or the papers.

*Right.*

I leaned down to my bag and fished the stack out. “Here. I have a contract too, but I want to discuss anything before you just go marking it out.”

“Well, if it’s in regards to not getting my mile high club card, I intend to do that with you.” He chuckled and grabbed the contract, his face fading. “Jesus, you *really* went all in with this.”

“I covered my bases, yeah.” I shrugged, my heart finally calming down. Maybe the distraction was exactly what I needed. “I’m risking my life to do this with you, and I wanted to set my boundaries.”

“I respect that,” Levi replied, his eyes scanning the formal contract. He didn’t need to know that I had borrowed most of it from the internet. I was just tweaking a very strange prenup I’d found on Reddit. “No kissing;

request grabbed the sharpie from my hand and popped the cap off. “That one  
ote up?go.”

My mouth dropped open. “No, it doesn’t.”

“Yes, it does. If we don’t kiss at all, it’ll be super suspect. We *have*  
before at least once or twice—and we don’t have to tell Josh about it,” he  
I won’t giving me a wink. “He wouldn’t understand that it’s solely business.”

I blew out a sigh. “No tongue then.”

around. He snorted. “Oh my god, you sound like a middle schooler right now  
're still “And you sound like a dick.”

“So offended.” He laughed, his eyes going back to the line of rules  
to me. of these are okay. The *no butt touching* is a little disappointing, but w  
out his—does that include a nice light loving smack?”

.. “The I rolled my eyes. “No ass touching, smacking, brushing, groping—”

“Okay, that’s enough. I think I get the point.” He looked over at  
sparkle of amusement in his eyes causing my stomach to flip.

sharpie Ugh.

“So, if we don’t sleep in the same bed, where *do* we sleep? It wou  
do *not* really weird if we didn’t share a room. I only booked one for us.”

s laugh “I’m sure there’s a couch,” I pointed out, narrowing my eyes at him.

“Oh, come on,” he whined, his shoulders dropping. “I don’t want t  
; in myon the couch. It’s a Cali king bed. We’ll just put up a massive row of p  
a lot to You’ve seen those people on reality TV shows—they can sleep platc  
in a bed.”

act. He I shook my head at the strange reference. “Those people also walk  
nترنت, half naked and are apparently looking for love at the same time. This  
g?” Hereality TV show, and if I have to, *I* will sleep on the couch.”

He sighed. “No, you definitely won’t. I might be a dick, like you s

has to think I am, but I'm not going to make you do that. I'll take the c  
though I really think you should consider the pillow barrier idea."

I blinked a couple of times, unable to hide my smile. "I'll *consider* i  
to kiss "Good enough." He flipped to the next page, his face contortin  
added, concentration. Levi used the sharpie to keep his place, carefully readi  
line that Linley and I had written. His jaw tensed every so ofte  
occasionally he chuckled.

v." I drummed my fingers on my newly spray-tanned bare thighs, n  
shorts riding up. Despite everything being platonic, I had used the vac  
. "Mosta reason to purchase all new clothing, wanting to ensure that I lool  
hateververy best around the elite crowd. I had grown up around it since Jo  
Levi were best friends, and our families had become close because of t  
But I was hardly wealthy.

me, the My parents were business owners of a couple dry-cleaning place  
were middle class, and that was it. We never wanted for anything,  
wore secondhand clothes and drove used cars. I didn't mind it, real  
ld lookstill searched the clearance rack despite now making more than both  
parents ever did.

. "There's nothing really to argue with." Levi signed the bottom  
to sleepcontract with the black marker. "I just don't get why you felt the nee  
pillows.so detailed." There was a hint of offense in his voice—and it was  
onicallysurprising.

"Like I said earlier, I just wanted to cover my bases, Levi." I to  
aroundpapers from him and shoved them back in my bag.

isn't a "I get that, but I'm not some stranger," he reasoned, his gaze locki  
mine. I instantly bit my lip, my breath catching.

seem to *What the hell is wrong with me?*

ouch— “Josh is my *best* friend. There’s no way I wouldn’t uphold my end of the deal, even if it’s going to cost me a pretty penny. I’ve never wronged any of the people that I care about.”

ing with “Right, but I’m *not* Josh.” My voice came out less confident than I intended it to, and I cleared my throat, looking away. “I know that you’ve always been loyal to him, but this is totally different.”

“He’s like my brother, and while you and I *definitely* don’t get along, there’s no way that I would ever do something that would hurt Josh. I know that hurting you or backing out of the deal would hurt Josh.”

ked my I glanced back at him, the sincerity striking. “I believe you, but I don’t want to be safe. It’s not going to be easy for me to maintain this level of loyalty... lie.”

He nodded. “I get that. Speaking of, we need to lay out and agree on our terms. The history between us if people ask. Rachel already knows you, and she knows that we *never* saw eye to eye. It’ll be a shocking relationship to say the least, and... “Okay, but that was years ago, and I was just a teenager when the two of you were together. Things change as people get older and *mature*.”

“Yeah, yeah. That’s a good point. So maybe we reconnected when you came to work for Mom this last year?”

ould be “I’ve worked for your mom for nearly two and a half years now. I’ll be a little corrected him, letting out a sigh. “That won’t work.”

“Oh, damn. Didn’t realize it’s been that long.” He huffed, slinking back into his seat. “So, maybe we met up at a party, we had a few too many drinks together, and ta-da! Love.”

ng with I wrinkled my nose. “Uh, no. That’s not romantic at all. There’s no way that would happen. I don’t even go to parties anymore. I only go occasionally. I *think* we should have a better story than that.”

l of the “Like what?” He sounded less than enthused. “Because everyone  
ged the that I’m not exactly the best representative of romance.”

“But if you *matured*, met a girl who was up to your standards, a  
than I were serious about chasing her—winning her heart—you *would*.”  
you’ve His face shifted to deep thought, and my eyes drifted to his biceps  
and layered with ink of some sort of gladiator tattoo. “I guess that  
along, make sense.”

h—and “So, if you found a girl that you *really* liked, what would you do to  
heart?”

t I just He shrugged, staying quiet as he played with his Rolex watch. “  
vel of a know really, but I would make sure that it was something *big*. I’d p  
show up to her house with roses—or maybe do the eighties kind  
n some scene, the whole boom box over my head. Make it iconic.”

he also I nodded. “Okay, so you developed a crush on me, and then—”

her.” “And then I took you out on the yacht, saying we were going sta  
two of with Josh. You wouldn’t have believed it, but you would’ve gone out  
curiosity. It would’ve been a trick, and ended up being just the two of  
en you have roses, wine, and we would’ve stargazed, spending all night talkin

My eyebrows raised. “That’s...that’s impressive, actually. I never w  
ow,” I thought you had that in you.”

He rolled his eyes at me before continuing. “And that was three  
lown in ago. We got serious really fast, but we’ve kept it on the down-low, l  
y, slept we’re not about labels—and wanted to make sure it was real before  
our families.”

also no “But the wedding is kind of our way of letting everyone know,” I  
go out liking where he was going with it. “Also, why aren’t your parents com

“It’s their anniversary, and they’re taking a trip to Fiji.”

knows *Must be nice.*

“Oh, cool. Great. Happy anniversary to them.” I made a mental note and told Lisa and tell her.

“Yeah, for sure.” He leaned his head back against the seat and sighed, tone-deaf. “This is such a long flight.”

“And it’s impossible to get comfortable enough to sleep,” I muttered under my breath, shifting in the seat, wishing that I could get some desperately needed shut-eye. I curled up my legs, turning sideways in the seat so my feet were looking out the window. The ocean blue beneath us was a little jarring. I don’t never liked flying over the water. Taking a few deep breaths, I closed my eyes.

*Everything is going to be just fine. Two weeks in paradise and if all goes well, I get to walk away as a millionaire. My parents can retire. I can buy a nicer house. It’ll be great.*

The fatigue slipped up as my mind eased, and I let myself slip right into the cozy warmth filling my body, dreaming of sandy beaches...

And then as soon as I drifted off, I woke up.

To a *freight train* of a snore.

And the scent of something sexy and masculine—a mixture of sandalwood and bergamot. Blinking my eyes, I saw nothing but dark denim, and the pressure of a hand resting on my back. My heart nearly *stopped*.

*Oh my god.*

*I’m lying on Levi’s lap.*

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## 4

### LEVI

**M**y eyes took in the sight of her, stepping out of the bathroom droplets slipping down her bare legs from underneath the gray *Holy fuck.*

“Sorry, I forgot my clothes.” Ally gave me a sheepish smile, her auburn hair towel dried and spilling over her shoulders.

I nodded, deciding to stay quiet on the matter as she scooped a sm of folded clothing from the top of her leather suitcase. The light spr freckles on her shoulders caught my eye, and I felt something stir in th my stomach.

*Get it under control.*

Shifting my weight on the bed, I tried to follow my own advice, t when she disappeared back into the bedroom. The image of her nake filled my mind, her perky breasts only making my arousal more intens

*Fuck me for walking in that night.*

I had never looked twice at Ally in any way other than just as an ar younger sister, but the moment I stepped into that bathroom, a little up, things shifted. Granted, she was still Josh’s annoying little sister, b



*Damn, she was fine.*

Her small chest led to a small waist, luscious, curvy hips, and a per—though I hadn't gotten a good view of it that night. She was all I about for weeks afterward during my *private* time.

Which was a little embarrassing.

“Do you think this is okay for the dinner party?” Ally’s voice into my thoughts, and I grabbed a pillow, resting it over my bulging lap.

I took in the flowy burgundy top paired with white shorts and s “You look ho—good. It’s just a casual dinner. I think that’ll do.”

l, water “Were you about to say I look homeless?” She folded her arms ac  
towel. chest. “Because I know this spray tan makes me feel like I’m *always* :  
dirty.”

er dark I laughed. “I wasn’t going to say homeless, but now that you mentio  
Her shoulders dropped. “Seriously? Levi, I’m not kidding. I need t  
a good first impression.”

all pile Ally’s worry was actually...*endearing*.

nkle of “You look fine. But just as a little advice, there’s more confidence  
ie pit of trying too hard. You’re dressed like you always do, and that’s t  
representation of you. It makes you authentic. I don’t want you to cc  
like you’re trying to impress them. We’re here for the wedding, to  
hankful good time. I want him to think the business deal is secondary.”

rd body “Wow, deep thoughts.” She snorted before going for her bag. “V  
e. you wearing?”

moying “I don’t know—some gray pants and a button up. I don’t worry abc  
boozed I dress,” I added, shrugging my shoulders. “I always look good.”

ut... The way she rolled her eyes made me laugh, and I scooted to the  
the bed, still holding the pillow over my throbbing erection as m

drifted back to her bare legs. “I *am* going to go shower now, so you’re perfect ass in the bathroom, right?”

thought She stood up, turning to give me a weird look. “Does it not look like I should I put on more makeup?”

I groaned. “Women, I swear. I just wanted to make sure the bathroom was clear. I’m going to shower.”

“You said that already.”

sandals. “Right.” I stood up carefully from the puffy white duvet on the bed, dropping the pillow and keeping my back turned to Ally.

across her “Are you sore or something?” she asked as I sidestepped awkwardly, making sure she did *not* catch sight of something I didn’t want to explain.

“Yeah, something like that.”

in it...” Her laughter filled the beachy resort suite. “Maybe dancing will help to make those muscles.”

*You could say that.*

A sigh escaped my lips as I shut the bathroom door behind myself. I was in *not* expected room sharing with Ally to be just that—room sharing. The best apparently, my body just really *wasn’t* going to let go of how attracted I was to her. I grabbed a towel and turned on the water of the open, tub to have a shower.

*Why is every shower open like this?*

What’re Letting out a grunt, I hung the towel on the hook and stepped in, the water pelting my shoulders. My eyes shifted to the door, double-checking out how that I had really turned the lock.

And I had.

edge of My erection was still throbbing and as the water ran down my back, my eyes my mind lose control, playing out what I’d *really* wanted to do with

re done walked into the room with just that towel on...

*I walked up to her and pulled the damp fabric free from her body. "What the hell am I doing? Just get it out of the way." My eyes drifted to her chest, flat abdomen, those fucking curvy hips.*

om was *"Fuck me, Levi," she whined, her bright blue eyes begging mine. "I want to feel you inside of me."*

My breath hitched as I stroked myself, more turned on than ever. In the bed, *I brushed my fingertips along her chin, threading my fingers through her damp hair. Cupping the back of her head, I brought her lips to mine. God, if I only knew how she tasted.*

*Ally let out a moan as her lips parted for me, and I dove into every inch of her mouth, my free hand sliding along her smooth skin. I gave her a deep open upsqueeze, savoring the moan escaping from her lips.*

*She tugged at the bottom of my shirt, and I pulled it over my head, shedding the rest of my clothes. Ally came at me, shoving me toward the bed. I had her sit down, pulling her onto my lap. The moisture between her legs was thick. I pressed against my shaft, and I let out a groan as I grabbed a condom.*

d I was *I slipped it on as I felt her lips on my neck, and then she lowered her head and kissed me down on me.*

*And fuck.*

The knock on the door caused me to jump sideways. e warm *"Levi, are you coming?" Ally shouted from the other side of the door. "We're supposed to meet everyone in ten minutes. I don't think it looks like we're going to be late."*

*"Really, Ally?" I called back, turning off the water and grabbing a towel. "You're not my mom."*

en she *Guess it's a good thing I didn't get dirty on the flight.*

I quicklytoweled off and wrapped the towel around my waist. “Let’s swing the bathroom door open—Ally was standing *right* there, hands on hips, eyes staring right up into mine. “Why are you being creepy?”

“Says the man who walked in on me in the shower,” she shot back, narrowing her eyes and stepping to the side. “Like I said, I just thought I should make a good impression. We really don’t want to be late.”

“We’re not going to be late, Ally.” I let out a sigh and dug through my clothes I had planned on wearing. I grabbed a pair of boxer briefs, and was just about to drop my towel when I realized that was a bad idea. “Could you like look somewhere else?” I said to Ally, who was still glaring at me. A towel was tucked under her chin, and a towel was tucked under her arm.

“Right, sorry,” she muttered, spinning around and disappearing into the hallway toward the door.

I chuckled, dropping my towel and wishing she would’ve waited a few more seconds before interrupting me. I got dressed and headed back to the bathroom, passing right by Ally, who was staring into her phone near the door. I peeked over her shoulder, seeing an Instagram post—one from her old ex.

“Why do you even bother to follow that douche?” I commented, grabbing my comb and fixing my hair.

“I don’t follow him,” she quipped, dropping her phone to her side and looking up at me.

“So you just happened to see his post then? Because that makes no sense. I don’t think that’s how the algorithm works.”

“Okay, well, he’s dating one of my old friends from college, who was just...weird.” She shook her head, looking more perplexed than ever.

“Why is that weird? Didn’t you date him back in college?” I never

before knew the guy other than the few times that Ally brought him around, her blue was a smartass. “Maybe they just reconnected.”

“Yeah, but that still doesn’t make it any less weird. They used to crack at me, other bro and sis. I just think that’s weird.”

Thank you I shrugged, setting the comb down and grabbing my watch. “I guess change sometimes. Still, stay away from that guy.”

He then to the “You don’t have to worry about that,” she laughed, just as I sprayed and was cologne. Her nose crinkled as I sat the container down.

Can you “What? Does the smell not suit your fancy or something?”

He, arms Not that I cared.

“Uh, no, it’s fine. I just caught a big whiff.” She cleared her throat and then headed toward the door. “Kind of suffocating.”

“Good, keep you from getting too close and breaking the rules,” I said a few grabbing the handle and holding it open for her. We stepped out into the hallway and headed toward the grand staircase, leading to the ballroom near the restaurant below. I scanned the area, looking for any familiar faces.

Then Brad, “Did they rent out this whole place for the wedding?” Ally’s

voice sounded distant as we headed down the stairs, my focus on the seating

arranging “I don’t know. They *did* rent it for Trey’s wedding a few years back

I shrugged, my eyes finally landing on a table of familiar faces. “Found

him and “What?”

I grabbed Ally’s hand, intertwining my fingers with hers. “Just be cool sense. I best behavior.”

She met my eyes with complete indifference. “The only person you should be worried about is yourself, Levi. If anyone is getting us in trouble, it’s going to be you.”

It really I rolled my eyes, tugging her along toward the bar on the far side,

and he from the table where Rachel and her parents were sitting. “We’re not going to go straight to the introductions. I think we should have a drink first, all each two of us.”

“Because that’s what a normal couple would do,” she added, giving us things approving glance and falling in step beside me. We walked past the table. I peeked over at Rachel, who was staring right at the two of us.

and some *Perfect.*

“What can I get for you?” the bartender, a pretty young blonde, asked.

“I’ll have a piña colada” Ally beamed, giving the woman a smile. She slid onto one of the stools.

coat and “And I’ll just have whatever beer you have on tap,” I said to her, turning to Ally. “We need to make sure we look like we’re getting along.” I joked. Carefully, I placed my hand on her thigh, a jolt of excitement slid into me through my core.

each side *Jesus, Levi. Get it together. You’re not sixteen.*

“This is breaking the rules,” Ally squeaked, her reddening cheeks surprising me.

below. “No, it’s not,” I argued, continuing toward her knee. “You listed back.” *Specific* places on your body, and your legs were not on the list.”

them.” “Levi...” Her voice trailed off, though her tone was that of a warning.

The sound of our drinks hitting the bar in front of us caught my attention and I met the brown eyes of the bartender.

“Thank you,” I said, giving her a smile. “You can put it on my room number 204.”

ple, it’s “Perfect,” she cooed, running her tongue along her plump lips.

“Anything else for you?”

not far *Really? Ally is right here.*

going to “Nope, we’re good, thanks,” Ally chimed in, her voice painfully  
just theHer hand brushed mine, and suddenly she was leaning into my shoulder

Claiming her territory.

g me an And *fuck*, that was hot.

ole, and *But it’s just a game.*

“Of course, have a great evening,” the woman replied, giving Ally  
before walking away to another couple of customers. Ally pushed her  
ed us. of me the moment the bartender turned around.

as she Disappointment hit me square in the chest.

Man, this was going to be interesting.

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ed lips.

“Nope, we’re good, thanks,” Ally chimed in, her voice painfully sweet. Her hand brushed mine, and suddenly she was leaning into my shoulder...

Claiming her territory.

And *fuck*, that was hot.

*But it’s just a game.*

“Of course, have a great evening,” the woman replied, giving Ally a smile before walking away to another couple of customers. Ally pushed herself off of me the moment the bartender turned around.

Disappointment hit me square in the chest.

Man, this was going to be interesting.

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*I swear, women just flock to him.*

I took a sip of my drink, my lip curling at the amount of alcohol. I figured that she would mess it up after the way her eyes had raked over me. It didn't necessarily *bother* me, but I was in this predicament to win.

And I was *not* going to lose out on a million for some blonde babe making eyes at him.

"You good?" Levi's brows were furrowed at me, his head tilted slightly. "Because I would figure you'd need to come up for air at some point."

*Right.*

I sat my drink on the bar, realizing that it was already halfway gone. "I was just prepping myself to socialize. It's what I do."

"Uh huh," Levi chuckled. "And considering you don't get out much, I think you should probably slow down. I saw you at the Christmas party last year."

My mouth dropped open. "I wasn't even that drunk at the Christmas party."

“Yeah, because standing in a chair and singing Jingle Bells with the is something you’d do stone-cold sober.”

*Oof.*

“Leroy is a really good singer,” I muttered, my cheeks feeling ho thought. I *had* gotten a little out of control, but everyone else seemed t enjoy it.

“You’re not though.” He snorted, taking a huge swig of his beer.

“I am well aware.” I laughed, relaxing a little. My eyes flickered the table where Rachel Lewis, her parents, and a man I figured to fiancé were seated. They were laughing and chatting, and I couldn’t l admire Rachel. She was Hollywood gorgeous with long dark hair, oliv and bright green eyes. A perfect ten.

That’s what she was.

And there was no way in *hell* that she was going to buy Levi dat Don’t get me wrong, I was a pretty woman—and I had no problem c the attention of the male gaze. However, I wasn’t Hollywood pretty.

I was just...*normal*.

“Let’s go.” Levi grabbed my hand and pulled me toward the table.

Apprehension built in my chest as I put the best smile I could on n approaching a table full of wealthy socialites—the kind that I had neve been around.

“Levi Lombardi, is that you?” An older, white-haired man said, set drink down on the table. “Well, I had no idea that you were coming.”

“Wouldn’t miss it,” Levi replied, not missing a beat. “It’s good to s Frank. This is my girlfriend, Ally Montgomery.”

The older gentlemen, Frank, turned to me, his eyes narrowing s “You sure look familiar. Have we met before?”

janitor “I work as Lisa Lombardi’s CPA for her investment company,” giving him a smile. “I think I’ve been present in a few meetings, but the only way I would think we’d have met.”

at the “Wait, are you Josh’s younger sister?” Rachel suddenly chimed in, leaning forward in her chair, curiosity filling her emerald-green eyes.

*Stunning.*

“I am,” I answered, ensuring my tone stayed light. “Is this your fiancée?” I gestured to the dark-headed hunk sitting beside her. He was like Thor, but in a business suit—and a little unpleasant.

“This is Rex Shultz, my fiancé,” she said in response, looking right at me. Levi, who had placed his hand on my shoulder. “He has a small ownership in Ferrari.”

“Like the car—”

“Impressive,” Levi cut me off, sticking out his hand. “I’m Levi.”

Rex looked unenthused but shook his hand. “I know who you are. Your heavy southern European accent caught my attention, seemingly a little out of place with his looks, but I didn’t press. “It’s nice to meet you though. Thanks for coming.”

“Wouldn’t miss a chance to celebrate any win for the Lewis family,” Frank really continued, his attention shifting back to Frank. “So, where’s Trey?”

Frank’s smile shifted downward. “He couldn’t make it I suppose. He’s settling his some new business deal in New York that he had to settle.”

“And it was apparently more important than my wedding,” Rachel snapped, her irritation jolting. “But you know how he is.”

“Family should always come first,” Frank agreed with her, giving her a slightly sympathetic look. “No matter how great a business deal, nothing above the people in our lives.”

I said, I nodded, realizing what Levi had meant when he said that Frank it that's about family—we hadn't talked more than a few minutes and he was pointing out values.

leaning “Why don't you take a seat with us?” An older version of Rachel knew to be her mom, Liz, gestured to a couple of empty chairs at the table. “There's no need to be strangers.”

“Thank you.” I Levi pulled out a chair for me, and I took a seat beside Frank. I only in down beside me, placing his hand lightly on my thigh. A jitter of excitement rolled through my body.

“Right past Ugh. What is it about this place that makes me feel like this?”

partial “Maybe it's the alcohol.”

“So, I'm just *dying* to know...” Rachel leaned against her hand, resting on the table. “How in the hell did you two end up together when we all hung out, I thought Ally drove you insane.”

“I see.” The “And there it is.”

“I'm out of Levi shrugged beside me. “I guess things just changed between us. Thanks was young, and I was really immature back then.”

“Smooth.”

“Right,” Levi Frank chuckled. “You were one heck of a kid. I wasn't sure you'd slow down and grow up.”

He had “Ouch.”

“Yeah.” Levi's smile stayed plastered on his face. “Something like Rachel just know that one day I walked past Ally's office and saw her in a dim light. She works her ass off, and my mom swears that she's never had a CPA.”

“It comes Frank's eyebrows shot up at the comment. “Coming from Lisa that's impressive. She wouldn't say such a thing if she didn't mean it.”

was all “Thank you.” I beamed, taking a sip from my drink. I glanced already Rachel, who was still watching me closely.

And it was nerve-racking as hell.

, who I “And I take it you’re still working for your father?” Liz asked, looking at the table. Levi. “The last I talked to Margo, she said that you had moved up to

That’s a big deal, congratulations.”

Levi sat “Thank you,” Levi replied, acting as nonchalant as ever.

interruption “So how long have the two of you been together?” Rachel interrupted conversation, her eyes bouncing between the two of us. “This is *shocking* coupling. I never would’ve seen it coming.”

“We’ve only been together a few months,” I answered before Levi. “It shocked me too. I always thought he was the most insufferable I’ve ever met, but I guess it turns out he has a hidden romantic side.”

Rachel took a sip of her drink. “Now *that* is a side of Levi that definitely never seen. Please share how in the world this man is so romantic. In our entire relationship, I don’t think he bought me flowers than just once or twice.”

I glanced over to Levi, giving him a look of disbelief. “Really?” He shrugged. “I was just a kid.”

*A really dumb one.*

“Hardly.” Rachel’s crisp, somewhat salty response was surprising to me. I couldn’t help but check out Rex’s reaction to it.

Nothing.

The man was lost in his cell phone.

Modern day love was weird.

, that’s “So, on our first date—one that he tricked me into,” I began, mustering my courage to take the plunge, “he took me out on a yacht, and w

over to stargazing. It was really romantic. We talked all night, and yeah.”

Rachel did *not* look impressed. “Hmm, well, I suppose that’s better than being dragged to a house party for your first date. That’s what he did to you know. And *then* he forgot about me. He and Josh went home, leaving me to call Trey to pick me up.”

“Okay, we *really* don’t have to discuss that,” Levi leveled, shooting a glare across the table that could kill. “I was nineteen years old, and I had no idea what I was doing.”

“Trust fund baby problems,” I mumbled under my breath, glancing at Levi across the table. I had never felt more disconnected from a group of people than I could. *How does Josh manage this?*

He had tailed along with Levi for years to all the high-class events before he even graduated high school. He made it look easy, and he had once mentioned to me that he felt out of place.

But my brother had charisma that I didn’t.

“I think I’m going to get another beer,” Levi said, breaking my train of thought. “Would you like another drink?” He looked over to me, motioning with his hand toward the nearly empty glass.

“Sure.” I smiled up at him.

He nodded, his expression less confident than it had been a few months prior to us talking to the Lewis family. Levi turned around and walked through the tables, heading back to the blonde behind the bar.

“So, why did Lisa hire you?” Rachel asked, her tone less than pleased.

I took a deep breath—she was really going after me. “I was the top of my graduating class at UCLA and I got my master’s degree while working full-time for Nike. She took me in as an intern after that, and my job just took off from there.”

“Wow, you must have some work ethic,” Frank chimed in, giving her a warmer smile—the opposite vibe from what his daughter was giving me. “That’s really spectacular. Your brother is smart too, though. I’m not surprised at all when he landed the job working for Bitco as the sales director.”

I think you both must be products of a very hardworking family.”

“Thank you,” I said, genuinely touched by the compliment. “My parents owned two dry cleaners in the city, and they always worked very hard.

*Which is why I want to give back to them.*

“I came from very humble beginnings, and I think anyone can work their way to the top if they just have the grit to do so.”

“Do you ever take on any side projects?” Rachel asked, her voice soft—since from bratty to just curious.

“I do occasionally,” I answered, my eyes flickering toward the blonde who was leaning against the bar, speaking to the bartender, and based on the look on her face...

I might be in trouble.

“I’m working on a new cosmetics line, and I do have a reliable accountant to handle some of the books, but it would be nice to have a second set of eyes go over it. Any time there’s an opportunity to hire a woman, I’m all in for female empowerment.”

I nodded, finishing the rest of my drink. “I’d be more than happy to help more about it.” My eyes shifted back toward the bar at the sound of laughter.

*You’ve got to be kidding me.*

The blonde had her phone out, showing Levi something on the screen, getting full-flirty giggles making my stomach flip. If I didn’t get over there, he would blow the deal before it even made it to the table.

Looking back at Rachel, I saw the sympathy on her face—and the

g me a confirmed my fears. “I should probably call it a night,” I choked out, p  
ng off. back from the table. “The jet lag is giving me a headache.”

wasn’t “Of course, we’ll see you tomorrow.” Frank beamed, not connect  
lirector.dots.

That I was aware of anyway.

parents I bid them all goodnight and headed for the bar, looping my arm  
” through Levi’s. “We need to call it a night.”

“What? Why?” He turned to me, giving me an annoyed look.  
rk their coming back with your drink.”

“Oh *right*, the drinks,” the bartender cooed, tapping Levi’s bicep.  
shifting “Don’t worry about it,” I quipped, dragging Levi away from the  
have a headache.”

ur. Levi “Do you?” Levi asked, everyone at the table waving as we passed.

look on “I don’t,” I sneered as we made it to the stairs. “But you *have* to g  
shit together, Levi. You can’t be bugging off and flirting with the bar  
That’s *not* what a mature boyfriend does. It made you look bad.”

CPA to “Oh, come on—”

eyes to “No,” I chided him, stopping at the top of the stairs, out of sigl  
for it—everyone. “Everyone at the table noticed, especially Rachel. We’re nc  
a good start.”

to talk He sighed, running his fingers through his hair. “Fine.”

ighter. “Good.” I spun on my heel and headed toward the room. “  
definitely sleeping on the couch, by the way.”

en, her “Aw come on, Ally,” he whined from behind me. “You saw that thi  
s going tiny.”

“Don’t flirt with blonde bartenders and we’ll discuss a change in ter  
at only



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## 6

### LEVI

“Oh my god,” I groaned, running my fingers through my hair as though I had slept on cardboard the entire night. My six-foot-three-inch frame did *not* fit comfortably on the small couch in the room of the suite. In fact, based on the sharp pains in my neck and shoulders, I probably would’ve been better off crashing on the floor.

I reached for my phone, and nearly rolled my eyes at just how early it was. It was barely six a.m., but as much as I wanted to just roll over and go to sleep, there was no way that was happening. Grunting out in pain, I pushed up and rolled my shoulders, desperate to relieve the tension. Even though the soft light of dawn filled the room around me, and I couldn’t help but glance over to where she was still sleeping.

It was kind of...*cute*.

Her face was pleasant, and the low light in the room illuminated her creamy skin. Her high cheekbones were still naturally shaded with pink, and everything about her was pretty. But really, she was more than beautiful in the moment, she was...*enchanting*.

*Man, I must really be tired.*

I shook my head at just how ridiculous I was sounding in the moment. A lack of sleep must've been hitting me in weird ways—which is exactly what I needed to get out and clear my head. Grabbing some black running shorts and a white t-shirt, I got dressed and laced up my running shoes. Before stepping out of the room, I chugged a water.

You know, staying hydrated and all that.

Relief flooded through my body as I made my way toward the beach, picking up into a jog. Something about working myself physically put my mind at ease, and as my breaths deepened I started to think less about everything going on. My eyes scanned the blue waters, and I didn't realize I was running *right* past Rachel.

Until she grabbed my arm.

Startled, I put on my brakes, stopping and spinning around to find a dark-headed, exotic ex-girlfriend. Rachel was a stunner, though I wasn't attracted to her in that way anymore.

"Hey," she greeted me, her thick lips curling up into a smile. "I don't expect to see you out here running. You never did that much running the day. Mostly just a gym rat." She eyed my biceps, which I had to admit *might* have been a little smaller than they used to be...

But still.

*Ouch.*

"Yeah, I actually still go to the gym, but running seems to clear my mind more than lifting weights." I rocked back on my heels, her scrutinizing catching me off guard a little. "I just try to put my mental health first. You know, I have a business to run. It's important to keep a clear head."

"Right." She nodded, though her tone was that of disbelief. "And your relationship with Alley wouldn't have anything to do with *why*

ent. The out here running at the crack of dawn?”

Why I “Yeah, I have no idea what you’re getting at, so I’m gonna go ahead and keep going...” I motioned awkwardly down the beach, taking a step in the slipping direction. “I need to keep my time...”

“You know you hurt Ally last night?” she snapped at me before slipping away. “That was the same shit you used to do to me back when we were sandy together, and it just goes to show that some things never change physically seriously, that was so embarrassing for her!”

My stomach clenched at the irritation in her voice. “I, uh, didn’t...I—” She cut me off by holding up a hand. “I don’t need to hear your explanation just saw the way she reacted to seeing that, and then the way she had you out of there. Like, come on, Levi. It just wasn’t fair to her. You basically dumped her off at our table and made your exit like it was no big deal. It wasn’t—I nodded. It was no secret now that Rachel wasn’t impressed at all my actions—and maybe there was some validity to what she and Ally [I] didn’t saying. “Yeah, well, it’s not really like that...” I choked out, not sure what I *should* say. All I knew was that I did *not* want to lose this deal.

And Rachel thinking I hadn’t changed...

That could be a problem.

“I’m just disappointed, that’s all. I was really hoping that you had grown up, especially considering what Ally was saying about your first date. My head was really cute, and I thought you know, the two of you *actually* are looking cute together.”

“Right,” I said with a nod, my head beginning to spin. “I was just trying to get our drinks and that bartender was being so flirty—I just was trying to be I guess friendly.”

“While ditching your beautiful, intelligent, charming girlfriend. I

her—I really do.”

read and “I better get back. I told her that I was going to pick her up breakfast in that was finished running—I don’t want her waiting on me,” I said continuing spinning around.

I could “*Right*. Well, why don’t the two of you come play beach volleyball after lunch today?” Rachel laughed before heading off at a jog herself. I chuckled as I left her, though I didn’t feel any sense of humor. I was borderline panicked.

—” *I have to make this right.*

Jumping over the beach chairs and sprinting back to the resort, I stopped at the gift shop, buying a bouquet of bright exotic flowers. I tucked it under my arm and picked up a few doughnuts for Ally as well. If I was to play the game, I needed to do it right.

Because I needed to win.

Using my hip, I pushed open the door to our room, my gaze going to Ally, who was still sleeping. Taking a deep breath, I steadied myself, which must’ve been racing because of how fast I’d been moving.

“Good morning.” I cleared my throat, stepping up to the side of the bed. Ally’s eyes fluttered open, her blue irises reminding me of the water just viewed on my run. “What is this?” She pointed to the flowers and me. That was holding, her voice full of sleep.

“Uh, it’s for you.” I held out the flowers as she sat up in bed.

Suspicion was written all over her face as she narrowed her eyes, trying to take the bouquet from my hands. “You got me flowers?”

“And doughnuts.” I held out the small white bakery box and smiled, offering an apology for last night. I shouldn’t have been flirty with the bartender. “I mean, she doesn’t even hold a candle to you. You’re way hotter.”

She laughed, shaking her head, though she did accept the box. “You know that these grand gestures are great, Levi, but...” Her voice trailed off quickly, and she opened the box, revealing three heart-shaped doughnuts.

“Those are especially made for you,” I pointed out, wiggling my eyebrows at her as she looked back up at me, her auburn hair in a messy bun on her head. I didn’t even want to admit how gorgeous she looked.

In fact, I “This is really nice of you, but Levi”—she reached out, gripping my forearm—“a gesture done behind closed doors doesn’t help impress Frisby.”  
*Right.*

I plopped in “It might put you in a better mood—and get me off that.” I pointed to the couch. “I mean, I slept like *shit* last night. Everything on my body is going today.”

“That’s really dramatic,” she snorted, taking a massive bite out of the doughnut. The pink glaze matched her nails, and something about the way she ate it straight the moment even more adorable. “But we’ll see. This bed is *really* comfortable—comfortable. I guess maybe I could share at some point.”

“Oh, come on,” I whined, plopping down on the bed beside her. “If I don’t get a decent sleep, I’ll ruin this for the both of us.”

Or I had “Wow, so you’re trying to blackmail me into letting you share the bed?” She shook her head, handing me one of the doughnuts. “It’s very sneaky of you. I have to say...” Her voice trailed off as her eyes held mine. “It’s obvious. You’re good at playing the game.”

I couldn’t help but laugh, ignoring the way my heart flipped in my chest. “I am good at this.” I took the doughnut from her, shoving the entire thing into my mouth. Her eyes went wide as I downed the thing, before standing up and heading to the coffee machine. “You want coffee? We’re supposed to go to the beach volleyball with Rachel and Rex this afternoon.”

u know “Oh?” She picked up the flowers from the white duvet, putting them  
as sheher nose. “So when did you decide this?”

“I went for a run this morning,” I began, filling the coffee maker  
ebrows Rachel just so happened to be running down the beach as well. She in  
on herto come and play this afternoon. I thought it might be the perfect way  
our relationship out there. Rachel is going to be the hardest to convin  
ing myI’ve changed—and you were right, I’m not doing so great at that right  
ank.” need to get my head in the game.”

She nodded, flipping back the covers and revealing her long, tan le  
d to thebody stirred as I took in the way her shorts were tucked up around he  
y hurtsthighs.

*Fuck, she’s gorgeous.*

of her I ripped my eyes from her, spinning back to watch the coffee drip i  
it madepot. “It’s not until one p.m. though, so we can do whatever you want—  
big andcan do something on your own. I don’t want you to think that you  
spend the whole time with me. That might get annoying.”

f I keep “Uh, well.” Ally’s voice was closer. “It would look weird if we  
doing things together.”

e bed.” I spun back to look at her, startled to catch a whiff of her warm  
lky, butperfume. “Yeah, so that’s probably a good idea. I just know that w  
clever.really get along.”

“I think that we’ve been doing fine.” She shrugged her shoulder  
hest. “Ibrows furrowing. “We just have to keep reminding ourselves what v  
g in mythis for. Last night can’t happen again. I definitely think Rachel is sl  
up andof us, and I think that we’re going to have to prove her wrong.”

to play I nodded, pouring a cup of coffee and handing it to her. “Okay, so v  
you want to do? Wear matching outfits and go galivant around the isla



m up to She laughed, the sweet tone of it making me smile. “Nix the m  
outfits, but yeah, let’s go *galivant*.”

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She laughed, the sweet tone of it making me smile. “Nix the matching outfits, but yeah, let’s go *galivant*.”

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“I suck at volleyball.” I glanced up at Levi, who was giving me a look as we headed toward the beach after lunch. “Like, I’ve been very athletic. The closest thing I did to sports was the math team.”

“Great, so we’re gonna lose then,” he huffed, rolling his eyes. “lose. I knew you were a nerd, but geez.”

I shook my head. “Just when I thought you had the capability of a decent human being, you have to go and remind me just how arrogant you really are. I’ll be fine—and so what if we lose? It’s just a game.”

He chuckled at my comment and grabbed my hand, sending a jolt of excitement through my chest. “For the show.” He held my hand and furrowed my brows. “There’s no way I’d be walking around not holding your hand.”

“Okay.” I let out a sigh, looking away from him. I was so aware of his touch, more so than I had ever been before.

*It’s just because it’s Levi.*

Staring out at the ocean, I focused on the clear blue-green waters never been to place like this—probably because I couldn't afford it. breathtaking. I reached for my phone in the pocket of my shorts, seeing Levi at the edge of the water.

“What're you doing? It's already one o'clock—they're just down Levi pointed toward the group of people setting up a volleyball net.

“Okay, that's fine, but I want a picture of this.” Dropping his phone, he opened up the camera and held it up to capture the water. “I want to see everyone.”

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“Here.” He took the phone from my hands, gesturing for me to toward the water. “It'll be better with you in it.”

I spun around, hiding the blush growing on my cheeks. “Right.” My voice sounded squeaky, and I took a deep breath as I waded out into the Caribbean waters.

*Stop letting him get to you.*

“I don't think your family and Linley will want to just see a butt shot.” Turn around.” Levi's voice was full of amusement, and I shook my head and spun around. It was a good thing I had a naturally red complexion, otherwise, I'd be screwed.

“This better?” I forced the biggest cheesy smile of my life, throwing my arms up in the air and bending a little at the knees.

“Yeah, just like that.” Levi burst into laughter, his head tipping back.

I joined in before noticing that he was taking more pictures—and I was in the middle of the shot. I saw my reflection at the screen as he did. It was genuine too.

My heart flipped in my chest.

“That's probably good.” I cleared my throat, heading back toward him.

“Oh, absolutely not.”

s. I had “You want me to take your picture then?” I offered, holding out my phone. It was for my phone.

topping “Nah, I don’t need any solo pictures. I think we should take one together.”

