

MELISSA IVERS



JINGLE
Devil

A NASHVILLE DEVILS NOVELLA

JINGLE DEVIL

A Nashville Devils Holiday Novella

MELISSA IVERS

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Jingle Devil

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Author's Note

Please note that Jingle Devil is a work of fiction and while it is a hockey romance, not all aspects of hockey may be accurate. This is a fictional story and as such will have fictional teams, players, and the rules may not be exactly the same as they are in the real world.

Team Roster

Players

Lincoln Dallas #8 - Right Wing and Captain

Tag Harris #26 - Left Wing

Foster Craig #44 - Center

Ian McIver #9 - Defenseman

Owen McIver #6 - Defenseman

Rhett Remington #28 - Defenseman

Dimitri Kozak #31 - Goalie

Weston Gray #14 - Center

Brad Tavers #3 - Defenseman

Austin Cloutier #29 - Backup Goalie

Thomas Desjardins #11 - Left Wing

Andrei Vasilgev #18 - Right Wing

Coaches

Mick Weller - Head Coach

Chris Miller - Assistant Coach

John Belanger - Goalie Coach

Devils Owners and Support Staff

Gordon Benson - Owner

Jazlyn Benson - Owner

Dean Prescott - General Manager

Krista Irving - Secretary for Head Office

Dan Fraser - Security Guard

We all know you're already on the naughty list, yet like to be told you're a good girl by a man with a deep voice and a penchant for giving hand necklaces.

Am I wrong?

Didn't think so.

Now turn the page and read your hockey smut. Show me how beautifully you listen.

ONE

Mick

Hello, my name is Mick Weller, head coach of the Nashville Devils hockey team, and I'm addicted to white peppermint mochas. With soy milk, no less, because regular milk is for real men.

Which I am not, with this drink in my hand.

It's at the complete opposite end of the spectrum from the black coffee I always drank before. All it took was one mix-up with my assistant and a sip of peppermint heaven, and I was a goner. Black coffee turned to sludge in my mouth; nothing else could compare.

I would damn my assistant, Tessa Risen, but I do that enough already. Although it's not totally in a bad way. More like *dayum* every time she bends over, or wears anything tight, or revealing, or sweeps her hair up exposing her neck or... At this point pretty much everything she wears or does makes me and mini me rise to attention. She's been torturing me with her low-cut blouses and mile high heels since Jazz Benson, part-owner of the Devils, hired her for me a little over three months ago.

That's three months of celibacy because my dick refuses to get hard for anyone else. But it sure as hell comes to attention every time she leans over my desk, giving me a bird's eye view of her ample cleavage. It's very distracting when I'm looking at players' stats or reviewing game footage. Not to mention it's physically uncomfortable in one particular area of my dress pants.

You might think I'm happy about this. After all, she's close by. Should be easy to seal the deal. But the truth is, I couldn't be more annoyed.

I don't *want* to want my assistant. I certainly don't want to become

another cliched old man with a hard on for his young secretary. But here we are. And don't tell me you don't know what I'm talking about, because it's in all the movies. Give me a name of a movie with an older man and a younger assistant, and I'd bet you any money he's fucking her on that fancy-ass office desk of his.

Just like Tessa and I are doing in the fantasies I can't seem to control.

For instance, the one where I hold a second soy milk peppermint mocha under my fancy-ass office desk and insist she come and find it. Preferably in lingerie that leaves next to nothing to the imagination. With her face that close to my lap, would she be tempted to touch me? To jingle my bells? To take me in her mouth and suck me off? I'm getting a chub just thinking about it, and since I'm almost to my office in the Devils' arena, I need it to deflate.

I turn my thoughts to the least arousing thing in the arena: the fishy smell in the locker room. It seems to radiate from multiple places, and no one can figure out where it's coming from or what's causing it. My money's on the Bruiser brothers; they're always getting into something and there's a good chance the smell is intentional.

My thoughts try to redirect to Tessa, despite my best efforts. With a low growl, I force myself to think about the new trade with the attitude problem we're getting as a late Christmas present. That might be one gift I'd like to return, but I won't be able to do anything without a receipt. Rumor has it, Rhett Remington is nothing but trouble, and I don't need more of that.

Just when I think I have a handle on things, I walk into the coaching offices, past the fully decorated Christmas tree, take one look at my assistant, and it's a problem again. If there's not already a rule about pitching tents over your assistant so close to Christmas, there should be. I'm not sure Jesus had this in mind when he preached about goodwill to your fellow man.

"Good morning, boss," Tessa greets me with one of her warm smiles as she snags the coffee I extend to her and takes a small sip. "Look at you, ordering this drink all by yourself."

"I figured you ordered it enough this week for the both of us. You should've seen the look the barista gave me. I felt judged." I laugh and try my best not to make it obvious I'm checking her out, but I am. It's part of my morning routine.

Consistency is key, and practice makes everything perfect.

She's wearing a low-cut red button-up blouse that immediately puts me in the holiday spirit. It's paired with black dress pants and red stilettos that look

more like bedroom heels than office shoes. I doubt they're comfortable to walk in, but no question they're sexy as hell. Her curly dark brown hair is swept up in a high ponytail, exposing the length of her tanned neck, and her hazel eyes are more brown than green today. She's absolutely stunning.

And at twenty-three, she's almost half my age. I'm usually not attracted to much younger women, but there's something about Tessa that's worked its way under my skin, and it would take all of Santa's elves to get her out.

With a smirk, Tessa leans over and squeezes my bicep. It doesn't escape my notice that her hand lingers on my muscles for a few extra seconds before falling away. "I think you can handle a little judgment, Coach. You can give most of the rookies a run for their money."

"What do you know about the rookies?"

"They do come in here from time to time." A pink blush colors her cheeks, and she averts her eyes.

My gut clenches and my blood boils as jealousy gets the better of me. I have no claim to this woman on a personal level; she can talk to whoever she wants. That's what the logical side of my brain says anyway, but my caveman side gives zero fucks.

Looks like me and the rookies need to have a little heart to heart about bothering my assistant. If I'm not here, there's no reason for any of them to be.

I understand a lot of the previous assistants were bunnies who wanted to work the players more than their computers, but Tessa is different. She's never been anything more than polite to the players, and she's a great worker. Plus, I've put her off limits to everyone on the team, including me. Maybe especially me. I'm not sure how she'd respond to a forty-five-year-old man putting the moves on her. I'm probably the same age as her father. Damn if that realization doesn't sting.

I'm way too old for her and she's way too young for me. When I was her age, she was a baby. A literal baby. Out of the office, I'm sure we'd have no chemistry and nothing in common. She'd try to make small talk while I stared at her tits. Total mismatch. Like Rudolph and the Abominable Snowman. The Grinch and the entire town of Whoville. Mr. Scrooge and... well, everyone.

"Oh, they do?" I prop my hands on my hips. "And what exactly do they come in here for?"

"Sometimes they stop by to say hello or chat."

I narrow my gaze at her and purse my lips in a playful way. “Chat, huh? Hmm. Sounds suspicious.”

“Don’t you have work to do?” She pushes on my shoulder and smiles. “I put those stats you asked for on your desk.”

I head to my office and call over my shoulder, “You’re the best.”

Sure enough, there’s a thick stack of Devil statistics from this year, organized alphabetically by player last name, on my desk. Best assistant I’ve ever had. Almost makes me feel bad that I’ve been leering at her like a creeper since I walked in this morning. Almost.

The morning wears on and I perfect the lineup for the game tomorrow. It’s not ideal to have a game the day before Christmas, but the NHL rests for no one. Because we’re so close to the holiday, I’ve lightened the practice schedule for the guys, leaving Tessa and me alone in the arena office section today.

“Hey, Coach.” She sticks her head in my office and eyes me speculatively until I wave her in. “I was thinking about ordering lunch from the pub that just opened up a few blocks away. I’ve got the menu pulled up if you’re interested.”

I push my chair out from underneath my desk and turn around in it as she makes her way across the room. She’s reapplied her bright red lip gloss, and I can’t help but watch how it glimmers under the office fluorescents. As she rounds the corner of my desk, her heel must snag on the carpet because she abruptly lurches at me with a look of horror etched on her face. On instinct, I reach my hands out to catch her, but as it turns out my mitts do nothing to slow her descent. She grabs onto them, twists her body, and falls face first into my lap.

My pulse hammers in my veins, and I fight every instinct I have not to put my hands on the back of her head and push her further into me. I unclasp my hands from hers, grip the arms of the chair, and fight back a groan.

Her glossy red lips are separated from my dick by two thin layers of fabric. That. Is. It.

I could have it out and in her mouth before she could blink.

Without a doubt, that would put me on the naughty list.

