



Thin ICE

a coach's daughter, reverse harem romance

LISA CULLEN

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DAUGHTER, REVERSE
HAREM ROMANCE**

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DESCRIPTION

1 hookup 5 years ago + 1 daughter of the coach + 3 star hockey players = happy ending?

A one night stand five years ago changed my life forever. My sweet daughter Abigail is my life and the reason I advocate for women's rights in the male dominated world of sports.

But when I become the physiotherapist for my dad's hockey team, I don't expect to run into my daughter's baby daddy... and two of his hunky best friends.

Zachary, the goalie, is irresistibly handsome and definitely off-limits.

Lennox is calm and relaxed off the ice, and a menace with skates on his feet.

Justin is the passionate, Casanova playboy of the team.

Only one of them is my baby girl's daughter...

But all *three* of them want me.

LUCY

Thank God. I eased my head left and then right. Muscles that had been bunched and tight for the last hour finally released, and I groaned while massaging the nape of my neck. Daylight forced me to blink when I pushed open the door, and I felt like a zombie waking from the dead until my vision cleared.

The walk from the clinic to my car was a few dozen feet, but it felt like forever before I slid behind the wheel. “If I never have to do a clinical rotation again, it will be too soon.” I knew clinicals would be a bitch, but I still wasn’t prepared for the sheer number of hours I’d spend locked inside a tiny room listing injuries.

My phone shrilled my dad’s tone from my purse, and I fished it out before it rolled over to voicemail. “Hey, Dad.”

“Dinner’s ready. You want to come over and eat with us?” His smooth voice held out hope I’d say yes.

I nodded and cranked the car. “Let me pick up Abigail. I’ll see you in an hour.”

“Okay. I’ll tell your mom to hold dinner for you.” He signed off without a goodbye, but I didn’t expect one. Dad’s great, but he wasn’t the warm and fuzzy type.

I spent the whole drive to Abigail’s day care drumming up names for my future physiotherapy clinic. Nothing sounded right. I wanted to convey healing with strength but with that undertone of softness. Pulling up at the day care, I smiled at

Abigail's teachers and stepped out to help my daughter into the backseat.

"Hi, Mama." She bounced over to me, her sunshine smile plumping her cheeks.

I scooped her into a hug and tugged off her backpack. "Hey, sweetheart. Did you have a good day?"

"Uh-huh." Abigail's blonde ponytail draped down the back of her neck. "Did you?"

I waited until she'd strapped herself in and I'd gotten behind the wheel again to answer. "It was a good day." I pulled out on the highway and eased toward Dad's. "Listen, sweetie, we're going to stop by Gram and Gramps for dinner, okay?"

"Okay." She played with the straps on her seat and kicked her feet back and forth. "I have homework."

"Really?" I switched between watching her in the mirror and keeping an eye on the road. "What kind of homework?"

Her toes caught on the passenger seat and she pulled them back while humming her favorite song. "It's due tomorrow. It's about my family. Who's my daddy?"

Whoa. My entire body spasmed at the question, and I tightened my grip on the wheel to keep the car on the road. How was I supposed to tell my daughter that I didn't know her daddy? She was the result of a one-night stand in college. A night I don't remember except for a bright red strawberry birthmark on the right side of a muscular neck.

Thankfully, we pulled into my parents' driveway and Abigail forgot all about her assignment. How could I help her finish it without telling her the truth?

"Gramps!" Abigail wiggled in her seat and yanked off the straps holding her in place.

My dad—the head coach of the next up-and-coming professional American Hockey League team—grinned playfully at Abigail and cupped his hands around his eyes while pressing his nose to the glass. He might be a bit short-

tempered with his team, and with me, but he loved his granddaughter with every cell in his body. “Abby, are you in there?” He knocked on the glass. “Hello?”

“Gramps, I’m here.” My daughter popped up from her seat and pecked on the glass with her little fingers. “I’m right here.”

He opened the door and wrapped her up in a bear hug. “Hiya, kiddo.” He gave me a quick nod of welcome and turned for the house. “Got something I need to talk to you about, Lucy.”

I stiffened automatically and had to force my jaw not to clench. The last time he said those words to me was right after I told him I was pregnant with Abigail. A conversation that had gone over like a blowtorch on ice. We’d put that behind us, but I never quite got over the disappointment I saw on his face that night.

Mom met us at the front door and ushered us all into the kitchen and straight to the old, scratched-up kitchen table I’d done homework on for as long as I could remember.

“How were your clinicals?” Mom wasted no time in passing around plates already filled with food and helping Abigail over to her seat.

I broke open my dinner roll and slathered it with butter. “Not bad. Glad they’re over.”

“What happens now?” Dad asked while adding salt to his potatoes. “You’re still helping out at the women’s and teen’s advocacy center?”

“Yeah.” I shook my head. “It’s so sad. Over forty percent of teen girls stop sports because of self-esteem and body image issues.” I forced myself to stop there before I delved into the harsh reality of it all. I’d stopped playing hockey at sixteen for those very reasons. It took years for me to understand that my body shape had nothing to do with my ability to play. I was a devil on the ice. Always had been. But I’d quit because of my size and suffered for years before I finally found peace with myself and a body shape that I loved.

But I really didn't want to go into all that with my dad. "I found a building that's available for rent. Now that I'm fully licensed, I can open my own clinic."

A look passed between Mom and Dad, the two of them having a whole conversation with a single look. Man, they were good at that.

Dad set his fork aside and dropped his hands to the table. "About that." He gave me a small smile. "I have an offer for you." His smile widened. "I'd like you to consider becoming the team's physiotherapist."

I choked on the bite of roll and slapped a hand over my mouth to keep bits from flying across the table.

Dad waited for me to recover, watching me with that look I'd seen all through my childhood.

"You want me to work with you?" I almost couldn't believe it, but now that we were sitting here, I remembered all the times he'd asked me about my hopes for a future clinic. He knew I was worried that I'd never make it out on my own. Most businesses failed, even those with a degree behind them.

He leaned over the table and laced his fingers together. "It's been on my mind for a while. We could use someone who can check out the guys between games. Makes sense to have someone on staff."

"And if I think they need to be pulled from a game?" I couldn't help asking. "Will you trust me to have both their best interest and the game's outcome as a priority?" I'd never worked with my dad before, but he'd been at enough of my games as a kid and I'd seen enough of his coaching through the years to know he had a *no-holds-barred* mentality. He didn't believe in holding back.

Well, neither did I, especially when it might mean a player's career.

His jaw ticked a couple times, but he nodded slowly. "I'll have questions, and you have to take the player's choices into consideration." He held up one finger. "But if you tell me they need to be pulled from a game, I'll listen."

I took another bite of my roll to give myself time to think.

Dad's grin fell and he turned serious. "Of course, there's no fraternizing with the team members. You'll be considered part of the team. No relationships among team members." He attempted to make it sound like a joke. "Never had a woman on the team before, but I'm trusting you to keep it professional. Especially since you're all the same age."

I laughed at the thought of hooking up with one of his players. "Don't worry, Dad. That won't be a problem." Not only did I have a strict policy about not dating my clients, but I had no interest in dating period. Not when I was on the cusp of a new career and had a daughter to raise. My days were full enough. I didn't need a guy to fulfill any lingering desires.

He nodded and resumed eating. "Good. Meet me at the rink at eight tomorrow morning. I'll introduce you to the team and get things rolling."



I SHOULDN'T BE NERVOUS. So why did I have to keep wiping my hands on my pants as I crossed the parking lot the next morning? A blast of cold air hit me square in the face when I pulled open the side door and stepped inside. I'd never quite gotten used to the cold that came with ice hockey. It settled in my bones and made me long for hot chocolate, thick gloves, and boots. I'd have to learn to deal with it if I wanted to keep this job. And I did. From the moment Dad mentioned coming here to work, I'd felt drawn to it. I missed hockey. I never felt cold once I stepped on the ice. It was the sitting and watching that put an ache in my joints.

Shaking off the thought of gliding across the ice, I turned toward Dad's office while tapping out a text to him that I was on my way inside.

Concrete walls and a low ceiling made me feel a bit claustrophobic, but I could deal with it.

Seconds later, he stuck his head out from a door down the hallway and waved me closer. "Right on time." He stepped out

and closed the door behind him. “Come on. The guys will be on their way out onto the ice. We’ll catch them there.”

“Great.” For some reason, my voice came out high and squeaky. Which was the opposite of great. I cleared my throat and focused. I couldn’t let it get to me that I was about to be working with one of the world’s leading hockey teams.

Dad led the way down a concrete-walled corridor with gray doors on either side. Man, someone either really loved the muted color or they’d just been too bored to bother choosing different ones. “Your office will be here.” He pointed at an open door.

I spotted an examination table and a long row of shelves and cabinets as we hurried past. “Am I expected to be with you during games and practice or should I stay back here?”

“Whichever makes more sense to you.” He increased his pace and held a hand overhead. “Lennox, hold up.”

A man ahead of me lifted his mask and slapped a hand to the back of the man ahead of him. Brown hair curled around the edges of his helmet, and dark eyes found mine as he looked past my dad. “What’s up, Coach?”

With thick pads and helmets, it was hard to get a good look at the team. They all turned to face Dad.

Another man paused. “Are we canceling practice?”

Dad motioned them all to step back into the hallway, and we stopped a few feet from my new office. “We’ll start practice in a minute.”

The two men ahead of Lennox removed their helmets and I stopped dead in my tracks, my heart kicking hard against my ribs. What the hell was that? The guys were gorgeous and as different as night and day. Though they were both tall and probably muscular—it was hard to tell with the padded uniforms—one had blond hair and light blue eyes while the other had short dark hair and eyes the color of coal.

“Guys, this is my daughter, Lucy. She’s going to be your new physiotherapist. It will be her job to help make sure any injuries are treated right away and with the utmost attention to

detail. Do not make her life difficult. We're all professionals here, and I expect you to act like it." Dad looked each man in the eye, and they all responded with straightened shoulders and nods of respect.

I'd dealt with a few men from professional teams of varying sports during my clinicals. A few were assholes, but they'd generally been a good bunch. I expected the best from Dad's team because he demanded respect and gave it to his players in equal measure.

Dad introduced me to the entire team—all twenty players—but their names and faces blurred together after a while.

Except for three men. Lennox with the dark eyes. Justin with the blond hair and playful smile. And Zachary. Zachary in particular held my attention. Something about him struck me as familiar though I couldn't put my finger on which detail stood out to me. They were all gorgeous in their own way, and I found myself almost stuttering over my words when Dad introduced me.

Heat scorched my cheeks and I prayed they'd think it was cold from the ice rink and the frigid air shooting down on us turning my cheeks bright red. I brushed off the lingering attraction and focused. Of course I'd be drawn to the three hot guys in hockey gear. I hadn't had sex in five years. Being in close proximity with a gorgeous guy was bound to get any woman's libido going. I could manage this. No problem. I was here to work and nothing else.

"Thank you for taking time to meet me." I fisted my hands to keep from wiping the sweat on my pants and jerked my head over my shoulder. "I'll be setting up my office in there. Feel free to come by anytime. I'll also be attending all your games and practices. If you have anything you need checked out, don't hesitate to ask."

Some guys would take that as a free pass to make a crude joke, and while I saw a few guys make suggestive faces, they all remained quiet.

Dad clapped his hands. "Alright. Everyone onto the ice. Big game this weekend."

They all filed toward the end of the hallway where an open door gave me a view of the ice rink. The clatter of hockey sticks rang through the air to mix with the good-natured ribbing among the team.

I turned my back on the retreating team and stepped into my new office. It still smelled of paint and drywall dust, but I didn't care. I had my very own office. A squeal of excitement tightened in my throat.

Footsteps sounded behind me and I whirled around. Justin stopped in the open doorway and leaned his shoulder on the frame. His heavy pads made him look bulky, but the slight grin teasing his lips drew my attention.

I licked my lips and he followed the action with a smoldering look that caused heat to pool low in my belly. "Can I help you?"

"Oh, I hope so." He took a step into the room, coming close enough that I caught the flecks of gold in his blue eyes.

Holy hell the guy was hot enough to make me catch fire with nothing more than a look.

"Justin, right?" I forced my legs to move and walked over to the examination table. "What can I do for you?"

He followed behind me, his presence lifting the hairs on the back of my neck and sending jolts of awareness down my spine. "I think I pulled a muscle. Could you check it for me?"

LUCY

Bullshit. The word lingered on the edge of my tongue, and I bit my inner cheek to keep from saying it out loud. I couldn't risk making a fool of myself on the first day, but something about the guy's cocky smile told me that he had another muscle group in mind.

I was ninety percent certain he was full of shit, but I waved for him to come on in. "You're going to have to remove your pads."

He yanked off the outer layer of his uniform so fast he could have been a professional stripper. Oh, wait. They were all about the slow tease. So, what did that make this guy?

His blond hair stood up in short spikes that would be flattened once he wore his helmet for more than five minutes, but the jagged look suited him. As did the cocky demeanor radiating off him. He strolled over to the exam table, and I'll be damned if he didn't have a slight limp every time he moved his right leg.

"I need you to fill these out." I grabbed a stack of forms and shoved the clipboard at him.

He smirked while writing. "I was going to stop by your dad's office on my way out of practice and find out what I was supposed to do. Then he goes and brings you on board." He lifted his head and gave me a long once over that for some reason didn't feel as creepy as it should. If anything, it made my pulse beat faster. This one was trouble. "Must be my lucky day."

I crossed my arms and leaned a hip against the cold countertop. My new digs were brighter than the mundane gray outside, but the beige walls and white countertops could still use some color. I'd see what I could do about bringing in some paintings to liven up the place. He handed the clipboard back to me. "I think it's everyone's lucky day, Justin." I met his smirking grin with one of my own. I knew how to deal with guys like him. He'd flirt and maybe ask for my number. But he'd never take anything seriously. Guys like him never did.

I didn't like judging him after a two-minute interaction, but everything about this guy screamed *player*.

"What's the problem?" I rubbed my hands together to make sure they wouldn't shock him with cold and narrowed my focus on his leg.

His smirking grin fell and he stretched out his leg. "Most likely a hamstring strain." My eyebrows shot up and he laughed. "I've had them before, so I know what they feel like. There's a tight sensation here." He pinched the back of his leg, right over the hamstring.

"Scoot back onto the table and lift your leg." I didn't touch him yet. Wouldn't if I could keep from it, but I had to once it came time to perform the range of motion test and to be able to properly document my findings.

Damn. He had fine muscle tone.

"Need me to take my pants off?" The smirk returned.

I lifted his leg and tested his range of motion. "Do you want to stay on the team?"

"Yes. What does that have to do with it?" His hiss of pain sliced the air.

I winced for him. "Sorry. But you heard my dad. No fraternizing." I lowered his leg to the table and stepped back. "I'm happy to report you can keep your pants on."

"You're a smart ass." He propped up on his elbows. "I like it."

“Yeah, well, don’t think it makes you special. I’m a smart ass to everyone.” It wasn’t a complete lie. I usually tried to be more professional, but Justin made it easy to loosen up. “And you’re also right about the strain. You remember what to do?”

“RICE.” Justin swung his legs over the edge of the table. “Rest. Ice. Compression. Elevation. Got it, doc.”

“And come see me again if it gets worse. An MRI might be in order to make sure you haven’t torn it.” I scribbled the diagnosis on his paperwork and looked at him through lowered lashes. “You should probably take a few days off skating.”

He started shaking his head before I even finished speaking. “No way. Big game this weekend. I can’t miss it.”

I’d expected that response. “You know what happens if you ignore an injury.” I said it as more of a threat than anything. Hockey players were notorious for skating through injuries. I once played a whole game with a broken nose because I couldn’t bear the idea of disappointing my teammates.

Justin slid from the table, the move bringing us face-to-face. And damn it all if I didn’t want to kiss him right then. It made no sense, except that I hadn’t gotten laid in almost six years and the raw masculinity mixed with Justin’s devil-may-care attitude made him far too attractive. I wasn’t about to break my dad’s rules. Not even for what I was sure would be a scorching hot kiss that might have the potential for more.

The disappointment wouldn’t be worth it. Before I could recover enough to step back, Zachary and Lennox slammed the door open and burst over the threshold.

“Geez, man, what’s taking so long?” Lennox smacked his helmet against his palm. “We need to run drills.” His long hair feathered around his face and he scraped it back with a frustrated huff.

Zachary scuffed his knuckles over his cheek after setting his helmet back on the crown of his head.

“Oh, you know.” Justin winked at me and stretched one arm past me to grab his gear. His breath whispered over my

cheek, eliciting a rush of goosebumps. “Just falling in love with the doc.”

“Cut the shit.” Zachary scowled and knocked on the doorframe. “Stop hitting on Coach’s daughter. We all know she’s out of your league.”

The compliment combined with his sour tone twisted my stomach and caused a sour taste in the back of my throat. I stepped back and to the side, opening up the space between me and Justin.

He made a noise in the back of his throat that might have been disappointment, but he pulled on his gear and stomped over to Zachary and Lennox.

The reality of Zachary’s words punched straight to my heart. I wasn’t looking for a relationship, but having the possibility ripped away from me hurt more than I anticipated. I pushed all the hurt away and focused. “He needs to watch that leg. Maybe let him take it easy out there today.” I lifted my eyebrows and met all three men’s gazes head-on. I would not allow my burst of attraction for them to impede my work. I couldn’t risk losing what little ground I’d gained by taking on this position.

Besides, a relationship would interfere with my goals. I wasn’t about to give up my hopes and dreams for a quick and dirty tumble.

Lennox hooked Justin’s arm and hauled him toward the hallway. “We’ll take care of him.” His dark eyes blazed when he looked back at me over his shoulder. “Thanks for seeing him.”

“It’s what I’m here for.” I shrugged like it didn’t matter, even though it did. Very much. I needed these guys to trust me with their injuries. They didn’t have to find me attractive. That would hurt more than it helped in this situation. But they did need to respect me as a medical professional and someone who could help them.

The three of them filed out of my office and thumped down the hall, the sound of their hockey sticks rattling along

the way. I shook my head to clear it of any lingering hormones and wiped down the exam table with an antiseptic towel before pulling fresh paper over the edge and tucking it in.

My phone buzzed from my pocket and I pulled it out far enough to check the screen. The sight of Abigail's preschool number caused my heart to stampede and I answered with a breathless "Hello?"

"Miss Ashley, this is Mrs. Perkins. I'm calling to inform you that Abigail took a little spill at school today." The woman's calm voice did nothing to ease my panic.

"What happened? Is she okay?" I glanced around the room to make sure I wasn't forgetting anything, then remembered all I'd brought in was my phone and keys.

Mrs. Perkins took a deep breath. "She seems fine, but we would like for her to see a doctor."

"What happened?" I repeated.

"It seems she fell off the swing while out on the playground. She's up and playing but has complained of a headache, and there is some swelling."

Oh God. My hand trembled on the phone. Not Abigail. Not my baby. I couldn't stand for anything to happen to her. She might have been unplanned and a complete shock, but I loved that girl with every bit of my heart. "I'll be right there."

"Thank you. We look forward to seeing you. I'll make sure Abigail is ready to go when you arrive."

I hung up the phone before I said something I'd regret. Abigail's school was fantastic. We hadn't had any problems all year. But I knew that if I kept listening to her talk then I'd go apeshit. It was better for both of us if I ended the call and used the drive over to calm down.

Sucking in a deep breath and closing my eyes while I let it out slowly, I lowered my shoulders. "She's okay. It's a minor bump. Outward swelling is good. It means the trauma hasn't gone inward." I imagined a lump and potential bruise on my baby girl's face and all the breathing in the world couldn't calm the storm spinning out of control. Stuffing my phone in

my pocket, I rushed out of the office and hurried down the hallway.

Dad would be in his office for the first hour of practice. He always finished up business calls while the team warmed up. He'd join them on the ice later. I had to tell him that I was leaving early. Not my best moment on my first day, but it couldn't be helped. Thankfully, I knew he wouldn't mind. Dad might be a hard ass, but he would do anything for Abigail. I'd have to fight him to keep him from meeting me at the doctor's office. Hell, he'd be more upset about the fall than me. Nothing bothered him more than his granddaughter's tears.

My sneakers squeaked on the harsh concrete until I stopped outside Dad's door. His voice filtered out as I raised my fist to knock. "Listen, I know it's a rough start to the season, but this kid has promise."

My ears perked up at his serious voice. The one Abigail called his fussy man tone.

"I'm not saying I will trade him. I'm saying the option is on the table. Zachary has proven himself as a top-notch goalie. You won't be sorry to have him play for you."

This was the part of the business I didn't like, players getting traded around and talked about behind their backs. Zachary would get a say, of course, but he wouldn't know until the last minute that his name was getting thrown around.

I knocked and waited for Dad to call out before I twisted the knob and entered. His office was a shrine to his job. Posters of his best players lined the walls and trophies filled the shelves. He sat behind a cluttered desk with his phone to his ear and his feet propped up on top of a stack of folders. He ended the call and waved for me to come closer.

Poor Zachary. The guy deserved to know he was up on the chopping block, but I wasn't about to be the one to tell him.

ZACHARY

There was no way they were winning this game. I stretched out my arms and rolled my head side to side as the kids on the ice slid all over the place. They were having the time of their lives, but that would not win. Still, I grinned when my goalie smacked a puck back across the ice but groaned when that same kid left the net to help his teammates chase the puck.

I'd seen ducks with better organization. Oh well.

The buzzer sounded, signaling the end of the game. Grinning, I motioned for the boys to join me. They all skated over, several of them wearing looks of shame and defeat.

"Did you have fun?" I kept my grin in place and rubbed my hands together to ease the cold turning my fingers bright red. I'd forgotten my gloves again.

"Yeah!" Several kids shouted, while a few others mumbled and clacked their hockey sticks against the plastic partition.

"Well." The word lingered in the air until all the kids looked up at me. "I think you did a great job."

"But we didn't win." Brian, one of the oldest on the team, tipped his head to the side and regarded me with a grimace. "I wanted to win."

"I know." I clapped him on the back and motioned for them to head toward the locker room. "It's fun to win. I like winning." I knew better than to bullshit these kids. They might be eight to ten years old, but they were tough kids who knew

when an adult was blowing smoke. “But having fun is important too. And you all played to the best of your ability. That last shot was a masterpiece, Dillon.”

The little boy grinned wide, showing the gap where he’d lost a tooth last week. “Thanks, Coach.”

Smiles started out slow, but the more I commented on their playing—highlighting the things they’d done right—the wider the smiles grew. That was what I wanted from my team.

Losing sucked, but that didn’t mean they should be sore losers.

I talked to the parents, fielding questions and giving encouragement where I could, as the kids switched from their hockey gear to street clothes. I needed to leave for practice soon, but I wouldn’t go anywhere until the kids were all safe with their parents. Or guardian. I had a few foster kids who were lucky enough that their foster parents cared enough to bring them to practice and games. I’d also lost a few through the years when they hit a rough patch and parents couldn’t afford the time or the money to keep up. I understood. Sports were a tough gig, and not all parents could get their kids to practice if it meant missing work.

I wished there was more I could do for them.

The last kid filed out of the locker room and I gave him a high-five before checking my watch. “See you next week, Ben.”

The kid jerked his head in a nod. “Later, Coach.”

Grabbing my duffel, I slung it over my shoulder and headed toward the front door. My thick coat made a shushing sound with every stride, and I shoved my empty hand into my pocket, flexing it until feeling returned.

I rounded a corner and skidded to a stop before I crashed into Lucy. My heart thudded against my ribs so hard I lost my breath.

Lucy tossed her hair over her shoulder and took a step back. “Hey. Sorry.”

“No problem.” I frowned as I took her in. She looked different today. More business casual and less preppy doctor. Her skirt hugged her hips and her high heels put her almost at eye level with me. Damn. As much as I suddenly wanted to stand here and talk to her, I desperately wanted to watch her ass as she walked away. “What are you doing way out here?” The question came out accusatory, and she raised her eyebrows.

One hand fell to her hip and she straightened her shoulders. “I could ask you the same thing.”

I thumbed my chest. “Youth coach.” I felt a moment of satisfaction when her mouth dropped into a perfect O.

“You coach the youth league?” She looked me up and down, her brows in an adorable pucker. “Huh. Well, maybe you can help me then.”

Must be my lucky day. “I’d love to.” Damn my mouth. I cleared my throat. “What do you need help with?”

“I have a meeting with the board in...” she checked her watch. “Five minutes. Any insight you can shoot my way? I’m here to advocate for more female participation in hockey.”

I couldn’t say I was surprised. She’d struck me from the beginning as someone who’d have a cause. Not sure why. But I was right, and that made me grin. “You want to put girls into a boys hockey league?”

She waffled her hand side to side. “I’d start with creating a girls league, but yeah. I don’t see why they couldn’t play together.”

Um, maybe because guys got a thrill out of punching the shit out of their opponents and fans responded to the brutality with cheers for more? I couldn’t imagine a girl being okay with getting her teeth knocked out in the middle of a game. Then again... who was I to decide what girls wanted?

“I also think there should be a better support system for players. Buses to pick up kids whose parents can’t bring them. Lower-cost uniforms thanks to community donations. That

sort of thing.” Lucy’s eyes lit with an inner glow and her hand fluttered as she talked.

I loved the moment of seeing through the professional Lucy Ashley. She’d taken care of Justin yesterday, and we were all grateful. Having her there was great for our team. But it was going to be hell on me. I’d never been drawn to a woman like this before. I couldn’t explain it, but I felt like I knew her. It was more than her being Coach’s daughter. From the moment I saw her, even before he told us who she was, I wanted to get to know her. And now she was off-limits. Fuck my luck.

I realized I’d been standing there staring at her without speaking when she lifted that one eyebrow again. I grinned to hide my discomfort. “I’ll walk with you. Do you mind if I sit in on your meeting?”

“Sure. As long as the board has no objections.” She straightened her blouse so the buttons aligned, and I had a sudden urge to see what she’d look like without it.

I smacked those thoughts away and focused. “The board is mostly men. But there are three women. You won’t have any trouble getting them on your side. I’d start with your support system idea and work up from there.”

Stopping at the wooden double doors to the left of the stairs that led to the upper rows of seats, I held out a hand, asking her to wait.

“What?” She smoothed a hand over her hair, showing her nervousness when she swallowed several times. “Do I have something on my face?”

“No. You’re perfect.” The hell did that come from? No time to worry about it now. I gripped the doorknob and gave it a twist. “No matter what they say, keep your temper. Fastest way to get them all to turn on you is to get loud or obnoxious.”

“I would never do that.” Her wide grin said the opposite, but she quickly schooled her expression and stepped past me.

The room was small but well-lit with several fluorescent lights. Tan walls and a hard concrete floor cast the seven men

and women across from us in a yellowish glow that made them all appear older.

Lucy moved toward them, walking with a casual grace. I was right. Her ass looked amazing.

Off-limits, Zack.

“Thank you for agreeing to see me.” Lucy stopped in front of the long table and folded her hands in front of her.

I made my way around so that I stood close but didn’t invade her space.

“You made quite the case to Cassandra.” The man at the end spoke for all of them while watching Lucy. “What exactly are you proposing, Miss Ashley?”

The *Miss* caught my attention. I’d noticed she didn’t wear a wedding ring, but that didn’t always equate to single. My heart gave another hard thud.

Lucy laid out her case in precise detail. Everything from how the buses could best benefit the players to her ideas to scope out grants and other means to pay for some of the more expensive items that kept many kids from joining the youth league. She took my advice and waited until the end to bring up allowing girls into the league. By the time she finished, the board members seemed split. Some smiled at Lucy while others frowned so hard their eyes disappeared beneath bushy brows. And every one of the frowning ones? Men.

Figured. I almost snorted at their audacity.

“You believe girls would be interested in a sport known for its violence?” Bob, the oldest board member, leaned forward and knotted his fingers together on top of the table.

Lucy reached into a briefcase I hadn’t even noticed and pulled out a sheaf of papers. “These are names of girls, and boys, who would like to play but are either prohibited by the all-boys rule or cannot get to the rink for practice.” She walked forward and eased the papers onto the table. “There are one hundred and fifty names there. All within a thirty-mile radius from this facility.”

Holy shit. There were that many kids who wanted to play? We had forty kids now, barely enough for two teams.

“And you’re proposing that we allow all of these children access to hockey?” Cassandra asked.

“Yes.” Lucy held her ground and met each member eye to eye. “I believe every child should have equal opportunity. Regardless of their gender or class. Among other considerations. Schools once advocated for ‘no child left behind’ and it was considered a rousing success. I’m proposing the implementation of the same principle.”

“And how will you get them here?” Duke, the one most likely to give Lucy grief, thumbed through the pages.

“I’ll bring them.” I stepped forward, not daring to look at Lucy. “Once we have a bus, I’ll pick them up and take them home.”

Her tiny, shocked inhale shot all the way through me, and I’d be damned if my dick didn’t respond with a twitch. Now was *not* the time for a raging hard-on, so I focused on the board members eyeing me.

Lucy impressed me with her determination. The least I could do was offer to help out. Plus, I’d just been thinking about a busing schedule. I didn’t believe in divine help, but this was serendipity if I’d ever seen it.

I liked her ideas, and she’d made a good point. Everyone deserved to play whatever sport they enjoyed. I remembered a time when I couldn’t make it to practice because my parents had to work. I’d given up hockey for three years and hated every minute off the ice. If I could give one kid the chance to pursue a dream, it would be worth my time.

Lucy’s passion ignited a spark in me. A spark that made me want to do better as a human. I needed to be more understanding and remember what it felt like to be that kid in need.

“We’ll consider your proposal.” Bob flicked his fingers, dismissing us.

Lucy's teeth locked and her nostrils flared, but then she glanced up and nodded tightly. "Thank you. I look forward to hearing back from you. Does a week from today give you long enough?"

Attagirl. She pinned them down by forcing them to give her a time frame.

Bob grunted and nodded. "Fine. One week from today."

Lucy spun on her heel and strode from the room. I followed close behind, trying not to stare and failing. As soon as the doors closed behind us, she twirled around and fist-pumped the air. "I think that went great. I mean, Bob is a bit of a dick. But the others seemed pretty enthused. What did you think?"

I thought I was going to get an ass-chewing from her father for being late to practice. Worth it. I headed outside with Lucy walking beside me. "I think they'll agree. Be hard to say no to a hundred and fifty kids. Even with reduced uniforms and other cuts, that's a pile of money they'd be turning down."

Her mouth puckered. "Ugh. I hate when it all comes down to money."

"Money makes the world go round." I shrugged and slipped my sunglasses on when we stepped out into the harsh mid-day sun.

Lucy scoffed. "That's what most people think. But they're wrong."

"Yeah?" I checked the time on my watch and increased my pace. "If it's not money, then what is it?"

Lennox and Justin jogged across the street and joined us before she could answer. "Hey. Coach sent us to get you." Lennox tapped my watch. "Forget how to tell time?"

"Shit." Lucy clapped a hand over her mouth. "I'm so sorry. I didn't even think about practice. It doesn't matter if I'm late. Dad knew I had a meeting today. I'll tell him it's my fault."

"Don't worry about it." I didn't need her to stand up for me or try to protect me from Coach. I was no masochist, but

I'd made my decision and I'd take the consequences. "I wanted to help with your meeting."

The four of us turned the last corner on the block leading to the rink. Lennox and Justin kept shooting me dirty looks. I'd have to explain everything later, but I was sure they'd give me hell on the ice.

Coach Ashley met us at the door, his frown a dead ringer for his daughter's when Bob questioned her. "What the hell took you so long?"

"Sorry, Coach," I started.

Lucy glared at me and lifted her chin. "Zachary was helping me with my meeting."

Coach pointed a long finger at me. "We'll talk about this later." He faced his daughter and the coldness fell away. "How's my granddaughter?"

Lennox, Justin, and I all shared a look, no doubt asking ourselves the same question. Lucy had a daughter?

LUCY

I shouldn't feel like wincing when my dad asked about Abigail. I'm not ashamed of my daughter, but the circumstances around her conception were always awkward. People tended to count back the years and judge me for getting pregnant in college. I usually told them to fuck off—if I bothered saying anything at all. Their judgment was one of the societal and cultural norms that I hated. It was none of their business. If any of these guys dared to say a word...

I took a deep, cleansing breath and met Dad's concerned gaze.

With three hot guys staring me down, each of them making those same calculated looks as they watched me, I said the only thing I could. "Abigail's fine. If anything, she was more upset about having to leave school than she was the fall." It was true. She'd cried when I picked her up and complained the whole time we sat at the doctor's office. The only thing she wanted was to go back to school and spend the rest of the day with her friends.

Even a promised trip to the ice cream shop for a cone didn't stop my baby girl from maintaining her social butterfly status. My girl never met a stranger.

I lifted my chin and met Zachary's heavy-lidded gaze with a glare that dared him to ask about my past.

"You have a granddaughter?" Justin punched my dad on the shoulder. "You never told us that. How old is she?"

Dad lit up like a Christmas tree and pulled out his wallet. “Just turned five.” He flipped his wallet open to the most recent picture I’d given him of Abigail. A picture that happened to have me in it too. I’d taken Abigail to the park and she wanted me to swing with her. Not wanting to miss the look on her face, I’d snapped a quick selfie of us laughing together. Dad loved that picture. I wasn’t surprised that he used it to show the guys, but it did make me uncomfortable when they all stared a little too long.

Justin raised both eyebrows and looked at me from the side. “Cute kid.”

“Five.” Lennox scratched the back of his neck. “Tough age. I was giving my mama hell by then.”

“Abigail isn’t like that.” I was proud of my daughter, and I let it drive my voice, daring them to argue with me. “I’ve never known a better kid. And I’m not saying that because she’s my daughter.”

“She’s right,” Dad spoke up, his voice tinged with amusement. “Doesn’t even color on the walls like her mama did at that age.” His mouth creased into a wide smile.

He’d remember soon enough that he was mad at Zachary for being late and give him hell. But right now he was just a doting grandpa showing off his girls.

I didn’t need to be showed off. I had enough problems hanging overhead without adding any kind of romantic entanglements to the mix.

Zachary kept staring at the photo, a line between his brows as he looked at me and Abigail. Finally, he looked over at me and grinned. “She looks like you.”

“Thanks.” My breath released in a whoosh. Those were the kinds of compliments I accepted. They were the only ones.

Dad snapped his wallet shut. “Alright. Everybody inside. Don’t think I’ve forgotten about practice.” He pointed at Zachary and his eyes narrowed. “You owe me twenty laps around the rink.”

Zachary tapped his forehead in a mock salute and shouldered past Lennox and Justin. “Sure thing, Coach.”

Their shuffling turned into roughhousing, which caused Justin to take a step back and to the side. He landed on my foot and his elbow grazed my breast.

Electricity zipped through my entire body even though my foot throbbed. “Ow.” I shoved his shoulder to make him move and huffed at the three of them. “You better not have ruined my new boots.” I eyed the leather for scuffs and rubbed it on the back of my other calf to clean off the dirt and debris from his sneakers.

“Sorry.” Justin held up both hands like I held him at gunpoint. “I know better than to come between a woman and her shoes.”

“Har har.” I scrunched my face into a mockery of a smile. “I need to get to work. So, if you’re done goofing off, get out of the way.”

Zachary burst out laughing and stepped back, holding the door wide open for me. “After you.” Mischief twinkled in his eyes, and my phone rang before I could move past him.

I moved out of the doorway and waved them to go on ahead of me while I dragged my phone from my bag and checked the screen. “Dad, I have to take this. I’ll be in soon.” I turned away and swiped to answer Jenna’s call.

She started talking before I could say hello. “You are not going to believe this.” Her voice was close to reaching a level where only dogs could hear her.

“What?” I leaned my back against the concrete wall and draped my arm over my stomach. My briefcase bumped my hip, reminding me I needed to stop by my car to drop it off, so I didn’t forget and leave it in my office. The rink stretched three stories above me, the cold concrete creating a blockade from the sun. I shivered in my dress coat and silently berated myself for not choosing my warmer peacoat for today. Oh well. Fashion sometimes overruled weather. I’d be warm enough once I made it to my office.

“Lucy?” Jenna belted my name loud enough that a man walking past me jolted and stared at me.

I rolled my eyes and focused. “Sorry. What’s going on?”

“Didn’t you hear a word I said?”

“Nope. I had my big meeting with the board for the youth advocacy so I’m a little distracted.” I refused to apologize again.

Jenna sighed but her tone dropped to a tolerable level. “One of your videos has gone viral.”

My heart stuttered, then raced. “What? Which one?”

“The one of you skating with those girls at the pond and asking them about hockey.” Voices filtered through the background and Jenna talked to someone, her voice low and muffled. When she came back, her bright cheeriness made me grin. “Listen, the local paper wants to do a story on you.”

“Of course,” I answered automatically. “When and where?” Oh, what if they did it here? Then I could showcase my new job at the same time.

It was on the tip of her tongue to ask when Dad butted in. “You sure you want to do that?”

I jumped at the sound of his voice. “Dad? What are you doing out here?” I pushed hair back from my face and frowned up at him. “You’re supposed to be inside. Why are you listening to my phone conversation?”

He rubbed one knuckle down his cheek, not looking at all repentant. “I came out here to let you know that your supplies arrived today. I told the delivery guys to leave them in your office. Didn’t think you’d want me or anyone else unpacking for you.”

Oh. Well. I narrowed my eyes at him and covered the mic on my phone. “Why did you ask about the interview? It’s great exposure for the youth advocacy.”

He looked past me, his gaze going dark. “They’ll look into your history. Your past. Are you sure you’re ready for all that to be brought up?”

“It’s no one’s business,” I argued back, my spine stiffening as indignation flared.

“Honey, no one cares if it’s their business. You’re about to step into the limelight. You need to be prepared for the attention that’s going to come your way.”

His insinuation that I wouldn’t like my college years getting dredged up wounded me more than I expected. My chest tightened, and I curled my fingers around the phone. “I’m ready to face any and all consequences. This is worth it, and anyone who looks down on my projects for what I’ve done in the past isn’t someone I want to work with.”

This time, when he smiled, it reached his eyes. He grasped my shoulder and squeezed like he did with the guys after they’d made him happy. “Alright. Go get ‘em.”

I meant every word. I didn’t care what trouble it brought my way. My dream of advocating for more girls in sports and their equal rights was worth it. I wouldn’t let a little fear keep me from fighting for them.

Jenna whistled into my ear. “Yoohoo? Can I get an answer? The guy’s breathing down my neck asking when he can meet you.”

Watching Dad retreat inside, I took a deep breath to steady my heart. “I’m free next week.”

After we confirmed the date and time, Jenna moved on to other conversations.

“I’m working for Dad,” I informed her with a grin. Anticipating her squeal, I held the phone away from my ear.

Even with my arm fully extended, I heard her shriek and burst out laughing. The sound bounced off the walls as I entered the rink and made my way down the low-ceilinged hallway to my office.

Boxes were stacked outside my doorway, with several more littering the floor inside. I nudged one aside with my foot and surveyed the room with fresh eyes.

“I can’t believe it.” Jenna made a snorting noise. “You have all the luck. I swear, if you call me back in a month and say you’re dating one of them, I might have to stop being your friend.”

The sound of curses and hockey sticks slamming together made me imagine what was going on out on the ice. Was Zachary doing his laps or defending the goal? I’d gotten a good look at him this morning. He had the broad shoulders and thick build of a goalie. I’d love to see him skate. But that was a distraction.

“No worries there.” Even if I found three certain hockey players completely gorgeous. “They’re off-limits, Jenna. No fraternizing with the team. Dad’s rules.”

Jenna paused a full heartbeat. “Damn girl. That just makes them that much more tempting.”

She wasn’t wrong. I couldn’t help nodding my head. Every time I told myself they were off-limits, I wanted them a little bit more.

“You should come to practice with me.” I didn’t know where the thought came from. Maybe it was a plea for help. With Jenna beside me, no one would think twice about the coach’s daughter. Jenna was the epitome of beauty. She turned heads everywhere she went.

Lennox, Justin, and Zachary wouldn’t bother even glancing my way if Jenna was around.

A surge of heat passed through me, hitting so hard and fast that I grabbed the nearest counter to stay upright. What the hell was that?

Jealousy. It took me a second to recognize the flare of envy, but once I did, my cheeks heated.

“I’d love that. But my boss has me working killer hours. Raincheck?” Footsteps sounded through the phone, the soft clack-clack of heels telling me Jenna was on the move. “Listen, I have to go. There’s a big meeting and I’m running late. I’ll call the newspaper and let them know you’re game for an interview.”

“Thanks.” I was talking to empty air. Jenna hung up on me. Not that I was surprised. She had a tendency to do that, and I’d never held it against her since it was a personality trait and not a snub.

I prowled around my office, pulling out the drawers and checking all the cabinets while I decided where I’d put all my stuff. I turned and tripped over one of the larger boxes. My momentum sent me careening into the wall, where I came face-to-face with a blown-up poster of Dad and his team. My hand landed on Justin’s crotch and I snatched it back, face flaming even though no one was there to see me.

The look he’d given me yesterday skated through my mind. I was pretty sure he was into me, but I didn’t know if it was because I was the coach’s daughter and off-limits or if he felt the same kind of genuine attraction I’d felt.

“Not the time, Lucy.” I berated myself while slicing through the tape on the first box. I had more than enough on my plate to keep me busy. The upcoming interview was chief among them.

My hand trembled around a packet of gauze. What if Dad was right? What if the interview dredged up my past and plastered it all over the news? I couldn’t be of that much interest to the press. Right?

JUSTIN

I busted my ass in practice, and I was still riding the high of getting three pucks past Zachary. Poor bastard must have a bug up his ass from the way he frowned all during practice. I'd never seen him miss so many pucks. Not my problem. I'd let Coach and Lennox sort him out while I did whatever the fuck I wanted.

I showered and changed into my regular clothes, then dropped onto the bench seat beside Lennox.

He shot me a glare and stretched out his legs, crossing his ankles. "If you tell Zack to suck it one more time, I swear I'll put your head through a locker."

I clicked my tongue at him and made a sour face. "Aw. What's the matter, Lenny? Did you not get laid last night?"

Lennox smacked the back of my head without hesitation, grinning the whole time. "None of your business, asshole."

"Somebody's cranky." Zachary toweled off his hair and grabbed his jeans from his locker.

"Can't imagine why." Honestly, his attitude came as a bit of a surprise. Lennox was usually the chill one of our group. The only time I really saw him turn hostile was on the ice. Out here, he was one relaxed dude. "Wouldn't have anything to do with the coach's daughter, would it?" I wiggled my eyebrows and curved my hands through the air to create an hourglass silhouette. "She's hot."

Zachary yanked his pants up and growled while slamming his locker shut. “Don’t, Justin. She’s not to be played with.”

“Who said anything about playing?” Adrenaline sang through my veins. I was talking shit and I knew it, but I couldn’t help it after such an awesome practice. “I like her.”

That shut them the fuck up. Spinning around, I whistled and opened my locker, then started spiking my hair until I had it the way I liked. The white-blond hair set off my tanned skin and blue eyes. I didn’t need my hair falling over my forehead like some guys. No. This was perfection. Women couldn’t resist once they caught sight of my baby blues. I’d learned to use that to my advantage. Was Lucy a sucker for blue? One way to find out. She’d been professional and courteous yesterday, but I was pretty sure she was digging me. If I’d had a few more minutes with her, I would’ve have scored a date.

And with me, dates always ended in sex. I winked at myself in the mirror and wiped the last of the hair gel on my towel.

Zachary and Lennox stared at me with matching frowns. “You need to be careful with Lucy,” Lennox said. He sat forward and lowered his forearms to his thighs.

Zachary shoved his feet into his boots and bent to lace them up. “She’s not someone you can bang and ditch.” He jerked on his laces like they’d personally offended him.

“What the hell are you talking about?” I knew, of course, but I was having too much fun watching them try to act like they were concerned for me when it was really Lucy they were both thinking about.

She’d had that effect on all three of us from the minute we took off our helmets and got our first look at her. I didn’t believe in love at first sight. Didn’t believe in love at all, actually, but I believed in a heavy dose of lust.