Before I could say anything, he threaded his arm around my waist, pulling me into his chest. My breath hitched at the contact, and I hoped to God he didn’t notice. His fingers brushed my bare skin as my tank top blew up in the breeze, and my entire body reacted.

and it to *Embarrassing.*

“Smile.” He held my phone up, pressing his cheek against the top of the lens. I forced my best smile as he snapped a couple of pictures of me. Soon as he was done, I pulled away and grabbed my phone. I shoved it in my pocket, not even wanting to look any closer at what he’d captured. “Come on. We’re gonna be late,” I choked out, taking off toward the group of people just down the beach.

“Hey, wait!” Levi called after me.

But I didn’t.

I needed a break from being alone with him. I could still feel his touch—against my bare skin, and the excitement it had caused was just too much. If I wasn’t careful, I was going to lose my head.

And actually develop a crush on him.

*Yikes.*

“Hey, you two!” Rachel called out, adjusting her thick, white-rimmed sunglasses on her face. I glanced over, seeing that Levi had easily caught up to a jog beside me. “You made it just in time. Want something to drink?”

“Yeah, the cooler is right over here,” Frank spoke up, dropping his head from his face just long enough to give us both a smile and point to the Yeti just to the left of his beach chair.

my hand “The selection is shit,” Liz huffed, her displeasure visible even with her tacky, gaudy designer sunglasses on her face. “I wish we would’ve thought together.”

pulling Frank let out a heavy sigh. “I think the selection is just fine.”

God he “Well, then that’s all that matters.”

to a little Rachel laughed and shook her head at them. “Mom’s in a mood today.”

“She’s always in a mood,” Rex muttered under his breath from a few feet away.

to of my Rachel blinked a few times before clapping her hands together. “Come on, us. As ready for some beach volleyball? I know I am!”

to it back Levi and I exchanged a glance but nodded. This was going to be interesting.

to e group “Are you ready to kick some ass?” Rex shot a wink at Rachel.

“Wait.” I turned to Levi as the two of them positioned themselves on the other side of the net. “Is it just *us* against them? Like no one else is on our team?” I nervously glanced over to just Rex and Rachel, standing in a diagonal formation.

to vay too “Yeah, it’s just the four of us,” Rachel called out before Levi answered. “Most of the wedding party and guests aren’t arriving for a couple of days—and the ones who are here are too busy doing what they can to hang out.” She sounded a little put out about it, but I wasn’t going to

to rimmed “You’ll be fine.” Levi patted my shoulder, before guiding me to the right-hand upcorner, opposite Rachel. “I can cover most of the space.”

to :?” “Can you?” I spun around to look at him. “Because I don’t think I can understand—I’m *not* good at this kind of stuff.”

to e black “Fake it ‘til you make it.” He nodded, before jogging backward in time to his spot.

with her I turned back toward the net, my eyes landing on Rex, who was ready to bring the white and red ball.

*Oh my god, I'm going to make myself look like such an idiot.*

Heart pounding, the best I could hope for was that Levi really *could* fill all the space like he said he could. I mean, I wasn't like *scared* of the ball. "I just had *terrible* coordination. I was more of a spin class kind of give away feet." "Heyo!" Rex shouted as he popped the ball into the air. I was relieved that it was heading right to Levi. With ease, Levi tapped the ball back over the net. He hit it back and forth to them, and it wasn't long before I saw just how athletic Rachel was. She was dodging and diving to hit it to be *I am so not Levi's type*.

Which wasn't a surprise. I knew that I wasn't. But something about the thought in the moment made my stomach flip. I pushed some of my hair out of my face, and pulled the black hair tie off my wrist. "Oh, she's getting serious!" Rachel called out, a huge grin on her face as I put my hair up.

"She's not even doing anything," Rex laughed. "She is the epitome of standing there and looking pretty."

"Shut the fuck up," Levi shot back at him, startling me. "She'll win the next one, won't you, baby?"

*Baby.*

I whipped my head around, his dark hazel eyes jarring me a little. "I'll try."

He gave me a reassuring smile—another one that I'd never seen from before. He was *really* doing well at putting on a show.

"Here we go," Rex called out, serving the ball.

"It's yours." I heard Levi's voice behind me.

readying Anxiety filling my body, I went for the ball, mimicking the finger tap that Rachel did. I hit it straight up—and it did *not* go over the net. I stepped forward, tapping it just before it hit the ground...

and cover But his effort wasn't enough, and the ball whirled off to the right.

and all... Rex burst out into laughter. "I knew she wasn't any good."

and all. "Ignore him, Ally." Rachel gave me a smile. "He's just a trash talker. He's all bark, no bite. I swear, you can probably run circles around him. The ball comes to all that accounting you do."

before I That did *not* make me feel any less embarrassed in the moment.

... "You're just fine, Ally," Levi's voice came out soft beside me. "I know a solid hit, you just have to hit more toward that side." He gestured toward Rachel and Rex. "You've got this."

auburn A smile tugged at my lips as his hand brushed down my shoulder. I backed up into his corner and tossed the ball back to Rex.

ace as I "Should I go easy on her?" Rex teased, lowering his sunglasses to look right in the face.

ome of "Give me your worst," I called out to him, my voice coming out confident.

get this "Atta baby!" Levi hollered from behind me. "You heard the lady? Give us your worst."

He grinned and with one swoop of his arm, he served the ball. It went in Levi's direction first and he quickly hit right back over the net. It went back and forth, Rachel catching most of the hits on her side. After about six hits, Rex dove forward, and the ball flew *right* to me.

and Levi *Shit.*

It was a direct hit, just a couple inches above the net—the opposite of what it had come from above before.

*How the hell do I hit that?*



up thing I lunged and palmed it, but it came out in more of a downward motion. My dovehand collided with the ball, and it tipped back over the net, crashing between Rex's legs.

"Fucking spiked it!" Levi pumped his fist in the air and lunged forward, wrapping his arms around my waist. I squealed out with laughter as he spun me into the air. Rachel's laughter resonated in the background, and when it locked with Levi's as he sat me back to the ground.

But instead of backing away, he leaned right into me.

His nose brushed mine and before I even could comprehend what was happening, his lips crushed to mine. I caught my breath, hesitant as his tongue brushed my lower lip. I parted them and he dove into my mouth, tasting like beer. Fireworks exploded through my entire body and he pulled me closer to him, his tongue canvassing every inch of my mouth hungrily.

His hand stayed planted on my lower back as his other threaded through my hair, holding my face to his. I could *feel* him becoming aroused against me—and it was so fucking hot. I pressed myself against him and a light, confident smile escaped his lips. And for a moment, I forgot that we were in front of everyone, Rex included.

Until Levi suddenly pulled away from me.

He looked away from me, so I had *no* idea what he thought about what just happened. My fingers flew up to my puffy lips, and I whipped my head back to Rachel and Rex, who were heading back to get more drinks.

They had paid any attention to what just happened between us, probably this was just normal.

But *nothing* about that kiss was normal.

I rocked back and forth from left to right, stealing a glance back to Levi. He wasn't looking at me. In fact, he was staring directly ahead.

on. My expression on his face entirely unreadable.  
hing in *Fuck me.*

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*Fuck me.*

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“So how’s everything going?” Josh’s voice asked on the other side of the phone. “Have you managed to talk any business with Fran?”

“Uh, not yet. It’s only been a couple days.” I sat on the edge of the bed in the room, trying not to let my mind wander back to the volleyball game. I was getting ready for a night out with Rex and Rachel, and it was everything I had not to barge into the bathroom and take those 100 fucking lips again. She was *better* than I’d imagined in my alone moments. And that was terrifying.

I could *not* let it happen again—but damn, it was hard to keep myself under control. I wanted her so bad.

“Ally sent me pictures. The place looks really nice.” Josh brought me back to reality.

“Yeah, it’s nice. I had no doubt it would be, knowing the Lewis family. My eyes flickered to the hallway at the sound of the bathroom door creaking open.

“Is Ally having a good time? Are you being nice to her? She looked happy in the picture you took of her, laughing like that.” His voice came

unsure and a little suspicious.

“It was probably Rachel making her laugh,” I grunted, not even wanting to admit just how much I’d enjoyed that moment of taking her photo. “I hope one of them have hit it off.”

“Is that Josh?” Ally asked, suddenly appearing from the hallway. She was wearing a *tight* black dress, with cutouts at the side. She looked fucking hot. I was going to have to adjust to keep my head under control. “Is it?”

I blinked a few times, picking my jaw up off the floor. “Yeah, it is, it’s time for us to get down to the lounge and meet up with Rachel and Rex.”

end of  
“Yeah, you two go have fun. And hey,” Josh added.  
“What?”

bed in  
“Take care of my sister, man. I know that the two of you don’t get along, but don’t let anything happen to her.”

ie. Ally  
“You got it.” I hung up the phone and shoved it in the pocket of my jeans. I had opted to dress up a little for the evening, and I was glad I did, because Ally was looking extravagant.  
ents.

In an effortless kind of way.

y mind  
“So where is this lounge we’re going to?” Ally asked, her eyes rimmed with black eye makeup as I stood to my feet.

ne back  
I swallowed the thought of what I’d really like to do. “It’s downstairs on the other side of the place.”

amily.”  
licking  
“Okay.” She smiled up at me, but I looked away, slipping past her door. I’d never had to worry about holding back from a woman before, and I wasn’t even sure if I’d ever felt so much chemistry and attraction in my life, anyway. I opened the door for her, keeping my eyes straight ahead.  
d really  
me out  
than taking in her ass...

It was torture.

Taking a deep breath, I followed her out and we headed toward the dining room staircase. When we got to the opening, something soft and warm slid into my hand. My heart stumbled over itself in the most obnoxious way...

And I jerked my hand away.

She was “Are we not doing that now?” Ally’s face filled with confusion. I was maybe a little *hurt*.

*Fuck.*

but it’s “No. Don’t want to be over the top,” I grunted, taking off down the stairs and leaving her to trot to catch up. I headed right to the lounge, over the water on the other side.

“Can you please just slow down?” Ally huffed, her heels clicking along beige tile. “I’m in heels and half your height for heaven’s sake.”

“Exercise is good for you,” I snorted, glancing back at her struggling pants. keep up. A pang of guilt hit me, but I brushed it off. This was the same because as before—nothing had changed.

*She’s just Josh’s annoying little sister.*

*Who I’ve kissed...once.*

meeting Eyes ahead, I led the way to the bar, relieved when I caught sight of neon lights. Palm trees glistened in the low light, and the bar was lit with some kind of exotic music. I immediately saw Rex and Rachel on the floor, grinding against each other.

er to the *Oof.*

—and I My mind filled with images of Ally grinding against me in that manner and my body instantly perked up at the thought.

and rather *I could just take her back and lift that tight little number right up...*

My mouth went dry as we stepped into the bar, Ally’s arm bumping against mine. I ignored the jittery sensation, heading for the bartender

e grandeyeing us—well, *Ally*. He wasn't that old, probably around my age, with  
into my hair and bright green eyes.

Eyes that were raking over her body.

And it pissed me the fuck off.

n—and “Hey, you!” Rachel called to Ally, running up and wrapping her arms  
“I'm so glad you came out with us tonight.”

*She's already drunk.*

ie stairs “I'll let you two chat, I'll grab some drinks,” I said to Ally, my lips  
looking flat as I weaved through the crowd to the bar. It was packed, and the  
fine. Maybe it meant that we wouldn't have to stay out very long.

on the Not that I needed to go back to the room.

*Fuck these conflicting feelings.*

gling to “What can I get for you, sir?” the bartender asked, his eyes glancing  
ne Ally me back to Ally and Rachel. I wanted to punch him out.

But I just smiled. “I'll just have a piña colada and whatever's on tap

“Perfect, the lady's drink is free.”

I rolled my eyes. “Thanks.” I stood there at the bar while he made  
t of the using it as an excuse to avoid Ally for a few moments. In front of Rachel  
playing Rex, I knew I would have to show *some* affection—especially after  
e dance heated kiss we'd shared on the beach. I didn't want them to think that  
and I weren't good.

“Here ya go.” The bartender set the drinks on the bar and I grabbed  
manner—up, giving him a nod before heading to the group of women congregating  
realized that some of the wedding party must've shown up for the  
though I didn't recognize a single one of them.

rushing “Thank you,” Ally said as she took the drink from my hands, sipping  
already “I'm dying of thirst after practically *running* here.”

with dark I shrugged, avoiding her eyes. “Dramatic.”

“Alright then,” she snapped in a low voice. “Good to know what mood you’re in.” Her auburn hair was in waves down her back, and bounced as she spun around to greet it with Rachel and her friend: a hug. The snide little reply made my chest burn with irritation, and I heard

Rex, who was standing at the rail, looking out over the dark ocean. Maybe it wouldn’t be so hard to keep my distance from Ally after all.

staying “Hey man, we haven’t really had a chance to talk much since I got here. What was greeted him, holding out a hand for him to shake.

He eyed my hand and reluctantly shook it. “Yeah, everyone has been pretty busy.”

“Is your family coming out for the wedding on Friday?” I leaned against the rail opposite him, sipping on my beer—some kind of ale that I was a fan of.

.” “They’re very busy people, and won’t be flying in until Thursday for rehearsal dinner. Not everyone can just go jetting off for a full two weeks to see them. He sounded a little salty about it, but I just nodded.

hel and “Yeah, so where are you from? I can’t place your accent.”

fter the “Rome.”

at Ally “Cool.” I gulped my beer down, feeling more awkward than I ever had in my life. It made sense for Rachel to be with someone who was as excited as a rock, but damn, he was *not* an easy conversation. I glanced toward the water, seeing a few people out and about on the beach, walking hand in hand. Something in my gut shifted at the sight, and it felt a little like longing.

ing on it. “Your woman is being hit on.”

I spun around, Rex’s voice inciting pure jealousy. My eyes landed on



downing the rest of her drink and laughing with a blond-headed guy. I kind of gestured out to the dance floor, and I saw the confliction written all over his face.

s. *Oh hell no.*

ded for Tossing my beer into the trash, I headed right for the two of us, grabbing Ally's elbow lightly as I made it to her. "Let's go dance, but I took her empty glass and handed it over to him.

here," I "Uh..." She looked up at me, and then over to the guy. "Okay."

"I thought you said you don't dance?" the dude offered up, raising a quizzical eyebrow at her, holding the glass.

"Just not with you, buddy." I patted his shoulder as I led her out onto the dance floor. "She's taken."

as *not* a "That was smooth," Ally snorted as I turned to face her in the middle of the dance floor. I made sure to lead her out far enough that we were surrounded by a thick crowd of people. "Took you long enough, though I was just distracted by a very interesting conversation with Rex."

She wrinkled her nose. "Is that even possible with him? He's literally the dumbest person I've ever met I think."

A chuckle slipped through my lips. "He is very dull, but I'm confident that maybe he just doesn't like us very much."

"I can't blame him. Must be intimidating to see a power couple like us walking." Her blue eyes twinkled as they peered up into mine.

"Yeah, *us*," I echoed. "That's what we are."

"Absolutely." A giggle left her lips as I tugged her body into mine. My hands brushed along her hips as she worked them back and forth. "I'm Ally, bending the rules." Her eyes dared mine as I drifted a little lower.

He was “Is that what I’m doing?” My breath hitched as she spun, putting her hands over her mouth. “Is that what I’m doing?” My breath hitched as she spun, putting her hands over her mouth.

*Fuck.*

She put her hands in her hair and ground her ass against me. My hands remained on her hips, enjoying every second of *this* Ally. I’d seen her loose before, but *damn*, I had never experienced her at this level. The scent of lavender filled my nostrils as her hair tickled my nose. I found myself leaning into her, enjoying the moment...

She spun back around, my hands gliding along the black fabric dress. Ally’s smoky eyes locked with mine, our faces closer than ever. Every inch of my body was on *fire* for her. My heart picked up its pace suddenly I couldn’t figure why I would want to keep myself away from her. *What happens here, stays here.*

She beat me to the punch, though. Her arms wrapped around me, bringing me to her. Ally’s fingers threaded through my dark hair, tugged enough to turn me on. Noses brushing, her lips pressed to mine. At first the kiss was hesitant, but the moment I kissed her back, she opened up to me, then nipping at my upper lip.

I wasted no time, possessing her mouth like it was mine. The sweet, juicy pineapple was on her tongue as I continued to delve in deeper, holding her hips against my own. She was a good six inches shorter than me, but it felt right. My erection was pressing against her lower stomach, and as she rubbed against it was driving me *crazy*. I was full-fledged *throbbing* for her. We weren’t even swaying anymore...

But I *definitely* wanted to keep this dance going.

I broke the hot kiss for a split second. “Do you want to get out of here

er back

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## ALLY

I couldn't tell Levi no.

And the moment the door shut behind us, he was on my body *needed* it. "You're so fucking hot," he murmured in my ear as his hands pressed down my sides. My chest heaved with an excited breath as he pinned me against the back of the door. There was a part of me that was honestly worried that maybe we *shouldn't* be doing what we were, but my pussy was *ready* for him...

The moment his lips were on my neck, sucking my skin into his mouth, I felt my panties getting wet. I wanted him to touch me, let me grind against his hand. A moan escaped my lips as I pulled at the buttons of his white shirt, desperate to feel his skin against mine. His fingers stopped at the hem of my dress, slipping just underneath. The sensation of his warmth sent a jitter of arousal through me, and I ripped at his shirt with more force. Slowly, he began to tug it upward, the cool breeze of the room's air conditioner tickling my moist underwear.

*Ugh. Just fuck me already.*

“You’re eager,” he growled into the nape of my neck, and I shuddered in response. In one big motion, he took my dress right up and over my head, tossing it to the floor. It left me in just a strapless black lace bra and matching underwear. His eyes raked over my half-naked body, his teeth tearing at my bottom lip. “You’re fucking gorgeous, Ally, and I’ve been *dying* to have my hands on you.” The lust in his voice was raspy, his eyes darkening as he looked at me with a hunger greater than before. My eyes widened as he lifted me into the air, his hands squeezing my ass cheeks as he carried me to the bed. With a swift toss, I hit the white duvet.

“Take it all off,” I panted, my eyes on the tufts of black hair sticking out from his white shirt—that only had a few buttons remaining. He gave me a wicked grin and unbuttoned the rest. He stripped it off, revealing thick, muscular arms and I couldn’t help but pour my eyes over his washboard six-pack in front of me. I ran my fingers down my abs, going lower until I hit the hem of my panties. I slipped beneath them, my hand finding my throbbing clit.

“Oh *fuck*, that’s hot,” Levi groaned as he caught sight of me masturbating to the sight of him getting undressed. “Keep doing that.” I arched my back at the arousal building in my pussy, finding the sexual hue in Levi’s gaze to be one of the sexiest things I’d ever seen. He dropped his shirt to floor, his eyes still locked on the movements of my hips between my legs. Leaning down, he ripped my panties down my legs, discarding them somewhere on the floor.

“I want to see all of you,” he huffed, his eyes lingering on my nipples and pussy in front of him. “You’re so wet for me.”

“I am,” I panted, my voice coming out strained as I continued to masturbate. “But I want that cock, Levi.”

lered in He went silent as he undid the black belt around his pants and du  
y head, condom from his pocket. He tossed the foil onto the bed and slowly un  
atching his pants, his dick making a large outline in his navy boxer briefs.

into his *Oh god, he's so big.*

get my My mouth went dry at the sight of his erection as he stripped ou  
ie came underwear, his cock bouncing free. I literally ached to feel it inside  
fted me lick pussy, my walls pulsing at the sheer size. I already knew it was g  
he bed. feel so fucking good.

“Fuck me, Levi,” I demanded, dipping a finger into myself as I buc  
g out of hips against my own hand. “Come on.”

“I like it when you beg like that,” he growled, climbing onto the b  
off his quads flexing as he slipped in between my legs. His taut, perfectly  
ver the figure was on full display—and I couldn't find a single flaw in his  
dome, athletic stature.

finding *He looks like a Greek god.*

He loomed above me as he made his way back to my lips, takin  
rbrating with force. A bit of sexy pain pulsed as he bit my lower lip, and I l  
moan. He tugged my hand away from between my legs, breaking the  
he dark peer down at my fingers. They were glistening with the wetness of my  
æen. He and he brought my fingers to his lips, sucking them into his mouth. A g  
y hand groan escaped him as he licked them clean. My lips parted with  
y legs, breath, burning the sight of him into my brain forever.

Once clean, he grabbed my other hand, pulling me into a sitting p  
ow bare His hands slipped around my back to unhook the clasp on my bra. He  
small, but perky breasts free, his hands immediately palming the  
ued to satisfied breath that left his lips sent more juices slipping from my p  
and I was certain I was going to be making a mess on the duvet.

g out a “Touch my pussy, Levi,” I demanded, my voice breathy as our zippedlocked.

He grinned, his white teeth sparkling beneath the low lights of the  
“You’re so bossy—so sexy.” He brushed his fingertips down from my  
t of his running over the small hill of my stomach before reaching my sopp  
: of my pussy.

going to *Oh yes.*

Using two fingers, he slipped between my wet folds, and I let out a  
ked my he began to tease my clitoris. My hips bucked against his hand,  
building in my core as he kissed lower. Leaning down, his lips cares

ed, his breasts, his tongue circling my nipple before sucking it fully into his m  
y toned “Oh my god, Levi,” I panted, my fingertips brushing along his shou  
broad, he continued to worship me, his fingers taunting the entrance of my

No one had ever taken this amount of time when it came to foreplay  
and the heat in his touch was enough to nearly send me over the edge.

g them *He knows exactly what he’s doing.*

at out a His lips left my breasts, slowly working their way down my abdom  
kiss to my stomach fluttered with excitement as he neared my throbbing puss  
r pussy, rubbing my clit, he kissed my inner thighs.

guttural “You’re so sexy, Ally,” he groaned as his eyes alighted with lust, j  
a sharp to lick his fingers again. The loss of his contact left me aching, but t  
he was looking at me left me feeling more wanted than ever before.

osition. And I wanted his cock inside me. *Now.*

set my “God, just fuck me, Levi.” I met his gaze, and the hunger in his  
m. The brown irises made my heart stutter.

pussy— A wicked smile stretched across his face and he leaned down, s  
himself between my legs. “Not yet.” He kissed my clit before runn



my eyestongue where his fingers had just been. My knees shook with pleasure in response, and he groaned out in satisfaction, his mouth going to work on my chest. He nudged and sucked gently, my hips bucking.

"You taste so good." His voice was husky and raw, and I ran my fingers down my body until I reached his soft, dark hair. I laced my fingers through his locks, squeezing ever so slightly as he sucked and kissed me, driving me to a cry of climax. As my hips rocked against his face, the stubble on his jaw tickled me in all the right ways. I shut my eyes, the pure ecstasy crashing through my body like the waves of the ocean outside.

*Oh my god, this is so good.*

I bit my lip as I felt myself holding on tighter to Levi as his movements picked up speed. Levi slipped his fingers out and using both hands, he pulled me to him, forcing me to give into his raw strength. *He* wanted to be the one who brought the orgasm. The dominant move was so sexy...

An orgasm burst through my body, moisture streaming from my eyes, and "Oh, *Levi*," I moaned, my entire body trembling as he lapped at the wetness. Still cleaning up any mess I would've made on the bed.

"You're fucking phenomenal." He reached for the condom, giving me one last kiss. He eyed me as he tore it open, my chest still rising and falling heavily from the immense pleasure I had just experienced. He tossed the wrapper toward the trash before stretching the condom over his cock. New arousal thrummed through my body as he positioned himself between my legs, desperate to tighten myself around his raging erection.

"Tell me you want me to fuck you again, Ally." His voice came out in a low growl as he loomed over me, the tip of his penis teasing my entrance. "I want to hear you say it to me."

sure in “I want you to *fuck me*, Levi,” I leveled with him, daring him with r  
k as heas I propped myself up onto my forearms. “*Now.*”

on my He let out a guttural groan as he rammed his cock into my ready pu  
hips thudding against mine. “You’re so tight, Ally. Oh my *god.*” Hi:  
/ handsran down my thighs and he leaned down, his lips brushing my fo  
into his “You’re so good, baby, so *fucking* good.”

ne right I tipped my head back, catching his lips with mine. I lightly bit hi  
tickledlip, and he responded by slamming his hips into mine again. Crying c  
igh mya burst of pleasure, I gripped his shoulders, digging my nails in. He r  
my lips the same way he was ravaging my pussy, and I held on  
savoring every bit of it.

vements Sex had never felt so fucking good.

he held He slipped an arm underneath my lower back and suddenly shifted  
the oneas he leaned back. Never slipping out of me, he pulled me into his  
strong arms moving my ass up and down while my pussy ground aga  
pussy.hard cock. He tasted of beer and smelled of mahogany as I wrapped  
vetness,around him, my arms around his neck. I rocked my hips back and fo  
he growled into my mouth, his body shuddering at my movements.

ing my “You’re so sexy,” he murmured, letting me ride him, my legs w  
ing andaround his waist. “I’m gonna cum for you.”

o tossed “Mmm,” I replied, his words nearly sending me over the edge again  
nassivecan cum for me.” I rocked, letting the tension in his thighs guide n  
himselftoward the orgasm that I was so close to. His grip on my hips tighten  
n. he let out a loud moan as he stilled me against him.

it raspy “*Fuck!*” He leaned his head against my bare shoulder, his dick  
want toinside of me. Knowing that he was cumming caused my own arousal t  
and I joined him in orgasm, pulsing around his dick. He pulled his hea

ny eyes from my neck, leaning in to kiss my lips once more, his tongue ra  
right into mine, scouring every inch of my mouth. It was *hot* and pas  
ssy, his—and I clung to him for a few seconds longer, moisture seeping out fr  
s hands pussy on his still slightly hardened cock.

rehead. We stayed there for a few moments longer, lost in a heated kiss, be  
pulled away, his eyes suddenly searching mine.

s lower “What?” I panted, my brows furrowing as I tried to catch my bre  
ut with something wrong?”

avished He shook his head, planting a soft kiss on my nose before pulling  
to him, him. “We just made the biggest mistake.”

“Um, *what?*” I knew I sounded like a broken record, but as he slip  
the bed, scooping up his clothes, I couldn’t help it. I’d just had the *bes*  
l me up my life...

lap, his And he was already saying he regretted it seconds after finishing.

inst his Levi continued his head shaking, only adding in a grumble as he slic  
myself boxer briefs. “That was the dumbest thing we could’ve done.”

rth and “I’m confused,” I snapped, folding my arms across my chest and  
my breasts. “You seemed to enjoy what happened.”

rapped “I never said that I didn’t enjoy it,” he barked back. “All I’m saying  
we just really fucked up. Josh will *kill* me if he knows that this hap  
1. “You Besides, I just broke all the fucking rules that you put in that contrac  
ie right basically can do whatever you want now.”

ed, and My mouth dropped open. “You’re being a jerk right now.”

“Wow, tell me something I don’t already know.” He rolled his ey  
pulsing grabbed his pants, heading toward the bathroom. The mom  
o peak, disappeared, I jumped into action, scurrying around the room for n  
id away

imming clothes. I pulled back on my underwear and grabbed a sports bra out of my bag.

From my *Everything is fine. It's fine.*

Except it didn't *feel* fine. I had been expecting Levi to feel the same before he did about the intense encounter...

But that obviously wasn't true.

ath. "Is I grabbed a pair of black cloth shorts and a tank top, quickly dress slipping into my sandals. "I just need to get some air," I mumbled to me off under my breath, pushing my auburn hair out of my face. I slid my phone from my pocket and headed toward the door, desperate to escape the ruffled bed and reminders of the piece of stupid I had just done.

at sex of "Where the hell are you going?" Levi demanded, just as I reached the door handle. "Where are you going, Ally?"

"I just need to get some air." I didn't turn around to see him, ripping the door open.

His hand landed on the door above my head, forcing it closed. "I'm not hiding, think so. We need to talk about what just happened."

"I think you've said enough." I spun around, snapping at him. "Your message is that it's very clear."

opened. He let out a heavy sigh, his body looming above mine—feeling it—you close as he was before, but so much further away at the same time. "I'm definitely not finished talking about it all. We need to talk about what the fuck we're supposed to do now."

yes and Leaning my back against the door, my shoulders dropped. "I don't know what I want. I guess if it's such a big deal, we just act like it never happened. We go on our own following the rules and just no more touching me like that." My head dropped off with disappointment and I hoped he didn't notice.

t of my “I normally have no problem with sex and friends.”

*Good to know.*

“But...” His voice trailed off as he met my gaze. “You’re the younger way I of my best friend, so I just broke way more than the rules in that context could see the concern in his face, and as much as I was angry at him for I understood.

ing and “We won’t tell Josh about this,” I said, my voice coming out slow. “myself it was just a one-time mistake.”

one into “A very fucking good mistake,” he grunted, pulling his bottom lip l covers into his mouth. “But it won’t happen again. We have to keep our pants

“Got it. I’ll go buy a chastity belt in the morning.”

for the He smiled at the joke, though it didn’t reach his eyes. “If you put on those, there’s no way in hell I’m not gonna try to get that thing off of you ing the “Noted. I guess I’ll just have to dress like a nun.”

“Also a fetish.” He shrugged.

I don’t I squeaked, unable to hide my surprise. “I didn’t see that coming.”

“It was a joke.” Levi chuckled, running his fingers through his hair u made seriously, we can’t let that happen again. I mean, I’m not gonna lie, I to get you out of my system—something about being here with you, it just as “Yeah, same,” I said when his voice trailed off. “I guess it’s just th

No, I’m contact and alcohol.”

that the He eyed me, tilting his head. “We each only had one drink tonight, I “Well, it was a very strong piña colada?”

know. I “Whatever helps you justify what happened.” Levi spun on his back to heading toward the bed. “But I’m sleeping in the bed tonight.”

7 voice “Pillows between us.” I hurried behind him, grabbing a few pillows the couch. I climbed onto the bed, fashioning them in row right down

center.

“Are you serious right now?” Levi burst into laughter, his voice lighter sisterhumorous—like we hadn’t just had sex and regretted it.

tract.” I “I am.” I leveled with him, flipping the covers back. “You’ve or it... admitted that you regret touching me. I’d hate for it to happen again.”

He nodded. “Alright. No touching then.”

‘I guess

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“I am.” I leveled with him, flipping the covers back. “You’ve already admitted that you regret touching me. I’d hate for it to happen again.”

He nodded. “Alright. No touching then.”

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## LEVI

“So how have you enjoyed your first week here?” Frank asked, sipping on his mimosa. He had agreed to brunch with me, and despite everything, I was nervous to bring up the business deal.

“It’s been great.”

*Especially the sex I had with Ally—that she thinks I regret.*

“It’s really a nice time of year to be here. Liz and I have decided we might start taking an annual vacation here.”

“Yeah, I don’t blame you. It’s a nice resort. I came with the family years back. We all had a blast. It was memorable for sure. Not as memorable as this trip though. You know, with Ally. This is our first trip together as a couple. It’s been really special.” The words came out easily, but I wasn’t sure if I was just a good liar, or if...

*Nah, no way.*

Frank’s grin stretched across his face. “I have to say, I remember the first time I went on a trip with Liz. It’s like a whole new experience. You’ve really enjoyed traveling until you have a partner in crime for it. I can imagine going anywhere without her.”

I nodded. “I can definitely see myself being like that. I can’t imagine anywhere without her.” My eyes drifted out the window of the restaurant searching for Ally. She had sworn that she would be fine spending morning on her own—and that she would *enjoy* it.

But I still kind of worried about her.

I had promised Josh that I would look out for her—and that’s exactly I had done. We hadn’t spent much time, if any at all, apart.

And that wasn’t my norm.

“I think Ally is a very nice woman,” Frank said, nodding to me. “I think the two of you are a good match, too. It takes a strong woman like me, and you to handle a man like yourself, though I think you’ve come a long way.”

“Thank you. That means a lot coming from you.” I picked up a glass of water, sipping on it. I had been avoiding alcohol ever since Ally I had, um...gotten a little too close. I didn’t want to take any chances, but sober me *still* had to use my shower time very wisely.

She had been better than I could’ve ever imagined.

“I can’t believe Rach is getting married today,” Frank said with a grin, grabbing my attention. “It seems like just yesterday she was a little girl playing fashion show in the living room. It’s amazing how fast the time goes by. Before you know it, you and Ally might have little ones of your own and then *bam*, you’ll be walking one of them down the aisle.”

*That escalated quickly.*

“Uh, yeah, maybe so. We haven’t talked much about kids...yet,” I said when I saw his facial features shift. “I mean, we both want them, but I don’t have a set time frame. I’m still working hard to grow my father’s business, then I’m hoping to expand on my own—you know, for the future of our family.”

e going Frank's eyes narrowed for a moment. "I see, and what kind of ex-  
taurant, are you thinking, Levi?"

ing the "Well, if I could, I'd love to have a shot at buying CyberSecure," I  
out, mustering up the courage to just throw it out on the table. I mean  
been here nearly a week and it hadn't come up at all.

ly what I needed to get it moving forward.

"That's a big task for someone your age." Frank raised an eyebrow  
an impressive thought that you have going though. I'm not selling  
'I think bargain though—and there are a lot of stipulations. I want to ensu-  
her to everything transfers over smoothly. Nothing worse than a cha-  
ownership and a failed business."

ly own "I absolutely understand that, Frank. I think that I have the capabi-  
lly and run the business the way that you intended it be run."

because "That's a big statement, son." He folded his arms across his chest,  
back in the wicker chair across from me.

I bit the inside of my cheek—he was *not* as open as I had hoped.  
a sigh, big statement, but I'm trying to build a legacy for my family."

toddler, "The family that you're not sure you're going to have?" Frank's s-  
ne flies made my stomach churn.

own— "Actually, I was hoping to let Ally in on thirty percent..." My voice  
off as his face lit up at the mention. "She's part of the legacy—and fan-  
*Sort of, anyway.*

I added "That...that is what I like to hear." Frank tapped his fingers on the  
there's tablecloth. "But I'll be honest with you, Levi. I don't like to be out on  
ss, and outings—or weddings—and discussing business. The wedding is tonig-  
ny own I think we should chat about this after the fact."

"Absolutely. I completely understand that. It just came up and I thou-

“Expansion? I’ll throw it out there that I—we are interested in purchasing.” I reached for the water, nearly gulping it down to quench my suddenly dry mouth. The forced thing I wanted to do was put the man out...

Or rub him the wrong way.

“I get it,” Frank said with a grunt, forking a bite of his waffle. “I’ve done the same thing. Like I said, we will definitely chat about it in the week. “It’s I’ve gotten a couple of offers on it, but I’m going to keep being picky. It won’t sell to anyone other than the perfect match.”

“Well, I look forward to discussing it with you.” I gave him a smile and took a silent deep breath. It wasn’t the *best* answer from him—but it was at least in the right direction.

lities to



“How did it go?” Ally asked the moment I stepped into the room, her eyes wide as saucers. “Did I come here for no reason after all?”

I rolled my eyes at her sass—sass that I was seemingly starting to find more funny than irritating. “It went alright.” I knew there was no point in lying to her. She had thirty percent in the company anyway. “He’s open to the idea. I don’t know that he was as open as what I was hoping for. He’s got some other offers, but apparently he’s going to be really picky. He’s a fan of you though. Once I threw your name into the mix, he was all over it.”

Her eyebrows shot up. “Me?”

“Yeah, he’s very into...family.” I cringed at the same time she did, trying to read into what I meant.

“So what? You told him we were going to have a family of our own.” I choked out, motioning between the two of us. “I don’t really think I’d

for my something we can *fake*, Levi. In fact, that seems like the one thing I don't want to fake at all. I was just—”

“Stop,” I cut her off. “There’s no way in hell that we’re going to do something like that. I think that I can just use it to sway him to the deal. No one would’ve said that we have to make our relationship work after the deal is over in the future. People break up all the time—I mean, you and what’s-his-face were together. You broke up.”

She blinked her eyes at me a couple of times, disgust filling her face, taking you seriously bringing up my one serious relationship as some step in an example? Like, I get what you’re saying, Levi, and you don’t have to worry. I’ll happily support us breaking up. I just hate the fact that we’re leaving Frank. He’s a genuine guy.”

“Yeah, and he can think that we’re *genuinely* together.”

“You’re seriously so shallow.” She plopped down on the edge of the table, her pastel blue dress spilling around her upper thighs. “I feel terrible for you the way that we are.”

“So, halfway in, you’re what? Going to back out of the deal?” It seemed to burn in my chest as I threw my hands up in the air. “I’ll book your flight I guess.”

“I never said that I was backing out,” she snapped. “I’m just admitting I feel *guilty* about lying to a man who is potentially going to sell a multimillion dollar company—and make me a millionaire.”

“Okay, you’re acting like the man is *giving* it to us, Ally. I have to leave the entire business. It’s going to set me back every single penny that I was inheriting.”

“So then why do it?” She looked up at me, confusion filling her face. “You can have all the money you could ever want. What’s the point?”

I don't "The point is that I want to have something of my own—to pass d  
my children. It's like my legacy. I get that I was born wealthy, but I st  
to faketo make a name for myself. CyberSecure is how I'd like to do it."

eal. No She was silent for a few moments, her thick, seductive lips pursing  
is over.eyes fell to her clasped hands. "I never knew that you wanted a fa  
serious.your own someday."

I shifted my weight to my heels, suddenly feeling more vulnerab  
e. "Areever. "I...I do want a family of my own. Pretty much everyone wants o  
sort of "I think there's plenty of people who want to be bachelors their wh  
worry.—my *brother* is one of them." She rolled her eyes, picking at her nails  
ying toa habit that I'd never realized she had...

And it was strikingly cute for some reason.

I shoved the thought away. "Josh? Nah, he definitely wants to settl  
he bed,one of these days. He just hasn't met the right person yet. He's workin  
or lyingthough."

"Well, he never tells me anything anymore." Ally shook her head  
ritationanyway, I hope that someday you get the family you deserve—a  
fuckingbusiness." The sincerity in her voice was touching, but while it hit me  
the gut, I didn't show it.

ing that "You're just saying that so you can become a millionaire. If I  
l you aconvince Frank I was gay, I totally would've brought Josh inste  
would've made the perfect match for me if you think about it."

buy the "Oh my god," Ally groaned, pushing her hair out of her face. "I  
iat I'mthere's nothing you won't do to get the company, is there? But yeah,  
way too much of a womanizer to fool anyone that you're actually with

a. "You "I'm going to take that as a compliment." I snorted, turning arou  
grabbing my light gray shirt off the hanger. "I don't know why every ;

down to ever with has to bring up my reputation. It's not like I'm a bad guy." Ally pointed out, raising a brow. "First off, we are *not* together," Ally pointed out, raising a brow. "And second, no girl wants to feel like just a notch in the bedpost. You see as here a long list of high-profile ladies, and it's probably just very intimidating of the women that you're with."

I nodded, though I had never once thought about that. "So are you telling me that you are intimidated by the long list of women I've been with?" She laughed sarcastically, standing to her feet and patting me on the shoulder. "I hate to break it to you, Levi, but *no*. I still remember you. It was a kid who got a nosebleed in the middle of his baptism, turning the entire church red—and then believed that Pastor Sarah had gotten her period when she was with you. You don't intimidate me."

She said, "Fuck. That was a bad day."

She said, "Fuck. That was a bad day."

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He said, "But you're right in the middle of it."

I could hear him say, "He's right."

I swear to God, you are a girl, Josh."

He said, "And you're a girl I'm not talking about."



ever with has to bring up my reputation. It's not like I'm a bad guy."

"First off, we are *not* together," Ally pointed out, raising a brow at me. "And second, no girl wants to feel like just a notch in the bedpost. You've got a long list of high-profile ladies, and it's probably just very intimidating to the women that you're with."

I nodded, though I had never once thought about that. "So are you trying to say *you* are intimidated by the long list of women I've been with?"

She laughed sarcastically, standing to her feet and patting me on the shoulder. "I hate to break it to you, Levi, but *no*. I still remember you as the kid who got a nosebleed in the middle of his baptism, turning the entire pool red—and then believed that Pastor Sarah had gotten her period when we told you. You don't intimidate me."

