

TOTALLY



PUCKED



#1 New York Times Bestselling Author

LAUREN
BLAKELY

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ABOUT

Ever hear the story about the gal who got dumped with this parting shot?
“And, maybe you need some lessons in the bedroom.”

Sure, I wanted to shout at my ex: “You suck in bed too.”

But I’m a lady. I didn’t say that.

I do, however, share the whole sorry story over drinks to my best guy friend—the hockey star who’s been my bestie forever.

And he’s suddenly intensely curious about these bedroom lessons. He’s so damn interested, he says, “I’d be willing to be your test subject.”

If I say yes, it’ll change our lifelong friendship in the next twenty-four hours...

TOTALLY PUCKED
A MY HOCKEY ROMANCE SHORT
STORY

By Lauren Blakely

BAD ROMANCE VIBES

Katie

When I lock up the lab on Friday night, I leave the ocean research behind and walk into the San Francisco evening with self-care research on my mind instead. I'm in the mood to look out for me. Maybe even get myself a little something.

I'm six months post-breakup after all and doing much better. Feels like a milestone.

As I walk along Fillmore Street, I pass some of my favorite stores till I spot Bling and Baubles, a cute jewelry shop my sister told me about.

Perfect.

I head inside and check out a display of trendy artsy jewelry—boho necklaces, chunky bracelets, cool rings as the woman smiles from the counter, then says, “A Christmas present for you, Katie?”

That's Rachel, and I've gotten to know her since I've been back.

“Yes. I need something that says—no, that declares—I'm better off alone, dammit.”

She gives me a sympathetic smile. “I was once there. I call this the Treat Yourself line.” She ushers me over to some bold necklaces with all sorts of pendants—a star, a snake, a skull, a winged dragon, then to another shelf with a collection of chunky metal bracelets alongside vegan leather ones too.

“These all say I can open my own pickle jars, thank you very much,” I tell her, then spot a chunky bracelet shining under the chandelier lighting in the store. “It's very Wonder Woman.”

“Kind of makes you feel like you’re warding off all the bad romance vibes.”

“Exactly,” I say, liking that approach. “I am happily single now.”

“I can tell,” Rachel says.

I’m so stinking thrilled that Henry is no longer in my life. I’m so damn glad I got out of that going-nowhere-fast relationship. Now, he’s pretty much in the rearview mirror.

Except for one little thing that’s been nagging at me.

His parting words.

But I try not to let his insult get to me.

Instead, I take the bracelet, snapping it on my wrist, then pay and thank Rachel. “I’ll see you at The Spotted Zebra in a little bit?”

“I’ll be there. Carter and I go every year,” she says.

I smile. She and her guy have the best time dating all over town. She’s the one who told me about the annual Christmas party there. “See you soon,” I say, then head out, my gaze turning to the bracelet.

A reminder of where I’ve been and where I am.

Once outside, I take a moment to enjoy this change in my life. After I finished college, I moved to Seattle for my masters. A few months ago, I moved back home—here—to be closer to family. My sister lives and works in the city as the mascot for the Golden State Foxes hockey team. My brother plays for the other hockey team—the Sea Dogs. My mom and grandma are here too. And I have a great job working as a scientist at a lab studying how to improve ocean health and conservation.

My best friend from forever lives here too, and I’ll be seeing him soon—Fisher Hendrix, who just got signed to the city’s Golden State Foxes team.

We’ve been best friends since high school. And I’ll meet him in thirty minutes at The Spotted Zebra for the bar’s annual hot cocoa tasting party. I text him that I’m on my way.

He replies quickly with a ***Can’t wait, Giraffe.***

I laugh at the nickname he gave me when we were younger and I was taller than him for a few months.

That sure changed.

He shot all the way up and bulked out pretty nicely too. You have to be strong and sturdy to be the winger for an NHL team.

But as I’m walking down the street in the foggy evening, silver and gold lights twinkling on the shop windows, the only thing that still feels off are

those parting words from Henry.

I really need to let them go.

But they keep replaying. Like my head's stuck on a loop of the last thing my ex said to me.

Maybe I do just need to tell somebody. If I blurt it out, perhaps I can finally let it go.

SNOWGLOBE LUBE

Fisher

The second I walk into the quirky gift shop, Effing Stuff, I spot what I want on a shelf by the counter. *Boom*. “That one,” I say to my friend Hayes as I point to the snow globe I’m going to snag. Like I can pass up this bad boy. Under the globe, there’s a squirrel spinning on its tail in front of a tree.

Hayes shakes his head, snort laughing. “That’s what you’re getting Katie for the spiked-hot-cocoa party? AKA the get-drunk-and-make-out-under-the-mistletoe-and-blame-the-whiskey party?”

I park my hands on my hips and give him a look. “One, I’m not even going to address that last remark. But two, yes,” I say emphatically. “She’ll love it.”

“Because she’s a squirrel?”

I smack my teammate on the shoulder. “Keep up with me. She likes snow globes, she likes animals, and she likes quirky things. And I need a gift for her.”

“All right. Fair enough,” my friend says. I’ve known him for a couple years, since he’s kind of a mentor type. I was recently called up from the minors and have been playing in the pros for two seasons. I’ve had a good run so far, and he’s been looking out for me. But teammate time ends shortly when I meet up with Katie.

I grab the snow globe and plunk it down on the counter, then say hello to the woman working the register.

As she rings it up, Hayes studies me curiously. “Why now? Why are you

giving my wife's sister a gift tonight?" He asks, since he's married to Katie's sister Ivy.

"Because your wife's sister is also my friend," I point out. "And can't a guy just give a gal a present at the most wonderful time of the year?"

Hayes rolls his eyes. "I suspect you have ulterior motives."

"What kind?" I ask, meeting his gaze head-on.