“Dating Lucy is against the rules.” Lennox lowered his voice and scanned the locker room.

I followed his gaze and found we were the last three in the room. “Come on. You really think Coach would get rid of us if

we dated Lucy?”

“He might get rid of Lucy.” Zachary slapped the wooden bench. “Don’t you think about anyone other than yourself? Lucy has a daughter. She probably needs this job. You’re not going to screw that up for her.”

Damn. He had it bad for the little blonde. I didn’t expect that.

“It’s not just that it jeopardizes the team.” Lennox held up a hand to stop Zachary from rising. He faced me. “At best, dating Lucy will make the others think you’re getting special treatment. Coach’s favorite.”

“At worst, you break her heart like you do every other woman you’ve dated.” Zachary ground out between clenched teeth. “You fall in and out of love faster than most men change socks.”

“You two are really torn up about this.” I couldn’t believe it. The two most laid-back guys on the team were getting shaken over Lucy. Why? They were right about everything. I had a reputation for sleeping around. It accentuated my playboy lifestyle. Kept people from looking too close.

I didn’t fall in love, despite Zachary’s claims. I never fell in love. Never had and never would.

Love made me weak, and I couldn’t risk that, especially at the peak of my career. I played up the playboy personality for the attention it brought me and my career. No one could fault me for wanting to make something of myself. Coach Ashley had the team of a lifetime. We were on our way to the national championship.

Lennox flipped a towel in Zachary’s direction. “Settle down. Justin will do the right thing. He’s too concerned with his career to jeopardize it.”

“True that.” I spun around and put on my shoes. “And I’m not going to put Lucy at risk of losing her job.” I rolled my eyes when Zachary held up a warning finger and stood. The only women I dated were the ones who wanted something from me. It became a mutual thing at that point, and we both

got what we wanted without me feeling like I was just using them for sex and discarding them. I'm an asshole, but I'm not that big of a prick.

"Listen to me." Zachary crossed the room and cut in front of me before I could walk out. "You're not going to hurt Lucy."

"You're not listening to *me*," I emphasized. "I like her. I'm not going to hurt her. That's not what I do."

"So, you're not going to try and sleep with her even though Coach gave us specific instructions to leave his daughter the hell alone?" Zachary arched one eyebrow but lowered his hands.

Good, because I'd feel real bad if I had to punch a fellow teammate in his smug ass mouth. I shrugged like it didn't matter, even though it mattered a lot. I didn't just want to have sex with Lucy. There was something different about her that I couldn't put my finger on. There were a lot of places I *would* like to put my fingers, and they all involved Lucy's body.

She'd shown me her sharp wit in her office yesterday, and I couldn't help grinning at the memory. She was someone who wouldn't let me get away with shit. I liked that about her. She'd been right about my leg. Maybe I should check in with her on my way out and have her give me another checkup.

"I don't like that smile." Zachary folded his arms, still blocking the door. "What are you planning?"

"Me?" I thumbed my chest. "Not a damned thing." I pushed his shoulder. "Move."

"Not until you agree that you'll leave Lucy alone." Bro was adamant.

I respected the hell out of Zachary and Lennox, but they got on my fucking nerves when they went all high and mighty with their holier-than-thou routine. Like they didn't need to get laid. Hell, maybe they didn't. I'd never asked and despite the occasional raunchy locker room talk, these two were hella quiet about their sexual exploits.

I narrowed my eyes at Zachary and matched his crossed-armed stance. “I’ll stay away from her if you will.”

He rocked back on his heels, his eyes narrowing to slits. “I agreed to help her. I’m allowed to get close to her.”

“Ah, ah.” I wagged my finger back and forth under his nose, loving how he snarled. It was so easy to get under his skin. I loved the big asshole like a brother, which made this so much fun. “You’re only allowed to be close to her? What does bussing kids back and forth from the rink have to do with spending time with Lucy? You expect her to ride the bus with you?”

“No.” He spat out the word, but I saw a flash of something in his eyes. Something that looked an awful lot like hope. “I’m not risking my career for anything.”

No. He wouldn’t. Neither would I, but I kept needling him. “That’s not the way it looked to me when you two walked up earlier. Looked pretty cozy to me. Wouldn’t you say, Lennox?” I looked at Lennox over my shoulder.

He eyed the two of us with a shrewd glare. “You’re both hopeless.”

“You want in too?” I puffed up my chest and pretended to consider. “We could make a bet.”

“No.” They both jerked like I’d shot them. Lennox stood, his body moving with a feline grace that made him our most dangerous asset on the ice. “Lucy is not a bet. She’s not a bargaining chip. She’s not a conquest. Got it?” He punctuated the last two words with pokes to my chest with his index finger.

“Chill, bro.” I rubbed the spot where he’d gouged me. “I was kidding. You both act like I’m a real dick.”

Lennox arched an eyebrow. “Watch yourself.”

Geez. I shook my head and shouldered past Zachary. “I’d never treat a woman like that.” I meant every word. I loved women. They were amazing, wonderful creatures who made life worth living. I’d never stoop low enough to hurt a woman.

I'd succeeded in ticking off my teammates, which was the goal all along.

They'd sit in the locker room and stew, wondering what to do with me, while I checked to see if Lucy had left her office yet.

A bloom of heat tightened in my chest and spread outward. I really, really liked this girl. Which made no sense considering my lifestyle. She'd challenged me and I had a hard time letting that go. I wanted to see what she'd do if I pushed a little harder. This rush of sudden, genuine feelings startled me. I couldn't remember a time—ever—where I'd felt like this about a woman.

My steps sounded hollow in the empty hallway, but I'd hear if anyone came up behind me thanks to the acoustics. I rounded the corner and spotted Lucy's office, and my heart skipped a fucking beat. What the hell was this? I didn't do infatuation.

Lucy stepped out of her office and picked up a box. I rushed forward, about to call out and ask if she needed help, when her dad came around the other corner and took the box from her. She grinned up at him and the sight wrenched deep. She had a beautiful smile. Her laughter bounced down the hall, the sound making my own lips curl into a grin. She had a great laugh too. According to Zachary, she was advocating for women's rights in sports. I admired her spirit, especially on this particularly sticky subject. I had a sister who'd been ridiculed for wanting to play professional hockey. She'd eventually given up, even though she was better than me on the ice. Women deserved to do whatever the hell they wanted. Zachary had beat me to the punch when he offered to help her with her cause. That didn't mean I couldn't offer my support too.

Lucy bent to pick up another box and then disappeared into her office. I should have crawled out of the shadows and offered to help, but the sight of her dad behind her gave me pause. I didn't think I could hide my feelings well enough to fool him. While I'd managed with Lennox and Zachary, Coach was a different story. I couldn't deflect with him by using

punchy jokes and sexual humor. Especially not with Lucy standing right there. I didn't want her to see me as *that* guy.

I had it bad. All I'd thought about all day was how I'd get close to her again. These feelings were not going away on their own. I'd have to follow them all the way through to see where they led.

How could I do that with her dad and my teammates watching my every move?

LUCY

Cold wrapped around me before I even settled on the bench beside Dad. I tugged my hoodie tighter over my stomach and shoved my hands deep into the kangaroo pocket. Dad's team skated out onto the ice and cheers nearly popped my eardrums. I grinned up at Dad, who spared me a quick smile before he turned his focus to the team.

Zachary, Lennox, and Justin skated around the perimeter, along with three other guys whose names I couldn't remember. Why did those three stand out to me?

Sitting there alongside my father and the other players with nothing between me and the rink, I had an unobstructed view of the entire rink. Players crowded into the benches around me as the refs skated out and started the game.

Lennox fought for the puck, smacking it with his stick and sending it skipping toward Justin. Grunts mingled with cheers as a rush of bodies collided. Hockey was not a gentle sport, and I'd be lying if I said I didn't love every brutal minute. Sure, there was something hedonistic about bloody noses and cheering every time a fight broke out, but it sure was a rush. The raw masculinity did something to me. And yes, I wanted women to be allowed to play. Because they deserved to have a chance if that's what they wanted.

But I still loved the sight of twelve men on the ice battling it out for supremacy. I'd be willing to throw down on the ice, but not professionally. I enjoyed playing for fun. Watching, on the other hand, was all about winning.

Lennox caught an elbow to the chin and careened back, his arms flailing. Justin swooped over and shoved the guy back until Lennox gained his balance. He shouted something at the offending player, who responded with a shrug while skating backward.

“Stop messing around,” Dad shouted at them. His jaw ticked a rapid rhythm, and he slapped his hands together in a loud clap that reverberated across the ice. “Lennox, get on him.”

Lennox nodded and skated back to his position.

Justin screamed across the ice, skating with a flawless perfection I found fascinating. He stole the puck right out from under an opponent’s stick and whacked it toward the goal. The goalie lunged... and missed.

The buzzer sounded and the players around me leaped to their feet. We’d made the first score of the game.

Three hours later, Lennox scored the winning goal and every player on the benches shouted as they poured onto the ice in celebration. The noise around me grew to a fever pitch. I hugged Dad and shouted a congratulations in his ear before pushing him out onto the ice to join his players. “I’ll be around after they shower to check for injuries.”

He nodded and waved, indicating he understood. Hopefully, he’d tell the guys so they knew to expect me. Not that I’d be barging into the locker room unannounced or anything. The thought of it sent heat up my neck and into my cheeks. I blamed it on the adrenaline of the game. It really got the heart pumping.

My phone rang and I backed out into the hallway where it was quiet to answer. “Hey, Mom. How’s Abigail?”

“She’s great. We’re about to start making cookies. How’d the game go?”

“We won.” Man, it felt good to say that. Dad had wanted a winning team. He deserved a winning team to carry him through to the championship. This might be his year. I hoped it was his year. For all their sakes.

Mom laughed into my ear. “You hear that, Abigail. Gramps’s team won.”

My daughter screamed happily in the background. The sound warmed my heart. “Do you want me to come pick her up?”

“No, honey. I just wanted to check on your dad. I knew he wouldn’t hear his phone ring and we were dying to hear. He’s so excited about this year’s team.” The sounds of pots and pans banging together rattled through the phone.

I imagined them there in the kitchen, gathering up all the ingredients for my mom’s famous cookies. Abigail loved baking, and I was a menace in the kitchen. Mom made up for my lack by helping Abigail every chance they had together. “Well, you can congratulate him soon.”

“Sounds good, honey. Congratulations.” Mom said her goodbye, then gave the phone to Abigail.

“We’re going to make you a cookie.” My daughter sang into the phone. “Did anyone get hurt?”

“No, baby. Everyone is fine.” Well, as far as I knew. I hadn’t seen any altercations that looked like they’d led to an injury. Still, I should check Justin’s leg again. The thought caused another rush of heat that spread further than my face.

I tried to push the thought aside, but it lingered. I was attracted to him.

“Okay.” Abigail’s voice rose higher. “Bye, Mama.”

“Bye, baby.” I ended the call and stopped to lean my back against the wall. Adrenaline from the game continued to pump through my system. I needed to get it under control before I checked on the guys. My mind needed to be clear so I wouldn’t make any snap judgments that might end up getting one of them hurt.

The locker room door at the end of the hall opened and Dad waved me over. “They’re ready.”

Great. Work face, Lucy. I schooled my features and strode toward Dad with my chin high. “Any complaints?”

“Nah. But you know what to look for.” He stepped back for me and then closed the door.

Twenty pairs of eyes stared at me from around the room. Whew. I was not expecting the nervous bubbling in my stomach. “Great game, everybody.”

Cheers and stomping feet kept me from saying anything else for several minutes.

Dad whistled when it became evident they were not going to calm down on their own. “Pay attention. Faster you get through this, faster you can go celebrate.”

Justin cheered the loudest at that and draped his towel around his neck. They were all fully dressed, and I was grateful I didn't have to walk into the stench of your average locker room. This one smelled of cologne and musk. Not a bad smell at all. If anything, it made me want to curl up and bask in the smell for an hour or two while I gave my little vibrator a workout.

Focus, Lucy. I jerked my attention back to the men standing around me and clasped my hands together. “Alright. Everyone is anxious to get out of here. Trust me, I get it. But first I need you all to understand that I need to know about any injuries you might have sustained. Lennox, you took a couple of hard hits. Now there's nothing I can do for a broken nose, but how's your arm?”

Lennox rolled his shoulder forward, then back, and completed a full range of motion exercises. “Right as rain, Doc.”

“Good.” Great. Thank goodness. I continued around the room until I could clear all of them. “If you start to notice any discomfort, come see me tomorrow. I'll be in my office all day.”

“That's it.” Dad clapped. “Get out of here and have some fun.”

Twenty guys surged toward the door. “What about you, Lucy?” Justin stopped in front of me, his giant blue eyes

catching and holding mine. “You want to go out and have some fun?”

“Oh, no. I couldn’t.” I motioned at Dad. “I need to pick up my daughter.”

Dad grabbed his scarf and wound it around his neck. “Abigail can stay with us tonight.” He grinned easily at Justin. “You should go out and enjoy yourself.”

“Dad...” I should argue, fight harder against the pull of attraction stringing me closer to Justin. But damn it, I wanted to go out, maybe have a drink. I wanted to let myself be twenty-five for one night. No consequences. No repercussions.

“Yeah.” Justin stayed put, but the low timbre in his voice shot straight through me. “Come with us. Blow off a little steam. It’ll be good for you.” He said the last bit too low for Dad to hear.

Dad was already on his way out the door with the rest of the team. “We’ll see you in the morning for breakfast, Lucy. Have fun tonight.”

Just like that? I expected him to pop back in any second and tell me he was joking. He’d warned me not to fraternize with the team, and now he gave me permission to go out and party with them? Maybe he didn’t fully understand what the invitation meant, but I did.

Lennox held open the door. “Well, this just got more interesting.”

“You can ride with me.” Justin jingled his keys.

“No way.” I did have some common sense. I retrieved my keys and walked backward to my car. “Tell me where to meet you.”

“How do we know you’ll show?” Justin prowled toward me, his steps languid. Like he had all night.

I shrugged one shoulder and popped the lock on the driver’s side door. “Guess you’ll have to trust me.”

Lennox shouted the address, and I slammed the door after nodding that I’d heard. The bar wasn’t too far, and I made my

way there without incident. Justin rode with Lennox and Zachary in a sleek Lexus. Lennox drove, and I found the contrast of Lennox owning a luxury sedan intriguing.

Justin hopped out of the car before the others and jogged across the parking lot to open my door. “You didn’t bail.” He winked and propped his forearms on the doorframe. “Good. You won’t regret it.”

“Easy.” I stood and the move brought my chest within an inch of his arms. “No one likes a pushy guy. I’m here for a drink. Maybe a little dancing.”

Justin held up both hands and walked backward with the same grace he showed on the ice. “You got it. I’m a great dancer.”

I bet he was. I didn’t even mind his little invasion of personal space. But I couldn’t let him get the idea that I’d fall into bed with him without so much as a hello.

I’d done that once and gotten Abigail. Pretty good trade, in my opinion. I wouldn’t give up my daughter for anything in this world. And I’d made damned sure she didn’t suffer because of my actions.

Rock music pumped from the jukebox when we entered the bar. Most of the team were already in a back corner, taking up every table available. Beer bottles filled one table, and a woman in a white apron worked to clear them while another brought a fresh round.

“What’ll you have?” Justin hooked his thumb toward the bar. “I’m grabbing drinks if you want to go with Lennox and Zachary to find a table.”

“Just a beer.” I didn’t follow Lennox but made my way around the edge of the bar where I could observe before diving in. I had a decision to make, and I needed to make it right now before my head was too clouded. There were two potential outcomes for tonight. I could leave here alone, or I could leave with Justin.

He’d given me all the signals I needed to show he was interested. I had no doubt he’d ask before the night was over.

It would be sex. Nothing more. Sex with Justin would be a big step up from my vibrator. I needed that release more than I cared to admit.

Lennox and Zachary chose a table in the middle of the room and sat. Justin weaved his way through the crowd, four beers tucked between his fingers. When he reached the table, his head jerked around as he scanned the room. His eyes found mine and he left the table. Every stride in my direction held purpose and an absolutely outrageous sex appeal. Justin was cocky and a little vain, but he was also sweet.

He stopped in front of me and held out my beer.

I checked the cap. Still sealed. “Do you dance?” I twisted off the cap and took a long pull.

Justin’s arms wound around my waist, and he pulled me close enough to feel the outline of his cock pressed tight against his zipper. “I’m an amazing dancer.”

I sucked in a breath and tried to calm my racing heart. The feel of him pressed so close made the hunger worse. His hands spanned my back, and he swayed side to side, brushing his hips over mine.

It was ridiculous and corny and everything that I always tried to avoid because it meant that it wasn’t real. But tonight, it was exactly what I needed.

His cheek touched mine, and his breath eased over my ear. “You want to go back to my place?”

LUCY

Was I really this weak? I stared up into Justin's blue eyes and tried to talk myself out of making a decision based on my need for sexual gratification.

Damn he was hot. Justin had the lean, toned physique of an athlete, and the blond hair and blue eyes of a cover model. Everything about the way he looked at me screamed playboy, which meant I knew exactly what I was walking into. Justin wasn't the kind of guy who would take it personally if I didn't want to hear from him tomorrow. "Won't this make it weird at work?" I asked him over the thumping bass of another rock song.

He traced the curve of my spine with his fingertips. "Not if we don't let it." With that enigmatic response, he dropped his arms. The song ended and he held out his hand. "You want to go?"

"Who's going?" Lennox and Zachary stood behind Justin.

He scowled and dropped his arm. "Private conversation."

"Not when you're talking loud enough for half the bar to hear." Zachary scoffed and grabbed for Justin's shoulder. "We already talked about this."

"No. You talked. No one asked what I wanted. Or what Lucy wanted." Justin locked eyes with me, and they were clear and bright with no hint of intoxication. "I asked Lucy to go home with me. And I'm waiting on her answer."

Having Lennox and Zachary staring at me should have given me the strength to say no. It did, and it didn't. Because it also pissed me off. They looked ready to answer for me, to tell me to go home and be a good little girl. Fuck that.

Hot, delicious anger swirled in my stomach and gave me courage. They didn't get to look down on me for my decisions or to speak for me like I didn't know my own mind... my own needs. "Let's get out of here." I shot the words at Justin while watching Lennox and Zachary.

Lennox moved like he might touch me, but then dropped his arm back to his side. Dark eyes burned into mine. "Are you sure that's what you want?"

I made a show of looking Justin up and down. "Oh, yeah. I'm sure."

Zachary's face flushed beneath his leather jacket and he tugged at his shirt collar. "Don't say we didn't warn you."

"I don't need a babysitter." I gripped Justin's hand and we made our way to the door. I regretted my harsh words within three steps and started to turn back around. I caught a flash of hurt in Zachary's eyes, along with something else. He and Lennox looked at me with desire darkening their pupils. That couldn't be right. Or maybe that was why they kept trying to warn me away from Justin... because they wanted me for themselves. "Will they say anything?" I whipped my head back around to look at Justin.

He laced his arm around my waist and pulled me close. "No. They'll keep it quiet."

Good. If my dad found out I'd left the bar with a team member, he'd never forgive me. A moment of indecision gripped me but it passed when Justin's hand smoothed over my hip, dipping beneath my hoodie to touch my bare skin. I hadn't been touched in so long that the feel of his rough fingers drove me wild.

"Where do you live?" I'd have to drive since he rode with Lennox, and I wasn't about to leave my car here.

“Not far.” He opened my door for me and the chivalrous gesture made me grin. “Go to the end of the block and turn left. My house is the third on the right. Can’t miss it. Look for the blue mailbox.”

I committed his directions to memory and thanked the hockey gods that I wouldn’t have to wait long.

Justin closed my door and ran around to the other side. He adjusted himself before climbing in, bringing my attention to the impressive bulge in his pants. I couldn’t wait to have him inside me. I rubbed my thighs together, my skin already slick and wet for him. “If this is a mistake, tell me now.”

He reached over and turned the key in the ignition. “Drive, Lucy.”

Hot damn he was sexy as hell when he said my name in that low growl. My tires spit gravel as I pulled out of the parking lot and onto the road. Justin set his hand on my thigh and rubbed his palm up and down over my thick leggings. I’d dressed casually for the game in fleece leggings, a short skirt, and an oversized hoodie. I almost regretted it now, but everything would be easy to remove, and I’d worn my one cute bra so bonus points for me. His hand slid up my leg, moving closer to my sex. I bit my lip and pressed harder on the gas. “You better not make me wreck.”

The blue mailbox came into sight, and I whipped the car into the driveway and killed the engine.

Justin was out of the car and around to my side in a flash. He yanked open the door and held out his hand. “Last chance to say no.”

I slid my palm over his, pushing aside all my doubts. I spotted a cracked sidewalk and a solid oak door before Justin pulled me into the house and pushed me against the door. His lips found mine and my soul almost leapt from my body. More. I had to have more of him.

With the door pressed into my spine, I let it hold me up while I gripped his shoulders. He slid his hands beneath my

hoodie and palmed my back with both hands, pulling my hips flush against his.

I gasped and he used the opportunity to plunge his tongue into my open mouth. His body was firm, the muscles taut beneath his jacket. I needed to feel skin, so I pushed the coat from his shoulders. He released me long enough to shrug the coat off, leaving it in a heap on the floor. My hoodie followed, leaving me standing there in my lacy black bra.

“You’re beautiful.” His pupils dilated as he reached for me. One hand cupped my breast, squeezing it through the bra, while the other settled low on my spine. Justin’s kisses were a drug all on their own.

His tongue stroked alongside mine, his cock hard against my stomach. I groaned and arched into him.

Justin swept a hand beneath my knees and pulled me into his arms without ever breaking off the kiss. He carried me through the living room, where I spotted a leather sofa and a massive TV screen before we entered a bedroom and he kicked the door shut behind us.

The room was surprisingly clean for a bachelor, and the bed even smelled freshly laundered when Justin lowered me onto the blue quilt. Maybe it was just my college experience talking. Or maybe Justin had more of a handle on life than I’d given him credit for. I was happy to be wrong, especially when he rained a trail of kisses over my collarbone before moving lower.

I wrapped my legs around his waist. “I want you inside me.” I tended to be quieter in bed, but I was desperate for relief.

“Keep talking like that and this will be over too soon.” He pulled one strap down over my shoulder and followed it with his lips.

My breast popped free and he groaned as he took my nipple into his mouth. “Fuck.” My head fell back against the pillow as the rush of sensations swam over me. I was ready to

combust, my skin on fire. I rocked my hips, letting him press his cock into me.

His tongue swirled over my nipple until it drew into a tight bud that he rasped again and again with his tongue.

I slid my hands over his shoulders and down his back, feeling each dip and ridge of pronounced muscle. When I moved to his stomach, he angled us to the side so I'd have access to his pants and didn't try to stop me from releasing the button and unzipping his fly. I worked my hand into his boxers. I stilled when I found him.

"Impressed?" His question was far too cocky, but hot damn. With a dick that size, he could be as cocky as he wanted.

"You have no idea." I stroked him, hard, going from base to tip, then palming his head until precum coated my fingers.

He lifted his head and stared down at me, his eyes cerulean in the soft lamp light. "I want to taste you, Lucy. Are you okay with that?"

"Only if I can return the favor." I gave him an extra tight pump and grinned wickedly when he closed his eyes.

He inched out of my grasp, continuing to kiss me as he traveled down my stomach. He stopped there and swirled his tongue over my naval. Both his hands gripped my skirt and leggings, and he pulled them down in a swift motion that left me bare to my ankles. Sitting back on his heels, he removed my boots and finished taking off my clothes. His eyes devoured me the whole time. "I'm going to make you come on my tongue, Lucy girl." He parted my legs and stared down at me. His tongue darted out between his teeth and he lowered his head to my pussy.

He stroked me hard and fast, then slow and easy, never giving me one tempo long enough to find a rhythm.

I gripped his head and cursed when his tongue worked over my clit. "Do it again."

He complied, the rough rasp of him eating me out filling the room. I cried out when he left my clit, then cursed again

when he stiffened his tongue and thrust it inside me. The angle put his nose against my clit, and he used it to his advantage, managing to stroke me with his nose while he tongue fucked me.

“I’m coming.” My thighs quivered and I gripped his shoulders when he spread me wider and fucked me harder. “Oh, God. Right there.” My mouth fell open as I panted and my orgasm rushed through me.

Justin licked and sucked, his quiet murmurs soothing until my legs stopped shaking. He crawled back up my body, kissing every square inch of me. He paused when he reached my breasts and finally took my bra off with a flick of his fingers. His cock prodded my entrance. “I’ll have to go slow. Stop me if it gets uncomfortable.”

“Not yet.” I held his shoulders and pushed. “My turn.”

“You don’t have to.” He stared down at me, and something flashed in his eyes.

It almost looked like insecurity. But that couldn’t be right. I shook the thought away and pushed again. “Please. I want to.”

Almost reluctantly, he rolled onto his back and put his hands behind his head. His cock was the most magnificent thing I’d ever seen. Not that I had a lot to compare to, but there was no shortage of dick pics that I’d deleted from my phone. I scooted onto my knees and brought my hair over my shoulder. Curiosity and desperate need brought my hands around him to lift his cock to my mouth. He was thick enough that one hand didn’t circle him fully, and there was no way I’d get much of him in my mouth, but I wanted to try.

Watching him from the side, I swirled my tongue around the head of his cock, then took the tip into my mouth and sucked.

“Damn it.” He gripped the headboard behind him and squeezed.

“What?” I repeated the motion and his cock jerked in my hands as it swelled bigger. “Is something wrong?”

“You don’t know what you’re doing to me.” His eyes shot wide when I lowered my mouth over him as far as I could go and wrapped both hands around his shaft beneath my lips. I used both together to stroke him. “Lucy.” He growled my name in that tone, the dark, gravelly one that made all sorts of dirty thoughts rattle loose in my head.

“Hmm?” I popped him out of my mouth but kept my hands moving.

Tendons stood out on either side of his neck and his arms shook where he held the headboard. “You have to stop.”

“Why?” I licked him again, just to see what he’d do, and he bucked in my grasp. “Interesting.” What else drove this man wild? He wasn’t inexperienced. I knew that based on how well he ate pussy. But something about receiving a blow job set off a darkness in him that I found utterly fascinating. I released his cock and swung my leg over his lap, sitting so he rested flush between my folds. I rolled my hips over his length and arched my back. “You’re going to feel so good inside me, Justin.”

I lifted onto my knees and reached between us to guide him into position. It was going to take a little work to get all of him inside me, but there was no way I was missing this. I eased over him. Prickles of pleasure started at the base of my neck and spread to my scalp.

“You’re so tight.” He ground his teeth together and knocked the back of his head against the wall. “You might not be able to take all of me.”

“Oh, I will.” I rode the few inches I’d taken in, then moved my hand out of the way and worked my way lower. “You’re big. So big.” He stretched me, filling me so that I felt every bump and ridge. I took him in, every last inch. “Fuck me, Justin.” I arched my back and gripped his thighs.

Cursing with every breath, he moved his hands to my hips and lifted me, then brought me crashing back down over his cock. “You’re amazing.” He brought his head forward and pulled a nipple into his mouth.

I worked my hips and spread my knees, taking him deeper. “I see stars.” Damn, this man knew how to fuck. He took his time, dragging his cock in and out of my pussy in slow waves that brought my orgasm to new heights. What had started as prickles on the back of my neck turned into full-body shakes. My pussy clenched tight and I rode his cock to the best orgasm of my life.

I only had one thought as Justin came inside me: How the fuck was I going to stop after just once? Dad would never forgive me if he ever found out.

LENNOX

I had no right to be mad at Justin. He'd made a move and Lucy accepted. It was none of my business what those two did. So why did I wish I'd jumped between them and asked Lucy to join me instead? I'd spent the last two days trying to figure out what the hell my problem was. We all knew Justin was a playboy who'd get pussy anywhere he could. I worried that his actions would end up fucking all of us. Lucy's dad was not going to take kindly to learning Justin and Lucy broke the rules.

Damn Justin and his unrelenting need to flaunt the rules. He was a great guy and a teammate that I trusted with my life. But he had a problem. We all overlooked it because we liked him and he skated like a damned devil. He'd saved my ass during our game.

Shouldering my duffel, I pushed through the door and made my way to the locker room. I'd come early with the hopes of running into Justin.

Lucy's door was shut, the lights off and the shades closed. There was no reason for her to be here early. I almost hated that I wouldn't get a chance to see her too. Maybe I could run into her at some point after practice and see how she was doing. Justin wouldn't call her again. He never went out with the same woman more than a couple times, and Lucy was too much of a liability to fool around with.

The metal door squeaked when I pulled it open and I stopped to survey the room. Empty. That was fine by me. I

could sit back and wait for Justin.

I kicked off my shoes and plopped onto the low bench seat. A chill settled over me despite my puffy coat and athletic pants. Crossing my ankles, I sat with my back against my locker, trying to appear nonchalant when the door opened and Justin strolled in, whistling.

He spotted me and rolled his eyes, throwing his duffel at my feet. “You’re here early.”

“Stating the obvious. Good way to start a conversation.” I tapped my feet together and jerked my chin toward the bench running perpendicular to mine. “Have a seat.”

“Why?” He bent at the waist and jerked the zipper on his duffel. His skates and helmet tumbled out. “You can lecture me from there.”

“Sit the fuck down, Justin.” Anger curled in my stomach and I slapped the red seat. Our whole locker room was done in shades of blue and brown, our eagle mascot’s face staring down at us from every wall.

Justin sighed dramatically and crossed his arms like a toddler, but his ass met the bench. He mimicked my posture. “There. Happy?”

“You have no idea.” How much could I ask him about his night with Lucy without it being creepy? “How did things go with Lucy?” That seemed like an innocent enough beginning.

“Incredible.” Justin’s eyes glazed over and he shifted on the bench. “Seriously, I’ve never been with anyone like her.”

Really? That was new. He’d never had anything good to say about the other women. “You don’t plan on seeing her again, though? Right?” I sounded more accusatory than curious, but I wasn’t sure Justin would notice.

Heat blasted down on me from overhead and I shrugged out of my coat while waiting on Justin to answer. The steady thrum of the heater chugging away filled the silence.

“Justin?” I prodded him with my foot. “You can’t see her again.”

“Why?”

He had to ask? I used my captain’s voice to try and infuse a warning in my tone. “Because of who she is.”

Justin scoffed and tossed his head back. “You’re just jealous.” He stood, advancing until he towered over me. “You’re mad ‘cause I asked her out and she said yes.”

“No.” I argued back.

He pointed a thin finger at me, poking me in the chest right above my heart. “If you want a shot at Lucy, you should take it. Ask her out. Worst she can do is say no.”

“I’m not interested in dating Lucy.” My racing heart argued the opposite, but I wasn’t about to let Justin know that. “And what do you mean “I should take my shot”? You just said you were going to ask her out again.”

“I wouldn’t say I asked her out the first time. She went out with all of us, but she slept with me.” He kept going before I could say anything. “And she is one hell of a lay, Lennox. I mean, a damned hottie in the sack.” His cheeks turned red. “I didn’t have to go slow with her.”

My eyebrows shot upward. Justin wasn’t shy in the locker room. We’d all seen his cock. Hell, we’d all seen each other. It was one of those things that happened in locker rooms. Justin was what my last girlfriend would have called *hung like a horse*.

That didn’t even cross my mind when he asked Lucy to leave with him. I hated him a little bit for that. “You’re trying to blow her off like all the other girls.” I pushed to my feet. I wanted him to leave Lucy alone, but that didn’t mean I’d accept him treating her like she was disposable.

Justin didn’t budge. We were of similar height and build, but that was where the similarities ended. I pushed his shoulders, shoving him out of my face. “She deserves to be treated better than that.”

“Make up your fucking mind.” Justin shoved me hard enough to send my back crashing into the lockers. “Either you

want me to leave her alone, or you're okay with me asking her out. Which is it?"

"I'm saying you should have treated her with more respect from the beginning. You treated her like all your other dates. Fuck 'em and leave 'em. That's what you do, right? Well, Lucy deserves better." My chest heaved and I fought for control. I didn't usually fight outside the rink, but this had gone too far.

Justin swung a fist at my jaw. "You don't own my life. You might tell me what to do on the ice, but my life out there is none of your business."

I ducked under his fist and landed a punch to his kidneys. "You need to break things off with Lucy, but do it right." The burst of movement caused sweat to gather in the small of my back. I grabbed Justin's hand when he went in for another punch and pulled it around behind his back.

He wrenched out of my grasp and whirled around, quicker than I expected, and wrapped both arms around my waist. He lifted me off the ground and slammed my back into the lockers. Once. Twice. On the third hit, I raised both my fists over my head and slammed them into his spine.

He howled in outrage and threw me aside. "You asshole." He prowled back and forth in front of me, watching for my next move. "You can't tell me you don't want her. I saw the way you and Zachary watched her. You're as hard up as I am." He kicked out at my calves and I skipped out of range. "Admit it. You're jealous that I asked her out."

Zachary stepped between us and grabbed each of us by the collar. "Your voices are so fucking loud I heard you out in the hallway. Care to tell me why you're shouting about Lucy where everyone and their brother can hear you? Where her *dad* can hear you?"

"Fuck. He's not here, is he?" I curled my hands around Zachary's wrist and tried to pry his fingers open. I'd have an easier time trying to unhinge a shark's mouth.

“What do you care?” Justin snarled. He walked backward until he was out of Zachary’s reach. His shirt would tear before Zack turned him loose.

“You’re putting the entire team at risk.” I smacked at Zachary’s elbow, trying to break his hold. Nothing worked. The guy was built like a tank and once he found a purpose, nothing could shake him loose. “If you hurt Lucy and her dad finds out it was you, it’s over.”

“For me.” Justin threw his hands out in a wild gesture. “It has nothing to do with you. If I want to ruin my career, so be it. Lucy is worth the risk.”

What the fuck? I’d never heard him be this passionate about anything, much less a woman. I didn’t know that I believed him.

“I’m not fooling around with her. I like her.” There was almost a plea in his eyes the way he looked at me. “Like, really like her.”

“I don’t believe that.” I shook my head and gave up trying to get away from Zachary. He’d let us go when he was ready. Muscled fucker couldn’t help but step between us. He thrived on calm and would fight to the death for any of his teammates. On or off the ice.

Zachary released us, his knuckles popping after holding so tight for so long. He took one step back, both hands close enough to grab us again if we went after each other. “I think he’s telling the truth, Lennox.”

“What?” I spluttered and shook my head. “No way. He’s never serious about any of them.”

“Doesn’t mean he can’t change.” Zachary lifted one shoulder. He stared hard at Justin. “He was different with her at the bar. More careful. He’s willing to fight you, which is a pretty big deal for both of you. Seems to me you both like her.”

“You too, motherfucker.” Justin’s grin widened now that he knew he had Zachary on his side. He clapped Zachary’s

shoulder and squeezed, trying to rock Zachary back and forth. “Seems like we all have the hots for the same girl.”

“Not that it matters,” I admitted with growl. “We can’t all date Lucy. One of us with her is enough to ruin the team dynamics. It’s ruining the three of us already.”

“Not me.” Zachary held up both hands and took a step back. “I’m fine with it.”

Justin smirked and clapped his hands together. “This is great.”

The door opened and the rest of the team filed in. They barely looked at us as they came in, and I felt a rush of relief that Zachary stepped in when he did, or Justin and I might still be screaming and punching each other.

Poor Lucy. She had no idea the shit she was stirring up. We all dressed for practice. I couldn’t get Lucy out of my head. Justin was right, I liked her. Zachary hadn’t denied it either. His whole *fine-with-it* attitude caused a momentary distraction. What did that mean? What did Justin mean when he said I should ask Lucy out too? I couldn’t ask him, but he’d said he wasn’t backing down. Did he intend for us to let her choose who she’d rather be with?

Our teammates roughhoused and talked, their voices drowning out my thoughts as the excitement of heading out to practice built up in the locker room. After winning our game, we were all ready to get out there and prep for the next one. Coach wouldn’t take it easy on us because we’d won. If anything, he’d crack down harder.

Would Lucy be there to watch? Damn it, I had to stop thinking about her.

Grabbing my helmet and my stick, I followed Zachary and Justin into the hallway. We hung back from the rest of the team. I clacked my stick against Justin’s. “Sorry.”

He shot a sideways grin at me. “Sorry we didn’t get to finish our fight?”

“Insufferable bastard.” I elbowed him hard enough that he crashed into Zachary, who hit the wall and bounced back with

a shove.

We drew closer to Lucy's office and the three of us straightened. The door opened and she stepped out. I'd be damned if my heart didn't stop in those few seconds that I took her in. Black pants covered her long legs, and she wore a teal blouse open at the throat with a gray scarf around her neck. Her cheeks pinked when she looked at Justin.

"Hey." Justin tapped his stick to his helmet where it sat on the back of his head.

She grinned, flashing us a dimple on her right cheek. "Can I talk to you after practice?"

"Me?" Justin thumbed his chest.

Lucy's blush deepened and she licked her lips. "All three of you." She took a breath and let it out in a rush. "I need to talk to all three of you."

LUCY

I practiced my speech over and over again as I paced my office and waited for practice to end. No matter how great the sex was with Justin, I shouldn't continue having anything that resembled a relationship. I mean, sex wasn't really a relationship.

Ugh. The fight between what I knew I should do and what my body wanted me to do hadn't stopped since I left Justin's house two nights ago. I'd known he wouldn't call, and I was glad that he hadn't. My heart gave a stupid little ache and I bit my lip. Okay, so maybe I was a little bit irrationally upset that he'd done exactly what I knew he'd do. That look today in the hallway had caused my body to flame. It said he wasn't done with me yet, and I wanted that to be true.

Damn it. I kicked my toes against the wall and pushed my hair back from my face, then shook out my hands. I could do this. I *had* to do this. My goals and my career were far more important than sex. Even if it was the best sex of my life and it made me want more.

The door opened and I wheeled to face Justin, Lennox, and Zachary. I'd never admit it to them, but they looked hot as hell coming off the ice all mean-faced with their adrenaline pumping.

Lennox wiped a towel over his face and shouldered past Justin. What the hell was that all about? His eyes caught mine and a moment of pure want flashed. I tamped it down as best I could, but Lennox must have seen it because his eyes widened

and he took a step forward. I held up a hand to stop him, to stop all of them, from coming any closer. Already the room felt three sizes smaller with all of them pressed in like this. I was suffocating in their presence. No, not suffocating... turned on. A surge of desire ran so heavy through me that I closed my eyes to keep from moaning. This was not happening.

Gritting my teeth, I forced my eyes open and crossed my arms over my chest to present a more closed-off personality. "I wanted to make sure we're all on the same page about what happened the other night."

"You mean you fucking the life right out of me?" Justin had absolutely no shame or remorse as he called me out.

My entire face heated. Yeah, there was no coming back from that. I lifted my chin anyway, determined to see this through. "Yes. That. It was a one-time thing."

"I can't believe you would do that to me." Justin took a step. He smiled playfully, but I swore I saw a flash of hurt in his eyes, just like that night. "Didn't it mean anything to you?"

"Stuff it up your ass, Justin." Lennox punched Justin's shoulder and moved to intercept before he came close enough to touch me. "You're the one who leaves after one night."

"It's against the rules," I interjected before they devolved into the fight I saw brewing in their clenched fists and angry snarls. They were like a couple of dogs fighting over a bone. I was no one's property. I made my own decisions. "I'm not going to jeopardize my father's career. Or my own."

All three snapped to attention at that. "Your dad's career?" Zachary asked. "What does this have to do with him?"

"It's not just his rule that we're not allowed to fraternize. I'm part of the staff now. What I do is a reflection of the team as a whole." A lump formed in my throat when I thought about Dad and what he'd say to me if he knew about me and Justin.

"It's pretty easy to keep a secret." Justin eased past Lennox, and this time Lennox let him move close enough to brush his knuckles down my arm.

The move sent delicious shivers along my skin, and I gripped my arms to keep from swaying closer. What was it about this cocky guy that drew me in? I didn't usually care for his type. Something about Justin told me he had a depth that no one knew about. Or that was just my libido talking, and I wanted him to be more than a giant dick—figuratively speaking.

“No.” I held out my hand, palm up, when he took another step. “I have enough going on in my life. Between my advocacy work and raising Abigail, plus working here; my life is full. I don't need anything else complicating my days.” I looked hard at Justin. “Or my nights.”

He smirked a little at that. “I'm not ready for this relationship to be over, Lucy.”

Damn him. Damn him to hell for saying my name in a purr of sexual desire that went straight to my pussy.

Lennox and Zachary looked at each other behind Justin's back. Lennox's eyes narrowed and he started forward. Zachary did the same, the three of them creating a triangle of strength that I wanted to dive right in the middle of. I didn't know where the thought came from, but once it hit, I couldn't shake it loose. I liked all three of these men enough that for a split second, I considered tossing aside my fears and seeing where this ended.

I shook my head clear of the intoxicating thought. “We don't have a relationship, Justin. We had a one-night stand. We both knew that going in. It was one sexual encounter. Nothing more.”

“One-night stands are the worst.” Zachary's voice came out of nowhere, the dark tone bringing my attention to him. “Trust me. I had one in college. Be glad you remember yours. All I remember is waking up in an unfamiliar room with some girl's pink panties on my pillow.”

His words sparked a memory of the night I'd gotten pregnant with Abigail. I'd gone to a party, gotten drunk, and fallen into bed with the first cute guy I saw. I remembered making the decision to sleep with him, then the details turned

fuzzy. The guy had a strawberry birthmark on the right side of his neck, something he'd passed down to Abigail. Other than that, I had little to no memory of the night. He'd been slightly clumsy as a lover, but that could have been inexperience or alcohol or both. I'm sure I wasn't memorable either. The pink panties comment gave me pause. I'd been wearing pink panties that night and couldn't find them when I slipped out in the middle of the night.

I stopped my rambling thoughts, slamming the lid on that night. It's not like Zachary was the guy I'd slept with in college. He was a hockey guy and I'd gone to a medical college. Those two were nowhere near each other. I'd remember Zachary. He was the kind of guy you couldn't forget with his broad shoulders and wide smirk. And a tiny scar on his upper lip that crinkled when he smiled. I'd definitely remember that.

Justin closed the distance, bringing us chest to chest. His padded shirt brushed my crossed arms, and I was grateful I'd worn long sleeves to hide the way goosebumps popped out all over my skin. "We could do this." He trailed a finger down my cheek and tipped my chin up until I met his gorgeous blue eyes. "We could make this more than one night. I'm not done with you." He pointed over his shoulder. "And these guys can vouch for me when I say I've never said that to a woman before. You're different. There's something about you that makes me want more."

Zachary and Lennox shifted closer. They hemmed me in, their bodies generating enough heat to make me sweat. And I didn't want to back away. There was nowhere to go. With the exam table behind me and them in front of me, I was well and truly trapped. Only it didn't feel that way. It felt like coming home, that strange but wonderful feeling of being where you belonged. Safe. Secure. What the hell did that mean?

"I..." I trailed off as I stared into his eyes. *Can't* was supposed to be the next word out of my mouth, but it stuck in the back of my throat.

He leaned in closer. He should smell disgusting after practice, but he brought a hint of mint and sage with him. "All

I'm asking for is a chance. Give me a chance to prove that we can do this. You can have it all, Lucy."

"Stop saying my name," I breathed out in a whisper.

"Lucy," he whispered back.

My knees weakened and I planted my ass on the exam table to keep from sliding into him or falling at his feet and telling him I wanted to try too. This was all too new, too crazy. I had a brand new job that I depended on to pay my rent. I couldn't put that at risk, especially not with Abigail relying on me. It didn't make sense to risk all that for a romp in the sack with Justin. Yes, he was amazing in bed.

That didn't justify it. The question was, was I strong enough to balance it all? Could I have the career, manage my obligations at the advocacy center, raise Abigail, and keep a relationship a secret from everyone I loved? I thrived on complicated. If anyone could do this, I could. Would it be worth it?

Justin made me want to think so. His thumb stroked my cheek.

"This is a bad idea," Lennox spoke up from over Justin's left shoulder.