*Fuck. That was a bad day.*

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## ALLY

I stood beside Levi, my eyes drifting to Rachel as she appeared at the end of the sea of white chairs, her arm threaded through Frank's. Her wedding gown was a bright white, making the sand look a little less white in comparison. It was a flowy, sleeveless bohemian style—probably designed by her and her chocolate-brown hair flowed as freely as the dress in waves down her back.

She looked beautiful.

And as I gazed back to Rex, I saw emotion on his face for the first time since meeting the strange man. Tears glistened in his eyes as the soft music played, Rachel and Frank walking down the aisle in synchrony.

What a poignant moment.

It pulled at my heartstrings as the ceremony continued, and all I wanted was to long for something that I had managed to shove into the depths of my being was pushed back to the surface. Maybe I *did* want a happy ending, a husband, and some kids.

“It’s windy as fuck out here,” Levi grumbled beside me as we sat down in the chairs.

“It’s still beautiful.” I side-eyed him, not wanting to take a second from the way that Rachel and Rex were staring into each other’s eyes holding each other’s hands. Levi chuckled beside me, but I ignored allowing myself to get lost in the precious moment between the two of

“I promise to love you no matter the season or the timing, and to always be a place of solace and safety for you,” Rex said to Rachel. She grinned at her vows, and I found myself smiling along with her, wiping the moisture from my eyes as they had their final kiss.

*Maybe someday someone will love me like that.*

I couldn’t stop the longing as they exited, everyone cheering around me. Her vibrant designer gown joined them, but on the inside, I was reminded how many times things had gone wrong in my romantic life. I mean, I was *pretending* to be her girlfriend...

And *that* was the best sex I had ever had—not that sex defined by our relationship.

It was just kind of pathetic that a fake connection was the closest I had come to experiencing the *real* spark that I had wanted my entire life. A DJ slipping into mine grabbed my attention and I turned to look up at Levi. He had shorter dark hair perfectly styled in a hipster side sweep as he gazed at me.

“You ready to go do this reception thing?”

“Yeah.” I forced a smile back at him before looking away. I let him lead me through the sand, toward the large reception hall. They weren’t a typical dinner—just one massive party. And after getting to know Rachel, it made sense.

“I hope they have some strong drinks,” Levi muttered as we headed into the flow of the other guests up the hill. “Weddings suck.”

d away I raised my eyebrows at him. “I agree, but why do *you* think they su  
es, now He acted like the question caught him off guard. “Uh, because it’s l  
ed him, just one big party for two people who are agreeing to be forever cha  
them. each other. Not exactly the most romantic thing in my opinion.”

ways be “*Right*. And what do you prefer, Levi?” I quipped, shaking my he  
d at his calves burned as we took the hill, and I pulled at the olive dress that L  
re from chosen for me to wear to the wedding. It was gorgeous, but it was al  
and stopped at my mid-upper thighs. It was a little racy for me.

But the way I caught him staring at me in it was *hot*.

d me. I “I guess I just prefer to never settle down.” His voice brought me  
ags had reality, though he didn’t sound nearly as certain as I expected him to.

Levi’s “That’s kind of sad and lonely,” I remarked, letting out a sharp br  
we entered the grand reception area, where the party appeared to be  
fined as wing already.

“I don’t see the point in relying on someone for anything,” Levi cor  
t I had his hand still warm in mine. “Honestly, most women just want me  
A hand money, anyway. They see me as a bottomless wallet and they  
evi, his whatever they want.”

lown at Looking up at him, I couldn’t hide my surprise. “Now that’s sor  
I’ve never heard you say. I bet not all women are out to take advan  
you.”

im lead “Yeah, right,” he snorted. “I can’t think of one that didn’t start dat  
doing a because of my looks and money. It makes it nearly impossible to fin  
ichel, it fucking connection.”

“I guess I could see that—but I don’t have that problem,” I add  
ed with voice dropping a little.

“I’ll go get us a couple of drinks.” Levi ignored what I’d said, dropp

ck?” hand and heading toward the bar. Normally, I would’ve been annoyed, but a hand landing on my shoulder didn’t give me that opportunity. I spun around to see Rachel giving me a giddy smile. “You’re beautiful!” I embraced her lightly.

ad. My “You look *phenomenal* in that dress,” she countered, gesturing down at my body like I was a car for sale. “Like, wow, it brings out the little bit of color in your blue eyes and *pops* with your complexion. Love it, really. I bet Levi loves you in it too.”

“Thank you.” I felt my cheeks grow warm. “It was honestly such a relief to be back to wedding.”

“Thanks, I never knew that Rex had it in him to be such a romantic. It really surprised me. It was impressive. We’re going to start trying for a baby in full know. I’m ready for that.”

“Oh wow.” I drew in a breath, shocked by the statement. She continued, “Yeah, I know.” She laughed, pushing some of her dark hair behind her ear. “It’s just that, while I love my businesses and whatnot, I just want to be a mom more than anything—and I’m not getting any younger. I don’t want to be an old mom. I think that Rex will be an *amazing* dad, too.” She continued rambling with the giddiness that one would expect on a wedding day, but the more she talked about it, the more it reminded me of how empty my life felt.

*Stop feeling sorry for yourself, Ally.*

I smiled and nodded through the conversation. “I totally get it.”

“Would you want to have kids with Levi? I bet he would be a fantastic dad.”

When we were together we never really talked about that kind of thing, but I always thought that he would make a great dad. He has a great dad as a role model too.”

“Yeah, we haven’t really talked about it much, but I could

ried by happening,” I admitted, feeling an annoying little pang of emotion  
tion. chest. Ever since landing on the island, I was thinking about Levi in th  
u look more and more...

And I found myself actually agreeing with Rachel.

own my I *could* see it happening—and somehow in that fantasy, I saw my  
of greenwell.

et Levi *Yikes*.

“Cool wedding, Rachel,” Levi’s voice boomed from behind me, jus  
i lovely arm came over my shoulder, holding out a glass of champagne to me  
it from him, putting the glass to my lips, desperate to drink it all away-  
, but he most healthy kind of way, of course.

by, you “Thanks, Levi. I was just telling Ally how beautiful she looks in thi  
It really flatters her—everything about her.”

“I knew it would,” he said from behind me, his voice softer  
ind he expected. “That’s why I bought it for her.”

to be a “Oh, nice.” She beamed, reaching out and squeezing my arm. “We  
want to two lovebirds have fun tonight. I should probably get back to socializi  
he was all these people that flew all the way out here to celebrate with us.”

but the “Have fun,” I said, before turning around to peer up at Levi. “I thin  
fe was. already a little drunk.”

“No way.” He feigned shock, placing a hand up to his mouth. “If  
guess, I bet she pre-gamed the entire wedding. Stressful events are re  
un dad. strongpoint.”

g, but I I nodded. “Good point, I guess. I don’t really know her, but I tru  
s a role You wanna go dance or something?” I gestured out to the dance

thinking it might be a good distraction from all the unwanted f  
see it swirling around in my head.



in my “Actually, no.” He shook his head before grabbing me lightly by the waist and steering me away from the dancing. We came to a stop near the bar, and he led me back into the resort, his eyes searching my face. “Something’s wrong with you. You look like something is wrong—and I don’t want you to think we’re not good,” he added quickly, causing me to roll my eyes. “I’m fine.” I took a long gulp of my champagne, ignoring the way he was looking at me in the moment.

It was as his “Yeah, I know you’re not. You’re pounding that champagne. I took considering you’re a lightweight, you’ll be smashed before they even get to the cake.”

“Perfect. Then I won’t have to remember that I’m going to be alone.” I ripped my eyes from Levi and back out to the crowd, not wanting him to see just how much that really bothered me.

than I “Ah, I get it,” he said, his voice dropping in volume. “I guess to those who want to find their soulmate, a wedding might be like salt in the wound, but if it makes you feel better, fifty percent of people who get married end up getting divorced.”

I laughed at the well-known statistic. “Wow, that really makes me think she’s much better.”

“Yeah, I bet it does.” He chuckled, then grabbed my hand. My heart jumped at the surprising contact. “But can I tell you something?”

ally her I looked back up at him, our eyes meeting. “What do you need to tell me, Levi?” He hesitated and a glimmer of hope swelled in my chest, along with the feelings that I had worked to push away coming back to the top of my mind.

2 floor, “I...” His voice trailed off as his jaw tensed. “It’s not easy for me to talk about feelings about this kind of stuff, but—but I think that you’re a real catch, Ally.”

an elbow that we don't see eye to eye at all, but there *was* a reason that I chose  
exit of everyone else."

thing is "Yeah, because your options were limited." I sighed, pushing a strand  
anyone auburn hair out of my eyes.

3. "Because you were the *best* option. You're really something, and  
that he that any guy would be *crazy* not to see that. You're beautiful, intelligent,  
charming, passionate, sweet—and a *freak* in the sheets," he added, taking  
ie, and out a sharp breath.

cut the His words nearly made my head spin—was he admitting that maybe  
had...*feelings*...

forever For me?

wanting Our gazes remained on each other, my mouth growing dry  
apprehension rose to meet the tension that was settling between us.  
people barely hear the music or the noise of the crowd, my mind running  
round—with what all this could mean...

ied will *Is Levi the one?*

"I'm just saying," he continued finally, clearing his throat. "I have  
feel so doubt that the right one will come along one of these days. He's going  
your worth, and I bet he'll write a hell of a lot better vows than Rex wrote  
y heart Rachel."

My heart sank, suddenly feeling stupid for even *thinking* that Levi  
tell me, have legitimate interest in me. "I thought his vows were nice."

ll those Levi chuckled. "Yeah, but nice doesn't equate to what someone like  
deserves, Ally. You deserve your wedding day to be perfect."

to talk *Just not with you.*

I know I swallowed the rejection creeping up, sucking the air right out  
room. "Thanks, Levi. That means a lot."

you out “No problem, kid.” He patted my shoulder before someone called hi  
from a few feet away, waving to him. “Don’t drink too many o  
rand ofglasses,” he added, pointing to my empty glass as he walked away.

“No worries,” I muttered, staring down into the glass.

I think *Maybe I can just get a whole bottle.*

elligent,

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“No problem, kid.” He patted my shoulder before someone called his name from a few feet away, waving to him. “Don’t drink too many of those glasses,” he added, pointing to my empty glass as he walked away.

“No worries,” I muttered, staring down into the glass.

*Maybe I can just get a whole bottle.*

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## LEVI

*I shouldn't have said anything.*

My eyes flickered back over to Ally, pleasantly speaking with a woman—none of which held a candle to her. She was easily the beautiful woman in the room, and it was bothering the shit out of me that I felt that way about her. I really wanted to just blame it on the one with the will to have sex with her, but...

There was something going on beneath the surface for me.

And that was *not* good.

I hadn't caught feelings for a woman since Rachel, and even then it escalated nearly as fast as what was happening with Ally. I was brooding all over her, and in the moment of talking to her about all that sappy shit, my mind had actually imagined what *I* would say if I was reciting wedding vows to my best friend's little sister.

Talk about a clusterfuck of weird emotions.

All of which needed to just go away.

Because one, Josh would kill me before I ever made it to the aisle and two, there was *no* way that Ally and me together for real made any sense.

wouldn't work in the world outside of this island. There was just r  
Ally and I had never gotten along, so why would that suddenly chang  
was always the thorn in my side, and I was always the annoying v  
who pissed her off just by breathing.

"Levi, do you mind if we chat for a few minutes?" Frank ask  
grabbing my attention away from my own thoughts.

I whipped my head around to the left, meeting his dark, friendl  
"Yeah, of course. What's up?"

He ran his fingers through his white stubble. "I know that it's getti  
but I thought that we might be able to discuss the deal with CyberSecu

I tried to remain calm, only allowing my eyebrows to raise slightl  
couple  
e most  
e that I  
d night  
are you sure? I don't want to take away from family time."

He smiled, his eyes lighting up. "Oh, I think we've had plenty of  
time—I'm about to call it a night, if I do say so myself. I think every  
is drunk except for you and me. I love my family, but once they're d  
well, they're a bit much for me."

"Getting drunk isn't really my thing anymore, so I understand," I ac  
which was the truth. I *did* try to stay away from drinking too much. It  
: hadn't  
asically  
good for my health...

Or my decisions.

"That's a good thing to hear," Frank said with a nod, wiping a few b  
sweat from his forehead. "I was just thinking that I might have come a  
little too harsh on you when we met for breakfast the other morning. I  
that you're very serious about purchasing the company, and honestl  
agree that you could potentially be a great fit. I'd like to see the comp  
nd two,  
ense. It  
to someone who has plenty of years remaining to build it even larger



io way.already is. I don't want to pass it on to someone who's my age, looking  
ge? Sheas a way to retire in a handful of years."

ain guy I nodded, hope building in my mind. "I think I could do well w  
without changing *too* much of what's already there. I believe that yo  
ed me,try to fix what's already working. I'd only look into expansion  
products or services, while maintaining everything else the way it is."

y eyes. He gave me an approving look, a smile still on his face. "I can  
appreciate that view. I can also appreciate your choice in partner. I kn  
ng late,you mentioned Ally was going to be in on the deal with you, and  
re." putting that kind of trust in your partner is admirable. I did the sam  
y. "Oh,with my wife, and she makes the best business partner. I know it's  
everyone, but after all my years, I can tell when a couple is compat  
familybusiness—and I think you and Ally have a great shot."

one left My mouth dropped open, but I quickly corrected myself. That v  
lrunk—something that I would've thought—but whatever it took to get th  
right? "Yeah, she's agreed to a thirty percent stake in the company.  
lmitted,that's really all she's comfortable with taking on right now."

. wasn't "I understand. It's a big step taking on a company like CyberSecur  
have to be honest with you, Levi. I'll only consider the deal if she's g  
be an active part of the company. I think her CPA skills and charism  
reads ofbe a wonderful addition to the leadership that you bring to the tabl  
across acomplement each other in that way."

can see "That really means a lot coming from you," I replied automatically,  
y, I *do*my brain was now backfiring and spinning, trying to figure if there v  
many gogrounds to what Frank was saying...

· than it *Maybe we're just really that good at acting.*

"Anyway, Liz and I are flying back home tomorrow. I know everyo

ng at it is planning to stay another week, but we have a lot to get done. I  
working right now—not retired yet,” he added with a chuckle, givin  
ith it—friendly pat on the arm.

u don’t “Right, I get that,” I said, my heart dropping. I *had* intended to s  
of newsecond week, getting as much time in with Frank as I could, but now...

There was no point.

1 really It would just be another week of trying to keep myself from All  
ow thatwhile I would love nothing more than to ravage her body every  
I thinkminute of the day, it was *not* good for whatever feelings were hiding l  
e thingthe surface.

not for “I’m actually heading out tomorrow too,” I added, downing the res  
ible fordrink. “Ally needs to get back to work and so do I.”

“Ah, so we’re like-minded then.” Frank laughed. “Fun is fun until it  
was *notto* get back to the grind. I’ll be in touch with you in a couple weeks at  
ie deal,deal. I don’t want to rush things, and I’ll have a lot of making up to do  
I thinkget back. I’ve put a lot to the side planning for this wedding.”

I nodded, tossing my beer into the trash I was standing beside  
e, but Isounds good. I’ll look forward to your call, and in the meantime, I’ll  
going towork on my business plan.”

a could “Atta boy.” He squeezed my shoulder before turning to go. “Tal  
le. YouLevi.”

“Look forward to it,” I called after him. As soon as he had disappear  
thoughthe crowd, I took a deep breath, letting out a sharp exhale.

was any *This is looking good—really fucking good.*

A smile stretched across my face as I shook my arms out, burstin  
excitement. I scanned the crowd for Ally, hoping to catch her and tell  
me elsegood news. After all, she benefitted from it all too.

'm still And I was depending on her.

g me a She would have to be a part of the business plan.

“Hey *you*.” A drunk Rachel waltzed up to me, reaching out to squeeze my arm. “I just want to say you are so cute with Ally. She’s the sweetest I have ever met. I hope that you marry her and invite me to the wedding.”

I raised my eyebrows, amused by the drunk slurs coming from my—my girlfriend. “You really need to find Rex and tell him it’s time to get fucking bed.”

“Oh my *gosh*, you are *such* a party pooper, Levi.” She let out a drunk giggle, leaning on my arm a little more as she nearly lost her footing. “I told you that you might be buying CyberSecure.”

“Yeah, maybe,” I answered her curtly, still searching the place for Rex. The crowd had thinned out significantly, mostly made up of drunk people getting down awkwardly on the dance floor. I turned back to Rachel. “You seen Ally anywhere? I really need to find her.”

“Ally? Yeah, yeah, I have.” Her sleek brows furrowed as she looked at me. “That manicured finger up to her red lips. “Oh, she told me to tell you that she got tired and she was going to bed. I *completely* forgot to relay the message to you. *Bad*.” She started to giggle again and I rolled my eyes, peeling her hand from my arm.

“You *really* need to go find Rex, Rach.” I shook my head as she walked away, before sauntering right back out into the mixture of people.

*She’s going to have a hell of a hangover on her honeymoon.*

Slipping effortlessly through the room, I slipped out, heading back to the main area of the resort. It was convenient that everything was all right where I needed it. And as I thundered up the grand staircase, I was thankful the room was away.

Because I was suddenly *irritated*.

Why wouldn't Ally have told me she was going back to the room I  
eze my Was it really that hard to find me and just tell me? Was she avoiding  
st girl Isome reason?

.” I reached into my pants' pocket, pulling out the keycard and open  
my ex-room. There was a soft glow coming from the main area, and the soun  
you toTV filled my ears. I let the door shut behind me and I flipped the d  
before heading down the hallway where I saw Ally, propped up on t  
ink-girleating chips and watching some sort of chick flick.

g. “Dad “Why did you leave?” I demanded.

She slowly dropped her hand, which was holding a chip. “Are you  
or Ally.me?” Her hand hovered above the bag before she dropped it back in.

people “Uh, I wouldn't say that I'm *mad*, but I'm definitely irritated th  
.” “Havecouldn't take a minute to tell me that you were leaving. That recepti  
was *not* that spacious. It would've been easy to find me and tell me y  
: put ainstead of relying on *Rachel*, who was drunk out of her mind, to  
she wasinstead. It's amazing that she even remembered.”

ge—my Her eyes widened. “I'm sorry. I didn't think it would matter. Yc  
and offbusy, and I thought it might annoy you.”

I shook my head. “You said we have to act like a real couple. Wel  
cackledwere a real couple, I would've wanted to know that you were leaving  
*you.*”

“Okay, fine,” she snorted, reaching back into the chip bag. “I wi  
into thesure that I consult you before leaving a wedding reception.”

ht here, “Well, lucky for you, there won't be any more of them. We're  
sn't fartomorrow,” I snapped. “I'm sending Jeff a text right now.” I pulled

phone, typing out a quick text to our pilot, who was enjoying the  
myself?himself while we were all here.

me for “What?” Ally exclaimed while I finished typing. “Why are we leav  
it all because I told Rachel to tell you I was going back to the room?”  
ing the I pressed the send button and shook my head. “No, I’m a dick, but  
d of the *that* much of one. We’re leaving because Frank is also leaving ton  
eadboltThere’s no point in hanging around when all his family is gone. Rac  
he bed,Rex will be off doing their own thing. There’s no purpose to us sta  
have plenty of work to get back to, anyway.”

She nodded before her face fell. “I guess the deal is off...”  
mad at *Oh yeah. The deal.*

“Actually...” A smile tugged at my lips. “I think we *might* have tha  
at you bag.”

on area Ally dropped the bag of chips onto the bed beside her, lunging for  
ourself,her eyes lit up. “*Wait*, did he agree to it? Are you buying it?”

tell me “Well, he’s going to consider it, and thinks that we could potential  
good fit. He’ll get back with me in a couple of weeks. And knowin  
ou were Frank is, that means he’s serious.” I couldn’t hold the excitement bac

my voice and I laughed as Ally hopped to her feet, coming right for me  
l, if we “Oh my *gosh!*” she squealed, jumping into my arms and wrappi  
—from around my neck. “This is so big!”

The scent of her warm amber perfume filled my nostrils, catch  
ll make breath as her breasts pressed into my chest, my arms wrapping arou  
waist and holding her bare feet off the floor.

leaving *Fuck.*

out my The desire came rushing over me like a tidal wave as her cheek pre  
mine, her hair tickling my nose. My hands loosened on her waist as

resort my head back, my eyes locking with hers. It was our last night like this

*What's one more time?*

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I tilted

my head back, my eyes locking with hers. It was our last night like this...

*What's one more time?*

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## ALLY

I caught my breath as the lust alighted in Levi's hazel eyes, his hands leaving my waist and threading through my auburn hair. He cupped the back of my neck, not hesitating for a second as he brought my lips to his. *I shouldn't be doing this.*

All of the alarms were going off in my head as his tongue delved into my mouth, dancing with mine as he fisted my hair. The familiar taste of bourbon was in his kiss, and my pussy tightened as I felt his cock grow hard against my dress.

"Just one more time," Levi panted as he reached for the back zipper of my dress. "Then never again."

"Never again," I whined, backing my ass up against his dick. "But I want you right now."

Levi chuckled darkly as he pulled the zipper down, exposing my bare ass. The cool air of the room sent a chill down my spine—or maybe it was the brush of his fingertips brushing down my skin, unhooking my bra. He gently pulled the material down, my dress and bra dropping to my ankles. It left my ass in a colorful thong, my ass cheeks bare against the boner in Levi's pants.

And I was fucking *dying* for it.

“Do you like it like this?” Levi asked in a husky tone as he ground his backside. “It’s our last night, let’s make it one to remember.”

“Then fuck me like this,” I moaned out as his erection brushed my entrance through my soaking underwear. *“Please.”*

“You are a fucking naughty girl.” A groan escaped Levi’s lips as he gripped my hips, holding me firmly against him as he ravaged me through our clothes. The way he was rubbing against me turned me on to the point that I could’ve orgasmed just like that.

*Everything he does is so hot.*

His fingers slipped under the satin material of my panties and he pulled them back slightly, pulling them down my hips and adding them to the pile of clothes on the floor. Levi spun me back to face him, my body completely naked while he stayed clothed.

“God I could get used to seeing you like this all the time,” he murmured, letting out a sharp sigh as his eyes raked down my body. “I’m committing you to my memory.”

My heart fluttered at his words, butterflies bursting through my stomach as he began to slowly strip in front of me, tossing his shirt to the floor. My eyes ran down his perfectly toned chest and abs, my mouth salivating as he reached for the button on his pants. He unzipped them, dropping his boxer briefs and pants at the same time, stepping out of them.

Before he could take a step toward me, I closed the distance, dropping to my knees and taking his cock in my hands. I stroked him using both hands, looking up and meeting his gaze. I gave him my best seductive grin, my tongue slipping past my parted lips. He let out a groan as I licked the head of his cock, and slowly, I brought my mouth to the head of his erection.

into my mouth, using my hands at the base of his dick as I worked  
and forth.

His fingers found my hair, holding it back from my face as I picked  
speed, fucking him with my mouth. “You’re *really* fucking good at this  
hands forced out, his breath catching as I let him deeper into my mouth, but  
through the back of my throat. “*Fuck.*”

I kept working back and forth before he finally stopped me, gently  
me up to my feet. His lips met mine, his hands on my hips as he forced  
backward, bumping me into the edge of the bed. He released me and  
stepped spinning me around.

“You said you wanted it like this,” he said, sticking his fingers into  
my mouth. Levi then took his moist fingers and added extra moisture to  
already soaked pussy. He slipped a couple of fingers into me, working  
inward, and forth as his other hand forced me to bend over. “You’ve got the  
best pussy I’ve ever seen.” Levi ran his fingers over my wet folds, and I suddenly  
felt his lips, kissing my ass cheeks. He leaned back, slapping me playfully  
on the ass and gently—and then going right back into my pussy.

His tongue slipped into my folds, running from my clitoris all the way  
to the end of my opening. My legs trembled and I let out a moan, conscious  
of begging for him to just fuck me right there, shoving his cock deep inside  
me. However, I refrained, letting him bury his face in my pussy, bringing  
me to pure ecstasy.

“Oh, Levi,” I cried out as he flicked his tongue back and forth, bringing  
me closer and closer to the edge of climax. My hips rocked back and forth,  
the tip of my ass bouncing against his face. I could feel the muscles tense, rippling  
under my skin. I took a deep breath, curling into the bamboo flooring of the room as the orgasm burst through

ed backbody. Moisture poured from my pussy, and Levi let out a groan as he  
me up, his hands running down my hips.

l up my “Oof,” he blew out a breath as he backed away from me. “Stay j  
ais,” hethat. I wanna fuck you just like that.” I smiled, hearing the condom v  
umpingtear behind me...

And then he took me.

pulling He shoved his cock forcefully into my pussy, quickly taking me. Hi  
ced mewent for my hair, and I let out a cry at the tinge of pain mixed with pl  
e then,His other hand rested on my waist for a second before slapping  
cheeks on both sides, one at a time.

into his “You’re the best fuck I’ve ever had,” he growled from above me.  
to myholy *fuck*, Ally. Your pussy feels so good.” The arousal and lust in hi  
ig backwas the sexiest thing I had ever heard, and the moan that escaped hc  
e nicestshowed that as Levi continued to pound into me, our bodies filling th  
iddenlywith the thudding of skin and sex.

layfully He slowed down after a few more moments, pulling out of me com  
“I need to see your face,” he murmured, flipping me around to face hi  
way tolifted me onto the bed, but didn’t join me there, instead looming o  
sideringedge. Grabbing my legs, he lifted them straight up into the air, restir  
side ofagainst his chest and shoulders. Lightly, he kissed my calves, sucking  
ging meskin into his mouth. He smiled down at me, positioning his cock  
entrance of my pussy, teasing me by just inserting the tip and then pu  
ging meout again. He let out a sharp breath.

l forth, “Just fuck me, Levi,” I pleaded, meeting his eyes with mine. “I w  
ny toescok inside of me.”

ugh my “I just want this to last all fucking night,” he groaned, running hi  
down my tan, lean legs. “This is the best fucking sex I’ve ever had.

lapped know how I'm going to go back to the real world and not fuck you ever  
I see you."

ust like My mind stopped for a moment, having trouble processing what  
vrapper hearing him say—right in the middle of fucking me. "I—"

"Don't say anything," he said, shaking his head for a moment,  
shoving his whole cock into me. "Just let me fuck you like the  
s hand tomorrow."

leasure. I let out a loud cry in response as he gripped my legs, his in  
my ass speeding up as he rammed into my body over and over. His dick was s  
something inside of me that turned me on all over again, getting lost  
. "Like, good he felt in the moment.

s voice *Fuck, this will be hard to give up.*

opefully I stretched my hands over my head, resting my arms as I enjoyed the  
ie room of Levi standing above me, his eyes hazed over with lust as he  
contorted his face, focused on where our bodies were intertwining. I s  
pletely eyes, focusing on the sensation of his cock filling me over and over  
n. Levi's pussy tightened around Levi's dick as I neared a second orgasm, a  
ver the lower body tensed as it erupted, pulsing around his cock.

ing them "Oh fuck, there you go." Levi let out a loud groan. "Oh my god."

g a little "Levi," I moaned out, riding the final few waves of my climax. It  
at the best one yet, and as my eyes fluttered open I was met with his intense  
illing it now focused on my face.

"I love it when you cum for me," Levi panted, his intensity picking  
ant that our gazes stayed locked. "You're fucking perfect."

"Just fuck me harder," I whined, loving the way his hips were sla  
s hands into mine. He picked up the pace, letting out a chain of grunts. It  
I don't

ry timesexiest noise, and I felt sexy as my breasts bounced with the motion speed. I lifted my hands, palming them for Levi.

t I was “You’re gonna make me cum,” he panted.

“Cum for me then,” I demanded, my voice taking a raspy tone. “Cum before me, baby.” The nickname had slipped from my lips but I didn’t realize Levi’s body stilling as he tensed, filling the condom inside of me.

*Fucking perfection.*

intensity He leaned down, placing a soft kiss on my lips before pulling out stroking “That was amazing, Ally.”

in how I raised my eyebrows as he headed toward the bathroom, and I pushing my hair behind my ear and trying to process what had just happened. Levi had said a *lot* during sex, and while I knew he was caught up in the view moment, I also knew that there had to be *some* reason he’d said those things for my pleasure. That stuff doesn’t just come from arousal.

shut my I blew out a sigh as I headed toward the dresser, pulling out an over shirt and fresh pair of underwear. I wasn’t sure what to expect when Levi came out of the bathroom—was he going to go back to acting like the worst mistake of his life? Or was he going to maintain the same attitude he’d had during sex?

was the “We should probably pack,” Levi said as he came back into the room. I stared, wanting to fly out in the morning. He said the weather conditions will be perfect to make the flight then.”

g up as I nodded, swallowing hard as he rocked back and forth from his toe heels. “Okay, I guess I’ll get started working on that.”

humming “Yeah, I should probably get started on it too.” He cleared his throat, reaching to pick up his bag and tossing it onto the bed. “And for the

1 of his Ally”—he turned to me, his hand resting on the bag—“I *don't* regret what happened between us.”

“I feel like there’s a *but* coming after that,” I said, letting out a small sigh. “If it’s because we broke the rules I set, I don’t think it’s fair to regret it, me backing out of the contract.”

He shook his head, a half-hearted smile growing on his face. “Well, you broke the contract, so I think it’s basically null and void—but either way, I’m not backing out of your thirty percent stake in the company. I would like to give that to you, and there’s no way in *hell* I want to have to explain myself to you, brother *why* the contract was broken.”

I burst into laughter, relief replacing the tension in my shoulders. “Honestly, I think he would probably kill us both. He’s never been nice to me. He’s always told me to stay away from you, and I think he knows I’m equally as capable of making terrible decisions.”

“Yeah, right. You’ve always been perfect, Ally. I don’t think I’ve ever done anything that you’ve ever done wrong.”

“Have you *seen* my choice in men?” I exclaimed, tossing my own blanket over the bed. “I don’t think I’ve picked a decent guy—like my type is just a bunch of red flags.”

“No wonder you like having sex with me so much,” he teased, reaching over and grabbing my hand. He pulled me to him, brushing my hair off my face and behind my ear. “You’re really something, Ally. You deserve a guy who knows that—and treats you as such. I think that’s why your brother is so hard on you sometimes.”

“Yeah, thanks, Levi,” I choked out, forcing myself to back away from him. “That means a lot. I, uh, I’ll have a lot more respect for you now.”



et what “Good, I’m glad you don’t think I’m a total asshole.” He chuckled,  
me go as I began pulling my clothes out of my drawers. “Maybe after  
nervous can be friends instead of enemies.”

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The word sent a pang of hurt in my chest, but I brushed it off. I *knew*  
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“Good, I’m glad you don’t think I’m a total asshole.” He chuckled, letting me go as I began pulling my clothes out of my drawers. “Maybe after this we can be friends instead of enemies.”

*Friends.*

The word sent a pang of hurt in my chest, but I brushed it off. I *knew* that it all wasn’t real—just like I *knew* that we were never going to be anything more than friends.

But it didn’t stop me from feeling the rejection.

Maybe getting back to the real world was a good idea.

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## LEVI

“Glad to be back?” Josh asked me, handing me a beer as he leaned against the bar. “You were only gone a little over a week, *damn*, it felt like a long time. I hate going out without you.”

“Yeah, I guess usually you just go with me when I travel.” I chuckled. “It was a good time though.”

“When you told me you were coming back early, I assumed that because you and Ally just weren’t getting along at all.” Josh ran his hand through his hair, his eyes scanning the dance floor.

“Nah, it wasn’t that bad. I don’t think I give her enough credit.” I was thinking about her. We’d been home nearly a week, and I hadn’t seen her since we split at the airport.

But that didn’t mean that I hadn’t thought about her constantly.

“Credit for what?” Josh’s change in tone and narrowed eyes caught my attention. “Did something happen while you were there?”

“No, no, not at all,” I lied, shaking my head like I was disgusted with myself. “I just mean she really put on a good show for everyone. I th

was the reason that Frank is giving me a shot at buying CyberSec actually, I *know* she's the reason. Everyone loved her."

Josh's face flooded with relief. "Yeah, everyone loves Ally. They have—always will. I haven't really talked to her much since she got through. I thought she was avoiding me actually."

*Oof. Can't imagine why—not like I stuck my dick in her or something.*

"I bet Mom has her catching up on work." I rubbed my jaw, forcing to sound like I didn't care...

*Because I don't, damnit.*

aned up "Probably," Josh said with a shrug. "Bro, look at those two girls  
ek, but nodded to the middle of the dance floor, where two blondes were c  
with each other, each cradling a drink in their hands...

led. "It And staring right at us.

They were hot—like *really* hot. The one on the left had a *tight* silver  
on, hugging the curves of her hourglass figure.

it was *Maybe I just need a means to forget Ally.*  
fingers

"Maybe we should see if they need another drink," I suggested, shr  
my shoulders at the thought of *actually* approaching them.

smiled, "Well, speak of the devil," Josh said, his words confusing the shit  
een her me.

"What?" I turned back to look at my best friend, but then *instantly*  
sed me My eyes landed on a *sexy* auburn-headed woman with eyes like ice  
pussy that fit my cock like a fucking glove. "What's *she* doing out?"

by the Josh laughed. "Looks like Linley must've forced her to get out tonig

ink she I nodded as my mouth went dry, having not even noticed her bes  
walking in with her. I couldn't get over the black bodycon dress Ally  
—the same one she had worn our first night together...

secure— The one I'd pulled over her head and tossed to the floor of our room  
Just the thought made my cock jump to life.

always “You think they’ll come talk to us?” I asked, ripping my eyes from  
ot backthe two hadn’t even noticed us...yet.

“Who knows?” Josh said, whipping his head back around to the blo  
g. the middle of the dance floor. “Linley is more intimidating than me  
myselfwith her big-ass personality. I have no doubt she’ll be fine.”

“Yeah, for sure.” My eyes shifted back over to Ally, her back turned  
I could envision her juicy, bare ass grinding against me, and  
ls.” Heeverything I had not to take her straight to the damn bathroom of the b  
lancing *You can’t fuck her again, Levi.*

And maybe *that* was why I wanted her so bad at the moment. I’d  
wanted what I couldn’t have—and I definitely couldn’t have her. Ju  
er dresswas about to look back toward where Josh was heading, Ally spun ar  
if she could feel my gaze on her.

Our eyes locked and I saw the surprise on her face, her plump  
ruggingparting at the sight of me. My heart jumped in my chest, and I *had*  
feelings that were slipping up on me...

t out of She was just a good fuck.

That was it.

y froze. But it didn’t feel right to think that about Ally. I’d had plenty of  
e and awho were good fucks, but *damn*, it felt like she had an iron grip on me,  
squeezing the life out of it with every single second I held those oce  
ght.” eyes.

t friend And then she took a step toward me.

had on *Nope. Nope, I can’t do this.*

I ripped my gaze from her and downed my beer, setting it on the l

heading out to where Josh was chatting up the women. There was no  
had the self-control to deal with Ally tonight. I needed more time.

Ally as *And a distraction.*

“There he is!” Josh called out as I walked up to him and the two  
ndes in women. “This is my best friend, Levi—the one I was telling you about  
ost men “It’s so nice to meet you,” the blonde in the silver dress purred, r  
her hand down my bare forearm. “I’ve heard a lot of things ab  
l to me. Lombardi family. It’s nice to finally see you in the flesh rather than  
it took your social media. I’m Tiffany.”

ar. “Nice to meet you, Tiffany.” I feigned my usually charming smi  
one that always made the women flock to me. As much as I wanted  
always behind me, where I was certain Ally was burning a hole into the back  
st as I head, I made myself stay there in the moment with Tiffany. She w  
ound as though not nearly as striking as Ally in that black dress...

*Stop it, Levi.*

red lips *She’s not an option.*

ited the “I’m Maddie,” the other blonde said quickly, giving me a toothy gri  
I think I’m going to take your friend.” She gave Josh a wink, flirta  
batting her eyes at him. “Come on.”

“You don’t have to ask me twice.” He beamed, grabbing her ha  
women leading her off to dance a few feet away. My stomach dropped as I  
y heart, back to Tiffany, whose big brown eyes were staring up at me.

an-blue “You want to dance?” I choked out, wishing that the entire moment  
making me feel like I needed to throw up my dinner.

“I thought you’d *never* ask,” she squealed before moving her h  
running her hands down my chest. I felt...

bar and *Nothing.*



o way I I swayed back and forth, trying to focus more on the music playing  
us than the woman rubbing her body against mine. Usually, I enjoy  
moment like this—though I never made it sexual. Only Ally had ever let  
blondethat out in me.

.” *Damn it. Stop thinking about her.*

running “Can I buy you a drink?” I asked, thinking maybe conversation would  
out the better alternative.

just on “Uh, yeah, sure.” She stopped dancing, spinning around to face me  
you not much of a dancer?”

le—the “Not really. That, and I’m pretty fucking thirsty.” Just to prove a  
to lookgrabbed her hand, brushing off the ick that came with it. “I don’t know  
of myyou, but I’m not drunk enough to really get into dancing.”

was hot, She burst into a high-pitched nasal-sounding cackle. “Oh my *god*,  
so funny. I had no idea how charming you were. I thought you were  
those typical douchebag kind of guys—no offense.”

“No offense taken,” I chuckled, eyeing Ally, who was on the other  
n. “Butthe bar, chatting it up with Linley. The old me probably would’ve gone  
atiouslythem and made some smart-ass remark...

But I couldn’t do it.

and I felt like I was fresh out of a breakup or something.

turned “I’ll have a Manhattan.” Tiffany beamed to the bartender, who was  
on us.

wasn’t “What about you, Levi?” he asked. Everyone knew who I was back  
home.

lips and “I’ll just have my usual.” I turned to Tiffany, mostly just because  
me from being able to see Ally. “So tell me, Tiffany, where are you from

“Wow, you’re actually acting like you want to get to know me.” She

around a thick manicured eyebrow. “I must’ve really caught your attention, huh?” I enjoyed a “Something like that.” I played it cool. “So where are you from? It brought sound like an L.A. accent to me.”

“That’s because I’m from Boston.” She took the drink from the bartender’s hands, giving him a smile. “I moved here about a month ago, and I love it.” “What do you do?” I took a long sip of my drink, hoping that I had downed enough beers I could somehow create some sort of attraction with the woman in front of me. I’d never been into redheads anyway...

“I work in marketing for a tech company, but I also act on the side. Acting is a serious thing, but I’ve always wanted to make it, I guess. It doesn’t pay about as much as acting though.”

“Mmm, yeah.” I nodded, not surprised to find an *actress* in L.A. “You are really impressive. What tech company do you work for?”

“Xelent,” she answered before taking a sip of her drink. “I thought acting would just be a thing I did after college, but now I’ve been there for over a decade on the side of years.” She let out a half-hearted laugh.

I thought to myself: *The woman has some depth.*

“I get that,” I said, taking a seat on the barstool. “I’m working on a business plan right now and if I don’t land it, I’m gonna be disappointed. I’m not sure where I’ll go from there.”

“Ah, I see,” she said with a nod. “Well, cheers to your business and I hope that it works out for you, Levi. I barely know you, but I’m rooting for you.” I clinked my beer with her glass, relaxing a little into the conversation. “I’ll be taking another drink.”

It kept me thinking: *I got this. I just had to get in touch with the old me—before Ally.*

“How about we go dance now?” I held out my hand to her, setting the raised empty beer bottle on the bar. “I’m feeling like you sparkle in that silver dress.”

h?” Tiff. Can I call you Tiff? Or is that a no?”

doesn't She burst into a fit of giggles, taking my hand and gulping down the  
her Manhattan. “I think I would love nothing more than to show you ju  
ender's much I can sparkle.” Tiffany leaned in a little closer, her lips only  
e it.” inches from my ear. “And you can call me whatever you want to tonig  
f I just *Great. Distraction it is.*

to this

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r dress,

Tiff. Can I call you Tiff? Or is that a no?"