I grit my teeth to try and prevent the inevitable, but it does nothing to stop the growing bulge in my pants. My dick lifts up, practically kissing her chin. Fuck me.

She doesn’t feel too young for me with her head in my lap.

TWO

Tessa

O MG. Red alert. Red freaking alert. My face is in my boss's crotch. My face is pressed against his dick. His dick that's getting hard against my mouth. And even though I'm more embarrassed than I've been in my entire life, I can't help but notice how impressive it is.

Also, I think I let out the tiniest moan. It was so low I'm sure he didn't even hear it.

He doesn't even begin to compare to the boys I've dated. And I say boys because they still act like they're in college. But Mick? He is all man. I bet he knows how to satisfy a woman too. Although I've thought about Mick in my bed constantly since I started this job, now is not a good time. Not with my face so close to his... you know.

I push away from him and scramble to my feet. His face is unreadable, and heat crawls up my neck. My gaze falls from his chocolate brown eyes to his stubbled jaw and down the polo stretched across his broad chest to the full tent in his pants. He should shift. He should wheel back under his desk. He should do...something. Instead, he remains unmoved, his hands resting on the arms of the chair, and his magic stick fighting his dress pants. I wish the fabric were thinner and that bad boy could punch his way through.

I bet that thing would come out shining like the star on top of the Christmas tree by my desk. The harps would play. Angels would weep. And I'd fall to the floor—this time intentionally—with my mouth popped open, ready to give it my all.

I'd like to say I'm not a total loser with a crush on her boss, but I'm not a liar. Older men never really did it for me. Not until Mick Weller. He checks

all my boxes, and I'd love nothing more than for him to invade my box with that tool in his pants.

"I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to..." I gesture to his lap. "You know."

The way his lip quirks in a lazy smile tells me he knows exactly what I'm talking about, but then he shakes his head. "No, I don't know."

I'm not touching this situation with a ten-foot pole. Pun not intended. Better to change the subject and move on. I'm certainly not going to talk to my boss about his dick or how sizable it felt. It's not an appropriate workplace conversation, and I'm sure he doesn't reciprocate my fascination with him. I'm much too young. I've done my fair share of internet sleuthing, and his last girlfriend was actually a few years older than him. There's no way I'm even on his radar despite his pants tent. My mouth was really close. It's a perfectly natural male response when there's a warm hole in such close proximity. I get it. I'm nothing special.

"So... uh... let me know about lunch."

He laces his fingers behind his head and leans back in his chair, making his biceps bulge. Too bad I can't think of another excuse to run my hands over them. "You're not going to show me the menu?"

"I'm pretty sure you can pull it up yourself." I walk around to the other side of the desk, putting some much-needed space between us, and getting his groin area out of my field of vision. "In fact, let me leave you to do that in privates. I mean, private."

His gruff laugh follows me all the way out to my desk where I dive behind it and pretend to be enthralled by expense reports. Five minutes goes by and no sign of Coach Weller. Maybe he's talking things down. Maybe he's in an internal debate between the cheeseburger and chicken sandwich.

"Hey, Tessa." Jake pops his head in from the hallway and grins. "I didn't know if you'd be here this week."

A glance toward Coach's office confirms he's nowhere in sight and I sag a little in my chair. Jake is one of the afore mentioned rookies and Mick looked less than pleased when I mentioned them stopping by. I'm sure he doesn't want them becoming a distraction. "I'm just here today and tomorrow. What about you? I didn't think you all had practice today."

He props himself on the doorframe, his shirt pulling up to expose the bottom ridge of his abs. The rookies are all flirts. "I stopped by to get some extra time in the gym. You know I like to—"

"What are you doing in here Simmons?" Mick bellows from the doorway

on the other side of the office.

“I—uh—”

“Is there a valid reason you’re flashing your abs in the coaching offices?”

I cover my mouth with the palm of my hand to suppress the laughter fighting its way out. Jake’s face is bright red, and he’s pulled his shirt down so low the neckline is almost at his nipples. He shakes his head so fast I think it may pop off, mumbles something about a Merry Christmas, and flees down the hallway.

“That was mean.” I smile as I spin back and forth in my chair.

Mick runs a hand through his hair and sighs. “He was ruining my appetite. I’ll take the chicken sandwich.”

“So…” I need something, anything to deflate the tension that’s left in this tiny office. Hockey usually works. “You think you’re going to beat Toronto tomorrow?”

“Absolutely.”

“Such confidence. Too bad Toronto is on a winning streak.”

“Is that your nice way of saying you think they’re going to win?” Mick leans against the corner of my desk and crosses his arms.

“They’re absolutely going to win.”

Normally, I’m all for supporting the home team, and I do hope the boys can do it, but Toronto has been on fire lately. They’re in line for a top spot in the playoffs, they have the highest scoring player around, and to top it off, their goalie is the best in the league.

“You wound me.” He eyes me for several seconds before continuing, “How do you feel about a bet?”

“A bet?” I repeat, turning those words over in my mind as I clasp my hands in front of me and rock on my heels.

He strokes a hand over the stubble on his chin, and I can’t help but wonder what it would feel like between my legs. Most of the guys I’ve dated have been clean-shaven, but Mick always has a five o’clock shadow. I bet it would feel rough against the smooth skin of my inner thigh and my core clenches as I imagine it marking my flesh.

“If the Devils beat Toronto tomorrow afternoon, then I win, and if Toronto beats us then you win.”

He hasn’t set the terms of the bet, and my heart is beating a hundred miles a minute. “What do I get if I win?” I whisper.

Mick’s gaze travels the length of my body, pausing at my lips, and then

meeting my eyes. This is the first time I've seen him checking me out, and I can almost feel his hands on me, coasting along my hips and trailing up my back. "Anything you want."

I gasp and my eyes widen. I want several things, none of which I will voice out loud, and all of them involve at least one of us being naked. "And if you win?"

"Then I want a date." He states this so simply like he's asking to borrow my stapler. Unless I'm taking this the wrong way, and he wants me to find him a date. Which doesn't make sense because looking like that, he can get any date he wants. He doesn't need my help. Instead of assuming or questioning him like an airhead, I remain silent, fidgeting with my fingers because that's so much better. He leans across my desk, grabbing an official Nashville Devil's stress ball, and tossing it between his hands. "Shall I take your silence as a yes?"

I blink. And then I blink again. "With me?"

Mick drops his head and a deep laugh rumbles through his chest. He doesn't laugh a lot, but when he does it's like the melody to your favorite country song. It just makes you feel all warm and fuzzy on the inside.

"Yes, with you. Who else do you think I'm talking about? You think I want you to set me up with Simmons? I don't think it was my attention he was trying to get."

"I'm sure any of the rookies would say yes for some one-on-one time with their..." Hot as fuck. Magically delicious. "Coach."

"There's a charity dinner after our game tomorrow, and I don't think any of them would look very good in a dress."

"Maybe if they shaved their legs."

He chuckles again, and I almost swoon. Or maybe it's low blood sugar; it is lunch time, after all. "So, what do you say? Do we have a deal?" He flashes me a smile.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity served up on a silver platter. One dinner. *One date* with Mick. I should say no and go back to my desk to order lunch. I know I should. It's the smart and most logical thing to do because I don't want something to go wrong and put my job at risk.

On the other hand, I don't have sexy grade-A hunks of beef like Mick lined up at my door to take me to charity dinners every night. And I've been lusting after him for months.

I was planning on spending Christmas Eve alone in my apartment

watching all the Netflix holiday movies. Not much different from my normal night, except these movies have Santa. Since I moved here from Florida, my nights aren't that exciting, though I guess if I'm honest, I didn't have much of a life there either.

I'm overthinking this. He probably wants to go as friends, in which case I'm making it weird. Or maybe he wants to cross the line—although I doubt it—and if that's true, I owe it to myself to find out. I'll regret it if I don't. And a one-night stand with a real man doesn't sound half bad. It's been a few months and while my BOB is a good companion, it doesn't replicate the feel of a man's hands or tongue. If it turns into a one-night thing, I'm adult enough to pretend like nothing happened the next day.

“We have a deal, Coach Weller. Since you said I can have anything, I'll have to think about what happens *when* I win. And I'll have my dress ready in case you can pull off the impossible.”

“Nothing is impossible if you want it bad enough.”

Well, fuck me. Don't I know it.

THREE

Tessa

This has been one crazy day after another. First, I faceplant in my sexy boss's lap and very inappropriately caress his erection with my cheek. And now, I'm walking arm and arm with said sexy boss into a charity dinner for the local children's hospital.

I'm not sure how they managed to pull out a win against Toronto, but the Devils beat them by one goal. Mick must have threatened them or offered them a bonus if they won. Something had to have motivated them to score the last two goals in the third period. Especially with the Avalanche playing so well.