Zachary nodded, though a muscle leaped in his jaw when I looked over at him. "There are a lot of factors to consider. It's not just about you, Justin. You made sure of that when you brought us in on your little tryst. Now we're keeping secrets too."

"I won't let anything bad happen to you." Justin ignored his friends, his teammates, and focused solely on me. His thumb moved back and forth over my cheek in slow, steady strokes.

I knew what he was capable of, the heights he could take me to in bed. But he could also bring me down. If we did this and things ended badly, we'd both be ruined and he'd drag Lennox and Zachary down with him.

"Excuse me? I'm looking for Lucy Ashley?" A male voice spoke up from behind Lennox.

He whirled, as did Zachary, the two of them bracing like a couple of bodyguards primed to fend off an attack.

A tall, slim man with brown hair and a press badge lanyard around his neck lifted his eyebrows. “Can you tell me where she is? Coach Ashley said she’d be here, in her office.”

“Who are you?” Lennox asked in a low growl.

The man blanched a little but squared his shoulders and stuck out his hand. “I’m Brad. I’m with the *Branson Tribune*, and I’m here to do an interview with Miss Ashley.”

Holy shit. The interview. I’d forgotten all about it. I checked the time on the clock hanging behind me. Five minutes till noon. He was right on time. I could smack myself for forgetting and letting him walk in on me like this.

I stepped around Justin and took his offered hand. “I’m Lucy Ashley. Thank you for coming down. I was just checking over the team for injuries after their practice today.” I stopped myself there, before my rambling and need to explain got me into trouble. This man did not need an explanation for why I was in my office with three hockey players.

That was none of his business. Though the contemplative look he gave the guys said he didn’t quite believe me. We’d been standing far too close for comfort. Too close for me to have been giving them a check-up. There was nothing I could do about that now. Onward and upward, as Dad liked to say.

Zachary, Lennox, and Justin walked around Brad, each of them giving me questioning looks like they wanted to ask if they should stick around. A rush of affection for their concern made me grin and wave them off. “I’ll see you tomorrow after practice. Justin, keep up the treatment on that leg.”

He winked at me from behind Brad’s back. “Sure thing, Doc.”

I turned away from them, and from Brad, before the rush of heat could give me away. “Would you like to step into my office?” I hurried across the room and opened the door that led to my inner office, a small space that held a narrow desk and two chairs. The door didn’t lock, and I noticed belatedly that

Justin had left my main door open as well. He lingered out in the hallway, miming *call me* when Brad entered my office.

I shook my head at him and turned my focus to the interview. Screwing this up would be the end of my advocacy for women's rights in hockey.

Brad reached into his pocket and took out his phone. "Do you mind if I record the interview?"

"Not at all." I scooted behind my desk and set my hands in my lap. My thoughts chased each other in a steady loop. How much had Brad seen and heard before he made his presence known? We were not doing anything wrong, *per se*, but Justin's hand on my cheek was purely sexual. Anyone looking would realize that in a heartbeat.

ZACHARY

Practice was hell. I managed to keep my cool through the hours of skating and guarding the net, but every time I looked at Justin, I knew I had to talk to Lucy. Justin floated like a damned fairy over the ice. The bastard never stopped grinning. Every time he skated past me, he'd grin wider. Lennox and I had tried talking to him again after leaving Lucy's office yesterday, but he didn't want to hear it. He kept saying that everything would be fine.

No matter what I told myself, how many times I mentally berated myself for this asinine plan, I waited for Lucy after practice the next day. I made it subtle, saying goodbye to Lennox and Justin the same way I always did and going out to my car. I even drove out of the parking lot and headed toward home, stopping at a coffee shop to grab a latte before circling back around. I cruised through the lot to make sure both Lennox and Justin's vehicles were gone and that Lucy's was there before I parked and hustled into the building.

The place rang with a hollow emptiness that made my stomach clench. I hated these narrow corridors and the way every step made it sound like someone was chasing me. Sweat ran down my forehead and I dashed it away before it stung my eyes. I turned the corner and spotted Lucy's door cracked open.

She stood on the other side, her blonde hair in a high ponytail that caused curls to sweep over her shoulder.

Justin was an idiot in some things, but he'd gotten this one right. There was something about Lucy that made my pulse beat faster. It was a physical attraction at first, but when I'd seen her advocate for the kids at the center, I started to fall for her kind spirit and gentle nature. She fought for what she believed in, the same as me.

I palmed open the door and stepped into the quiet room.

Lucy turned to face me, her face a mask. Her eyebrows shot up and her gaze raked me over from head to toe. "Zachary, are you alright? Did you get injured?" She switched into doctor mode in an instant, and her careful concern made me want to grab her and kiss her senseless.

Fuck, I was a mess for this woman. It happened so quickly that it made no sense, but there was no denying the way my cock responded to her soft voice. When she touched my arm with concern, I had trouble dragging my attention back to her question and forcing away the image of those soft hands wrapping around my dick. I had no place thinking shit like that. She'd slept with Justin. That didn't mean she'd have me... unless Justin was right yesterday. He hadn't stopped talking after we left Lucy's office when the douche reporter showed up. Justin had it in his head that Lucy liked all of us the same way we liked her.

Lennox called him a daft bastard, and I'd agreed. Until I looked down and saw Lucy staring up at me. She blinked slowly and licked her lips. My cock twitched again as another rush of images invaded my skull.

"I have to go pick up my daughter from school." Her hand stayed on my arm. "What did you need? If you came here to talk about Justin, there's nothing left to say."

Justin's name on her lips should have been a bucket of ice water over my head, but it had the opposite effect. I imagined her with Justin, and it didn't bother me the way it should. He treated women with respect even though he never called them back. I knew he'd showed Lucy a good time. The way she watched him yesterday told me she'd enjoyed herself and wanted to do it again.

Was Justin right? Did she want all of us? The more I tried to get rid of that question, the harder it sank its claws into me. I had to focus. I'd come here to talk, and I hadn't said a damned word.

I placed my hand over hers where it rested on my arm. Her breath hitched and she licked her lips again. "Be careful with Justin."

Her brows crashed together. "What do you mean? We slept together once. It didn't mean anything to either of us." Her words sounded true enough, but her expression and tone didn't match. She spoke with a low huskiness and her eyes were wide, almost hopeful, and her pulse thrummed where my fingers rested on her wrist.

She tugged her hand back and clutched it to her neck.

"That's what you both say." I followed her when she walked backward, stopping when I came within touching distance. I didn't want to come off as creepy or a stalker, so I backed off. "I'm asking you not to hurt him."

We'd all heard him tell her that he wouldn't let anything bad happen to her. I felt the same way, but I also needed to protect Justin. That was part of my job as his friend and teammate.

"What makes you think I have that kind of power?" Lucy put her hands behind her and gripped the edge of the exam table. The paper made a crinkling sound that might as well have been as loud as a gunshot. It rattled through me, reminding me we stood in the middle of her very public office and the door behind me was still open.

I looked around her space, taking in the changes she'd made since I helped paint the walls. Colorful landscapes hung on three of the walls, and her diploma took up a spot on the fourth. Medical equipment sat on the counters, and I recognized the array of exercise bands on top of the filing cabinet. She'd taken a drab, depressing place and made it feel homey. This was how she could hurt Justin, she just didn't know it. "Justin's not as laid-back as he seems. I've never seen

him react to anyone the way he does with you. It's unsettling, and I'm not sure what to think about it. He's my friend."

"You look out for each other." Lucy shrugged one slim shoulder, bringing it to her ear before dropping it again. "I respect that." Reaching up, she tossed her ponytail over her shoulder. The move wasn't sexual at all, but it brought my attention to the slim curve of her neck.

I fisted my hands and shoved them into my pockets before I did something foolish like wind my hands into her hair and see if it felt as silky as it looked. I'd never been this attracted to a woman after a handful of interactions. I tended to stay away from most women, since my last few girlfriends all tried to get me to quit hockey after watching one game. No one needed that kind of negativity in their life.

"Is that all?" Lucy's soft gaze found mine. "I really do need to go pick up my daughter."

I believed her, but I couldn't shake Justin's words away. Curious, I tipped my head to the side and watched Lucy squirm when the silence continued to stretch. She could walk away, but she chose to stay here. I stood between her and the door, but I wasn't stopping her from leaving. I moved closer but off to the side, opening the space between her and the door. "Justin said something yesterday."

"Justin says a lot of things," she scoffed with a grin that brightened her eyes and made my chest warm.

"Yeah." I agreed with a nod. "But this involved you. And now I can't get it out of my head."

Her cheeks pinked and she ducked her chin. "He better not have told you about... that." She rocked her head side to side.

"That?"

Huffing and pressing her eyes closed with her fingertips, she whispered, "If he told you anything about me and him having sex, you'll have to do more than protect him from a broken heart. I'll break his fucking nose." Her fingers fell away from her eyes and she clenched both hands into fists.

I laughed and wrapped my hands around hers, prying open her fingers one by one. “Justin doesn’t kiss and tell. He’s an asshole, but he’s honorable.” Her pulse ratcheted up and her chest rose in a rapid inhale when I stroked my thumb over her palm. “No, he said something else.” I flipped her hand over and kissed her wrist where her pulse thundered. “He said you might be interested in me too.” It was ridiculous to even think about. But I’d seen the way she looked at me yesterday, and when we first met. Curiosity and interest were similar, but the sexual heat between us now was undeniable. I didn’t know if she’d admit it or brush it aside. There were consequences to what I was asking, consequences we’d discussed at length yesterday. Consequences I didn’t give a damn about with Lucy standing in front of me with that look of want in her eyes. I kissed her wrist again.

Her fingers curled over my cheek and she sucked in a ragged breath. “Zachary.”

The sound of my name in that breathless tone undid me from the inside out. It wrapped around my heart and squeezed until I lost all ability to think. “I get it now.”

“What?” Pink gilded her cheeks and she sank her teeth into her lower lip.

I lifted my eyes to hers and dragged my thumb over her plump bottom lip so that it popped out of her mouth, glistening. What would she feel like with those lips around me? “The reason you told Justin to stop saying your name. I get it now. That’s all I want to hear, my name on your lips.” My cock lengthened and I shifted my weight to ease the pressure. “I have to ask, Lucy.”

She stared at my lips, her fingers still moving back and forth over my stubbled cheek. “What?”

“Would you ever consider having sex with me?” I wanted her more than I’d wanted any woman in my life. But I’d walk out the door without hesitation if she said no. It dawned on me where we were; the trouble we could get into if anyone walked past and saw us. We were not doing anything wrong. Not yet.

The thrill of the forbidden hit me as I stared into Lucy's wide eyes.

We shouldn't do this, but especially not here. All she had to do was say no.

Lucy's smooth lips glided over mine and her hand slid around to cup the back of my neck. She kissed with a fiery passion that drove me insane. My dick ached with the need to be inside her. Her scent wrapped around me, a fresh, floral fragrance that made me think of a field of flowers in spring.

I banded an arm around her waist and pulled her closer. Her mouth opened when my erection pushed into her lower stomach, and I took advantage of the shock to stroke my tongue alongside hers. She made a mewling noise in the back of her throat, her nails scraping my scalp until shivers danced up my spine. She wanted me as much as I wanted her. The pressure in my cock tightened to a painful level and I ground my hips against hers. Friction from my jeans sent jolts through me, and I bent at the waist, pushing Lucy's back toward the exam table. Nothing mattered except for this. Pleasing Lucy became my reason for existing. Hearing her say my name as she came was the only thing that I wanted to hear.

I tore my lips from hers and settled them in the hollow of her throat, where her pulse raced to match mine. She slid her hand between us, cupping my cock through my jeans. I thrust into her hand, letting her feel me. I wasn't as big as Justin, but I knew how to use what I had.

Lucy's head fell back and she made that noise in the back of her throat again. It spurred me on, hearing her start to come undone. I unbuttoned the top button on her blouse and pushed it aside, revealing a white bra with lace curling around the edges. I kissed her there, licking the curve of her breast.

Desperate to see more of her, I reached for the hem of her shirt.

Lucy's hand gripped my wrist and squeezed. "Wait."

LUCY

What the hell was I thinking? Zachary's dick pressed hard into my palm and his hand spasmed at my waist. I moved my hand from his crotch to his chest and pushed. He backed away immediately. Disappointment drew his lips into a frown, but he didn't say a word or make a move to try and convince me to sleep with him. My respect for him grew. I'd felt his dick. I knew how much he wanted this.

And he knew I wanted him. Hot damn did I want him. It was as bad as the night in the bar when I'd decided to sleep with Justin. My pussy was drenched already just from his kisses. I'd thought one night with Justin would take care of the raging hormonal urges. If anything, it made them worse.

I slipped past Zachary. He turned to watch me go, his spine straight and his jeans bulging. When I reached the door, he pushed off from the table, ready to follow me out. But instead of leaving, I closed the door and locked it. I turned out all the lights except for the lamp in my inner office.

With the door shut, we were cast in almost complete darkness. "I want you, Zachary." I'd barely managed to say the words when he brought his lips to mine. He kissed me eagerly, his lips warm and firm on mine. He sucked my bottom lip into his mouth and nibbled gently.

I rubbed my hands over his short hair and rocked my hips against his. He groaned and reached for my shirt for the second time. I didn't stop him, and he pulled it up over my

head and tossed it aside. His eyes shone black in the tiny bit of lamplight.

I still needed to pick up Abigail, which meant we had to make this fast. As much as I wanted to take things slow and easy, we were both frantic. I grabbed his pants and undid the belt, walking backward to the exam table. His jeans fell open at a touch on the zipper, and he kicked them off as we walked. His cock was long and thick, not as big as Justin's but still a magnificent piece. It bobbed ahead of him with every stride and my pussy grew slick. How had I gotten so lucky? Two guys wanted to fuck me, and they had the cocks of gods. It didn't matter that this would be over fast, the friction of walking was getting me close to the edge.

Zachary stopped beside the table and slid my pants down over my hips. I stepped out of them, and he used the opportunity to slide a finger between my folds. "So hot and wet." He murmured against my mouth. One finger dipped into my pussy and my knees went weak. Zachary held me up with one arm around my waist and stroked me deep with his finger.

"Hurry." I rocked into his hand and almost came apart when he added another finger. "Oh, fuck. Hurry, Zachary."

He groaned and deepened his thrusts. "I want to enjoy this."

I slid my hand over his cock, pumping him into my fist. "You'll enjoy it more if you shove your cock inside me."

"I knew you had a dirty mouth." He kissed me, easing his tongue into my mouth and setting up a matching rhythm with his tongue and fingers.

Thoughts fled as he worked me over, slowly adding a third finger that had me gasping and writhing in his arms. My legs gave way as stars burst in my vision and I came on his fingers. He lifted his lips. "Say my name." He increased his pace when I groaned and my legs shook.

My orgasm swept me away, but it wasn't over yet. Another built right away, but this time I wanted his dick in me when I came. "Zachary." I kissed his earlobe and breathed into his ear.

He shuddered in response, his cock leaping in my hand. “Fuck me with this cock, Zachary. Take me hard and fast. I need to feel all of you.”

My words had the exact effect I’d hoped for. Zachary spun me around and bent me over the table. He still wore his shirt and hadn’t removed my bra.

I didn’t give a damn. Paper crinkled under my cheek and I stretched both arms over the table to grip the other side. The table felt cold on my heated cheeks.

Zachary squeezed my ass and let out a sound of pure lust. He nudged my legs wider apart and settled his knees next to mine. The head of his cock pressed against my entrance, and I bucked my hips, silently asking for more.

He gave it to me, seating himself with one smooth thrust that made us both gasp.

“Hot damn.” I stood on my tiptoes, then eased onto the balls of my feet, sliding over his cock. “That feels so good.”

He withdrew to the tip, then plunged back into me. “You feel so good. I never want to stop.”

My spine arched and I gave myself over to the feel of him taking me over and over again. This was what I’d needed. Every nerve in my body came alive. I wanted him closer, close enough for me to see his eyes when he came. I loved the thrill it gave me to watch a man come apart the way Justin had when I rode him. He’d watched me shatter on his cock and hadn’t been able to stop himself.

Zachary had more control, but he was losing it one deep plunge at a time. The slap of skin hitting skin sent goosebumps skittering along my arms. His cock stroked deep, hitting that special place in my pussy that made me cry out with pleasure. “Yes. Right there. Do that again.”

He gave me everything I asked for. His fingers dug into my hips, holding me steady, holding me up when my legs wanted to give out. “That’s it, baby.” He slid one hand around my hip and fingered my clit while he pounded into me. “Come

for me. Then I'll turn you around and we'll start all over again."

Holy fuck. The rough rasp of his voice in my office made my nipples peak to hard nubs. I came apart at the seams, bucking over his cock with a wildness I hadn't felt in years. Pleasure tore through my body in fierce waves that shook me from head to toe.

Zachary kissed the nape of my neck and withdrew.

"No." I whispered while reaching for him.

He chuckled and slid his arms beneath me, turning me around and placing my ass on the table. "I'm not done with you yet. I need to see your face this time. Feel that wonderful pussy choke the cum from my dick." He kissed me and dragged me to the edge of the table. My legs went around his waist and he buried his length inside me again. I was so sensitive from multiple orgasms that I almost came again right then and there.

Zachary eased his lips along my jaw. His shirt rucked up around his waist and I buried my hands beneath it, ready to pull it off so I could feel his skin against mine. Hard muscle met my fingertips, and I forgot all about taking off his shirt as I explored the smooth ridges and hard whorls. I rubbed my palms over his hardened nipples and heard him groan. So I did it again.

His head lifted from my neck and he brushed my ponytail away from my face where sweat had made strands of hair stick to my cheek. "I can't hold on much longer, Lucy."

I gave him a delighted grin and used my heels in his ass to pull him closer. "So don't hold on. Come inside me. Zachary." I leaned back on my elbows, giving him room to thrust deeper. "Zachary." I repeated his name when he grinned and fucked me harder.

He took advantage of the new position, pistoning his hips so that his cock stroked every inch of me. I was so close to coming. My skin buzzed, my heart slammed my ribs so hard I heard it in my ears. And Zachary, Zachary was a picture of

perfection. His face was tight, his lips peeled back from his teeth in a fierce grin. His eyes were pools of liquid midnight and the sight of him still half-clothed did something to me. His pace quickened. He leaned forward and braced himself with his palms on the table on either side of my head.

I grabbed my knees and held them wide, giving him an even deeper thrust. “Oh.” The sound that came out of my mouth was somewhere between a keen and a howl. “Yes. Right there. Holy fuck. Oh, Zachary. I’m there. I’m coming.” I locked eyes with him. “Come with me.”

He nodded jerkily, his body spasming as his cock swelled and then his hot cum filled me in thick waves. The feel of him coming apart finished me off and we tumbled into bliss together. My body didn’t belong to me anymore. It was nothing more than nerves and sensations firing at will. I felt his lips caress my shoulder, my collarbone, my jaw. But I couldn’t move. He thrust a few more times, his shoulders shaking, before he gathered me into his arms and held me until I could feel again. Even his words were a muted roar in my head that I barely understood.

I’d thought sex with Justin was great, but this? I’d never felt anything like this before. What had he done to me?

Brain function finally returned, and I glanced up at the clock. “Shit. I have to go.” I kissed the corner of his mouth. “I’m going to be late picking up Abigail.”

Zachary released me after one last, lingering kiss. He bent and grabbed our clothes, passing me my shirt and pants before he shoved his feet into his jeans and jerked them up. The sound of his zipper sounded far too loud, reminding me of what we’d done. The rules I’d broken again. I couldn’t bring myself to regret it.

“Will you go to the hockey charity gala with me?” Zachary adjusted his cock in his jeans and shoved his feet into his boots. His eyes were still heavy-lidded but they were clear.

I stilled with my shirt in my hand. “Gala?” My nose scrunched. I’d heard about it, but it wasn’t exactly on my radar to attend.

“Yeah.” Zachary shrugged and blew out a sigh. “I’m supposed to go and bring a date. It’s for my youth league.” He tied his boots and straightened, brushing a hand down his shirt. He looked wonderful.

Meanwhile, I probably looked like a woman who’d been well and thoroughly fucked. I raked my fingers through my hair and checked my face in the mirror. My cheeks were bright red, my lips swollen from Zachary’s kisses. Slight scratches marred my chin from his beard, and I touched them with one finger.

Zachary kept talking, his voice urgent but not insistent. “I go every year. There are a lot of advocacy groups there. Some of them might be willing to help you too.”

That could be helpful, but was it a good enough reason to be seen in public with Zachary? “Is this a date?”

He stilled, his head lifting slowly until he met my eyes. Broad shoulders rolled back. God, I loved his shoulders. They were the kind made for holding onto. The kind that made me feel safe and protected, even if I didn’t need a man. I appreciated his strength and how he controlled it. “We can’t date. I’d call it a business meeting with mutual benefits. I fulfill my obligation to bring a date, and you have the chance to bring more attention to your advocacy.”

“You sound like you had this planned out.” I tugged my shirt over my head and sat to pull on my leggings.

Zachary watched me, the weight of his gaze making me tingle all over again. “Trust me, I would never dream of planning this. Reality is so much better.”

My skin flushed, heat blooming in my chest. He’d given me one of the most honest and genuine compliments I’d ever heard, and it didn’t feel the least bit wrong.

With my leggings in place, I slid on my shoes and reached for my keys on the counter. “I’ll think about it. I don’t like leaving Abigail, and something like this would take me away most of the night.”

“Bring her with you.” He didn’t hesitate to include my daughter, and that made me like him even more.

I’d tried to date a couple times through the years, but they all ran at the mention of my little girl. She was the most important thing in my life, and nothing was going to come between me and her or me and my advocacy. My job. These things were what defined me, not being in love or having a man in my life. I wanted those things too, but not at the risk of losing the others.

I unlocked the door and held it open. “I’ll think about it.”

JUSTIN

I ducked under a hockey stick, my skates spraying ice across an opponent's legs. Zachary shouted at me, and I waved him off with a snarl. Fuck me. I was a disaster today. From the minute I skated onto the ice, I couldn't keep my mind off Lucy. She'd become the focus of every thought, every move. I glanced her way, even though I knew I should leave the shit alone. She was more potent than any drug.

She sat beside her father, who was mad enough at my spectacular failures today to be chomping his chewing gum like his life depended on it. He slammed his hands onto his hips, then pointed at me with a warning glare.

Zachary slammed into my side, pushing me out of the way and spinning me around at the same time. "Focus, asshole." His voice roared in my ears.

I shoved him back. "Get off me." He'd saved me from taking a stick to the head. Again. That was the second one I'd missed today. I needed to focus before I ended up with a concussion or getting pulled from the game. The crowd around us roared when a scuffle broke out between Lennox and the opposing team's right defender. Fists banged on the glass. They were hungry for more. We're assholes on ice. Demons on skates. That was what I was supposed to be today, but all my focus on Lucy had made me lose my edge.

Zachary skated back to his spot in front of the goal, and I dove back into the game. The puck skimmed over the ice amid a clattering of sticks. God I loved this game. It got my blood

pumping and made me want to bash heads almost as much as I wanted to fuck Lucy again.

A leg appeared alongside mine, then a full body. A man in yellow, his mouth twisted in a sneer, shoved me before I had time to get out of his way. This was a deliberate attack on my person. No doubt he hoped to take advantage of my distraction. My momentum carried me to the left, where I used my stick to trip another player, then hooked the other guy with an elbow and pulled him down with us.

My fist met the other guy's shoulder, glancing off the padding and going underneath to land a solid blow in his armpit. Everything turned into a blur after that. Fists, knees, elbows. We pummeled each other with everything available to us. I took the end of a stick to the mouth through the gaps in my helmet that snapped my head back.

Then they're thrown off me. Zachary heaved bodies left and right, throwing them like they were confetti. "Get up." He held out a gloved hand and grabbed mine, jerking me to my feet.

"Duck." I balled my hand into a fist and swung it at the guy sneaking up behind Zachary. Instead of ducking, he spun around and clocked the guy himself.

The ref's whistle tore through the air as he skated into the fray with both hands waving. "Twenty-two blue, thirty-one blue, off the ice."

"Aw, ref," I complained. "Come on."

"Now." He points to the penalty box. "Ten minutes."

"Ten?!" Zachary flung my hand off his shoulder. "What kind of batshit call is that? They came for Justin. You saw them."

The whistle blared again. "Off. The. Ice. Or I'll give you ten more."

Zachary cursed and skated away. I followed at a slower pace and threw my stick onto the floor once I stepped into the box. Plexiglass surrounded us on all sides, protecting us from

the crowd and from everyone else on the ice. Everyone except each other.

Zachary turned on me as soon as the gate behind me closed. He fisted my shirt in both hands and slammed me onto the bench. It creaked beneath the force, and the crowd's cheers reverberated off the walls. They loved a fight, on or off the ice didn't matter. They were a bloodthirsty lot, never satisfied with a game unless someone spilled blood.

I grabbed Zachary's wrists and twisted, but he was a tough motherfucker. "Get off me." Using all my strength, I pushed to my feet and shoved my hands into his elbows to break his stance. "What's your problem?"

"You're going to make us lose this game if you don't pull your head out of your ass." He pushed me again.

This time, I brought him down with me, kicking his skates out from under him so that he collapsed onto the bench.

"What are you talking about?" I removed my helmet and tossed it into a corner. "I'm not the only person on the team."

"No, but we're all having to watch your ass while you moon over Lucy." His voice was pitched too low to carry, plus the noise from the crowd kept us contained in our bubble.

Three of our teammates still on the bench glanced our way and raised their shoulders in a *what the fuck?* motion that I threw back at them, along with flipping them off.

"I'm not mooning over Lucy." The sound of her name almost dragged my attention back to where she sat. A few feet and a sheet of plastic separated us. And a whole slew of reasons why I shouldn't look at her, much less have increasingly vivid dreams of us in bed together.

"Right." His shoulder bumped mine hard enough to knock me forward. He removed his helmet and settled it on his knee. "You're not imagining the two of you together right now?"

"What's it to you if I am?" I tunneled a hand through my hair and watched the game progress in front of me. Lennox tore across the ice, his stick knocking the puck so fast it became a black blur. He swung hard and the puck skipped into

the goal. He fist-pumped the air and our team surrounded him with a few quick pats on the back before they took up their positions again.

I should be out there. Zachary should be defending our goal. Steve was pretty good, but Zachary was better. He was right. We were going to lose this game if I didn't figure out how to focus. "She's stuck in my head, man. I've never felt like this about anyone." I lowered my head and shook it slowly back and forth. "Why does it have to be her?"

"I don't know." Zachary's eyes cut toward Lucy and he ducked his head.

A groan tightened the back of my throat. I yanked off my gloves and rubbed the back of my neck. "I can't stop thinking about her."

I waited for Zachary to tell me to get my head out of my ass. When he didn't, I angled a look his way and caught him frowning while staring at Lucy. She turned just enough to catch his gaze and then jerked around, the pink in her cheeks darkening to a rosy hue. She rubbed her hands together and pushed them between her thighs as her throat worked on a hard swallow.

Zachary's breathing changed, turning heavy enough that his entire body moved with each exhale.

"Fuck." I punched him. Hard. "You like her too," I hissed into his ear.

He snapped around and leaned away from me. "Keep your voice down."

I punched him again, until Coach looked over and shook his head at us. The warning in his eyes was plain, and I held up my hands to show him I understood. As soon as he turned away, I punched Zachary in the leg. "You like her. What the hell, man?"

"It's nothing." Zachary rubbed his leg where I'd punched him and grimaced. "You wouldn't understand."

Oh, man. I was seriously going to beat him to a pulp for that one. "Don't tell me what I do or don't understand. I know

I slept with her once, but I'm not done with Lucy. There's a wholesomeness about her that I can't get away from."

Zachary's jaw clenched and his knee bounced up and down. "I get it." He tipped his chin toward me but kept his gaze on the ice. "She's something else."

"Did you two hook up?" I didn't know where the question came from, but the way Zachary's gaze shot straight to Lucy was a dead giveaway. "What the actual fuck? You slept with Lucy after giving me hell for it?"

His knee continued to bounce, the pace increasing. He rubbed his gloved hands over his head and caught his helmet when it fell off his knee. "It wasn't like I meant for it to happen." He scowled. "It was your fault, actually. If you hadn't said all that shit about her liking all of us, I never would have made a move."

"But you did. You made a move on her." Damn. I wanted details, but then I'd have to tell him about my night with Lucy, and that was *not* happening. Few things were a secret between me, Lennox, and Zachary. This was one of them. "And you're not done either, are you?"

His refusal to answer me was as much of an answer as if he'd punched me in the chest and tore out my insides. My heart gave a funny twist and I palmed it.

"What does this mean?" Zachary asked. He shot another look at Lucy, and then back at the ice. "This is crazy. We can't. I mean, even one of us sleeping with her is bad enough. But this? I mean..." Frustrated, he trailed off and punched his fist into his thigh three times.

"Ohhh." The wounded sound from the crowd drew our attention back to the ice.

The score was even. We'd missed the other team scoring twice against our stand-in goalie.

We were headed up shit creek without a paddle. We couldn't lose our second game of the season. I mean, we could, but it would be horrible for the team's morale. Several teammates on the bench shot dirty looks toward me and

Zachary. Yep, we were in trouble with the team too. They knew something was wrong, and they blamed us for the sudden turn in the score. I didn't blame them. I'd do the same thing in their situation. They'd seen me and Zachary almost start a fight with each other on the ice. That shit didn't fly if we wanted our team to stay solid.

I knew what Zachary was thinking. It was all my fault because I couldn't stop looking at Lucy. Well, now Zachary couldn't stop looking at her either.

"What are we going to do?" I asked Zachary when the noise died down enough that we could talk without shouting.

He shrugged and knocked his helmet against his knee. The guy really could not sit still for five seconds, much less ten minutes. "What can we do? We both like her. She likes both of us."

I had one idea. It was crazy, but it might work. Did I dare say it out loud? Zachary might laugh me right out of the box. Then again, what's the worst he could do? He could tell me I was crazy. That people didn't do that in real life. I leaned in close. "We could share her."

My teammate twitched so hard that his elbow caught me square in the gut. I'd think it was on purpose if not for the way he spun around to face me with his eyes wide and alarmed. "What the fuck did you just say?"

I shushed him with raised eyebrows and a shake of my head. "You heard me."

"That's not..." He blinked. Glanced at Lucy. When he looked at me again, a hard glint burned in his eyes. "Explain."

Well. Shit. "It's not like I have it all worked out in my head or anything. We could." I stopped and licked my lips. "I could take her out some nights and you could take her out other nights."

Zachary took his time thinking about what I'd said.

I leaned past Zachary and caught Lucy watching us. Her concerned expression warmed my heart. I lifted my eyebrows at her and almost winked. But then her dad looked our way

and I tried to appear nonchalant as I straightened out my legs and checked my skates. The timer ticked down. We'd be back on the ice in five minutes, if Coach allowed us to go back out. From the daggers he continued to shoot our way, that was uncertain.

"There for a second, I thought you meant we'd sleep with her at the same time," Zachary said it with a scoff, like the idea was ridiculous.

The image of the two of us buried balls deep in Lucy at the same time gave me an instant semi.

I almost believed Zachary didn't feel the same way until he suddenly shifted in his seat like his pants were too tight. I knew mine were. "I wouldn't be opposed to that."

"Damn it, Justin. Don't joke about this." Zachary rounded on me.

I met his glare head-on. "I'm not kidding." I lowered my voice so he had to lean in to hear me.

"We could both be with Lucy. Either apart or at the same time." I didn't care as long as he didn't keep telling me I had to give her up. This might be the answer I'd been looking for.

Could we pull it off?

LUCY

I couldn't hear a word Zachary and Justin were saying, but the angry gestures made me want to jump between them and put an end to the madness. Heat pooled low in my belly as I watched the two men I'd slept with swap verbal punches.

Justin said something that made Zachary's eyebrows crash down and his mouth drop open. What? What had he said? Not knowing was killing me a little more with each passing second. I forced my gaze back to the ice. If Dad caught me watching the guys in the penalty box, he'd have questions I didn't know how to answer. I had a job to do here, and their argument was a distraction I should avoid.

Lennox skated past, his eyes sparking trouble when he glanced at Justin and Zachary. The look promised retribution as soon as he could get his hands on his teammates.

The delicious heat curling deep inside intensified. What the fuck was going on with me? I'd slept with Justin, and then Zachary. That was more than enough to satisfy my sex drive, but it had the opposite effect. I wanted more of them. I ground my teeth together and huffed a breath into the cold air. They were a risk I could not afford. Not with my advocacy dreams hanging in the balance. Sure, no one really cared if I had sex. But they did mind if I had sex with multiple men on my father's hockey team. A team that was set to go to the championships this year if they could keep their damned heads in the game.

Justin moved in my peripheral vision as he shoved Zachary's shoulder and the two of them finally resorted to glaring at each other in silence.

Dad patted my shoulder. "Don't worry about them. They'll sort it out."

I glanced up in time to see him nodding toward Justin and Zachary. "Yeah, I know." I'd seen enough fights before to know that they never lasted long. Usually by the time the penalty ended, they were best friends again. I had a funny feeling that whatever caused their fight had something to do with me. I snorted and shook my head at my arrogance. No way I had any power over either of them. They enjoyed sex with me, sure, but that's where it ended.

Two skaters on the opposite team passed in a blur of motion. They nodded at each other and split apart. One went after Lennox, skating up to his unprotected back. He bumped into Lennox, then spun across Lennox's back and dropped to a knee, his stick out in front of him.

Lennox jumped to avoid the obstacle and another skater hit him from the left, knocking him to the ice with a sickening thud.

"Watch it!" Dad pointed at the ref. "Watch your players, ref."

The ref shrugged and skated backward across the ice. He'd missed the whole thing as another skater provided a distraction in almost knocking him down while the others went after Lennox.

Lennox leaped to his feet. "Try that again, motherfucker." His voice was a low growl that sent shivers along my spine. I should have been appalled at the darkness emanating from him, but it caused excitement instead. Lennox was a force of nature as he took off after the skater. The crowd surged to their feet as their bloodlust rose.

Justin and Zachary pounded their fists on the barrier between them, and Dad turned to face the box.

He shook his head at them. “Stupid fools. What do they expect me to do? I can’t get them out of the box until their time is up.”

I jerked my gaze up to the clock. They had a couple minutes left in the box. Then all hell would break loose. I knew the look in their eyes. They were hell-bent on destruction once they hit the ice.

“No one hits Lennox.” Zachary bellowed at Dad while slamming another fist to the barrier.

Dad waved him off and returned to the game. We were falling behind puck by puck. My heart dropped at the score, then fell again when I spotted Lennox limping across the ice. He skated behind the goal and stopped. Leaning forward, he rubbed his knee, hiding a wince by dipping his head and turning to the side.

Lennox was hurt. Damn it. I stood and grabbed Dad’s arm. “Lennox.” I jerked my head in his direction. “I need to check on him. He’s hurt.”

Lennox pushed off the wall and took a turn around the ice, rejoining the team. The puck skimmed the ice, flashing between the opposing team. Lennox went after the player dashing toward the goal. His strides were fluid now, but I caught the way he bared his teeth in pain every time he put weight on his right leg.

Dad peeled my hand off his arm. “If he tells me he needs off the ice, you can look at him.” He shook his head when I started to argue. “I’m not pulling him, Lucy. I need him out there. Already lost two of my three best players. Can’t lose him too.”

I wanted to rant at him that Lennox’s well-being was more important than a game, but I held it back. None of them would look kindly on me pulling Lennox from the game. I didn’t even have that kind of power. All I could do was sit there and watch him skate while in pain and hope that Justin and Zachary would get back out there and protect him like they were supposed to.

I tried to relax, but every muscle screamed in protest when I sat. I scooted to the edge of my seat and shoved my hands between my thighs to keep from slamming my fists on the partition in front of me. The smell of adrenaline mingled with the ice and the sour stench of hotdogs and beer. It twisted my stomach, but I stayed seated and kept an eye on Lennox. My heart hammered against my ribs like it wanted to burst free. Why? Why did I have this incessant urge to call Lennox off the ice and take care of him? It made no sense.

I hated the frustration clawing through my system. It felt like thousands of ants marching over my skin and nothing I did made them go away. Worry slithered through my veins and I sank my teeth into my lower lip to keep from calling Lennox's name as he raced past. He played like the devil himself sat on his shoulders. Nothing and no one stood in his way. If they tried, he plowed right through them. Cheers rose in a tidal wave that drowned out the grunts of pain from the players. Bloodthirsty. The whole stadium was full of bloodthirsty men and women. "Fight. Fight. Fight." They chanted over and over again like it was an after-school brawl.

Justin and Zachary yanked on their gloves and helmets and grabbed their hockey sticks. One more minute and they'd be back on the ice. They crowded close to the gate barring them entry and shouted at every opponent within hearing distance. Their jeers and taunts had almost no effect, but that didn't stop them.

I applauded their efforts to distract the other team from Lennox, who was tearing across the ice at high speed with the puck in his possession. He slapped it toward the goal and angled his skates for a quick turn before he slammed into the goalie. The goalie moved too slow to stop the puck, and it slid over the line right between his feet.

Lennox fist-pumped the air and high-fived nearby teammates. A breath of relief rushed out of me. He was okay. I had to keep telling myself that or I'd go crazy with worry.

Another player on our team hit the ice and I jumped to my feet. The ref's whistle blew a short, sharp blast. The guy rolled to his knees and put one skate down on the ice. Lennox and

another teammate helped him up. He thanked them with a thump to the back as the game continued around them. The ref shouted a warning at the guy who'd knocked our player down, but he let him stay in the game.

“Shit call, ref,” Zachary shouted and shook his fist. Anger rolled off him in thick waves. “What’s the deal, huh? They pay you to make those half-assed calls?”

“Shut it.” Dad glared at Zachary from the side. “Don’t start something you can’t finish. Save that shit for the ice.”

Zachary nodded, his gaze catching mine for a split second before he jerked it away.

God I was hot for him. Not just him, I realized as my traitorous body responded to Lennox’s voice lilting across the ice. Zachary, Justin, Lennox. I liked all of them. I’d fucked two of them and would happily jump Lennox’s bones if I could. What was wrong with me? I was not the kind of woman who jumped into bed with strange men. Not since that night in college taught me to have a little more restraint. But these men had me all hot and bothered. I couldn’t take my eyes off them long enough to keep my thoughts together. I had a job to do. Not just that, but women were counting on me to be their advocate in male-dominated sports, and I had a daughter to raise. There was no time for feelings, much less relationships.

That’s not what I wanted, though was it? I wanted sex. Hot, dirty, thrilling sex. The mere thought of it set my body on fire until I stopped feeling the cold emanating from the ice. I didn’t care about the other players getting pushed around. I cared about Lennox not getting hurt again.

My heart skipped into overdrive, my pulse humming in my veins. I didn’t understand this attraction to any of them, much less all three at once. Nothing could come of it, so it didn’t hurt to fantasize. Except it did hurt, because I wanted them so much that I could barely breathe.

Stop it, Lucy. I admonished myself even as I jumped to my feet when I realized what was playing out in front of me.

Twelve men on the ice sometimes made it hard to track all the intricate details, but I'd gotten so used to watching Lennox that it had become second nature to pick him out of the pack. He blocked a cheap shot from an opponent's stick as that opponent tried to steal the puck from the guy beside Lennox. Lennox shoulder-checked the opponent in passing and took off to guard his teammate driving the puck across the ice.

They closed in on him like matching freight trains. A shout of warning lodged in my throat. It wouldn't matter if I screamed myself hoarse. He didn't need the distraction. Lennox glanced left, then right, seeing the men coming for him at high speed. He slowed at the last second, but it wasn't enough.

Blood rushed through my ears in thunderous waves as three bodies collided on the ice. I would never forget the sound of Lennox's pain or the way his face crumpled behind the mask. He doubled over, one hand covering his stomach as they drove him to his knees.

Seeing Lennox injured stirred feelings I'd never experienced before. I wanted to hold him and protect him. It was crazy. I wasn't ready for a relationship, but especially not one with a hockey player. I cursed myself relentlessly. I didn't have feelings for just Lennox. I had feelings for all three of them. Feelings strong enough to make me want to say *fuck it* to all my responsibilities so I could give myself what I wanted. What I deserved. My hands curled into fists and I jumped to my feet. "Get up, Lennox." My breath fogged the air.

Dad moved to the edge of the ice, ready to take action. Things moved in slow motion, each detail excruciatingly clear as I watched Lennox take another hit to the stomach. He shoved at one man's knees, sending him flying backward. Then Lennox was on his feet. Helmets clattered to the ice. He tore his helmet off and threw it behind him with his left hand. His right fist flashed out, catching his opponent in the chin.

Someone rammed into Lennox from the side. Both men slammed into the ice hard enough that the thud reverberated through the building. The man who'd hit him rolled to his feet.

Lennox lay prone. Unmoving.

“Get up.” My throat tightened. “Get up. Get up. Get up.”
The words were a prayer stuttering from my frozen lips.

Lennox didn't move.

ZACHARY

Oh, fuck no. I forced my way onto the ice, shoving past Justin's stretched out arm. My feet hit the ice and I pumped my arms to move faster over the glassy surface. My breaths came out in harsh rasps. No one fucked with my team, but I'd really fuck them over for messing with a friend.

Justin appeared at my side, his face twisted in a scowl that would have regular men pissing their pants. He held out his hand, and I bumped my fist into his. We didn't share an ounce of blood relations, but we were brothers in all the ways that counted.

"Zachary. Justin. Get back in the box." Coach yelled our names. "Get the fuck off the ice."

For a man who rarely cursed, he was letting it fly today. I came within a second of spinning around and flipping him off. Only Justin's head shake stopped me, and the silent way Lennox lay sprawled on the ice. He had to be okay.

Another ref joined the first one. They blew their whistles and waved their arms. Too fucking late. I shoved the guy standing over Lennox, pushing him back.

"Fuck off." He slapped at my hands and shoved me back.

Lennox groaned and lifted his head. "Damn, man. One of you was bad enough but now there are three Zacharys."

Concussion. Had to be. I needed to protect him. Lennox's head fell back onto the ice and he raised a gloved hand to his face.

I hit the right defender who'd taken out Lennox with a tackle that would make football pros proud. He went down with a grunt and a curse. My brain bounced in my skull as my helmet cracked against his. I didn't let it stop me. Rolling sideways, I chopped my hands at another player's knees, bringing him down to my level. His eyes widened when he crashed inches away from me. A fist landed in my ribs, forcing my breath out in a whoosh. Something cracked, and my next inhale grated in like jagged shards of glass. Cracked or broken rib.

Justin flew at the goalie when he skated too close and took him down with an arm around his neck. Little fucker was wiry as shit but tough as nails. He twisted his hips and threw the goalie down flat on his back, then stood over him, one skate on either side of his waist. "Stay down," he ordered with pointed finger.

That should have been the end of it, but both teams had gotten the taste for blood, and with me and Justin taking out the opposing team, the others joined in with a string of profanity that would make a normal man's hair stand on end. It was a free-for-all. Fists pummeled anything within reach. Blood splattered across the ice in a crimson stain. An elbow caught me in the center of the back and I staggered forward.

Whistles blew but we were too far into the brawl to stop. Both teams flooded onto the ice in a writhing mass of rage and desire to see bloodshed. I ducked a wild swing and did my best to protect Lennox as the fight unfolded around me. I hadn't instigated the fight, but I damn well hadn't stopped it either. Part of me felt bad for that, while the other part—the bigger part—reveled in the chaos. Mayhem reigned on the ice. Sometimes you had to give yourself over to the beast. As long as it stayed here, where the cold dried my sweat and the people around me didn't mind knocking my teeth loose as I did the same to them, I let the beast inside me rage.

A hand wrapped around my ankle, and I dropped my gaze to Lennox. Confusion twisted his features, and he shook his head side to side like he was trying to clear it.

“Everybody off the ice.” A ref pushed his way into the middle of the fight. “Come on, guys. Get it together.”

I lowered my hands and dropped to a knee beside Lennox. “We got you.”

He grunted and pushed up using one arm. “I feel like someone took a hammer to my head.”

“Yeah, well.” I gripped his hand and helped him sit up. Justin dropped to his other side. “Can you skate?” He bared his teeth at me and I grinned back. “Alright. Let’s go.”