She burst into a fit of giggles, taking my hand and gulping down the rest of her Manhattan. "I think I would love nothing more than to show you just how much I can sparkle." Tiffany leaned in a little closer, her lips only a few inches from my ear. "And you can call me whatever you want to tonight."

*Great. Distraction it is.*

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## ALLY

“Don’t just sit and stare at him, Ally. It’s weird,” Linley reprimanded me, nudging me with her knee under the bar.

I ripped my eyes from Levi, who was chatting up a cute blonde. “Really that obvious?” I turned to my best friend, disappointment filling my voice.

“Um, *yeah*. It’s super obvious. Like honestly, I’m surprised that your brother hasn’t noticed how the two of you are acting so suspect.” Her eyes were filled with amicable judgment—and sympathy.

So much sympathy.

“I shouldn’t have told you what happened,” I grumbled, spinning around in circles on the edge of the bar.

“Girl, you’re walking around like you just broke up with a boyfriend, not hooked up with your brother’s best friend. You literally look like a walking rain cloud—I feel *all* that bad sad juju coming off of you makes me want to buy an umbrella.”

“Shut up,” I teased, kicking her shin lightly. “I’m not *that* bad. I definitely don’t have any bad juju—whatever that even is.”

“You’ve gone through two tubs of ice cream since you got back,” pointed out, sipping on the straw sticking out from her red Shirley Temple. “I think that you need to get out there instead of torturing yourself by watching him flirt with some other girl.”

“I know, I *know*,” I groaned, leaning on my elbow and positioning myself away from them. “I don’t know why it bothers me so much. It was a stupid agreement and things got a little heated. It doesn’t mean anything, right?”

She narrowed her eyes at me. “Ally, I feel like you’re working to convince yourself of that—not me. I think you went off to the Caribbean and had some legit feelings for your brother’s best friend, who just so happened to be the biggest douche canoe I’ve ever met, and now he’s totally just looking at you with your head. He’s looked over here a million times since you got here.”

“Maybe I should just go talk to him.” I went to slide off the stool.

Linley’s hand stopped me. “Absolutely *not*. That is literally the worst thing you could ever have. That makes you seem...*desperate*.”

“You’re right.” I facepalmed. “What the hell is wrong with me, Ally? I literally *never* have problems with this. I’ve never been attracted to Levi. The moment we got to that island, it’s like he’s gotten under my skin and I can’t get him out.”

“Maybe you should just find someone else to use? I mean, if you want my honest opinion, I think that’s what Levi is doing—maybe.” She looked at me and I followed her to the dance floor, and I craned my head to see what she was looking at.

*Ugh.*

Levi and the blonde were dancing close on the dance floor, and his hands were placed lightly on her waist. They moved in sync together, and both



Linley in my throat as I watched her raise her arms over her head, smoothly and gracefully. “Her perfectly manicured fingernails down the stubble on his jaw. Watching her. *I hate her.*”

*Wait, no, no I don't. It's not her fault.*

Myself I shook my head, sliding off the stool and heading toward the bathroom. “Where are you going, Ally?” Linley called after me, grabbing my hand as soon as she caught up. “You can't let him get to you like this. You're winning—you get thirty percent of the company and that's *totally* worth it. It happened with Levi. You just have to just remind yourself of *who* he is. You caught the same fucking jerk he's always been.”

It is to be I stopped, taking a deep breath and running my fingers through my hair. “You're right—and I *know* that about him. I just can't bring my heart onto the same page. He's like flipped some sort of switch in me. I hate that I can't be like him and just let it all go. But you should've just said the things he said to me, Lin.”

Her lips turned downward with sympathy. “Was it during sex?”

Lin? I I hesitated, wringing my hands. “Uh...yeah.”  
Levi, but “Mmm.” Her lips pursed. “You can't take anything a guy says during sex—and it goes to your heart, Ally. I once had a guy propose to me right before he was a cum. It's just—sex just does really strange things to their brains. It's like they're brainwashed by their dick.”

It had passed I laughed, though her words stung. “He said some of it afterwards—like, he made it a huge deal that it was our last time to sleep together.”

“Yeah, because probably in the moment, he was sad that he wasn't getting another piece of that awesome kitty you got,” she teased, elbowing me. “You're too much sometimes.” My eyes flickered back to the dancer, the blonde now facing Levi, a flirty smile on her face as she batted

running thick fake eyelashes at him.

*She's his type.*

*Not me.*

I swallowed the hurt, replacing it with determination. "I'll just find someone else to fill the space," I mumbled under my breath.

Linley's arm as "That sounds a little unhealthy," Linley said. "But yeah, okay. Go ahead, you're still flirt. It'll at least remind him of how much he's missing out on. Levi knows what you're a catch, and why not play games with his head?" She shrugged. "He's smiling a playful look. "Just don't be dumb—and pick a hot guy."

"Got it." I scanned the sea of people. "It's just too bad that I'm terrible at this kind of thing."

Linley's "Just go up to the bar and look pretty. I guarantee they'll come to you." I *hate* Linley urged me back toward the bar. "I'll go to the bathroom, make sure you're heard like you're alone and then they'll *really* come for you. You're like a little piece of meat and they're all lions."

"You really need to work on your analogies," I laughed as we parted.

I headed back to the bar, forcing my eyes to stay *away* from Levi and his blonde dance partner. I'd seen him dance with a million women over the years—well, maybe not *millions*...

Or maybe it *was* millions.

He'd been a playboy since the beginning of time, and there was no way a one-trip to the Caribbean was suddenly going to change that about. No matter how bad my heart was acting like it wanted him.

Linley's "And my brother would kill me—I couldn't forget that aspect of the situation." I thought.

Linley's "You look lonely as hell," a deep voice said from behind me, grabbed my attention. I turned to see a tall, handsome blond-headed man. He was

my age, maybe a little older than me, actually.

But whatever.

He looked sophisticated in a light gray suit and tie—like he had just finished work. He wasn't *quite* on Levi's level, but at the moment I was probably just being a little biased.

“My friend is in the bathroom,” I said, giving him a smile.

“Like *boyfriend* or *friend*, friend?” His blue eyes lit up with amusement, and I found myself drawn to the charisma in his voice.

“Just a *friend*.” A flirty giggle escaped my lips.

“So, this *friend* won't try to kick my ass if I offer to buy you a drink

“Oh, I think that would make her day.”

“Perfect. I love making random strangers' days. Let's get you that drink, maybe dance a little, see where the night takes us.”

*Very forward.*

“Okay.” I shrugged as he waved the waitress over. He was giving me a Gosling vibes from the movie *Crazy, Stupid, Love*, and I was there for him even if he was more of a player than even Levi.

“What can I get you?”

“A Shirley Temple,” I said to the bartender, giving this new Ryan a grateful smile. “Thanks for picking up my drink.”

“Of course.” He gave me a nod. “So, what's your name? My guess is something sexy, like Brittany or Haley.”

I laughed, shaking my head. “It's Ally.”

“Yeah, like I said, something sexy.” He chuckled, his tone deep and gravelly. “I'm Connor, and yes, I know. It's *not* a sexy name, but I'm trying to make up for my parents' lack of uniqueness.”

“You are something else,” I said, just as the bartender sat my drink

on the bar. “Lots of swag.”

“Did you seriously just use the word *swag*?” He laughed, amusement glistening in his face. “I think I’m already in love with you. That’s amazing, probably do you do for work, Ally?”

“I’m a CPA for Lisa Lombardi’s office,” I said, not remotely surprised by the reaction on his face.

“That’s fucking impressive.” He leaned against the bar, incidentally closer to me. “What’s it like managing a billionaire’s finances?”

“A lot of zeros,” I joked, his eyes intently dancing across my face. “Hot, but nothing in my body reacted to the intensity of his gaze.”

*That doesn’t mean anything. It’s just all in good fun.*

“What do you do, Connor?”

“I’m the VP of sales for Data Corp.” The pride in his voice was evident. I didn’t blame him—the tech company was a frontrunner, making CEO Ryan a very wealthy man.

“That’s equally impressive,” I said, taking a sip of my drink. I caught a glimpse of Linley, being led out to the dance floor by a guy. She shot me a wink. “Do you like your job?”

“I do.” He nodded, downing the rest of his drink. “Do you want to dance?”

I nodded before basically shotgunning the rest of my own drink—I mean, this is it’s all the courage I could get. I might have danced with Levi, but it was normal. I set the empty glass down on the bar, grabbing his extended hand. “Let’s do it.”

“Man, where have you been all my life?” he murmured, his hand cupping my face. I laughed a little at the strong pick-up line, not bothering to read into it. Connor was probably assuming that he would be taking me home tonight...

But he was sorely mistaken.

I didn't do that stuff.

However, I played into the moment, letting my liquid courage heat my face as I swayed to the music, Connor's hands landing just above my shoulders. As much as I wanted to, I *didn't* go looking for Levi in the moment. I didn't want him to think I was remotely concerned about what he might think of me. "You got *moves*, too." Connor pulled me closer to him, our bodies pressed suddenly against each other's. My stomach flipped at the contact—but he was a good way. I forced a smile, coercing myself to have a good attitude for the moment.

It was *just* dancing.

However, as his hands slid lower and he leaned toward me, I braced myself, and expecting such a strong move so fast...

But it never happened.

"What the *fuck* do you think you're doing?" a familiar voice blared louder than the music, Connor instantly being ripped away from me.

"Whoa." Connor threw up his hands in surrender as Levi stood there, *fuming*. "What the hell, dude?"

"I saw you trying to get fucking handsy with her," Levi continued, voice cold. The blonde he'd been dancing with stood a few feet back, my face mirroring the same shock as mine.

"Bro, you need to calm down," Connor shot back at him. "She isn't with you, is she? I saw you with her." He pointed to the blonde. "Calm down, feeling *fuck* out. You don't need to play hero."

"You're about to get your ass beat," Levi seethed, lunging toward Connor.

Panicking, I jumped in between the men, glaring up at Levi as I placed my hands on his chest as a buffer. "Stop it, Levi. You're acting crazy right now."

—I can handle myself.”

He glared down at me, his hazel eyes alight with anger. “You’re not supposed to be up my seriously okay with that douche touching you like that?”

my waist. *He’s seriously pissed at me.*

I didn’t “It’s none of your business *what* I do, Levi,” I snapped at him, just as my brother suddenly appeared beside him.

“What’s going on?” Josh demanded, his eyes bouncing between the two of us. I didn’t know what to say, not inus with a puzzled expression on his face.

“*Nothing.*” Levi shook his head, giving me one last glare before spinning on his heels and storming out.

Josh gave me a weird look before chasing after his best friend, leaving me alone in the middle of the dance floor, Connor already long gone.

*Well, that was unexpected.*

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*He’s seriously pissed at me.*

“It’s none of your business *what* I do, Levi,” I snapped at him, just as my brother suddenly appeared beside him.

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*Well, that was unexpected.*







## LEVI

If it were physically possible, my eyes would've bored a fucking hole through my computer screen. It had been *two* weeks since I'd spoken to Ally. Every day was torture, since she was only a short five-minute walk from my office.

But I couldn't bring myself to apologize for making an ass out of myself. Josh thought I had just been doing the honorable thing, standing up for my little sister—not being a jealous asshole. In truth, it had fucking hurt seeing Connor Nash put his hands on Ally. Connor wasn't a bad guy, but I was certain that he probably had more game than I did...

And that only made it worse.

I stared at the phone on my desk, tapping the screen—like Ally was going to actually send me a text.

*Why do I care so much?*

My brain was on overload when it came to her, and I still didn't understand what the hell had changed between us. It wasn't like me to take sleeping with someone so seriously—I mean, yeah, it was the best pussy I'd ever had, but that doesn't usually trip my heart.

*Voodoo vagina magic.*

I chuckled at the terminology in my head before realizing that my phone was vibrating on my desk. Reaching for it, my heart jumped at the name on the screen.  
*Frank Lewis.*

I cleared my throat as I answered. “Hey, Frank. It’s good to hear from you.”

“Good to see you answer your phone.” Frank chuckled. “How’re you treating you in L.A.?”

“They’re great, just keeping up with work and life. Did you get caught up on all your work?”

“Oh yeah, took me a little longer than I had hoped, but you know how it goes.” His tone was bright and friendly, and I tried to hold back my excitement, apprehension filling my chest. “I’m actually calling because I’m in your neck of the woods today. I thought we might be able to meet and discuss CyberSecure’s future. What’s your availability look like?”

“I can make time for you whenever you’d like to meet up,” I said, convincing at just how eager I sounded.

So much for nonchalance.

“What’s Ally’s schedule like? I don’t want to leave her out of the meeting.”

*Fuck.*

“Uh, I bet my mom would let her go for a meeting,” I said, knowing it was the truth—though I might have to answer for it. She’d been watching me like a hawk lately, though she hadn’t pried into what had happened in the Caribbean. She wasn’t the type to do that, not yet anyway. She would be on the sidelines for awhile first.

“Perfect,” Frank said. “How about we meet for lunch at one? We can

at Brewer's? That's not far from your office, right?"

phone "That works great. It's just down the street, actually." I pushed  
back from the desk, seeing that it was already noon—and I still had  
a massive obstacle in my way...

I had no idea if Ally would agree to the lunch.

"I'll see you two then." Frank hung up the phone, and I shoved it  
into the thingspocket of my black slacks.

*Guess that apology might have to happen sooner rather than later.*

But then again, I knew that she wanted that thirty percent just as much  
as I wanted the rest of the company—and that provided me a little relief.

I made the walk down the two flights of stairs to her floor fairly quickly  
and as her office door came into view, my heart began to thud loudly in  
my chest. It was annoying, but I did my best to ignore it. Taking a deep breath  
and knocked softly on the not quite shut door.

"Come in," Ally's voice called out on the other side.

I pushed open the door, and her eyes went wide as I stepped in, closing  
the door tightly behind me. "Hey." I cleared my throat.

"Uh, hey." She narrowed those striking blue eyes at me. Her auburn  
hair was pulled back in a sleek ponytail, bringing out her high cheekbones  
and heart-shaped face. Her white blouse tucked into black dress pants gave her  
the professional, sexy look—and I fought to keep my thoughts on the  
task at hand.

"We're going to get a late lunch at Brewer's."

"And *why* would I do that with you, Levi?" She folded her arms across  
her chest, a dark eyebrow raising slightly.

"Because if you want your thirty percent stake in CyberSecure, you  
need to meet with me to the luncheon with Frank—that he has requested you attend.

“Does he still think that we’re *together*?” The way she emphasized myselfword made my stomach flip, her tone sour.

I hesitated. “Uh—”

“Oh my *god*, he *does*,” she groaned out, shaking her head. “You have been kidding me. Why couldn’t you just tell him that we broke up, but that we’re still amicable enough to do the deal? That would show a lot of maturity.”

“I don’t think so.”

“I don’t want to pretend to be with you.”

“Okay, so then I guess just forfeit the deal.”

“No,” she snapped. “How about you apologize for what you did to me, and then maybe I’ll consider going with you.”

My shoulders slumped. “Why are you being like this? I just had a little to drink the other night, and I didn’t want Connor Nash putting his hands on you. He’s a...he’s a douche.”

“Mm, right,” she snorted, rolling her eyes. “I swear, I don’t think you have the balls to actually apologize for being a jerk.”

*Jesus, she is really being stubborn.*

I checked my watch—we *needed* to be leaving. “Fine. I’m sorry. Will you please forgive me for standing up for you and keeping you safe from some asshole who probably just wanted to get in your pants.”

“That—that is *not* an apology.” She let out a heavy sigh, but pushed back from the desk, grabbing her purse.

“But it got you moving.” I shot her a grin. “And that’s worth something.”

“I’m moving because I want the money.” Ally shot me daggers and pushed her chair back in and slung the black bag over her shoulder. “I’ll just get this done.”

“You’re gonna have to be happier than how you’re acting,” I said,

the laster as she walked toward me, her curvy, *luscious* hips making my mo  
dry as she got closer. The scent of that familiar perfume hit me, an  
brief moment I thought she might actually be about to touch me...

ve to be Nope.

it we're She brushed right by me and grabbed the door handle, ripping i  
y." "Let's go, *honey*."

I shook my head, feeling both aroused and irritated at the way s  
looking at me. However, I bit my tongue, following her out and shutt  
door behind us.

? Then "Where are you two off to?"

*Oh, fuck.*

ittle too My mom was standing a few feet away, a file in her hands as h  
ting hisbounced between us. "I didn't know—"

"We're grabbing a late lunch," I said, not opening up the conversa  
ou haveanything more. "I hope that's okay?"

"Um, sure, but I just—"

"We're running late, love you, Mom." I guided Ally by her sh  
/, Ally.toward the exit, quickly evading my mother's curious gaze. Ally wa  
ou safeagainst my touch, and I couldn't decide if it was a positive or negative.

Did she miss what happened between us?

herself *Stop it.*

I mentally reprimanded myself, releasing her as soon as we made  
ing." the elevator. I hit the ground floor button and shifted to the back  
as shewhile Ally went to the opposite. My heart was pounding in my ears as  
."Let'sa glance over at her, hating how fucking attractive she looked in the m

*Why do I want her so bad?*

eyeing "What?" Ally's voice was cold.

mouth go I shook my head, embarrassed that I had been caught staring. It had to do with the fact she was being so cold to me—and the draw of her being off

That's the only thing that made sense.

"Is there anything I need to know before we meet with him?" she asked, her voice going a little quiet as we reached the lobby and stepped

"Because I don't want to be blindsided by something."

She was I sighed, running my fingers through my dark hair. "Uh, there's nothing to be blindsided by. I sent the official offer over, but I haven't heard from

since the trip—and I *do* have a business plan, but I doubt that he's going to want to go over it at a lunch. I would assume this is more of a catch-putting feelers out there."

Her eyes "So we need to have a strong front—that's going to be hard."

"Only because you're acting like you fucking hate me," I said, catching her arm right as we stepped outside. She spun around to face me, her eyes alight with emotions that I didn't understand. "What?"

"I don't *hate* you. It's just the fact that you didn't actually apologize for what happened. You've been avoiding me like the plague—even more than you did before."

... "Yeah, well..." I paused, not even knowing what to say. "I don't know how to do this."

"Do what?" Ally asked, exasperated. "Be a kind, considerate person, is that it?"

In the corner, "You're making me out to be something worse than I am." It was then that I stole a glance and burned my chest at her jab. "I'm *not* a bad guy, Ally. I mean, I saw you in that moment, trying to make a move on you—and I know you don't do things like that."

She let out a sharp exhale. "I don't even know what to say to that. It's about what the guy was doing. It's about the way you spoke to me,

I to just me feel like what happened was my fault. You pinned the blame on me  
limits. “I—I didn’t blame you.” I racked my brain, not understanding.

just...I was pissed at the guy. I don’t know. You got in between and  
asked, me, and I lashed out at you. I’m...I’m sorry.”

ed out. *This woman is going to be the death of my pride.*

She narrowed her eyes at me, studying my face for a few long mon  
thing to the kind of moments that we needed to be spending *walking* to the res  
om him “Okay. I’ll forgive you *this* time, but don’t go yelling at me like that  
going to Even my fake boyfriends have to treat me with respect.”

-up and “Oh my *god*, you’re so dramatic,” I groaned, grabbing her ha  
leading her in the direction of Brewer’s. My stomach felt uneasy  
moment, and I knew it was the spark from her touch—and just the v  
napped, got under my skin.

ace me, “You really need to work on a filter.” Ally’s voice was still cold,  
the usual sweet warm tone that it usually was.

gize for And I *hated* it.

re than “You might want to lessen the cold, fuck-you tone that you’ve go  
on there.”

t know She burst into laughter, startling me. “Levi, this is the best you’re g  
get from me if Frank Lewis isn’t present.”

human I nodded as I grabbed for the door of the upscale restaurant. “A  
then. I guess this is how we’re gonna play this.”

ritation *Bring it on.*

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## ALLY

**Y**eah, I was angry at Levi.

And as Frank stood from the table to shake our hands, everything I had not to just rat him out right there...

But then I would lose the deal, too.

“It is so good to see you, Frank.” My voice was warm, and I ignored the look that Levi gave me. “I’ve been wondering when we were going to see you again.”

“Oh yes, I apologize for taking a little longer than I initially said,” I replied, as we all sat down around the table. “I got busy with work—and I have to admit, there are a lot of offers for CyberSecure. It’s a little overwhelming to be honest.”

“Ah, I understand,” Levi chimed in, grabbing for his glass of water. “You’re a highly sought-after company. You’ve really built a tech empire.”

“Thank you.” Frank leaned back in his chair. “I’m proud of it, and that’s why I’m so picky about it going to the right people. I’ve had a lot of offers than yours that you sent over, but I just...I like what the two of you bring to the table.”

I sat quietly, not wanting to ruin the moment for Levi. My stomach churning with nausea, as it had been for the last three days. Not even water on the table looked appetizing.

“What would you like to drink?” A young waiter appeared from seemingly nowhere, a bright smile on his face.

“I’ll just stick with water,” I said casually, keeping my voice pleasant. Levi’s arm draped around the back of my chair.

“Same for me.” Levi nodded.

“Me, as well.” Frank chuckled.

“Ready to order then?” The waiter’s eyes drifted to mine.

My stomach rolled at the thought of food. “I’ll just have a house salad.” It took

Levi and Frank both gave me a funny look, like we weren’t sitting at one of the nicest places on this side of town. However, neither of them prioritized

I was thankful for that, reaching for my water as they both ordered the Scandinavian steak and potatoes. I tried to see

*Yuck.*

The waiter hustled off as I sipped on the glass, my mouth feeling pleasantly Frank but also overrun with saliva—the feeling I sometimes got right before I vomited. Whatever bug I had picked up was lingering... and then s been

And making this whole lunch experience that much worse.

“It’s a” “So, what have the two of you been up to in the last few weeks?” I eyed the two of us, a smile still on his face.

“Well, not much, unfortunately.” Levi chuckled, squeezing my shoulder playfully. “It’s just basically been back to real life for the both of us. I’ve been higher of you been really busy at work, and I have too.”

“But the time we spend in the evenings definitely keeps us grounded. I spoke up, thinking of the advice that my parents had given me long ago.”

ch was spent last weekend on his yacht, just the two of us. It was a nice getaway even though it was a bit expensive. “It really was,” Levi added, eyeing me. “It’s the small things for sure.”

“That’s great to hear. A long-lasting relationship appreciates the little things and always is eager to say sorry when necessary. I think it’s the one that has gotten me into trouble a time or two. I haven’t always been as good as at apologizing,” Frank added with a chuckle.

“Isn’t that the truth,” Levi grumbled.

I nudged his knee under the table. “Levi’s been learning how to apologize better. I think it’s hard for a man of his stature and intelligence to admit he has faults sometimes—but he’s really coming around. I’m proud of him.” “You’re a good woman for recognizing his progress.”

“After she gives me the cold shoulder, of course,” Levi added, looking at me with a playful glint in his eye. “It’s a little hard to hear, but it’s really good to hear from someone who really knows him.”

“Oh, that just means you need to get a little faster with that apology,” Frank burst into a giddy, deep laugh, and I joined him, loving the roast. “Maybe lunch wouldn’t be so bad after all.”

“If you’ll excuse me for a second,” Frank suddenly said, pulling his phone from his pocket, the screen lighting up. “I have to take this.” He stood up and left the table, leaving Levi and me alone.

“Frank,” Levi said.

“Well, this is going well,” Levi grunted, downing half his glass of water. “It is going well.” I narrowed my eyes at him.

“Yeah, but what’s wrong with you? Since when do you just eat salads at a place like this? You know I’m paying for your meal.”

I bit back the burning offense. “I’m just not feeling well today.”

“We,” Levi said. His brow furrowed. “Because of the argument we had?”

ay.” “No, because my stomach just hurts. It has for like three days now  
e.” out a sigh, avoiding his eyes.

e small “Are you okay?”

hat last “It’s just a virus, I’m sure. I’m just not feeling like eating much-  
en greatdidn’t want to be rude and not eat.” I picked at the napkin in my l  
wanting to drop any of my other concerns—like whether it mi  
something more.

ologize “Got it.” Levi’s knee was bouncing beside mine under the table, l  
nit thatscanning the restaurant.

him.” “Why are you so nervous?”

“This is just a big deal. It’s my future—*your* future,” he added, hi  
his tonegrowing quiet. “I don’t want to fuck it up, Ally.

y knew “Well, I guess we should probably start with just making it throu  
meeting, acting like we actually love each other.” Just as I finished, the  
y, son.”appeared with the food, setting it down in front of us. The smell  
: seasoning on the potatoes and steak left me nearly gagging as I sat th  
eyes boring into my salad.

s phone “You okay?” Levi asked me again.

ood up I looked up at him, seeing the creases of concern in his face. “I don’  
know. My stomach is just really bothering me.”

“Maybe we should go?”

water. “No, no. I don’t want to mess up this meeting. I don’t want to n  
anything for us.” My voice was rushed, and just as I finished the  
t houseFrank appeared, taking a seat and scooping up his fork.

“Is everything okay?” he asked, studying my face.

“She’s getting better from a virus.” Levi gave me a sweet, symj  
look. “She thought she was feeling up to lunch, but as it turns out sh

.” I let quite handling the smell so well.”

“Oh no, that’s too bad.” Frank mirrored Levi’s expression. “Well, two need to take it to go, that’s totally understandable. I mainly just—and I to touch base with the two of you and invite you to meet with our executive team at the end of the week.”

“That would be great.” Levi beamed, grabbing my hand which was in my lap. “And I’m sure that Ally will be feeling better by then.”

I nodded. “I just really didn’t want to miss the meeting.”

“That’s very honorable, but I don’t want you to be miserable or since two of you are my top runners for the business, and the fact you show signs of not feeling well only confirms to me that I’m on the right track with this.”

Frank waved to the waiter as I avoided Levi’s gaze. “Can we get a couple of these to-go boxes for these two? They’re going to have to cut the lunch short.” The waiter nodded, scurrying off.

Levi pulled out his wallet. “Let me give you some cash to cover your share, since we’re having to cut this short. I can’t tell you how sorry I am for the inconvenience—I know it seems like a waste of time.”

“No, no.” Frank shook his head. “That’s not necessary. It’s on me, and I completely understand. When Liz was pregnant, we were in a business meeting with a serious investor, and she was really struggling with morning sickness. I tried to convince her to stay home, letting me wrap up the deal.” He chuckled as he continued, “She didn’t listen to a word I said, and in the middle of the meeting—while giving the presentation—she threw up all over the conference table.”

*Pregnant.*

The word stuck out to me, while Levi and Frank laughed. I racked my brain—when was the last time I’d had my period?



*No, there's no way.*

if you I wasn't late...at least, I didn't *think* so. My periods had been irregular since the beginning of time, so I wasn't always sure *when* to say that I was late. I had skipped months before too.

*It's just a virus.*

resting My stomach flipped with nerves regardless of my attempt to talk down. I wasn't the type to be anxious, but...

"I think I'm going to step out and get some air," I said quickly, sitting back in the chair. "I don't want to have the same fate as poor Liz."

Frank nodded, the laughter fading on his face. "You go ahead and give the sale a rest. I'll be out in just a second." Levi looked up at me as I stood to my feet. "I'll be out in just a second." Levi looked up at me as I stood to my feet.

"Okay." I gave Frank a small wave goodbye, my head spinning as I stepped away from the table. My stomach was back to churning violently, and for the first time since the sign came into view, I took a detour.

Bursting through a stall door, I barely made it to the toilet before I realized how little I had eaten for the day. I wrapped my arms around myself and trembled, hating the way it felt to vomit. But as I stood up straight again with nausea resolving, relief landed on my shoulders.

*Just a virus.*

I said, I wiped my mouth and washed my hands before slipping out of the restroom and heading for the front doors.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Levi's hand grabbed mine, slowing me down just as I reached the glass doors.

"Yeah," I muttered, pushing through the door and drinking in the fresh air.

"I'll be grand by the executive meeting—you don't have to worry about me."

“I’m not worried about the meeting, Ally,” Levi snapped. “You regular Frank, you showing up not feeling well *helped* us. I just don’t understand it was why you didn’t tell me that you weren’t up to lunch.”

“Sorry, I’ll make sure to mention it next time.” My tone was harsh. My heels clicked down the pavement, trying to ignore how *right* it felt for my hand to be intertwined in mine.

“Listen, if you’re going to have thirty percent of the company, we’re not going to be cooting seeing each other. I don’t see Frank selling it to me and letting you be a silent partner. He’s too invested in you—so how you feel matters to me too—and I froze, turning to look at Levi, who was holding a brown bag with a few things in it and a few boxes in the other hand. To the outside world, in that moment, we looked like a real couple...

And it hurt more than it should.

“Would you like for me to provide you with a daily update on my life as the being, Levi? Because the only time you *care* about my feelings is when I swoop into my office, giving me *zero* notice about some business meeting I lost and let’s not forget, *that* is the only reason you apologized for the cliff as I’m not fucking genuine.”

Levi went silent, dropping my hand, and that’s how we spent the rest of the walk back to the office before splitting up. I had been harsh, but I didn’t realize I was feeling sick, tired, and emotional.

And then it hit me...

*Maybe it’s just bad PMS.*

I fell down

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## LEVI

“She’s being a full-blown jerk to me,” I complained, spinning around to look at Jameson on the bar top.

“Uh, I don’t see how this is news.” Josh leaned against the black bar beside me, facing the crowd in the upscale dive. “My sister has always been a jerk to you, just as much as you have been to her. Like, what did you do? Give her thirty percent of a company in exchange for a fake girlfriend? *poof!* She suddenly loves you?”

“I don’t need her to *love* me,” I choked out, hardly able to say the words out loud. “I just don’t know why she’s being so fucking cold to me.”

“Well, you did make a huge scene in the club a couple weeks ago, and I told me you never apologized.” My best friend finally glanced over to me, brows furrowing. “What is up with you though, Levi? You’re not your usual self. *Because I can’t get your sister off my mind.*”

“I don’t know,” I lied. “It’s probably just the stress of this deal.”

“Well, you shouldn’t let it get to you. Ally said that it was going to be overall, even with her being sick at the lunch yesterday.”

“Yeah, but she didn’t even *tell* me that she was sick before we left lunch. It would’ve been nice to know that, you know?”

“You’re not going to catch it.” Josh snickered. “I highly doubt the you got close enough to pass germs.”

“What?” I shook my head. “No, I mean, I would’ve never made her the meeting if I knew that she was under the weather. I’m not that big of an asshole.”

“That’s debatable, but I think you’re worrying way, way too much about it all. I think you should be more worried about those two *fine* ladies looking toward us.” Josh gave a nod toward the crowd and I glanced in that direction. *Great.*

Two women were headed for us, one blonde and the other with black hair. They were attractive, yeah, but I was *not* in the mood.

“You two look lonely,” the dark-headed one greeted us, slipping between Josh and me. I scooted over to get some space. “I recognize both,” she continued. “Josh Montgomery and Levi Lombardi, right?”

“That’s us.” Josh gave them both a wicked smile. “And who do we owe the pleasure of speaking with?”

*Grossly charming.*

“I’m Mel,” the dark-headed one said, her white dress making her tanned skin look bronzy. “And this is my friend, Sarah.”

“Nice to meet you. Can we get you two something to drink?” Josh asked me, giving me a look.

“Yeah, nice to meet you two. Put whatever you want on my tab.” Mel’s face was flat, and I couldn’t care less.

Sarah, the blonde, turned to me. “I’ve been following you on social media for like five years. I was wondering where you went though. You

for the posted in like a month.”

“Yeah, I’ve been busy.”

two of “With work?” She ran her finger down my chest, and my stomach  
at the contact. “Or with *someone*?”

er go to I narrowed my eyes, already seeing the game she was playing. “Botl

g of an “He’s not with anyone,” Josh said quickly, his arm already draped

Mel’s petite shoulders. “He’s just being facetious. Levi’s a joker.”

about it “Yeah, that’s me,” I grunted, wishing I’d just stayed home. I had *ne*  
reading that way before, especially when it came to a couple of hot women e  
ection. the scene.

And it was all Ally’s fault for being so damn cold to me.

ck hair. “We’re gonna step out and get some air,” Josh said to me, grabbing

couple of drinks from the bartender and nodding to the door. “Wanna g

right in “Nah. I’ll just stay here.”

ize you “Suit yourself. You and Sarah enjoy.” Josh shot Sarah a wink tha

her giggle, while Mel clung to him as they turned to go.

ve have As soon as they were out of sight I pulled out my phone, hoping t

text or *something* to give me a reason to leave—but there was nothing.

“So, can I be blunt with you?” Sarah grabbed my attention, lettin  
an skin sigh and pulling out a barstool.

“Uh, sure.” I eyed her over the top of my phone, pulling up a text th  
sh eyed Ally—one that was devoid of messages.

“I can tell that you’re not into this.”

y voice *Wow, genius.*

“But you don’t look like you’re happy, either—so what’s the  
l media Unrequited love with a supermodel? Can’t get the girl’s attention?”

haven’t Interesting. The woman had some sense to her.



I pulled out the barstool and took a seat across from her. “You’re right, kind of wrong.”

lurched “Ah, so you’re hung up on a girl, but the guesses were wrong.”

h.” “She’s a business partner of mine—well, *pending* business partner.” Sarah pushed back some of her blonde hair before flipping it o

around shoulder. “I see, and let me guess, you slept with her?”

“Uh, yeah, it only happened a couple times, but now...”

ver felt “Now she’s what? Clingy? Needy? Wants more than you?” Sarah entering on her Manhattan, her gold bodycon dress hugging her curves as she her legs. She was a very attractive woman...

*So why am I not feeling anything for her?*

a fresh I wasn’t even *interested* in the chase. “She’s the opposite of those go?” She’s fucking cold and distant. Granted, I didn’t apologize for an i that happened at a club on the other side of town—”

it made “Oh my *god*. It’s *that* girl? The pretty redhead? Mel and I were there that night, and wow, you really went after Connor.”

o see a “Yeah, *Connor*.” The sound of his name instantly pissed me off, m flashing back to the sight of his body pressed to Ally’s...

g out a “Connor is my *brother*.”

“Like, for real?” I wrinkled my nose, unfortunately picking a read to resemblance in their faces.

“Yeah, for real. He can be a douche though. I didn’t feel bad for h *damn*, you left her right there in the middle of the dance floor after mortifying the poor girl.”

e deal? “Okay, I have apologized for that, and I’m tired of harping on i irritation was burning my throat more than the whiskey.

“Yeah, yeah, I get that. I think it’s clear that you have feelings

kind of then.” Sarah laughed. “And maybe she’s being distant because she know where you stand.”

“We don’t stand anywhere. We’re just business partners—I just need to stop being so rude to me.”

“You’re avoiding your feelings.”

“I don’t have feelings—not *really*. And why the hell am I sitting here playing therapist with you? This is fucking weird.” I slid off the bed, sipping and shaking my head. “I gotta get home. Tell Josh I’m heading home.”

“I think they’re probably already leaving.”

“Okay, well then, I’ll get you a cab home.” I let out a sigh, not wanting to be a total jerk. The woman had tried to talk to me, after all.

“Oh, no way. I’m not going home alone tonight.” She giggled, and I twisted in annoyance.

“I’m not taking anyone home.”

“Oh, I didn’t mean with you.” She patted my arm as she stood to leave.

“I wouldn’t go home with you even if you asked me to.”

“That’s an unnecessary burn.”

She shrugged, giving me a wink before walking away. I watched her go, wishing that I was my usual self. She was the kind of woman who put out the just enough challenge to be fun...

But I wasn’t in the mood for the chase.

I pulled back up the text thread as I headed to grab a cab home. My finger totally hovered over the keyboard for a few minutes before I finally sent it.

*Are you busy?*

Sliding into the cab, I gave the driver my address and left the phone on my lap. My eyes stared at the screen, wondering what the hell Ally had meant for her to—was she with her friends? A guy? Home alone?

doesn't    The three dots popped up on the screen after a few seconds, follow  
message.

eed her    *What do you need, Levi?*

“Seriously?” I muttered under my breath. She didn't even fucking  
the question.

ere and    *Just want to talk.*

arstool,    I cringed after I sent the message, realizing that I sounded a little de:  
I *never* wanted to talk to someone. They were always the ones messag  
My phone vibrated in my lap.

nting to    *About what*

My eyebrows shot up at the lack of punctuation, but whatever. S  
ny facejust being her usual snide self.

*Whatever is going on between us*

I held my breath as I sent the response, inwardly blaming the four  
ier feet.of whiskey I'd chugged in the last hour for being so ballsy with her...

And then my phone rang.

My heart jumped, but it wasn't Ally...

her go,    It was her brother—and he was *pissed*.

rovided    “Where the hell are you?”

“I started getting a headache, so I'm going home.”

“You're full of shit, bro. I wanna know what's going on with yo  
fingersI'm already pretty sure I've put the fucking pieces together.”

“And what is that supposed to mean?” I retorted, though the apprel  
and dread were already looming over my head.

ie open    “You're seeing my sister for real, aren't you? Because see, what ha  
was upa couple of weeks ago—that was fucking weird, man. But I told myself

ed by maybe he's just looking at her in a more positive light. Maybe he cares for her.' But no, that's not it at all, is it? You were being a jealous asshole-

"I'm not seeing your sister," I cut him off. "I've just been dealing with the fact that she's my soon-to-be business partner, and we *need* to get along." He was silent on the other end of the line.

"Josh, I'm not going to start dating your sister." I repeated. "If you did, I'd have to fucking beat your ass before I considered dating you." My voice was still stern, but it was becoming more amicable. "I just don't think this whole fake girlfriend thing was a good idea, Levi. I know that you need to keep that image up for the deal—but when does it end?"

"I don't know, man," I said with a sigh. "Frank wants Ally to be my silent partner, which would mean that the two of us would have to work together. I don't know if that's a great idea or not, but I can't back out now." "If the two of you can get past your differences, you *might* actually be a good team. You just have to have patience with her, Levi. Ally is not cold or snide because she's secretly hurt under the surface—I'm sure it's just the club incident or whatever. It'll blow over. Just don't push it."

I nodded as the cab pulled up in front of my place in Beverly Hills. "Thanks for the advice. I'll just try to give it some time. We have a meeting with the executives on Friday, and I just want to make sure I'm both in the best headspace possible."

"Got it. Can you just promise me something?" I asked. "Uh, sure." I slid out of the cab into the warm evening air.

"If there's something more to your relationship, you'll tell me before I go pursuing something with her, okay?"

"Yeah, yeah. I promise—but there's nothing."

"Good, I'd hate to have to kill my best friend. Hope your headac-

is about better.”

—” “Yeah, night.” I hung up the phone, nearly facepalming as I opened  
with the text thread to Ally.

g.” *What is going on between us?*

I stared at the message from her, my stomach knotting up as I thought  
the conversation I’d just had—and the promise I had just made.

it.” His *Nothing, see you at the meeting.*

’t think *I’ll send over the business plan for you to study.*

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he gets

better.”

“Yeah, night.” I hung up the phone, nearly facepalming as I opened up the text thread to Ally.

*What is going on between us?*

I stared at the message from her, my stomach knotting up as I thought of the conversation I’d just had—and the promise I had just made.

*Nothing, see you at the meeting.*

*I’ll send over the business plan for you to study.*

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## ALLY

The table of six executives and Frank clapped for us, having just finished the presentation. Thankfully, Levi had taken the lead, with me commenting on the financial aspect of the slides. It had gone well for what I could tell, anyway.

“So, what did you all think?” Frank asked the panel, consisting of four men and two women, diverse in their appearance and age.

“I think that the two have a solid plan,” a dark-headed, middle-aged woman named Cassie said, leaning back in her chair. “They seem to have a good dynamic in the way they present themselves as well, and as the new PR, I think they’d make for a fresh look for us.”

“I disagree,” a white-headed man, Victor, grunted—I happened to know he was the VP of Operations. “I think they’re too young to take on a company like this. Neither of them has even hit thirty yet.”