It's the best bet I ever lost. Let's just hope this Christmas gamble doesn't come back to bite either one of us in the ass. But with Mick beside me, it's hard to think of anything else. He is irresistible in a tux. The black fabric is snug against his broad shoulders and narrows to his tapered waist. His brown eyes are so deep I might get lost in them. That is if I don't get distracted by his stubble and full lips first. I'm not sure if I'll be able to keep my hands to myself.

"Have I told you how absolutely stunning you look tonight?" he whispers in my ear, his warm breath caressing my neck and breaking me out in goosebumps.

I turn my head to smile at him. "Only about five times but it hasn't gotten old yet."

"That dress," Mick rasps. "Where did you get that thing?"

"I just had it laying around... Do you think it's inappropriate?"

"Absolutely."

Not that I picked this dress with the purpose of seduction—who am I kidding, that’s exactly why I picked this dress. The emerald green is perfect for a Christmas eve, and the fabric hugs my body like a glove. “I think us being here together already crosses the line.”

“Baby, when I cross the line with you, you’re damn sure going to know it.”

His words are like fuel to the fire raging inside me. A shiver sweeps through me, and my panties dampen with need. His hand sweeps across my lower back and he grips my hip in a tight hold.

Mick leans down and this time his lips graze the skin behind my ear. “Are you chilly, baby girl? Or is it something I said?”

I may combust on the spot. *Baby girl*. Sweet mother of all things sensual. I’ve never heard a term of endearment be so sexy.

We make our way past the Christmas trees and Mick pulls us to a stop as Jazz and Lincoln block our path.

“Well, hey guys.” Jazz greets us each with a hug but not before eyeing Mick’s hand on my waist. “Fancy meeting you here.”

Well, crap. Jazz and I had known each other for years. We met at the Olympic training center in Florida. She’d been the talent and I worked in the front office of the training facility. I was never a skater myself, but I loved to watch the girls practice and spent every lunch break I could, rink side. Jazz and I had instantly bonded over our shitty parentage and became fast friends. Despite our friendship, I would’ve been happier if we had gone all night without seeing someone from work. Especially now that she’s an owner again and essentially Mick’s boss. I’m still trying to figure out if he’s using me for my company or if this is an elaborate set up for a one-night stand.

“I’d believe you were surprised, except you knew I was coming, especially since you’re the one that put me in touch with this foundation.” Mick smiles, shaking Lincoln’s hand.

Jazz laughs and links her fingers with Lincoln’s. “I was talking to Tess.”

My heart hammers and I swallow past the lump in my throat. Since her relationship with Lincoln was splashed all over the news, there isn’t a workplace dating policy, but Mick is my direct boss. I don’t want things to get weird.

“Oh, well,” I clear my throat, heat creeping across my cheeks. “I lost a bet. This is my punishment.”

“Doesn’t look very punishing.”

“You haven’t spent much time with him then.” I chuckle and step away from Mick.

Lincoln raises his brow. “I didn’t peg you for a dating man, Coach.”

“I don’t date,” Mick scoffs and runs a hand down the front of his tux. “Dating was something I considered in my twenties.”

If I wasn’t sure about the longevity of his relationships, I am now. Mick Weller is a one and done kind of guy. Which is perfectly fine with me, and I’d rather know upfront. “We’re just here as friends,” I interject.

Lincoln holds up his hands and grins. “No judgement here.” He wraps his arms around Jazz’s shoulders and tugs her to his chest. “I spend a fair amount of time sleeping with the boss.”

Jazz rolls her eyes before pulling me in for another hug, saying her goodbyes, and pulling Lincoln to the other side of the room. I glance at Mick as an awkward silence settles between us.

“Shall we?” He extends his arm which I loop with mine and let him lead us around the room to find our table. A few couples sit down to join us for a fancy looking roasted chicken. There’s no one I recognize at the table, and I relax, sinking down in my chair. We make small talk until dinner is over, and Mick pulls me on the dance floor.

“I almost didn’t think I’d get you alone.” Mick holds my hand in his and snakes the other around my waist to rest on my back as he sways us around.

“I don’t know if I’d say we’re fully alone.” I make a point to glance around at the other couples on the dance floor. “There are plenty of people out here with us.”

He pulls me closer to him and strokes his hand up and down the zipper line on the back of my dress. “Yeah, but I can be closer to you out here and don’t have to share you with anyone else. And now that I’m thinking about it, why are you free on Christmas Eve? Shouldn’t you have family you’re hanging out with? Not that I’m complaining.”

“I’m a casualty of divorce.” I shrug and lay my head on his shoulder. “My parents separated when I was in high school and do not get along. Like at all. And because I’m an only child, holidays became a tug-o-war. They wanted me to spend Christmas and birthdays with them, not to make it special for me, but to use it as ammo against each other. Two years of that and I decided I was done with the holidays and started spending them by myself. Plus, they’re both still in Florida. I only moved up here after Jazz practically begged me to take this job.”

Mick remains silent for several seconds, his hand still circling my back. “Begged, huh?”

“Absolutely. Something about the new coach being super high maintenance. Couldn’t keep an assistant to save his life.”

“Not my fault they were only there to ogle the players.”

“You did hire them. Sooooo.”

“Touché,” he says with a low chuckle.

“By the way…” I trail off when my gaze lands on the one person I absolutely never wanted to run into again. Winston Wells, a friend of a friend who does something for the Nashville Aces, our kick-ass football team. He was a blind date turned stage four clinger. We were one conversation away from upping that to a stage five. We went on three dates last month and there was zero chemistry. Absolutely nothing. So, I cut things off like any normal person would do. But he’s been calling and texting me ever since. He even stopped by my apartment on Monday to beg me for another date.

Mick places his index finger beneath my chin and turns my head to face him. “What’s wrong? Where did you go just now?”

“You see that guy to my right? Blue tux, curly blonde hair?”

“Justin Timberlake looking guy. I see him.”

“We went on a couple dates, and he won’t give up. I’ve made it clear I’m not interested but he keeps calling and texting. The man doesn’t take no for an answer.” I sigh as Winston steps onto the dancefloor and navigates around the couples, his gaze intent on me. “Dammit.”

“Well, I can fix that.” Mick’s eyes twinkle with mischief and before I can question him, he winds his hand around my neck, just below my pinned messy bun, and lowers his lips to mine.

Heat courses through my veins as I wrap my arms around his neck and open beneath him. I whimper as his tongue slips past my lips and dances with mine. He tastes like red wine and is just as intoxicating. His stubble is rough against my chin, and I want more. I want it rougher, harder. I want him to drag that stubble all over my body and mark me as his. But he kisses me at a lazy pace, exploring my mouth like he has all the time in the world, sipping at my lips like I’m a rare vintage he wants to savor.

My hands trail over his shoulders and down the front of his tuxedo jacket. His muscles flex under my touch, and he groans, pulling our hips together. Lord have mercy. This man and his erections are going to be the death of me.

I'd say we just crossed that line.
And I damn sure know it.

FOUR

Mick

Tessa has the sweetest mouth I've ever tasted, and I can't wait to taste her everywhere.

I wasn't going to cross the line. I really wasn't. But one look at that asshole's face and how focused he was on Tessa, and I couldn't hold back. Jealousy had me gripped by the balls and even though I knew she wasn't interested in him, I needed him to know he couldn't have her. Stupid? Maybe. Irrational? Sure. Do I care? Not in the slightest.

The second my lips touched hers, the world fell away around me, and it was just the two of us. Tessa with her hands skimming down my torso and moaning into my mouth. And me, gripping her hips as I absolutely pillage her mouth. She's so responsive to my touch and I've barely gotten started.

With a groan, I pull away, putting some much-needed distance between us. If I don't, I'm likely to start undressing her right here. Since this fundraiser is for the children's hospital, they may frown on public fornication on the dance floor.

Tessa blinks after staring at me for several seconds. "I, uh, I—?"

At some point during our kiss, Mr. NSync had gotten closer. He sure is persistent. If the sight of my tongue in her mouth didn't convince she was otherwise engaged, I'm not sure what would.

He clears his throat and shoves a hand between us. "I'm not sure we've met. I'm Winston Wells. And you are?"

"Annoyed." I grab his outstretched hand and shake it, putting a little extra pressure behind the squeeze. I enjoy it a little too much when he winces and pulls out of my grasp.

“Al Boyd? Nice to meet you Al.” He nods to Tessa before draping an arm over her shoulders. “How do you know my girl?”

“Your girl?” Tessa shakes him off and glares at him.

He ignores her, his gaze never leaving mine. “Are you a friend of her dad’s or something? Isn’t Tessa a little old for a babysitter?”

His jab doesn’t go unnoticed but I’m not going to let it affect me or what’s happening between me and Tessa. “She’s welcome to call me Daddy, although it’s not a requirement.”