The crowd cheered when Lennox gained his feet. I took Lennox’s left side while Justin took his right. Together we glided over the ice toward Coach. The rest of our team skated ahead of us, clearing a path between the opposing team’s players. They jeered but backed away. All part of the game, I reminded myself as my jaw clenched and anger ebbed and flowed in waves.

Lennox’s head bobbed forward. He caught himself and snapped straight. “I’m fine.”

“Yep.” I pressed my lips into a flat line. “You’re always fine.”

The refs converged once all the players were off the ice. I knew what was coming next. They’d put me back in the penalty box. Probably another five minutes. Oh well. Maybe I deserved it. But I’d do it again. Lucy met us at the edge of the ice and held out her hand, waving us on. “Come on. Take him to my office.”

“I’m fine.” Lennox tried to argue, but his voice was too low and full of pain. His weight dragged to one side and he winced when his knee bent. “Okay. Maybe not fine.”

Lucy walked backward, her eyes taking in all three of us. “Justin, your lip is bleeding.”

He traced his tongue over the tear in his lower lip and growled. “Motherfucker got me good.” He shot a look over his shoulder.

“You step one foot back on that ice before the refs say so and I’ll bench you the next two games.” Coach’s voice said he wasn’t joking around. He pointed at the hallway. “Get out of here. All three of you. Let Lucy check you out.” He checked his watch. “Hurry up.”

We followed Lucy from the rink and into the squat corridor. It felt even tighter with the three of us squished together. We stopped to clip guards on our skates and shuffle-walked our way to Lucy’s office. She marched ahead of us, her spine straight and her steps firm enough to make her ass bounce in a delicious jiggle. Damn. I shouldn’t be thinking about her right now. I should be concerned about Lennox. I was concerned. He was more stable on his feet now, but he gripped my shoulder like a lifeline. The further we walked, the more he hobbled.

I held a hand to my ribs and took short, shallow breaths.

“Hey, Luce, you need to look at Zachary too. I think he’s got a cracked rib.” Justin tattled on me with a lilting joy in his voice.

We were all a little banged up, but I wasn’t worried about my ribs. “I’m fine. Just look at Lennox.”

“I can’t believe you all went out there and fought like that.” Lucy stopped on a dime and spun to face us. Pink dusted her cheeks. She crossed her arms, which caused her tits to jut forward through her puffy vest. Her fur-lined boots and vest reminded me of an Arctic runway model. She pulled off the look flawlessly. Her hands clenched and unclenched on her upper arms. A quiver shook her voice. “What were you thinking?”

We looked at each other and burst out laughing. I felt bad for it, but the release of adrenaline put my head in the clouds. My shoulder brushed the concrete wall, reminding me of the cramped space we all occupied. “Come on. We don’t have much time.” Even now I heard the game start back up again. If we were lucky, Coach would let me and Justin back on the ice once the refs were done penalizing us for our little brawl.

Lucy's lips puckered but she turned and led the way to her office. Her concern was touching. But who was it directed at? Justin's earlier comment about the two of us sharing Lucy hit me in the chest, and I almost lost my breath all over again. I'd never shared a woman before. Not in any capacity. I wasn't sure I was capable of something that intimate. I shot a look at Justin, who watched Lucy with a darkly possessive gleam in his eyes. He swallowed and looked at me, his lips curling up into a tiny smile as he tipped his head toward Lucy. The move asked a silent question. Had I thought about it?

Oh, yes. I'd thought about it. The fight distracted me, but Lucy was never too far from my thoughts. She'd been stuck there since the day we met, even more so since we had sex. She was a drug I never wanted to quit, consequences be damned. It was risky, letting her in like that. She had the power to destroy us with a single word to her dad.

"Get him on the table." Lucy's voice sliced through me, the concern in it giving me pause. She looked at Lennox the same way she looked at me. The same way I'd seen her look at Justin.

We hobbled through the open door, and relief crashed over me when we stepped into the bright light with its homey atmosphere. It was short-lived when I caught Lucy chewing her lip in obvious concern over Lennox.

"I think he has a concussion." I helped Lennox hop up onto the table and removed his helmet. It didn't matter *why* she was worried about him as long as she helped him. We needed Lennox in his best possible shape. He rallied the team like no one else.

"Nice." Lennox punched my shoulder and rolled his eyes. He winced and rubbed at his forehead. "You're probably right."

"Maybe one of the EMTs should look at him." Lucy rushed over and grasped Lennox's face between her palms. "I'm not a doctor. I can't treat brain injuries."

"My brain's fine." Lennox smirked at her and she blushed.

“Don’t joke about this.” She turned his head to the left and then the right. “Any pain or stiffness in your head or neck? I can take an X-ray to check for broken bones.”

Lennox’s hands covered hers and he leaned in close enough that his nose brushed hers. “Stop worrying about my head. It’s fine.”

“I can’t stop worrying.” She whispered the words so low I almost missed them, but we all noticed the way her fingers curled over Lennox’s cheeks. His long hair fell forward into his eyes and she brushed it back with a careful hand.

“You’re pretty shaken up about this.” I stayed beside Lennox and watched her face flicker through a range of emotions.

She lowered her hands. Lennox caught them and kissed her knuckles, eliciting another heated blush on her cheeks.

Justin cursed low and fierce under his breath. “No fucking way.”

I’d never seen anyone this distraught over a fall on the ice. Lucy looked Lennox up and down. “Come on. I need to check your knee. And you can complete the concussion protocol once I find it. But you really should let someone else check out your head.” She pulled her hands from his and backtracked to the counter where her filing cabinet sat. The top drawer opened with a screech that rattled my eardrums. “You shouldn’t go back on the ice if you have a concussion.”

“I don’t have a concussion.” Lennox glowered at me. “You should have left that alone.”

I snorted and crossed my arms. “Sure. Whatever you say, man.”

“Guys, chill.” Justin smacked my back then squeezed Lennox’s shoulder. “We have other things to focus on.” His eyes were glued to Lucy.

I didn’t blame him. She had us all wrapped around her little finger. What did that mean, and what were we going to do about it? Would she even admit that she liked all of us, including Lennox?

“Why are you so worried about Lennox?” I dragged the question out into the quiet and let it linger.

Justin grimaced and palmed his mouth while shooting daggers at me.

I shrugged. Why shouldn't I ask? We all had a right to know if she was attracted to Lennox too. It might help if I told her that Justin knew we'd slept together too.

LUCY

I ignored Zachary's question. I didn't have an answer that I wanted to admit out loud in front of all three of them, and a lie wouldn't pass my lips without faltering. Worry overtook me in a crushing embrace that made it hard to breathe.

The constant chug from my heater ground into the silence that lingered between us. I riffled through the filing cabinet, my fingers flying over the papers. What did I remember about concussions? I should have remembered more from my basic classes or brushed up on it before the games started. But I hadn't expected to be the one they'd bring players to with head injuries. The sight of Lennox crashing onto the ice burst through my mind. My hand stilled on the cabinet, and I gripped the edges to stay upright when my legs went weak. I had to toughen up. I couldn't fall apart every time one of them got hurt. I'd never make it through a game if I went weak in the knees.

"Can you check my knee and get me out of here?" Lennox sounded worn out but steady.

Justin shifted in my peripheral. "Lucy will take care of you." There was something in his voice that I couldn't quite place.

I ignored that too and turned away from the filing cabinet. "I can't find the concussion protocol. I'll go through it the best I can." I stalked over to stand in front of him where he sat squeezed between Zachary and Justin. His eyes met mine and

they were clear, the fight returning to them. “Are you feeling dizzy?”

“No.”

“Lightheaded or sick to your stomach?” I could do this. I could ignore Zachary and Justin and focus on the problem in front of me. I just had to remember the steps and not get distracted.

“Nope.” His lip twitched in a half smile.

“Any double vision or headache?”

Zachary made a noise when Lennox shook his head no.

“What?” I asked Zachary.

Zachary looked at Lennox, then over at Justin. He seemed about to say something, but then shook his head. “When he first woke up, he said he saw three of me.”

“You were completely unconscious?” Shocked, I took a step back and reached for my phone. “You need to have a CAT scan.”

“No.” Lennox scowled at Zachary. “I was out for a few seconds. And all that about seeing three of him was a joke.” He backhanded Zachary in the chest. “My head is fine. Check my knee and let me go.”

“Fine.” I threw my hands up and let them fall. “Lay back.”

He locked his gaze with mine and scooted back on the bed. His long legs swung around behind Justin, and he stretched them out toward the end of the table.

Justin shifted his weight but stayed in place. “They need us back on the ice.” He removed his gloves and set them on the counter. The sight of his long, slim fingers contrasted with the thick pads on his shoulders, chest, and legs. He gripped the edges of his collar where the pads met and used them as a handle.

I couldn’t take my eyes off him until Zachary cleared his throat. “What’s this all about, Lucy?”

“Nothing.” I cleared my throat and moved to the end of the table. “Can you get his pads off?” Heat scorched my cheeks and I made myself turn around. I couldn’t be trusted to do it myself, and watching would only make the heat worse. Lennox was injured. I needed to take care of him, not stand there lusting over him. They all had better things to do than to sit around waiting on me to get over my infatuation with them. God. I had a kinky need to be with all of them. That realization stopped me cold. I fisted my hands to keep from slamming them over my mouth as shock rolled through me.

Grunts sounded behind me, followed by a hiss that had to be Lennox. The sound of his clothing being removed did a number on me. It was too easy to imagine him naked, his long hair fisted in my hands as we came together. What good was it doing to torture myself like this? Why couldn’t I stop? Pads hit the floor in a series of thuds.

“He’s ready.” Zachary’s laughter eased through his voice and sent a ripple down my spine.

Turning, I moved quickly to Lennox’s side. I started at his ankles and worked my way up to his knees. “You rubbed this one.” I ran my fingers lightly over his right knee and watched his face for any sign of discomfort. “When you took that first hit, you stopped and massaged this knee.” He needed to know that I’d seen him, that he couldn’t hide from me.

I expected him to lock down his facial expressions, and he didn’t disappoint. Every time my fingers passed over the back of his knee, he didn’t move a muscle. He didn’t even breathe, and that was the telling motion. I passed my hand under his leg and lifted his knee into a forty-five-degree angle. “Does that hurt?”

His knuckles whitened on the edges of the bed, but he shook his head. “It’s just an old knee injury. Nothing to worry about.” Sweat dotted his upper lip and his calf muscle quivered in a series of tiny jerks that traveled beneath my hand.

“Hmm.” I straightened his leg, and he relaxed, his chest falling in a quick exhale. I wrapped both hands around his

knee and rotated the kneecap beneath my thumbs. “Any pain when I do this?”

“None.” He spat the word at me like a curse. That meant it hurt like hell.

I’d been around hockey players my whole life. I knew them too well to trust a word out of his mouth. But I kept talking, kept asking questions, because it distracted me from the feel of his body beneath my hands. I rolled my eyes and moved to the other leg. “Any pain here?” He shook his head as I manipulated his ankle and then his knee. The left leg seemed in perfect condition, but I worried about the right.

“I’m going back to the game.” Lennox sat up and grabbed my hands.

“Not until I check you out and verify that you can skate without causing permanent injury.” I yanked my hands back and resumed my examination. His legs were strong beneath my fingers, the muscles well defined. They’d left his pants on, keeping me from seeing more than the lines beneath the black fabric.

Zachary and Justin looked at each other over Lennox’s head. They were all so close to me I smelled the sweat and the coppery tang of blood from Justin’s split lip. Zachary held one hand to his ribs, reminding me I needed to check him too. Cracked ribs were not uncommon, even with the thick pads.

Lennox flopped backward and settled his hands behind his head. “Check me out all you like, Doc. But I’m getting back on the ice.”

Zachary hovered near my right elbow while Justin watched me from the other side of the bed. I should feel closed in and angry, but their presence made me feel protected. “You know what I meant,” I snapped.

The overwhelming urge to be close to all of them turned inside me. I tried to fight it off by turning cold in my manners and speech. It probably wouldn’t work, but I had to do something to tamp down the growing need to be with them.

A shadow fell across the room. Dad stormed in, his eyes snapping with anger. “Refs have agreed that your time down here counts toward your penalty. I need you back up on the ice.” He snapped his fingers. “Can you hurry this up?”

“No.” I was not about to back down. “We agreed that I could do my job. So let me.”

Zachary’s eyebrows shot upward. He had his back to my dad, and he mouthed *wow* at me before schooling his expression.

I resisted the urge to roll my eyes and pout like a child. Dad had agreed to my terms. He’d know something was off if I turned Lennox over to him without a proper exam. “I need to check Zachary too. He’s wheezing. Ribs might be broken.” I shot a smirk his way when he snarled his nose.

Heat blasted over my face from the overhead heater and I shrugged out of my vest.

“Fine.” Dad jerked his head. “What about Justin?”

“Let me check his nose and put him through the concussion test.” Why was I trying to keep them all in here? I should let Justin go. Even Zachary. I doubted he’d even let me X-ray his ribs. But neither of them argued with me. For a brief moment, I considered the fact that they might *want* to be in here with me, the four of us together. My pulse whooshed hot blood through my veins, and my entire body warmed at the sudden rush of desire.

Dad threw his hands up in the air and turned on his heel. “Get back out there as soon as you can. The team needs you.” He stopped at the door. “You boys are on thin ice. Stop screwing around.”

All the heat I’d felt drained away in a blink. Dad had no idea, but he’d just reminded me of why this could never work out. This was why I couldn’t feel anything for these guys. They were supposed to be off-limits.

The door closed behind Dad, and we all stared at each other in complete silence. I didn’t want to be the one to break it, but I had an exam to finish. I cleared my throat and rolled

my shoulders back. “Let’s get this over with.” My voice stayed cool and calm even if my pulse fluttered too fast. I blamed my libido for the sudden surges of heat and desire. After not having sex for five years and then hopping in bed with two different guys within the same week, my body was all over the place.

I craved more. I didn’t know what it would take to satisfy my urges, and that scared me almost more than the risk I’d taken by having sex with Justin and Zachary.

Lennox took a deep breath and let it out. “Come on. Let’s do this.”

His words jolted through me. I snapped to attention and slid my hand over his bad knee one last time. “I think you suffered a slip in your kneecap.”

He nodded. “That’s what happened last time. Nothing serious. It hurts like hell but I’ll be fine.”

“I can give you something for the pain. And it wouldn’t hurt for you to see your regular doctor.” I frowned and concentrated on his thigh. “What about your hamstring? Any problems there?”

Lennox’s chest rose on a sharp inhale and he stilled beneath my hands. “No.”

Zachary took a step back as I moved closer to Lennox’s hips. He gave me room to work but stayed close to Lennox’s side. I’d never seen anyone as protective as Zachary. He didn’t hesitate to throw himself onto the ice when Lennox went down. Justin was right behind him, but there had been a second where he tried to stop Zachary. They fought the other team with a kind of glee that I hadn’t seen in years. They relished the fight.

Even now, Justin traced his split lip with his index finger and grinned at the crusted blood that came loose. There was a gleam in his eye that should have made him seem dangerous, but it only accentuated his lean frame and brought out the warm feeling again. I’d seen him react to me in a way that was sweet and charming. Justin loved with a passion that I’d never

experienced until we went to bed together. Of course I craved more of that.

“You’re blushing.” Zachary touched my cheek with one finger. It was no more than the soft flutter of skin to skin, but it ignited inside me, setting me alight.

I tucked my chin, setting my cheek against my shoulder to hide my face, then slid my hands higher up Lennox’s thigh.

He hissed and grabbed my hands. “Watch where you’re putting your hands.”

“What? Why?” My fingers curled over his hands without thought. “I need to check your hips to make sure you didn’t tear anything.”

“My hips are fine.” He growled through clenched teeth. “Your hands, on the other hand, were on their way toward something you might not want to find. You might not think anything of it, but it’s kind of hard for a man to ignore when a woman touches him like that. Even if she’s being professional.”

“What are you talking about?” My throat turned dry as sand. I hadn’t done anything wrong.

Lennox grinned. “A few more inches and you were going to find something you didn’t bargain for.”

My eyes shot to his crotch. I couldn’t help it. And oh my God. An erection strained against his soft pants, showing off the impressive bulge. I’d been rubbing my hands over his thigh, trying to help him, and he was getting a hard-on. I wanted to be angry but that was the furthest thing from my mind.

Lennox had a hard-on while I stood hemmed in by the three of them in my very small office. Now what was I supposed to do?

LENNOX

I knew I should keep my damn mouth shut. But the look on her face and the way her hands felt on me made stopping impossible. I'd sported a semi for the last ten minutes, but her proximity pushed me over the edge.

Her mouth fell open with a soft pop as her eyes latched onto my bulging crotch. The fingers curled in mine tightened and she sucked in an audible breath.

Zachary and Justin released a string of curses that seemed to snag and hover in the sudden tension. Lucy's tongue darted out, and she licked her lips, her breath hitching before she pulled her eyes to mine.

Her voice came out in a breathless whisper. "What are you doing?"

What the hell was I doing? I didn't have a damned clue. All I knew was she'd gotten under my skin. Seeing her dance with Justin had been intoxicating, but having her touch me—even professionally—drove me wild with hunger. It was a terrible ache that settled behind my breastbone and throbbed in my dick. I wanted her with a savageness that I'd never felt before.

"I'm not doing a damned thing. Not unless it's what you want." I curled my lips into a smile and brushed the backs of her hands with my lips in soft kisses.

She pulled in another stuttering breath as the tension thickened. She obviously wanted me, but I caught the edge of fear in her eyes as she darted a look around the room.

Zachary and Justin hadn't moved. If not for their sharp breaths, I'd worry they were mad at me. A quick look at their faces revealed the truth. They were turned on too. Poor Lucy had no idea what she did to us, the lengths we'd go to make her ours. Wait... what? Ours? Where the hell did that thought come from and why did it make my cock swell even harder?

Lucy shifted her weight to the foot closest to the bed, bringing her closer to me. "Lennox..." She shook her head, her ponytail flying to drape over her shoulder. "You're hurt."

"I'm not that hurt," I argued reflexively. I hated feeling weak, hated being seen as weak. One wrong move during a college game almost ruined my chances of being on Coach Ashley's team. I couldn't let this little injury sideline me. I shouldn't be letting Lucy distract me from my goal. She was a risk to all of us. But damn me if I could stop myself. Lucy could. If anyone was strong enough to put an end to my desire, it was her admitting she didn't want me. I'd leave her the hell alone if that's what she wanted. "It's okay." I kissed her knuckles again and released her hands. "I don't expect you to do anything."

"Fucking hell." Zachary shifted, turning his back to me. "Someone's coming." He blocked me from view as the door opened.

"Hey, guys. Coach sent me to see what's up." Assistant manager Greg Smith shuffled in. He was a short man with a round belly and tufts of brown hair that he kept hidden beneath a cap tugged low over his eyes. We all liked him well enough, but his timing was for shit.

Justin snorted out a laugh. "Oh, there are a few things up in here." He eyed me with a broad smile. "Lennox and Zachary are getting a few X-rays. We'll be back as soon as Lucy handles the situation."

That damned smirk widened, and he gave me and Lucy a pointed look that said he wasn't about to let either of us off the hook.

She flushed and tossed her ponytail over her shoulder. "Sorry, Greg. It's taking a little longer than I expected. Still

getting used to the portable X-ray machine.” She waved vaguely at the room.

“Can’t you do that after the game?” Greg moved further into the room, and Zachary angled his body like he thought I needed protecting from the older man.

Well, my dick tenting my pants might be a bit of a problem. Even Greg’s unpleasant arrival didn’t calm my desire, though it did dampen it considerably. “We’ll be there in a bit.” My voice came out with a flash of temper. “Let Lucy do her job.”

Greg’s lips pressed into a flat line. “Just doing my job, Lennox.”

“Yeah, well, so is Lucy. She has to clear me before I can get back on the ice. I’m not risking this knee for one game when we’re still at the beginning of the season.” It was a ballsy lie. I’d said the exact opposite minutes ago, but no one called me out on it.

Lucy made her way to the counter, grabbed a notepad and pen, and scribbled something on it. “Tell Dad that I’m working as fast as I can.” She ripped off the slip of paper and handed it to Greg. “He might want his players on the ice now, but if he wants them the whole season, he needs to let me do my job.” She reiterated my words with a sharp tap of the pen on the counter.

We all wanted to win this season and get into the championship. But that didn’t mean Lucy was going to let anyone push her into releasing us before she was satisfied.

Greg took the paper, pinching it between his thumb and forefinger. “Yeah, okay. I’ll tell Coach.” His steps made soft shushing sounds on the concrete and the door closed.

I dropped back onto the bed with a crackle of paper. “Fuck.” The back of my head ached from the fall, and I pummeled my fist into the side of the bed.

Lucy took my hand. “Stop that.”

“Why?” I curled my fingers together and stared up at the ceiling. “Let’s get this over with so we can finish the game.”

Hurt flashed over her face, followed by a tightening of her hand on mine. “You don’t have to leave.”

“Yeah. I do.” I held onto the bed with my other hand and tried to ignore the softness of her hand in mine. There were so many things I wanted her to do with that hand, but if this was all I’d ever get, I wanted to remember this feeling forever. “I have to get out of this room, Lucy. I have to leave before I put you in a position that risks ruining your reputation. I’m too much of a risk.”

I believed that with all my heart and soul. I’d always been a risk. Even my mother admitted it when I was a kid. No one wanted to take a chance on me until I met Zachary and Justin. They were more than my friends. They were the only two people in the world who knew my shitty history and still wanted to be my friends. I’d do anything for them.

“No.” Her hand spasmed around mine. “Lennox, I already put my reputation on the line when I slept with Justin.”

I’d known they slept together. Hearing her say it should not make me want her more, but it did. “That was okay.” I dragged a hand through my hair. “We’re in your office. It’s different. Anyone could walk in, and if they catch us, even like this.” I held up our entwined hands. “Coach would have my head on a platter.”

Jealousy bit deep at the reminder that she’d slept with Justin. I tried to ignore it, but a gnawing anger chewed on my bones.

“No one is making Lucy have sex,” Zachary growled out. His hands fisted at his sides, and he raked Lucy over with a heated look that sent another burst of jealousy tearing through me.

“This is ridiculous.” Lucy pulled away from me and paced back and forth across the narrow room.

We should be leaving. We should walk out right now and get back on the ice where we belonged. Like fools, we stayed put and watched Lucy cross her arms and spin around to face the three of us. “My entire career rests on this going well for

me.” She motioned at the room. “How the fuck did we get here?”

“Well, Lennox took a hit. And then you made us come here.” Justin’s taunting grin made me want to punch him in the face. I loved the guy like a brother, which meant he was damned infuriating.

Lucy rolled her eyes and sighed. “Stop being a jackass. You know what I mean. I don’t regret sleeping with you.” She met my eyes and her posture curled in what looked like defeat. “Lennox, I slept with Zachary too.”

I jerked upright, barely shoving away the urge to grab Zachary’s collar and drag him over for an explanation.

“I don’t regret that either.” Lucy continued. “We had sex right there on that bed.” She pointed to where I lay.

“You bastard.” I kept my voice low enough that it didn’t carry. “What about all that shit you spouted? What about Lucy’s reputation?”

She resumed her pacing, and we were all spellbound. I tried to tear my gaze away, but all I could think about was Lucy and Zachary. Lucy and Justin. Damn them.

“This is crazy.” She placed her palms on her temples and raised her head. A vein pulsed low in her throat.

Fuck. I wanted to bury my head in the curve of her neck and kiss that spot. I wanted to feel it speed up as I made her come.

“I came here to work. Not to have sex.” Lucy’s voice rose and fell as she turned away. “Dad will never forgive me if he finds out I had sex with one of you. Much less that I did it with two.” She shot a look at me. “Or three.”

“You’re killing me.” I swung my legs over the side of the bed. “Come on. Lucy’s right. We shouldn’t be here.”

“That’s not what I meant.” She rushed over and set her hands on my shoulders. “I like you Lennox. I’ve thought about sex with you more than I want to admit.”

Justin stepped around the table. “If you wanted him, all you had to do was say so.” He jerked his head. “Zachary and I can watch the door.”

“No.” I shook my head and tried to move away from Lucy’s touch. “I’m not going to risk Lucy like that.”

“What about the game?” Lucy asked. Her hands slid up from the pads on my shoulders to the sides of my neck. She drew in a shaky breath. “You’re supposed to be on the ice.”

Zachary came to my rescue. He clapped a hand to the center of my back. “Worst we’ll get is a scolding from Coach. Well worth it, in my opinion.”

“Stop.” I gripped Lucy’s wrists until she looked at me. “You don’t have to do this. I’m not some charity case that needs you to have pity sex. It’s not worth the risk.”

She chewed on her lip and a spark of something flashed in her eyes, followed by a grin. “I don’t think anyone could accuse me of having pity sex with anyone. Much less you. I’m doing this because it’s what I want.” She took a step closer, moving between my knees so we were chest to chest. “And right now, I want you.”

Who the hell was I to say no to that?

Justin and Zachary shifted and backed toward the door. “We’ll be out here,” Justin said with a wink. “Call out if you need us.”

“I think I know what I’m doing,” I retorted sharply. I did know. I knew I was about to have sex with the one woman I should be avoiding at all costs. Risk. Reward. The two wobbled back and forth on an invisible scale. Lucy claimed she wanted this, but what would happen afterward?

“Wait.” Lucy held out a hand toward Justin. “This is going to sound crazy.”

We all froze except for Justin. He walked over to Lucy with all the confidence in the world and kissed her cheek. “Nothing is crazy when it comes to you.”

Her breath whooshed out. “Would you...” she trailed off and licked her lips again. Her eyes held mine for a second before they darted away again. “Would you stay in here with us? Lock the door and keep an eye out... but stay in the room?”

LUCY

A slow, sensual heat built in my belly and spread lower. I was going to do this. Again. Every breath felt tighter than the one before. The heat spooled tighter as Lennox's nostrils flared. He glanced at Zachary, then Justin.

"I never should have said anything." It was ridiculous. What was I thinking when I asked them to stay? "Forget it." I tried to wave them off, but Lennox captured my hands and brought them to his lips.

"Is that what you want? For them to watch?" His voice dropped to a rich bass that sent shivers of heat rushing through me.

I loved this feeling. I never wanted it to stop. "Only if they want to." I hated the moment of insecurity wrapping around me. I should not be doing this. Having sex with Justin was one thing. Zachary another. But this, having sex in my office with Lennox while the others watched, was so far beyond my normal that I couldn't breathe.

"I'm staying." Justin eyed Zachary and reached for the door. "In or out?"

The sound of his husky voice and Lennox's rapid breaths gave me the jolt of courage needed to look at Zachary. His eyes flashed as he took a step into the light and reached back to flip the lock on the door. "Staying."

Holy shit. I'd really done it now. They'd still stop if I changed my mind. I knew I should but damned if I would.

The game continued not a hundred yards away. I was keeping them from joining their team, but none of them seemed to mind that we were breaking every rule my dad had laid out between us. I couldn't help myself. Something about these three men made me throw caution to the wind.

I slid my hands around Lennox's neck and leaned in to kiss him. My fingers tangled in his long hair still damp with sweat. He slanted his mouth over mine and his hands found my hips. He pulled me closer until I hit the edge of the exam table.

Knowing Justin and Zachary stood behind me, watching, turned me reckless. I opened my mouth for Lennox and groaned when he eased his hands beneath my shirt. My skin was on fire, and his slow stroke across my hips stoked the flames.

He broke off the kiss long enough to yank his chest pads and shirt off and throw them aside. They hit the ground with a loud clatter, and I managed a quick laugh before his lips were on mine. He devoured me with that kiss. His tongue explored my mouth in a slow caress. I arched into him, sliding my hands along his strong shoulders and down the ridges of his spine.

"Beautiful," Justin said in a ragged breath behind me.

Zachary grunted, and I turned my head far enough to see the two of them leaning against the wall on either side of the door. Justin shoved his hand down his pants and winked while he tugged on his cock.

I'd thought I was wet before, but the sight of him jerking off as he watched me sent a rush of wetness into my panties. I moaned into Lennox's mouth and toed off my boots, then reached for my pants. He swatted my hands away and pulled his lips away from mine.

"I want to undress you." His eyes were liquid pools of dark heat. He slid off the bed, running his hands inside my pants and cupping my ass. He pulled me flush against his erection and squeezed my ass.

I followed his lead, finding his firm cheeks and scraping my nails along his hips. He kissed the hollow of my throat and sucked the curve of my neck where my pulse beat wildly. “I want you inside me.” I slid his pants down to his knees, my chin grazing the side of his cock in the process. “But first.” I took him into my mouth.

“Fuck.” Lennox bucked his hips, driving his cock deeper. “Oh, God. Lucy,” he groaned my name and grabbed the sides of my head. My head bobbed over him in quick strokes. I took him deeper with each one, until he eased down the back of my throat and couldn’t go any further. “That feels so good. Oh damn. I don’t want you to stop.”

I kept my eyes open and the sight of Lennox throwing his head back as he fucked my mouth gave me a rush of euphoria.

Zachary moved in the corner of my vision. He yanked his dick out of his pants and stroked it hard. “Keep going.” A muscle ticked in his jaw. He locked his legs and pumped his cock.

Lennox’s grip on my head tightened. He thrust harder, going deeper. I opened my jaw for him and slid my tongue along his length.

“Fuck.” He pulled out of my mouth with a pop. “I’m not going to last if you keep that up.”

I smirked up at him and guided him back to my mouth. He cursed when I licked the tip of his cock, then eased it back into my mouth.

“She gives good head.” Justin’s voice came out in a guttural growl. “But wait until you feel her tight pussy squeeze you.”

My face heated at the reminder that I’d already done this with Justin, that he was watching me blow one of his best friends. And things were about to get so much better. I couldn’t help thinking about the possibilities. They were willing to watch. Would they join in at some point? Did I want them to? My pussy clenched at the thought of one of them

fucking me while I sucked off Lennox. Not now, but maybe someday.

Lennox's cock was long and thick. I loved the feel of it in my mouth, the bulbous tip gliding over my tongue in smooth strokes. He spasmed when I used the edge of my teeth to scrape the sensitive underside, and I did it again when he groaned my name in a harsh exhale.

Grinning, I released him and stood. "Get on the bed."

"Not yet." He gripped the edges of my shirt and peeled it off in one tug, then moved to my pants. "You wanted to give them a show. Now it's my turn." Something dangerous glinted in his eyes. I shuddered from the heat of that gaze, curiosity making me bold.

Lennox dropped to a knee in front of me without a hint of pain from his injury. I almost stopped him, but the way he looked at me, the way they all looked at me, kept me going. He slid his hands around my waist and eased my pants down, revealing me in slow motion. His eyes locked onto my pussy, and he hooked one hand around the back of my knee. "You might want to hold on to something." He brought my knee up to remove my pant leg, then brought my leg over his shoulder.

"Yes." Zachary hissed.

Oh God. Oh fuck. What had I gotten myself into?

Lennox palmed my folds and spread me wide. His tongue flicked out and grazed my clit. I groaned and almost hit the floor but grabbed the edge of the table to stay upright. Watching me the way I'd watched him, he did it again. Heat enveloped my pussy as he tongued my clit in slow circles. I'd wanted to have sex with him, but this was so much more. This was fire in every cell of my body. Heat that pulsed and spilled over in rocking waves that drove me down onto his waiting mouth. I wasn't used to guys eating me out, but the sensation was too delightful to resist. I hooked my heel on the ridge of his spine and rocked my pussy onto his tongue. I was going to come all over him. I didn't know if I should ask him to stop or keep going. My brain stopped working. All I could do was feel

him pushing deeper into me, his tongue stiffening as he entered me in a heady thrust.

“She’s almost there.” Justin’s eyes caught mine in a heated embrace. “Let go, Lucy. Let us all watch you come on his face.”

Lennox growled between my legs and his tempo increased. He fingered my clit and worked his tongue in slow thrusts until I shuddered. My thighs shook and I sank further onto him.

I couldn’t hold back the aching need to scream much longer. I gripped the edge of the bed with one hand and shoved my fist into my mouth. I came apart as Lennox used fingers and tongue to push me over the edge. He licked and sucked until I stopped shaking, then lowered my leg to the floor and rose to his feet. His cock settled between my legs, and I cradled him there as a new wave of need burst through me. He ran his fingers along the curve of my jaw, his thumb brushing the sensitive skin where my pulse raced. “Now I’ll get on the table and let you ride me.” He pushed his cock into the narrow gap between my legs. “Give them a show, sweetheart.”

“I will,” I said it with a promise that had all three of them chuckling.

Justin and Zachary never took their eyes off me as Lennox scooted past me and hopped onto the bed. He stretched out a hand and unclasped my bra, then flung it aside. The exam table was narrow but still wide enough that I didn’t have any trouble climbing up and settling astride Lennox.

“This is the hottest thing I’ve ever seen.” Justin moved close enough to kiss my shoulder. He skimmed the shell of my ear with his lips. “Fuck him good. Show us what you can do.”

With those words thrumming all the way through me, I guided Lennox’s cock to my entrance I sat there on my knees, ready to take him in, and locked eyes with Zachary.

He jerked his hand over his cock at a furious pace. “I’m going to come all over your floor, Lucy.”

Why don't you come in my mouth? I almost asked it. My lips parted at the sudden need to have him in my mouth as he came. I swallowed thickly and lowered my eyes to Lennox. He palmed my breasts, his thumbs flicking over the pebbled peaks of my nipples. "Take me however you want."

I slid myself over him, fully seating him in one thrust. Goosebumps broke out across my arms and I shivered as I leaned forward and grabbed his shoulders. "Fuck. You feel good." I rolled my hips over him and shivered again. "I'm not going to last long." Already, the tingles on the back of my head were driving me to move faster, to take him deeper. Harder.

His eyes turned obsidian in the low light as desire overtook him. His hips popped under mine, thrusting him deep and widening my legs to accept the fullness.

He pinched my nipple just hard enough to make me gasp and arch my back so my tits hung in his face. He used the opportunity to suck a nipple into his mouth and pull at it with tongue and teeth. My pussy tightened and my mouth opened. "Please." I didn't know what I was pleading for, only that I was on the verge of coming so hard that black tinged the edges of my vision.

I bit my lip and spread my legs wider, almost letting my knees slide off the bed to get more of Lennox inside me. He growled and twisted my nipple again, his teeth worrying the other one as he sucked harder. His cock strained and swelled.

I rode him from tip to balls, each slam of my body over his sounding like a small slap as skin met skin.

"That's it. Give it to him, Lucy." Justin encouraged me from the side. His voice caressed my skin. "Give it to him."

Zachary's spine arched and he gasped, his eyes widening as he came. "Fuck that's hot as hell. Come on, Lucy. Ride him."

Lennox moved beneath me. He released his hold on my breasts and grabbed my hips. Holding me tight, he bucked upward in a series of short thrusts. His lips twisted into a

smile. “You feel so damned good. I knew you would. God I fucking never want to leave this pussy. You’re holding me so tight.”

I was. I couldn’t help it. My pussy clenched tighter and I gasped as the orgasm rolled through me. The world turned hazy. Nothing mattered except for the feeling of Lennox’s cock dipping hard and fast into my slick heat. I felt him swell again and his smile turned fierce, his thrusts harder. “That’s my girl. That’s what I wanted to see before I came.” He let go with a savage thrust that made stars burst in my vision. He shuddered and his hot cum spilled into me in thick waves he pressed deeper with each thrust of his hips.

“What are you waiting for?” I asked Justin while sitting back on Lennox’s lap, his cock still firm inside me.

Justin double-fisted his cock and his cum joined Zachary’s on the floor. He sank into the nearest chair. “Some guards we turned out to be,” he said with a laugh.

“Thank fuck for locked doors.” Zachary grabbed some towels and cleaned up the mess they’d made.

I climbed off Lennox, my legs still shaky. I had to ask them now, while I still had my nerve. It would fade after the sex glow wore off. I took Lennox’s hand and gripped it tight. They all looked at me when I cleared my throat. I lifted my chin and looked each of them in the eye. “Maybe next time you can all get a little action.”

LUCY

This was a mistake. I eyed myself in the full-length mirror. The midnight blue dress clung to my hips and breasts in a sexy but classy way. But the way it dipped down to show off my back made me want to stay home and hide.

“Wow. You look ‘mazing.” Abigail bounced into my room, her yellow dress swishing. She hopped up onto my bed and kicked her feet. “Can we go now?”

Ugh. I wasn’t getting out of this. I gave myself one last look in the mirror and grabbed a sheer white scarf from my closet. It would work as a shawl to cover my back and shoulders. The event was evening attire, so there was nothing wrong with the dress. I just wasn’t used to showing off so much skin. My daughter was right, though. I did look stunning.

I tried to tell myself that I was doing it for the event. Everyone would expect me to dress up. But in the back of my mind, I admitted the truth. I was doing this for Zachary. I wanted him to look at me. Not just look at me but want me.

I’d barely seen any of them since our little episode in my office. The few times I did see them, I felt their gazes following me. I wasn’t nervous about the gala tonight. I was nervous about what Zachary would say when we were together. Did he think I was crazy for what I said?

Part of me felt a little crazy. Me with three guys? It would never happen.

Abigail jumped to her feet and hopped across my bed. “Let’s go, Mama.”

I held out my hand and wiggled my fingers. “You’re right. Let’s go.” The drive to the hotel wouldn’t take long. I couldn’t decide if that was good or bad, but Abigail made the time pass even faster with her constant chatter.

I handed my keys over to the valet and took Abigail’s hand again. “You remember what I said about tonight?”

“Yep.” She jumped over a crack in the sidewalk and swung our hands back and forth. “Best behavior.”

Nerves gripped me. What would Zachary think about Abigail? My daughter was a handful. Delightful, but a handful. She had no concept of strangers and would talk the bark off a tree. Her precocious behavior had gotten her into trouble plenty of times. Maybe I should have left her at home, but she was my daughter and I wanted her with me.

Abigail bounded up the steps, dragging me along in her wake. I stopped her outside the main door and smoothed a curl from her cheek. “Princess behavior.” I lifted my chin and grinned at her while crossing my eyes and poking out my tongue between my teeth.

She giggled, covering her mouth with her gloved hand. “You’re silly. Princesses don’t do that.”

“No?” I sighed. “I guess you should show me how they act then.”

Abigail took the challenge to heart. She tipped her chin up and smiled. “Like this.” With a sweep of her arm, she walked into the lobby.

Women in dresses far fancier and more revealing than my own dotted the open lobby. Gray floors reflected the light from crystal-studded chandeliers that brightened the space to a delicate ambiance. Voices drifted high and low as conversations flowed around us. Men in tuxes mingled with the women, and I scoured the area in search of Zachary. When I spotted him, my heart slammed to a stop. I took him in from his shiny shoes to the smooth cap of hair covering his head.

His black suit fit him so perfectly that it had to have been tailored. Broad shoulders filled it out at the top while it slimmed to fit his narrow waist and thick thighs.

He wasn't alone. It took my brain a minute to catch up to the sight of Lennox and Justin flanking him. The three of them stood together, each holding a fluted glass of champagne.

My heart and my emotions took off like a flight of startled birds. They scattered to the four winds and then slammed back into me so hard I almost lost my breath. If not for Abigail and the crowd glancing our way, I'd run over and kiss every single one of them.

Abigail turned a slow circle. "Wow. Do we get to dance?" She tugged on my hand. "It's like a princess castle. I want to dance."

"Hmm?" I jerked my gaze back to my daughter. "I'm not sure there will be any music." Breathe, Lucy. Breathe. I could do this. I could pretend that nothing had happened between me and the three men approaching me. I had to be professional and keep my head.

Justin smiled, and my heart melted at the sight. Damn them all. Why did they have to be so sweet and amazing?

"Well now, who's this?" Zachary stopped first and held out his hand to Abigail. "I had no idea there would be a princess here tonight."

Abigail stood rooted to the spot, her blue eyes so wide they looked ready to pop from her head. "Are you a prince?"

"This guy?" Justin slapped Zachary on the back. "He's the best prince of all."

Abigail took Zachary's hand and shook it like I'd taught her.

"Abigail, this is Zachary, Justin, and Lennox." I pointed out each man as I said their name. She mouthed them back at me, and I knew she'd remember. Even at five, she had a memory for names and faces. Especially when they made the kind of impression these three had.

Lennox dipped his head in a nod that made his hair flop over his forehead. “Can I get you ladies something to drink?”

“Water, please.” I needed something to ease the dryness in my throat, and champagne was not the answer tonight.

Lennox winked at me and Abigail. “As you wish.” He skirted around the edge of the crowd and disappeared.

“That’s a beautiful dress.” Justin shook Abigail’s hand and smiled easily at her. “I’m glad you were willing to leave your library to grace us with your presence tonight.”

Abigail twisted her hands in her skirt and fluffed it dramatically. “This is my favorite dress.”

“And the only one she would wear.” I grinned even as I said it. My daughter was one of a kind. From the moment I told her about tonight, she’d been adamant about this dress. Nothing could persuade her to change her mind. And I didn’t mind. The yellow princess dress might not be an adult’s first choice, but it suited my daughter just fine. Even if she’d chosen to pair it with a bright pink, fluffy scarf as a last-minute accessory.

“You look amazing.” Justin leaned in close with the excuse of kissing the back of my hand. His lips lingered a beat too long and my pulse kicked up at the unexpected contact.

Lennox returned with two flutes of water. He handed one to Abigail with a flourish, then repeated the gesture with me. “Your refreshments.”

Abigail giggled at his over-the-top actions and covered her mouth. “I like it here.”

“Good.” Zachary moved to my side and held out his arm. “I’d like to introduce you to a few people, if you’re ready.”

I wasn’t, but that’s what I’d come here for, so I settled my hand in the crook of his elbow and nodded. “Abigail, stay with Mama.”

“We’ll keep an eye on her.” Justin and Lennox fell in step behind Abigail, who skipped along beside me.

She took in the entire lobby without ever slowing down.

I expected Zachary to lead me to the few clusters of men and women standing in the lobby, but he guided me toward a pair of open doors on the other side of the room.

Abigail gasped loud enough that it covered my own shocked inhale. “It’s a ballroom.” She swished her skirts and bounced. “Dance. I want to dance.”

I stared at her helplessly. There was no music except for the soft strains from a nearby piano. A man sat at the baby grand, his fingers floating over the keys.

Lennox angled a look at me, one eyebrow raised in a silent question. Did I trust him to dance with my daughter? I nodded for him to go ahead.

“May I have this dance?” He held out his hand to Abigail, and she almost bounced right out of her shoes. She didn’t squeal but nodded with the grace of a ballerina while accepting his offered hand.

I allowed Zachary to lead me a short distance away.

“Caroline.” He spoke the woman’s name with a graceful lilt to his voice, and a middle-aged woman in a black sheath dress turned our way. “This is Lucy. She’s the one I told you about who’s advocating for the girls at the rec center.”

“Oh yes. I remember.” Caroline smiled warmly at me, her brown eyes sparking with interest. “Zachary has had nothing but nice things to say about you, my dear.” She patted Zachary’s arm. “Why don’t you tell me more about your ideas.”

I’d prepared all week for this moment, and the words came easily now as I stood with Caroline. Zachary stayed by my right side, his steady presence helping to ease the last of my tension. “I’d like to see more girls given the opportunity to participate in sports generally thought of as male-dominated. Hockey, in particular. But more than that, I think there should be more role models in place for those girls that are available to talk and not simply coach or run drills.”

The longer I talked, the more animated Caroline became.

She stopped me with an upheld finger. “I’m sorry. I don’t wish to interrupt, but there’s someone I want to hear this.” She waved at someone and smiled. “Laura. You and Watson come here for a moment. You need to hear Lucy’s ideas.”

Another couple joined us. They said hello to Caroline, then looked my way. Laura blinked at me. “You’re Lucy Ashley.” Her smile widened. “I know your parents. We all grew up together.”

I tried not to let that rattle my courage.

Zachary squeezed my hand to his side. Abigail’s laughter sounded from my left, and I looked that way in time to see Lennox spinning her around with her arm up over her head. Her face full of excitement and joy. She was having the time of her life.