“Yeah, but it just means that they’re driven,” Cassie shot back. “That gives us a lot to work with when it comes to our relationships with younger start-up companies. They’re going to see us as allies, not enemies.”

“I don’t know.” He let out a sigh. “And Frank told me the two of you have a relationship, right? What kind of relationship? Married? Dating? If either of you would take is a breakup and the company would be hung up in some legal battle.”

“We would *never* let that happen,” I chimed in. “Even if our relationship ended, our partnership would continue, and if something very bad happened, I’d just allow for Levi to buy me out.”

“Smart woman.” Cassie gestured to me. “I think that they’re in the right mindset to take this on, regardless of their personal relationship. I think it’s honestly irrelevant, though if they *were* together, we could paint the picture of a power couple—which they clearly are.”

“I suppose. I just don’t know how I feel about it. I think that’s fine if you can have that opinion.” Victor folded his arms across his chest.

“And what *is* the status of your relationship?” Sandy, an older woman with a stone-cold face, looked up at us. Her eyes were like daggers, jabbing between Levi and me.

Levi smiled, his entire demeanor much more relaxed than mine under her scrutiny. “Well, we are currently dating—and our relationship is serious. She would look for us to be engaged in the next six months or so. She knows she’s coming,” he added, looking over and giving me a wink.

*What the fuck?*

I forced a smile, somehow managing to hide my shock—and *any* of the whole room filled with smiles. “I’m just waiting on him to pose the question.” The words felt suffocating, but everyone ate it up, laughing.

Well, except for Victor.

He looked skeptical as fuck.

“Now *that* is some exciting news!” Frank was beaming as he stood

u are infect. “If there are no more pressing questions, I say let’s let these t  
) All itback to their other jobs. That’ll give all of us some time to think th  
e nastyand then if there are any more questions, we’ll create a list for Levi a  
to answer.”

ionship “Thank you so much for your time.” Levi went around the table, s  
opened,each of their hands, and I quickly followed suit. “We look forward to  
to know each of you better as we pursue this deal and ensure that it’s l  
ie rightall of us.”

k that’s “Thank you,” Frank said to us both. “I’ll be in touch with you two,  
m as a looking good, guys. It’s looking really good.”

I nodded, hardly able to come up with anything to say as I gathered  
of me to materials. Anger and irritation were making my still-upset stomach  
even worse, though I had sucked on a peppermint constantly thro  
an with whole thing. I hadn’t bothered to tell Levi that I was still dealin  
umpingnausea...

But I was still trying to figure out the *why* behind it, too.  
ider the All I knew is that once work was over, I was going to be taking a tri  
rious. I drugstore—and I still was coming to terms with that.  
ows it’s *But seriously? Engaged? What the hell?*

“Shall we?” Levi’s hand rested lightly on my shoulder, bringing n  
from the dread of what might be to come.

ger—as “Of course.” I headed for the door, letting him open it for me as ev  
pop the waved goodbye to us. I walked in silence out of the office building, in  
fuming at the fact that not only was Levi determined to keep lying—  
determined to dig the hole even deeper than it already was.

“That went really well, I think,” Levi remarked, sliding into the ba  
d to his of the car. “We really have this in the bag, I think.”

two get “Right.” I pulled out my phone, typing out a text to Linley and den is over, that she meet up with me tonight.

nd Ally “I wouldn’t worry about Victor, by the way,” Levi continued, h voice *grinding* my nerves with every word that left his mouth. “He’s shaking in just a couple of years, so as much as he might be opposed to the y getting generation taking over, I don’t think his opinion will sway the rest best forexecutives. Also, I know that the guy who will be taking his place much pro you and me, so I think it’s just a minor setback.”

but it’s “Minor setback,” I echoed him, shaking my head. “Is that what w them all when they learn that we’re *never* going to get engaged? Or l up our actually going to pretend to do that too?”

n churn “Why are you being so snide about it? You agreed to be in a igh therelationship with me. We all know that they lead to marriage. I don’t s ig withan engagement is that startling. It’s clearly taking that kind of ammc this deal done.”

“So you’re just willing to say—and lie about—whatever, just to m p to thedeal? Like, don’t you think at some point we need to stop the bullshit’ lying like this, Levi. It sucks.”

He blew out a sigh as the car pulled up outside of our glass-front b ne back “I don’t know, Ally. I never intended to have to go *this* far with it, e just think that we should consider the benefits of it.”

everyone “Of blatantly *lying* to Frank’s face?” I countered, taking his hand to ternallyof the car—only because my stilettos were borderline *too* tall for me.

he was “Yeah, I guess, if that’s how you have to put it.” Levi dropped my l we walked to the building, grabbing the door for me. “I mean, peo ick seatserious and break up all the time. It’s not that big of a story.”

“Except for the fact that it’s one of the main selling points that

standing playing.” I shook my head as I stepped into the elevator, pushing the  
for my floor.

is deep “It’s not the *main* point, Ally. It’s just the only point you pay attention  
retiring because for some reason it gets under your skin—and I get it. I get that  
younger never do a damn thing wrong. You never bend the rules or whatever  
of the come on, we’ve got a good thing going. We should be celebrating today  
is very I pursed my lips in frustration as I stepped out onto my floor  
whatever.”

we’ll tell Levi grabbed the door, jumping out to follow me—all the way  
are we office, shutting the door behind us. “It’s *not* whatever. We can’t keep  
on terms like this. It’s not good for our partnership.”

serious “Partnership?” I tossed my bag onto my desk and spun around to face  
see how “What fucking *partnership*?”

to get “Uh, the thirty percent I’m giving you makes you my partner, whether  
like it or not—and Frank thinks you’re going to be involved in the final  
make the heard you today at the presentation. You know what you’re doing, and  
? I *hate* your input will be helpful for everyone.”

“I don’t understand you.” I let out a groan, running my hand over my  
building. “You didn’t want anything from me, other than to pretend to be  
either. My girlfriend, and *now* you’re saying you *want* me to be an active part  
company? I’d have to quit my job working for your mom.”

get out “Yeah, I know, but just *think* of how great it would be.” His hazel  
were intently focused on my face, and the excitement in them tugged at my  
hand as heart.

people get *It would be great—and heartbreaking.*

I swallowed the emotions I’d been fighting. “I don’t know if that’s  
you’re *want* to do, Levi. We’ll have to stage a breakup and working through

but I don't think I can put on that kind of show, to be honest. I don't *want* to

He nodded. "So you don't really want to do this with me?" His expression was cryptic, his jaw tensing beneath the sexy five o'clock shadow that you were going on.

er. But "It's not like that, Levi. It's just...we don't get along."

ly." "But we *do*."

r. "It's I couldn't help but laugh. "No, we *don't*. We never have, and I don't we ever will. Like yeah, I think you know what you're doing with to my business, and your plan is great. I can get onboard with that, but our leaving that, we don't ever see eye to eye."

"I thought things were okay between us, and Josh said that you just give him a little space to cool off after the whole club thing—so I did that, and we are fine."

her you "But what was with the weird texts you sent me the other night? I What was that about? They didn't start off sounding like business." I thought as the words left my mouth, having buried that whole occurrence deep in my mind, never intending on bringing it up to him. He had sent me my face loop that night...

re your Giving my stupid heart hope.

of the "Ally..." His voice trailed off as he took a step toward me, his suddenly softening. "I just...I just had too much to drink that night, and I feel eyes myself worry too much about how distant you'd been. I've known you for a while at my time and you're Josh's little sister, so of course I care about how things

*Ah, of course. Playing the sister card.*

I cleared my throat, feeling the lump already growing. "Okay, well, I'm glad we cleared that up—and I'll consider being a more vocal partner in that. I give me some time to think about it, and I'll get back to you." I turned

)." from him, needing a break from taking in his handsome, built figure in a black suit.

he had But his hand on my arm stopped me.

"What?" I demanded, my anger returning as I spun back around.

He didn't answer though, his lips crashing into mine before I could consider pulling away. A moan slipped from my throat as my body didn't think against his touch, my lips parting as his tongue begged to enter. My head heaved as his hands ran around my waist, slipping lower to squeeze my ass. "God, I missed this," he growled, his hands ripping up the bottom of my skirt.

I needed I stopped him, my hands forcefully landing on him as I broke my hands from his. "What the hell are we doing?" I gasped for air, my pussy moistening my underwear. "We aren't supposed to do this..."

Levi? "Then tell me to stop." He leveled with me, his eyes searching mine. "Tell me to go away, and that you don't want to do this."

I hesitated, my mind running rampant and my pussy aching for him. As much as I wanted to push him away, I just...

*Couldn't.*

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his face  
and I let  
it a long  
seconds are..."

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here. Just  
walk away

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*Couldn’t.*







## LEVI

“I want you,” Ally finally muttered after an intense few moments of silence, her eyes hazy with lust. “Now.”

My cock jumped to life in my pants and I spun around, realizing I had locked the office door.

“Okay, so I guess you changed your mind.”

“Hardly,” I chuckled, flipping the lever to the locked position. “I prefer no accidental interruptions.”

Her gaze dropped to my suit pants, my cock twinging at the way she lingered on my bulge. Ally’s fingers went to her burgundy blouse, tugging it out from where it was tucked into her black pencil skirt. Slowly, she pulled it over her head, revealing a black bra. I caught my breath and picked up pace back to her. I reached around her, unsnapping the hook and setting her breasts free.

“You’re beautiful, you know,” I murmured, catching her eye as she dropped the bra to the floor. “I can’t think about anyone but you.”

Something flickered in her eyes, but she didn’t say anything, pulling me back down to her. My lips crushed to hers, but I didn’t linger long, b

free and trailing down her neck. My hands drifted down her hips, finding the hem of her skirt—and then pulling the whole fucking thing up around her waist.

I *needed* her wrapped around my dick.

She let out a little noise as I lifted her up onto her desk, giving me the perfect angle. I pulled her to the edge, grinding my cock against her through our clothes. Kissing and sucking on her neck, I made my way lower, making it to her perfect, perky tits. I kissed around the soft flesh making it to the erect pink nipple, sucking it into my mouth.

“Oh my *god*,” she cried out softly, her fingers finding their place in my hair, tugging at my locks.

Her hips rocked against my dick and I groaned, letting go of her. I hadn’t had time to pull out a condom, so I dug out a condom from my pocket—I had put there this morning for this *very* instance...

I’d just realized that this was planned.

I tossed the condom onto the desk and fumbled with my belt, ears ringing and frustration causing my hands to tremble. Finally, I let my dick out, brushing her soaked underwear. As much as I wanted to just push her to the side and just take her, I stopped myself, my fingers replacing my cock.

“I just want you to fuck me,” she panted as I slipped a finger through her wet folds. “I want your cock, Levi.”

“Mmm.” I dropped her breast from my mouth, leaning back. “I want you to cum for me first, Ally.” Her blue eyes were on fire as I shifted her with one hand, the other tugging her underwear down. “I want to *taste* you.”

She let out a little whimper as I dropped to my knees, dragging her closer to the edge of the sleek, modern desk. “Oh, *Levi*.”

My tongue stroked her clitoris, her legs quivering at the contact. I felt

ling theit with a kiss, her wetness covering my lips. Everything about Al  
and hersweet, but the fucking taste of her pussy was the sweetest—and it w  
wanted anymore. I teased her pussy’s entrance, fighting the urge to  
myself to the same rhythm as her hips. She rode my face, my tongue c  
me thethe length of her. I savored the moment, committing to my memory t  
hroughshe felt, tasted, and smelled.

finally “I’m gonna cum,” Ally whined, her legs resting on my shoul  
beforegrabbed onto her thighs, wrapping her legs around my neck, fully bury  
face in her pussy. It was a *dream*, liquid pooling into my mouth as  
: in mybounced against my face.

*Fucking naughty girl.*

er juicy A cry escaped her lips as she orgasmed, her entire body tensing agai  
one thatHer fingers in my hair clenched so tightly it nearly hurt, but it only tur  
on further, drinking her in as she finally came down from the high. F  
loosened as I cleaned her up with my tongue, finally leaning away from  
gerness “You’re so *good* at that,” she panted as I rose, kissing her on the  
, the tipand letting her have a taste of just how *good* she was. I let the kiss dee  
n to thea few moments longer, my tongue dancing with hers, caressing every  
of her mouth. I had been *dying* to have her again...

ugh her And I hadn’t even realized it.

*Maybe this will finally get her out of my system.*

ant you My hands felt along the smooth surface of the desk beside her, look  
up withthe condom I had just set out. Eyes still shut, tongue deep in a kiss, I  
” found it. However, Ally stopped me, pulling away.

er even *Oh shit. She’s changing her mind.*

Her eyes searched mine for a second, before she scooted right off th  
ollowedMy mouth went dry as our gaze stayed locked, and I was unsure as

lly was she might say...

as *all* I But she didn't say anything.

stroke She dropped to her knees, her hot, wet mouth wrapping around the overing my cock. A guttural moan escaped as she sucked me deeper, slipping the way *right* down her fucking throat.

“You're so *naughty*,” I heaved, listening to sound of my dick deep lders. Imouth as she grabbed my balls. She gave them a tight squeeze, he ring my hand aiding her tongue. “Holy *fuck*.” My eyes drifted downward, hard her as to contain the urge not to cum right then and there. My fingers threaded through her soft auburn hair, keeping it out of her face—and my view.

nst me. *I need to stop her before I blow my load.*

ned me But the pleasure was just *too* good.

her legs Ally worked back and forth, my cock wet with her saliva. It was n n her. good as the juices from her pussy, and I let my hands rest against in h mouth letting her have full control of the moment...

pen for She knew what she was doing.

r corner I shut my eyes, feeling the orgasm building in my lower abdome gonna cum.”

She moaned in response, maintaining her movements as I peaked. her hot mouth with my semen. Ally's mouth stayed there, and n ring for fluttered open as she swallowed, the sound turning me on all over aga finally stood to her feet, wiping her mouth.

“Turn around,” I growled, her eyes going wide as she looked up

“I'm not done.”

ie desk. Her lips curled up into a seductive smile and she spun around, stick to what round ass out for me. I reached over her, my sloppy wet cock rubbing

her inner thigh. I tore open the foil, leaning back and sliding the latex sheath over my still-throbbing erection. I could go all fucking night when it came to the tip of my cock. I grabbed her tiny waist, my grip tightening as the tip of my cock lapped at her entrance. Without any hesitation, I plunged into her sopping pussy, a groan escaping my mouth as she tightened around me.

"Oh my god, yes," Ally cried out, her hands bracing against the desk, otherknocking a few things off onto the floor. I kept her bent over, nonstoply slamming into her over and over, enjoying the second round of sex with her. I slapped her ass cheek, leaving a red mark, a moan coming out of her mouth. I scooted my hands back, gripping the flesh of her buttocks, parting her cheeks to give me a better view of my dick sliding in and out of her. I caressed the second hole, feeling her tremble against the touch.

*Oh fuck.*

I had no intentions of doing anything beyond that, but her reaction was so early as her hair, hot, so I kept circling, her moans increasing in volume.

*The whole fucking building is going to know I'm balls deep in her.*

My hips slapped against her, the sound like music to my ears and mine. "I'm myself reaching a second climax. She let out a loud moan, her own body tensing...

And then she *exploded* around me.

Her pussy tightened around my cock, pulsing with her orgasm. Her moisture spilling around my dick. The sensation was too much, and I went hard and fast, letting out a growl as I fell forward, my hand landing on her. Ally on the desk.

"Jesus," I panted, my breaths sharp as I tried to fill my lungs with oxygen. "This is the best sex I've ever had."

Her body froze beneath me as I placed a kiss on the top of her head.

ex overbreathing in the scent of her skin. I didn't know why I was so...addicted to Ally. With a sigh, I pulled out of her, running my hands through my hair. I tried to smooth it out before pulling off the condom and tossing it into the trash can. My hands were wet beside the desk.

She pushed herself off the desk, reaching for her bra and fastening it back into place before turning around to meet my gaze. "What the hell is going on between us, Levi?"

My stomach knotted up at the question, one that I should've seen coming after "I don't know what you mean by that. We just got a little excited."

The hurt on her face was a knife to the heart. "Right, that's what it felt like out of the heat of the moment." She let out a sharp sigh and grabbed her bra, pulling it over her head. "I don't know why I even asked. I should have known."

"Known what, exactly?" I demanded, suddenly catching a little off guard by the way she said it.

"That you're the kind of guy that does whatever he wants when it comes to women, regardless of their feelings." *Feelings.*

"What are you trying to say, Ally?" My heart jumped in my chest as I swallowed the emotions, reminding myself of what Josh had told me.

"I'm trying to say that you need to leave my office, now," she said, pointing to the door as I finished zipping up my pants. "I can't believe you're here beside me to you, again."

That stung.

"Are you trying to say you regret this?"

"Just leave, Levi."

"Fine." I spun on my heels and headed for the office door, unlocking it.



icted to before hesitating, my instinct fighting me to stay there—to tell her what I was really feeling for her.

ash can *That I'm falling for her.*

I shook my head at myself, knowing that wasn't the right thing to do. I went back to my room to talk to Josh before I ever talked to Ally about anything at all, and then I ripped the door open. I stepped out into the hallway, closing it behind me.

“Hey, hon, what's up?” Mom's brows were furrowed as she stepped into her own office just down the hall.

“I was just stopping in to see Ally for a second,” I said carefully. “It was—” “About the deal that you're making with Frank Lewis, right? I think it was a smart move of you to bring Ally on your team. She's got a wealth of experience, and she can see things that I can't—not even after doing this over twenty years. She's really something. I think the two of you make a great team, in all aspects of the word.”

I swallowed hard, guilt tugging at me for leaving her the way I did. “It's something. I'm happy that she's on board with me when it comes to CyberSecure. I just have to work out the final details and I think we have the purchase in the bag.”

“That's great, son.” Mom gave me a smile as I turned to leave. “Come on, also, these walls aren't soundproof, so you might want to keep that in mind next time.”

As I gave *Oh, fuck.*

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making it

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*That I'm falling for her.*

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*Oh, fuck.*





## ALLY

“**S**o *what* happened in your office yesterday?” Linley nearly spilled her wine as her eyes went as wide as her face.

“Yeah, it’s as bad as it sounds,” I groaned, dropping down to sit on the edge of my coffee table. “I just can’t tell him no—like the sex is so good.”

My best friend shook her head at me. “Normally, I would be jumping up and down, cheering you on for enjoying some amazing sex, but your friends are starting to get too caught up in Levi—and I don’t want to see you any more hurt than you already are.”

I chewed the inside of my cheek, running my hands down my bare legs sticking out of my knit shorts. “Yeah, I know...but...there’s something.” My stomach lurched as I said the words out loud, thinking back to the drugstore trip I had taken this morning.

Her face fell. “It’s not just a stomach virus, is it?”

“I don’t know for sure.” My voice was quiet, my eyes flickering to the glass of water sitting on the other side of me. I had skipped the wine—just in case.

“Oh my god,” she said with a sigh. “Does he have any idea that you be pregnant?”

*Pregnant.*

The word still made my stomach tighten into knots. “He has no idea—and honestly, I don’t know if that’s even what it is. You know I’ve irregular forever, so I don’t know that I should be reading into it. It’s just nausea is hanging around, and I don’t know why...”

“Maybe you’re lactose intolerant suddenly,” Linley offered up, giving a half-hearted smile. “I’ve heard of that happening before.” She pushed her freshly dyed dark hair behind her ear. “That’s just as likely as you being pregnant, since you used protection—right?”

“Of course we did,” I snapped, wrapping my arms around myself. “That’s another reason why I’ve put off taking the test, because I mean, the chances of pregnancy are nearly zero. It’s not like a condom broke or something.”

“It still happens.” Linley’s voice was quiet. “Do you want me to stay until you take the test?”

I let out a sigh, shrugging my shoulders. “I guess maybe that would make it easier. I just don’t know what I’ll do if I am—like, Josh is going to freak out at both of us. I don’t want to ruin their friendship.”

Linley took a sip of her wine. “That’s on him if he freaks out, whether it’s me or you. I’m sure he will at first, but I think that he’ll come around. If there’s anyone else involved, that means he’s going to be an uncle. I don’t think he’ll stay *that* long—not at you.”

“I don’t want him to be mad at Levi, either.”

“Well, there’s nothing you can do about that. Levi could’ve been talking to him about what happened between the two of you, especially since it was tonight.”

u might clearly *not* an isolated incident. I think Josh will understand. You  
going to have to be honest with him about the feelings you have for Le

“No way, that’ll make it so much worse for Levi.”

sa at all “And *maybe* he deserves that, Ally.” Linley stood to her feet, offer  
ve been her hand. “He might be giving you thirty percent of a company, b  
ust, the doesn’t mean it’s okay for him to playing with your heart the way  
think he knows that you have feelings.”

ring me “I don’t know.” I took her hand, her bright red nails glowing under  
hed her lights of my apartment’s living room. “I think men are oblivious to l  
getting everything half the time. I swear they don’t catch hints.”

“Touché.” She laughed. “So where’s this test? I say we put your r  
“That’s ease now, so you can have a glass of wine and let yourself relax a littl  
chances maybe we should make you a new online dating profile. I’ve found a  
of new apps that are gaining some ground.”

y while “You’re wild, Lin.” I pulled my hair out of my face, tying it up in  
bun on the top of my head. It felt like I was back in college, prepping  
d make a speech in front of the entire class.

o freak But instead, I was just about to pee on a stick.

I headed across the living room to the bar, grabbing my brown  
ich I’m purse and opening it. I fished out the test kit that I’d bought, spinning  
a baby and letting out a heavy sigh. “It’s going to be for nothing.”

ay mad “Right.” Linley smiled, but I didn’t hear the confidence in her vo  
was usually there. “Let’s go do this.”

“Deal.” I headed to the bathroom, tearing open the box on the wa  
honest and pulling out the instructions. I’d taken plenty of pregnancy tests  
nce it’s past, since I had always been irregular, but never once had I felt the  
that I did this time.

're just And it's because my gut wasn't agreeing with my head.

vi.” “Okay, here.” Linley took the packaged test from my hand. “clearly nervous. Let me help you.”

ring me “Thanks.” My shoulders sagged under my oversized sweatshirt. “out that know why this is getting to me so much.”

he is. I “I do.” Linley eyed me as she ripped the packed open, pulling off of the test and handing it to me. “You've only ever taken these wh the dim were in a serious relationship, where you had plenty of security. Th literally one of those situations, but I guarantee there's plenty of women wh been in your exact shoes.”

mind at “I don't know if that makes me feel any better.”

e—and “Well, regardless of the outcome, you have an amazing support couple here for you, and we'll be happy no matter what you do—even if L total jerk and flakes on the whole thing.”

a loose “You think he would do that?” I raised an eyebrow, fumbling w to give stick in my fingers.

“No, I don't, actually. I'm just trying to give you the worst-case s as proof that no matter what, you're going to be just fine—now go pee leatherstick, Ally.”

around I took a deep breath, tugging my knit shorts down and taking a sea toilet awkwardly. Linley went back to reading the instructions as I u ice that on the end of the stick, hating just how ridiculous pregnancy tests were

Like, is it even possible to do it and *not* make a mess?  
y there *Ugh.*

s in the I finished up and stood to my feet, taking the cap that Linley held nervesthink I'm going to just sit it on the sink, and then we can go do sor else, setting a timer or whatever.”



Linley nodded as I sat the test on the sink. “I’ll set a timer on my phone. You’ve got five minutes.” She pulled out her phone, setting the timer and then

looked back up at me. “What do you want to do?”

“I don’t know.” “How will I tell Levi?” I blurted out, feeling the tears welling up in my eyes. “What am I supposed to do?”

“We don’t know for sure that you’ll be telling Levi anything, first of all. And secondly, *if* you are pregnant, I think that you should tell him as soon as it isn’t possible. There’s no point in holding out on him.”

“And Josh?”

“I think that’s something Levi should have to tackle—or maybe the two of you together? I don’t know. Again, let’s just take it one step at a time, and I think that’s for the best at the moment.”

“Okay.” I nodded at her advice, my eyes tempted to look over the pending test sitting on the bathroom counter. However, I held off for a few more long moments, staring down at my bare feet on the white tile floor.

*Everything will be fine, no matter what.*

I mean, I knew that my parents would be angry—or maybe more shocked than anything, but they’d definitely be there to support me. They had never faltered in that aspect of my life, and this situation would be no different. It was just *Levi*.

“Ally...” Linley’s voice brought me back from my thoughts, her voice startling. “I think the test is done.” She was leaning over the bathroom counter, her eyes wide as she looked up at me.

*I’m pregnant.*

“It’s positive, isn’t it?” I demanded, rushing to the counter and picking up the stick. I could barely breathe as I saw two *bold* pink lines in the window of the test. “Oh my god. Oh my *god*.” Emotions welled up

one for chest, and I felt the tears slip from my eyes, cascading down my cheeks, looking dripping onto my sweatshirt. However, as much as I was shocked, terrified, and worried...

in my I was also *excited*.

*What the hell is wrong with me?*

t of all. The feeling was just as shocking as the positive test in my hand. There was soon as *nothing* good about the situation I was in, yet somehow the thought of actually having a child wasn't *that* bad to me. I'd always wanted a mom, anyway...

both of This might be the only way I got to do that.

Ally. I “Are you okay?” Linley’s dark eyebrows were furrowed as she studied my face. “You’re literally smiling like an idiot—and crying at the same time.” I nodded to the “I-I-I don’t know,” I choked out, wiping the tears from my cheeks. “I mean, for a few there’s just this part of me...like maybe this isn’t so bad. I do love babies.”

or. “And Levi *can* afford to support the two of you,” Linley added, her face brightening. “There’s no way his parents wouldn’t make sure that you have everything you need, so yeah, that’s definitely not something you should ever worry about.”

nt... “Yeah.” I nodded, trying to get in control of the tears slipping down my cheeks. “And you’ll make an amazing aunt of sorts.”

r voice “Damn right I will.” Linley laughed, reaching for me and pulling me into a tight embrace. “Everything *is* okay. You just have to keep thinking about it all like that. There’s going to be some hurdles to get over in the beginning, but you’re already getting in the right mindset to do this—you’ll make an incredible mom.”

ie little “And my parents are going to be grandparents.” I sniffled, leaning into my best friend’s shoulder. “They’ll probably be the crazy kind that smother

eks andbaby with way too many gifts and trips.”

terrified, “That’ll probably happen from both sides. The Lombardi family smother the baby too.”

“Oh my god,” I groaned, breaking away from her. “What do you they’ll say though? Do you think they’ll think I’m a slut?”

ere was “What?” Linley looked shocked. “Why on earth would they think ight of Levi is their *son*, and honestly, they love you, Ally. Lisa took you right to be a her wing as soon as you graduated. I don’t think this will change how feel about you at all. I do think that Levi should be the bearer of the though.”

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have to I took a deep breath, my heart beginning to race in my chest. “I I guess I should ask him to meet me for lunch Monday so I can tell him. own my Linley shook her head at me. “I don’t think that’s the way to do it over with while you still have the courage.”

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“What?” Linley looked shocked. “Why on earth would they think that? Levi is their *son*, and honestly, they love you, Ally. Lisa took you right under her wing as soon as you graduated. I don’t think this will change how they feel about you at all. I do think that Levi should be the bearer of the news though.”

“Yeah, I guess that’s true. I’m still going to be worried about it until they know, though—Josh too.” I held the test in my hand, glancing back down at it.

“One step at a time though.” Linley squeezed my shoulder. “I know that’s easier said than done sometimes, but there’s one person who deserves to know before *all* those other people.”

I took a deep breath, my heart beginning to race in my chest. “I know. I guess I should ask him to meet me for lunch Monday so I can tell him.”

Linley shook her head at me. “I don’t think that’s the way to do it. Get it over with while you still have the courage.”

I swallowed hard, reaching into my pocket. “Okay. I’ll send him a text right now.”





## LEVI

I stared at the numbers on the screen of my computer, pouring over for the umpteenth time that day, while my phone vibrated beside the couch.

*Probably someone else asking if I'm coming out.*

Ignoring the buzz, I kept my eyes focused on the screen. The last I wanted was to go out and mingle with a bunch of people whose sole aim was to party—I was on the brink of owning one of the biggest companies in the world. And besides, I couldn't even have fun anymore, as my mind hung up on the one person I couldn't have.

"Hey, you're really staying in on a Saturday night?" Josh called from the kitchen, just before poking his head in.

*And that's why I can't have her.*

"Yeah, man. I'm just trying to make sure this is as solid as possible. She wants me to send it out to all the executives on Monday and I just want to make sure that I cover everything. It's a big deal."

"I'm sure it's just fine the way it is, Levi." Josh walked over, glancing down at the screen. He put his hands on my shoulders, giving them a squeeze.

“You need to get out of this damn house and enjoy yourself for once since you started working on this *deal*, you’ve become even more than usual.”

“I *am* enjoying myself right now,” I grunted, scrolling through more numbers. “Maybe I can go out next weekend—just not right now. I’ll nail this. This is my future.”

“You *are* going to nail it.” Josh’s brow furrowed as my phone wailed again, lighting up beside me. “What the fuck?” He reached for my phone, picking it up. “Why is my sister texting you, Levi?”

er them  
me on “What?” I whipped my head around in shock, grabbing for the phone. “What’d she say?”

thing I  
mbition “We need to talk *now*,” he grunted, his voice taking a dive as he tossed the phone onto my lap. “What the fuck is that about? What does she need to tell you about?” Josh walked around to the front of the couch, his face red.

st tech  
nyway, “Uh, well considering that she’s thirty percent of this, and that she’s supposed to be working on the questionnaire they sent out, that’s pretty important. What’s about.”

om the *Except I haven’t sent her the questionnaire.*

Frank “Okay, well then call her,” Josh demanded, folding his arms across his chest. “If she needs help with the fucking document, help her. Don’t sit here with your face in your computer. That text sounds urgent.”

want to *No fucking kidding.*

lancing  
squeeze. “Right, sorry,” I grunted, shutting my laptop and picking up my phone. However, before I could hit the call button beside her name, another notification came through, popping up on the screen.

*Just come over to my apartment.*



e. Ever Thankfully, Josh didn't see that one, and I quickly shut my phone. Standing to my feet and reaching for my laptop case, I slid my computer and slung it over my shoulder.

e of the "Are you going to just leave Ally hanging?" Josh snapped, looking pissed by the minute.

"No," I shot back at him, heading toward the garage door. "I left the drive with the ledger information at the office, and I need to go pick up my phone, her. I didn't make a copy of it, so I can't help her without it."

Damn, my on-the-fly bullshit game was *strong*.

phone. Josh nodded, though suspicion was written all over his face. "Ally"

Well, I'm gonna head to the party in Beverly Hills tonight. I guess I'll have to go without my wingman while you go fuck around with me sister. Oof, wouldn't I like to.

e going "Yeah, I get that," I said with a nod. "Maybe I can swing by once getting all this shit to Ally."

it she's "I won't hold my breath." Josh headed down the hallway, disappearing into his room as I reached for the doorknob of the garage, swinging the door open and hitting the button to open the door. My mind was spinning as I tossed my bag into the passenger seat, my phone still in my hand. I had no idea what Ally could possibly want to talk to me about, but I knew that it could just sit good...

*And probably involved her feelings.*

I blew out a sigh, starting the engine and glancing down at the text on my phone. My fingers hovered over the screen for a moment before I sent a reply. Her text *Be there in ten minutes.*

Ally liked the message as I backed out of the garage, the headlights flooding the darkness. I stomped the gas, the motor of my white Lamb

me off. echoing in the quiet of the evening. I hadn't had a single intention of  
entering tonight...

But I never saw this coming.

g more *Maybe I should've just called her first.*

My mind was still on overdrive as I pulled into the parking lot  
of the apartment complex, trying to remember which fucking building she lived  
in. I'd only ever gone over to Ally's place if Josh had needed to bring  
something—or for the housewarming party that he threw her when  
she moved in. I stepped out into the warm, humid air, and pulled out my phone  
right. “Let me guess,” a familiar voice called out. “You don't know where  
I'll just tell you're going.”

My eyes jumped up over the top of my phone to see Linley, an eye  
raised at me as she hit the unlock button on the car parked beside me.  
I don't remember. I never come here.”

Her face contorted in disgust. “Second floor, two-thirteen. That one  
pointed to a second-story door, the porch outside decorated in homey  
with plants and shit.

sed my *Makes sense.*

“Thanks. Do you know what this is about?” I took a step up onto  
sidewalk, my black vans contrasting with the nearly white cement.

“Uh, I think it's probably in your best interest if you just go and  
Ally.” Linley gave me a half-smile before heading to her car. “Good  
though.”

*Good luck?*

*What the fuck am I walking into?*

I couldn't even mutter goodbye to Ally's best friend and my gaze  
back to the apartment, my stomach now churning at the thought of walking

f going behind that door. But I did know one thing...

This was *not* a booty call.

My shoes thudded up the steps, and I weaved around the obnoxious on the front porch before ringing the doorbell. It was a gated apartment complex and that was probably a good thing.

Otherwise, a plant thief would have a heyday.

I chuckled to myself just as the door swung open. Ally's eyes were red, her mascara smeared slightly beneath her bottom eyelashes.

*Oh shit.*

"Uh, hey." I cleared my throat, running my hands through my hair.

"You look like shit—like you're upset."

Her eyebrows raised, but she didn't say anything, opening the door.

"Nope," gesturing for me to step inside. I glanced around the apartment, seeing her fascination with plants didn't stop at the porch...

*They're everywhere.*

Shaking my head, I spun back around to Ally, who was shutting the door behind me. "So, what is it that we need to talk about something happen?"

She stayed quiet—*again*. Her blue eyes clung to my face, like she was halfway expecting me to just read her mind or something.

"Ally, you asked me to come over so we could talk. I can't have a conversation with you if you're not talking." I tried to stay calm, keep my voice collected, but something about the way she was looking at me was...*unsettling*.

"I know that." Her voice was timid as she pushed some flyaways out of her face. "This is just a lot harder than I thought it would be."

"What's harder?" I narrowed my eyes at her, seeing that her arm

wrapped around herself. “I seriously don’t know what’s up with you—you’re starting to freak me out a little.”

She rolled her eyes, and I felt relief at the sight of her sass—at least some of the signs of the Ally I knew. “Just hang on. I know a better way to do this.”

“Uh, okay.” I stood awkwardly in her tiny living room, trying to decide whether I should sit down—or maybe get closer to the front door in case I needed to escape. I had never seen Ally in this state before, and I wasn’t sure I could handle *any* upset woman.

Especially one that apparently had something to show me.

I chewed on my lower lip, peering down the hallway as I waited a few moments, my stomach still feeling uneasy and my heart racing. If I could somehow know better, I’d think I had just run five miles.

Finally, Ally reappeared from one of the rooms, holding something in her hand. “I think this will make it clear.”

“All right,” I said, letting out a sigh as she held it out to me. I noticed her hand was trembling as I took it, my fingers brushing her skin. “What’s that? Did I really understand what’s going on?”

“You will.”

I gazed down at what I recognized as some sort of test in my hand. I noticed two pink lines in a window, and one dark line in another.

*She has COVID?*

“Uh...” I hesitated, holding the test stick out to her. “Is this about me? Am I exposed or something?”

“What?” Her mouth dropped open, her brow furrowing. “What are you talking about?”

“I thought we were kind of past the pandemic thing.” I shrugged. “And I thought you already had COVID once.”

ou, but “Oh my *god*, you have to be fucking kidding me.” She facepalmed,  
out a loud groan. “I don’t have *COVID*, Levi.”

st there *Oh.*

o this.” *OH.*

side if I *FUCK.*

eded to “No,” I gasped, grabbing the stick from her hands again and flip  
how toover. Sure enough, there were two tiny words on the back side of the t  
*Pregnancy test.*

My whole body froze as the surrealness of the moment landed  
another chest, making it difficult to breathe—like the fucking oxygen ha  
I didn’t sucked right out of the room.

“So you get it now?” Ally’s voice sounded distant, like she was  
g in her through a telephone.

I nodded, though it was more of an automatic response as my hea  
ced that light. “And this is…” My voice trailed off as I got the courage to look u  
‘I don’t the test. “This is mine?”

Her face contorted. “Uh, obviously.”

“Sorry,” I mumbled, still feeling shocked. “I just… I just had to mal  
hand. II’m just trying to wrap my head around it—I believe you, I just… wow.”

“I know that it’s a lot to take in…”

“Yeah, it’s definitely a *lot*.” I held the test out for her, and she took  
e being my hands, her gaze still intently focused on me.

Waiting.

are you “Is that really all you’re going to say?” There was moisture gliste  
her eyes as she looked up at me, her expression beginning to fall apart.  
ged my *Oh shit. Of course.*

I reached out to her, pulling her into me. “I’m sorry, Ally.” I wrap

, letting arms around her. "I'm just trying to process it—it's all going to be f  
do whatever you want me to. I just...holy *fuck*, this is just sending m  
loop. We used protection."

She leaned away from me. "So you're good with me keeping the bal

I nodded, not having thought of anything else. "Yeah, you can.  
oping it know why we wouldn't—I mean, I didn't *exactly* plan on becoming  
est. this way, or this soon, but we can figure something out..."

"Okay, now you just have to tell Josh about it."

on my *Oh the hell I am.*

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She leaned away from me. “So you’re good with me keeping the baby?”

I nodded, not having thought of anything else. “Yeah, you can. I don’t know why we wouldn’t—I mean, I didn’t *exactly* plan on becoming a dad this way, or this soon, but we can figure something out...”

“Okay, now you just have to tell Josh about it.”

*Oh the hell I am.*

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## ALLY

“**W**hy wouldn’t *you* tell your brother that you’re pregnant?” He dropped his arms from around me. “He’ll take the new one better from you than me.”

“Are you serious?” I exploded, throwing my hands in the air. “You can’t be kidding me. He’s *your* best friend—not mine. You know him better than I do.”

“Yeah, and I know that he’s going to fucking murder me when he finds out that I knocked up his little sister.”

“Don’t say it like that,” I snapped, folding my arms across my chest. “That makes it sound like I was just some kind of floozy.”

He chuckled, somehow finding humor in the moment. “You’re not kidding. You should probably point out that this is all the result of a couple of hot night stands—neither of us look squeaky clean.”

My mouth dropped open. “You’re making me feel *terrible*.”

“No, I don’t mean it like that,” he said quickly, his hands going up in a small surrender. “I just don’t know how else to put it. It’s not like you’re not together.”

“Well, Frank Lewis thinks we’re together—and whoever else. I don’t know what everyone is going to think...” I plopped down on the edge of the couch, my head falling to my hands. “I *never* sleep with men outside of a committed relationship, and the *one* time that I do, *this* happens.” The frustration was nearly as overwhelming as the reality of having a baby...with *Levi*.

“I mean, my mom probably won’t be surprised,” Levi said, shrugging his shoulders as I looked up at him, narrowing my eyes.

“What does that mean?”

“She may or may not have heard our little rendezvous in your room on Friday—and she was under the assumption that we were going to the Caribbean as, you know, a couple. I don’t think it’ll shock her the way everyone else.”

Embarrassment flooded my cheeks. “Oh my gosh, that’s literally unprofessional of me. God only knows what she thinks of me now.”

“She thinks I’m *into* you.” His voice came out in a weird tone—on the verge of being unrecognizable as I stared across the coffee table at him.

“So what do we do now?” I asked, deciding not to press into his feelings. No matter how I felt about him, I didn’t want him to pursue something with me just because I was pregnant—that’s not the kind of woman I want to be.

“Uh, that’s a great question. We probably should start with just Josh, don’t you think? Maybe schedule a doctor’s appointment? I don’t know.” He looked overwhelmed, but surprisingly calm given the situation. He had expected something much, much worse.

“Okay, yeah. I can schedule a doctor’s appointment.” I took a deep breath, a silence settling between us as we sat, staring at each other.

“We should tell Frank.”

*Ugh.*

It's not even "Can we *not* talk about that deal right now?"