“It’s not a requirement for what?”

Tessa chuckles, and the poor guy genuinely looks confused. I lean forward, angling away from Tessa, and whisper, “For when I’m between her legs eating her pussy and destroying her for little boys like you.”

I pull away and almost feel bad. He’s opening and closing his mouth over and over like a fish. Flounder does us both a favor, he doesn’t move and no words come out of his gaping pie hole. Refusing to let him have another minute of my time, I grab Tessa’s hand and pull her from the dancefloor.

She looks around us with wide eyes. “Thank you?”

“Don’t thank me yet, baby girl.” I ghost my lips across her temple. “I haven’t done anything worth thanking. Not yet anyway.”

“Not yet? Are you saying you didn’t just kiss me to make Winston take a hike?” Her forehead wrinkles as her brows draw together. “What did you say to him anyway?”

I pause beside our assigned table. “It was a happy coincidence. Truth be told, I’ve been wanting to do that since our first day working together.”

“You have?” She lets out a small sigh and runs her hand down her face. “I’m sorry I’m repeating everything. I think your lips fried my brain.”

“Then just wait till you find out what my mouth can *really* do.”

“Sweet Mother of Mercy,” she whispers.

I lean in close and nip her earlobe, loving the way she shivers with the slightest touch. “Do you want to sit down at this table and wait for dessert? Or do you want to come home with me and let me eat *you* for dessert?”

Because I don’t fight fair, I lower my mouth and pepper kisses along her neck. She draws in a sharp breath as my stubble rubs over her collarbone. It seems like my lips aren’t the only thing Tessa likes and so long as she picks option two, I relish finding out everything else that tickles her fancy.

“If I pick option two does that change things at work? I’m not fired if I pick the wrong thing, am I?”

I shake my head with a chuckle. “No, baby girl. You’re not going to get fired and no matter what you choose, nothing will change at the office. You’ll still be my phenomenal assistant because I couldn’t replace you if I tried.”

“And I’m not too young for you?”

I shake my head. “Am I too old for you?”

“No.” Her gaze falls to the ground before meeting mine. “I didn’t get a chance to tell you what I wanted if I won our bet.”

“That’s right. What did you want if you won?”

“Well, I tried to come up with something good all afternoon. I couldn’t stop thinking of one thing. The only thing I wanted.” She pauses and takes a deep breath. “But... it’s not something I thought I could say out loud.”

“What was it?”

“You. I just want one night with you.”

She wants me. She just wants one night with me. Well, she’s in luck because she’ll be getting me for a lot longer than that. If I get my way, her tasty little mouth and tight body won’t leave my bed for days. And even after that, I may only let her out for work and food, but we don’t have to worry about the logistics of our relationship tonight.

Sounds like a later problem.

Right now, I’ve got to get her back to my place.

FIVE

Tessa

I can't believe I told Mick Weller I wanted him for a night. I can't believe he took me back to his penthouse apartment. *His penthouse*. His penthouse that overlooks downtown Nashville.

It's modern and sleek and freaking huge. A small Christmas tree sits on the side table next to the couch and soft carols come through the hidden speakers.

I don't get to see much. Just the twinkling lights of the city below as I glance out his floor-to-ceiling wall of windows before he places a hand on my shoulder and unzips my dress with the other. I should protest, push him away and move away from the window... but I don't. We're several stories up but there's a chance someone could see us, and I can't help the thrill that runs down my spine.

Let them see.

I close my eyes as his fingers trail down my spine until the green sheath falls around my feet, leaving me in a black lacy thong and stilettos. The dress didn't allow for a bra and I'm finding it hard to care.

My nipples pebble and my pussy aches; I can feel his eyes all over me and I'm desperate for his touch.

"Fuck, that ass..." he groans, his hands grip my hips, and he rubs his hard dick across the cheeks. Remember when I said his erections will be the death of me? I was right. He's going to kill me with that anaconda in his pants. And I'm going to die with a smile on my face.

No regrets. Not even one letter.

He spins me around, forces me backwards, and presses me against the

windows. The cool glass at my back is a stark contrast to his heat at my front. He grinds his hips into mine and I let out a soft moan. My core clenches and my skin practically vibrates with desire. I run my hands over the jacket of his tux, inexplicably aware that I'm practically naked while he's still in his full tuxedo. There's something so fucking sexy about the disparity in our clothing but my fingers flex, needing to feel his skin on mine.

I slip my hands under his jacket but before I can push it from his shoulders, he grabs my arms. "Not yet, baby girl. It's my turn first."

He leans forward and kisses down the column of my neck. He grips my waist, keeping me steady as his tongue traces the swell of one breast and then the other. Mick moves even lower, lightly caressing the tip of his tongue across my tightened nipples. He pulls one in between his teeth and tugs before moving to the other side.

My head falls back against the glass, and I let out a low, guttural moan. My skin tingles as he trails his lips lower. And lower. Until he's kneeling on the floor, his palms coasting up and down the sides of my thighs. His lips ghost over the lace covering my pussy and then he rubs the scruff of his chin across the inside of my thigh. I swear the second that stubble scrapes my skin, my soul leaves my body and floats to the heavens. What's left is a whimpering, quivering mess, and he hasn't even really done anything.

No smooth-faced boy will ever do it for me again.

Once you go stubble, nothing else is worth the trouble.

I need to pull myself together before I start writing full poems to this man's facial hair.

But then he growls. He pushes his mouth to the small scrap of fabric in front of my clit and fucking growls. I'm going to have twelve poems done by morning.

"Oh, fuck me," I moan.

"Not yet," he murmurs against me, ripping the panties from my body and tossing them behind him.

"That's the hottest thing I've ever seen."

He chuckles, picking up one of my legs and biting the soft flesh of my inner thigh before sliding it over his shoulder. "If you like that, then you'll love this."

I open my mouth to question him, but then he leans forward, his mouth latching onto my clit and my brain ceases to function. My hands find their way to his hair and grab on for dear life as his tongue makes tight circles

around that little bundle of nerves. I moan and whimper. I use the foot not over his shoulder to lift up and rock my hips against his mouth. Shameless hussy or not, I can't get enough.

Mick growls again, this time the vibrations spread through my core, and his scruff rubs across the sensitive flesh. My leg collapses and I'd be a puddle on the floor if it weren't for his hands catching the globes of my ass and pinning me to the window. They squeeze my cheeks and hold me in place as his tongue travels lower and spears inside me.

My fingers tighten in his hair, and I bite my lower lip to keep the string of expletives inside my head. He plunges his tongue in and out of my pussy, fucking me with it, before going back to my clit. He sucks it between his lips, rolls it with his tongue, and does things no vibrator will be able to replicate. My thighs quiver and my breath catches as waves of pleasure crash over me. His name becomes a chant, my whole body shudders, and I think I black out for a minute.

I regain my senses as Mick slides my leg from his shoulder. It's a damn miracle I'm still standing but I manage to support myself on shaky legs as he stands. I wish I were one of those girls with a witty response loaded up for any and every occasion, but I can only stare at him, mute as a mime, under his intense gaze.

"Turn around." Mick demands, his voice low and gravely. "Now."

Holy hell, that's hot.

He quirks a brow, assessing me with a watchful eye, until I spin around. The view really is astounding from up here. The lights from the bars below illuminate the crowded sidewalks, and I wonder if they can see me standing here in my heels with my breasts pressed to the glass. My nipples are tightened and my breasts tingle along with my greedy clit. A small thrill runs through me as I imagine Mick reaching around and strumming me to another orgasm while the tourists watch from below.

Mick sweeps my hair to the side, covers my back with his front, and rasps in my ear, "Do you like knowing they can look up at any moment and see you? Do you want them to know I'm fucking you? That you're mine?"

A shiver runs down my spine and I manage to nod.

"What's that, baby girl? I couldn't hear you." His hand caresses up my arm and across my shoulder before it closes around my throat. It squeezes. Not enough to choke me, but enough that there's no mistaking who owns who at this very second.

My core clenches and my wetness drips down the inside of my thigh. “Yes,” I whisper. “I want you to fuck me where everyone can see.”

“You want them to know I own that pussy?”

“Oh, God yes.”

He gives my neck another squeeze, runs both hands over my shoulders, down my back, and grips my hips. “Bend over, baby girl.”

I back up a step, arch my back and bend over, resting my palms on the window. Mick unzips his pants and then there’s a crinkle of foil. My heart races and my skin feels like it’s charged with electricity. He gave me the best orgasm of my life with his mouth, and I can’t wait to see what his dick can do. Especially since I felt it in the office yesterday. I’ve been thinking about that one-eyed monster for the past thirty-six hours.

A moan escapes my lips as the head of his dick glides through my slick folds. Back and forth. Rubbing my clit. Circling my entrance. Then back at my clit.