I experienced a moment of regret that I couldn’t spend the whole night laughing and dancing too. But I’d come here to gain support for my campaign.

Lennox twirled Abigail again when the pianist picked up a livelier tune. All around us, people turned at the sound of Abigail laughing. Lennox joined in with a deep chuckle. He was amazing. They all were. Justin cut in on Lennox and they took turns dancing with Abigail. None of them seemed to have a care in the world. I fell in love with them a little bit in that moment.

Zachary turned around when a man called his name. The move brought his right side close to mine, and I let go of his arm to keep from getting tangled up in his tux.

He stretched his head up and to the side as he searched for the man still calling out his name. His collar slipped down his neck, revealing a strawberry birthmark.

Shock froze me in place. What the hell? It couldn’t be. I tried not to stare, but I needed a closer look. I leaned toward him at the same time he lowered his head and shook hands with a man in a peach tux. Blood roared in my ears until I thought I’d pass out.

Caroline touched my arm and called my name, dragging my attention away from Zachary and the mark about the size of my thumb that dipped below his collar.

The same mark that graced my daughter's neck. The one thing I remembered about my one-night stand in college. Oh fuck. If Abigail saw the mark on his neck, she'd go ballistic.

Was Zachary my daughter's father? The thought staggered me. What were the chances?

ZACHARY

Something was bothering Lucy. She stood stiff at my side, her voice tightening as she kept talking to Caroline.

I shook hands with Mark, and we stepped off to the side so our conversation wouldn't interfere with Lucy's. She watched me go with an inscrutable expression.

Lennox and Justin finished their dance with Abigail and walked her over to Lucy. I nodded my thanks at them and was rewarded with Justin's shit-eating grin.

"Nice party." Justin butted in as he passed.

Mark lifted his glass of champagne in a toasting gesture. "I almost didn't come. Sick to death of wearing this suit." He tugged at the collar and grimaced.

"I hear you." I worked my finger beneath my collar and pulled it away from my neck. I usually didn't mind the whole ordeal. It was for a good cause. But tonight, the suit chafed and all I could think about was getting back to Lucy and figuring out why she kept staring at me like that.

Mark ambled off to talk to someone else, and I turned back to Lucy. She knelt in front of Abigail, smoothing the girl's hair over and over. "Are you having fun?"

Abigail nodded and yawned. "Uh-huh."

"Good." Lucy straightened and cast a quick look around the room.

The room had filled up while I was walking Lucy around introducing her to people. I cupped her elbow and tilted my head to the side. “Can I talk to you?”

Abigail rubbed her eyes and yawned again. “Is it time to go home?” She peered up at her mother, exhaustion dimming the brightness in her eyes.

I checked my watch, surprised at the late hour. It felt like we’d just gotten here.

Lucy sighed. “Sorry. She’s used to going to bed early. I should have expected it would wear her out. I’m surprised it didn’t hype her up.” She took Abigail’s hand and squeezed. “Can you stay awake a little longer?”

Abigail nodded and wrapped her arm around Lucy’s legs. “I like it here. It’s fun.”

“I have a room,” I blurted out the words without thinking them through. I knew Lucy wouldn’t accept the invitation to go upstairs with me. It was too much to hope for, but now that I’d brought it up, I stood by it. “Maybe she just needs a quick nap?”

“She doesn’t know the meaning of a short nap,” Lucy said with a quirk to her lips.

I shrugged and slid my hands into my pockets to keep from reaching for her in front of everyone. “Maybe a short break then? We could get something to eat from room service.”

“I want to see your room.” Abigail widened her eyes. “Please. Please. Please.”

“Abigail.” Lucy shushed her gently as a blush crept up her cheeks. No one seemed to notice.

Almost everyone in the room was engaged in a conversation that took up their attention. Even Lennox and Justin were occupied in a corner where they chatted with Mark and another man I knew from the rec center.

Abigail tugged on Lucy’s hand. She cupped her free hand around her mouth in a C and whispered, “Please, Mama.”

“Okay.” Lucy gave in with a soft smile. “But only for a little while. Mama needs to talk to a few more people.”

All traces of fatigue fled as Abigail bounced on her toes. “Yay. Where’s your room?”

I held out my elbow to Lucy again, needing her touch more than I wanted to admit to either of us. She slid her hand into place, and the three of us walked out of the ballroom. We could have been a family, I realized as I saw our reflection in the mirrored walls. Abigail looked like Lucy with her blonde hair and excited smile. Her blue eyes were bright with interest where Lucy’s were shadowed with whatever was bothering her.

Lucy stopped to scoop Abigail into her arms and settle her on her hip. The sight of the two of them made something inside me break open. I pressed the button for the elevator and Abigail’s mouth opened in a quiet gasp of awe when the doors opened and we stepped inside.

“If you like this, wait till you see my room.” I retrieved my keycard and flipped it over my fingers. The elevator rose with that stomach-dropping whoosh, and Abigail giggled.

She curled her hands against her belly and rested her head on Lucy’s shoulder. “I like it here. It’s pretty.”

“You’re pretty.” Lucy kissed her daughter’s cheek, her voice thick. “I love you, Abby.”

“Love you, Mama.” Abigail tucked herself in tighter and barely lifted her head when the doors opened again and we walked out.

I led the way to my room, the last one at the end of the hallway, and slid the keycard in until the green light flashed. I pushed the door open and stepped back for Lucy to precede me.

Abigail kicked her feet and wiggled. “Oh, pretty.”

Lucy lowered her to the floor and Abigail took off like a shot. She ran to the balcony and cupped her hands around her eyes. I barely had time to open my mouth before she took off again. Little feet pattered over the thick carpet. She ducked

into the bathroom, then came racing out again. “Wow, you have two rooms.” She bypassed the room where I’d sleep tonight and tore through the adjoining door where a second, smaller room held a bed and another bathroom.

“Why do you have two rooms?” Lucy cradled her elbows, her arms firm over her stomach. She stood with her back to the balcony. The mirrored doors gave me a perfect view of her back in that gorgeous dress. It scooped low, revealing a swath of smooth skin that I longed to kiss. The white shawl around her upper arms covered her shoulders but left her lower back bare. “Zachary?”

I jerked my attention to her face and the way one side of her mouth hitched up in a tiny smile like she’d seen me looking and liked the attention. “It was the only room available. Most of the people here flew in from out of state. It’s easier for me to meet with them if I stay here tonight. I’m supposed to have breakfast with Caroline and some others early in the morning.”

Abigail squealed and I turned. With a wild flop, she fell backward onto the bed and flipped onto her stomach, scooping a pillow under her head.

Lucy sighed and shook her head. “Silly girl.”

“She’s amazing.” I didn’t bother trying to hide my feelings from Lucy. We’d had sex. You couldn’t get more intimate than that. “You’re amazing.” I reached for her, my fingertips skimming the soft curve of her shoulder down to her elbow.

“Zachary.” She sighed my name, her eyes closing. “I can’t stop thinking about you.” The admission came out almost silent. She took a step and tilted her head back to look up at me. “I’ve been watching you all night.”

“Yeah?” The heat in her eyes traveled to my cock and it pulsed. “You look like a goddess in that dress.” I lowered my voice. “I haven’t been able to think about anything but you.”

She released her grip on her elbows and slid her hands up my chest.

Soft snores emanated from the room where Abigail lay. The girl had fallen asleep with the suddenness of youth.

Lucy rubbed my lapels between her thumb and forefinger. "I should wake her up and go home." Her lips pursed and she shook her head. "I should, but I can't. Because I can't stop thinking about you." Her breath hitched and she locked her eyes on mine. "You, and Lennox, and Justin."

"What about us?" I wanted to hear her say it. She'd brought it up before, but I needed to hear it again to make sure she really meant it. "What do you want, Lucy?"

"You." She stood on her tiptoes and rubbed her nose along the edge of mine. "I want all of you. I want you to call Lennox and Justin and have them meet us up here. Then I want all of you to fuck me."

Good God. I was going to bust my fucking pants if she kept talking like that. I tangled my hand in her hair and kissed her until we were both breathless, then I fished my phone from my pocket and dialed Lennox and Justin in a three-way call. They both answered, their echoing voices telling me they were close to each other. "Lucy is asking if you two want to join us in my room."

"Damn straight," Justin said. "I'll be right there."

"Me too." Lennox ended the call and I tossed the phone aside.

Lucy strode over to the door where Abigail slept and crept over to her daughter. She tugged the blanket up over Abigail's shoulders and moved a strand of hair from Abigail's face. The girl didn't move a muscle even when Lucy turned on one of the bedside lamps and closed the door behind her. "She'll sleep for hours. Nothing could wake her."

That was all the permission I needed to cross to her and pull her into my arms. I crushed her to my chest and kissed her again. I couldn't get enough of this woman. Her nipples peaked beneath the gown, and I skimmed my thumbs over the hard nubs.

Three sharp knocks sounded on my door.

Lucy pulled away and opened the door while I adjusted my pants over my straining erection.

Justin and Lennox rushed into the room, their coats off and their ties askew. Lennox threw the bolt on the door and tossed his coat onto the nearest chair. “How does this work?”

“I don’t know,” Lucy admitted. “Let’s start slow and see what happens. Okay?” She looked at each one of us.

“Okay.” Lennox yanked his tie loose and kicked off his shoes.

Justin approached Lucy and cupped her face in his hands. “There’s nothing we wouldn’t do for you.”

She blinked quickly and turned her cheek into his palm. “Thank you.” Her voice was thick with emotion.

We all wanted to please her. Justin was right. We’d do anything for her.

Lucy backed out of Justin’s arms and turned back to me with her hand outstretched. I joined them, daring to press a lingering kiss to her collarbone. She undid my tie, then the top button of my shirt. Her lips parted on a sigh when Justin came up behind her and ran his hands down her exposed spine.

I framed her face in my hands and kissed her open mouth. Her fingers worked the buttons one at a time until she reached the button on my jacket. She stopped there briefly before popping them loose and pushing the jacket from my shoulders.

Cool air brushed over my neck, and I reveled in the feel of her fingers returning to the buttons. She yanked my shirt out of my pants and finished undoing the buttons while Justin kissed her shoulder and neck. My shirt caught on my suspenders when she pushed it open.

I broke off our kiss and took a step backward.

Lennox took my place. He eased one blue strap down over Lucy’s shoulder and kissed the exposed skin. He still had his shirt and pants on, but had gotten rid of his tie and his suspenders hung down his hips.

I shucked off my white dress shirt and the white undershirt but left my pants on. I wanted this to last, and I'd be too tempted to rush if my pants came off now. Lennox stepped back when I tapped him on the shoulder. Justin moved to the bed and sat on the edge with his legs stretched out in front of him. Lucy swayed on her feet, her eyes glazed and her lips swollen. Lennox moved behind her and cupped her breasts through the dress. She released a tiny moan and leaned into his chest.

I couldn't stay away from her any longer. I took her into my arms fully as Lennox backed up.

"Is that a birthmark?" She pressed a kiss to the mark on my neck, her lips warm and sweet. An odd intensity lit her voice. "How have I never seen it before?"

I was too busy thinking about the things I wanted to do with her to pay much attention to her questions. Why did she care about my birthmark?

LUCY

This was it. I'd shoved right past all the reasons I shouldn't be in Zachary's arms, asking all three men to have sex with me. But they were there—the reasons I should walk away.

A thrill shot down my spine when Zachary kissed the curve of my shoulder. Dad would be furious with me if he ever found out. But how would he? It's not like we were going to parade this all over the news. We all had obligations to the team and fear of what would happen if we were found out.

My fingers found the groove beneath Zachary's shoulders, that ridge of muscle that flexed every time he moved. God, I loved that feeling of power skating beneath my fingertips.

Lennox thumbed my nipples through the dress and pressed his dick into my ass. "You feel so good." Warm breath brushed over my neck as he pressed open-mouthed kisses along my neck and shoulder.

Zachary's head dipped toward mine. "We can stop anytime, if that's what you need."

"I need you. All of you." I was breathless and in desperate need. I fingered the ridge of muscle and pulled him closer. His birthmark flashed in the lamplight, and my stomach bottomed out. It had to be a coincidence. Birthmarks were unusual, but he couldn't... I gulped a breath full of uncertainty. He couldn't be Abigail's father.

Holy hell, what was I getting myself into?

Justin leaned back on his elbows on the bed with his legs stretched out in front of him. His cock bulged through his tuxedo pants. I groaned as Zachary and Lennox smoothed their hands over my body. Zachary slid a hand over my ribs and then bent to gather the hem of my dress in one hand. He pulled it up to my hip and held it there in his fist.

“Let’s take things up a notch.” Zachary thumbed my panties aside and eased a finger between my folds.

I was wet and hot, and the pressure of his finger drove me wild. I bucked into his palm and let my head fall back against Lennox. “Holy fuck.” I reached back and tangled my hands in Lennox’s hair, trapping his mouth on my neck.

He squeezed my tits, then worked the dress down to free them completely. Zachary pushed his finger in deeper, then added a second. “Let’s get you ready for Justin.” He smirked at his teammate laying on the bed.

My pussy clenched at the thought of Justin’s dick inside me.

Zachary gave a deep chuckle. “Oh, she likes that.” He pulsed his fingers in a quick thrust. “We’re taking our time tonight, Luce.”

I wanted them to. God how I wanted them to make this last. But I couldn’t forget about Abigail. She usually slept for hours, but what if this was the one time she woke up? I bit my lip to hold back a groan when Zachary curled his fingers and dragged them through my pussy.

“None of that,” Lennox growled at my back. He pinched my peaked nipples and bit my earlobe. “Let us hear you, sweetheart. Sing for us.”

I couldn’t take much more, and I wanted to please them too. I made a grab for Zachary’s pants and jerked them down over his hips. The move pulled his fingers out of my pussy, and I let out a sharp exhale. “Fuck me, Lennox. Fuck me while I suck Zachary’s dick.”

I bent at the waist and took Zachary’s cock into my mouth. He was warm and so, so hard. Tears sprang to my eyes at the

thrill of it all.

He gripped my head and guided me deeper. “Fuck, yes. Just like that.” He eased his hips forward, plunging his cock in and out of my mouth. “Take me a little deeper.”

Lennox unzipped his pants, the sound like a gunshot to my ears. He palmed my ass and squeezed. “Spread your legs, Lucy.” Pushing my dress up to the center of my back, he tore my panties off with a savage yank that shredded the material.

Cold air hit my wet pussy, and I shivered while widening my stance. I wanted him inside me. I wiggled my ass and felt his cock press against my entrance.

“God you’re impatient.” He pushed into me slowly. “Poor Justin isn’t getting any action.” He sank deeper. “What can we do about that, Zachary?”

I couldn’t see either of them, but I heard the pleasure in their voices and it drove me wild.

“I think, once Lucy’s ready, she could take all three of us at the same time.” He forced his cock down the back of my throat, then pulled out with a pop. “What do you say, Lucy? Think you can suck one of us off while the other two fuck you?” He smoothed my hair back from my face, watching me intently.

“Yes.” I grabbed for Zachary, needing to feel him in my mouth as Lennox pounded me from behind. “I want all of you inside me. Make me come so hard I can’t breathe. That’s what I need. That’s what I want to give all of you.”

Lennox drove his cock into me, burying himself to the hilt. “I think she likes the idea.” He pumped in and out, giving me every inch of his cock. “So much for taking it slow.”

“I’ve never been good at waiting.” I could be patient, but right now, I needed fulfillment too much to be shy and demure. I wanted to be fucked hard enough that I’d still feel it tomorrow.

“Justin, your turn.” Zachary took a step back and motioned Justin forward. “Let her get a taste.”

Zachary took control of the situation like it was the most natural thing in the world, and I loved seeing this commanding side coming out in him.

Lennox bent over my back, curling himself deep inside me, and pistoned his hips. “Damn you feel good. I can’t get enough of this pussy.”

Justin stood and dropped his pants. His heavy cock bobbed toward me, every step he took full of purpose. “You’d better be ready to give it up soon. You can have her ass or her beautiful mouth, but I get that sweet pussy next.”

He fed me his cock before I could respond. It didn’t matter. The thought of all three of them fucking me at the same time caused my entire body to vibrate with need. I arched my spine to take Lennox as deep as possible and sucked Justin’s cock until my cheeks hollowed out and he cursed. I could barely get him over my tongue, so I used both hands to stroke him while I sucked his head.

“That is the most beautiful sight in the whole fucking world.” Zachary took Justin’s spot on the bed and palmed his cock. His eyes gleamed with a furious inner light that made my stomach clench. “Make her come, Lennox. She needs it to help get her ass ready for you.”

Goddamn.

Lennox gripped my hips and stroked deep enough to make my toes curl. The force drove me harder onto Justin, who cursed loud and long. His hands shook when he scooped my hair into a knot at the base of my neck. “You’re so good at that.” He bucked into me, gagging me before he retreated. “You make us feel so good. We’re going to return the favor.”

Pressure built at the base of my spine. I held Justin tighter and moaned over his dick. Lennox slid a hand over my hip and fingered my clit as he used his length to drive me ever closer to the edge. “Come for me.” He pulled out to the tip, then rammed back inside.

I sucked air with a shocked gasp as tingles spread along my spine. He did it again, taking his cock away and then

slamming it home in a single thrust.

Justin jerked out of my mouth as the first wave of ecstasy crashed into me. He held my shoulders so I didn't pitch onto the floor.

"That's it." Lennox swirled his finger over my clit and dragged his cock out of my tight heat. My body convulsed as the orgasm slowed.

I sucked in breath after ragged breath, my vision swirling with color. Justin, Lennox, and Zachary stripped naked, the three of them standing around me like a trio of gods.

"She's ready." Justin slid my dress over my head, scooped me into his arms, and carried me over to the bed. He kicked at Zachary, who shifted to the side. "Give me a second with her."

My head swam with the force of my orgasm, and we were nowhere near done. My body felt entirely boneless, and I didn't know how I'd manage to move.

Justin slid onto the bed, still cradling me to his chest. He smoothed my hair away from my cheek and kissed me. His tongue swept over mine and scraped the roof of my mouth. A warm hand cupped my breast, the thumb sweeping over the nipple.

I groaned and arched into the touch. Feeling returned with a savageness that shot my eyes open wide. I turned in Justin's arms and straddled his waist. "I like being on top of you."

He grinned and pulled my nipple into his mouth. His cock rested between my legs, heavy and thick.

"I'm going to ride you so hard you see stars." This was it, the moment we'd worked for, the moment I'd wanted for weeks now.

Lennox and Zachary boxed me in, one on either side of me. I gripped Justin's cock and eased it inside me. "God you're so thick." I panted as he stretched me. A shudder worked down my spine at the sensation of him filling me to capacity. But we were not done yet.

Lennox threaded his fingers through my hair while Zachary stroked my spine.

“You can do it.” Zachary gripped my chin between his thumb and forefinger. “You can take all of us.”

“Damn straight.” I settled on Justin’s dick and let out a shaky breath. “Just give me a minute. He’s so damned big. I want to come again. One more time and then we’ll take the next step.” I rolled my hips. “It’s not going to take much. Oh fuck.” My body quivered as I moved over Justin. “Just a little. More.”

My pussy tightened and I leaned forward for better leverage.

Lennox palmed my ass, then slid his fingers over my hole. His thumb pressed there, the pressure driving me forward. “I’m going to love taking this ass.”

I came apart so fast that it felt like my entire body set itself on fire. I clenched my muscles, locking them around Justin and stroking him as deep as I could.

He groaned and bit my nipple hard enough to draw out a gasp and a second wave of pleasure. Before I came down from the high, Lennox moved behind me. He pressed a palm to the center of my back. “Lean into Justin, baby. Relax.”

His cock prodded my hole. Pressure built as he took my ass in tiny increments. “That feels good.” I wiggled to get used to the sensation, my breaths crashing over Justin’s chest. “Zachary.” I held out a hand to him and he scooted closer.

“Almost.” Lennox’s voice sounded strained, and I looked at him over my shoulder. Sweat lined his brow. Tendons popped in his neck and his head fell back. “So tight.” He thrust forward, then retreated. “I feel Justin in your pussy.”

“I feel you both.” I sat back onto Lennox’s cock and felt them both shudder. “I’ve never felt anything like this before. More, Lennox.” I rocked back further. “Give me more.”

“Damn it, Lucy. I’m trying to be careful.” A guttural groan shook his body. “You make it almost impossible not to fuck you so hard I go blind.”

“Fuck me.” I ordered while rocking my hips. “Better yet, both of you get on your backs and let me do it.” I pushed each of them in the chest.

Justin went down first. Lennox looked at me, then at the tangle of our bodies, and shifted his legs around before going down onto his back. I turned my head toward Zachary. “Fuck my face, Zachary, while I ride your friends. Make it good.” I used my thighs to lift myself up, then slide back down over both men. I’d never heard sounds like they made as they gave up control and let me take over. The two dicks inside me filled me up so much I doubted I could hold even another finger if they tried. I wouldn’t mind Justin’s finger on my clit, though. I didn’t know a woman alive who didn’t love her clit getting finger-fucked. But I had enough sensation going on to last all night.

I moved again, pulsing up and down in a slow wave that brought me right to the peak of another orgasm.

Zachary moved so that he stood over Justin. I opened my mouth and took him in. The feel of his dick sliding over my tongue and down my throat drew out a long, rattling groan. I gripped his hips and used them as leverage to pump my ass over Lennox.

He bucked beneath me. “Don’t hold back. Give us everything.”

I did. I used muscles I didn’t know I had to keep them deep inside me while I sucked Zachary’s cock. Nothing could compare to this. How was I supposed to have normal sex after this?

“Hellfire, Lucy.” Zachary’s head fell back and he pounded down the back of my throat.

My memory flashed back to that night in college. The boy I’d slept with said the same thing. He’d held my face the same way. As much as I wanted to ignore it, I was pretty sure that Zachary was the guy I’d slept with in college. He was Abigail’s father. The thought should have knocked me on my ass, but it drove me to want to please him even more. I wanted to make all of them come so bad I’d give almost anything.

I worked my hips faster and both men thrust their hips upward to meet my pace.

“Fuck it.” Justin grabbed my thighs and helped boost me a little higher. “I’m coming. Going to fill that sweet pussy.”

Lennox cursed. “Damn straight. Come with us, Lucy. Let us feel you shake and clench on our dicks.”

I did. I sped up, driving myself onto their dicks at a frenzied pace. Zachary held my head still, fucking my throat like he’d die without it. His back bowed and his cock swelled, filling my mouth. He pushed deeper and shuddered as hot cum burst out. I swallowed it down as fast as I could, the feel of it pushing me over the edge. My pussy and ass locked on the cocks stroking me, the orgasm stiffening my body as wave after wave of pleasure rocked through me. We’d fallen into having sex together with a naturalness that frightened me. But I loved it too.

Lennox and Justin came at the same time, their cocks pulsing in rhythm. I stroked them in tiny bursts until their thrusts slowed and then stopped.

Zachary pulled out of my mouth and stroked my lower lip with his thumb. He’d done that same thing that night in college. I remembered now, and it scared the shit out of me.

Should I tell him that he’s Abigail’s father?

LUCY

I had to leave. I couldn't stay all night in Zachary's room, even if that's what my mind, heart, and body screamed for me to do. I'd gotten off lucky that Abigail slept through the whole thing.

Once I caught my breath, I eased off of Justin and Lennox. They complained with soft grunts as they reached for me. I grinned at their languid smiles and rolled to the edge of the bed. My dress lay in a blue puddle in the middle of the floor. I snagged it and stepped into the silky material. I'd have to go without panties since Lennox had shredded mine.

What a night. I sighed happily and passed a hand through my hair to try and sort out the snarls from their gripping hands. My fingers caught on a tangle, and I winced trying to pull it loose.

"Let me." Zachary came up behind me. Rough fingers caressed mine as he worked the knot into a smooth strand. "There." He brushed my hair over my back and kissed my neck.

I had to tell him. My throat tightened with the realization. Didn't he deserve to know? But I had to get back downstairs before everyone noticed we were all missing. I checked the time and my mouth fell open. We'd been gone far too long already. What if someone had seen me leave with Zachary? If that same person noticed Lennox and Justin leaving afterward or saw all of us returning together, we were screwed.

It wasn't fair that I'd just had the best sex of my life, and now that experience was getting tainted by the threat of getting found out. "I have to go." I barely murmured the words, but the room was so quiet they carried with the force of a hammer blow.

"I'll walk out with you." Zachary reached for his pants and hauled them up over his tight ass.

"No." I palmed his chest. "We shouldn't be seen together too much." His brow wrinkled, but he nodded like he understood.

My throat convulsed with the need to tell him everything.

Lennox and Justin tugged on their clothes in a flurry of good-natured jabs and shoves.

Justin shook his head. "When we play next week, you better not let them get you down on the ice. I'm not coming out of the penalty box to save your ass."

"Oh, right." Zachary scoffed. "Like you were the one to save him. I did that." He tossed his shirt over his shoulders and flew threw the buttons. His nimble fingers drew my gaze, and I couldn't help remembering how good those fingers felt deep inside me.

"Next time, you better not get thrown in the penalty box." Lennox ran a hand through his hair, taming the long strands until they fell to his shoulders. "What happened anyway?"

Zachary shot a look my way, then grinned at Justin. "Just a little misunderstanding. It's all worked out now."

So, they had been fighting about me. Why did that make me feel treasured and wanted? I didn't want them fighting over me. Not when I was more than willing to let all of them have me. If not for Abigail and the guilt clawing at my throat, I'd offer to stay here tonight and see just how many times I could come with them. My guess... a lot.

"We'll tear up the ice next week," Lennox said it with the iron grip of a promise. He punched his fist into his open palm and sat on the edge of the bed to put on his shoes and socks.

I loved listening to them talk. They kidded around like brothers, but they also treated each other like equals. None of them were afraid to speak their mind in front of the others. And they had each other's backs in a way that I hadn't seen in a long time.

Zachary and Justin were livid when Lennox went down while they were in the box. They'd ignored all the rules to get to him, damn the consequences.

And the way they treated me sent a shiver of desire burning bright down my spine. I'd never get enough of them and how they loved me. But eventually, it had to end. I swallowed my fear that this might never happen again and focused on the positive experience.

I'd never been so satisfied after sex. Having all three of them inside me was a brand new experience, one that I'd love to have again and again. I couldn't make myself regret having sex. Not when it was that good and I cared about them this much. It was crazy how much I felt for them after so short a time. Shaking my head, I picked up my scarf and wound it around my wrist.

The adjoining door burst open and Abigail bounded into the room, her eyes bright and cheerful. "I had the best sleep." She clasped her hands together beneath her chin. "Can we go back to the party?"

I jerked my head around to check on my guys and found them all completely dressed and relaxed.

Lennox laughed and motioned Abigail closer. "You liked the party, huh?"

"Uh-huh." She danced her way across the room, twirling on her tiptoes.

I scanned the room one last time, even though I knew it was pointless. Abigail wouldn't have a clue what I'd been doing. I kicked my torn panties under a chair and rolled my eyes when Zachary smirked at me from across the room.

He stood and smoothed a hand over his shirt. A single crease ran down the side, but it would be covered with his

jacket, so I tried not to worry.

Abigail's scarf trailed behind her, fisted tight in her left hand. I'd taken it off her when she fell asleep, but she must have found it on her way out of the room. I gulped a breath when she lowered her hands and her birthmark shone brightly. "Do they have ice cream?"

"Ice cream?" Justin raised his eyebrows. "I'm not sure if they have ice cream. We could go ask."

"It's getting late. We should go home." I hated to leave the gala without finishing my conversation with Caroline, but if I went back down there now, there was no way I'd be able to focus on anything but what had happened up here.

I caught my reflection in the mirror behind Zachary and stared. I looked thoroughly sexed up. My makeup was smudged around my eyes, and my lips were swollen. My hair lay in waves around my shoulders and down my back. And my damned nipples poked through the dress. I should have used the nipple pasties, but I hated the way they felt. Too late now for regrets. I certainly couldn't go down there looking like this.

Abigail hopped onto the nearest chair and turned around backward to lay her arms across the back. "Whatcha watchin'?" She angled her head toward Lennox who had taken out his phone to show something to Justin.

The two of them put their heads together while grinning at Abigail. "I'm showing Lennox a video of him falling down on the ice."

"I fall down a lot." Abigail used her knees to pop up and down in the chair. "Mama takes me ice skating sometimes. I used to be real bad, but now I'm good. Right, Mama?"

"Right." My voice came out raw and almost timid. I cleared it and smoothed my damp hands over my hips.

Zachary reached beneath the chair across from Abigail and grabbed my torn panties. He balled them up in his fist and winked at me on his way to the bathroom.

My cheeks heated. "Abigail, we need to go, sweetheart."

She wrinkled her nose and flounced around to sit in the chair. Her feet stuck straight out and she kicked them back and forth. “I’m hungry.”

Lennox wiggled his fingers at me and raised his eyebrows. “Room service?” he mouthed where Abigail couldn’t see him.

I loved him for keeping quiet and letting me parent Abigail. So many times, people answered Abigail’s questions without even consulting me. It pissed me off. I was her mother, and I made the decisions.

Lennox seemed to understand that, and he waited for me to give an answer.

Zachary strolled out of the bathroom, hands in his pockets. He glanced at Abigail and smiled.

I waited with my breath frozen in my lungs. Abigail’s birthmark was right there, almost glowing in the overhead light. He had to see it. Most people saw it before they noticed anything else about my daughter. My throat worked but no sound came out. I shot a panicked look at Lennox, who stood and made his way toward me. Justin came around the bed from the other side. “Lucy, you okay?”

Zachary looked at me and his brows furrowed. I could grab Abigail and leave. If I did that now, he might not see the birthmark. We might be able to put this off a little longer.

“What’s that?” Zachary froze in his tracks.

“What?” Abigail turned her head around, putting the mark on full display.

Zachary’s throat worked and he dragged in a heavy breath. “On your neck? Do you have a bruise?”

My precious, amazing daughter hopped off the chair and danced around the room. “Nope. It’s a kiss.”

“A kiss?” Zachary shot a look at me, questions filling his eyes.

Spinning in a dizzying circle, Abigail nodded. “Uh-huh. A kiss from my daddy. Mama says he has one too. Just like mine. Mama says I got it from him.”

Zachary paled, his right hand finding the mark on his own neck.

Lennox and Justin closed ranks. Shock covered their faces as they looked from Zachary to Abigail, to me, and then back to Zachary. My eyes sank closed. I forced out a tight breath and knotted my hands together at my waist where my stomach twisted and writhed into a tight ball.

“Can I watch Lennox fall down?” Abigail ran over to Justin and threw her arms around his legs. “Is it funny?”

Justin shook himself out of his stupor and nodded. “Yes, it’s very funny. Come over here with me and Lennox and we’ll show you.”

Blood rushed through my head, and I knew my face had to be scarlet. I looked away from my reflection in the mirror and faced Zachary. Memories of our time together tonight and earlier in the week crashed in, colliding with what I remembered of that night in college.

He was a good guy. Even back then. I remembered that much.

Zachary scrubbed a hand over his shorn hair, then down the side of his face. “What kind of trick is this?” His fingers tapped almost nervously on his thigh.

“No trick.” I wished my voice was stronger, but it barely made it the five feet between us.

“What the hell, Lucy?” He took one step and closed the distance. Grabbing my arms, he brought us nose to nose. His hands were warm and they held me tight. Not tight enough to hurt, but enough that I gripped his arms in return. I wanted to lean into him, to tell him everything that I knew and suspected. Words failed me. In the one moment when I needed them the most, I couldn’t get my throat to work.

Lennox cleared his throat. Zachary and I turned to look at him. Lennox dipped his head toward Abigail, then flexed his fingers in a motion that plainly read he wanted Zachary to ease the fuck up.

His fingers dug into my skin for a split second before he released a heavy sigh.

“I’m pretty sure you and I slept together in college.” I forced my voice to work, despite the words coming out in a ragged whisper.

“Pretty sure?” He wagged his head side to side. “I had a one-night stand in college. I don’t remember much.”

I cupped his neck and dredged up all of my strength. “I remember this.” My thumb brushed his birthmark. “And tonight, you said *hellfire*. You said the same thing that night. Most of it is a hazy memory, but I remember that.”

“I can’t.” His eyebrows drew together. “You snuck out before I got up the next morning. You took my shirt.”

I nodded, my throat going tight again. “I still have it. It’s an old band T-shirt that’s missing the left sleeve.”

Abigail burst out laughing, her clear voice ringing with all the joy in the world. My daughter loved to laugh. She would find joy in any situation. But the one thing she wanted more than anything was to find her father. She needed her father. All little girls needed their dad, especially if they were as kind and decent as Zachary.

“Hellfire,” he muttered under his breath. His gaze drifted over my shoulder. “Am I her father?”

ZACHARY

Was this really happening? How? Why now? My thoughts ran faster than I could keep up. Abigail sat between my two best friends, her face glowing with laughter as she watched videos on Justin's phone.

"What's the deal?" Lennox stood and crossed his arms.

Lucy glared at him with quiet fear in her eyes. "Lennox, can you order some food? Abigail likes chicken and fries. Zachary and I need to talk."

"Seems this includes all of us after tonight." He didn't back down.

I held up my hand to stop him from coming any closer. "Right now, I need you to see to Abigail. Please."

He hesitated on the please, his jaw working back and forth. "Fine. But I expect an explanation later."

"You bet." We'd all have a nice long chat once Abigail wasn't around to hear all the dirty details. Holy shit. I had a daughter. Well. I *might* have a daughter. I looked hard at Abigail, searching for any sign of myself other than the birthmark. She looked so much like Lucy that it was hard to see beyond the blonde hair and blue eyes.

Her nose was wider, as was the space between her eyes. That was more like me. And her chin. She had a tiny cleft in her chin that resembled mine. I'd missed it before when I looked at Coach's picture.

Lucy shot a pointed look at Abigail. “Abigail, maybe you could show Justin those animal videos you love.” She pleaded with them using her eyes and the twisted bit of grief pulling her lips into a frown. “I don’t want her to hear us arguing.” She clung to my arms. “Please. This is supposed to be a fun night. I don’t want to ruin it.”

“Show me the animal videos.” Justin held out his phone. “Cats or dogs?”

“Cats.” Abigail twisted her hands in her lap, the sudden shyness making my heart twist tight in my chest. “Cats are my favorite.”

Mine too. Was it really possible that she was my daughter? I loosened my grip on Lucy’s arms but didn’t completely let her go. “How could you keep this from me?”

She frowned up at me. “It’s not like I knew who you were,” she hissed quietly. “Neither one of us remembers much about that night. I ran into you at a party. I barely remember grabbing your shirt because I couldn’t find mine when I left the next morning.”

“You didn’t have to sneak out.” Hurt flared way down deep. I’d looked for her the next morning and been dismayed to find her gone. Memories were hazy, but I’d known there was something special about her even then. “You snuck out like it didn’t matter.”

Lucy drew in a shocked breath that made her nostrils flare. “I didn’t think you’d want to see me. Why would you? I was just some random girl you hooked up with while drunk.”

The words stung more than I cared to admit. They might’ve been true in most situations, but not this one. “And afterward? When you found out you were pregnant.” I lowered my voice to a dull whisper. “Did you try to find me?”

I watched her eyes turn dark with something I couldn’t name. She twitched her head in a nod. “Yes. I tried. But I didn’t have much to go on.”

“Fuck.” I rubbed a hand over my face. “I left about three months after we hooked up. I had an offer to join a pro hockey

team, and I took it. I knew that I could always go back for my medical degree, but hockey wouldn't wait forever."

"You were going to be a doctor?" Her mouth dropped open with a quiet exhale. "You'd make a great doctor."

"You're one of the few who think so." My parents hadn't been thrilled with either option, but they hadn't fought me when I left college. They thought both options were foolish. I didn't have the brains for a degree or the brawn for pro hockey. I'd been determined to prove them wrong for so long that it came as second nature now. They'd see this as one more way I'd screwed up my life. I didn't see it that way at all.

Abigail was the sweetest little girl I'd ever met. Lucy loved her with the kind of devotion that had made me jealous as a kid—when I saw parents who actually loved instead of just tolerated their kids. I'd wanted to be the kind of father who was so proud of their kids that they showed them off to the world.

I'd been denied that for the last five years. "I have a daughter." I started to move past Lucy.

She held my arms tight, forcing me to stop unless I knocked her down and pulled her along in my wake. "Zachary, wait. We don't know for sure."

"The fuck you just say?"

Lennox cleared his throat and made a slashing motion over his mouth when I looked over at him. He held a finger to his lips and mimed covering his ears.

I waved him off, motioning that I got the point. No cussing in front of Abigail. "Lucy, you can't be serious. Look at her. Look at me. You said yourself that I was the guy that night. So, unless you slept with someone else around the same time, she's mine." Our vacant memories and the missing shirt were enough to convince me.

Lucy, on the other hand, held firm. "I want it to be you. Really, I do. But I can't tell Abigail who you are unless we know for sure. And only if you understand what that really means."

Justin handed Abigail his phone at the same time Lennox stood and opened the door when someone knocked and announced room service. They worked together to get Abigail settled with her food, then strolled over to us.

The man with the wheeled cart gave us a curious look but left without a word. Silence descended for a long beat. Lucy's perfume teased me, reminding me of what we'd done tonight. I'd never felt that way with anyone before. The way she took us all in and made us feel equally loved. It couldn't be real, could it?

What did that mean for the two of us—me and Lucy—as Abigail's parents?

“Get a paternity test.” Lennox crossed his arms once he stood within talking distance. “I've done them. It's not hard and then you'll know for sure.”

“You have kids out there?” Lucy asked with a frown.

“No.” Lennox shook off her question with a dark scowl. “Had a few women try to con me into taking care of their kids. None of them were mine. I'm too careful.” He lowered his eyes to Lucy's mouth, then lower. “Except when I'm with you.”

Damn. He was right. We'd all raw-dogged Lucy like there was no such thing as accidental pregnancy. Though, if she did get pregnant, I'd be there for her. There was something about her that drew me in. Even now, when she cut me off from Abigail until we knew the truth, I loved her for her caring nature. She protected Abigail the way a parent should.

Lucy's cheeks pinked. “I'm covered.” She lifted one shoulder to her ear and let it drop. “After Abigail, I made sure I was more careful. She's my world, but I'm not ready for more kids yet.” She kept her voice low and tight, her eyes roaming between all of them before falling to Abigail.

The little girl sat at the table, her legs swinging back and forth while she chowed down on some chicken strips and fries. She ate with gusto, not a single care in the world. I wanted to make sure that look stayed in place forever.

No kid of mine would ever know the pain of abandonment that I'd felt. She would know that she was loved and cared for. I didn't care what I had to do to make that a reality.

"How long does it take to get results back?" I asked.

Justin scrolled through his phone, his eyes narrowed. "Couple days at least. Could be up to a week."

"She'll have questions about what we're doing." Lucy frowned and twisted a strand of hair around her finger.

"Mama, I have a loose tooth." Abigail poked her fingers into her mouth, pinched a tooth, and wiggled it back and forth. "Can I pull it?"

The girl had absolutely no fear.

Lucy chuckled, and the sound worked through my annoyance to find that tender spot down deep. We kept our conversation low to keep Abigail from overhearing, but it was clear that she knew something was up.

"You can pull it, if it's ready." Lucy finally let go of my arms and turned fully to face Abigail. "Do you want help?"

Abigail wiggled a few more times, then let go. "It's okay. It's not ready yet. Maybe tomorrow." She shot a smile at all of us. "Maybe I'll lose it like that man." She mimed punching her jaw. "His tooth flew right out and bounced."

Justin groaned. "Sorry. I didn't mean for her to see that part."

"It's okay. She's seen worse. I just don't want it to become a habit." Lucy heaved a sigh and palmed the back of her neck. The slim column begged to be kissed, but I restrained myself.

After coming down her throat in an orgasm that made my knees buckle, I should be satisfied for the night. I had a feeling that I'd never be truly satisfied with Lucy. I'd always want more of her, no matter what.

"What's the plan?" Justin asked.

I eased my hands into my pockets to keep from reaching for Lucy again. I wanted to hold her so bad that my chest

ached. It made no sense, but the longing was a constant throb. “I’m getting the test.” I eyed Lucy, waiting for her response.

She chewed on her bottom lip, her face scrunched up in indecision. After a painful silence, she nodded. “Yes. We’ll get the test.” She held her hand out, palm up. “But you have to know something, Zachary.”

I shuddered at the sound of my name in that low voice. “What?”

“It won’t make much of a difference.” She set her hand in the center of my chest and lowered her voice so that I had to lean close to hear.

Desperation clawed through me. I’d wanted kids for years. This was my chance to have that dream finally come true. My heart ached with the need to have this behind us so I could become Abigail’s father. “What are you talking about?”

Things with Lucy were complicated but this was the beginning of something great. Perfection, even. I would never find another woman who made me feel the way Lucy did. Even in college, that one night we spent together, I’d known then there was something special about her.

Tears filled her eyes, and she blinked them away furiously, her nose turning red at the tip. “My dad will be furious with you.”

“What? Why? I didn’t know about her.” I couldn’t bring myself to say her name just yet. My voice threatened to break even thinking it. My daughter. My Abigail. I had a daughter. I didn’t need the reassurance of a paternity test to tell me what was right in front of my eyes.

“You don’t understand.” Lucy groaned and dropped her hand. “He was so disappointed in me when I came home pregnant. I’d failed him. If you’re her father...” Her head moved side to side in a distressed wag. “When he finds out, he’ll be furious. And it won’t change anything. A relationship will still be off-limits.”

Confusion battled with the rush of affection brewing in my chest. I watched Abigail over Lucy’s head. She bobbed her

head side to side, humming and chewing without a care in the world. “But I’m her father. He can’t stop me from seeing my daughter.”

“No,” Lucy agreed. “But he can still cut you from the team. He can still fire me and refuse to let me see you. He can keep you and me from having a relationship. And he will. Being Abigail’s father won’t change anything.”

Hurt bloomed so fast that I staggered back a step. I would have a relationship with my daughter, but I still couldn’t have Lucy? That was ridiculous. Being with Lucy made the most sense of anything in my life.

I lowered my head so we were eye to eye. “It changes *everything*.”

LUCY

I bundled up Abigail and left the hotel after promising Zachary that I'd think about our options. I knew what was right. He deserved every chance to be Abigail's father. But how did I explain all of this to the little girl chattering away in the backseat? She'd loved spending time with Zachary and the others. She'd have questions about the test and what it was for.

While telling her the truth made the most sense, I couldn't get rid of the niggles of doubt in the back of my mind. What if I told her that I thought Zachary was her father, but then the test proved otherwise? She'd be devastated. Lying to her about the reason for the test hurt almost as much, but it made more sense.

What a mess.

My thoughts churned the whole way home, through the night as I put Abigail to bed, and into the next morning. I had to talk to someone. Someone with a level head and a heart that would take in all sides of the problem and give me an honest answer.

I needed my mother. Checking my phone, I eyed the schedule on the desk and sighed. Dad would be on his way to practice. Saturday morning practices were required once the season was underway. If they didn't have a game, Dad made them split up and make their own teams and play like it was a game. He claimed it helped cultivate teamwork while keeping the competitive spirit alive. I believed him. I'd seen some of

their *playful* games through the years. Winning one of those practice games was almost as coveted as winning a real game.

Lennox, Justin, and Zachary would all be at practice today. They wouldn't miss it. Despite last night's incredible conclusion, they'd go about their lives today like nothing happened.

Which left me with the chance to talk to Mom without Dad's scowling and his hints of judgment. I didn't need him to look down his nose at me and remind me that I should have been more careful. Much as he loved Abigail, he still didn't understand my weakness that night. Mom might not understand, but she'd listen and she wouldn't judge. I needed that serene, listening ear more than I cared to admit.

Rolling from the bed, I rushed through a quick shower and threw on the most comfortable but appropriate clothes I could find. Leggings, a sweatshirt, fuzzy boots, and a knit cap made up the ensemble, and I didn't give two shits that I looked like a half-asleep gargoyle when I saw myself in the bathroom mirror.