One of the He gave me an incredulous look. "Why not? This is like icing on the cake of aHe'll be stoked for us, and it's just legitimate proof that we're a real thing on was "But this *is* a real thing, Levi." My irritation was growing, and I suddenly felt like this was all just another part of the game for him. "This is a real thing his that we're going to bring into the world. You're going to be a dad."

"Yeah, I know," he snapped, rising to his feet. "I'm just trying to point out the bright side of the situation. We'll just have to fucking co-parent and figure it out along the way."

to the *Co-parent.*

Why it will *So he really isn't considering a real relationship at all.*

I hadn't planned to talk about it, but it still stung—more than I was really ready to admit it did. "So should we tell Josh now?"

Levi shook his head. "No, he's at a party for the night in Beverly Hills. I don't think it's a good idea to go this late, anyway. We should wait a few days, make sure that we're as put together as possible. I have no idea what your reaction is going to be."

ing real *But it's not going to be good.*

was. "I'll go with you when you tell him." I nearly cringed at the thought of telling him I was there, but...

I don't I was just as responsible for the baby as Levi was.

ation. I Levi ran his hands over his face. "Do you wanna like get some coffee or something? Maybe just hang out for the evening?"

breath, "Uh..." My voice trailed off, surprised by the suggestion. "I guess I can?"

"I just don't feel like going back to the house, and if Josh shows up, I know that there's something up—he already knows there's something going on."

with me.”

ie cake. *Well, that’s news.*

ing.” “What do you mean?” I leaned back on the couch, studying the v  
iddenlyexpression faltered as he looked at me like he had admitted someth  
al childshouldn’t have. “I didn’t think anything was up.”

“It’s not, I just...I haven’t been going out or whatever because of v  
oint outon the business deal with CyberSecure, and he thinks something is  
d try tobecause of that. I don’t miss parties very often—but I’ve just been l  
whatever.”

“Right...” I bit my lip, not sure if I believed his reasons, though I  
idea what else it could be. If having a baby wasn’t a reason to adm  
nted tofeelings for someone, then I didn’t know what was, honestly...

So that wasn’t it.

Hills. I “Yeah, so pizza? Do you like pizza? Does it make your stomach :  
couplethat why your stomach has been so off?” He pointed to my belly, ne  
what hispulling out his phone. “I don’t know who delivers here.”

“I think it was morning sickness, yeah,” I said, trying not to laugh  
tripping over his words for the first time in his life. “But it’ll pass  
ught ofsecond trimester.”

“The second what?”

“You know, like the second trimester of pregnancy?”

food or “I have a lot to learn, don’t I?” An apprehensive laugh slipped thro  
lips as he looked at me.

ess we “You do, but so do I. We’ll just figure this out together.” I ran my  
down my thighs before standing to my feet and grabbing my phone  
p, he’llcoffee table. There was a text from Linley, asking if everything ha  
ing upokay.

*He took it better than I expected.*

I sent the message before heading to the kitchen to get myself a way hisneeded refill of water. “I like cheese pizza from wherever, by the way. ning he “Cool.” He nodded as I walked by him, his face in his phone moment.

orking My fingers were still trembling as I turned on the faucet, filling m wrongback up with lukewarm tap water. For some reason, ice-cold water m busy orstomach feel less than great—and now that I knew I was pregnant, I just have to accept that fact.

had no *But he didn’t get mad about it, so that’s good.*

it your As soon as I turned off the sink, I felt hands slip around my waist, s me. I spun to see Levi right there, his body pressed to the front of me.

“We’ll figure this out.” His voice was soft, and strangely comforti sick? Isleaned toward him, letting my shoulders drop against him. “I don’ rvouslyanything about pregnancy, childbirth, babies—whatever, but I think th can do this business thing together as well as we have, then why can’t at Leviparent a kid?”

by the *Right.*

I tensed up a little, breaking apart from him. “We should probably not blurring the lines of our relationship.”

“What?”

ugh his “Yeah, you know, *blurring* the lines,” I reiterated, taking myself a glass of water a few feet away from him.

y hands Just for safekeeping.

off the “I don’t understand what the hell you’re saying, Ally.” His voi d gonegrowing defensive. “What lines are there to blur?”

“Uh, the one you just did?” I shot back. “Not to mention, you’re tr

order pizza and act like we're a couple or something—but you keep much-*co-parent* and it's confusing as fuck.”

” “Okay, so then what do you want me to do? I'm just trying to be in the you in whatever way you need me to be. I mean, at this moment in time else do we have? We need to be able to get along. It's just *pizza*, I'm not really glassasking you to be my girlfriend or something.”

I took a deep breath, his words stinging all over again. “Yeah, okay, I would be sorry.” I shook my head, slipping past him and back into the living room.

*It's just the pregnancy news getting to me.*

“Ally, wait,” Levi called after me, grabbing my arm. “I don't understand what you want from me. We have to take all of this one step at a time now. Having a baby is more serious than buying some massive computer as I don't think there's any reason to complicate the working relationship with a kid right now.”

“Working relationship?” I said, exasperated. “You *fucked* me in my living room. We co-What kind of working relationship is *that*?”

His eyes widened. “I don't know. I got caught up in the heat of the moment—the same thing that happened when we were in the Caribbean. Now we have to deal with the consequences of that, and if we're going to continue then we *have* to get on friendly grounds with each other.”

“Then stop *fucking* me.” My voice came out cruel and sharp, tinged with the anger and hurt I was feeling in the moment. “Friends, business partners, whatever you want to call us, *don't* screw each other, Levi. I don't know what works in your world, but it's crossing a line in mine.”

He went silent, his square jaw tensing. His broad shoulders looked more massive in my small living room, and while he looked sexier than ever in his black t-shirt and light wash jeans...

saying I wasn't going to let him in again.

I'd already given him more than enough, and my heart was beginning to fracture with the feelings that I'd developed for him. He *clearly* didn't have the same feelings as me, no matter *what* he said in the middle of sex. I'm not just like Linley had said...

Guys say things they don't mean when they're thinking with their dick. I'm "I'll make sure that I don't *blur* the lines anymore, Ally. I didn't mean that it was such a problem for you, considering *you* could've just told

You wanted me just as bad as I wanted you in the moment. It feels unfair for you to hold this over my head like it's just *all* my fault."

"I never said it was all your fault. I just don't want to keep you in my company. Everything is so difficult. We're already going to have to explain all of this to Josh—and we need to be on the same page. You know he's going to ask a lot of questions."

Levi groaned. "I *know* he is, and we'll just be honest with him. This was a little hot and heavy in the Caribbean, and we got caught up in the moment. It happens, and we're friends, business partners, and that's it."

*Just keep driving the point home, Levi.*

"Just friends." I cleared my throat just as the doorbell rang, coming through the apartment. "Bet that's the pizza."

"Yeah, probably." Levi shook his head, going for the door, while the others—there staring at the place he had just been standing.

*Just friends.*

I chewed the inside of my cheek, my mind already picturing my brother's reaction to the news. There was *no* way he was going to buy an ever didn't have any feelings for Levi...

He knew me way too well.



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## LEVI

*Just tell him the truth.  
I got your sister pregnant.  
But we're just friends.*

My knee bounced up and down as I sat on the couch, while Ally paced the floor in front of me. We had waited two days, letting the weekend pass without telling Josh. The two of us had gotten off work early, coming to my house waiting for Josh to finish up and arrive.

“What is taking him so long?” Ally turned to me, letting out a nervous breath. “It’s almost six.”

“He probably just got stuck in traffic.” I tried to sound nonchalant, but wanting to get her anymore worked up than she already was.

Besides, it was taking everything I had not to lose my lunch.

“Jesus, he’s going to kill us, Levi,” she grumbled, going back to her heels clicking on the bamboo floors of my living room. “Like, I never want to talk to me again.”

“I think that’s a little dramatic, but I do have an ambulance on standby for myself,” I joked, though part of me wondered if I should’ve.

“Yeah, and that’s not dramatic.” She laughed, shaking her head. “Maybe we’re freaking out for nothing though—he might take it better than we think he will. I mean, *you* took it pretty well.”

“There was no other way to take it. Freaking out on you wouldn’t have been helpful for either of us.” I took in her figure, her tight black dress making her ass so fucking appealing.

*Just friends. No blurring lines.*

She had been difficult to read Saturday night, and part of me had wanted to ask if she *wanted* something more from me—but then she went into “blurring the lines” talk and I just...

I just didn’t want to ruin anything more than I already had.

“There he is.” The sound of the doorbell rang through the house and I stopped pacing, pausing to fold my arms across my chest. “We’ll handle this. You tell him, and then I’ll back you up.”

*Right.*

Josh appeared in the living room a few seconds later, his expression puzzled as his eyes bounced between the two of us. “Uh...is it my birthday or something?”

*Fuck, I wish.*

I forced a laugh, though it came out lopsided and awkward. “No, we were just hoping to talk to you for a little bit.”

“Okay, you two are being fucking weird, and I don’t like it.” Josh sat down in a black leather chair across from me. “If this is some fucking way of telling me you landed the deal, I don’t like it.”

“Well, we *did* kind of land something,” I said, cringing immediately. Ally shot daggers at me. “I mean, we didn’t—we haven’t landed the deal yet. I think we will though. It’s looking good.”

at me. “Okay, so then why are you and my sister sitting in the living room news of you looking like you’re about to burst.” Josh grimaced, and *nothing* his shifting demeanor was making me feel any better about what I wasn’t have to say. “Someone better fucking say something, *now*.”

k pants “Go on, *Levi*,” Ally said to me, her eyes urging me to speak.

My mouth felt like it was full of cotton as I forced myself to speak. “It may have been something that happened in the Caribbean—”

anted to “*What?*” Josh demanded, cutting me off. “What the *hell* is that supposed to all that mean? Is this some sort of messed up way of saying that you screw your sister? Because I should’ve known that you can’t go anywhere and keep your dick in your pants.”

nd Ally *Okay, this is already going really bad.*

can do But I kept my voice calm, already seeing Ally shrinking away. “I mean, this *is* kind of that.”

Josh’s face went red as his foot began to tap against the floor. “And your expression “And she’s pregnant.”

hday or Josh *lunged* across the table, coming right for me, and I stood to protect my chest taking the brunt of the hit as I tried to hold him off.

“What the hell is wrong with you, Levi?” he roared, the solid six inches of muscle on him doing me a favor. “You make me a promise and then you come in here and knock her up?” He swung at me and I dodged it, his fist *barely* missing. I sat his my nose.

a weird “Stop it!” Ally shouted, suddenly grabbing for her brother’s arm. “It’s not your fault too.”

y at the Josh froze, dropping his hand from me and spinning to look at Ally. “Business” “Yeah, you know what? You’re right. What the hell were you thinking?”

Like did you forget how much of a shithead he is?”

n, both “Hey,” I called out, growing defensive. “I’m not *that* bad of a guy about could’ve done much worse than me...”

s about I don’t think he heard me though, his red face of anger directed at her in the moment. “After *everything* I’ve told you about him, you still go with him? Why would you do that—why would you *want* to? You can’t change a guy like him, Ally. He’ll never be what you deserve, and you’ve just gone and complicated your life to an ungodly extent.”

used to I wanted to punch him square in the jaw for laying into her like that. I’d never loved my “It’s not like I thought that I *could* change him,” she fired back, her eyes sharp. “We got caught up in the heat of the moment, and it just happened. And I don’t think it’s fair for you to come after me like that when you don’t fucking sleep around with whoever you want to!”

Well, I *Whoa. Go, Ally.*

I was sincerely impressed with her in the moment, not holding her back from taking any shit—but she also didn’t deserve to take the brunt of his anger. “Dude, I fucked up and I broke the rules we set. It just happened, and there are consequences to it.”

Josh spun back to me. “And you *never* planned to tell me what happened?” “I don’t—I didn’t...I don’t know,” I stumbled over my words, shocked and hurt in his voice. “Listen, I wasn’t expecting to go through with this and have things happen the way they did. I just—”

“You just couldn’t fucking keep your dick in your pants!” Josh was burning up with anger, and I knew there was *nothing* we could say that would change his feelings in the moment.

it Ally. “Maybe you should go, Ally.” I turned to her, seeing the hurt written over her face. “Let me handle it from here.”

“No, that’s not fair.”



ly. She “Aw, how sweet,” Josh seethed. “The two of you are just one fucking team now, aren’t you? How long have you known? Is it official?”

is sister “We’re not together,” I said flatly, beating Ally to the punch.

t in bed “Oh my god,” Josh groaned, shaking his head. “So you really knocked up my sister, and you don’t even have the balls to be a man and *be with her* now? Like, are you okay with this, Ally? I *know* you don’t sleep with people you don’t have feelings for.”

My stomach tightened at Josh’s words, my gaze drifting to Ally. Her face looked mortified. Her eyes darted to me for a split second before going back to her brother.

it—like “We’re just friends—and business partners,” she muttered, her voice lacking some of the confidence that she had earlier.

My heart sank.

back or *Does she have feelings for me?*

anger. “I can’t deal with you two.” Josh threw up his hands. “Have fun telling Mom and Dad about this, Ally. They’re going to be so stoked to know you got knocked up on a one-night stand with my best fucking friend.”

ened?” “I mean, it was more than *once*,” I clarified.

oked by “Shut up,” Ally and Josh snapped at me simultaneously, both of them shooting the same set of blue daggers at me.

*Yikes.*

was still *What a fucking welcome to the family.*

t would “I think I am going to go,” Ally said finally after a tense few moments. I promised Mom that I would call her.”

tted all “Does she already know?” Josh demanded as I raised my eyebrows.

“Yeah, I couldn’t hold back the news.” Ally looked embarrassed. Surprised looks on both our faces. “I know that we said that we would

happy tell everyone else after Josh knew—but I couldn't keep it in.” She gave  
al?” apologetic look.

“It’s okay,” I tried to reassure her, ignoring Josh nearly melting do  
ked up a few feet away. “Everything is fine, just like I said before. Just go  
th her? Josh and I need to talk.”

ple that “Obviously.” Josh’s voice was cold to me as he turned to Ally. “Wi  
done talking, but yeah, I think it’s best you go ahead. I’d rather Lev  
y, who kicking *not* be interrupted again.”

ing back She let out a sigh. “Yeah, okay. Please don’t do something stupid, Jo

“Love you too,” he snapped, shaking his head at her as she gave us  
e losing sheepish smile, heading toward the front door.

“Dude, I had no idea that this was going to happen,” I said as so  
heard the front door shut. “I should’ve come clean about what ha  
between us in the Caribbean, but I just thought—I thought it was  
telling couple of times...”

ow that Josh surprisingly dropped his shoulders, plopping into the chair  
' from me. “I don’t understand why you didn’t fucking tell me, Levi. Li  
that I’ve always made Ally off limits...but come on. This is a big dea  
of them long have you known?”

“I didn’t find out until Saturday night...”

He put the pieces together. “Right, when she said she needed to talk

“Yeah, I had no idea at the time. Things have just been so *weird* b  
ents. “Ius.”

“That’s what happens when you have a casual fling with someone t  
at her. can’t just ghost and forget exists.” His tone was still cold, though the  
by the was dissipating from his face, finally.

wait to “I don’t *want* to forget she exists...”

me and His eyebrows shot up at my words. “That’s a new one.”

I shifted uncomfortably on the couch. “I know, and I haven’t figured out just exactly what’s going on. I just know that I’ll be there for her with all the pregnancy stuff, and I’ll do whatever she needs me to.”

Josh was silent for a few long moments. “Are you...are you falling for her?”

I shook my head, though my heart jumped at the question. “That’s not really what I’m asking. That’s just...that’s just really make things messy between us.”

Josh.” “That’s not an answer to the question.” Josh perked up, his eyes narrowing at me. “I asked if you had feelings for her.”

“I don’t know,” I groaned, not expecting the conversation to take the turn it did. “I thought that it was just a fling...”

“But then you saw her with the dude at the club.” Josh facepalmed. “I just *aknew* something was up with that—you *never* gave a shit about what was up to prior to that trip.”

“I don’t know.” I was starting to sound like a broken record.

“Holy shit.” He leaned back in the chair, running his hands along the back of his head. How stubble on his chin. “You’re going to be a dad and I’m gonna be an uncle. I did *not* see this coming.”

“Yeah.” My voice was quiet. “Me neither.”

“I guess I should tell you congratulations, but I still want to punch you right now for screwing my sister.”

I nodded, a smile tugging at my lips. “I can give you a cheap shot if you want it, if that would make things better.”

Josh laughed, some of the tension draining from the room. “Nah, I don’t want to send you to a hospital, but I do have one more question...”

My stomach tightened again. “And what’s that?”

“You’ve fucked her since the Caribbean, haven’t you?”

red out *Shit.*

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“You’ve fucked her since the Caribbean, haven’t you?”

*Shit.*

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## ALLY

“So I guess the two of you worked it out?” I asked, sitting next to Levi in the waiting room of the imaging clinic that the OBGYN had brought us to.

“I mean, yeah.” Levi shrugged his shoulders, his eyes stealing a glance at me. “The best we could, anyway. It was definitely not a pleasant conversation after you left, but I think everything will blow over.”

“That’s good,” I said with a nod, leaning back in the chair. “So weird, right?” My heart was bopping with anxiety at the thought of what he’d just poked and prodded—in front of Levi.

“Uh, yeah. It’s a little weird,” he chuckled. “But we just have to get it done. We’re gonna be going to a lot of these appointments together. More or less. It’s pretty clear that this is my job.”

I couldn’t help but laugh. Lisa had surprisingly taken the news better than anyone, showering me with affection and excitement at the office—she was still under the impression that Levi and I were seeing each other. It was awkward, but only because I was having a terrible time deciphering what she thought we were together...



And who knew the truth.

“So I haven’t heard anything back from Frank,” Levi spoke up, drifting to the TV hanging in the corner of the dull room. The colors mixture of rose pink and gray, giving me an unwelcomed seventies vint

“He’s a busy guy,” I commented, running my fingers down the wood grain of the chair’s arm.

“Yeah, and I guess we’re fixing to be really busy ourselves.” Levi l sigh, resting his chin in his hand. “We’ll have to figure out all the de how we’re going to work this out.”

to Levi  
ad sent  
“Hmm.” I didn’t try to decipher what he was talking about, as L growing more and more cryptic as time passed. He alluded to working out and the future, but never went into detail.

lance at  
And so I chose to just ignore it.

ersation  
Because there was *one* thing he had been *very* clear about—and th that we were just friends.

this is  
*Having a baby together.*

f being  
“Ally Montgomery?” A woman stuck her head out of a door, givin bright smile as I stood to my feet, nudging Levi. “Are you ready?”

used to  
I nodded. “Yeah, let’s do this.”

n made  
Levi trudged along behind me, his large frame filling the narrow l that we walked down. The woman pointed to a dark room, lit up only ultrasound machine. She gestured to the bench.

ter than  
-though  
to do the first ultrasound vaginally.” She handed me material to co other. It lower half, before slipping out of the room.

ng who  
I looked up at Levi, whose face was bright red. “What’s wrong?”

“Being a woman is weird, man. No one ever asks me to drop my p

the doctor—not usually, anyway.”

his eyes Laughing, I unbuttoned the top of my jeans. Levi’s eyes went right  
were motions of my hands, his lips parting slightly.

ie. “Absolutely not.” I motioned for him to turn around.

smooth “Oh come on,” he whined. “I’ve already seen you—*all* of you.”

“Friends don’t peep vaginas.”

et out a “Ugh,” he groaned as he spun around, his back to me. I smiled  
tails of dropped his head back in frustration.

*Such a man-child.*

evi was I slipped out of my jeans and underwear, folding them up and setting  
g things in a second chair as I positioned myself on the gray bench, draping the  
over me. My heart was pounding, nervous as to what we were fixing to

*I hope the baby is okay.*

hat was “Can I turn around now?” Levi asked, his voice full of impatience.

“Yeah,” I said, just as the door opened back up, the tech reappearing

“I’m Jamie, I’ll be doing your ultrasound today. I’m guessing you’re  
ing me aShe gestured to Levi.

“Uh huh,” Levi answered her, taking a seat in the chair beside me.

*Dad.*

halfway *To my baby.*

r by the “How long have the two of you been together?” she asked, taking a  
the chair beside me. “You’re a cute couple.”

ly have “Thanks,” Levi spoke before I could. “It’s gonna be a cute kid, isn’t

ver my She laughed, her brown eyes sparkling. “It definitely will be. We’ll  
hear the heartbeat today, and then you’ll get some cute little pictures.”

I took a deep breath. “And you’ll be able to make sure everything is  
pants at right?”

She nodded as she readied the probe. “Yeah, we will. We’ll also check to see just how many babies are in there.”

“How many?” Levi echoed, his face going white.

“Yeah, how *many*.” Jamie put the gel on the end of the probe handing it to me. “Go ahead and insert this into your vagina, and then take it from there.”

As he I took the end of the probe, ignoring Levi’s wide eyes as I shifted, slid it under the sheets. If I wasn’t so focused on the screen, I would’ve lost my head off at his reaction...

But the moment I saw the little bean, I caught my breath.

“Is that the baby?” I gasped, my heart swelling at the sight.

“That is.” Jamie smiled. “And here in just a second, I’ll let you hear the heartbeat. It looks like it’s going nice and strong.” She pointed to the monitor on the screen, adjusting the probe slightly. “Here.” Her fingers clicked on the keyboard, the sound of a fast heart rate filling the room. “Dad.”

“Oh man.” Levi’s voice was soft, coming out in nearly a whisper. I whipped my head around to him, my heart squeezing at his expression...

And the tears in his eyes.

“That’s your baby.” Jamie beamed as she began to pull the probe out, clicking away on the keyboard. “Congratulations.”

“Thank you.” I dabbed at the tears welling up in my own eyes. I took a step back as she finished printing out the ultrasound picture.

“Here you go.” Jamie handed the picture over to me and I took it from her. It was okay, the crisp smooth photo baby glimmering under the light. “And I’ll go

heck to images sent over to your doctor.” With a smile and nod, she stood up, me to clean up and get dressed—and Levi sitting in dead silence beside

“You okay?” I scrutinized his expression, his eyes still a little haz before the emotional moment.

hen I’ll “Yeah.” He cleared his throat. “I don’t know why I wouldn’t be fighting in this room is just shit.”

slipping “Right,” I snorted, flipping the sheet back. My face went hot as I laughed my careless mistake, my entire lower half suddenly on display. It feel...sexy in the moment, not even as Levi’s gaze slipped over for second. However, he quickly stood to his feet and turned away.

“Sorry.”

near the “I forgot you were here,” I muttered, feeling ridiculous as I swung my heart over the side of the bench.

fingers “Right, because you weren’t *just* talking to me.” There was an edge around voice that was irritating—like I had done something wrong.

*Typical Levi.*

isper. I I grabbed for my underwear and pants, quickly covering the bare sweet half of my body. “It’s not like you haven’t seen me. We’re having together.” I should’ve held my tongue, but I couldn’t help it.

He let out a sigh as he turned back around to me, his eyes boring into me, “Are you really going to go there, Ally? I’m trying to be a mature adult this.”

with the I raised my eyebrows. “And so me simply pointing out that you’re my body before is somehow immature?”

om her, “No.” He shook his head, walking past me and grabbing at the handle. “It’s not like that at all. I just don’t know how to navig

leaving complicated relationship—but I don't think that we should do anything to me. It blurs the lines anymore.”

My eyes from “You’ve said that multiple times, Levi.” I slipped through the open door, following the exit signs back to the waiting room. Smiling and giving a thumbs up to the ladies at the front desk, I headed straight for the main glass door. The warm, slightly humid air hit me in the face as I headed out into the parking lot. I realized I’d almost walked toward Levi’s black Mercedes. The guy only had enough cars for the army. I didn’t want to.

“Ally.” A hand grabbed my wrist gently, stopping me just as I reached for the passenger door handle. “Don’t go getting all worked up.”

I was slapped with the musky, masculine scent of his cologne as my legs were pulled around. “I’m not getting all worked up,” I choked out, my throat tight. His eyes studied my face. My back was against the warm black metal of his car, butterflies erupting in my stomach. He was closer to me than he had been in what felt like ages, though it had only been since the escapade in the office.

But so much had happened since then.

“Good.” His tone was husky as his fingers brushed some of my auburn hair behind my ears. “Because as outrageous as this entire situation is... I don’t think I would change anything about it.”

My eyes widened, my heart jumping in my chest. “Really?”

“Yeah. I mean, I’ve always wanted kids—and this isn’t *exactly* what I’ve seen in mind. I figured I’d be having one with a wife, not a friend, but this is still to be good.” A smile tugged at his upper lip, but I didn’t mirror the emotion. My mind was still hung on that stupid little word...

*Friends.*

“We’re having a *baby*,” he reiterated, his smile growing wider as he

ing that grew soft. He opened the door for me, gesturing for me to get in. “And excited for us. I think it’s all gonna work out.”

n door, I glared up at him. “Except for the fact that everyone thinks we’re c g a nodtogether. I even had to lie to my parents and say that we’re dating, be rs. Theknew that your mom would call mine—and that’s exactly what happe parkingcringed at the lie, one that was getting tough for me to keep straig a smallmom had been more shocked by the fact that I was seeing Levi than that she would soon become a grandmother.

hed for “That’s just details, Ally.” Levi chuckled, climbing into the driver “We’ll land the deal long before we ever have to worry about th I spunquestions coming. The breakup will hit long before the gender revea ning asdoes.”

l of his “How can you be so nonchalant about it?” I asked, exasperated, pul ad beenseat belt across my lap. “I’m so tired of lying to everyone.” in my *And about my feelings.*

“You just have to stop focusing on that aspect of all of this—a shouldn’t be too hard, considering we have a baby to plan for.” He put urn hairin drive, whipping out of the parking lot and heading toward the mai .I don’t“I don’t think people will focus on the relationship between you and n the baby comes into the picture.”

I scrunched my nose up at him. “Uh, wouldn’t a baby bring *more* a at I hadto the relationship we have? Because a baby is a pretty big ste s goingrelationship.”

e same “Nah.” He shook his head, a deep chuckle filling the car. “They’l busy watching us killing it with CyberSecure and being bomb co-1 they won’t even think about the sketchy-ass details of the relationship.

is voice “*Right.*” I drew out a breath, not bothering to point out how :

I'm so *delusional* he was sounding in the moment. "We'll just keep navigating your way."

*Actually* He glanced over at me, a curious look on his face. "My way? Do you have a better way of doing this, Ally?"

ended." I I met his eyes for a split second before looking away, my heart full of light. My "Nope."

the fact

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fucking

*delusional* he was sounding in the moment. “We’ll just keep navigating it your way.”

He glanced over at me, a curious look on his face. “My way? Do you have a better way of doing this, Ally?”

I met his eyes for a split second before looking away, my heart fumbling. “Nope.”

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## LEVI

I stared at the picture Ally had posted on her Instagram, her little bump more pronounced now. It was cute— *she* was cute.

But I didn't let my mind go there.

It'd been *months* since we'd hooked up, and now that the whole world knew that I had slept with Ally Montgomery, and assumed that we were in a relationship, you'd think the sex would keep coming...

But nope.

And the reason why was sitting *right* next to me.

"So after your meeting with Frank, we've got to pick up the shit nursery." Josh ran his hands along the steering wheel. "And hopefully that meeting will seal the deal, because Mom has already asked me twice if you're going to be moving in soon. She's mindblown that the two of you live separately if you're *together* with a baby."

I exhaled sharply in the passenger seat of Josh's car. "Dude, I don't know when the deal is going to close. I thought it would've been done by now, really." I didn't hide the irritation from my voice. It had been driving me *crazy*.

It was like I was with her, but not *really* with her.

“I just think that it’s taking a toll on Ally. The lies can’t be good stress level. Other than Linley and me, the whole world sees her as a girlfriend. I’m just worried how it’s affecting her.”

*And what about me?*

I pushed the selfish thought away. “I get it, but it’s not like she didn’t want to do this with me. She gets thirty percent of the company—let’s not forget that.”

“*If* you can actually land the deal.” The unsureness in his voice was palpable as he pulled up alongside the curb. “I get that Frank is a slow-moving guy—I just thought that you guys had this in the bag months ago. Not being strung along, and yeah, you’ve had meetings—and Frank went on a month-long vacation...but come on, Levi. It feels like he’s just giving you the runaround.”

*Or hearing everyone else out.*

The professional rumor mill had been spinning that one around, and I’d heard that some other major financial players were coming into the ring to pitch for the company. Any suave businessman would hear out every one of them, and as much as Frank came across like a kind-hearted guy, and he was...

He was also a *very* suave businessman.

“Good luck,” Josh said to me, patting me on the shoulder and gesturing for me to get out of the door. “Sorry for the shitty pep talk. I know I didn’t help anything.”

“Nah, you’re good, man. I get that you’re just trying to look out for the best for Ally.” I pushed open the car door and grabbed my bag, slipping it over my shoulder. “I know that I can land this deal—and it’s going to be worth it for everyone, especially our little guy.”

“Or girl.” Josh shot me a wink. “You definitely come across like the  
for her of guy who’d end up as a girl dad.”

as your “Bring it on.” I laughed, shutting the door. However, as I spun around  
walk into Frank Lewis’s office, my smile faded. It was true that the deal  
would make it that much better for my son—or daughter.

’t agree But I wasn’t sure that I could land the deal anymore.

at’s not My confidence was fading, and I felt that even more as I walked through  
the main doors of the building and headed toward the elevator. The  
; potent impromptu meeting had left me missing a doctor’s appointment with  
kind of and she hadn’t been able to make this meeting...

low it’s I hated doing any of the CyberSecure meetings without my best  
nt on a partner.

you the *And mother of my baby.*

“Good afternoon, Mr. Lombardi,” Tina, the receptionist, greeted me as I  
walked into the waiting area outside of Frank’s L.A. office.

and I’d “How’re you?” I asked the middle-aged woman, who, if I landed the deal,  
make a would be my own receptionist.

7 single *Wild.*

man— “I’m doing well.” Her dark chocolate eyes were bright as they looked  
me. “Where’s your better half?”

I chuckled. “She’s at a doctor’s appointment. It’s difficult to make  
ring to OBGYN appointments around.”

“Ah, that’s just too bad. I haven’t gotten to see her in a few weeks. I  
what’s bet that little bump is growing.”

ing it I nodded, pulling my phone out and bringing up the picture she had  
g to beto Instagram. “Here it is today, actually.”

“Oh my goodness.” Tina beamed, her cherry-red fingernails flying.

he kinder mouth. “How adorable is she? I’m just so excited for the two of you

“Thank you. Is Frank busy with meetings today? He didn’t have time to wiggle room in his schedule.” I glanced toward his heavy oak door, and he dealt that it was closed.

“Oh yes, he’s really trying to nail down a buyer.”

*So the rumors are true.*

through “I know you and Ally are still frontrunners,” she said quickly. “You were a bit ahead of the curve, and once it hit the public, things got pretty overwhelming—and you know how Frank is, he’s a very thorough man

*Suave.*

business “Yes, it’s an important quality to have as a businessman of his level.” She gave her a smile and took a deep breath, sinking into one of the black leather waiting room chairs.

me as I “I’m sure he’ll be done in no time.” The phone ringing kept Tirion from saying anything more, and she picked it up, chatting casually.

the deal, My attention went back to my phone, the picture of Ally still pulled up on the screen. She was in an olive-green tank top and black leggings, her hair in waves past her shoulders.

and up at And a big smile on her face, her hand lightly over the little growing bump. *She’s fucking gorgeous.*

love the And of course, she had tagged me in the photo, the whole world talking about it that I was probably right there in the middle of it all with her—and I wish

s, and I But not in the way that I wished I was.

“Levi,” Frank’s cheery voice called from the doorway.

I posted I looked up, seeing a gray-headed slender man slipping out the door.

Frank waved at me. “Mr. Lewis.” I cleared my throat, jumping to my feet and going up to “It’s good to see you this morning.”

u.” He laughed, giving me a firm handshake as we headed into his p  
e muchluxurious office. The place made mine look mediocre at best, with th  
seeingdesigner vibe, everything looking like it shouldn’t even be touched.

Or breathed on.

I took a seat in my usual spot, a white Italian leather chair. “All  
doctor’s appointment today, otherwise she would be here.”

ou guys A wide smile stretched across his face. “Ah, how far along is sh  
a littleRachel keeps up with her, but I have to say, with everything going on,  
n.” keep up with the time myself.”

“She’s nearly twenty weeks,” I answered, my stomach flipping  
evel.” Ihalfway mark. It wouldn’t be long and there’d be a baby...

leather And I did *not* want to still be negotiating this deal.

“Wow, she’s really coming along.” Frank nodded, reaching for a fo  
ia fromhis desk. He picked it up and flipped it open, reaching for his glasses t  
the desk. “So, I called you to this meeting for a couple of reasons.”

d up on I nodded, taking a deep breath. My whole body felt jitter  
auburnapprehension as he pulled out a slip of paper, and I hid my trembling  
by running them down my thighs.

bump. *Maybe the deal is off.*

“So, I’m sure you’ve heard that I’ve had a lot of offers by now.” Fr  
hinkingthe paper down on the desk, and I could see that it was a list of offers-  
as. much bigger than what I could even swing.

*Jesus.*

“I’ve heard of some pretty big names,” I said coolly, though I had  
rway ashow I was maintaining such composure. I felt like I might pass out  
ny feet.given time.

He shrugged. “I’m not one to worry about names—or really num

Christine, this point. I think the future of the company is what's most important, and I'd really like to extend that to you..."

*But...*

The hesitance in his voice had my heart dropping and I braced myself. He continued, a sharp exhale escaping his lips. "But we won't extend the offer until the company party this Friday. That's how the board wants to do it."

"I can't..." I nodded, hardly believing what I was hearing. "That's no problem, and I can be there, for sure."

"Of course..." He paused, eyeing me. "I will admit that some of the board members are very conservative..."

"I don't think I'm following..."

"Well, you know, Ally is pregnant with your baby." The look on his face finally connected all the dots in my head.

*Oh, that kind of conservative.*

My mouth moved before my mind could finish thinking it through. "I was handsplanning on getting married before the baby is here."

His eyebrows shot up at the same time my own did. "You are? I'm sure if that's how people did it these days. We've always been pretty pro-marriage."

*So this is more about Frank than just the board.*

"Yeah, my family is too."

*Sort of.*

"Anyway." I cleared my throat. "I was planning on proposing to her at any gender reveal party, but maybe I could do it at the company party before we sign the papers?" My mouth just kept moving faster than my mind...



and I'd And my ability to bullshit right there on the spot was impressive.  
And concerning.

But the excitement on Frank's face was undeniable. "That would re  
l as hesomething. I bet the whole company would get a kick out of that. It's  
officialshow just how personal this whole thing has been for you."

ts to do *Oh, you have no idea.*

*Conceived a child.*

n. Ally "It'd show them they're all just a part of the family." I smiled, tho  
eyes diverted to my phone, which was buzzing with a text from non  
e boardthan Ally herself. "I know that Ally would love for it to happen like  
well. It means just as much to her as it does to me."

"Well, does she know that a proposal is coming?" Frank leaned bac  
Frank's chair, his demeanor shifting from professional to friendly and casual.

*No way.*

"Uh, she has some idea, but I'm not giving her any specifics. I thi  
"We'rewill be the way to go—I know it'll be perfect, actually."

*Because she'll know it's coming.*

wasn't "Well, I look forward to being a part of it—and finally hand  
heavilycompany off to you," he added, pushing himself to a standing positio  
about time that I retire. I know I sound like a broken record, but dami  
last few months have been turbulent with all the potential buye  
amazing what people are willing to do just to make a deal."

*Oof. No kidding.*

r at the "I'm sure." I chuckled, my stomach flipping. "But I know myself a  
? Rightcouldn't be more happy with the decision for you to go with the two of

ian my "Oh yeah, absolutely." He placed his hand on my shoulder as we he  
the door of his office. "I knew from the beginning that you two were r

choice. I just had to hear everyone out—I felt like that was the right thing to do.”

ally be “I completely understand. You’ve worked very hard to build this company and I know there’s a lot of risks that go hand in hand with that decision.”

“Of course.” Frank nodded, grabbing the door handle. “I think I understand that so well, given your history and the path you’ve carved for yourself at such a young age—and that’s why I’m sure you’ll understand enough myI’ve got a backup buyer who will also be there Friday, just in case anything otherdon’t go exactly as planned.”

that as *What?*

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Frank in his

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choice. I just had to hear everyone out—I felt like that was the right thing to do.”

“I completely understand. You’ve worked very hard to build this company, and I know there’s a lot of risks that go hand in hand with that decision.”

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*What?*

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## ALLY

I stared at the bubbles in the tub as I sank further into the warm water, my tense muscles relaxing. Missing the meeting with Levi had me a bit concerned, though mostly just because I was curious about what Frank would say.

He was taking *forever* to make up his mind on a buyer.

And I was starting to wonder if it was going to happen at all for us.. I was never going to date for real again.

*Well, after the baby.*

My hand ran down my bare stomach, my baby bump more exposed than I thought though still concealable most days. I rolled my shoulders, my auburn hair darkening as the water soaked it. I bit my lip, my mind slipping back to the man who I was *dating* but not *dating*.

*Ugh.*

I wasn't the type to think about sex much, but ever since Levi and I had happened, I wanted him so bad. My pussy came to life at the thought of his hand drifting down my lower abdomen until two fingers made it to my clit. A light moan slipped from my lips as the pleasure deepened.

*Fuck, I want you, Levi.*

My hand kept circling as my free hand squeezed my breast, pausing to stimulate my erect nipple just beneath the surface of the water. I let out a sharp breath, letting my mind run wild.

*“Tell me that you want me to fuck you,” Levi growled, climbing on top of me. His strong knees gently pushed at my inner thighs, spreading out before him.*

*“Please fuck me,” I whined, looking up and into his potent hazel eyes interlocked with mine. “Please.”*

*He grinned down at me, observing silently as I touched myself in his hand, him, moisture covering my fingertips as I plunged inside my pulsing pussy.*

*A sharp moan escaped from my lips as my back arched against the tub, my eyes squeezing shut a little tighter.*

*“You feel so fucking good,” Levi groaned, his hips slamming into mine. Our bodies collided, his cock filling me. I kept touching myself, rubbing my clit as Levi’s eyes stayed locked with mine, his lips slightly parted.*

*“I’m gonna cum,” I panted, my legs tensing up as his hands tightened around my thighs. “Do you want me to cum for you?”*

*He nodded, his whole face darkening with lust as he gazed down at me. “You better fucking cum for me.”*

*“Oh my god, Levi,” I moaned, my pussy bearing down around my cock now inserted deep inside of myself. I came hard and fast, just like I did when I was alone, and my eyes fluttered open...*

*Reminding me that I was alone.*

*My phone buzzed on the edge of the tub as I sat up, my wet hair dripping down my back. Picking it up, I saw a text from Josh.*

*Are you not home?*

*Come answer the door.*

Laughing to myself, I pulled the drain on the tub and stood up, the water causing me to shiver. I grabbed my towel off the hook and wrapped it around my body, stepping out onto the rug. My phone vibrated again, and I rolled my eyes, Josh continuing to bombard me.

*Taking a shit?*

“Brothers, I swear,” I grumbled as I headed through my bedroom and into the living room. The knocking finally reached me there, and I moved faster to the front door, swinging it open.

“Jesus, Ally,” Josh greeted me, holding an armload of baby things. “I know everyone assumes that you’re going to be moving in with Levi, but I know the truth, so I bought you this shit that was on sale.”

“Well, that’s kind, I think.” I stepped to the side, letting him walk past the doorway. He headed to the couch, setting down the random items. “What all did you get?”

“Uh, this rocker thing.” He pointed to a box. “And that’s some sort of thing you don’t know, like diaper thing? You put the dirty diapers in it.”

I laughed, shaking my head. “I appreciate it. That’s thoughtful of you. I know once Mom and Dad know that I’ll be staying here, they’ll pitch in and get things for here.”