“Mick...”

“Fuck, baby girl.” Mick winds a hand in my hair and pulls my head back as he slides into me.

First an inch. Then another. He moves forward until he buries himself in my core, filling me up with his thick cock. My hand curls into a fist against the glass, and I bite my bottom lip to keep from filling his penthouse up with my moans. Mick pulls back and then plunges forward. His hand tightens in my hair, and he thrusts in and out of me, fucking me at a punishing pace.

My core clenches around his dick, and my tits bounce with every slap of his hips. I keep my gaze on the crowd below, hopping from bar to bar, to celebrate Christmas Eve. They’re having their green and red cocktails, passing the time until Santa makes his journey, while I’m having a different kind of cock. Right in front of them.

Mick forces my head back even more and wraps his other hand back around my throat. He leans over me, the front of his jacket dragging on my backside. My pussy flutters and he increases his pace, growling in my ear. “You like that, baby girl? Your pussy was made for me. Feels so fucking good.”

I don’t respond. I can’t. I can only whimper and moan as his hand tightens around my neck. He unwinds his hand from my hair and reaches around my hips to strum my clit with his fingers. I smack the window. I push back against him. I ride his hand while he fucking wrecks my pussy. My

whole body tightens and quivers. Shakes and trembles. Mick's name is a whimper as he drives my body to a place of pure pleasure and then throws me over the edge.

Stars burst before my eyes, and Mick grunts and moans. His thrusts speed up before he bucks and stills behind me.

My chest heaves as I struggle to catch my breath. Mick's lips graze my shoulder and the middle of my back, following his trail with his hands, smoothing them over my skin. He slips from me, and I brush my fingertips across the glass before I stand.

His arms go around my torso, and he holds me to his still tux covered body. I sigh and relax into his embrace.

"Twas the night before Christmas, and I fucked my assistant in my house. My dick is no longer stirring... I've got nothing that rhymes with house and mouse doesn't sound right."

"Nice try, Saint Mick." I chuckle and kick off my heels. "I think that's an automatic addition to the naughty list."

He presses his lips to my temple. "I'm pretty sure what we just did gets us both on the naughty list. Come on, baby girl, let's go to bed. I'm not quite done with you yet."

I smile even though my stomach twists. Not done with me yet. But he will be done with me soon. By the time the sun rises, and Santa makes his way back to the North Pole, I'll be back at home alone with nothing but the memory of what he felt like between my thighs.

Mick

I now have two addictions this holiday season: white peppermint mochas and Tessa.

There is, however, a big difference between the two. When Christmas ends, I will revert to my traditional black coffee and say goodbye to the mochas. As for Tessa... My time with her is only beginning. I want to take her to dinner, buy her flowers, watch Netflix and chill, and spend New Year's Eve with her bouncing up and down on my cock.

And perhaps explore other places she'll let me fuck her. I'm not just talking about the backdoor, but physical places. The look on her face when she thought someone might be able to see her through the one-way glass. Fucking priceless. I almost came in my pants. I've never been one for exhibition, but if it makes Tessa come harder than a freight train on my cock, then I'm in.

"Are you coming in?" Tessa asked, her voice shy and tentative over the sounds of the shower.

I know this is new for the both of us, but I want her to be comfortable here. Comfortable with me.

"I'll be right in." Very quickly, I shuck my tux, draping it on top of the bathroom counter, and step into the shower. The air is humid, and steam rises from the soft curves of her body. Tessa at work is beautiful. Tessa naked is fucking exquisite. So, I do what I hope to do everyday for as long as she'll let me. I pause, and let my eyes roam her body, worshiping her with a look before I take a step forward, intent on exploring her body with my hands next.

Tessa turns as I approach her, a timid smile on her face, and a glob of ivory soap shining in her hand. “Can I wash you?”

I take a deep breath and let it out on a shudder. “You can do anything you want.”

She turns me into the spray and steps behind me. My eyes close the second her palms connect with the muscles of my back and shoulders, and I relax and bask in her touch. Her hands are gentle as they start their explorations up and down my biceps, across the plane of my upper back. The more she washes, the bolder she grows, pressing into my skin with a firm touch that has my eyeballs rolling to the back of my head.

Her hands dip lower, rubbing the suds across my lower back and then she pauses briefly before kneading the cheeks on my ass. I groan, the blood rushing to my dick, more than ready for round two. Despite the sudden urge to impale her and bury myself within her tight pussy, I stay still, letting her continue to soap me. I wonder if, were all my washcloths magically go missing, she would do this every day.

I sure as hell hope so.

Those little towels are as good as gone.

“Turn, please.”

I’m more than happy to oblige, anything that gets my cock a little closer to her, I’ll do. She pumps more soap into her hands and spreads the suds over my chest. I let out another groan as the tips of her fingers graze both my nipples simultaneously.

“Sorry.” She smirks in a way that tells me she’s not at all sorry.

I lean back, letting the water from the shower head roll over my shoulders and cascade down my chest and abs to wash away the soap. “Are you about done?” I quirk a brow and give her my best stern look. “Christmas will be here before we get out of the—”

All coherent thought vanishes, and I suck in a deep breath as her hands grab my erection, the suds making her hands extra soft. She works the soap up and down my shaft, teasing the underside with a light skim of her nails. My balls tighten, either with jealousy or an impending orgasm, I don’t know. And then she reaches down and cups them in her hand. Gently squeezing them and trailing her fingers over the sensitive flesh behind them.

My dick twitches and my heart is beating so fast, I may need to see a cardiologist. I fist my hands at my side fighting every instinct I have to turn her around, bend her over, and destroy that tight little pussy of hers.

“When I tripped and fell face first into your lap...” Tessa trails off, transfixed by the rivulets of water flowing down my pelvis, rising away the suds. “I could feel you. I’ve never wanted something in my mouth so bad...”

“Do you want my cock in your mouth, baby girl?” My voice comes out so strained and deep, I barely recognize it as mine.

She nods, licking her lips, never breaking eye contact with my erection. “Yes, I need to know what you taste like, even if it’s just once. I need it.”

Her comment strikes me as odd, but I don’t have time to question it because she drops to her knees and takes me in her hand. I do what most gentlemen would do in my position, I close my mouth and move so that the shower spray hits my back and protects her. There will be plenty of time later to make sure she knows I’m not letting her go so easily.

I hiss and let loose a string of expletives as the tip of her tongue flicks across the tip of my dick, licking up the pre-cum that’s seeped out. Her satisfied moan nearly sends me over the edge, but I manage to pull my shit together before she leans forward and slips the head of my cock in her mouth. She skims her tongue over the tip and around, sucking gently like she’s savoring a lollipop.

She takes me deeper, pulls back to the tip, and sucks me to the back of her throat. Holy Mother of God. As she hums around my length, I think of the player stats and try not to empty myself down her throat two seconds into the best blow job of my life. I clench my jaw, my ass, my stomach—basically anything that’s clenchable. And then I work my fingers into her hair, gripping it in a firm hold, and slide myself almost out of her mouth. If I let her have control, there’s no way I’ll be able to last, and I want to stretch this out as long as I can. I’ve dreamed of sliding myself between her lips way too many times for this to go quickly.

My hips surge forward, but I keep my thrust shallow, fucking her mouth at a leisurely pace. One of her hands drifts to my thigh, curling around it and digging her nails into the backside while the other reaches up to play with my balls.

The lust within me feeds itself, growing larger, until it’s an unstoppable wildfire surging through my veins and burning me from the inside. I increase my pace and thrust deeper into her mouth, every stroke taking me to the back of her throat. Her whimpers only spur me on, forcing me to fuck her faster.

Tears slip out the corner of her eyes, smudging her remaining eye makeup. I know I should slow down, but I can’t. I’m like a wild animal and

the only thing that will tame the beast within me is to fill her mouth with my cum and watch her swallow every last drop.

My balls tingle, tightening, as she continues to stroke them. I should pull out, give her a warning, but I want her to swallow me down. I want to brand her from the inside. There's something primal about coming inside her. I grunt and swear, and as I lock eyes with her hazel ones that are now more green, my hips buck, and I empty down her pretty throat.

She drinks me down, taking every last drop, and when I pull myself from her mouth, her tongue laves the tip, cleaning me.

I smooth back her hair, run my thumbs around her eyes to clean her makeup and tears, and cradle her jaw with my fingers. After several deep breaths, I get myself under control and help her to her feet.

The water has cooled, and I tug her to my chest, curling my arms around her and just holding her for a while before I dare move to turn off the shower.

I'm not a religious man by any stretch of the imagination but coming down Tessa's throat felt like a rare sacred moment; an act that transcended time and space to connect us in a way that bound our souls together, tangled them in a way that can't be undone. In that moment, we were truly one spirit, one mind, one body. She's imprinted herself on the core of my very being, completing me with something I didn't even know I needed.