Abigail shuffled out of her room, rubbing her eyes and yawning. She blinked sleepily at me. "Where we going?"

"I thought we'd go see Gram." I shot off a text to let Mom know we were on our way. She answered right back with an emoji of a stack of pancakes. I showed it to Abigail. "She's making pancakes."

My food-loving daughter clapped and jumped up and down. All thoughts of sleep vanished with that promise of carby goodness. She dove into her room and threw on day clothes with as much randomness as I had and came out minutes later wearing an almost identical replica of my outfit. Except for the pink fluffy scarf from last night. She wound it around her neck and tossed the ends over her shoulders. "I'm ready."

I grinned at her as love swelled in my chest until it felt so tight it might burst. I hoped she always had this confidence to wear what she loved and to give a fuck off to anyone who dared to tell her it didn't suit societal norms. No one said a

darned word when a man ran around looking like a complete slob. Society claimed that it was his right as the man and the breadwinner of the household. Whereas women were required to look perfectly put together all the time. Fuck that. Some days I wanted to look cute and sassy. Not for any fucking man, but because it was what *I* wanted.

What did trying to conform to society ever get me? Insecurity and low self-esteem. That was pretty much all society gave most women, and that was on a good day.

“Maybe my tooth will come out in my pancakes.” Abigail bounded down the hallway, her boots clomping so loud it echoed.

I shook myself out of my stupor and followed her to the front door where she waited for me. “That would make breakfast fun.” Grinning, I tweaked the end of her scarf. “You’ll have to show Gram how loose it is.”

“She might give me a dollar if I pull it.” The thought invigorated Abigail, and she shoved her fingers into her mouth to wiggle the tooth. “I almost got it.”

We made our way to the car, brittle cold nipping our cheeks and making my teeth chatter. I cranked the engine and pulled out onto the road before the heater could catch up, and we shuddered our way down the road to my parents’ house. Abigail never stopped talking. She gave me a recount of her version of the party and watching videos on Justin’s phone. It all sounded like a fairy tale from her perspective.

Hell. My memories of last night were a fairy tale. I tightened my grip on the wheel to keep my thoughts in check and pulled into the driveway. Mom waved me in from the front door and within minutes we sat around the kitchen table with cups of hot coffee and plates stacked high with bacon and pancakes.

Abigail kept us both entertained as she polished off her pancakes—without losing her tooth—and hopped from her seat. “Can I go play on my swing set?” She licked syrup from her lips and threw her arms around me. Her blue eyes pleaded, and I didn’t have any trouble giving her the okay.

“Keep your coat on and your scarf tucked inside. Okay?” I slid the fluffy scarf beneath her coat and buttoned the top button. “Gram and I will be out to watch you in a few minutes.”

She skipped from the house, her blonde hair flying in the breeze.

Mom turned to me, spearing me with a look. “What’s wrong?”

I didn’t bother trying to hide anything from her. She’d been my best friend my whole life. I was lucky to have such a great relationship with her. I knew most girls were not as lucky. Sipping my coffee, I told her about Zachary. I left off the darker details. Things like my relationship with three men from Dad’s team. She didn’t need to know any of that. I’d be asking her to keep a secret from her husband. A secret that was mine to tell and not hers to hide. My throat convulsed with a surge of guilt. “I’m pretty sure he’s Abigail’s dad.” The cup warmed my hands, but nothing could pierce the ice wrapped tight around my heart.

Mom patted my arm where it rested on the table. “You like him?”

I blew out a slow, desperate breath. “That doesn’t matter. Dad would never let us have a relationship. Not as long as he’s on the team and I’m the physiotherapist.” I winced at the hurt pouring out through my tone. One of us would have to give up our job in order to have a relationship.

I knew who that would be. If I wanted to have it all, I’d have to sacrifice. I could never ask Zachary to give up his shot at a pro career. It wasn’t fair to him. But neither was me having to give up the job of a lifetime. “It’s all a mess.” I rubbed the ache building behind my eyes.

“Life is messy.” Mom squeezed my forearm and leaned in close. “You can’t let that scare you. Otherwise, you’ll spend your whole life worrying.”

I did enough of that already. I finished my coffee and twirled the cup between my hands. “Dad will never let it go.” I

shook my head as the reality of it all came crashing down on me. What were the chances I'd find Zachary again after all these years?

Mom's brows puckered together into a harsh line. "Your father doesn't get to make this decision. If the boy is Abigail's father, he has every right to be in her life."

"Yeah." But what about me? The question tangled in my heart. I held it back before the full truth could barrel out.

But Mom saw. Mom saw everything. Her face smoothed and she huffed a quiet laugh that was meant to soothe me. "You have feelings for him."

I didn't dare nod, but the truth welled up inside me with such bright intensity that I doubted she'd miss it shining in my face. I'd never been good at hiding my emotions, and she'd learned years ago how to see through my bullshit.

"Family comes first, Lucy." Mom's voice was quiet, sincere.

It wrenched my traitorous heart to hear her speak so softly to me when I'd done so much to shame her through the years. "I know." At least, I understood the sentiment. I blinked back a rush of tears and turned away from her. The familiar kitchen with its worn table and familiar white cabinets worked a sliver of peace into my heart.

Mom took my hand and held it between hers. "No. You're not listening, honey. Family comes first." She ducked down to look into my eyes. "Rules be damned. Family over everything. Always."

I wanted desperately to believe that Dad ascribed to the same feeling, but I knew better. The disappointment he'd thrown in my face during college was enough to shred me to pieces even now. I was playing with fire by sleeping with Zachary, much less with Lennox and Justin too. Dad might forgive me—eventually—for falling for Zachary again. But he'd never understand the pull of loving three men.

Did I love them? Or did I love how they made me feel? Both. The thought of giving them up made me sick. What hurt

worse was the knowledge that my actions could ruin all of their careers and put them out of pro hockey for the rest of their lives.

I wasn't above thumbing my nose at society when I was the only one getting hurt. I couldn't do that to all of them. I should have been strong enough to tell myself no. It wasn't too late.

"Even if family comes first, Dad won't let Zachary become a real part of our family. He'll be Abigail's father, but he won't be family." I had to say it out loud before it tore me apart.

Mom's smile was a little bit sad as she sat back and crossed one arm over her waist. "You leave your father to me."

I grinned at the bold claim, but something in her eyes told me she meant every word. "I need to be the one to tell him." I stood and made my way to the door.

Abigail would be expecting us to come outside soon, and she'd come looking for us if we were gone too long. I caught a glimpse of her as she jumped off the swing and landed on her feet with her arms stretched over her head. No fear. No doubt. She believed she could and so she did.

"When are you getting the paternity test done?" Mom asked. The easy atmosphere in the kitchen tightened into a stranglehold.

I folded my arms tight over my stomach and hugged my elbows close to my ribs. "Soon." Zachary would not be put off for long. I was sure that if I tried to deny him, he'd get the courts involved. I'd seen how he reacted to the news last night. He'd looked at Abigail like his entire world revolved around her. He would not sit around and let this go. Which brought up another question. Did I tell Dad about the possibility of Zachary being Abigail's father, or did I wait until I had confirmation?

LUCY

The rest of the weekend passed in a blur, with Monday morning arriving before I was ready. I didn't let that stop me from sending Abigail to school and making my way to the rink, though I did purposefully arrive late so that I wouldn't run into Zachary on my way to my office.

I was a coward for avoiding him, I realized as I jogged down the empty corridor and rushed into my office.

We needed to talk in person and in private. Neither of those things were possible until he finished practice. It wasn't fair of me to put him off this long and make him suffer through the weekend, but that was the decision I'd made when we parted ways Friday night after the gala.

I paced my office and waited. I cleaned and waited some more. My face heated every time I looked at the exam table and remembered what I'd done on it with Zachary and later with Lennox. I thought of them every time I stepped foot inside the room. Their presence was too much to ignore, even though I hadn't seen them in days. The softly colored walls and bright pictures didn't ease me today. If anything, being in the room heightened my senses and made everything feel ten times stronger.

I should have been upstairs watching their practice, but I hid and made Zachary come to me. Coward. The word banged around in my head as an hour passed. Then another. I might advocate for women's rights, but when it came to the thing I wanted, I hid from it and tried to push it away.

Finally, the door creaked open and Zachary poked his head inside. His eyes found mine. I waited for the anger, the resentment, the horror to flare in his dark irises. Instead, I found a kind of acceptance that turned my bones to mush. “Well?” He stepped inside and closed the door, then leaned his back on the frame and crossed his arms.

Well. My breath rushed out, and I closed my eyes long enough to gather my nerve. “You’re right. We should do the paternity test.” I held up a hand, silently asking him to wait. “I don’t want to tell Abigail what it’s about until we know for sure.”

“I’m her father, Lucy.” His hands flexed, the fingertips digging into his powerful biceps. He’d removed his pads and stood there in a pair of jeans and a T-shirt that stretched across his taut chest. He’d taken the time to shower before coming to see me, and the smell of his soap and cologne mixed in my nose.

I wanted to bury my head in his chest and let him tell me that everything would be okay. But I didn’t. I couldn’t. I’d made it this long without him, I would make it through this too.

“Please don’t make this any harder than it already is.” I took a step away from him before my body betrayed me and I leaned in. “I know it’s not fair for me to ask that, but I need you to keep it quiet. Talk to Abigail if you want. I’d encourage it, even. But don’t tell her you’re her father.” Especially if he didn’t plan on sticking around. I hoped and prayed he would. He seemed like the kind of guy who took that stuff seriously. I wouldn’t let him within five miles of her if I thought he’d break her heart.

A bead of sweat trickled down my spine despite the coolness in the room. Nervous energy zipped along my spine until he nodded, his expression tight.

“What about your dad?” He angled his head toward the door. “What will you tell him?”

“Nothing yet.” I’d come to that conclusion quickly after leaving Mom on Saturday. There was no point in talking to

anyone else until we knew for sure. “I want to keep it between us until the results come back. Then...” I shrugged. Then we’d figure out what happened next. I’d be devastated if the test came back with a negative result.

From the look on Zachary’s face, so would he. “I don’t care what the test says.” He pushed off from the door and moved toward me. His steps were powerful but graceful. The look in his eyes curled my toes as he closed the distance. “He’ll have to deal with it sooner or later. We all will.” He brushed a strand of hair from my cheek, sweeping it over my shoulder.

“If the test confirms that you’re Abigail’s father, we’ll sit down and talk to her. You, me, and Abigail. Then we’ll talk to my dad. I don’t want her around for that conversation.” He’d be pissed, and I didn’t want Abigail to see that. He’d never intentionally hurt her, but Dad had a tendency to talk first and remember that words hurt later.

“When can we get the test done?” He stayed close enough that I saw disappointment flare in his eyes when I moved out of reach.

I had to. If I stayed there, I’d end up in his arms again. And that would turn into us having sex. I needed my mind clear today. Zachary muddled my thoughts and made me dream of a future where I could have it all. In his eyes, I saw all of us living a life together, with me working the job I loved, advocating for women’s rights in sports, raising my daughter, and having three men warm my bed at night.

It wasn’t possible. It was a dream, a cruel trick the universe had decided to play on me. It would all come crashing down sooner or later. I should get out now before things fell apart. We’d been lucky so far, but the longer we skated on this rink, the thinner the ice. One day—probably soon—we’d all fall through.

I lifted a hand to my heated cheek and pressed my cold palm there to ease the burn caused by Zachary’s presence. “This afternoon. After I pick up Abigail from school. I’ve made an appointment at the clinic Lennox recommended.” I

met his gaze and took a cleansing breath. “I’m not sure if we should all go together. Abigail will have more questions if she sees you there.”

“Lucy.” He said my name like it was a prayer, like I was the one thing he needed in this world.

I couldn’t let that sway me. I had to think about Abigail and what was best for her. “You can meet us there.” That was all I was willing to give. “I can’t risk this breaking her heart, Zachary. She’s wanted a daddy for so long. You have no idea what it means to her. I can’t risk this all being a pipe dream.”

His jaw hardened, a muscle ticking in his temple even as he nodded. “It doesn’t matter to me what the test shows.”

“What do you mean?” Confusion warred with the hope I’d tried so hard to bury.

His smile slipped out, a warm caress in the coldness. “I don’t care what the test says. I still want to be in a relationship with you. I’d like proof that I’m Abigail’s father, but I don’t need it to know that I’d love her like my own.”

It was one of the sweetest sentiments I’d ever heard. He said it with such conviction that my heart lurched and sped up. “It’s too risky.” I was too much of a risk. I understood him wanting to be part of Abigail’s life—especially if he was her father. “You could lose everything.”

His head shook side to side slowly, and he never broke eye contact with me. “No. Losing you would be losing everything. You, Abigail, and what we have are the only irreplaceable things in my life.”

“And Lennox and Justin?” I breathed out their names, tasting the sultry heat of pleasure on my tongue.

His grin widened. “They’re part of what I have with you.”

I wanted that too. I wanted it so much my whole body reacted with a violent shudder. No one had ever made me feel the way they did. But what about my work? How could I advocate for women while tangled up in a relationship with three men? Maybe that was another way to stick it to society, but I didn’t see any of them allowing me to advocate for

women and girls in sports while in such a compromising relationship. Would I even have time for my advocacy work while in a relationship? I'd already sacrificed time that I should have spent on my work and spent it with Zachary. The gala was a good blend of both worlds, but those opportunities were few and far between. Agreeing to a relationship meant the advocacy would suffer further neglect.

"I can't." I forced my head to move side to side despite the screaming in the back of my mind. "I can't have everything I want. It's too much. Between work and Abigail and my advocacy, I don't have time for a relationship."

Zachary didn't move except to breathe. He watched me for several seconds, his quiet contemplation sending heat rushing through me. "You can have it all. You deserve to have everything you want."

I shook my head, trying to rid myself of the tantalizing words. "You don't understand the toll this will take on all of us. You, Lennox, and Justin are risking too much to be with me. I won't let you do that."

A muscle feathered in his jaw, his first real sign of annoyance. "You don't get to be the one who makes that call. We all know what we're risking. And we can decide for ourselves if we want to take the chance. I do. I feel pretty confident speaking for Lennox and Justin too, but you can ask them yourself."

My breaths came hard and fast. He meant every word. He was choosing me. Not just because he thought he was Abigail's father. He was choosing me because he wanted me. He thought that they all wanted me enough to risk their careers. It was too much. I raised a hand to my throat and rubbed my palm over my thundering pulse.

"We can figure it out." He held out his hands but didn't touch me. He seemed to know that I needed space. "Don't let fear keep you from us. Please."

Good God. The way he said *please* rippled through me, begging me to take a minute and listen not just to my fear but to my hopes and dreams. I'd given up on a relationship a long

time ago. That didn't mean I'd stopped dreaming of a happily ever after that included a husband. A husband, I reminded myself savagely. One. Singular. Not three men. Not plural. What a mess. Why did I have to like all three? Why couldn't I be satisfied with a normal relationship?

Fucking hell. I was so tired of trying to justify what I wanted by society's yardstick. "I'll think about it." It was the best I could do under the circumstances.

"Come to my house tonight and think about it?" He gave me a boyish grin and wiggled his eyebrows. "I'll even bring Lennox and Justin over. We can all think about it together."

"I can't." I reached over and gripped his arm to stop the hurt cutting into his smile. "I have Abigail to think about. It's a school night, and I don't want her schedule thrown off by a strange house."

"Right." His smile looked forced, but he held my gaze. "What time should I meet you at the clinic?"

"Five." I checked my watch. "That gives us plenty of time to get the test done and have dinner." I filled my lungs with air and held it. Need drove me more than I cared to admit. I didn't want to go to bed alone tonight. I knew the pleasure I'd be missing, and my body cried out for it.

Zachary started to turn away.

"Why don't you all come to my house tonight once Abigail is asleep?" the words rushed out in a single breath. "I'd like to spend time with you. With all of you."

Maybe I was making a big mistake, but I had to have another night with them. I deserved happiness too. I told myself this over and over as Zachary smiled and nodded.

"What time?" He gripped the doorknob in one meaty fist. "I'll tell Lennox and Justin."

LENNOX

I wasn't sure what to expect when I pulled up in Lucy's driveway, but the cute little bungalow with yellow shutters and front door had me grinning from ear to ear, especially when Lucy opened that front door wearing a sunshine yellow sweater over black leggings. Her hair fell down loose over her shoulders, and I clenched my hands into fists to keep from driving them straight into the soft strands.

She messed with me in a way I'd never experienced before. I wasn't the kind of guy who hopped from woman to woman like Justin, but something about Lucy tugged on pieces of me that I'd never given to anyone. She made me want to let out the animal side of myself, the part I kept hidden under a calm exterior. Lucy Ashley drove me wild. And she didn't have a fucking clue.

"Hi." She propped the door open with her hip and motioned me inside.

I took my time walking past her, pausing a breath away to inhale her lilac scent. "I'm glad you invited us over."

Discomfort flashed over her face, there and gone so fast I almost missed it. What was that all about? I knew better than to ask her directly. Better to come at it from around the corner.

"How did the paternity test go?" Zachary had filled us in on the plan earlier. I shed my coat and hung it on a peg beside Lucy's and a pink puffy thing that must be Abigail's.

Lucy closed the door a little harder than necessary. "Abigail thought it was great. She asked the nurse a million

questions.” Her face tightened as she frowned. “I need to send her a thank you card or something. She deflected Abby’s questions better than I ever could. She still has no idea why we were there.”

My heart squeezed for them. “I hope he’s her dad.”

Lucy’s exhale trembled through her body. “He does too.” She didn’t mention what she wanted. Or what she thought Abigail might want.

I couldn’t help a surge of sympathy for all of them. It wasn’t that I didn’t want kids. It was that I wanted them with someone I loved. “Zachary will make a great father.” Sparks crackled and burst from the fireplace on the opposite wall. I made my way over and held out my hands to the flames. “He’s wanted to be a dad for years.” He didn’t talk about it much, but when he did, he lit up.

Lucy’s presence warmed my side though we didn’t touch. I rubbed my hands together and scanned the photos lining the mantle. Lucy and Abigail sitting on the front porch with ice cream cones filled one frame. Another of the two of them with her dad, and a woman that could only be Lucy’s mother filled another. They smiled in every photo, mother and daughter matching grins and eyes that made me smile in response.

“I hate that he’s missed out on so much. If he’s her father.” She tacked on the last like an afterthought.

“He’s her father. The test is just a confirmation.” A brisk wind rattled a tree branch against the window, the desperate screech like nails on a chalkboard.

Lucy shuddered. “Damn tree. I keep forgetting to cut that limb down.”

I could see her outside with a chainsaw hacking at the offending tree. She was a woman who could do anything. But from what Zachary shared earlier, she was also afraid of losing everything. I wished I could offer her decisive comfort, but all I had were a few reassurances. “Zachary is great with kids. You don’t have to worry about that. It’s why he works so hard

at coaching the youth league even though he's busy with our league."

We stood shoulder to shoulder with the soft crackle of flames popping in quiet oblivion. Lucy had something on her mind, but I wanted her to feel comfortable enough to bring it up.

"He's great with Abigail. He even sat and colored with her at the office today." She pointed out a picture taped to the wall beside the fire. "It's all of us at the gala." Her voice was a whisper that delved into my soul and made me want to promise that everything would be okay. "I'm scared, Lennox." Her bright blue eyes dimmed and she knotted her hands over her stomach. "I'm terrified of what will happen if this goes badly. What Dad will do if he finds out." Her eyes shuttered closed.

I took her hand and turned her to face me. "It will be okay." I kissed her before she could argue. Her lips were firm, almost resistant, but then she relaxed and let me comfort her. I eased back a fraction. "We'll figure it out. But we have all agreed that we're willing to take the risk. You are worth it to us." I held her gaze. "Are we worth it to you?"

I didn't need a yes or no answer right now. It wouldn't be fair to try and force her to give an answer under duress. She could end things anytime if that's what she wanted, but I was not about to let this pass through my fingers without a fight. I had one more thing to say, and then I'd leave it alone. "As long as we're all in this together, everything will work out. You have a bigger support system now. That's what we are, Lucy. We're not here to drag you down or make life harder."

She wrapped her arms around me and squeezed tight. "Thank you."

Relief pulsed through me. I wanted this more than I cared to admit. Lucy had found her way into my heart in such a short time that it didn't seem real. But we were together, and that was what mattered.

A car engine rumbled closer. "Sounds like Justin is here." I kissed her temple and let her go to answer the door when

Justin knocked.

Zachary's quick laughter sounded as the door opened. "Sorry we're late. Justin got lost on the roundabout."

"I did not." Justin huffed and shoved Zachary in the shoulder.

Lucy grinned and ushered them inside while shushing them. "Abigail is asleep right there." She pointed at a room down a short hallway.

"Where's your room?" Justin wiggled his eyebrows while removing his coat and hanging it beside mine.

Zachary did the same. His gaze darted toward Abigail's room and his shoulders stiffened. He palmed the back of his neck and turned away, catching my eye with a tortured grimace. I understood the look after what he'd said today. He wanted this to work out even more than I did. He'd walked into a ready-made family, one that was already his by all rights.

He'd stop at nothing to join Lucy and Abigail. Coach's orders be damned. This was now Zachary's family and he'd fight like hell to stay. His dedication was one of the things I respected most about him.

Lucy took Justin's hand and pulled him to the left, where a closed door nestled almost hidden in a recessed wall. "Over here."

I pushed Zachary ahead of me, using the extra few seconds to bring my scattered thoughts under control. We were here tonight to spend time with Lucy. And we all knew how we wanted the night to go. I planned on a passionate night that none of us would ever forget. Remembering the gala and how Lucy responded to us made my cock twitch. I couldn't wait to bury it deep inside her and claim her as mine. As all of ours.

Closing the door, I found the lock and clicked it before turning around. Lucy stood between Justin and Zachary, her petite frame dwarfed by them.

She ran her hands over her hips. "I don't want you to think I brought you here just for sex."

“That’s why I’m here.” Justin yanked his shirt off and threw it onto the floor, reaching for his belt at the same time. “Not just for sex, but it’s definitely part of the charm.” He opened his belt and pecked Lucy’s cheek with a quick kiss. “Is there some other reason we’re here?”

Lucy’s lips puckered in a slight frown. “Well.” She laughed, tossing her head back to expose her throat. “I guess not. I just didn’t want to feel like I was using you for sex.”

“Trust me, we don’t think that.” Justin kissed her again. “But we’re more than happy to make you scream your pleasure.”

“Hell yes.” I double-checked the door. No one wanted little Abigail walking in on us. I had plans for Lucy tonight. Dirty plans that were sure to have her writhing in pleasure. “We have all night. And it’s going to be worth every damned second.”

Zachary settled his hands on her hips and pulled her back against his chest. “We came here for you, Luce. It’s all for you.”

She shuddered delicately, her eyes glazing with the first hints of passion.

I moved to stand in front of her and dropped to a knee. She tangled her fingers in my hair, tugging until I looked up at her. “I need to taste you, Lucy.”

Her breath shuddered out when I reached for her leg and slid my hand around to the back of her knee. She gave in to my urging to lift her foot. I slid her yellow sock down and returned her foot to the floor, then moved to the other foot. Kissing her inner thigh through her leggings, I felt her muscles quiver beneath my lips.

Zachary ran his hand beneath the hem of her shirt and splayed his hand over her stomach. Her fingers tightened in my hair when I hooked my fingers into her leggings and pulled them down, baring her smooth skin. Zachary removed her sweater and bra. God, I loved looking at her like this. Seeing

her standing in front of Zachary, her nipples pebbled and her body in desperate need turned me on like nothing else.

“Lennox.” She whispered my name, her nails scraping my scalp.

“I know.” I kissed her bare thigh and finished removing her leggings until she stood in front of me wearing a scrap of lace already damp with need. “Let me get you started, sweetheart.” She smelled divine, her lilac scent filling my head until it roared. My cock swelled hard and fast, my own need struggling with my desire to please her. I slid my finger beneath her panties and into her folds. Her slick heat wrapped around me, and I couldn’t stop myself from burying my head between her legs.

“Holy fuck.” She sagged onto my tongue as I licked her clit and sucked it gently into my mouth. “Take me to bed, Lennox.”

I didn’t need any more encouragement than that. Standing, I scooped her up and carried her over to the four-poster sleigh bed covered in a rich burgundy quilt. I laid her down in the center and crawled up over her, kissing my way from her knee to her belly button. She moaned and lifted her hips, seeking something to ease the need I sensed growing in her. I palmed her sex and stroked one finger into her pussy.

Her spine arched. Zachary settled on her left side and kissed her before she screamed. Justin took the right side and fondled her breast, his eyes alight with hunger. I added another finger and pumped them into her while lowering my mouth to her clit. I circled it with my tongue and felt her shudders strengthen. Her walls fluttered around my fingers and she grabbed the cover, fisting it with both hands.

Zachary swallowed her screams, his hands busy stroking her hair while Justin pinched her nipple with one hand and sucked the other deep into his mouth. She bucked into my hand and let go of the covers to grab at Zachary and Justin. She was close. So close. I could let her come now. It would be easy. A hook of my fingers and a little more pressure with my mouth and she’d shatter.

But we were just getting started, and I had a few positions to test out. I sucked her clit hard and removed my fingers.

“No.” She cried out when I tapped Zachary’s shoulder and he pulled away. “Don’t stop.”

Justin looked over at me, a devilish gleam in his eyes. “It’s playtime, Lucy, and you’re our favorite toy.”

“I was so close.” She twisted on the bed and moved her hand down to her pussy. “I can do it myself.”

I snatched it back, kissing her fingers. “Don’t worry. There’s no need for that. We won’t leave you until you’re satisfied. Though watching you fuck yourself is hot as hell and might be something we do later.” I rolled onto my knees, motioning at the three of us. We were all still clothed, she wasn’t. I loved the dichotomy of it. “Do you want to try something new?”

LUCY

New? All of this was new to me. What other new could there possibly be? I huffed a quick laugh, knowing damn well I was going to say yes. “Are you going to take your clothes off?” I hiked my eyebrows upward and grinned at the three of them.

“Hell yes.” Justin was the first to jump from the bed and yank off his clothes. He laughed at the others. “Come on. You heard the woman. Strip.” He’d already gotten rid of his shirt and undone his pants, but now he threw them aside without hesitation.

Good God. The sight of him made every part of me ache. I curled my fingers around Lennox’s. “I’d love to try something new. But you have to take your clothes off first.”

“Anything for you.” He scooted off the bed and peeled his shirt over his head.

How did I get this lucky?

I ran my palms over the bed and propped up on my elbows. I had three amazing men standing all around my bed in varying states of undress. They were all so different and yet they had one thing in common. They stared at me like they wanted nothing more than to devour me, to watch me fall apart over and over again. My pussy clenched and I lowered my head to the pillow. “Whatever you’re planning, you’d better hurry.” It was a meager threat. And they all knew it.

Zachary and Lennox had a hushed conversation, then Lennox whispered something to Justin that had him nodding

emphatically.

“Scoot over.” Lennox eased onto the bed beside me and settled on his back. Desire glittered in his eyes as he feathered a hand over my face.

I rolled onto my side. “What are we doing?”

A wicked grin tipped his lips up. “You’re going to ride my face. Then, when you’re ready, you’re going to suck Zachary’s dick while you come.”

My mouth fell open with a quick exhale that shook me to my core. “What?”

“Come here.” Lennox gripped my hip and pulled me across his body. “Climb up here.” He eased me up his body, raising his head to kiss along my legs and belly as I moved over his chest.

I stopped with my knees on either side of his shoulders. “I’ve never done anything like this before.”

“Good.” He kissed my inner thigh and blew a warm breath over my clit. “I like being your first for this.” He smacked my ass. “Now get on my face.”

Nervous energy hummed along my veins. I raised up onto my knees. Zachary settled at the head of the bed and held out his hands for me to hold. I gripped his palms tight and lowered my pussy over Lennox’s mouth. A moment of shame gripped me and I started to move away.

Lennox wrapped his arms around my thighs and pulled me down tight. His tongue rasped over my folds.

“Holy shit.” A shiver danced along my spine, and I let out a sigh as he did it again. His warm breath rushed over me, and tongue swirled over my clit. He paused there, sucking and licking my clit until my entire body quivered. “Oh fuck. Zachary.” I bent at the waist, leaning toward Zachary’s erect cock.

He guided me down, his strength keeping me from falling as passion overtook me.

The bed dipped at my side as Justin joined us. He kissed my spine and slid a hand over my ribs, then up to cup my breast. He plucked and teased my nipples in tandem with Lennox's tongue stroking over my pussy.

Lennox's tongue stiffened, and he pushed it inside me, his nose buried in my clit to create friction.

I grabbed onto the bed cover and lowered my head to Zachary's cock. He groaned and gripped the back of my head when I wrapped my lips around him and sucked. He felt so good in my mouth, his thick cock rasping over my tongue and into the back of my throat. I gagged on him and had to retreat, sucking on his head and pulling away to lick and nibble along his shaft. His cock twitched when I pulled him deep into my mouth again, and he whispered my name over and over again in that sexy rasp that I never got tired of.

Lennox's tongue plunged deep. He worked his head side to side, holding my legs to keep me in place.

Justin rolled my nipple between his thumb and forefinger, then pinched and pulled. I gasped around Zachary's cock and rocked my hips on Lennox's mouth as wave after wave of pleasure rolled through me. The sensations built to a peak, the three of them working me over with hands and tongues until I fell apart with Zachary's cock buried in my throat. He bucked his hips, driving his cock deeper at the same time Lennox sucked my clit into his mouth and tongued me hard.

Pleasure burst throughout my body. I shook all over, almost melting into Lennox and Zachary.

Zachary guided me onto my side, where I lay panting. "Well. That was definitely new."

Justin chuckled and pulled me into his arms, where he banded his arm across my chest and ran his free hand down to cup my pussy. "We're just getting started. I have an idea. Are you up for it?"

At this point, I'd agree to anything. "You might have to hold me up. I don't think my bones work anymore."

He chuckled in my ear, his laughter sending a strand of hair over my shoulder. “I got you, baby. We’ll take good care of you.” With me in his arms, he climbed off the bed and set my feet on the floor. “Let me know if this is too much.” He spread my legs and pushed the head of his cock into my entrance.

I groaned and sagged into him. “That feels good.”

“Then you’re going to love this.” He pumped his hips, giving me tiny shocks of pleasure with each thrust that drove him deeper inside. Even after coming so hard, it was a tight fit, and he took his time working his heavy cock all the way in. “I love how you take me, baby. You’re so good at this.” His voice strained and he panted in my ear. “I’m almost fully inside you. Do you feel that?”

I raised my eyes to meet Zachary’s and Lennox’s. They watched Justin fuck me with raw hunger on their faces. I angled my hips for better access and felt Justin slide all the way home. “You feel so good inside me. I’m so full with your cock.”

Zachary moved closer, his knees scooting across the bed and his cock still shining with my saliva. He nodded at Justin. “Put your hands on my shoulders, Luce.”

I didn’t hesitate to obey. My fingers slid over his smooth skin, and I held the thick ridges tight as Justin bent and grabbed my knees.

Zachary held my gaze. “Don’t be scared, okay. Hold on to me and let us do the work.”

I nodded, my heart slamming hard into my ribs. Justin pulled my knees up and back, then wrapped my legs around his waist. I was in the air, my legs around him and my hands holding Zachary’s shoulders. Panic flared but quickly sputtered out. I trusted them. They wouldn’t let me fall.

The angle shifted, wedging Justin deeper into my tight core. I sucked in a gasp at the new sensation, my mouth falling open.

Zachary claimed my lips in a brutal kiss.

Tightening my legs around Justin, I urged him to move. He responded with a quick thrust that sent tingles of pleasure pulsing under my skin. His girth stretched me further as he gripped my hips and pounded his thickness in a series of furious thrusts. Skin slapped skin in a steady crescendo. His fingers curved over my hips, denting my skin and keeping me aloft as he fucked me senseless.

Zachary cradled my ribs in his roughened hands, the coarseness of his palms contrasting with my smooth skin and drawing out the sensation of power. I stroked my tongue alongside his and opened my eyes. I wanted to watch him as I came. His eyes were wide and bright, deep fathomless pools of liquid heat that pulled me down, down, down as my body soared on clouds of raw pleasure.

Justin slowed his pace, dragging his cock through my tight heat in deliciously long strokes that gave me every inch of him. I felt every ridge and my core tighten. I couldn't see Lennox from here, but I felt his presence. We were all in this together. They would play with me and make me come over and over again before taking their own pleasure. I wanted to feel each and every one of them come inside me again. My pussy tightened and I locked my legs tight around Justin, asking him to push me over the edge.

“Fuck, Lucy. You're so damned tight I can barely stand it.” Justin's fingers flexed on my hips. “I feel you fluttering. You're almost there. Come for me.” He rammed into me, filling me to bursting.

So much cock. God how I loved it. He pulled back to the tip and filled me again. There was no slow and tender now. He set a furious pace, drilling his cock to the hilt. I didn't have time to breathe between strokes.

My stomach coiled tighter, my body poised on the precipice.

“Now, Lucy.” He slammed his cock home and we both exploded.

Zachary swallowed my screams, his lips and tongue soothing me as Justin pumped me full of his cum. His cock

pulsed, swelling and expanding with every burst. He gave a series of tiny thrusts as he finished, my body still trembling from the force of my orgasm.

“You’re not done yet.” Zachary released my lips and held me up while Justin released my legs from around his waist. “My turn.” He brought my body close to his, our sweat-slicked skin gliding together in a delicious tease. His cock settled between my legs, and I cradled it there despite my shaking muscles.

He walked us backward to the bed, lowered me with one arm banded around my waist, and entered me in one slow stroke that started another orgasm building.

“So good,” I whispered into his ear. His back flexed under my hands. I raked my nails over the hard planes and squeezed his ass, forcing him deeper. “You feel so good. I can’t get enough.” A sob of pleasure built in the back of my throat. “Oh God, Zachary. I’m going to come again.”

“Go ahead.” He rocked his hips, locking our bodies together in a timeless dance that knew no beginning and no end. “Come apart for me. Show us how good you feel.”

His cock wasn’t as thick as Justin’s, but he knew how to use it. Every stroke worked my pussy until I was clenching and grinding my hips. Zachary leaned on his elbow and slid a hand down to cup my ass. The move curled his cock into a perfect angle, and I screamed his name as I came in a hard rush.

“That’s it,” Lennox spoke from beside me. I never saw him move onto the bed, but he sat near my head, his cock in his hand as he pumped it. “But you’re still not finished, Lucy. Once Zachary is done, I get my turn.”

I loved every minute of this. Having all three of them inside me at the same time was an incredible experience, but I loved this too. I loved the individual attention they gave me, their undivided attention.

Zachary groaned and buried his head in the curve of my shoulder. He emptied himself inside me, his body growing

rigid under my hands. He nipped my shoulder and kissed my ear. “You’re incredible.”

The words warmed me even as he rolled away to swap places with Lennox.

“Wait.” I sat up and reached for Lennox. “I want you to fuck me while I’m on my knees.”

His eyes darkened, his nostrils flaring with heat as he worked his hand over his cock. “Whatever you want.”

I moved into position, putting my back to the wall and my knees sinking into the soft bed. Lennox prowled toward me, grabbed one leg, and lifted it over his shoulder. I was flexible enough that it didn’t hurt. He lined his cock up with my pussy and met my eyes as he slid into me.

“Fuck.” The new angle was exactly what I needed to incite another round of shivers deep in my core.

But Lennox wasn’t happy just using his cock. He eased his fingers over my clit, pressing and circling the sensitive area until I bucked and cursed as hot waves poured over me. I wound my arm around his neck and drove my pussy over him as hard as I could. “I need you to come with me, Lennox.” I ground the words out through my tightening throat. “Please.”

“Whatever you want.” He bared his teeth in a tight smile and thrust his hips upward.

My ears rang and my head swam with the force of my orgasm. I swam in a sea of bliss, unwilling to come down for several minutes.

My phone buzzed, the sound cutting through my pleasure and drawing me back down to the real world.

“Ignore it,” Zachary whispered into my ear. We lay in a heap, arms and legs tangled together.

I had no idea how we’d gotten here. They must have moved me while I was still blissed out. I shook my head to clear it and frowned at the name flashing on the screen. “I have to take it.”

Groaning, I snatched the phone from the table and brought it to my ear. “Emily? What’s wrong?” I checked the time. “It’s late.”

“Have you seen your article?” Her voice was shrill, almost panicked.

Fatigue and fear battled for dominance. “No. Why?”

Emily was my contact at the advocacy center. For her to call me this time of night could only mean something bad. She confirmed it with her dark tone. “Go look at it. Right now.” She hung up without waiting for an answer.

What the hell was that all about?

LUCY

I scrambled off the bed, my fingers flying over the screen.

“What’s wrong?” Zachary reached me first, his warm hands grazing my shoulders and traveling down to my elbows. Heat radiated from him, washing the chill from my spine.

“I don’t know.” I frowned down at the screen and scrolled until I found the article for the interview I’d agreed to. A frown pulled at my lips.

Zachary’s hands on my elbows held my back against his chest. His breath whispered over my ear, every inhale encouraging me to keep breathing through the panic.

The page loaded in a slow wave, the headline appearing first. “Advocacy for All.” I liked the headline. Short and snappy but to the point. It should draw attention. So, what was Emily worried about? Ice filled my body as the photo loaded. I knew from the instant it started that it wasn’t the photo I’d posed for during the interview. It showed a chandelier I’d only seen once before... the night of the gala.

I jerked out of Zachary’s arms and collapsed into the only chair in my room. The burst of cold from the upholstery shocked me but I ignored it to focus on the photo. A picture of me and Zachary at the gala loaded up in its entirety. We stood side by side, Abigail’s hand in mine. Whoever had taken the photo had caught us on our way out of the ballroom. The way we looked at each other. Damn that look on my face. My cheeks heated at more than the memory of what we’d done

that night. The photo was damning proof of my attraction to Zachary. I looked up at him like he was my knight in shining armor. And the way he looked at me was purely sexual. There was nothing but raw desire in his eyes. Anyone who looked at it would know the truth.

My hands shook. I gripped the phone tight and closed my eyes. "I'm sorry."

"What?" Zachary dropped to his knees in front of me. He was still naked, but it didn't seem to bother him. He clasped my icy hands. "What's wrong?"

A shiver of fear and fury scuttled through my spine, snapping it straight. I flipped my phone around to show him. "I'll fix it. I swear."

His eyes narrowed as he looked at my phone. Eyebrows drawn, he smoothed his palms over my forearms. "It's just a picture."

I scoffed in his face. "No. Whatever this is, it's not just a picture. That's not the picture I agreed to. This article is about my advocacy. Why would they use this picture unless they were trying to hurt me?"

"Have you read it?" Justin asked from his position on the bed. He lay sprawled on his back, his ankles crossed and his arms behind his head. His relaxed posture was probably meant to help soothe me, but it made me feel worse. "It was a gala meant to bring the advocacies together. Maybe that's why they used that picture." He squinted at me from across the room. "I don't see anything wrong with it."

I stood, wrenching free of Zachary's hold. "You don't see anything wrong with it?" I stalked across the room and shoved the phone in his face. "We're practically fucking each other with our eyes."

"Nothing wrong with that." He shrugged and leaned to the side to stare up at me. "No one can prove that it went any further than a look. Read the article and see what it says."

Basically, he was telling me to calm the fuck down and make sure there was a problem before I flew off the handle.

“Emily wouldn’t have called unless it was bad.”

“There’s nothing you can do tonight.” Justin took my hand and tugged me closer. “Don’t let it ruin your night.”

I frowned as I scoured the article. “They’re asking if my interest in advocacy work is really to further women’s rights in sports.” I continued reading, my eyes blurring with a rush of angry tears. “It insinuates that I’m more interested in the youth league’s coach than I am the advocacy.” I breathed out a quick sigh of relief. “They don’t call you by name, Zachary.”

“I don’t care if they do. It’s still wrong.” He was as furious as I was, but he held his temper as he stood and crossed to the bed. “We’ll deal with it, Lucy. All of us together.”

Lennox dragged a hand through his hair, but his expression held no remorse. “No one will believe them, Lucy. Anyone who has ever met you knows the real reason you’re doing the work.”

No. That wasn’t entirely true. This could ruin so much. Emily had sounded furious and scared. She was typically unflappable. If this had her spooked, then there was definitely something to worry about. I wanted to tell them that they were right, and we’d deal with it as a group. That was not going to be possible. As much as I loved them for immediately coming to my side and promising to be with me, I couldn’t let them do that.

“Come back to bed.” Justin grazed my hip with his hand.

I took a step back, forcing his hand to fall away. They wanted to comfort me. Damn them. I wanted to let them comfort me. But I couldn’t.

“Lucy?” Lennox tipped his head to the side, surveying me with intense scrutiny. “Please don’t let this bother you. We’re all going to be okay.”

“You don’t know that.” My breath wheezed out through the constriction in my throat. This was what I’d been worried about. I reached the bottom of the article and scrolled back up to the top to read it again.

Zachary draped my robe around my shoulders and pulled it snug at the neck. “You’re shaking. Come back to bed. You can keep reading. We’ll figure this out, just come be with us.”

His words were soft but strained.

I jerked my head up from the phone in time to catch the look he shot Justin and Lennox. He was worried. About me or about the ramifications of the article? I opened my mouth to ask but snapped it shut without saying a word. I was afraid of what would come out if I started talking. Part of me wanted to make them leave. The other part—a bigger part—wanted them to stay. That part begged me to climb back into the bed and snuggle in with them. This might be my last chance.

We’d have to face this head-on. We couldn’t let it go. *I* couldn’t let it go. “They don’t know about all of you.” I tapped the phone screen after shoving my arms through the sleeves of the robe and tying the belt around my waist. A sudden burst of hope bloomed in my chest. “They speculate about me and Zachary, but there’s no mention of Lennox or Justin.” I analyzed every word in the article, reading it all the way through two more times while pacing the room.

The three of them watched me but didn’t interfere.

“They wrote it as a mixture of my real interview and speculation. Look here.” I turned the phone around to show them. “Here he writes my exact response to his question about my work. I told him that I’d been trying to get more interest in women’s sports since my own experience as a kid. Then, in the very next line, he says that my attention seems to be more on the men than on my goals. He asks how a possible relationship with the youth league’s coach would interfere with my goals, saying that if I was truly focused on my career and women’s rights, I wouldn’t be swayed by a relationship.” Fury burned hot and then cold. He was right. I’d told myself the same thing day after day. I’d fought against my attraction and told myself that it could never work for this very reason.

But to have it shoved in my face like this made me furious. No one had the right to misrepresent me like this. It made me physically ill to see all my work flushed down the toilet with

that one photo. Everyone who saw that photo would think I'd sold out for a relationship. Damn it. Fucking assholes who thought they ruled the world because they had a platform where they could say any random shit that came to mind. I growled and paced until the room spun around me.

"Lucy. Stop." Zachary's commanding voice snapped my head up. Concern etched deep lines on either side of his mouth. "Take a breath." He moved to cut me off when I flipped him the bird. "You can't solve anything if you respond out of anger. It will make you look guilty. And you have nothing to feel guilty about." He curled a finger under my chin and brought my head up to meet his eyes. "Hear me. You have *nothing* to be ashamed of. There's no reason you can't have everything. Fuck this asshole. He doesn't know you."

He was right. I knew he was right, but I'd fought so long to make it clear that I was a true women's advocate. Having a relationship shouldn't undermine that. It shouldn't, but it did. For whatever crazy reason, society would only believe me as long as I stayed single. The minute I fell into a relationship, my advocacy was dead in the water. No one—even other women—believed that a women's advocate could have a sexual relationship and stay true to her cause.

I was a fool for thinking I could pull this off. I was spiraling. I knew it, but I didn't know how to stop it. I wanted to be the exception to the rule. I'd always wanted to be the one woman who proved it was possible to have it all. I'd given up because it made it easier.

"I'm emailing them." I backed out of Zachary's reach and turned my back on all three of them.