“Yeah, I would assume so, but I don’t know, Ally.” Josh looked at me, his blue eyes mirroring mine. “This whole thing with Levi is weird. It’s not what I thought it was going to be at all—and don’t get me wrong, I’m excited to be an uncle...but I don’t know if in hindsight I would agree to all this.”

“Well, it’s not really your decision,” I snapped at him, instantly regretting my harsh tone. “Sorry, I just—this is just weird for me too.”



Josh eyed me for a few minutes, silence settling between us. “All right, ask you something?”

“Sure, but can I at least get dressed first?” I tugged the white towel I had pulled more snug under my arms. “Because the way you sound, this isn’t going to be simple.”

He chuckled. “Yeah, go ahead.”

I slipped back to the bedroom, my phone still in my hand as it vibrated a little again. I lifted it up so I could see, Levi’s name coming in across the screen.

As a call.

“Hello?” I answered, tucking it in between my ear and shoulder, then dropping to my feet as I went digging into my dresser drawer.

“Hey, I meant to text you back, but it happened right in the middle of meeting with Frank.”

“So that’s okay,” I said, awkwardly pulling on a pair of black underwear I figured you were busy.”

“I’m glad the appointment went well,” he continued, his voice sounding a little...off.

“Did the meeting go bad?” I asked, putting him on speaker as I placed my phone on top of my dresser to pull my t-shirt over my head.

“What are your plans tonight?”

“Avoidant, great.”

“I don’t know. Josh is here right now, but I think he has plans with that girl he met at the gym last week. I think he really likes her.”

“Right, the girl from the gym.” Levi chuckled. “I give it two weeks before he figures out she’s way too smart for him.”

“Not his type at all,” I agreed, smiling as I pulled on a pair of knit pants.

“But no, I don’t have any plans after Josh leaves.”

y, can I “Can I stop by?”

“I take it then you’ll tell me about the meeting?” I picked the phone up a little, taking it off speaker and putting it to my ear. “Because the suspect is going to kill me.”

“Yeah, yeah. You’ll be fine. I’ll bring that weird barbeque pizza from Willy’s that you like?”

I smiled. “Yeah, that sounds good.”

“Perfect. Just send me a text when Josh leaves.”

“Deal, see you later.” I hung up, my heart squeezing a little as I placed the towel phone back on top of my dresser.

I knew I was in love with him.

And even though I had settled into the friend, business partner, and parent role with him, it didn’t keep the little tinge of hurt from hitting me every once in a while.

“You alive in there?” Josh’s voice carried through the house. *So freaking demanding.*

“Yeah, I’m coming,” I called back to him, swinging open my bedroom door. “What’s wrong with you?”

“I’m hanging out with Laura tonight and I don’t want to be late,” I shrugged his shoulders, plopping down on the couch beside all the balloons he had bought. “So, now that you’re decent, let’s have a real conversation with Laura.” “I don’t like the way that sounds,” I groaned, taking a seat on the floor across from him. I grabbed the throw blanket from behind me, spreading it over my legs. She swarmed red fleece material across my bare legs. “But go on, what’s this about?” “I don’t know how to really ask...”

“Uh, well, I don’t know how to really ask...”

“Okay, then maybe we should just let it go?” I leaned back, letting

sigh.

he back “Are you still sleeping with Levi?” Josh blurted out the question, his  
sense instantly crinkling up at me.

*I wish.*

sa from I blinked a couple of times. “No, I’m not.”

He nodded. “I didn’t think so, but...”

“But what?”

“Listen, Ally, I *know* you. I know you’re keeping *something* from me  
sat the I just can’t figure out what it is.”

I raised my eyebrows. “I don’t think that I’m keeping anything from

He was quiet for a few moments, his eyes dropping to his lap for a  
and co-before going back up to mine. “Do you love him?”

ing me I nearly choked on air, though feeling as if there was none at all  
lungs. “Uh...*who*?”

“You do,” Josh said in a quiet voice.

“I really don’t know what you’re talking about.”

edroom “Stop it, Ally. You know that I’m talking about Levi. I’m not an id

I saw it that night at the club—the way that you were looking at him with  
te.” He girl. You’ve never looked at him like that before.”

by stuff My heart did that annoying painful squeeze. “It’s not like that.”

ion.” “Really? It’s not like what? It’s not like you went to the Caribbean  
oveseat him, and then fell in fucking love? I *know* you, and I *know* that you do  
ling the go sleeping around. At first, I tried to just sit back and accept that may  
burning had a few, but it’s so obvious—like *painfully* obvious.”

My stomach tightened into knots. “You think he knows?”

Josh laughed in a sarcastic tone, tilting his head back. “Yeah, right  
g out a could say it right to the guy’s face and Levi still probably wouldn’t kn

whole mind is caught up on this stupid deal with Frank. He can't see a  
his nose but that right now. He never wants to go out, see friends, or even  
watch a movie at the house.

“Oh,” was all I managed to choke out, my hand running to my stom.

“Oh, yeah.” Josh gestured to my hand. “He does talk about the baby

“Well, maybe it's just the baby then,” I said carefully, eyeing th  
behind him. “It's changed a lot for all of us.”

ne, and “Yeah, but this started way before the baby, Ally. It started with  
CyberSecure shit. I think he's so obsessed with making the deal th  
1 you?” willing to do anything—and that's why I think you should keep your f  
second to yourself.”

*Right, so I don't get hurt.*

l in my “Levi is a good guy, but he has a one-track mind sometimes. I thi  
now is one of those times.” At my silence, Josh continued, “I think  
intentions are pure, but man, he's just taking this fake relationship t  
far—and he's willing to do whatever it takes to get that deal. I don't t  
idiot, and sees how it's affecting you.”

with that I pursed my lips. “So, what exactly are you trying to say?”

“Maybe once this deal is done—whether you two land it or not, you  
tell him how you feel, but *not* before that. I don't know what he wou  
an with he knew now.”

n't just “You mean, he might fucking lie just to keep the deal moving? Be  
/be you can't actually see him being *that* low,” I admitted, studying Josh's face

“No, it's not that...” His voice trailed off, his finger nervously pic  
the hem of his black t-shirt.

ht. You “Then what is it?” I demanded, my heart jumping with apprehension  
ow. His know that he doesn't feel the same as me? Is that what it is?”

nothing “You deserve a guy who can’t get you off his mind—no matter what’s going on,” Josh finally said, letting out a sigh. “And I don’t want to be heartbroken in the middle of trying to pretend to be more than just a son to my parents.”

“I know.” *Too late.*

“It’s not even close.” *Too fucking late.*

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all this  
that he’s  
feelings

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think he

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1. “You

“You deserve a guy who can’t get you off his mind—no matter what else is going on,” Josh finally said, letting out a sigh. “And I don’t want to see you heartbroken in the middle of trying to pretend to be more than just co-parents.”

*Too late.*

*Too fucking late.*

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## LEVI

I knocked on Ally's apartment door, waiting for her to answer, the ring box balancing in my other hand. My heart was pounding, the ring box in my suit jacket pocket...

Like it was real.

I nearly laughed as the door swung open, Ally standing there, her hair in a messy bun on top of her head. I was starting to get used to Ally...

And I loved it.

"What're you out here laughing about?" she asked, peering around the door. "Sherry doing bikini yoga outside again?"

"No, thankfully not." I laughed at the thought of her seventy-some-year-old neighbor's strange habits. "Are you hungry?" I leaned forward, brushing my fingers along her little bump as I walked through the door.

It was the only excuse I had to touch her.

She caught my hand though, my heart jumping as I stopped. "Levi, I have something to ask you something." The heat of her resting against my touch as I

those icy blue eyes with my own. Despite the cool blue hue, they always made my fucking body on fire, my dick already coming to life.

“Yeah?” I choked out, taking a step closer to her. “Something wrong?”

She hesitated, parting her lips like she might say something, but I dropped my hand instead. “Josh just brought a bunch of baby stuff. I want to see if you want any of it for your place?”

“Right.” I leaned over her, her face only inches from mine as I sat down on the counter. “And that’s all it is?”

Her eyes bounced between mine, the scent of her shampoo filling my nostrils as we lingered in the moment. “Yeah, yeah.”

I swallowed hard, my cock throbbing—I *wanted* her. I caught her closing what little space there was between us, my mind beginning to race with the possibilities of her body on mine. My nose brushed hers, and my heart went rigid.

“No.” She held up her hands to me. “No, we’re not doing this.”

“Right.” I cleared my throat, shaking my head and taking a couple steps back from her. “Anyway, there’s your favorite pizza, in all its barbeque glory.”

“You should really give it a chance,” she countered, reaching for the pizza and carrying the entire thing to the couch.

“Nah, that’s okay.” I chuckled, adjusting myself in my pants to conceal the raging hard-on I had in the moment. “So I guess Josh just came by to check out all that?” I took in the random baby items, wondering why the hell he bought them in the first place.

She’d get everything she needed at the baby shower, and if she didn’t, I’d buy it for her.

“Yeah, I don’t know why he does the things he does.” Ally shrugged.

ways set opening the box and picking up a piece of pizza. “But he is worried w  
continued fake romance thing we have going, people won’t get me t  
g?” need to take care of the baby here.”

out she “Hmm.” My jaw tensed as I took it in, shifting my weight. “Ha  
Did you considered moving in with me?”

Her mouth dropped open, still full of pizza. “What?”

ie pizza “Yeah, I mean, I could keep covering the lease for this apartment, s  
still have it at some point—but it would make it easier to tag team the  
ing my I hadn’t really given the idea *that* much thought, but seeing all the ba  
piled on her couch made me consider it. “I don’t see why it wou  
myself problem.”

to spin *Other than the cockblock of a best friend I have.*

and she “I don’t know...”

“Why don’t you know?” I sat down in the open area at the end  
couch across from her. “I’ve heard of plenty of couples doing that—w  
le steps like *couples*, but people who have babies together who aren’t really to  
s gross The house is big enough for you to have your own room, so your life  
on as normal.”

the box “And what *is* normal, Levi?” She raised an eyebrow at me, cover  
legs with the throw blanket as she continued to eat.

ceal the “I don’t know.” She was really out to stump me tonight.

drop off “We don’t even have a normal—unless you count our fake  
ell he’d relationship,” she snapped, shooting me a glare.

*Oh shit. Here we go.*

ln’t, I’d “It’s not forever, Ally, and in fact it’ll be over before you even l  
worry about it.” I kept my tone steady and calm, already feeling her  
rugged, rising in the room. Pregnancy hormones were a real fucking thing.

with this “You say that after every single meeting and I know that everything is promising, but we’ve both heard of other people pursuing the company. I said that there’s higher offers than yours, anyway.”

Give you “Yeah, and that’s true, but today’s meeting wasn’t like the others. I’m sorry for us, Ally...” My voice trailed off as her brows furrowed.

“So he went with a different one?”

Do you’d “No, we sign Friday at the party.”

“Baby.” “What?” She dropped her pizza back into the box, jumping up from the couch, her eyes widening. “Oh my god! We got it then?”

I nodded. “Yeah, we did.”

She ran around the coffee table, crashing into my lap and hugging my neck. I wrapped my arms around her still-petite waist, relishing the moment.

“I can’t believe it!” Her blue eyes were bright, and the moment I kissed her of them with mine it was over. I took her mouth with mine, my tongue sliding through her parted lips. Never mind the taste of the pizza, I fucking loved her.

A sweet little moan escaped from her mouth as I shifted her, letting her straddle me, putting her pussy right over my cock. She instantly began grinding against me, and I ran my hand around to her round ass, giving it a firm squeeze.

*Perfection.*

fucking Ally’s kiss was just as desperate as mine, her fingers running along my neck and tracing down my chest. I shivered under her touch, having been waiting for her. My hands pulled at the bottom of her shirt, lifting it up and over her head. Her breasts were more full than before, held back by a t-shirt studded with energy. I reached around her, unsnapping the clasp and dropping them free.

“You’re so beautiful,” I muttered, leaning down and sucking her

g looks into my mouth. I ran my tongue around her erect nipple in my mouth. You grinding growing more aggressive as she rode me through our clothes. Her hands went to the top of her knit shorts, tugging them down a little. She gave me the hint, sitting up tall so I could pull them and her underwear down. I pulled them down and fenagled them the rest of the way off, tossing them off to the side. “Take this off,” she panted, pulling at my suit jacket. I did as she instructed, shrugging it off as Ally worked the buttons on my white dress shirt free from the chest. “Let’s go to the bedroom,” I urged as she stripped me down to my chest.

She shook her head. “No, right here.” Ally undid my pants, freeing my cock as I ran my fingers through her wet folds. “I want to fuck you right now, Levi.”

caught *Oh shit.*

diving “Then fuck me, Ally,” I growled, just as she slid her wet pussy down my ~~missed~~ bare cock. A loud guttural groan erupted from my throat as she worked me, time, bouncing her body up and down. I cupped her breasts as her head fell back, hearing her back and pleasure rolled through my body.

egan to *This is breaking all the rules.*

a good But I pushed the invasive thought away, not even bothering to think about myself about it. I was already balls deep in her—about to fucking blow her.

“Oh my god, Levi,” she cried out, her hand running down her body. I groaned, my jaw of me as she started to rub herself.

starved “Fuck, Ally,” I panted, my hand flying up and grabbing the back of her neck. I pulled her mouth to mine, biting her bottom lip and lifting her from the couch. I slammed back into her. She moaned out, the sound followed by the slapping of our bodies against each other filling the room. *nipple apartment.*

th, her “I’m gonna cum,” she whined, breaking our lips apart for a second. My eyes locked just as her orgasm pulsed down my shaft, squeezing down. He took *Don’t cum, don’t cum.*

Ally sat. It took everything I had not to explode right there inside of her, beside. Ally didn’t let me. Ally slipped off my cock, stepped back off the couch, asked, dropped to her knees.

e. “Oh fuck, Ally,” I groaned as she dropped her mouth over the tip of my bare dick. “Oh my god.”

She slipped a hand around my balls, squeezing them as her hot tongue wrapped around my cock. Her free hand gripped the base of my erection now, while her head moved up and down, my entire cock wet with her saliva. Her hand threaded into her soft auburn hair, letting it rest as she did all the things I wanted to do. *Ugh.*

own my “I’m gonna cum,” I huffed as all my muscles tensed, the sensation building. “Ally, oh my god.” I exploded, filling her mouth with my cum. My head tilted. And she swallowed.

Lifting her head, she wiped her mouth and then reached for her t-shirt, dropping it on the floor beside her, slipping it over her head. “So is it just a meeting or do you worry about the signing at?”

7. *What?*

in front. I stared at her amused look, trying to get my bearings. “What?”

“CyberSecure.”

of her “Oh yeah,” I said quickly, shoving my cock back inside my pants, my hips pulling them up as I got my train of thought back on track. “There’s a party sound going to be like a company party that we’re going to do the signing at.” Ally said. “That’s going to be fun.” Ally slid her underwear up, covering her legs. “I guess it’s a big deal.”

and. Our “Yeah, but there’s still one more thing,” I said carefully, my eyes flickering to the suit jacket on the floor. “I think that Frank was a little up on the deal—and he has a back up buyer.”

but she “Why?” She furrowed her brow.

ch, and “Well, I think that some of the board members—and maybe even himself—were a little unhappy with our relationship status.”

of my Her slight smile turned to a frown as she took a seat on the edge of the coffee table, handing me my dress shirt. “What do you mean? They do not want to talk about that we’re together?”

direction “No...” My voice trailed off as I threaded my arms through the sleeves of my shirt. “It’s the fact that we’re having a baby, but our relationship is still moving forward.”

The realization hit her face. “That’s not really their business.”

reaction “I guess in a big deal like this, it is?” I shrugged, before standing up, my feet and tucking my shirt back in. I leaned over to the floor and grabbed my suit jacket. “I covered us though.” Digging the box out of the pocket of my shirt and handed it to her.

that we “No.” Her face contorted with a mixture of disbelief and anger. She stepped back up at me, glaring. “I’m *not* doing this.”

“What? People break off engagements all the time.”

“At what point do you decide that enough is enough? Levi, I am *not* doing an engagement? What’s next? A fake wedding and marriage?”

nts and I furrowed my brow, standing to my feet. “I guess it’s whatever it takes to actually land the deal, right?”

” Her eyes went wide at me. “You really have no fucking boundaries on yourself. “Do you?” Ally shoved the box back into my hand. “Absolutely *not* doing this.”

my eyes “This is how we get the deal, Ally,” I reasoned, running my hands through my hair. “This is it. We do this, and we sign the papers—and it’s *ours*.

“Until they want us to wait until after the wedding!”

“This is a life-changing—”

Frank “No, *this* is life-changing.” She motioned to our baby. “*This*. A  
I know what, Josh is right. All you fucking care about is this stupid  
I can’t do it anymore. I quit, Levi. My *whole* life has changed because  
I don’t like—and I fell in *love* with you.”

My whole body froze, and I shook my head, not even sure that I’d  
I’ve never been right. “I-I-I don’t...it won’t...you know, we can’t—”

Ally isn’t “I don’t want the thirty percent. Just get *out*,” Ally demanded, pointing  
at the door. “*Now*.”

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“Until they want us to wait until after the wedding!”

“This is a life-changing—”

“No, *this* is life-changing.” She motioned to our baby. “*This*. And you know what, Josh is right. All you fucking care about is this stupid deal. I can’t do it anymore. I quit, Levi. My *whole* life has changed because of this—and I fell in *love* with you.”

My whole body froze, and I shook my head, not even sure that I’d heard her right. “I-I-I don’t...it won’t...you know, we can’t—”

“I don’t want the thirty percent. Just get *out*,” Ally demanded, pointing to the door. “*Now*.”





## ALLY

I slammed the door behind him, my heart still breaking in my chest. I locked the door. He didn't say more than just a little handful of gibberish. *Because he doesn't feel the same.*

Tears spilled over and down my cheeks as I made my way back to the couch, my eyes staring at the open pizza box on the coffee table. Usually there was nothing for me to eat nearly the entire medium pizza, but tonight..

No way.

I flipped the lid and carried it into my kitchen, putting it away in the cabinet. I felt like a robot, going through the motions, my mind racing with so many thoughts. Part of me wished that I would've just kept my mouth shut and gone through with the entire engagement thing—and even playing house, if I had to—in with Levi.

But my heart just couldn't fucking take it anymore.

I either wanted it to be real or be nothing at all.

My bare feet were silent as I padded across the kitchen and back into the living room where my phone lay on the table. No one other than Joe and Linley knew that Levi and I were just a made-up joke, so my options

to call were limited. I glanced over at the clock, seeing that it was near and that meant that Josh would be on his date with Laura...

And I didn't want to ruin his night.

Or get Levi in too much trouble—not yet, anyway.

I picked up the phone and fell back on the loveseat, calling the only I had left.

“Hey girl, isn't it past your pregnant self's bedtime?” Linley laughed the other end of the line, the sound of people chatting filling the back behind her.

“Oh, I don't want to bother you if you're out,” I said quickly, my shoulders dropping as I hid under the throw blanket. “I was just hoping that we could talk.”

“What happened, Ally?” Her tone of voice shifted. “Is everything okay?”  
“Not really,” I admitted, fresh tears streaming down my cheeks. “I don't know why I put myself in this mess.”

“I mean, accidental pregnancies happen, honey. It's just part of life. I don't know how babies are made.”

“Lin, stop. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about this fucking relationship with Levi. I called it off tonight. I can't do it anymore.”

She was silent for a second. “What happened?”

“He had a meeting with Frank today, and we were supposed to be for the business on Friday. And I know that sounds exciting—and until I found out he wants to *propose* to me. Like can you believe that he bought a fucking ring and everything!” I threw my hands into the air, letting out a frustrated groan. “What is he thinking?”

“And he's not proposing for real, right?”

“No,” I snapped. “And I made myself look even more stupid.”

ly nine, admitted that I *love* him.”

She gasped. “Oh no, you didn’t.”

“I did,” I cried. “And Josh had *just* been here telling me not to admit feelings for him because it would just end in me getting heartbroken, but person it anyway. Like this is so embarrassing, Lin. He probably thinks pathetic.”

ghed on “Who gives a shit what he thinks?” Linley shot back. “I mean, he ground This whole deal started with two weeks in the Caribbean, and it’s turned a pregnancy and *months*’ worth of a relationship. If anyone should be oulders pathetic it’s him. You didn’t do anything. It’s amazing you’ve made it e could with all his stupid moves.”

“We fucked again tonight too,” I blurted out, needing to get it all kay?” chest. “I don’t know why he gets to me like that.”

‘I don’t “Okay, well, who cares? He’s just some dumb guy—and the child he’s going to pay for the baby the two of you have will be enough to n e—you for the damage he’s caused. I think you should just count yourself lucky you got out when you did. It could be worse—you could be walking his fakefake wedding aisle.”

more.” “You know, at first,” I began, sniffing. “At first I thought that t might be real, and *that* is why I blew up the way I did. I mean, we ge signing so well when we’re not going back and forth over the fake relationship it was, He even brings my favorite pizza over...”

at? He “You’re not listening to a word I’m saying.” She let out a sigh i , letting phone. “When is this party?”

“Friday.”

“Why don’t you just come with me to the Hamptons then? My when I aren’t going to be at the house there, so I was planning to fly in and sp

weekend getting a little east coast sun. It could be fun for you. Call babymoon.”

I hesitated. “I don’t know. It might be better for me to stay here. But I didn’t know what kind of fires I might have to put out with all of this.”

“Ally, it’s *not* your responsibility to worry about whatever fires choices create. He didn’t have to plan some fake engagement. I’m honestly desperate to get the deal that he’s stepping all over whoever it takes.”

“I’m sure Frank will still let him buy it,” I said, letting out a sigh. “My feelings should go talk to him. I know that he listens to me.”

“Absolutely not,” Linley argued. “Levi *has* to face the consequences of his decisions. I get that you love him—I do, but the guy has made your life off my hella complicated and maybe facing that fact is exactly what he needs to grow the hell up.”

“Maybe so.”

“And I think Josh *should* kick his ass.”

I giggled a little. “Yeah, maybe that wouldn’t be so bad, but I’m *not* down to be the one who tells Josh about it.”

“There’s the girl I know.” I could hear Linley smiling on the other side of the box. “I know that this all seems really complicated and confusing—and I know that it along hurts, but you’ve got this, Ally. You don’t need the deal at CyberSep. I’ll support you and your baby. Lisa won’t fire you because of all of this but I’ll be up with Levi.”

“Do you think he’ll tell everyone the truth about us?”

“And what truth would that be? Because honestly, I think it’s safe to assume that the two of you *did* have some kind of fling or relationship. Your parents’ feelings for him, and there’s nothing wrong with just calling it what it is.”

“A mistake.”

it your Linley went quiet for a moment. “No, I don’t think so. To be honest on how Levi acted at the club, I think that he had feelings for you. I think I don’t still *does* have feelings for you. However, I don’t think he’s man enough to admit them—or it has something to do with Josh.”

Levi’s “But if that’s the case, then why didn’t he just say that?”

He’s so “Probably because it breaks man code or something.” She laughed, her tone growing lighter again. “You’ll probably just forever be the one that maybe I away, and he’ll miss you for like fifty years, while you’re riding your model husband’s dick every night.”

ices for “Wow, okay.” I burst into laughter, wiping a rogue tear from my cheek. “I have no idea how you come up with these scenarios of yours, but they’re the best I’ve ever heard of. No one else I’d rather have as a best friend.”

“Good, so I leave tomorrow for the Hamptons, are you coming? I know it might be hard for you to get off that quick with work, but while you’re here, I’ll send Lisa a text, I’ll see if there’s a free seat on my flight. Okay?”

It going “You’re going to make a good mom one day.”

“Thanks.”

end. “I know.” “Okay, I’m putting you on speaker,” I said to her, pulling the phone to my ear and lighting up the screen. I hit the speakerphone button and I saw a new text message, my heart skipping a beat as I saw one from Levi.

Following *Ally, I know things are complicated, but let’s just finish the deal. I can talk about everything.*

My face contorted with frustration, shaking my head at the audacity he had to say such a thing to me. My fingers angrily typed out a reply, hardly able to refrain from chewing him out.

was...” *No deal. I’m out. Figure it out yourself.*

I hit the send button, and then opened up a message for Lisa. The l



t, based on reluctance I had about going to the Hamptons was now completely  
think he had there was no way I was missing this trip. I typed out a professional  
ough to Lisa, explaining the surprise opportunity to go with Linley for the weekend  
and apologized for such a late text. After sending it, I went back to the  
with Levi, waiting to see if he'd read it.

ed, her "Are you there?" Linley's voice came through the background.

hat got "Yeah, I am."

our hot "Did you send Lisa a text?"

"Yeah, I did." I stared at the text to Levi, the read receipt flashing  
reek. "I must've opened it up. Three dots appeared across the screen...

ere's no But no message came through.

"Has she replied?"

know it I sighed as a notification came through, and I opened it. "Yeah, s  
ou send it's all good, and to have a nice time." I read the basis of the mess  
loud before texting back a short and sweet reply to her.

"Okay, so this is going to be so much fun," Linley said. "I was able  
you a seat on the plane right next to me too. It's just a sign that it was  
re from meant to be. We'll go to the Hamptons, find a super rich, sexy man  
went to into pregnant women—or who wants to be a stepdad, and then a  
problems will be solved. It'll be perfect."

hen we "I think that sounds a little creepy."

"No way," she argued. "Women totally find the love of their life  
reaking they're pregnant. I've read about it a thousand times."

back a "A thousand times, really?" I rolled my eyes.

"I'm sure it's happened that many times. You're seriously *glowing*  
now, and you deserve to have a nice weekend, where you're not havin  
ittle bit on some kind of show for the world to see. You're not Levi's girlfric

gone—baby mama anymore—well, you are his baby mama, but you get  
l text to mean.”

weekend, “Yeah, I do.”

thread *And I don’t know if I like it.*

Because at least when I was fake, I was *something* to him.

“Everything is going to be just fine, I promise. Now get to packin  
flight leaves at nine.”

“Oh shit,” I groaned, jumping up and heading toward my bedroom.

g as he “Yep. I’ll pick you up at seven. Love you!”

“Love you,” I muttered, hanging up the phone. Letting out a sigh, I  
to pack my things. However, I couldn’t help but pull back up the th  
messages from Levi, hoping that maybe somehow I had just mis  
he said response. I mean, he *had* been typing something out to me, right?

age out But my heart sank as I stared at the screen.

*Nothing.*

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“Yeah, I do.”

*And I don't know if I like it.*

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“Yep. I'll pick you up at seven. Love you!”

“Love you,” I muttered, hanging up the phone. Letting out a sigh, I headed to pack my things. However, I couldn't help but pull back up the thread of messages from Levi, hoping that maybe somehow I had just missed his response. I mean, he *had* been typing something out to me, right?

But my heart sank as I stared at the screen.

*Nothing.*





## LEVI

“Tonight’s the night,” I said to myself, staring at my fresh appearance in the mirror of my bathroom. I was in a fresh tux, and my dreads had been cut only hours before. However, as much work as I had put in myself, I still looked like *shit*. I was exhausted, hardly having been able to sleep since the blowup at Ally’s.

*She fucking loves me.*

But it wouldn’t—it *couldn’t* ever work between the two of us, right? I had to know that I had feelings for her, but there was *nothing* we could do about them. So what was the point in putting them out in the open? To hurt ourselves?

“Yo, what’s up?” Josh called from my bedroom. “Are we doing this or not? I feel like I’m betraying my sister with this. I just wanna get it over with.”

“Yeah, I know,” I said back, spinning around and leaving the bathroom. “But it’s only a couple of hours. I don’t know if I’ll be able to convince Ally to let me sign anyway.”

Josh stood in the doorway of my room in his own tux, leaning against a black frame. “You know I have zero fucking sympathy for you, and you weren’t my best friend—and if the stupidity hadn’t been mutual between two of you, you’d be going to this thing alone.”

“Obviously.” I grabbed my wallet off my dresser, dropping it into my pocket. “I get that you’re mad at me for all of it.”

“No, I’m just honestly shocked that you thought faking an engagement was a good idea—like what the fuck was going through your head with that? I get that the deal is important, but doesn’t that cross a line?”

earance *It’s the closest I’ll ever get to actually having her.*

ark hair “I don’t know.”

out into “What do you mean, you don’t know? Like come on, Levi. You can live your life with no consequences. My fucking sister fell for you, and you broke her heart—I see it all over her face.”

able to “What?” I spun around to face him. “How did I break her heart? She told me she loved me, but I don’t—”

ht? She “You’re such an idiot,” Josh groaned, running his hands over his head.

ould do “She doesn’t want to be in a fake relationship, she wants a *real* one, not a fake one hurts, man.”

torture *But I feel the same way.*

is thing “We can’t be together,” I shot back at him before slipping past him and heading for the door. “It’s just fucking impossible. Nothing about it is going to work. She’s always been off-limits.”

it over Josh was quiet as he slipped into the garage behind me. “Why?”

hroom. “Because you said so, bro,” I chuckled over at him, trying to make the situation feel lighter than before. “I’d never pursue a relationship with you.”

inst the someone that you didn't approve of." I slid into my Mercedes, started the engine and fastened my seat belt across my lap.

een the "So do you *have* feelings for her?" Josh's voice came out even more as he looked over at me, his expression puzzled. "Why the fuck would I tell you if you did? Is *that* what's been wrong with you? Are you in love with Ally?"

ent was I blinked at him a couple of times, ignoring the question as I backed out of the garage into the evening. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Holy shit," Josh gasped. "You do. You love her."

"You're sounding insane over there," I snapped, stomping the gas heading toward the city.

act like "Just be honest." Josh's voice was getting an edge. "Is it just because you can't have her, so you want her? Or is it something real?"

I weaved in and out of traffic, trying to ignore what Josh was asking. We were best friends, but we *never* talked about shit this deep—not me, at least.

"I don't know."

is face. "So if I said it was okay to date her and to be with her for real, would you do it?" Josh's eyes were boring into my face, and I felt myself begin to sweat.

"Is this a trick question? Because I don't want to get my ass beat at this party." I rolled my shoulders, apprehension and anxiety coming from all directions. "I just want to get this night over with. It's going to be bad if I have to explain to Frank what happened—and what I did."

"You're going to tell him the truth?"

ake the My jaw tensed along with my grip on the steering wheel. "Yeah, I'm just gonna come clean about the entire thing. It was wrong, and



ing thehow I want to make the deal. I'll just tell him the truth and try to land that."

re quiet "That's ballsy."

in't you "Yeah, I know, but you're right, I took this mess too far. It starve without the deal—and it was about whatever it took, but then I liked the being with...someone."

I out of *That someone being Ally.*

"My sister."

I didn't answer him, turning into the driveway of the mega mansion gas and outskirts of Los Angeles. Everything about being here felt wrong, wasn't because of the elite party...

ise you It was just because *she* wasn't here with me.

"Name?" the valet asked as I opened the driver's side door.

ng. We "Lombardi," I answered him, glancing over to Josh, who was ey nyway.group of women heading into the house.

"Got it. Have a nice evening." He nodded to me as I walked around youfront of the car, joining Josh as we headed toward the large double door ning to "What kind of business party is this?"

"A very, very special one," I grunted, taking a deep breath as I grab : beforehand of the door. "It's a little over-the-top, isn't it?"

rom all "Yeah, I'd say so."

enough Both of our eyes went wide as we stepped inside. Don't get me w came from a long line of wealthy individuals, but *this* house was Frank was making *bank* with all his investments and businesses.

I think "She went to the Hamptons."

it's not "What?" I whipped my head over to Josh, who was staring at a purple and gold abstract painting on the marbled walls.

it with “Ally. She went to the Hamptons with Linley. She said she needed out of town for a while. She tried to play it off as a babymoon, but when I asked me to come along to the party, I knew. I thought I’d be beatified outass, but I guess I just need to give you my—”

idea of “Levi!” Frank called, his voice booming through the halls of the “All of the guests have headed to the courtyard. That’s where the party takes place. We try to keep it contained to a small area.”

“Of course.” I nodded. “I knew you had purchased a new home, but I don’t know if this is very nice.” My nerves were fried as I eyed Josh, who was giving me a funny look. I wasn’t my usual self. My voice was weak and my demeanor...awkward.

*What the hell is wrong with me?*

“Thank you, Levi.” Frank looked over to Josh, his brows furrowed. “I’m glad to see you, Mr. Montgomery, but I figured your lovely sister would be the one joining us this evening. Is she unwell?”

“You could say that,” Josh snorted, patting me on the shoulder. “I think I’m going to get some air real quick. I’ll give Laura a call.”

“Yeah.” I gave him a dirty look as he shot me an unprofessional look. “Sorry about that. He’s not used to these kinds of events.”

Frank laughed, shaking his head. “It’s fine. He’s always been a little strong, a little quirky, and it’s nice to see that it hasn’t changed, to be honest. I think it’s often we find ourselves losing those quirks as we get older.”

*Oof, this is gonna be hard.*

“I agree.” I nodded, running my fingers through my dark hair, wishing I had been able to give my hair that little style I had been able to give my hair.

“So, is Ally unwell? I couldn’t really decipher what Josh was referring

Frank had some concern in his eyes as we stood there, the massive entrance of his home feeling as though it was closing in on me. “Is she all right?”  
“Not really, if we’re being honest,” I forced out, digging deep honesty—and courage—to face up to Frank. “She’s very upset with me at home. “Oh no.” Frank’s thin lips turned to a frown. “Those pregnancy hormones can be tough to sort through. Liz’s hormones were all over the place when she was pregnant with Trey.”

“Yeah, but I don’t think Ally’s is just hormones. She is definitely hormonal—and craves some weird things, like barbecue pizza, but that’s my what this is,” I continued, trying not to keep stumbling over my words and I aren’t together.”

“You broke up?” Frank nearly gasped. “Well, I’m so sorry, Levi. That is a shame to hear. The two of you appeared to be quite the power couple.”  
“Yeah, I wanted us to be,” I admitted, which was surprisingly true.  
“We really had something going, but she’s right—we can’t keep lying.”  
“What?” Frank’s voice dropped.

“Just say it.”

“I lied about our relationship. I took her as a date to the wedding, hoping to prove that my life was at the right place to buy CyberSecure. I brought her because she’s incredible, beautiful, smart, witty—you know, she’s everything you could ever want in a potential life partner. I tried to convince her to be my fake girlfriend, but she wouldn’t do it without a thirty percent stake in the company.” I chuckled.

But Frank didn’t.

“Yikes.”

“So, I agreed to it, and we moved forward with that.”

“Ah, and she’s not actually pregnant.” Frank’s voice was ice-cold.

tryway “Well.” I wiped the sweat from my forehead. “She is pregnant, a  
?” mine. Some things happened between us—and I’ve been trying  
for theeverything I can for her. That thirty percent would set her up for life,  
e.” top of that I know that she was planning to retire her parents. But  
rmoneswrong of me to keep doing this to her.”

e when “I suppose you haven’t grown up as much as I presumed you had,  
grunted, rubbing the white stubble along his chin. “This is quite a  
finitelyLevi. I thought we were going to be celebrating an engagement and  
at’s notover the company. I suppose it’s a good thing I have a backup buyer.”  
ls. “She I nodded, the disappointment washing over my body. “I can  
understand that. Part of me just wanted to send over an email and w  
nat suremy offer—and part of me wanted to tell you that she ran off or m  
ple.” another lie to cover her absence.” I paused, the realization hitting me  
e truth.in the chest. “But honestly, I can’t buy this company without her.”

.” He didn’t say anything for a few moments, before finally letting out  
“So you’re withdrawing your offer now, then?”

“I think I am,” I said, my voice dropping off. “I don’t think I wan  
oping toshe can’t be here with me. I don’t want fucking anything if it’s not with  
ht Ally, “Very strong language there, Levi,” Frank said, letting out a chuckle  
rythingI said, this is quite a shock to the system. I have a courtyard full of  
er to bewho are ready to celebrate the exchange of ownership. If you were w  
e in thewould’ve let you sign for the company tonight—as the sole owner. He  
if you’re not willing to sign for it tonight, I’m afraid I’ll have to acc  
backup offer.”

I blinked a few times, realizing that he was putting the offer out  
table for me to take...

Without Ally.

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## ALLY

“It’s a *gorgeous* morning,” I said, grabbing up the orange juice and pouring it into my glass. My eyes shifted out the window of the house. It had rained the previous day, but now the sky was clear and beckoning me to come outside and enjoy it. “I think I’m going out to do a while.”

“You go do whatever your little heart wants you to. I just wish there was a little champagne in that,” Linley joked, looking half asleep as she slumped onto a bar stool. “I think I’ll pass up going out on this morning excursion of yours though. I’ll be out there later. I’m going to have to combat that bad headache before I go doing anything.”

“Yeah, you look a little hungover.” I took in her messy hair, her dark eyes bloodshot and tired. We had stayed out late the night before, but because we couldn’t drink, there was no hangover that followed me—I guess that’s a strange perk to being pregnant.

If that could even be considered a perk.

Linley suddenly sat up though, her face brightening up. “Hey, I forgot. That guy thought you were cute last night, are you going out with him?”

tonight? He seemed like a super nice guy. He had amazing biceps, and always a plus.”

I shook my head, my mind recalling the overzealous—and very d man from the night before. “I’m not really in the mood for dating right think I’ll just focus on myself and this little one.” I placed my hand o baby bump, which had seemingly grown overnight. My white tank to little snug around it, but I didn’t mind. It was my favorite physical attr: mine at the moment.

“He was so hot though, and he’d be the perfect rebound. He’s r Lombardi, but he’s still a someone who has a dick—and he could put i ice and e beach of you.”

“He was also extremely drunk and had no idea that I was pregnant. id blue, think that’s a good idea at all,” I reasoned, laughing as I sipped on my read for juice. “Your intentions are great, and I appreciate it, but I think you at there just focus on the house guest that *you* brought home last night. He she slid upstairs, you know. I kept thinking that he was going to be slipping ou sion of early hours, but nope, he’s *still* here. He must like you.”

“Oh *shit*. I forgot that he was there,” she groaned, facepalming. “ is hella his name again? Ben? Jim? It’s going to be so awkward if I have to rk eyes bitch that has to tell him to leave the house.”

“Well, first off, his name is Darren.” I raised an eyebrow at her. cause I kind of like him. He’s nice, and you had a *lot* of fun with him las t was a These walls are *way* too thin.”

“Great. At least someone remembers what I did last night. What’s totally do for a living? Because knowing me, it’s going to be something ter ith him like HR or something. The last thing I need is peacemaker.”

“Oh, I think he’s actually a male dancer.” I shot her a wink and ble

d that's kiss as I headed for the back door. "That's the kind of entertainment  
keep you on your toes."

drunk— "You're kidding, right?" she called after me, her voice riddled  
t now. I concern and amusement.

over my "Well, why don't you go ask him yourself? He'd probably love  
p felt more than to actually get to know you this morning." I giggled, open  
tribute of the French doors and stepping out onto the deck. The warm air hit m  
the sound of the ocean waves like music to my ears. My mind threaten  
to Levi bring Levi into the moment, wondering what it might be like if he was  
t inside But I pushed it away.

*He doesn't want it. He's probably hungover and celebrating h  
I don't company.*

orange My hair blew around in the ocean breeze, and I was wishing I had p  
should as I headed down the steps and toward the beach chairs and umbre  
e's still we'd set up the day before—all while Josh and Levi were probably k  
it in that the CyberSecure party.

And I hadn't heard a thing from either of them.

What's I pushed away the hurt and heartache, knowing that this was just t  
be that of many things that I would never be a part of when it came to L  
didn't owe me a place in his life—only our baby. I had done my best  
"And I the previous night, but it had been impossible, my heart only stuck  
t night. person. It was going to take time to get over Levi...

Lots of it.

the guy Clutching my orange juice in one hand, I followed the path to the  
rrible—taking in the morning sun rising in the sky. I kicked off my shoes and  
seat in the chair.

where a But I didn't feel like reading or playing on my phone.

Instead, I sat there, sipping my juice and staring at the boats on the horizon. I didn't regret stepping away from the deal, and I knew everyone would understand why I had done it. No money was continuing to break my heart. I could figure out another way to help my parents retire someday.