"That was... That was... Wow." Tessa lets me wrap her up in a fluffy charcoal towel.

I nod. "Yeah. Wow."

I wrap myself in an identical towel and tug her back to my chest. I hold her to me, kissing the top of her head, and rubbing her back. Her forehead rests on my chest and I can feel the barest graze of her lips over my heart. My heart that belongs to her. I should have given it to her sooner. Told her how I felt. But hindsight doesn't change where we are now. I can only lead her to bed and show her how I feel. Worship her body until we both fall asleep from exhaustion and then repeat.

This has been the best Christmas I've had. Even better than the year I got my first bicycle, and that thing had lights around the wheels. But it's got nothing on Tessa's smile and everything else that makes her uniquely her.

"Let's go to bed, baby girl." I press a kiss to her temple as she nods. "I've got one more present for you."

SEVEN

Tessa

Crawling out of bed while Mick sleeps is the hardest thing I've ever had to do. He looks so relaxed, so happy, even in his sleep, and I want to snuggle with him forever. Which is part of the problem. Mick doesn't date. This was a one-night deal, and that's what I had.

As tempting as it would be to stay plastered to his side with my head on his chest, I know I won't be able to bear the rejection that would come in the morning. The awkwardness that would inevitably fall around us when he woke up and asked me to leave. Or worse: the agony of watching him struggle, unable to ask, while we stared at each other until I made some excuse and high-tailed it out of here.

Either way, this thing would end with my heart being ripped in two. So even though it's eating me up inside to leave, I have to go.

For both of us.

That's what I tell myself as I slip on my dress from last night and gather my purse, with one last lingering look out the penthouse window. The crowds are gone now. Tucked into their warm beds while I sneak out into the cold air to sulk back to my apartment all alone.

The first tear slides down my cheek after I settle into the back of the cab, and they don't stop. Not when the driver gives me pitying glances from the rearview mirror. Not when he offers me a few tissues. And not when I step into my tiny apartment, locking the door behind me, and throwing myself down on the couch.

It's my own fault, it really is. I agreed to the date. Convinced myself I could go back to work after a night with Mick and pretend nothing happened.

Stupid.

I'm so stupid.

There's no way I can pretend this night didn't mean everything. That Mick didn't mean everything.

I can't even say I'm not experienced in the protocols after a one-night stand because I've had a few and walked away completely unscathed. I've never felt this stabbing pain in my chest or the gut-wrenching despair that has my insides twisted.

A sob bubbles out of my throat, and I wipe away the fresh batch of tears before pulling my phone out of my clutch. I have a message from Jazz, telling me how nice it was to see me tonight and wishing me a Merry Christmas. Nothing from either of my parents. They were radio silent last year, so I can't pretend to be surprised even though it adds to the hurt. And nothing from Mick. I didn't expect anything from him either. He's probably still asleep in his giant comfortable bed, spread out like a starfish, glad for his space.

I was so stupid.

Knowing it's Christmas and I'm going to spend the day alone yet again, fills me with a longing I haven't felt in a long time. Maybe next year I'll start dating. Try to find someone who can fill the Mick-sized hole in my chest.

Who am I kidding? Next year isn't long enough to get over what happened last night. If I want a chance to push him from my mind and find someone else, there's only one solution. I can't see him every day. I can't go back to normal. I can't live in a world where I can forget how he and I fit together so beautifully. I just can't.

Not when I... Shit. Not when I fell in love with my boss. So much for keeping things uncomplicated.

I fire off a quick text to Jazz, hoping she has her phone on silent, and turning off mine. After changing into some pajamas, I snuggle up on the couch with an oversized fuzzy blanket and start my Christmas movie marathon. I burrow back into the couch cushions and tighten the blanket around myself imagining it's Mick's arms.

I let the ghost of my memories comfort me just this once as I drift back to sleep.

EIGHT

Mick

I wake to rays of morning light streaming across the sheets and the muted sound of Christmas carols coming through my speakers. Not entirely ready to wake up, I reach out toward Tessa to pull her against me, only to find an empty bed and cold sheets.

Shit.

I sit up, letting the sheets pool at my waist, a faint sheen of sweat breaking out around my temples and the back of my neck. She could be in the bathroom or the kitchen, no need to panic yet. I throw on a pair of sweats and a hoodie and begin my search. With each step, my heart beats louder and faster, and the knot in my stomach grows tighter.

I search all the rooms in the house, even the closets, but it does me no good. With each step I take, the knot inside me gets tighter and tighter. And then I step into the living room and see it. Or rather I don't see it. Her green dress—the one that drove me so crazy last night; the one that hugs her curves so perfectly; the one that made me envious of a piece of fabric—is gone.

She fucking left.

And if the cold sheets on her side of the bed are any indication, she's been gone for hours.

I didn't talk to her last night. I didn't tell her that I had no intention of letting her go. That she was the best thing since the invention of ice skates.

Stupid.

I'm so fucking stupid.

I was so consumed by her and her body that I didn't tell her how I feel. Hell, I wasn't even sure I knew how I felt. It hit me last night like a slapshot

straight to the face. I've been in love with her since the first day she walked into my office; it just took me a while to catch up. It's not just about the sex, although I want that too, but I also want to have dinner with her, wake up with her in the mornings, celebrate her victories and be there to lift her up during her defeats.

And like a dummy, my silence let her go.

Sure, maybe all she wants from me is a one-night stand. If that's truly all she wants I'd find a way to live with it.

No, fuck that.

I'll do whatever I can to convince her to give me—us—a shot. Even if that means fighting dirty and using my face scruff to do the convincing.

Now I have to find her, and I have no idea where she lives.

Grabbing my phone, I bring up her contact info. I call her, but it goes straight to voicemail. Several more tries get me the same result. With a sigh, I drop down to the couch, run a hand over my chin, and call the only other person who may be able to help.

She answers on the third ring and the curt tone of her voice when she does makes me wince. "This better be an emergency, Weller. I'm not even joking."

"Good morning, Jazz. Merry Christmas."

"Don't you good morning me. Christmas or not, you are far from my favorite person right now." I can't see her, but I know she's giving me that ball-withering look of hers. I've seen her give Gordon that look enough times, I try to avoid being on the receiving end of things.

I sigh again and nod, even though she can't see me. "I'm sorry, I know I shouldn't be calling you today—"

"Do you think that's why I'm mad at you right now?" She cuts me off. "Because you're calling me on Christmas? What the hell did you do, Mick?"

Her question makes me take a metaphorical step back. How would she know something happened? Unless... "You talked to Tessa?"

"I actually did not get a chance to *talk* to Tessa," Jazz bristles. "I woke up with a text from her telling me she's quitting the organization and now her phone's off. So, I ask again. What the hell did you do?"

"Technically, I didn't do anything. We had this amazing, mind blowing ___"

"I don't need details."

"—night together and when I woke up, she was gone." I sink back against

the couch. “No note. No text. Nothing. She really quit?”

“Yep.”

The thought of not seeing Tessa every day, of not seeing her ever again, makes my blood run cold. “I need her address.”

And she laughs. A full-on, clutch-your-belly kind of laugh. “What makes you think I want to help you after you made a mess of things?”

“Let me fix them. Please.” I pause and take a deep breath. “I won’t be able to live with myself if I don’t.”

Now it’s Jazz’s turn to sigh. “You’re lucky it’s Christmas and I’m feeling generous.”

NINE

Tessa

A pounding on my front door jolts me from my nap. In my dazed state, I don't realize how tight the blanket has wound around my legs, and instead of rolling off the couch to stand, I roll off the couch to the floor. Not only am I a mess, but I'm a hot mess.

My hair is sticking out in multiple directions, my eyes are puffy from crying, and my left arm hurts from landing on it. This is shaping up to be a fucking *fantastic* Christmas.

The pounding continues, but whoever it is will have to wait until I get myself untangled from this fluffy death trap.

I know my parents didn't suddenly decide to give a shit and want to be a part of my life. There's no way it's Mick. Jazz and Linc are probably still snuggled in bed. It's probably Mr. Gilbert again. He's in his eighties and slightly senile. He wanders the hallway in his underclothes a couple times a month, although he's never been this impatient.

"Hold on, Mr. Gilbert. I'll be there in a sec."

The knocking ceases and without it, my apartment is covered in a looming silence. The oppressive weight of the air settles on me, making my limbs feel heavy. Jesus. Looming silence? Oppressive weight? I guess that's what happens when the Christmas Carol is on while you're dozing in and out of consciousness.

"Fucking blanket," I mutter, finally untangling myself, and throwing it in a heap on the couch.

I make no attempt to smooth down my hair or wipe the mascara I'm sure is still smudged under my eyes. If I have to look at Mr. Gilbert in his tighty

whities, he can tolerate my messy hair and left-over makeup.