They had a whispered conversation behind my back. I ignored them and opened my email. It didn't take long to find the email addresses of the man who'd interviewed me, the newspaper editor, and the owner. I added all their email addresses and put my fingers to work on the email. I told them in no uncertain terms, that their article was not only false but inflammatory. I assured them that I would pursue legal action if they did not redact the article and issue a public apology for their speculation and malicious intent to undermine my

advocacy by bringing attention to a false idea and mentioning my private life in any way. I reminded them that I had approved a copy of the article, and that nowhere in my agreement with them did they say that the article could be changed to suit the paper's version of the truth.

I might be talking out of my ass, but I was not about to roll over and let them do this to me. To us. My molars ground together until my jaw ached. I read through the email, fixed a few typos, then sent it with a hard jab of my thumb.

"They're wrong on so many levels." I finally turned around and found my three men getting dressed. "What are you doing?"

Justin was the first to reach me. He wrapped me up in a warm hug, and his chest vibrated under my ear. "We can't stay all night. We didn't think you'd want to have to explain to Abigail."

I sighed but nodded. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean for our night to end like this."

"It's okay." Lennox looped an arm around my waist. "It sucks, but it's okay. We won't let it end like this."

"Do you want us to stay a while longer?" Zachary eased his pants over his hips and zipped them. "We don't have to go now. We just thought you wanted to be alone."

"I don't know what I want," I answered honestly. "I want you. I know that. But this is my life's work." I shook the phone for emphasis. Realizing how that sounded, I winced and pressed my thumb and forefinger into my eyes. "I didn't mean it like that. Can you stay for a little longer?"

"Of course." Justin kissed my forehead. "We're here for you, Lucy. Anything you need. Okay?"

I nodded, my throat too tight to speak. I didn't deserve them. I'd be crazy to let them go because of the article.

Was it too late? Had the article already done too much damage for me to overcome? Another thought rushed in. What if they found out I was sleeping with three men? Not just any

three men either, but three of the best players on my dad's team?

ZACHARY

My phone rang half a mile from the practice rink. I groaned but answered since I knew Coach Liam wouldn't stop until I gave in. "What's up, Liam?" The man was sixty years old and as gruff as the day was long. But he was a fair coach and the man over me in the youth league. I answered to him whether I liked it or not.

"Zachary," Liam growled out my name almost like a curse.

The sound of it tightened my hands on the wheel as I grimaced. "Yeah?" I tried for nonchalant, though I was pretty sure I failed miserably. I should've been on cloud nine after getting to have sex with Lucy last night, but that damned article put a damper on everything. I couldn't get the image of her pacing the floor and chewing her thumbnail out of my mind. It tore me apart, knowing I was part of the problem. If I'd kept my hands off her, none of this would be happening.

Liam cleared his throat. "Look, kid. I like you. You're good with the kids and the parents respect you."

There was a but coming, I heard it in the gruff tone and the way he dodged around the conversation. I sure as fuck wasn't going to bring it up. "Thanks."

"Is there any truth to that article?" Liam sounded halfway between pissed and resigned. "It's none of my business who you have a relationship with as long as it doesn't interfere with your team. But this..." he trailed off with a coarse curse.

I'd never heard the man utter anything stronger than hell in the three years I'd known him, so the drawled out "fucking

shit” threw me. I wheeled into the parking lot and sat there with the engine idling.

“What article?” Maybe if I played dumb, he’d let it ride.

“Hell, man. It’s all over every major news publication. Pictures of you and Coach Ashley’s daughter eyeing each other like you’re trying to mentally tear each other’s clothes off. That article. I know you’ve seen it. Half the world has by now.” Liam cursed again. “Is it true?”

“Lucy and I met up at the gala. I wanted to introduce her to Caroline since I thought they would hit it off. Lucy brought her daughter, and when she got tired, I offered to walk them out so she could rest.” Truth but not the whole truth. It would have to be enough because there was no way in hell I was admitting to anyone that I took Lucy up to my room. It was none of their business. I couldn’t risk putting Lucy in a bad light. She was torn up enough already without me throwing her under the bus.

Liam blew out a breath that seemed to last forever. I waited for him to bring up the rest, but he kept quiet. Maybe no one knew that I’d taken Lucy to my room. The few hotel staff who’d seen us couldn’t give two shits. Unless someone bribed them. Cold sweat broke out across my forehead. I swept it away. “Look, Liam, I’m at practice. Is there anything else?”

“Anything else?” Liam boomed. “Anything else. Hell, boy. You’ve got yourself in one fine pickle. Parents are going to be on this like white on rice. If there’s any hint of a scandal—”

“There isn’t.” I did my best to reassure him, even though it felt like a flat-out lie.

Liam grunted. “Fine. Better not be. Because I won’t hesitate to fire you if I find out otherwise. Or if anything else happens.”

I palmed my forehead again, clearing away another line of sweat, and turned the car off. A rush of cold air swept over me when I opened the door, and I welcomed the cool draft to calm my temper before I lashed out and told Liam where he could

shove his job. I wasn't doing any of this for him. I coached to help the kids. No one else. What Lucy and I did in our spare time was of no concern to Liam or anyone else. The fact that the world suddenly wanted a play-by-play of her life—and mine—infuriated me. “Bye, Liam.” I ended the call with a savage smile and threw the phone into my duffel. Bastards. What right did any of them have to try and dictate who I slept with?

I understood Coach Ashley's stance on protecting his daughter. I could even respect it. But I couldn't help that I'd fallen in love with her. The knowledge pressed into me, stealing my breath and setting my skin on fire. I loved her. Damn it all, I loved her and Abigail, and I wasn't about to let anyone stand in my way.

Grabbing my duffel, I slung it over my shoulder and hurried across the lot. If I changed quick, I might be able to grab a minute with Lucy before practice started. I had to tell her. She needed to know that I'd stand with her through everything the world threw our way. I yanked the glass door open and broke into a jog, racing down the low corridor until I burst into the locker room.

Justin and Lennox sat in front of their lockers, heads together and whispers drifting across the room. We were the only ones in the room, but they stopped talking as soon as I entered.

Lennox's head snapped up. Something that looked like grief passed over his face. He palmed his cheek and reached for his skates. “How's Lucy?”

I lifted one shoulder and let it fall. I'd been the last to leave the night before, with Justin waiting in the car to drive me home. If I'd had my own car, I might have talked Lucy into letting me stay until daylight. She'd needed comforting, but nothing we said or did made her feel better. She'd fallen into our arms and fought like hell not to cry. Even now, the image of her reddened eyes burned hot as fire in my veins.

No one would ever upset her again if I could help it.

“This story is out of control.” Justin fumed. His hands clenched and released, his knuckles popping. “What can we do?”

I opened my mouth to answer him, but the creak of the door slammed my lips shut.

Coach Ashley walked in, his face twisted in a furious scowl. “Zachary, my office. Now.”

“Coach?” I indicated my bag. “Practice is about to start.”

He pointed a slim finger at me. “Now.” Without a word to anyone else, he turned and stormed away.

“Shit.” Justin breathed out the single word with a shake of his head.

Lennox eyed me. “You think he knows?”

“No.” I shook my head. “About me, maybe.” I sucked air through my clenched teeth. “Maybe Lucy told him about the paternity test.” I dove for my bag to see if she’d tried to call me. She’d promised to wait to tell him, but if things went south, she might’ve let it slip. She was close with her dad. I wouldn’t blame her for telling him before we knew for sure. My pulse kicked hard and fast, adrenaline rushing through me with a whoosh that made my ears ring. “I’ll be back.”

They stood and moved like they planned on following me. “Be careful, man.” Lennox clapped a hand to the center of my back. “He’s pissed, so watch what you say.”

No shit. I rolled my lips together and forced my hands to relax as I palmed the metal bar to open the door and stepped out into the hallway. The walls felt even closer than before, the low ceiling pressing down on me until the hairs on the back of my neck prickled with alarm. I hated small spaces like this, but there was nothing I could do about it but keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Coach Ashley’s door stood open, the man himself pacing back and forth. The sight reminded me so much of Lucy that my stomach clenched painfully.

I lifted my hand and rapped my knuckles on the frame. “Sir?” My voice came out with the appropriate amount of respect. It took effort, but I managed not to scowl when he flicked two fingers at me in a motion that drew me forward.

“Shut the door.” He sat on the edge of his desk and crossed his thick arms over his chest.

I did as he ordered and waited. It wouldn’t do me any favors to poke at him, so I kept my mouth shut and my body relaxed.

“There’s a photo of you and my daughter going around.” He spat the words with precision and no shortage of scorn.

I nodded. “Yes, sir. We met up at the gala. I introduced her to a few people who I thought might be interested in helping her advocacy.” That was all true. And it was what I’d told Liam. I couldn’t let my story get tangled up in all the garbage going around. “I met your granddaughter. She’s a wonderful little girl.” And maybe my daughter. I pressed my tongue to the back of my teeth and forced the words back down where they belonged. They’d only infuriate him right now. And I needed him calm. I hoped the mention of Abigail would help.

He scowled hard enough that wrinkles formed on his forehead. “My granddaughter is none of your concern. Neither is my daughter.”

“Sir, I was just trying to help.” Also true. How much did I tell him? “She’s advocating for girls hockey at the rink where I coach. I knew several women at the gala who would love to support her cause.”

“And that’s the only reason you were looking at her like that?” He snapped up a printed copy of the sports paper and smacked the back of his hand over the photo.

Heat crept up the back of my neck, and I barely resisted the urge to clear my throat and rub my neck. Those were the signs of a guilty man. Instead, I angled a look at the photo and shrugged. “She’s a beautiful woman.” I wasn’t sorry for looking at her like that. I wasn’t sorry about any of it except that it was hurting Lucy.

“You’re looking a little too cozy with my daughter.” Fury rolled off Coach Ashley. He leaned toward me, his eyes flashing. Coach’s throat worked up and down several times. He chewed on nothing while looking me over. “I’m going to ask this one, and you’d better tell me the fucking truth.”

I’d never heard him this angry before. I rolled my shoulders back and faced him square with my hands behind my back. I knew what was coming. I’d known there was no way to hide this from him forever. “Sir?”

His nostrils flared and he pushed off from the desk, not stopping until we stood nose to nose. “Are you having sex with Lucy?”

Ah, hell. I could have hedged around just about anything else. But I couldn’t flat-out lie to him. Taking in a fortifying breath, I nodded once. “Yes, sir. I slept with her.” It didn’t matter that I loved her. He was in no mood to hear about my feelings. I’d broken the rules. Still, I had to try. “I’ve fallen in love with her, sir.”

His hand slashed through the air. He stepped back, both hands held up between us. “I figured as much. But you knew the consequences, son.”

“It doesn’t have to be that way.” I didn’t know if Lucy loved me. I couldn’t put those words out there. “There are no rules in the book about this. It was your decision. I tried to honor it. Truly.” I was flailing in icy water, my words having no effect but to drag me deeper until I felt like I was drowning.

Coach shook his head side to side without breaking eye contact. “No. You chose to break the rules. I can’t have that.” A tired frown creased his cheeks. “It’s a good thing I already have someone who wants you.” He motioned at the door with a flick of his fingers. “Pack your bags, kid.”

Ice encased my body in a frigid embrace. “What do you mean?”

“I’m trading you. Pack your bags and tell your friends goodbye. You’ll be in California by morning.” There was no regret, no hesitation in his voice.

I could argue, beg, and plead like my life depended on it. In a way, it did. My life was here. Lucy, Abigail, Justin, and Lennox were the most important people in my life. I couldn't leave them behind. But what choice did I have?

LUCY

I should've gone into work, but the thought of it made me sick. How was I supposed to go in and look at Lennox and the others without breaking down? It had taken all my control to keep my emotions in check long enough to drop Abigail at school.

Now, I paced the house and tried to figure out what happened next. When I agreed to the news interview, I'd worried about them digging up my past and making crude comments about me getting pregnant in college. It never occurred to me that they'd find a way to slander me by dragging Zachary into it. Frustration boiled over and I slammed my fist into my open palm. No one at the newspaper was returning my emails, and now the story was so widespread there would be no shutting it down.

My phone rang, the shrill sound knocking me back a step as my heart raced. I snatched it from the counter and answered. "Zachary?"

"Hey." His voice crackled. "Can I come over?"

I scanned the house automatically. "Sure."

He chuckled. "Good, because I'm at your front door." A series of knocks thumped on the door.

I bolted that way, the phone still gripped tight in my fist. My throat closed up so tight I couldn't speak as I wrenched the door open and met his searching gaze.

He took me in, his eyes softening. “Hey.” He slid his phone into his pocket, kicked the door shut, and reached for me.

It was all too easy to fall into his embrace. The urge to finally break down and cry out all my fears and frustrations rushed up. My chin wobbled and I sniffed to clear the clog in my nose. “What’s wrong?” I’d checked the time not long ago. “You should be at practice.”

He winced and his arms tightened around my waist. “I’m being traded.”

“What?” Shock wedged deep, splitting me in two. Why was everything falling apart? This was all my fault. I should have been stronger. If I’d denied my attraction to Zachary, Lennox, and Justin, none of this would be happening. “He can’t trade you.” I palmed the threat of tears from my eyes and hardened myself against the pity trying to overwhelm me. “I won’t let him do that to you. This is my fault. I’ll quit working for the team so you can keep playing.”

“No, Luce.” He held my shoulders tight and peered into my eyes with no shortage of emotions stirring in the depths. “You’re not giving up your job for me.”

“I’m not letting you get blackballed into a trade either. It’s not fair.” I was ready to go to bat for him. I hadn’t gone up against my father in a long time, but this was one situation where I would not back down. “You deserve to be on this team.”

“I’m on your team.” He kissed the center of my forehead. “I’ll be okay as long as I have you.”

“You’re not leaving.” I shook my head and speared his chest with one finger. My phone dinged, and I let out a groan while flipping it around to check the screen. “Oh.” I took a step back from Zachary, grabbing his wrist in the process. “The results of the paternity test are back.”

His pulse jumped beneath my fingers. “That was fast.”

It was. And I was suddenly terrified of what I’d find in the email. I led the way to the couch and sat, pulling Zachary

down beside me.

“Do you want me to leave so you can look at them alone?” He shifted uncomfortably on the couch cushion and started to rise.

I kept hold of his hand and refused to let him pull away. “Stay. This is as much about you as it is me.” I used my free hand to tap the email and pull up the results.

Zachary peered over my shoulder. Short bursts of air peppered my neck and shoulder where he breathed, and the sensation made me shiver as I read. He leaned in closer and rested his chin on my shoulder. His short, scruffy beard rubbed my neck. “Does that say what I think?”

Joy lit me up and I cupped his cheek while nodding. “Yes.” Tears burned all over again. “You’re her father.”

“Holy shit.” He grabbed the phone and zoomed in on the screen. “I knew it. I knew I had to be her father, but seeing this...” he trailed off, shaking his head. “It makes it all real, you know?”

“I know.” I rubbed my palm back and forth over his cheek. “You’re part of the family. You’re not going anywhere. I wouldn’t have let Dad trade you anyway, but this...” I tapped the phone. “This means that you’re here to stay. If that’s what you want.” I gave him one last chance to back out.

Both of his arms went around my waist and dragged me into his lap. “I’m not going anywhere. I’m not leaving you or Abigail. This is it for me, Luce. This is the life I want. I don’t care what happens to my career. You’re more important.”

The fierce truth in his voice broke my heart. I wanted to tell him that it would be okay. That we’d find a way to make it all work out. But I didn’t know if I could. Dad would still be furious, but even he couldn’t run off Zachary once I hit him with the paternity test results.

“You’re a father.” I chuckled at the way his eyes widened as the full impact settled over him. I wanted to be shocked, but mild surprise was all I could muster. That and a huge surge of relief. I cupped his cheeks in my hands and kissed him.

His warm lips eased over mine, one hand cupping the back of my head. His breath shuddered in a slow exhale as I pulled back. His eyes searched mine and I saw our future spreading out before us. This was where I belonged too. Right here with him, with all of them. But right in this moment, it was the two of us against the world.

Taking his hand, I stood and led him to the bedroom. I needed this time with Zachary, a quiet moment where we reveled in each other and the possibility of happily ever after. He closed the bedroom door behind us, his gaze sweeping over the room. The sheets were still ruffled, and my clothes littered the floor, but I didn't feel ashamed.

I tugged his shirt, working it over his abs to reveal his chiseled chest, and kissed his heart where it thundered. Every time we'd been together, it was an almost frantic rush. I wanted more today. Today, I wanted slow and easy. I kissed the center of his chest and pulled the shirt over his head.

Heavy hands settled on my waist and his thumbs worked beneath my shirt to rub over my skin.

Shivers of desire and anticipation worked through me, drawing me into his arms. I lifted my head and kissed him again, taking my time to enjoy the sensation of our lips melding together. His cock pressed warm and hard against my stomach. I rubbed my pelvis against his, enjoying the soft groan as he sucked my bottom lip into his mouth and nipped at it with his teeth.

He leaned back and peeled my shirt over my head, then lowered his lips to my neck and his hands to my ass, where he jerked me tight to his chest. "You are the best thing that's ever happened to me."

If I wasn't in love with him already, that would have done it. I cradled his head in the curve of my neck and unzipped his pants to free his cock. It was heavy in my hand. I wanted him inside me. A slow ache settled in my pussy and I groaned.

Zachary hooked his arms around my knees and lifted me into the air. I looped my legs around his waist, my hand still wrapped around his cock. I'd worn my trusty leggings again,

and they provided the most delicious friction with every step he took toward the bed. He lowered us both to the bed, then unhooked my legs. “I want to take my time with you.”

I nodded and bit my lip. “Me too. If I can stand it. I want you so bad I can barely breathe. I need you, Zachary. You have changed my entire life, and I don’t want to spend another day without you.”

He slid my leggings down and threw them onto the pile of clothes in the corner. My shirt went next, followed by my bra and panties. He straightened to his full height and stared down at me. Desire flared hot between us. I let him look at me, and the intensity in his gaze made me want him that much more.

“You’re so damned beautiful.” He shucked his pants and underwear after kicking off his boots and socks.

I opened myself up to him as he lowered his body over mine. He rained kisses across my shoulder, then down to my breast, where he took a nipple into his mouth and sucked. His cock pressed between my folds, the head brushing my entrance. I strained my hips toward him. “Please.”

He palmed my slick heat and sucked harder on my nipple while nudging his cock inside. I took everything he gave me, craving every single inch. My legs hooked around his and I used my heels on his ass to draw him deeper.

Groaning, he released my breast and arched his spine, driving hard into me. Tingles pulsed along my pussy and up my back. My nails scraped over his arms and up to his shoulders. I ran my palms over his hardened nipples and rocked my hips in tiny pulses.

“I love you,” the words spilled out of me without regret. I framed his face with my hands and rose to meet him. “I love you so damned much.”

“Fuck, Lucy.” He kissed me hard. “I love you too.” He pushed deeper into me, his eyes fluttering closed before he snapped them open and captured my gaze. His thrusts increased, each one driving me higher.

Passion spiraled through me, my orgasm building and building with each pump of his cock. He drove me wild, speeding up, then slowing down, keeping my orgasm just out of reach until I twisted and moaned with need.

“That’s it, Luce,” he groaned my pet name in that tone I loved and changed the angle of his thrusts so that his cock curved into that special place. Then, without warning, his thumb circled my clit. He pressed it, teasing me with the additional sensation that sent me shuddering over the edge.

I screamed his name until his lips closed over mine. His back tightened beneath my hands, his pace increasing until he hit his orgasm and came so deep inside me it sent a shockwave and a second orgasm through my entire body.

We lay there panting and sweat-slicked for several long minutes. He caught his breath first and raised onto his elbows, relieving me of his weight. I didn’t mind. I actually kind of liked the feeling of him pressing me into the mattress. I rubbed my hands up and down his back, enjoying the play of muscle beneath my fingertips.

“I could stay here forever.” I grinned up at him, still high on sex. “But I have to pick up Abigail from school soon.” And I had to deal with my father. I cocked my head to the side, enjoying the play of light on his cheekbones.

He kissed the tip of my nose, then the side of my neck. “When are you going to tell her that I’m her father?”

LUCY

This was going to be a battle of wills unlike anything I'd ever attempted before. I pulled into my parents' driveway and took a fortifying breath. I had to present a calm front. No theatrics. No shouting or blaming. I had to prove to Dad that this was the real thing. Which meant I also had to tell him everything. Mom too. They were going to find out the truth sooner or later. I'd rather it came straight from me and not another shitty news piece.

Once I'd pulled myself together, I swung out of the car and marched into the house, going straight to Dad's office without stopping. Dad's office was a quiet space filled with old hockey memorabilia from his playing days. Bookshelves stacked full of playbooks and old videos of past games. It could be a museum of hockey history, and he loved it here. I was probably an ass for ruining the calm atmosphere, but I needed it to get through this.

He looked up from behind his desk, his eyes shadowed and a muscle ticking in his jaw. "Lucy."

It was likely the only word I'd get out of him at the moment, so I didn't let myself hesitate. "You can't trade Zachary."

"Really?" He gripped a pen between his hands and sat back with a squeak of his chair. "It's my team. My decision." He glared at me, but I didn't flinch. "It's up to me to decide what's best for my team."

“Zachary is what’s best for your team. You know that, you’re just getting rid of him because of me.” I managed to keep my tone under control and stopped talking before it slipped.

Mom eased into the room and took a seat on the leather chair across from Dad. Her steady presence bolstered me, and I forged ahead. “I’ve been sleeping with Zachary. And Lennox. And Justin.” Dad’s eyes widened, his mouth falling open. “Because I love them.” I leaned forward with my palms on the desk. “I love all of them, and I will continue to sleep with them. I’ll quit my job if I have to, but they stay on the team.”

Shocked outrage turned his face a rusty red, followed by a horrid shade of purple I’d never thought possible until I saw it for myself. “How dare you.”

“It’s her life, Peter.” Mom spoke up from behind me. “We promised to love and support her, no matter what. We will not judge her decisions.” Her voice was firm and resolute. “This is what she wants. How do we support her as parents?”

A long, uncomfortable pause settled over the room. I worried about his possible reaction, but silence was better than shouting. His shoulders rose on a hard inhale, and he palmed the back of his neck while looking everywhere but at me. Shame or something else? I held my ground, refusing to let him intimidate me into backing down from my confession. He couldn’t trade Zachary. I’d hoped for his acceptance—reluctant or otherwise—before I hit him with the real news that would send this whole thing off the ice.

Dad grumbled and rubbed a hand down his face. “I don’t understand any of this.” He gave me a hard look. “How can you be in love with three men?”

I shrugged. “We’re figuring it out. But this is what we all want.” I dug into my pocket and pulled out the paternity test results I’d printed before driving over. “And just so we’re all on the same page. Zachary is Abigail’s father.” I slid the paper to him across the desk. “You’re not taking her father away from her. Not now that we’ve finally found him. Not when

he's an amazing man who already loves her. And me. He's an asset to the team." He'd be an idiot to trade Zachary, but I couldn't say that to his face. "You can't send him away. We want to be a family."

Dad spluttered while Mom gasped and covered her mouth with both hands. "He's really her father?" She'd known we planned on getting the test, but I hadn't called to tell her about the results. Maybe I should have. She stood and rushed toward me, her arms outstretched for a hug. "Oh, honey. I'm so glad."

Dad's pen tapped a rapid beat on the desk. He laced his fingers together behind his head and sat back like a king on his throne. "What's the plan, Lucy? What happens when the media catches wind of this? It's one thing to be seen with Zachary. Another for them to find out he's Abigail's father. But the rest of it." He sighed and closed his eyes. "It's a disaster waiting to happen. What happens when the media finds out you're sleeping with multiple men?"

I'd thought about this since the night that news article came out. It opened my eyes, and even though I freaked out at first and tore myself apart trying to come to a conclusion, there was only one thing to say. I looped an arm around Mom's shoulders and met Dad's gaze head-on. "I guess I'll have to add another advocacy campaign to my list. One where people are not judged based on who they love. It doesn't affect my job."

And it was nobody's damned business who I slept with. As long as the men in my bed knew about each other and were okay with it, then who the fuck cared what I did in my private time? The media had no right to try and shame me, though I knew they'd give it a hell of a try. They'd do anything to ruin my campaigns, just for the media buzz it created.

"Are you really ready for the backlash?" Dad asked.

I tightened my grip on Mom's shoulder and nodded. "Yes. I'm fully aware that they'll chew me up and spit me out. Especially because I have a kids' campaign going. But I know what I'm doing." I released Mom and walked around the desk. "I love you, Dad. And I respect the hell out of you. You stood

by me when a lot of dads would've thrown up their hands and walked away. I know I'm asking for a lot, but I need you on my side."

"I'm always on your side." He stood and hugged me so tight my ribs popped. "I just don't want to see you get hurt."

Relief flooded through me, and I returned his hug, burying my head into his chest and squeezing as I inhaled his ice and old peppermint gum scent. "They can only hurt me if I let them. And I don't plan on letting them." I gave him an extra squeeze. "And you don't have to worry about Lennox, Justin, or Zachary ever hurting me. They're too good for that."

He patted my shoulder and a grin slipped free. "You always did have good instincts." Taking a step back, he settled in his chair. "I suppose you'd better bring them around for dinner some night."

"I will." I flipped my wrist around to check the time. "I'm going to pick Abigail up from school. I promised Zachary we'd tell her together this afternoon."

Dad kept quiet, but I recognized the acceptance in his eyes. He was willing to look past his own prejudices and accept that my life would look different from his. I loved him for that. He was a hard man, but he loved me. He'd always wanted what was best for me, even if sometimes I had a hard time seeing that.

Mom dashed tears away from her eyes and followed me onto the porch. She sent me off with a wave and one last hug.

My stomach swirled with nerves as I picked up Abigail and made the drive over to the park where Zachary was waiting for us. Abigail chattered all the way there, and I thanked my lucky stars she didn't question me on why I was so quiet.

Zachary sat on a park bench with his coat zipped up to his chin and his hands deep in his pockets.

Abigail spotted him before I'd even parked the car. "Mama. Is that Zachary? What's he doing here?"

“Let’s go find out.” Cold air filled my lungs as I inhaled and stepped out of the car. I opened Abigail’s door and took her hand once she freed herself from the car seat.

She skipped alongside me. The white puff ball on her knitted cap bounced with every step, and I caught myself watching her as we approached Zachary. He stayed seated, but his foot bounced rapidly like it was taking effort for him to stay still.

“Hi.” Abigail released my hand and climbed onto the bench beside Zachary. “Do you want to play?”

“Just a minute, Abigail.” I sat beside her and put a hand on her back to keep her from toppling off the bench backward. “Zachary and I have something we want to tell you.”

Abigail spun around and eyed each of us. “What?”

Zachary swallowed hard and tipped his head toward me.

I blew out a breath that clouded white in the air. “Do you remember when you asked me about your daddy?”

Abigail’s eyes widened, her mouth opening in an O. “Yes.” She nodded so hard her hat slipped over her eyes. “My teacher asked about my homework, and I told her I couldn’t do it. She was sad.”

“Well.” I brushed her hat back and took Zachary’s hand. “She doesn’t have to be sad anymore. And neither do you.” I tapped our clasped hands on Zachary’s ribs. “Zachary is your daddy.”

Shock widened her eyes. She blinked and stared, then turned slowly to stare at Zachary. “You?” Her throat convulsed. “You’re my daddy?”

He nodded once. “I’m sorry I haven’t been around. But I’m here now.” He moved like he wanted to hug her but held back. Clearing his throat, he tugged his scarf away from his neck and turned his head, showing her his birthmark.

“You have a kiss like mine.” Abigail lost all her reservations. She lunged for him and threw her arms around

his neck. “Hi, Daddy.” She squeezed so hard her face turned red.

Zachary’s arms crept around his daughter, his eyes reddening around the corners. He shot a look at me so full of hope mixed with fear that I threw myself against his side, trapping Abigail between us. It felt like home, like all the missing pieces were finally coming together. There were just a few still missing. Two men by the names of Lennox and Justin. We’d sort that out soon enough, but I knew what I wanted now, and I wasn’t backing down. I smoothed a hand down Abigail’s back and released Zachary.

“Will you play?” Abigail plastered her hands on Zachary’s cheeks, her pink gloves contrasting with his pale skin and dark stubble. “I like the slide best. What about you?”

He cleared his throat. “Slides are fun.”

“Come on.” Abigail scrambled off the bench without releasing her daddy. She pulled on his hand while straining toward the slide. “Let’s go play. I’ll show you all my favorites.”

I couldn’t help the laugh bubbling up in the back of my throat. Now that she’d gotten hold of her daddy, she’d never let him go. And from the look on his face, he had no problems being wrapped around her little finger. “Don’t let her convince you that she can walk across the top of the monkey bars,” I warned as they dashed away.

Abigail huffed like I’d ruined her whole day, but the frown quickly slipped back into a smile. “I can’t make it all the way across yet, so Mama holds me up.” She skipped toward the slide, her head tilted up to look at Zachary. “Can you hold me this time?”

I stayed close but didn’t interfere. They both needed this bonding time. They deserved it after five years apart. Zachary was going to be a great father. He talked with Abigail, never once growing tired of her chatter. He helped her climb the steps to the slide and waited for her at the end, catching her up in his arms and swinging her around. It was the single most

beautiful sight in the world. Our daughter was happy. Truly, incredibly happy.

We still had a lot to work out, but things were looking up.

Zachary held Abigail as she worked her hands along the monkey bars. She reached the end and wrapped her arms around Zachary's neck in another tight hug. "I love you."

His hand flexed on her back where he held her secure. "Love you too, bug."

One hour together and he'd already given her a nickname. I grinned at the two of them and snapped a few pictures to add to the fireplace mantel.

"Are you gonna get married?" Abigail swiped her gloved hand over her face, shoving her hair back at the same time. "Then you can live with us all the time."

Lord, this child. We hadn't even had a chance to discuss the future and what it meant to be a family, and she was already trying to get us married.

JUSTIN

I squeezed into the booth after grabbing a beer from the bar. Music wound out low and slow from the jukebox, the country song attempting to tug the heartstrings of nearby patrons. I scoffed and rolled my eyes at the cheesy lyrics and sipped my beer.

Lennox joined me a minute later, his own beer tight in his fist. He swigged deep and tossed his sunglasses onto the table. “Heard from Zachary?”

“He’s on his way.” I took another sip. Part of me wanted to chug the whole thing and grab another. The other half—the logical half—told me to shut the fuck up and pay attention because we all knew shit was hitting the fan. Now wasn’t the time to get wasted. God what a mess. I spun the beer around in my hand and tried to think of a way for us to all get what we wanted. “You think Coach kicked him off the team?”

We hadn’t’d seen or heard from Zachary since Coach called him into his office this morning. Practice had been a brutal affair, with Coach running us all ragged. He didn’t seem to take any particular dislike to me or Lennox. I couldn’t figure out what the fuck had happened to have Coach riding Zachary’s ass. So the papers had a picture of him and Lucy. Big deal.

Lennox kicked me under the table, drawing my head up with a jerk. “What?”

“Zachary’s here.” He grimaced and leaned back in the booth and stretching his arm out over the back. “Something’s

up.”

I shot a look over my shoulder. Zachary approached the bar and took a beer from the bartender before turning and looking our way. I couldn't tell shit about him from his face. He was as closed off as a brick wall.

The music changed to another canned country song.

Zachary motioned for the bartender to send another round over to our table and made his way toward us. The bar was busy in the sense that a few dozen people littered the tables and stools. Several were very drunk, while a few others sat around talking and laughing. No one paid us any attention. We were just three guys hanging out after work.

Except that we'd agreed to meet up and have a little chat about Lucy. I felt like shit for having this talk behind her back, but I couldn't look at her and say what I knew needed to be said.

Zachary slid into the seat beside me and took a long pull from his beer. “I'm Abigail's father.” He said it with a disbelieving laugh and scrubbed a hand down his face. A smile finally cracked through his stoic demeanor. “I'm a father.”

“Congratulations, man.” Lennox thumped Zachary's shoulder with a fist before returning his hand to the back of the booth. He slouched in the corner, his lips turned down in a frown. “Not to be an ass, but what do we do now?”

“Well.” Zachary scooted down in his seat and stretched out his legs. “Coach wants to trade me. That's why he called me into his office.”

“He can't do that.” I sat up so fast my head spun. My beer clanked against the window with a sharp rap, and I pulled it back to my lips for a long drink.

Lennox shot me a look but fire flared in his eyes. “You're not going anywhere.”

“That's what Lucy said. Now that we know I'm Abigail's father, I'm not leaving. I'll quit if I have to. She mentioned talking to her father, but she didn't get into specifics because

Abigail was with us.” Zachary sighed and took a sip of his beer.

“Shit.” I wasn’t drunk enough for this conversation after all. Maybe I did need another. Or three. “If he threatened to send you off because of a picture, what will he do when he finds out about us?”

“I told him I slept with Lucy. That’s when he brought up the trade. I don’t think he knows about you two.”

I’m sure he meant for that to sound helpful, but it lit a burning in my gut that I didn’t know how to tamp down. My jaw ached from clenching my teeth so hard. I finished my beer and grabbed the next one off the tray when a woman brought more over.

Lennox nodded his thanks and waited for her to walk away before he spoke up. “What do you need us to do? Do you want us to walk away? Give you a chance to live a normal life with Lucy?”

“What the hell?” Zachary asked. I’d known this was coming. It was the reason I wanted to get shit-faced drunk. Instead, I pushed the second beer away.

My foot bounced up and down so fast my muscles burned. An ache started in my knuckles, and I realized I had my fingers knotted together so tight my nails were white. “Lennox is right.” Admitting that made bile rise in the back of my throat. “This is your chance to have a normal life. You can settle in with Lucy and Abigail and not make waves.”

Unlike what would happen if the three of us ever stepped out together.

“What’s wrong with you two?” Zachary asked with a scowl.

Lennox met my eyes, and in them, I saw the same emotions tearing me up from the inside. I sighed. “We love her too. But we’re willing to walk away if that’s what is best for Lucy. This…” I motioned between us but couldn’t keep going.

Lennox didn’t have any trouble picking up where I left off. “The media will tear her apart. All of us. This is not something

that will stay hidden forever. At some point, we'll be found out. Then what?" Pain twisted his mouth.

I palmed my aching heart. "We want her to achieve her dreams. How can she do that if she's constantly fighting the media because of a polyamorous relationship?" Saying it out loud hurt more than I anticipated. I loved Lucy so much I thought I'd stop breathing if I couldn't be with her. I had to be stronger than that.

"She'll never agree to that." Zachary's gaze darted between us. "She should have the chance to voice her opinion too."

"Sorry, man. I disagree." Lennox's face hardened. "I don't mind listening to what Lucy wants, but we all know this won't end well. We don't even know if our teammates would be supportive. They might want us all off the team. How is a relationship going to work if we have to fight every person we know for it?"

Silence descended as we all considered the consequences. We'd all fallen in love with Lucy, but Zachary was the only one who truly held a claim to a future with her. She deserved the best. I'd just drag her down. My 'love 'em and leave 'em' mentality had ruined me for a real relationship. Even now, when I'd found the one woman I wanted to spend the rest of my life with, I had to walk away and act like I didn't care. I couldn't let Lucy see how leaving her would ruin me.

She was too open and tenderhearted. She'd keep me around because she felt sorry for me. I could never let her do that.

A woman in a skin-tight red dress ambled over to our table. She puckered her lips and poked out a skinny hip, her red nails sliding over her stomach in a move that she probably meant to be sexy but came off as trying too hard. "Hey, boys. Anyone care to dance?"

"No." We all answered in unison. At least we were on the same page about one thing.

She leaned over the table, planting her elbows on the sticky surface and shoving her boobs out the top of her dress. “Come on, now. Don’t be shy. Anyone here drinking this time of day is always looking for a little action.” She wiggled her ass and winked.

“Sorry, we’re taken.” Iron crept into Zachary’s voice and he motioned at a nearby bouncer.

The beefy man with tattoos running up both arms jerked his head and ambled over. “Come on, Sable. Leave the nice men to their drinks.” He slipped a quarter into her palm. “Why don’t you start a new song on the jukebox?”

We all breathed a quiet sigh of relief when Sable pouted but moved away. She spotted another man on her way to the dimly lit corner where the jukebox sat and beelined her way to his table.

I snorted and finished the second beer. “We’re not going to find our answers here. Not like this. We all know what we want. We want Lucy.”

“But what if what we want isn’t what’s best for Lucy?” Lennox fired back. He crossed his arms and glowered. “I don’t want to give her up, but I will if that’s what needs to be done.”

“That’s very noble of you.” I pointed toward Sable. “And if you really believed you could move on from Lucy, you wouldn’t have been so disgusted with our friend there.”

He’d tried to hide his disgust, but I saw it. I saw it and I recognized it because it was the same feeling brewing in me. I was ruined for any other woman. No one else would ever fit me like Lucy. I’d never been with anyone like her before. She smoothed all my jagged edges and made me forget why I’d sworn never to fall in love. She didn’t make me feel like I had to compete for her affection. And she sure as shit wasn’t sleeping with me because I was a famous hockey player.

If anything, that was part of our problem. We were not globally famous, but we were stopped often enough in the streets when someone recognized us from the hockey games. I

got a shit-ton of fan mail and no shortage of sexy pics from women wanting to be my next flavor of the week.

I hated that persona I'd wrapped myself up in. All I wanted was for someone to see me. To see the real me and love me. Lucy did.

The thought of giving that up... it terrified me.

"Talk to Lucy." Zachary drummed his fingers on the table. He stared at each of us. "Talk to Lucy and find out what she wants. No one has to get hurt here."

I was quick to offer an agreement. Too quick, based on the look Lennox gave me. "I love her," I said with a shrug in response to his unspoken recrimination. "You know how fucking hard that is for me to admit?"

Of course he did. They both did. They'd been with me through all the shit and knew my past almost better than I did.

"Nothing has to be decided right now," Zachary said.

His quiet tone almost grated on my nerves, but I was grateful that he was on my side. I nodded. "Take things slow? We'll talk to Lucy and go forward from there."

I hoped to hell she didn't give up on the idea of us. But I'd understand if she did. It was no worse than what I deserved after playing the playboy all these years. Of course, the one woman I'd fall in love with was the one I shouldn't have. Lucy would decide our future. I'd stand by whatever decision she made. Even if it tore out my heart with a dull knife.

Zachary's phone rang and he slid it from his pocket with a blush darkening his cheeks. "That's Lucy." He answered while Lennox and I both tried not to lean in and listen for no other reason than to hear the sound of her voice.

"Hey, Zack. Can you get hold of Lennox and Justin? We need to talk."

I couldn't tell a damned thing from the tone of her voice. But everyone knew that *we need to talk* was code for a cruel goodbye. I braced for the inevitable.

LENNOX

I haven't been this nervous since the first time I asked a girl to a dance, and that was back in like fifth grade. I meant what I said at the bar. Justin and I should walk away and let Zachary and Lucy have a life—a normal life—together. They deserve that. Lucy can do better than me.

Hell, I'd option that she was better off with Justin than me, playboy lifestyle and all. Because Justin was all in for this relationship.

Who was I trying to kid? I loved her so much it kept me up at night. I'd never felt this way about anyone, and it scared the ever-loving shit out of me. I wasn't good enough for her. I worried myself sick that I'd hurt her somehow. "Being with all of us is a mistake." I glared at myself in the rearview mirror as I drove. "She'll see that and end things with you. Brace yourself."

The reverse pep talk had zero effect on my stampeding pulse. My hands slicked with sweat, and I gripped the wheel tighter as I turned down the lane leading to Lucy's house. The sight of it caused a catch in my throat. I loved her simple little house, with its spacious rooms. I'd grown up worried I'd freeze to death in the winter and always felt jealous of people who didn't have to worry about how they'd stay alive when the world turned to ice.

I sat in the car with the engine idling, afraid to turn off the engine and go inside. I could only guess why Lucy wanted to talk to us. She was going to end things. I had to be ready for

that and accept it without arguing. It's why I'd said what I did to Justin.

The bastard didn't want to let her go. Neither did I, but I would if that was what she wanted. Enough. I killed the engine and climbed out. Justin and Zachary pulled into the drive behind me and we made the slow walk up the sidewalk and under the small porch roof.

Lucy opened the door before I could lift my hand to knock. My pulse skipped into overdrive. God I loved her. From her socked feet to her messy bun. I loved every inch of this woman, her giving heart and brilliant mind most of all. How was I supposed to give her up?

"Come in." She stepped back and waved her hand.

I watched, waiting for the darting look where she scanned her neighbors' houses to see if anyone was watching. She never looked away from me, except to find Justin and Zachary and then move back to me. This woman was everything I'd ever dreamed of in a relationship. And I was a sentimental fool for thinking I could keep her. All my words at the bar were a smokescreen, a way to try and convince myself that I could walk away.

I made my way over to the couch, my feet dragging over the soft carpet, and sank down with a resigned sigh. Justin kissed Lucy's cheek, and I scowled at him behind her back.

He lifted one shoulder in a half-hearted shrug and flopped into the nearest chair. "What's up?"

Lucy hugged her arms over her ribs and swayed side to side. Her gaze darted over each of us, lingering on me as she spoke. "I want to be with all of you."

My ears rang, and I shook my head to clear the noise. "Sorry? What did you say?"

Lucy dropped her arms to her sides and slid her fingers into her jeans pockets. "I don't want to give this up."

"But... what about your dad?" I couldn't let myself believe she meant it. It would only hurt worse later when the truth

came out. “He was pretty clear what would happen. He threatened to trade Zachary.”

A smile curved her lips. “I know. And now he’s decided that Zachary will stay.” She took a step closer to me, like she knew I was the one who needed convincing.

I didn’t. Not really. I needed to know she wouldn’t change her mind and boot me out the door when things were hard.

“I told him about you. All of you.” Her words were quiet but firm. “He knows everything. He was shocked at first, but he’s willing to relax his rules and let us be happy. No one has to leave the team. I don’t have to quit my job. We can be together.”

Really? I ran my palms down my thighs to try and soothe away the tension. It didn’t work, and Justin sent me a look that I couldn’t interpret to mean anything other than *told you*. I wanted to punch the fucker for no good reason. My typically calm attitude vanished quicker than a breath on the ice.

“What about your advocacy?” I pushed the issue. I had to. I needed answers.

She took another step, bringing her lilac scent close. “That’s where it gets tricky.” Her shoulders lifted and lowered on a deep breath that rattled around the room. “I think we should hold a press conference. That article about me and Zachary started a fire that we need to put out. The more we try to hide our relationship, the worse it will look when it’s discovered. And they will figure it out.”

She had a point. The media loved nothing more than a juicy story. They’d make one up if they could, as that reporter had already proved. Even though he was right, that story never should have run. But that’s what drew people in. Gossip and rumors.

“Press conference?” Zachary palmed his cheek. “It’s not a bad idea. We can get ahead of the storm. Put it all out in the open now. Show the world without any hesitation. Make it clear we’re not trying to hide.”

“I’m not going to slink around and pretend like I’m not having a relationship with all of you.” She shrugged. “Not anymore. I love you all too much to hurt you like that. I understand if it’s too much. That’s why I wanted to bring you all here and talk to you before we move forward. There won’t be any hard feelings on my part if you decide this is not what you want.”

She’d just admitted she loved us and gave us a way out all at the same time. She’d taken the words right out of my mouth.

“And this will not interfere with your advocacy?” I asked again.

She met my eyes and shook her head. “I’ve already spoken to the head of the advocacy center. She’s behind me one hundred percent. What happens in my personal life should not interfere with my goals. She reassured me that she’ll do everything in her power to make that clear and nothing about my campaigns will change.”

I could be angry that she’d gone behind our backs and revealed our relationship to her father and the woman at the center. I could, but I didn’t have the energy for anger. I was too stunned. I’d been telling myself this was over all day. To hear that it wasn’t, that Lucy still wanted to be with us, it took me a minute to shift my mental gears.

“Are you sure this is what you want?” I stood and crossed to Lucy. I didn’t touch her, knowing I couldn’t trust myself if I had her in my arms. “If we do this, there’s no going back. Our decision will follow us all the rest of our lives.”

“Lennox,” Justin warned.