The sound of a plane engine caught my attention, sounding as though it was flying low in the sky. Placing my hand over my brows as I scanned the sky, my eyes landed on a small plane with a person here... attached.

*That's cute.*

I squinted, wondering who was being proposed to—in real life. His name flashed in my mind as my heart nearly stopped as I read the words scrolled out on the screen. It was flying in the sky.

*I'm sorry, Ally.*

"What the fuck," I muttered, dropping my orange juice off my lap. I jumped to my feet to get a better view of it. "Oh my god."

"Too much?" a deep familiar voice called out from behind me.

I spun around to see Levi heading toward me in a white t-shirt and dark shorts. "What are you doing here?" I choked out as he gave me a flirtatious grin.

"Well, I was trying to apologize in a big way." He pointed back up at the plane, which was making another round in the sky. "I thought that might be what it takes for you to actually accept my apology—and I'm also so sorry you spilled your juice."

"Right," I mumbled, studying his face for a few moments. "It's fine. I wanted to do what was best for me, and I just don't think that our fake relationship was the right thing for me anymore."

on the “Ally,” he said, his voice growing soft. “This isn’t about the  
ew thatrelationship—I mean, it *is*. It was wrong, but I don’t regret going on th  
worthride with you. I only regret that it was fake.”

elp my A lump grew in my throat as I held his gaze, tears forming in m  
“Really?”

ough it “Yeah, I want to do this for *real* with you, Ally. I don’t want to b  
hield, Iand I don’t want to make any deals in my life if they’re not with yo  
bannerthat is what I told Frank last night when I went to the party.”

My mouth dropped open. “Did you tell him the truth?”

He nodded. “I did. I told him the entire truth, including the part v  
however,fucked it all up because I didn’t have the nerve to tell you that I fell  
materialwith you months ago. He had to sign the company over last night, so I  
with the backup buyer. I just couldn’t do it without you. You’re all  
about, and you’re all I want—and maybe I was trying to live out  
ap as Iwanted with you through our fake relationship.” He grabbed my hand,  
me toward him. “I love you, Ally.”

“This is *not* what I expected to happen today.” I laughed, wiping th  
pair off from my face as he cupped my cheek, leaning down and kissing my li  
a hugekiss was hot and heavy, setting my pussy on fire.

And then his phone rang.

p to the “Ugh.” He pulled away. “I swear if Josh calls me one more time as  
ught beI’ve talked to you yet, I’m going to—” Levi stopped as he stared  
rry thatphone.

“What?”

e. I just “It’s Frank.”

ing the “Take it.” I bumped his arm. “Go on.”

He hit the answer button, putting him on speaker. “Hey, Frank,

ie fakeup?”

at wild “I just wanted to know how things went for you after the party.” I  
across at Levi, who was eying me too.

y eyes. “I’m here now with Ally, actually. I flew out last night and made  
morning. It was worth it. I appreciate you calling me.”

ie fake, “So the two of you are together?”

u—and “We haven’t quite made it to that part of the conversation—”

“Yes, we are,” I cut Levi off, giving him an amused smirk. “He had  
plane fly by with a banner attached to it. It was a little cheesy and over  
where I top, but I appreciated the effort.”

in love Frank laughed on the other end of the phone. “I have to say th  
ie went impressed. I wasn’t sure he could pull that one off, but I’m glad  
I think worked out for the two—well, *three* of you. You’re going to make a  
what little family.”

pulling “Thank you,” Levi said, squeezing my hand as he said the wo  
appreciate you keeping the whole matter quiet—and I’m sorry that we  
ie tears your time.”

ips. His “Well, now, I wouldn’t go that far. I was actually hoping that the t  
us could meet up when you make it back to town. I know that I said I  
to sign the company over to the backup buyer last night, but I had a ch  
sking if heart. I’d like to still sell the company to the two of you—if you w  
l at the Levi and I exchanged a glance, my heart jumping at the excitement.

“Uh, yeah.” Levi nodded, holding my gaze. “But only if Ally com  
fifty percent. I want the company to be fifty-fifty.”

“Are you sure?” I couldn’t hide the surprise. “I don’t know.”

“Fifty-fifty.” Levi repeated himself. “Put her down for fifty percen  
what’s company and we’ll be back in town Monday to sign it over and p

check.”

looked “Deal. I’ll see you at nine.”

“That works great,” Levi said, his voice sounding a little breathless. Frank hung up the phone. He looked up at me, sliding his phone into his pocket. “I think we just did it.”

“I think you’re right.”

“Holy shit,” he exclaimed, grabbing me up and spinning me around. “We just did it—after *all* that, we still landed it.”

“You landed it.” I brushed my fingertips along the stubble on his jawline, my eyes searching his as he held me. “You did it, Levi. I didn’t have any idea what happened last night.”

“Yeah, you did. You forced me to man up, Ally—and you’ve done it so lovely but make me a better man this entire time.” He smiled up at me, chuckling. “But I do think that you should move in with me now. The reason we can’t do this parenting thing—without the “co” before it.”

I laughed, leaning down and swooping his lips back up with my tongue, wrapping my arms around his neck. He might’ve landed the business deal with CyberSecure, setting us both up for life...

But I landed the better deal getting to spend it with him.

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“Yeah, you did. You forced me to man up, Ally—and you’ve done nothing but make me a better man this entire time.” He smiled up at me, before chuckling. “But I do think that you should move in with me now. There’s no reason we can’t do this parenting thing—without the “co” before it.”

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But I landed the better deal getting to spend it with him.



# EPILOGUE

One Year Later

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# EPILOGUE

**One Year Later**

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## LEVI

“Good morning,” Ally’s soft voice said as my eyes fluttered open. “You’ve literally been sleeping *forever*.”

“Has it been forever?” I chuckled, rubbing the sleep from my eyes. I reached for her, pulling her into my arms. “Because I was thinking that I’d slept for a wink.”

“It’s nearly ten.” She was already fully dressed in a bathing suit with a white cover-up over it. “And Ella has been asking about Dada for *hours*.”

“Ah, where is she?” I asked, sitting up slightly to look around the bedroom of the Hampton house we had just purchased.

“She’s with Linley and Darren. They’re feeding her a snack before she heads out to the beach.”

“So we have a few minutes then.” I gave her a mischievous grin, winking at her with my eyebrows as I rolled us, landing her on her back and me on top of her. My cock was already hard as always in the morning...

But rarely did I get to take advantage of it at that time of day.

“We could be interrupted,” Ally warned me as I kissed down her neck. My fingers were working the white fabric up around her waist.

“Mmhmm,” I murmured, sucking and caressing her skin as I made my way down her body. My hand slipped the black bikini bottoms down over her hips, her sweet pussy already beckoning for me to taste it. “I just thought I should start the first day of our vacation out right.”

“I’m not... *Oh*,” she moaned as I reached her clitoris, sucking her into my mouth. It didn’t matter how many times I had her, I’d always want more. My tongue circled her while my hands squeezed her inner thighs.

buried my face deeper in between her legs, working my mouth at the entrance of her soaked pussy. Her hands were in my hair as her hips bled open, grind against my face.

*Fuck, I love it when she does that.*

As I My cock was throbbing, ready to take her and fuck her however she wanted me to, but I ignored it, slipping a finger inside of her as her hips became more rhythmic.

“Cum for me, baby,” I instructed, my voice low as her grip tightened on my hair.

“Oh, Levi,” she moaned, moisture gushing from her, filling my mouth and covering my lips. I drank her up, never tired of the way she tasted.

When her legs were wrapped around me. “That’s always so fucking good.”

Her voice was breathy as she pulled at me. “Come kiss me.”

“You don’t have to tell me twice.” I chuckled, lunging for her and kissing her mouth with my own. I could taste the coffee on her breath, and I

at her plump lips as I fumbled with the nightstand drawer beside the bed.

My hand slipped to my hard cock, stroking it as my fingers finally landed on my condom. I pulled it out and ripped it open, handing it to her.

She gave me a wicked grin before stretching it slowly over my dick. “My way, Levi.”

“How?” I could hardly choke out the word, her sexy little grin making my heart stutter.

“Like this.” She spun around and stuck her ass up at me, giving me my favorite fucking view. I grabbed her tiny waist, pulling her soaked pussy onto my dick. I plunged it inside of her, a groan escaping my lips as she tightened around me.

“Fuck me hard, Levi,” she demanded, her voice strained with pleasure.

ong therammed into her. “Oh my *god*.” I gave her ass cheek a solid slap. She bounced against my cock.

I’d never get tired of this view.

But today was a special day, and I wanted more.

ver she I pulled out, grabbing her waist and flipping her onto her back. She moans still mostly dressed, and I tugged at the tie on the front of her corset, flipping it open. Her black bikini top barely held in her breasts. I slid in my material to the side, releasing her tits. My mouth salivated at the sight of them, and I couldn’t help but lean forward, kissing the soft fleshy skin. “Oh,” she whined as I ran my tongue around her erect nipple, sucking it deeper into my mouth as I palmed her other breast. “Levi, I want you good.” of me, *now*.”

*Yes, ma’am.*

I taking I sat up, grabbing her hips firmly. Lifting her petite body off the bed, I nipped brought her back onto my dick. Her pussy was dripping with wetness. Her and I slid in and out easily, both of us slick with her juices.

ed on a “I love you, Ally,” I muttered as I grabbed her arms. Carefully, I lifted her back up off the bed, so she was sitting on my lap.

. “Fuck “I love you too,” she panted, her lips crashing into mine as she wrapped her legs against my waist. I bounced her up and down my shaft, making my doing most of the work as I canvassed her mouth with my tongue, as if I knew every fucking inch of her body like the back of my hand. My hands gripped her thighs, and she dug her fingernails into my neck and back. She right clung to me, her moans filling my mouth.

as she “You’re so tight,” I groaned, her pussy bearing down on my cock as I tried to catch my breath for a moment, my chest heaving with the anticipation as I what was to come.

up as it “Are you gonna cum for me?” she whined into my ear as my low tensed against her legs. She squeezed them a little tighter, my abs bur at the sensation of her hot skin against mine. “I love it when you cum Levi.”

he was “And I fucking love it when you talk to me like that,” I growled, I ver up,tight pussy taking me over and over, faster and faster. She was alv the thinready for me, and it drove me crazy, my cock always fucking throbt sight ofher. It didn’t matter how many times I’d had her, it was always excit . sexy. Her moans grew in volume, and they sent me right over the edge cking itorgasm. I released, nearly falling forward onto the bed as my cock 1 insideinside of her, filling the condom. “You always feel so good, baby.” M was ragged.

“So do you,” Ally purred at me, slipping off my cock and onto t e bed, IShe grabbed up her bikini bottoms, letting out a heavy sigh as she for me,them on. “We’re going to have to try and keep Ella out of the water . You know how much she loves water.”

brought “I’m sure we’ll be able to keep up with her, baby.” I gave her a rea smile, already seeing the motherly worry taking over her face. “W rappedvacation, relax a little. Josh and Laura are coming too. It’s going y armsreally great day. I know it.”

I didn’t *It’s the day.*

7 hands She gave me a funny look. “You’re acting weird.”

κ as she “Nah, I’m just excited for this vacation. We’ve been so busy w business that we haven’t had a chance to really relax and enjoy ourselv s I tried She smiled, climbing off the bed and grabbing for me, placing a kiss ation ofjaw. “I’ll see you downstairs then.”

*elle*

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## ALLY

“Mama!” Ella called out, barely able to waddle through the sand held her arms up for me to pick her up. She had Levi’s nearly black hair and my blue eyes, and they were bright under the sunshine of the mid-afternoon.

“Are you having fun with Aunt Linley?” I asked her as I swooped into my arms, placing a kiss on the top of her head. Ella giggled in my arms and I glanced over to Linley, who was relaxing against Darren. “So what do you do for work again, Darren?”

He rolled his eyes at me as Linley burst into laughter. “I swear, that’s getting old. It’s been a year, and everyone still wants to pretend that I’m a male dancer.”

“Wait, you’re not?” Levi perked up from the book he was reading. “What do you do then?”

“Josh, what *does* he do?” Laura faked her confusion, pushing some blonde hair behind her ear. “Because I was hoping to go see his *The Tenth* from *Down Under* show on Friday.”

“Ha ha.” Darren shook his head. “I still don’t know how the hell you got microbiologist confused with male dancer. They don’t sound the same.”

“They do when you’re drunk,” Linley pointed out, shrugging and snuggled in closer to him. “But I don’t know what Ally’s defense is.”

“Just not listening.” I looked over to Levi, who was smiling at Ella and giving us this giddy smile.

*Something is up.*

He had been giving us that look *all* day, and I still couldn’t figure out where it was coming from. He was the kind of person who was nearly

in a good mood...

But this was excessive.

as she “How’s the business going?” Josh asked, grabbing my attention  
air, but moment. “I heard the company is growing.”

noon. “We’ve had a profit increase of almost thirty percent, actually.” I b  
her up Ella in my arms, feeling her head resting heavily against my shoulder.  
y arms, for us to be almost double that by the end of the year. I think the new  
what do will continue growing at a higher rate than we initially projected.”

“Damn, my woman is smart,” Levi chuckled from a few feet away.  
: joke is might as well run the whole company.”

t I’m a “I think she does a better job of running the daycare in the office  
grunted, giving me an amused look. “Ever since I started there, you’re  
“What just carrying Ella around.”

“Best mom in the world.” Levi adjusted his sunglasses, setting h  
e of her down.

thunder “You are just throwing out compliments like candy in a parade to  
spun around, narrowing my eyes at him. “Don’t get me wrong, you’re  
ou guys sweet, but this...this is wild.”

ame.” He laughed, just as the sound of an airplane engine filled the skies  
as she us. “There it is. I swear, he must’ve been running late.”

I whipped my head toward the sound, squinting into the afternoo  
and me, over the Atlantic Ocean. The gasps around me and the words on the  
caused my heart to nearly stop, before skipping a few beats.

*Will you marry me, Ally?*

ure out I read the words over and over, the lump growing in my throat  
always vision growing blurry. I felt a gentle tug on my hand, and I turned to s  
down on one knee, his deep hazel eyes tinged with the color green and

“Ally, our love story is a lot different than what you might read in a fairytale, but it doesn’t make it any less magical. It’s special and unique for theI happen to think it’s the best one I’ve ever heard, but maybe that’s because it’s ours. I love you so incredibly much, Ally.” He paused, took a deep breath, pulling out a ring box from his pocket. “Which is why I look it’s about time that we make this thing really official. Will you marry me? And maybe have a couple more babies with me?”

“Yes and yes,” I cried as he stood to his feet, pulling the ring out of his pocket. “She’s slipping it on my trembling ring finger. “I love you.”

Levi pulled me into a hug, Ella asleep in my arms. “I knew today was going to be a good day.” He leaned down and placed a hot and heavy kiss on my lips, all our friends and family clapping and cheering around us.

“Finally got the most important deal of my life done.” Levi kissed the top of my head, taking a stirring Ella from my arms.

“Me too.”

Today.” I

always

around

n skies

banner

and my

see Levi

tears.



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★★★★★

**“This hot and steamy book deserves more than 5 stars!** Noah and  
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**“This book was amazing.** It captured my full attention from the  
out and beginning and kept me reading nonstop. I **could not put this book c**  
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★★★★★

**“This book was amazing.** It captured my full attention from the very beginning and kept me reading nonstop. **I could not put this book down** until I finished it!”

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# Accidental Baby for the Billionaire Sneak Peek

**He was supposed to break my bed, *not my heart.***

Mr. Hottie-with-a-Body ghosted me a year ago,  
and now he's my new boss.

Still cocky.

Still hot *AF*.

Still thinks he can take whatever he wants.

And he wants *me* to be his fake wife.

He'll get his promotion and I'll get my debt erased.

At first, he drives me crazy pushing all my buttons.

But the way he stares at me gives me goosebumps,  
And soon his rock-hard body is all that fills my thoughts.

Now, I love pretending to be husband and wife.

Except we pretend a little *too* perfectly,  
Because I'm staring at a big, fat plus sign.

He's promoted,  
And I'm pregnant.

*So who's going to tell the playboy he's a baby daddy?*

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And I'm pregnant.

*So who's going to tell the playboy he's a baby daddy?*

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## PROLOGUE - AVA

“Another!” I said, leaning on the bar. My heels were killing me. Standing on them had become hard now that the world was spinning slowly around me. Everything seemed to have tilted on its axis.

“Are you sure you should drink more?” the bartender asked.

“Come on...Johnny.” I squinted to read the name tag on the bartender's shirt. “Are you cutting me off?”

“Are you driving?” he asked.

“No way,” I said and giggled. “I’m way too drunk for that.”

He grinned and raised his eyebrows at me.

“I came in a cab, Johnny. Come on, just one more. My dad died this week and I can’t face the real shit sober.”

At that confession, Johnny’s face fell.

“I’m sorry,” he said and grabbed a glass to pour me another cranberry.

“That’s a great line,” someone said next to me.

When I looked up at him, the bluest eyes I’d ever seen looked down at me. And God, this man was *hot*. At least, I was pretty sure he was hot.

really drunk. But he looked edible. Bronze skin, sandy hair, and those the color the sky was named after.

“I’ll have to remember it for when Johnny over here wants to cut next,” he added.

I shook my head. “It’s not a line. My dad died this week. See the dress? We buried him today.”

The handsome stranger glanced down at me, and back up at me. Maybe my expression told him how dead serious I was.

“Shit,” he breathed. “I’m sorry.”

ne, and “Yeah,” I said. I wrapped my fingers around the full glass Johnny  
ld was in front of me. “Me too.”

is. “What happened?”

ender’s “Does it matter?” I asked. “He’s gone.” And he left us with a mouth  
debt my mom and I hadn’t known about. How the fuck did someone  
to their family? How had he hidden it from us for so long that he’d g  
and drank all the money away? Now, the banks were after us for the  
They didn’t care that it wasn’t our fault. They didn’t care that we didn’t  
the money to fix it. By definition, the fact that they were coming after  
it meant that it was *our* money that he’d gambled away.

s week, I shook it off.

vodka “Enough about me,” I said with a smile. “Tell me about you. You’re  
too attractive to hang out in a joint like this.”

He laughed, surprised. “Are you using a line on me?”

1 at me. “Did it sound like a line?” I asked and sucked on the straw in my  
was being ridiculously flirtatious.

...I was “It sounded like the kind of line I would have used on a girl like you,”  
said.

eyes— I giggled again. “Well, now that the line is out of the way...I’m Ava.

“Ava...do you have a last name?”

me off “You bet,” I said. “And I’m not giving it to you.”

“What?” He looked confused.

e black “There are way too many stalkers out there, you know? And God  
what people can do with next to no information at all these days.”

y face. “You think I’m a stalker?” he asked, his face a mixture of a frown  
grin.

I tilted my head to study him. The room swam around me, but his  
pushedface was in perfect focus.

I shook my head.

“No, you’re right. Stalkers are usually less attractive.”

ntain of He burst out laughing. “It sounds like you have experience. I’m Noah

do that “Noah. Well, if my ex is anything to go by...I mean, you know how  
ambledsay it’s not about looks, it’s about personality? It’s such a noble thing  
money. But it turns out he wasn’t hot *or* interesting.”

r’t have Noah kept laughing. “I would hate to get on your bad side.”

r us for I sighed. “Yeah, you wouldn’t want that.”

“So, how about I get on your good side?” he asked. He took a sm  
closer to me. His cologne wrapped around me, and I breathed in deeply  
’re waydrunk. And that made me horny. And this man was like a gift from tl  
on a night like tonight, when it felt like my whole world had fallen apa

“How are you going to do that?” I asked.

glass. I He kissed me. I melted against him, and he wrapped an arm arou  
waist, cupping my cheek with his other hand. His tongue slid into my  
ou,” heand he tasted just as good as I figured he would.

When he broke the kiss, my skin was hot.

.” “Like that,” he said. “Did it work?”

I nodded and swallowed hard. “Yeah, it worked.”

He smiled at me again, a charming smile that made me weak in the l

“How about we get out of here?” I asked. “I happen to have mor  
knowssides you can get on.”

“Yeah?” He grinned, already taking out his wallet to pay for our drii  
n and a I didn’t usually do this. I wasn’t the type to initiate a one-night s  
sleep with strangers. But I’d broken up with Kyle two weeks ago, and  
angeliclater, my dad had died of a heart attack. And just like that, everythin  
my life changed.

I just wanted to do something that wasn’t *me*. I wanted to do sor  
that made me feel like this wasn’t *my* life.

th.” “Let’s get out of here,” he said and took my hand.

people I let him lead me out of the bar. A black car pulled up a moment  
to say.frowned.

“Is this a cab?”

“No,” he chuckled. “I sent for my car.”

“You have a car you send for?”

all step He grinned at me, again looking a little baffled.

y. I was “You don’t have any idea who I am, do you?”

he gods “Should I?” I asked.

rt. He shook his head. “No, you shouldn’t. But in a short while, I’ll sh  
exactly who I am.”

ind my I giggled again, and he opened the car door for me, letting me get in

mouth, “Where do you live?” he asked.

I hesitated.

“I’m not going to stalk you,” he added.

I laughed, feeling stupid, and gave the driver my address. Noah was in a flash, his lips on my neck, nibbling the delicate skin. His hands on my breast, massaging and kneading. We were way past baby steps and the goodie was slow. But I'd asked for this when I'd told him to come home with me.

We were going to do this. I needed him to fuck my brains out so I would stop thinking about the hell my life had become. I needed to worship my body, to make me feel so good that nothing else mattered for a week anymore.

When Noah slid his hand down my crotch, it was a silent promise he would deliver.

The house was dark when we got out of the car.

"You live here?" he asked, looking at the old house. It was a large Victorian with a gabled roof, half-timbering, and a covered porch, straight from the Victorian era.

"Well, I do now," I said. "My mom needed help after...so I moved home."

"She's not here, is she?" Noah asked, his steps faltering.

"God, no. I wouldn't invite you back if she were. She's out tonight but will be back tomorrow."

Noah let out a breath and ran his hand through his hair.

"Not a fan of meeting the parents, huh?" I asked.

Noah shook his head. "That's not how I play the game."

We climbed the steps onto the porch, and I turned to him, running my hands over his chiseled chest. "A game, huh?"

"You bet this is a game," he said, nibbling my lower lip, and kissing me through his kisses.

"Well, a game should have rules," I said in a breathy voice. God, I

s on me him so badly.

cupped “Okay, rule number one...no clothes.”

I taking I giggled and pushed the front door open.

e. Noah started undressing me the moment the door was shut, and w  
o that I alone inside. He pulled my dress over my head and dropped kisses al  
him to shoulder while he unclasped my bra.

attered I fiddled with the buttons on his shirt and peeled it off his should  
was built like a *god*. The muscles moved under his skin as he pulled  
that hebra and ran his hands down my back.

When he pushed me against the living room wall, I gasped from th  
But Noah’s mouth found a nipple, and I forgot all about the temper  
e house the room.

om the I gasped as he sucked on my nipples—first, the right one, and then t  
I groaned when he massaged and squeezed my breasts, pushing them t  
ed back and planting kisses between them.

I fiddled with his buckle while he kissed, nibbled, licked, and suck  
When I undid his button and zipper, I reached into his pants and pu  
. She’ll cock free.

He was impressive, with silky smooth skin, and the tip was slick wit  
I ran my thumb over the tip of his cock, and Noah groaned.

“You’re driving me crazy,” he said.

“I know,” I murmured and pulled away from his grasp and onto my  
ing my Noah groaned and pushed his hips forward. I sucked the tip of h  
into my mouth and swirled my tongue around it, tasting the saltines  
talking need for me. When I sank my head further into him, taking him dee  
deeper into my mouth, Noah sucked a breath through his teeth. He pus  
wanted

fingers into my dark hair, curling them into fists, and pulled me close, pushing further and further down my throat.

I bobbed my head back and forth, stroking him in and out of my mouth. We were getting wetter and wetter as I sucked him off, melting into my panties.

“Fuck, Ava,” Noah said through gritted teeth, and he yanked back his head.

His cock slipped from my mouth with a plop. “I’m going to lose it, and I want to be inside of you when I do.”

He grabbed my hand and pulled me up, kissing me hard before replying.

“Where’s your room?” he mumbled.

I took his hand and teetered half-naked on my heels toward my bedroom.

When we stepped into the room, Noah pulled my panties down from the left, and I kicked off my shoes. He grabbed my ass with one hand and cupped my pussy around the front with the other. He ground his cock against my pussy.

I moaned.

When he ran his hand up my back, he pushed me forward, so that I fell onto my bed, naked and ready for him.

Noah ran his hand between my legs, his fingers finding my slit.

“You’re so wet,” he said.

“Yeah,” I answered simply.

None of this was like me. But it felt so good to just live in the moment. Noah paused, retrieving his hand. His pants rustled as he kicked the side of his pants, and I heard the rip of a foil packet. When he touched me again, he gripped my hips, and the rubbery tip of his condom-wrapped cock pressed against my entrance. I gasped, and Noah pushed into me. He moved slowly like he was aware of his size as I was. I moaned as he slid into me, filling me up.

When he was buried to the hilt, his hips flush against my ass, I

ser. He trembling around him.

He pulled back and pushed into me again, and I cried out as he stroked my mouth. Fuck me. Noah picked up his pace, stroking in and out of me, and I moaned and cried out as he pounded into me harder and harder. His balls pressed so tight against my pussy, and every stroke was pure pleasure.

In no time, an orgasm built inside me, his cock stroking me in all the places so that the pleasure burned and grew inside me.

When I orgasmed, my pussy clamped down around Noah's cock, he gritted his teeth and grunted. He gripped my hips, fingers digging into my skin, and I sank my chest onto the mattress, weakened with the pleasure. He crashed into me with every stroke.

I trembled, and Noah bent over me, planting a kiss on my back.

When he pulled out, I moaned again.

I rolled over and shifted onto the mattress. Noah crawled over me, and his legs fell open for him. He positioned himself between my legs and stroked me again.

He kissed me, and his eyes locked on mine when he bucked his hips, fucking me anew. He rammed into me harder and harder, breathing hard. His lips were fractions away from mine, our gasps and moans mingling and twisting together, and I held onto his shoulders as he rode me.

My second orgasm wasn't far off—alcohol always loosened me up. It was so much easier in this state.

When I cried out, grabbing onto Noah's shoulders and holding on tight, my orgasm ripped through me a second time, Noah bit out a cry.

He was right there with me.

His cock jerked and pulsed inside me as my body contracted, milk came out, and we paused, as we came together.



When it was over, Noah collapsed on top of me, out of breath.  
He rolled off a second later, allowing me to breathe.  
“Fuck,” he said in a breathy voice. “That was fucking incredible.”  
“It was,” I said with a smile.

“You were right. You had plenty more good sides to you.”  
I giggled and pressed my hand against my forehead. The alcohol  
starting to wear off, and now that I’d had a release to take care of the  
and heneed that had ruled me the last couple of days, reality started to set in.  
Noah was a stranger. And I’d brought him back to my place.  
I sat up and crossed my arms over my chest.

“You should probably go,” I said softly.  
Noah sat up, too. He frowned. “Why?”  
“Because I don’t usually do this. I’m a mess right now. I have a lot  
and myto work through. I mean, this was great, but—”

“Hey, it’s okay,” Noah said gently. “I get it.”  
“You do?”

He nodded. “I know all about what it’s like to try to get away from  
ard. Hisyou usually live.”

I let out a shuddering breath. “Thank you.”

“It’s going to be okay in the end,” he said. “And if it’s not okay, it’s  
I cameend.”

I rolled my eyes and snorted. “You know that line is all over the i  
1 as theright?”

He shrugged. “It’s still true.”

“Hmm,” I said.

“Can I call you?” he asked.

I frowned. “Why?”

“Because I don’t want to be the guy who hit and run when you’re through hell.”

I giggled despite the unsettled feeling in my stomach. “That’s what I’ll call it?”

He shrugged. “I prefer to cuddle after sex, but I know you need your alcohol. So, compromise.”

I nodded. “Yeah, okay.”

He shifted off my bed to find his phone in his pants that he’d kicked and handed it to me. I programmed my number into it.

“Ava,” he said with a grin.

“No last name.”

He laughed and pulled on his pants. I found an oversized shirt and a pair of shorts in my closet and pulled them on to let him out.

“I’ll call you,” he said when we walked to the front door together.

“Will you?” I asked.

He nodded. “Of course.” He flashed another of his charming grins before he turned.

The black car that had brought us appeared out of nowhere, and I climbed in. When the car drove off, I closed the door and leaned against it. My body felt amazing after having had sex. And alcohol. But neither of those had driven away the fact that my dad was dead and he’d left us with a shit ton of debt.

But I will figure that out again tomorrow. Right now, I needed Tylenol, water, and sleep.

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# AVA

## One Year Later

“I’m home,” I called out, hanging my keys on the hook behind the door. I put down my handbag and kicked off my heels, curling my toes downward. My feet ached after a full day on them.

I arched my back, hearing my spine pop. This was the fifth day in a row I’d worked overtime, and I was exhausted.

My mom didn’t answer me.

I picked up the stack of mail next to my handbag and sifted through it. They were all for my mom, but they were all bills. I knew the envelopes were for her now. Looking at the stack of bills made my stomach twist. There was no way I would get all those taken care of on my measly salary. Not when I was on my own now.

“Mom?” I called again. I fished a red envelope from the center of the stack and tore it open.

It was a final notice of foreclosure on the house.

I squeezed my eyes shut. I’d known this was coming, but now that it was here, I felt sick to my stomach.

It meant we only had thirty days to pay the outstanding mortgage were out on the street. And I had no idea how we could get that together in a month.

“Mom?” I asked, again, padding on stockinged feet through the house as the setting sun fell into the windows, casting lines of gold on the floor.

When I popped my head into my mom’s room, she was asleep on the bed. She looked thin and frail—a shell of the woman she used to be.

I tiptoed into the room and pulled a blanket over her. She sighed, her face furrowed in worry even as she slept.

“We’ll figure it out,” I whispered, and stroked my fingers through her hair. I did this once before I left her room again.

I hoped to God we could figure it out. Mom hadn’t worked since I died. The grief had sent her spiraling into depression, and instead of her the time she needed to recover, they’d let her go. Finding out about the debt my dad had left behind for us had only made it worse.

I’d moved back in to take care of her, to help her pay the bills. I could just leave her.

After a year, I couldn’t do what I’d set out to do—I couldn’t save the house.

My phone beeped with a message from Paige.

*Are we still on for tonight?*

Before I could type an answer, my phone rang. I didn’t recognize the number.

“Am I speaking to Ava Brooks?” a female voice asked on the other end of the line.

“Speaking,” I said. If this was another debt collector trying to talk me down, I would throw my phone against a wall.

, or we “This is Belinda Byers. I’m calling you from Solomon, Forger, and  
money My stomach twisted again, this time with hope.

“Oh, I’ve been waiting for your call.” I’d given up hope, thinking  
se. The call wouldn’t come. And they wouldn’t call me if I didn’t make it t  
right? That was what they always said after interviews and application  
er bed. didn’t hear back from them in two weeks, I had to assume  
unsuccessful. She wouldn’t call me to tell me I’d failed.

er brow Again.

“I’m happy to say that your application was successful. The ma  
ner hairpartners have reviewed your resume and considered your in  
recording. We’d like to invite you to work for us.”

dad had “Oh,” I breathed. “Yes. Thank you.”

giving “We’ll see you on Monday, Miss Brooks.”

t all the “I’ll be there,” I said.

I remained composed until we ended the call. As soon as I ended  
ouldn’t and I was sure Belinda Byers wouldn’t hear me, I squealed and thr  
hands up in the air.

her or Finally! I was catching a break.

This was the third law firm I’d applied to, in the hopes that I could  
better job with a higher salary. I needed the financial boost. I  
something—anything—that would get us by.

ize the I considered waking my mom to let her know, but decided against  
poor woman barely slept at night. She was stressed and depressed. I  
side offer to get all the sleep she could get.

Instead, I picked up my phone and typed a reply to Paige.

rack us *We’re on. I’ll meet you at nine.*

I hopped into the shower and washed off the day, changed into jeans

Riggs.”top and ballerina flats—no heels for me—and pulled my hair back ponytail.

that the Before I left, I took a microwave meal from the freezer and prepared it through, when my mom woke up. I left it on the counter with a note.

as—if I *I got the job! Have dinner, I’m out with Paige. I love you!*

it was I left the house quietly and drove into town.

The Seattle skyline was breathtaking at night. The space needle, along with all the tall buildings, created an urban backdrop against the inky sky, managing the sun sank away further and further, the lights in the city came out. Above, stars were pinpricks of light in the sky, as if the heavens reflected the city below.

I walked into Olive and Twist and glanced around. Paige waved from a booth.

“Did you only get off work now?” she asked when I hugged her. “Not too long ago. I had time to shower and change. You’ll notice I never saw me meeting you in a pencil skirt and heels.”

“It’s a nice change,” Paige said, rolling her eyes before she grinned.

“You work too hard.”

“Someone has to do it,” I said.

When we sat down, Paige pushed an Apple Martini in my direction.

“You’re a saint,” I said and lifted the glass to my lips to take a sip. “The news.”

“Yeah?” Her green eyes sparkled.

“We’re losing the house.”

Paige frowned. “I thought you had good news.”

I nodded. “I do. I got the job with Solomon, Forger, and Riggs.”

“What!?” Paige cried out. “Ava, that’s amazing! You should have told me!”

into that. What the hell!”

I giggled, and when Paige lifted her glass in salute, I clinked mine and it for hers. We each took a sip.

“It’s a big increase, and I start on Monday,” I said. “But that doesn’t mean we’ll definitely keep the house. We still have so much to take care of, and they’re after me like I’m the one that fucked up. Debt collectors are a disgusting brand of evil.”

and as Paige shook her head and glanced across the bar.

on. Up “It’s ridiculous that they’re willing to put you out of your house after what your dad did. And with your mom in her condition...”

“I know,” I said. “But there’s no use feeling sorry about it now. It is what it is. I just have to figure something out.”

“Will you be working with Noah Forger?” Paige asked.

“Who?”

I’m not The look she gave me made me burst into giggles.

“He’s only the god of the legal world,” Paige said.

l at me. “I know, I know. I was kidding,” I said. “I know who he is. I’ve heard his name. And I’ll be an idiot if I don’t know my new boss’s son’s name. Although I heard he believes he is god’s gift to mankind, that he’s here to do everyone a favor just by being on this earth.”

“I have “You forget to mention how drop-dead *gorgeous* he is,” Paige pointed out.

“I don’t actually know what he looks like,” I admitted.

Page shook her head. “Well, he’s *dreamy*. That counts for something. He’s a top-shelf lawyer. I’m jealous you get to look at that face all day long every day come Monday.”

I laughed and shook my head. “I don’t know if I’ll be working with him. He might be on a different floor. I doubt he’ll notice a measly paralegal.”



me anyway.”

against “Don’t you dare talk about yourself that way.”

“That’s how he’ll see me,” I said with a shrug. “Besides, I don’t care about him. I care about his dad, Archibald Forger, and the fact that he’s signed the checks. It’s all about who you keep happy.”

special “You’ve always been so diplomatic,” Paige said with a grin. “What do you do if you end up losing the house?”

I shivered just thinking about it. But it was a very real possibility.

er what “We’ll figure it out. I think I can afford something small for the two of us just to get us back on our feet. I can sell whatever won’t fit in the apartment, and we’ll take it from there.”

Paige shook her head and ran her fingers through her light brown hair.

“I wish I could help somehow. If I had the cash, I’d bail you out in a heartbeat.”

“I know,” I said.

Paige was a personal assistant to the CEO of a company in town. She had forgotten what it was the company actually did. I just knew that Paige had practically ran the guy’s whole life. She was the kind of person who had everything under control. She could multitask like a demon and look like she was doing while doing it.

“You probably wouldn’t have accepted it anyway,” Paige said with a shrug. “You never accept help, not even from Kyle when you two are together.”

ugh. And I snorted. “Like Kyle ever had something to offer that would help me. Seriously, he had his hands full saving his own ship from sinking, let alone mine.”

ugh. Paige laughed.

gal like “He called me two days ago,” I said.

“What?” Paige cried out. “Really?”

I nodded and swirled my drink. “Yeah, he said he wanted to meet me about the feels like we have unfinished business.”

“Are you going to meet him?”

“God, no,” I said and rolled my eyes. “I can tell you what his ‘unfinished business’ is. That new girl of his probably dumped him, and he’s fresh options for a wife. You know he just wants to get married. He doesn’t who. So, he’s going back to the drawing board. But I have enough problems of us, as it is.”

“I think you’re better off without him, anyway.” Paige leaned on the bar and tilted her head so that her blonde hair hung over her shoulder.

“I thought you disapproved of me being single.”

“I’d rather you’re single than with *him*,” Paige said.

I laughed and nodded.

“It’s a pity that guy never called you back,” she added.

“What guy?”

“The one you slept with.”

I groaned. “That was a year ago, and I wasn’t looking for anything serious. It was just a one-night stand. And so unlike me, anyway.”

That was true, but it pissed me off that he hadn’t called me back after I’d told me he would. I hadn’t asked for it, he’d offered. But whatever, it wasn’t my matter.

It was a hit and run, just like he’d said.

I shook my head and forced myself to get back to the topic. “Thank you for being so caring, Paige. But you don’t have to even *think* about helping me. This isn’t your mess to deal with.”

Paige sipped her martini. “It’s not your mess, either,” she pointed out.

I nodded. She was right—this mess was all my dad’s. It was convenient, that him that he’d checked out early, leaving the bullshit for my mom with. I missed him—a lot. Sometimes I wished I could go back in time only to see him again, but to shake him by the shoulders and ask him finished the hell he was thinking.

1 out of How could he have done that to my mom? To me?

care to He must have known that something like this could happen. Like problem-solving Paige, there was no use looking back at the past and wondering things might have been different. I had to deal with what was in front of the bar. Maybe one day, far into the future, we will finally be rid of this. My mom would be okay again, and I would be able to live my life.

“My house is always open for you. You know that, right?”

I nodded. Paige was a great friend. No matter what, she would help she could. We’d been friends since grade school, and she’d had me since day one when we’d decided to be best friends forever.

No matter how badly things went, though, I wasn’t going to impose space. Paige lived in a loft apartment, and I wasn’t going to barge in serious privacy with my mom and all of our stuff.

“So, what are you doing about the bar exam?” Paige asked, cheer he’d topics on me. “They’re going to let you work there as a lawyer once you t didn’t right?”

“I’m not taking the exam again,” I said.

“Come on, why not?” Paige asked.

anks for “Because after failing it twice, I get the message loud and clear.” I ing me heavily and drained my martini glass. “I’m just not meant to be a lawyer.

“That’s bullshit. I’ve never seen anyone on their toes like you. You it. argue with anyone into a corner, with a memory like an elephant, a

ient for miss nothing. They'll be lucky to have you. You just have to pass that  
to deal. Third time's a charm."

ne. Not I laughed and lifted my hand to flag a server so we could order  
m what round.

"Are you hungry?" I asked. "I haven't eaten yet."

"Sure, let's split it."

I kept I nodded.

ng how "You're not going to distract me from the topic with food," Paige w  
of me. I chuckled. "Wouldn't dream of pulling one over on you."

burden. The server appeared, and we ordered more martinis and a platter of  
share. As soon as the server left with our order, Paige got on with m  
passing the bar exam and finally becoming a lawyer like I'd always d  
whereof. But that wasn't going to happen any time soon.

ly back I sucked at writing exams. I clammed up, getting some kind of stage  
and everything I'd studied flew out of my head as if I'd never  
on her anything at all.

on her It looked like being a paralegal was my future.

And right now, all I cared about was paying the bills so Mom and  
ranging finally breathe again. I would focus on fulfilling my dreams again  
ou pass, time.

**Keep Reading *Accidental Baby for the Billionaire.***

I sighed

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