“Merry Christmas, Mr.—”

“Who the fuck is Gilbert?”

My breath catches in my throat and my stomach flips. My knuckles turn white as my hand grips the door, steadying me against the heat building up under my skin at the sight of Mick Weller standing in my hallway.

He looks worse than I feel.

He’s wearing a pair of sweatpants with a dark stain on the knee and a very worn Phoenix Lightning hoodie. His eyes are bloodshot and weary, and his shoulders are hunched like he’s carrying the weight of the world. His usual five-o’clock shadow has turned into a full-on scruffy beard, and despite myself, I ache to press against him.

“Tessa.” My name is a whisper on his lips as he reaches a hand toward me but must change his mind because it falls back to his side.

A wave of emotions crash over me. Hurt. Loss. Regret. Love. The last one hurts the most and I take a shuddering breath and close my eyes, squeezing them tightly to ward off the tears. When I open them, a lone tear escapes, sliding down my cheek. “I can’t do this, Mick.”

“Tessa.” This time my name is like a plea.

Jazz probably told him I quit. That’s why he’s here. So he doesn’t lose his competent assistant.

I take a deep breath and then another. “I’m sorry. I made this more than it was supposed to be. I can’t pretend last night didn’t happen. I can’t go back to normal.” I swallow past the lump in my throat. “I can’t work for the Devils and see you every day.”

With a hollow feeling deep in my chest, I start to shut the door, but his hand shoots out to stop me. “Tessa.” This time he says my name with more force than before. But not enough to break my resolve.

“I’m sorry, Coach Weller.”

He winces and captures me with his sorrowful brown eyes. “I can’t pretend last night didn’t happen either. And I don’t think I know what normal is anymore.”

“I can’t... I can’t go back to work. You’re going to have to find someone else.”

“I don’t give a shit if you ever take another step in that arena ever again.”

Wait. What? “This isn’t about the job?”

He takes a tentative step into my apartment and then another. “I don’t

give two shits about the Devils right now. I want you to stay. With me.”

My mouth opens. Then closes. Then opens again as I stand there and stare at him. I may look halfway calm on the outside, but on the inside, my body is short-circuiting. All the little Tessas inside my head are running into each other, throwing piles of papers all over the place, and setting things on fire. It’s chaos up there, and it’s not much better for the poor organ in my chest beating to the rhythm of a very erratic drummer.

“I should have said something last night.” He hangs his head and shakes it, his brown hair flopping to his forehead. “But I got so caught up in you. I don’t want this to end. I don’t want this to be only one night.”

“You said you didn’t date.”

“I don’t like casual dating and all the games and bullshit that come along with it. There’s nothing casual about us, Tessa. Or the way I feel about you.”

I don’t dare move a muscle, afraid that the most miniscule movement would derail his train of thought. I might’ve even stopped breathing. “How do you feel about me?”

His chocolate brown eyes melt me as he pins me with a smoldering look. He raises his hand again and this time, the tips of his fingers brush my cheek. “I know this sounds crazy. I know it’s fast. But I love you Tessa, I think I fell in love with you the day you walked into my office with your red high heels and matching lipstick. Please tell me I haven’t completely fucked this up.”

The little Tessas in my brain have all stopped to swoon and I can’t help but rest a hand over my heart and join them. Mick Weller, Head Coach of the Nashville Devils, and the sexiest hunk of man alive has declared his love for me on Christmas morning—while I’ve got bed head, and I’m in fucking snowflake pajamas. FML.

My eyes widen and my hands fly to my hair.

“Stop.” Mick chuckles, his hands grabbing mine, pulling them away from my unruly tresses and holding them between us. “I like you like this.”

“Like a hot mess?” I squeeze his fingers, grounding myself in him, in his touch.

“Like you just rolled out of my bed. Although, I’d rather have you in it.” Mick pulls me to him and presses a kiss to my forehead. “Tell me you want to be with me. Tell me you want to give us a shot.”

I sigh and relax against him, resting my head on his chest. “You know why I quit?”

“No, I don’t.” His arms tense even though his words come out light.

“I couldn’t bear to see you every day and know I couldn’t touch you. Quitting was the only way I had a chance at getting over you and moving on with my life. I’m not sure when it happened or why it took me so long to realize it, but I love you too. Which I know is crazy because—”

Before I have a chance to list the reasons, he silences me, stamping his mouth over mine in a harsh kiss. Damn, that scruff is glorious. When he pulls back, a smile pulls at his lips and his hands run up and down my arms. “I love you, Tessa.”

“I love you, too.”

“Since it’s still Christmas morning,” Mick’s eyes gleam mischievously as he backs me up toward the sofa, “I think I should get to unwrap a present.”

“You know, I think you’re right.”

As Mick kisses a trail down my neck and fiddles with the buttons on my pajama top, I can’t help but feel lucky. This man makes me feel more complete than I have in a long time and giving me his love is the best present I could’ve ever asked for. It doesn’t hurt that I hear jingle bells when he kisses the soft spot behind my ear or flutters his lips across my collarbone.

“Do you think Jazz will let me have my job back?” I murmur against the top of his head.

“Consider it done,” Mick says as he narrows his eyes. “But I’d like to propose another bet.”

“What kind of bet are we making this time?”

“I bet I can make you come in less than five minutes. Using only my tongue.”

Yes please. That’s a bet I will take any day of the week. His thick cock may be the end of me, but his tongue and the magic things he does with it, are a close second. “You’re on. And if you win?”

“No more talking to the rookies.”

Of course.

I open my mouth to remind him that technically the rookies come talk to me, but before I can get a word out, Mick sweeps me off my feet only to toss me down on the couch. My terms of the bet don’t get set before he rips off my shorts and then I don’t care anymore.

I think I win this Christmas bet either way.

I can only hope every Christmas morning starts out the same way—with this gorgeous man’s head between my legs, jingle bells ringing in my ears.



THANK you so much for reading JINGLE DEVIL!! I hope you loved this little holiday interlude with Mick and Tessa as much as I loved writing it.

Are you new to the Nashville Devils and not ready to leave? Check out [FORBIDDEN DEVIL](#), book 1 in the series, or keep scrolling for a special sneak preview.

Already read the books and can't get enough? Don't forget to preorder [BOSSY DEVIL](#), the final Nashville Devil Novel!

Special Look Inside Forbidden Devil - Jazlyn

THE BALLOTS WERE SENT OUT, votes cast, and results tallied. The consensus, ladies and gentlemen—*drum roll, please*—the general manager is a giant dick. Side note—probably overcompensating for a small one.

Resident asshole in question, Adam Barrett, GM of the Nashville Devils hockey team, sits across the conference room table from my brother and I in an awkward stare down. To say I could slash the tension with a machete would be a gross understatement.

Damn, I'd love to have one of those right now. Self-defense is alive and well in Tennessee.

While Adam is a pretty decent GM, he's a shit human being.

"I don't know what you both expect from me." Adam plants his hands on the long mahogany table and leans toward us. His chair creaks beneath him, and he lets out a frustrated sigh. Every word he speaks drips with contempt. "It's not in my job description to babysit two over-privileged rich kids who can't fathom what it means to own a hockey franchise, let alone run it.

I shift in my chair and my pulse skyrockets, as the heated glare from Adam settles on me. His hardened brown eyes bore into my soul, and I swear I can hear his teeth crack beneath the pressure of his clenched jaw.

It's a good thing looks can't actually kill. If they could, my lifeless corpse would slouch to the floor.

I did not wear my kickass heels to die in them. Adam will have to glare me to death another day.

He'd been my father's right-hand man for years, and for the life of me, I

don't understand why. Not that my father and I had a particularly close relationship. Growing up, I was always my mother's problem. Even after they divorced, he was too busy to spend real quality time with his children. But if the rumors are true, he was just as difficult as Adam, and Adam is a dumpster fire. Being an asshole must be a fairly common trait in the upper echelons of men's professional hockey.

I glance at my brother. Gordon's widened eyes and rigid posture reflect the same shock I feel.

Well, this meeting is off to a fantastic start.

Gordon and I set up this appointment with every intention of aligning ourselves with Adam, wanting to get the upper management team on the same page before our ownership was announced to the country. Somewhere in the last five minutes, the train left the station, derailed, and plowed into a fireworks factory.

I eye him like I would a ticking time bomb. I'm sure he won't physically explode, even though the pulsing vein on the side of his forehead indicates otherwise. "We're not trying to cause you more work."

"It doesn't matter. You're going to," Adam growls. I hold my hands up in surrender. "Listen, Adam—"

"What would a spoiled princess like you know about hockey, anyway? You probably wouldn't know a puck if it hit

you in the face." He gestures toward me, his hand sweeping out before it falls back to the table with a loud thump.