I shook my head at him. “No. We all need to take a minute and think this through.” I knew my answer. Lucy was what I wanted. That was the problem. I wanted her so much I was willing to overlook the ramifications of her decision. I held her gaze. “You understand what this means? The media frenzy may never die down. Every time we win, there’s a chance they’ll run the story again. Are you prepared for that? What

about Abigail? What will you tell her when her friends say mean things because they've heard their parents talking?"

"Why are you doing this?" She gripped my shirt in both fists and pulled me close enough to see the sparks of anger igniting in her eyes. Realization dawned. "You're trying to push me away. Why? What are you afraid of?"

The question startled me into admitting the truth. "I'm afraid I'll have to give you up. If that's going to happen, I need it to be now and not later." Losing her later would be so much worse.

"I want you, Lennox. And Justin and Zachary. Nothing can change my mind about that. It's true that I'm asking for a lot. I'm asking the world to accept something different. That's never without issues. But this is who I am. I fight for what I want, and I don't quit." Her palms smoothed over my shirt, then around my neck and into my hair. "There's no going back for me. I'm not letting you go unless it's what *you* want."

And we'd come full circle. I'd tried to tell myself to walk away. That it was best for Lucy. But one look at Justin told me he wasn't going anywhere. We'd all agreed to do what Lucy wanted. I'd been prepared to walk away. I hadn't dared let myself dream that she'd ask us all to stay.

"Sounds like she's made up her mind." Justin stood and stretched. A cocky grin crawled across his face. "I'm not about to try and change her mind. This is what I want."

"There's something else we need to do." Zachary stood too. "We need to talk to the team."

"Good point." I huffed a sigh. "They deserve to hear this from us. I can't believe your dad is okay with this." I imagined her telling her dad she'd had sex with three different men and shook my head. How much did he know, exactly?

Lucy's cheeks pinked. "Well, it came as a bit of a shock. But he came around. Dad wants what is best for me, but he also wants me to be happy."

And he wasn't sure that a polyamorous relationship was what was best for Lucy. I understood the sentiment. I'd had the

same thought multiple times. Well, there wasn't much I could do about it now, unless I was willing to leave her. That sure as shit wasn't happening now that I knew she was willing to take up the fight.

The least I—or any of us—could do was stand alongside her. Fight alongside her. We couldn't ignore the upcoming battle or pretend it didn't exist.

Lucy made a valid point. The best way to do this was to be honest from the beginning. What would our team think? I voiced the question. “What if our teammates want us gone?”

Zachary scrubbed both hands over his short hair and sighed. “I suppose that's up to Coach.”

“They won't ask you to leave.” Lucy sounded certain, but I couldn't help the doubt creeping in. “It's no different than my advocacy. What we do in our time is not relevant. I know you want them to approve, but you can still play even if they don't.”

“Unless your dad says it's causing too much controversy.” I had to get everything out in the open. We all needed to take a cold, hard look at the truth coming our way. We were about to challenge society in a way I wasn't sure they were prepared for.

“We'll talk to Dad and get his thoughts, then talk to the team.” Lucy feathered her fingers through my hair. She hadn't let me go this whole time, and I loved her for keeping me grounded even as I showed her all the ugliness. Her head tipped to the side and she gave me a tiny smile. “So, what do you say? Are you willing to stand up in front of the world and tell them what we've been doing?”

LUCY

Were we really doing this? I sucked in a sharp breath and let it out in a rush. Yes. Yes, we were. A united front. We were going to tell the world we loved each other, and they could all go fuck themselves. In a nicer way, of course. Nerves jangled in my gut and I pushed them down before my hands started trembling. The press conference was scheduled in an hour. The reporters would meet us at the rink.

In the meantime, we had to tell the rest of the team.

Lennox was right. The team deserved to hear about this first, and directly from us.

“It’s up to them,” Dad said from behind me. His hand settled on my shoulder, and he looked Lennox, Justin, and Zachary in the eye. “Tell them the truth and let them decide. If they want you off the team, we’ll talk about a contingency plan.” A tiny smile teased one side of his mouth upward. “Trust your team.”

Lennox nodded and the tightness in his shoulders eased. “Coach is right. We know these guys. All we have to do is go in there and be honest.”

Honesty was the best policy, but it was also the hardest. Some people lied as easily as they brushed their teeth. We couldn’t do that here. We’d tell the truth and see if it tore the team apart.

“I made a good team.” Dad slapped each man on the shoulder. “I talked big about what would happen if any one of you made a move on Lucy. I said it would destroy the team.

That wasn't my real fear. My fear was that she'd get hurt again." He eyed Zachary a little harder than the other two. "Even though last time wasn't your fault."

Zachary's lips flattened into a thin line. "I'll never regret that night, but I do regret not finding Lucy sooner."

Everything could have been different.

"Let's do this." Justin rolled to his toes and back to his heels while rubbing his hands together.

I'd known he would be the one most excited about this. Justin almost seemed to live for the thrill of it all. I didn't mind right now. He could take the lead with the team.

Dad nodded. "Everyone is in the locker room. I told them I had an announcement and that Lucy would be coming, so they should be dressed. Want me to check?"

"Yes." I barked out a short laugh. I did not need to talk to a bunch of half-naked men about my love life with their friends and teammates.

Chuckling, Dad opened the door and stepped inside. He waved us in behind him.

"Ready?" Lennox took my hand and laced our fingers together.

I squeezed tight and nodded. "Let's do this."

We walked into the room as a united front.

Every head turned our way and fear snaked down my spine as they all took us in. I didn't know if they'd figure it out right away or not, but Justin jumped into the fray without hesitation.

"Alright, guys. Here's the deal." He moved to my left and draped his arm around my shoulders.

Zachary stood behind me, his tall stature offering him a view over my head and a place for me to lean if I needed the extra support. Damn it. If I was this shaken up now, how was I going to handle the press conference? I fortified myself with a sharp breath and focused. I would do this. I had to. We all deserved to have the love we wanted.

Justin's hand moved up and down on my arm, and I hooked my arm around his waist. "We ignored Coach's orders to stay away from Lucy. We're all three in love with her, and she's okay with that." He spoke with a deep passion filling his voice and didn't hesitate for a minute. "We have what's called a polyamorous relationship. Coach has decided that he can live with it. What about you?"

Shocked expressions met Justin's question. A few of the men grinned and elbowed each other, which was a better sign than outright disgust or anger.

"Why'd you bother telling us?" A man off to the left asked.

"Because we're holding a press conference later today. Thanks to my work in advocacy for women's sport, there's a lot of drama going on in the papers about me." I lifted my voice and kept it collected but firm. "We're going to go public with our relationship, but it only seemed fair to tell all of you first."

"Why, though? What does it matter if we know?" Another man asked.

Lennox spoke from beside me. "We respect our team. We understand that we broke Coach's rules, and some of you might take an issue with that or the fact that we're living a different kind of lifestyle. The last thing we want to do is tear the team apart."

"We want to know if you're okay playing hockey with us on your team even though we're all sleeping with the same chick." Justin laid it out there like a Christmas present already unwrapped. "That's the truth of it."

A ripple of confusion swept through the room. The guys looked at each other amid a few murmurs, but then the atmosphere in the room shifted. One by one, they all shrugged. "As long as you keep skating and playing like badasses, we don't give a fuck." A brawny man in the back folded his thick arms. "That's what we're all here for. Skating and winning. You help us do that."

It was a simple enough statement, but I felt the words sink in among the four of us. Lennox let out a quiet chuckle first, followed by Justin and then Zachary.

Lennox fist-bumped the guy in the back. “I knew there was a reason we liked this team. Keep it real, man.”

“Always. Do what makes you happy.” He shrugged. “Are you going to make it to practice?”

“You bet.” Lennox’s thumb eased over my knuckles, the tightness of his grip relaxing to a natural hold.

I hadn’t realized I’d lost feeling in my fingers until it came rushing back with pins and needles. My own laughter bubbled up. That was almost too easy. It gave me hope for the press conference, even though I knew that it would be a thousand times harder.

“Where to now?” Zachary asked as we filed out of the locker room and into the hallway.

“Might as well go straight to the conference room. I’d rather be in the hall waiting to go in when the reporters arrive.” I tugged them toward the rink. “Dad had them set up the press box for the recording. We’ll be doing it live. That way there’s no going back and changing what any of us say. The team’s lawyers, and my own personal lawyer, are all there. They’ll monitor the situation and ensure things stay on the up and up.”

“Good. They need to keep an eye on the stations as they release their own versions of the recording. Are you allowing them to ask questions?” Lennox asked.

I shook my head. “No. We have it all scripted what’s allowed and what isn’t. I’ve invited several reporters and sports journalists. I know a few of them, but others only by reputation. I had to allow a few from the seedier magazines, which is why we’re not allowing questions. We go in, we say what we have to say, then we’re done. Anything else has to go through our lawyers.”

The fear returned in full force. I dreaded this part the most. It wasn’t that I was ashamed. I’d gotten burned by some of

these reporters once already. I was ready to set the record straight, but I did worry about the full ramifications of our decision.

Lennox had been right to challenge me. He made me take a serious look at our relationship and the long-term effects. Honestly, from what I saw, the good outweighed the bad. Yes, Abigail would have questions. I'd answer those when I thought she was ready and could understand. While Zachary was her biological father, I saw no harm in her growing up with three father figures in her life. Knowing she was cared for and loved was the most important thing to me.

We climbed the steps winding around the rink, coming out on the uppermost level. The rink spread out below us on my right, the white ice gleaming and perfect. It would be torn up after practice, showing every skatemark and gouge from their sticks. I loved seeing it afterward, seeing the whole practice laid out like a puzzle in need of solving. I'd get to sit on the sidelines today and watch them practice without fear. It was liberating. Exhilaration pushed down my fear, and I managed a genuine smile.

"Do we need to go over our statements?" I stopped outside the press box and turned to face them. The clear plexiglass showed no one had entered the press box yet. I heard voices from the other side, in the stairwell. The lawyers must have the reporters rounded up and waiting until time to start. "We'll let the reporters go in first, then we'll walk in. Public affection is fine as long as it's PG. We're not going in there to give them any kind of ammunition."

"I know what I'm saying." Lennox squeezed my hand one last time, then let go and bent to peck my lips in a quick kiss. "I love you. That's all anyone needs to know."

My cheeks heated with the look in his eyes. That look promised he'd have a lot to say later. When we were alone. I hugged him tight, then gave Zachary and Justin a quick kiss as well. "Let's go boys."

The door opposite us opened and several reporters piled in. They eyed the space, then spotted the four of us standing

outside. Cameras raised until the lawyers barked out orders that all phones and cameras were to be placed in bags and put away. They would each be given a copy of the live recording once it was processed and ready. They reiterated the point that the footage was not to be tampered with in any way, and anyone who went against those rules would be fined and face potential jail time.

I watched in amusement and awe as the reporters slunk to their seats with a few grumbles. They were too curious to leave, even though they knew now they were not getting the story they thought.

“Show time.” Lennox grabbed the door handle and pulled it open. “After you.”

I dipped my head in a nod of thanks and strode to the table set up at the front of the box. Lennox, Justin, and Zachary walked in behind me. I took the seat in the middle, and they joined me without any jostling or jockeying for the position closest to me.

“Thank you all for coming.” I set my hands in my lap and lifted my chin. “You’ve all been invited here today for an exclusive reveal. It’s been spread around that Zachary and I are in a relationship.”

A few whispered murmurs swept through the crowd. “Do you deny it?” A female voice spoke up.

I looked left at Justin, then right at Zachary. Both gave me encouraging smiles. “I’m here today to put those rumors to rest. Yes. I am in a relationship with Zachary. Also with Lennox and Justin.”

The room exploded with a burst of questions and general uproar. I let it all wash over me and kept my mouth shut. The team lawyers stepped forward. “There will be no questions. You are here to witness the press statement and nothing else. If you cannot control yourselves, you may leave.”

That shut them up quick. I gave him a nod of thanks.

Lennox and the others remained calm on either side of me.

The entire room turned to stare when Justin slid his arm across the back of my chair. “There’s no reason for confusion or annoyance. This is a relationship that we all entered willingly. I love Lucy. We all do. Polyamory might be a taboo subject for most of society, but we are not going to let what society calls *normal* dictate who we love.”

Amen and amen. I couldn’t have said it better myself. “For those who are wondering, I will continue my work in women’s and children’s rights in sports. Who we love is an important part of our lives. Women deserve the right to love whomever they please, just as they deserve the right to skate onto the ice beside their male hockey counterparts. This dividing line that pits men against women is ridiculous and archaic. We are better than this.” I stood. “Do better.”

Without another word, we turned and walked away. My heart thumped a rapid beat that had nothing to do with fear.

Fear had no hold over me anymore. We’d just told the world to go to hell. And I’d never been more proud of myself, or my men.

“That went well. All things considered.” Zachary laughed and pulled me into a side hug as we made our way down the stairs. “You were amazing.”

“What do you think they’ll say?” Justin wiggled his eyebrows at all of us, turning to walk backward down the steps.

What would they say about our revelation? Only time would tell.

LUCY

My phone never rang this much. I ended the call with David from *The Hockey Express* and ran a hand through my hair as I groaned. I'd known that our coming out would make waves, but I hadn't anticipated just how many ripples we'd make. I'd been fielding calls for three days. Most to my home number since it was public, but a few managed to dig up my cell number and called so often I'd turned my phone off for hours at a time to get a break.

I scrolled through the latest social media posts, reading a few hateful comments in passing. "No surprise there."

Zachary looked up from the couch where he'd settled in to watch an old hockey game. "Good or bad?"

I lifted one shoulder. "Both. Mostly good. We knew there would be haters." I tossed my phone on the counter and dropped onto the couch beside him. "Dad will be here soon with Abigail."

He snatched a look out the window behind us and grinned. "Maybe I can pick her up from school some days."

"She'd love that." Abigail could not get enough of having her father around. She often hugged him like she was afraid he'd disappear on her. It was heartbreaking in one way but sweet too. She loved him already, and the feeling was mutual.

My phone rang. I let out a groan but swiped it from the side table and checked the screen. "Hey, Emily."

“Lucy.” Emily’s voice held more excitement than I’d heard from her in a long time. “We’re getting national coverage.” She laughed lightly into my ear. “Your little statement got women all over the country fired up. They’re behind you, girl. One hundred percent. We all are.”

Gratitude bloomed hot in my chest. I leaned my head on Zachary’s shoulder and blinked back tears. Emily might have had some doubts at one point, but they were all gone now. “I’m glad it’s been helpful.” The last thing I’d wanted was for my falling in love to hurt them in any way.

“That press conference was genius.” Emily continued. “We should have thought of doing something like that sooner. I hate that you’re facing backlash from a few parties, but this is gold. Your speech brought more attention to women’s rights in a matter of days than we’ve seen in years.”

“I’m glad.” I really was. I’d never dreamed it would have this big of an impact. Who knew so many people cared about equal rights in sports? We wouldn’t solve the problem overnight, but if we all worked together, we could make an impact that would last for years. Falling in love with three men hadn’t been in my plans, but I wouldn’t take it back for anything.

Zachary kissed the top of my head. An engine growled outside and we both turned. “Abigail’s home. Can I call you tomorrow? We’ll toss around some ideas for where to go next.”

“Sure. Sure.” Emily laughed again. “Tell Abigail I said hello.”

“I will. Thanks.” I hung up and stood, pulling Zachary to his feet beside me.

Dad stepped out of the car and opened Abigail’s door. She hopped out, her backpack bouncing against her hip and her smile bright as sunshine. After hugging her Gramps around his knees, she raced for the house.

Zachary opened the door and was on a knee when Abigail threw her arms around him. “You’re still here.” She squeezed

extra tight and kissed his cheek before letting go and grabbing me around the legs. Blue eyes stared up at me. “Gramps said it’s going to snow soon. I want you and Daddy to make snow angels with me. We can have a whole family of them in the yard.”

Dad paused at the doorway. “Might even get enough for a few snowmen. Heard it’s going to be a nasty storm. Make sure you’re stocked up on everything you need for a few days.”

“No problem.” I lifted Abigail into my arms and hugged her. “Any homework today?”

“Nope.” She returned my hug then wiggled free. As soon as her feet hit the ground, she took off like a shot, bolting for her room and calling out to Zachary the whole time.

Dad shook his head. “She’s been talking about you two getting married nonstop. Any chance of that happening?”

“We’re talking about it.” I didn’t go into any further details. “Thanks for bringing her home.”

“No problem. She had a great time at the house. Asked me three times if she could have a puppy for Christmas.” He gave me a mischievous grin. “I told her to ask her daddy.”

I rolled my eyes. “She’s something else. We’ll talk about the dog, but no promises.”

“Alright.” He hugged me, then waved at Zachary as he walked back into the living room with Abigail attached to his leg. She giggled when he lifted his foot and wiggled, bouncing her around. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Bye, Dad.” I gave him another squeeze before stepping back and watching him until he slid behind the wheel. The wind whipped around me, stirring up the embers in the fireplace. Heavy gray clouds piled high overhead, and I swore I could smell the snow in the air.

Zachary tickled Abigail. “Do we have everything we need like your dad said?”

I didn’t bother hiding my smile. “Not yet.” I wiggled my phone side to side. “Lennox and Justin are not here yet.”

Abigail was too busy laughing and squealing to hear me whisper in Zachary's ear. His head snapped up and his eyes darkened. "They're coming tonight?"

I dipped my head toward Abigail. "I thought I'd invite them over once she's asleep." If I was going to be stuck at home for days on end, I wanted all of them here with me. We were a family, albeit unconventional.

Zachary was amazing and keeping up with Abigail. He took her outside and helped her run her energy out so that by the time we finished supper and she'd had her bath, she could barely keep her eyes open. I sent a text to Justin and Lennox, and they both responded they'd head over. We wanted to take things slow so that Abigail could adjust to our new lifestyle, but I still wanted to have them with me whenever possible.

I read Abigail a bedtime story and tucked her in, staying in the rocking chair beside her bed until her breaths evened out and I knew she was truly asleep. Zachary watched from the bedroom door, a look of adoration on his face. "I can't believe this is my life now."

Standing, I patted him on the chest. "Believe it." I winked. "Now, if you don't mind letting them in when they get here and locking up, I'll meet you all in the bedroom. I have a little surprise for you tonight."

"You're killing me, Luce," he groaned and pulled me in for a kiss.

His lips captured mine in a fiery kiss that melted me against his chest. I almost lost myself in his embrace but pulled away before things turned too heated. "Hold that thought." I walked away, my hips swaying. I had plans for tonight. Plans that included a shower, a shave, and a sexy pink lingerie set I'd found a few days ago.

A knock sounded on the bedroom door as I pulled the last strap into place and hopped into the bed. "Come in."

The door burst open and all three of them fell into my room.

Justin didn't slow but marched over to the bed to stand above me. "That is just about the sexiest thing I've ever seen." He palmed his cock through his jeans. "Tonight is going to be amazing."

I had no doubt. Sitting up on one elbow, I held out a hand to him. "We'll start with you." I hooked my fingers into his waistband and pulled him onto the bed.

A grin lit up his face and he laughed when I yanked on his belt. "In a hurry?"

"Yes." I felt the bed dip behind me as Zachary worked his way over to where I lay. Lennox stood at the foot, watching like he wouldn't mind standing there all night. He'd get his turn. They all would. I was not stopping until we were all completely satisfied.

Justin eased a hand over my shoulder, his calloused fingers brushing the satin strap. He stopped there and lowered his head, kissing my bare skin. "I will never get enough of this." His eyes fluttered closed when I pulled his cock free and slid down to wrap my lips around him. I sucked on the head and raised my eyes. "I'd like all of you naked and on the bed in a line." I tossed my hair over my shoulder. "It's my turn to play with you." I bobbed my head over Justin's cock as he flipped onto his back and gripped my head between his palms.

"That's it, baby. Take what you need from us." He lifted his hips in tiny thrusts that scraped his cock over the roof of my mouth. "We're here for you."

I hummed and worked him deeper, taking more than ever before deep into my mouth. When I hit my gag reflex, I slowed and worked my way back up.

Lennox scooted in beside Justin, and Zachary took the other edge. I released Justin and moved down to Lennox, wrapping both hands around his dick. "I'm going to fuck each and every one of you. It's going to feel so good. And when I'm done, I want all of you inside me at the same time." I bit his shaft with a soft nibble and grinned when he sucked in a breath and bucked.

“Damn it, Lucy.”

Laughing, I did it again before leaving him and moving on to Zachary. Zachary was ready for me. He sat up and pulled me into his lap, his lips closing around my nipple as he pushed his cock between my legs. I arched into him, giving him better access. My body flushed hot with need, but I wasn't ready to give in yet. I tugged on his head, pulling him away from my tit with a pop. “More of that later.” I worked my way down his body until I could pull him into my mouth. I sucked and played with each of them until they couldn't stop groaning and cursing.

Once I had them all keyed up, I straddled Lennox and eased his cock into my pussy. “God you feel good.” My eyes sank closed as I rolled my hips and leaned over him. “Zachary?”

“Right here.” He palmed my ribs and pressed kisses along my spine. His hands moved lower, cupping my ass and squeezing. He slid his finger along my spine, then dipped lower until he pressed against my back hole.

I rocked my body over Lennox and let out a gasp. “Right there. I need you, Zachary.” I wanted them all over me, filling every space. Justin moved to my side and slid his hands along my shoulders. He kissed the side of my neck and cupped my breasts, pinching and rolling the nipples while Zachary pressed the head of his cock to my ass.

“I'm ready.” I rocked onto him, aching more than I thought possible.

Lennox lifted me off his cock, then drove me down again in a hard stroke that made stars burst in my vision. “So damned good. I'm going to come so hard, Lucy.” He ran his fingers under the satin thong and tore it off.

I wasn't mad since its absence gave me the chance to feel him better.

Zachary gripped my hips, his hands covering Lennox's. “Let me in, Luce.”

Pressure built inside me, followed by the slow glide of his rigid cock penetrating my tight hole. I felt every ridge scrape inside me, and then he was fully seated. They both were. I was stuffed full of their cocks, but I still needed Justin's. I shifted my weight back and reached for Justin. "Your turn."

His devastating smile flashed as he rose onto his knees and offered me his cock. I remembered the first time, and how he'd almost been uncertain with the idea of me blowing him, but now he relished the idea. I palmed him, then popped him into my mouth with a sigh as Lennox and Justin began to move inside me. Their cocks rubbed together, brushing against the thin wall separating them.

Sweat broke out on Lennox's forehead and his head fell back against the pillows. "How is this our life now?"

He asked the question I'd been thinking all day. I had three amazing men who loved me and loved fucking me. I'd never leave this bed if that was an option. I could let them love me like this forever. Pleasure built in a steady, rising pressure in my core. Zachary and Lennox changed their pace, alternating thrusts. Lennox entered me as Zachary pulled out. The constant stimulation sent delight coursing through my body. I stretched myself to take Justin deeper.

He held my head between his hands and rubbed his thumbs over my aching jaw. "It's okay, Lucy. It's okay. Damn that feels good." His breath rushed over my cheek in a sharp sigh when I growled in the back of my throat and took him deeper.

I wouldn't be able to stand much more. Already, the orgasm sat right there, ready to grab. I held my body still and let them take control. The three of them worked as a team, pushing their cocks into me, filling me and pleasuring me until I broke with a shudder that locked me onto all three of them at the same time.

We came together, their cocks pulsing. Hot cum spurted down my throat and into my pussy and ass. Fireworks burst behind my closed eyes as wave after wave of pleasure shook me. I finally lifted my head from Justin's spent dick and fell over Lennox's chest. I ran my hand over the fine hairs

peppering his chest and kissed the hollow of his throat. The room was filled with our harsh breaths and undeniable pleasure.

I grabbed Justin's hand and pulled him down beside me. Zachary still had his cock in my ass and Lennox hadn't moved either. The feel of them wasn't unpleasant at all. In fact, I wouldn't mind them staying there until we were ready for another round.

I traced a jagged scar running the length of Justin's thumb and sighed. "I think we should move in together."

LUCY

Silence. Absolute, adorable silence. I propped my chin on Lennox's chest. "My house is big enough for everyone."

Justin patted my ass. "I think we already knew that."

Zachary snorted and rolled off of me, his laughter shaking the bed. "You're terrible."

I rolled my eyes and poked Justin in the belly button. "I'm serious."

Lennox smoothed my hair back from my face and kissed my forehead. "I think it's a great idea." He kissed me again. "What about a commitment ceremony too? We could have it at the rink."

"Commitment ceremony?" I scrunched my nose. "What's that?"

"Well." He cleared his throat. "Since you can't legally marry all of us, we could do that instead." He rushed ahead before I could say a word. "I understand if you don't want to. You and Zachary should get married, though. If that's what you both want."

It was the single most adorable thing in the world to see him so flustered. This man, who took everything life threw at him with his chin up, was worried about my reaction to his offer of a commitment ceremony. I leaned forward enough to grab his face and pull his head up so we were eye to eye. "I'd love to." And Zachary and I could talk about marriage some other time. I was certainly willing. And he hadn't looked

opposed the multiple times Abigail mentioned it. But I didn't want to make him feel like he had to rush into it. We had time.

Justin slid his palm over my back and kissed my shoulder. "You might need a bigger bed if we're all going to be sleeping in it."

I lifted my head, noticing for the first time how cramped the space was with four of us trying to find room. I was still sprawled across Lennox. Justin was barely on the edge of the bed, and Zachary had one leg thrown off the bed on his side to keep from falling.

I giggled at the sight of them all squished into my little bed. "Okay. New bed is first on the list." I tapped the dimple in Lennox's cheek. "Actually, first is telling Abigail that you will all be part of the family now. Then we'll set up the commitment ceremony."

Lennox's hands roamed my back, his fingertips finding every ridge of my spine. "I think we should talk about the possibility of more kids."

"Oh, yeah. We need our own team." Justin's eyebrows rose as he flipped onto his back and smoothed his heel up and down my calf. He nudged Lennox with his elbow. "Don't you think? At least five more, right?"

"You want us to have six kids?" I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I shook my head like that would clear it.

"You need more than six for a proper team." Zachary spoke up.

Lennox waved him off. "Nah. Six should do it. Goalies and defenders are easy to come by."

His words had the expected response. I rolled off Lennox in time for Zachary to snatch him up in a headlock. "Easy to come by? Easy to come by! You think goalies are a dime a dozen. I'll show you easy to come by." He tightened his grip and scruffed his knuckles over Lennox's head until his hair puffed up around Zachary's knuckles. "I'm a goalie and a defender. Let's see how you like it next time you play and I let some guy knock you on your ass."

“Aw, come on.” Justin intervened by grabbing Zachary’s leg and yanking. “We just need enough for the forward line.”

Lennox hammered a fist into Zachary’s thigh. “Hey, Lucy, how’s Abigail’s slapshot?”

“Better than yours.” Zachary fired back before I could. “Took her on the ice yesterday. She’s got my skills.”

“Lord help us then. We’ll have our work cut out for us.” Lennox’s face reddened when Zachary tightened his grip. “Kidding, man. Kidding.” He pinched Zachary’s leg until Zachary eased up.

I watched them with my mouth hanging open. I wanted more kids... but six? I shook my head again at the thought. Laughter bubbled up as they continued roughhousing on my—our—bed. I definitely needed more space if they were going to do this on a regular basis.

I couldn’t believe it. I’d gotten everything. More than everything. Things I never dared to hope for now literally wrestled in my bed. I’d made waves with my advocacy campaign. I was raising a wonderful daughter. I still had my job. And now, Abigail had her father, and I had three men who loved me more than I thought possible.

I loved them. God how I loved them. Justin kicked Zachary’s shin, which made Zachary ruffle up Lennox’s hair even more. Lennox elbowed Zachary in the stomach, and his breath rushed out in a whoosh. Laughing at the lot of them, I rolled off the bed and grabbed my robe. “I’m going to make hot chocolate and watch it snow. You three go ahead and do whatever you want to do.”

Justin bounced from the bed and wrapped both arms around my waist, dragging me back to his chest. “What if I want to do you?”

“Be my guest.” I spun in his arms and stood on my tiptoes to kiss him. “We have all night and the rest of forever.”

“I like the sound of that.” He returned my kiss with one full of heat and the promise of passion. He grunted and broke away. “Stop gouging me in the kidneys.”

Zachary stood behind him, his lips creased in a broad smile. Slapping Justin on the back, he pushed him away and took my hands in his. Before I could blink, he dropped to a knee and pulled out a black jewelry box. “We’ve danced all around this for a week now. I know it’s sudden and you might want to wait, but I can’t keep this inside any longer.” He cracked open the lid to reveal a single diamond in a gold band. “I’d like to marry you, Lucy Ashley.”

I grabbed his face and kissed him. “Of course I’ll marry you. I’d marry all of you if I could.” It almost didn’t seem fair that Zachary and I could have official documentation of our relationship, but we were also doing this for Abigail.

Zachary stood and swept me up against his chest with his arms around my waist. “You’re the best thing that ever happened to me.”

I framed his face in my hands and kissed him soundly on the lips. Justin and Lennox dragged on some clothes and left us alone for the time being. They crept out of the bedroom, with Lennox winking at me before he closed the door.

Zachary deepened the kiss, his tongue sweeping into my mouth like he couldn’t get enough of me.

I sighed into him and wrapped my legs around his waist. I was physically exhausted but running on an emotional high that I might never come down from. I gripped his shoulders and pulled away from his lips. “Give me that ring.”

Laughing, he slipped it over my finger, then kissed the knuckles while lowering me to the floor. “Come on. We’d better get out there before they wake up Abigail. They’re hopeless in the kitchen.”

“They better not wake her up.” I pretended to scowl. “Because then they have to put her back to bed.”

He smirked at me. “I’ll be sure and remind them of that. We did agree that this would be a joint effort. No one gets to slack off.” He kissed the end of my nose. “We have some major goals to score. Mainly, your women’s rights campaign and our championship.”

“You’re already winners in my book.” I slapped his ass when he bent to pick up his pants, then ran away giggling to snatch up my robe and throw it over my shoulders. I slipped from the room and ran straight into Lennox. “If we keep this up, we’ll never make it to the kitchen.” I pulled him down for a quick kiss and turned away to join Justin in the kitchen.

Snow fell in soft flakes outside the window. The yard was already covered in a fine sheet of white, and based on how thick it fell, we’d be covered up by morning. I propped my hands on the counter and leaned forward to get a better look. “Abigail is going to lose her mind tomorrow when she sees this.”

Zachary laughed from behind me. “Hope you two are ready to make snow angels because Abigail is more than ready to have a family of them out there in the yard.”

“And snowmen,” I reminded him with a pointed finger.

He saluted me with a coffee cup from the cupboard. “And snowmen.” He made his way around the kitchen like he’d always lived there, gathering up the supplies for hot chocolate. I listened to him moving around and caught glimpses of him in the window when I turned back to the snowy landscape.

My body ached lightly from our robust sexual adventure. I ran a hand over my stomach, imagining what it would be like to carry their children. The thought made me smile. One or two more kids would be nice. Abigail would love having younger siblings.

This was the life I’d always secretly hoped for. And it was all mine. Three faces appeared in the window behind me. Justin stood just over my left shoulder, while Lennox was at my right. Zachary stood in the middle. Together, the four of us created a picture of happily ever after that I’d never thought possible. Mine. All mine.

We’d skated across some thin ice to get here, but I wouldn’t change anything about our past or our future. Smiling at them in the window, I twisted Zachary’s ring around and around on my finger.

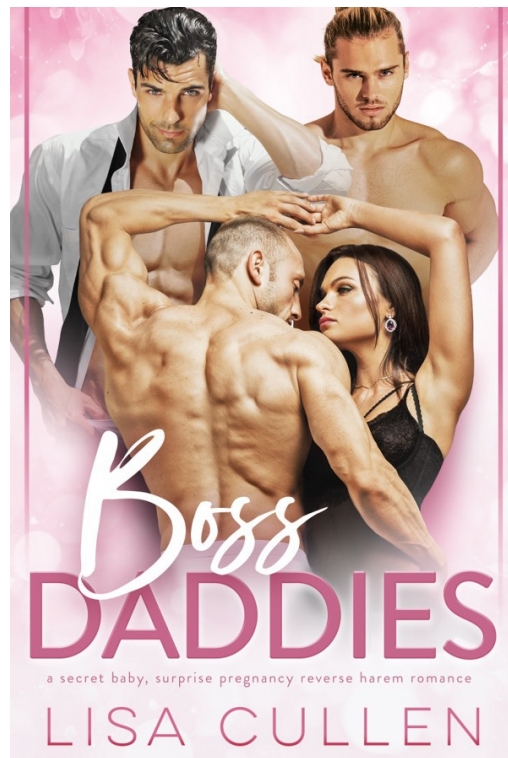
“I left space on the ring so they could add stones too.” Zachary picked up my hand and brought it to his lips. He kissed my palm, his eyes holding mine in the window as snow filled the air. Heat raced through me, my breath hitching. “We can make it as official as possible. We belong to you, Lucy. Forever.”

My heart threatened to burst right open. This was the kind of love they told stories about. The kind of love people spent decades searching for. I squeezed my way into the middle of them and held them all tight. Forever didn't sound nearly long enough.

*Thank you for reading **Thin Ice**. I hope you enjoyed Lucy's story. [Get Boss Daddies, the next book in the series here.](#)*

*Binge read the entire **Forbidden Reverse Harem Collection** [here.](#)*

BOSS DADDIES (PREVIEW)



DESCRIPTION

It was meant to be a swimwear modeling job.... But now my three bosses have me on my knees asking for more.

One of them is my baby's daddy... and *he has no idea.*

What was I thinking, accepting a modeling job in a freaking bikini? I *used* to be a model, but my life is so different now... I'm a single mom trying to make ends meet when they hire me.

There's **Harper**, the tall, tattooed, serious and gorgeous billionaire who wants to change the world.

Player **Desi** is the confident, handsome stylist on set, teasing me relentlessly and making me want more...

And there's also quiet **Silver**, the irresistible shy photographer for the shoot.

I may be wrong... but I think they all want *me*.

I know not to mix business with pleasure. My main worry is making enough to pay for my daughter, but my money worries are soon erased as the three fashionable billionaires shower me and my little girl with expensive gifts.

Temptations arise at every opportunity and I succumb to my irresistible bosses... but soon, the fire between us sparks hotter, and I end up with a baby in my belly...

And no idea whose it is.

LUNA

“I ’m sorry but I just don’t believe you.”

The words washed over me like the first burst of a cold shower on a hot summer’s day. It took all of my self-restraint to keep the smile on my face as the growing warmth from the cup in my hand teetered towards painful.

“I can assure you,” I replied as sweetly as I could manage, “I definitely used oat milk.”

“I was watching you,” the customer replied, “and I didn’t see you use that oat carton at *all*.” The lilt in her voice matched the sharp way she pointed a manicured blue-tipped finger at me. The tart disbelief in her tone was abundant and as we stared each other down, I knew I didn’t have a chance in hell of winning this argument. I could have made this drink right in front of her salmon-spectacle-clad eyes and it wouldn’t have been good enough. Judging by the purse of her lips and the blonde bob of her hair, I was pretty sure she was simply spoiling for an argument.

“Ma’am, as you can see, we’re really busy today and I’m having to make multiple drinks at the same time—”

“That’s not my problem!” She cut in with such glee that I had to fight the reflexive urge to toss the cup at her and storm away.

“I understand that, I’m just trying to explain that you’ve seen me making other drinks—”

“I don’t care,” she interrupted again. Her raised voice caused several seated patrons to glance up from their various drinks and meals to check out the commotion. Fuck. The muscles in my face were already aching from my forced smile and keeping that up with an audience was even harder.

“I *want* another coffee. Made correctly this time.” Her beady eyes narrowed behind her glasses, and for a few seconds, I entertained the rather abrupt intrusive thought of dragging her over the counter and giving her a close-up view of the difference between our milk cartons.

That fantasy would be my only retribution today.

“Right away, ma’am.”

I didn’t miss the victorious smirk that curved across her lips as I turned away, and the image burned into my mind as I discarded the oat latte—and it *was* oat, we may be busy but I made that drink correctly—and started on another. Unsatisfied groans about the extended wait rose up from the queue that had formed behind Mrs. Oat Milk during her little rant. The sound sent a wave of burning, embarrassed heat across the back of my neck and down my spine.

Spending every available hour working my fingers to the bone serving coffee and cake to Chicago’s business elite was not how I wanted to spend my days, but it was a job. A job I’d poured my heart and soul into for the past five years just to make ends meet. Yet, every time I came face-to-face with someone like Mrs. Oat Milk—someone who took pleasure in making the jobs of service workers that much more difficult for their own twisted pleasure—I contemplated my survival rate if I just quit and lived on instant noodles until the end of my days.

A sweet, selfish fantasy that didn’t take into account my adorable daughter, Hazel, and her hatred of noodles. The desire for something better burned hotter with each passing day.

Coffee remade, I turned back to the customer and offered her the drink with the same fake service smile fixed upon my

face. She sniffed and opened her sleek black purse. That thing likely cost more than my entire month's wages.

"You could learn a thing or two from this," she said stiffly. "If you'd done the job correctly the first time then we all wouldn't have had to stand around waiting for you to fix your mistake. It's coffee, how hard can it be?" A tinkling laugh followed her words, a sweet sound that was so detached from the smarminess of her words.

I cast a quick eye down the queue with as much apology as I could muster in my eyes, but there wasn't a sympathetic gaze to be found. Of course not, these people were all the same. Running around the world with their fancy jobs, fancy clothes, and not even five minutes to spare standing in a queue.

"You ought to be more careful," the woman continued and the embarrassed heat from earlier was slowly morphing into anger mixed with tension in my chest. "I'm doing you a favor, coming to drink here instead of at the office. Without people like us, dinky little coffee places like this would go out of business. And you think it's okay to try and poison me with *dairy*?"

She tossed a few coins onto the counter so hard that one bounced against the hard surface before it rolled off the edge and clattered somewhere on the floor.

"Well, I'm not picking that up." Her beady eyes narrowed at me once more and the building anger within my chest snapped. My smile vanished.

"Without people like *you*—"

"Luna!" A warm, cheery voice tinged with the slightest hint of a French accent cut right through the wick of my explosive response and a warm hand landed on my shoulder.

I turned to see Cerise, my best friend and suffering co-worker by my side. Before I could react, she had taken the coffee from my hand and set it on the counter.

"Here's your drink, have a lovely day!" she called cheerily as her hand hooked around my elbow and dragged me a few feet away from the service counter.

“Cerise...” I began and my chest clenched like the snap of a rubber band as the anger I almost released on that awful woman stalled with nowhere to go.

“Luna,” Cerise warned softly, “I know. Awful people with awful requests, but if you had yelled at her, there’s no way Dickie would still let you off early. I swear, your temper runs as hot as your hair!”

Just like that, a small laugh bubbled in my chest and broke through the tension of frustration. Cerise was, of course, referring to my flaming auburn hair. At the mention of Dickie, I sought out the clock on the wall and groaned.

“Shit...” Cerise was right. It had taken me days to sweet talk my boss, Dickie, into letting me off early today to coincide with my daughter getting an early release from pre-school. If I was late and my mother found out, I’d never hear the end of it.

“Take five minutes. I’ll handle this.” Cerise patted my elbow and swept past me before I could even respond. Her cheery voice filled the cafe as she began apologizing for the wait and rapidly taking orders from the disgruntled queue. I took my leave and darted through the gray double doors into the back of the cafe.

Cerise always had my back, ever since she’d stumbled upon me sobbing amongst the garbage cans not two weeks after I’d started working here. She’d been so kind as I’d poured my heart out about not knowing how I was going to afford diapers after Dickie had shot me down about an advance on my wages. The next day, I’d come into work and she had left a baby care package outside my locker with all the essentials. I’d never been more grateful for such a kind act, and from then on we were best friends.

I stumbled into the toilet, locked the door behind me, and sank down onto the chilled toilet seat with a groan. Already my heart was beginning to slow without the crowded bustle of the cafe. I took a few deep breaths and the tension that burned like static in my chest started to ease.

Fuck.

I had almost lost my cool and something like that could easily have cost me my job. Losing this would turn the blogging site I freelanced for into my sole income and that was definitely not enough to live on.

“Come on Luna,” I sighed, “keep it together.”

It was just a shitty customer. Another hour and I would be out of here. I dug around in my apron and pulled out my phone. If I had any chance of making it to the school on time, I would need to call an Uber, an expense I was loath to create but in the interest of getting to Hazel before school finished, it was essential. I flicked through to the Uber app, added my details and request, then tapped on my emails to wait for the booking confirmation. Upon opening my inbox, however, something new caught my eye.

New Leaf

A pulse of confusion shot through my gut as I opened the email.

Dear Miss Luna Quinn,

I hope this email reaches you well. Please forgive my forwardness but I am writing to you in regard to a modeling opportunity that I believe will be extremely lucrative for us both. I came across your account on Instagram and I was blown away by your pictures.

If you haven't heard of us, my name is Harper Saunders. I am the Lead Designer and co-owner of New Leaf. We are a luxury fashion brand that specializes in lingerie, swimwear, and more for those needing a little boost to their confidence after physical alterations. Each year we put together several calendars for charity. These calendars showcase each of the designs of that year. If you haven't seen us around in stores, I've included a few links in this email for you to take a look at.

I understand that this may seem rather presumptuous but I think your style and confidence would really enhance the New Leaf brand. If you are interested, I would like to offer you an interview at our downtown office to discuss this opportunity more.

The opportunity includes a three-week all-expenses paid trip to one of our beachside shooting locations as well as compensation for any disruption this may have to your regular life. Childcare is included and you will be paid a total of \$1,000,000 upon completion of the calendar.

I've included my details below and I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Harper Saunders

CEO, New Leaf

A million dollars?! This was a joke, right? I read the email several times, unable to comprehend what I was reading. Harper Saunders, *the* Harper Saunders had emailed me? The billionaire CEO of one of the most famous fashion brands in the entire *world* had emailed me? No. No way. This had to be fake.

Despite my doubts, I quickly checked the email and all the attached information against what was on the New Leaf company website and it matched. It was *real*?

I had been following New Leaf on all their socials ever since I stumbled upon one of their charity showcases not long after Hazel had been born. I was drawn to them immediately as they had been showcasing lingerie and underwear for mothers who no longer felt sexy after going through such a powerful change to their bodies. A few of their photographs had even become the inspiration for some of my own designs.

Before Hazel, amateur modeling was my passion but pregnancy had definitely hindered those plans. I had been working to rebuild that confidence on my Instagram. With a modest following, I couldn't complain, but the thought of those pictures catching the eye of Harper Saunders?

"No fucking way," I breathed out and returned to the email, reading it over again and again. The amount glared back out at me.

One million dollars.

An email like that direct from a billionaire CEO... there had to be a catch. Men as rich as him surely had assistants for this sort of thing, right?

However, no matter how many times I checked, the information remained the same and everything provided looked legit.

Was I dreaming? I had to be. This was too good to be true.

“Luna!” A sharp rap of knuckles against the bathroom door made me jump, dragging me back down to reality, and yet even as my boss’s dull tones drifted through the door, the email remained on my phone staring up at me.

“Luna! You’ve been pissing for ten minutes, get the fuck back to work!”

Suddenly, the prospect of going back out there to face my overly handsy boss and a cafe full of people much richer than me was exhausting and I glanced back down at the email. The temptation was rising.

“Luna!” My manager knocked rapidly on the door again.

“I’m coming!” I called back as sweetly as I could. I still needed him on my side in order to get out of here early. As I flushed the toilet, I shoved my phone back into my pocket but the email was crystal clear in my mind’s eye.

It was just an interview, right?

I opened the toilet door and came face-to-face with my boss and his stubbled jowls broke into a toothy smile when he caught my eye.

“About damn time, I don’t pay you women to fuss about in there.”

“Sorry, Dickie.” I gave him my sweetest smile and slipped past him, narrowly avoiding the usual pat on the ass he liked to give anything with a skirt.

It was just an interview... and the prospect of anything that wasn’t this place was *exciting* despite my disbelief.

If I said yes... what was the worst that could happen?

End of preview. [Get the entire story here.](#)

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