Considering I grew up playing hockey, I can only assume his observation is based purely on the fact I have a vagina and not my actual experience with the sport. I'm also pretty sure he knows that.

He's a fucking prick.

"I did play hockey. In the Olympics."

"On the *women's* team. We all know how different it is from real hockey."

I steal a glance at Gordon. His green eyes sharpen, his nostrils flare, and his lips press together in a firm line. He's always the first one to come to my defense. Not that I can't stand up for myself, but in his mind, no one messes with his little sister. Adam is either completely oblivious, or doesn't give a shit, because he turns to him next.

"And you, Gordie." He spits out the name like my brother doesn't deserve to share a name with the great hockey legend. "You're just some

washed up has-been who couldn't make it in pro-hockey. You're sure as shit not going to hack it here."

My spine straightens, and I throw my shoulders back as the blood simmers in my veins. If there's anyone who needs to eat a bag of dicks, it's this guy.

Gordon is a lot of things, but a washed up has-been isn't one of them. The only reason he isn't playing professional hockey is a devastating knee injury. Otherwise, he'd still be out there week after week tearing up the ice.

He stands, towering over Adam with his bulky six-foot- three frame. The muscle in his jaw tics before he leans over and slaps his hands flat on the table. The sound echoes off the walls as he pins Adam with a glare, and I give him a mental high five. It's a total power move to put Adam back in his place.

He needs to learn he's no longer in charge around here.

"Unfortunately for you, *Mr. Barrett*, our father left the hockey team to us. In case you don't understand, that means you now answer to Jazlyn and me. It would be in your best interest to keep future comments about our perceived shortcomings to yourself." Gordon straightens, smoothing a hand down his tie. "Unless, of course, you'd like to search for another NHL team to work for. I don't know anyone who's looking for a new GM right now, and with last season's record, you don't look too good."

Adam's face turns a satisfying shade of red as he jumps to his feet. "What the hell was your father thinking? You two are going to be the end of this team. You're both a laughingstock. Don't think we aren't all waiting for you to fail." With one last glare at Gordon, then me, Adam turns and stalks out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

My fists clench under the table so hard my nails dig into my palms. I want nothing more than to charge into his office and tear him a new asshole. But regardless of how I feel about Adam, we need him. My father's closed mind and selfishness brought the Devils to the bottom. They finished the previous season with the second worst record in the league. Pair those stats with two inexperienced owners, no general manager in their right mind would consider joining the organization right now. We need to win, and win often, to entice even a half- decent GM to replace Adam.

That means my best option is to swallow my pride and let it go. Even if my brain is screaming at me to clean house.

Gordon releases a long breath, unbuttons his black suit jacket, and

collapses into his seat. Dark circles rim his eyes, and there's a noticeable slouch in his shoulders. He looks like he's in need of a serious nap, or maybe a stiff drink. Or both.

I need both.

"That went well," I muse, lacing my fingers together in front of me, and quirk my mouth in a wry smile.

"I don't know, sis. I'm not sure we were in the same meeting."

I hate how Adam makes him sound so defeated, and it riles me up all over again. I shoot to my feet, sending my chair rolling several feet backward.

"You know what? Fuck that guy. I don't give a shit what he says. We're going to turn this team around. This is *our* legacy, Gordon. We're going to take the Devils out of the bottom and make them winners. We're going to prove everyone wrong, including that fancy suit wearing asshole."

My voice steels with resolve as I point towards the door where Adam made his recent exit.

Gordon slumps even lower and runs a hand down his face. "I hope you're right, Jazz. I really hope you're right."

"I think you should know by now, brother, I'm always right." My lips curl up in a smirk, and I cock my hip against the table.

Am I cocky? Yes. A little self-assured? Right now, absolutely.

But the gauntlet has been thrown, and there's no way in hell I'm not picking it up. Just need to figure out how to run a hockey franchise while simultaneously building a good team and getting wins.

Couldn't be too hard. Probably. Right?

Gordon shakes his head, chuckling. "I wish we could just fire him."

"Trust me, I know the feeling. Unfortunately, unless we can start winning, I don't think we stand a chance at recruiting anyone." "True enough." Gordon makes his way to the door of the conference room. "I'm going to make some calls to a few friends of mine and see what our options are for replacing him."

I nod. "Good idea. Keep me posted."

Anger and restlessness boil through me. Sitting down in my office chair to stew for the next few hours doesn't seem very productive. A good walk around the stadium will help me get my bearings and settle the storm brewing inside.

Adam's right about one thing. I have no idea what it takes to run a hockey team. For the better part of my twenty-eight years of life, I've been on the ice.

The front of the house is foreign to me, and I didn't ask for it. I didn't expect to have a hockey team suddenly thrown in my lap. I didn't expect to have to move my entire life for Dad's dying wish, or for his dying wish to land me as co-owner of his hockey team.

I certainly didn't expect to be in a position where I would be completely disregarded and disrespected because of my gender. Our ownership hasn't even been made public yet. If Adam's reaction is any indication, I'm in for a media shit show.

Great.

I make it downstairs, sure I'll be able to find the workout room and, with it, a punching bag. Maybe giving it hell for a few minutes will improve my mood. Better it than Adam's face. I clench and unclench my fists. I haven't been this pissed in a long time.

Lost in my violent thoughts, I round a corner and run into a solid wall of muscle. The impact sends me staggering in my heels, and I might have fallen on my ass if two hands didn't reach out to steady me.

"I'm so sorry."

My muscles tense, and my heart pounds in my chest. I know that voice. It's deep and gritty, yet smooth and hypnotizing. It's a voice I could get lost in. And have. The meeting with Adam threw me off balance, and I forgot about him being here.

As one of my players.

"I almost ran you over. Are you okay?" A flicker of recognition sparks in his light blue eyes, and his hands drop to his sides.

Lincoln Dallas.

A missed opportunity if there ever was one. One look at him, one innocent touch, has my nipples peaked and my panties soaked. My body remembers him too.

He's one of the sexiest men I've ever laid eyes on. His tall, muscled body, full lips, and chiseled jaw are a gift to women everywhere. The hockey gods have been kind to him. Unlike some of the other hockey players, he doesn't look like he just got knocked around a few times after meeting the wrong end of a hockey stick.

"Jazz?" Lincoln's mouth tilts to a frown. "What are you doing here?"

I cross my arms over my chest, trying—and failing—to get my damn heart rate under control. Shit, it's like I'm in middle school with the way my body's reacting—racing heart, fluttery stomach, damp palms. I take a deep

breath, release it slowly and count to ten. Get it together. “Hello to you too, Linc.”

His eyes flash to my cleavage before meeting my gaze. “Sorry. I’m just surprised. It’s been a long time.”

I drop my arms. As satisfying as it is having Lincoln eying my boobs, it’s not the best time. Now that I’m his new boss, there would likely never be a good time.

“It has. Six years, I think.” I don’t think. I know damn well how long it’s been since the last time I laid eyes on him.

I haven’t stopped thinking about him since.

He grabs my hand and gives it a squeeze, effectively jump-starting my body from its sexual hiatus. It’s like being hooked up to a car battery. Tingles race across my hand and down my spine, right to that bundle of nerves no man can ever seem to find. My body aches for more of his touch. His fingers brush along the length of mine, teasing my flesh in light caresses. No one but Lincoln has ever made my body light up like a cheap carnival game—and it makes him dangerous to my current position.

“I was sorry to hear about your dad, but it’s good to see you.” His voice deepens as his eyes travel the length of my body. “If you’re going to be here for a few days and need someone to talk to or maybe get your mind off things, I’m here for you. I’d love to catch up.”

I can think of a number of ways Lincoln can get my mind off things, starting with—*Abort. Abort.* Rule number one of hockey team ownership: no fraternization with the players. I need to get out of here fast before I lose myself in his husky words and steely gaze.

Adam and Eve’s corruption came in the form of an apple. That man—that sexy-as-fuck hockey playing man—could easily become mine.

“It’s good to see you too, but, um...I have to run. I’ll see you around.”

Lincoln’s eyebrows draw together, and before he can utter another word, I turn around and bolt back to my office, far away from temptation, as fast as my black Prada heels can take me.

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About the Author

Lover of all things romance and hockey, she also loves to bake extra delicious treats. Melissa Ivers loves to write steamy stories with all those hot, alpha men and women who can bring them to their knees, literally and figuratively. Melissa lives in Kentucky with her eye-rolling teenage son and two of the laziest dogs known to man. She has numerous fictional boyfriends, but—shhhh—they don't know about each other.

When she isn't writing or working, you'll find her under a blanket on the couch reading a book on her Kindle, binge watching shows off Netflix, such as the *Office* and *Vampire Diaries* and being an all-around joy.

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