He smiles like he was just granted access to every team's video review room in the league. "Oh, gee, like maybe you're hoping this snow globe will help you tell her that you've been secretly in love with her your whole life?"

I scoff. "No. Dude. Seriously, I just want to thank her in advance for helping me out tomorrow. I'm going to ask her to go to this whole lighting festival thing that the team's publicist asked me to do on behalf of Little Friends," I explain. "I'm asking her as my friend."

But the truth is she's a sexy, feisty, smart friend who I can't stop thinking about.

"So it's a fluff gift for your publicity request," Hayes says as I finish the transaction. After I thank the clerk, we head out of the store into the chilly night.

I stop to consider his assessment. "I think of it more like a *pre-gift* for my friend date request," I correct him.

"Whatever you say," he says and once Hayes takes off, I head to The Spotted Zebra to meet her, but the whole way I keep noodling on what Hayes said.

That I'm angling for a make-out sesh under the mistletoe.

That can't be right. Can it?

But when I reach The Spotted Zebra and see Katie walking down the street, I mouth wow.

THE DEVIL IS ME

Fisher

There's only one explanation for the way I am staring at Katie like I can't look away.

Hayes is the devil. He is the motherfucking devil on my shoulder, whispering in my ear, "*Has your best friend always been that sexy?*"

But damn...

Katie's smile, her pretty pink lips, her big brown eyes, her fair skin and rosy cheeks, that chestnut hair, all silky and long.

Yup. The devil is out tonight, and he is getting bigger and bigger.

There's an angel on my other shoulder whispering, "*She's your friend. She's your best friend. Friends don't think about what friends look like naked.*"

But that angel is shrinking down to a speck as Katie reaches me, then sweeps some hair from her cheeks before she looks up into the murky starless sky. "I was promised snow," she says, then playfully stomps her foot. "I want sledding, and snow angels, and snowmen. Is that too much to ask?"

"I'll see if I can order up some snow for you," I say. Then, since I'm holding a gift bag in one hand, I wrap my free arm around her in a friendly bear hug like I've always done and...

That was a rookie mistake.

The devil climbed up my back, wrestled the angel to the ground, and took the fuck over. Because I catch the scent of her hair. She smells like jasmine and midnight. Has she always smelled that good?

My train has left Friendship Station and it's picking up speed as it rattles into Dirty Depot.

I let go of her. Better not linger on how pretty her eyes are, or how lush her lips are.

Katie doesn't seem bothered by the quick disengagement. Instead, she arches a brow and returns to my comment, asking, "But what if what I really want is spiked hot cocoa?"

Yes! I jump on her question like it's a puck that just dropped, stat. "Then you are in luck. Let's get some hot cocoa and whipped cream and marshmallows, all for a good cause," I say, trying desperately to focus on innocent things, normal things, friendly things.

Like this tasting, where all the money goes to animal rescues, just like the lighting festival.

I open the door to The Spotted Zebra, holding it for her like a perfect gentleman. "After you, *Giraffe*," I say, hoping the childhood nickname helps my cause.

"Thank you, *Troublemaker*," she says, using mine. Well, I was a troublemaker. Apparently, I still am. At least my libido needs to be locked up with the key thrown away when it comes to my best friend.

We head into the familiar bar, saying hello to my cousin Carter, and his wife Rachel, who comes to this party every year.

Then grab our own table. Just like friends.

Right. Sure. Just like friends.



An hour later this spiked hot cocoa buzz that's working through me is making it hard for the sweet side of my brain to get any playing time. The spicy side of my head can't stop thinking about how sexy Katie looks in that red sweater.

That snug red sweater.

Why do fucking red sweaters even exist?

Focus, Fisher, focus.

"So, how's everything going with the lab and the turtles and the ocean and all that good stuff?" I ask.

As she sets down her mug of *Lick My Lips*, she tells me about the work she's doing on conservation, and how well it's going, finishing with a rap on the table. "Knock on wood, but we're making some tiny, but very real progress with our efforts."

With a proud grin, I lift my mug of cinnamon hot chocolate spiked with tequila. "I'll drink to you being an awesome marine biologist," I say.

She clinks her ceramic mug against mine. "And to you beating the Sea Dogs last night. That was quite a goal."

I preen. "Which one?"

She laughs. "You're such a show-off."

"Just being honest. I scored two goals," I say. Damn, that was a good game.

"Okay, the one in the second period. The one in the first period seemed more accidental."

"An accidental goal? You kill me, woman."

She stretches an arm across the table to slug my shoulder. "Somebody has to keep you in your place. Or your ego would be enormous."

"And that's your job? Ego checker?"

She lifts her chin. "Yes. That is the job of the best friend."

Thank you!

Message received. Just what I needed.

Friend, friend, friend.

That brings me to my focus for tonight—asking my friend to go with me to the lighting festival. Katie lifts her cup, and as soon as she finishes that drink, it'll be the perfect moment to make my *friend date* request. The squirrel snow globe is ready to wingman me down Friendship Lane.

When Katie sets the mug down, she mouths, *whoa*. "I think that one went straight to my head. Before you know it, I'll be telling you all my secrets," she says.

Secrets...

Like what you like to do in bed? Or maybe what you want me to do to you?

I grab the bag from the floor, jam a hand in it, then shove the snow globe across the table. "I got a little something for you," I say.

Her brown eyes twinkle. "Fisher, this is so me," she says, clutching it to her chest. That lucky snow globe is cuddling up against that red sweater, and I am jealous of a trinket. Send help, someone, please. Then she shoots me a

very devilish look. “And I have a feeling you need me to help you with something.”

Was I that obvious? “You could tell?”

She shoots me an *I know you so well* look. “In high school, you gave me a box of Russell Stover chocolates to help you figure out how to ask out Leanne to the Valentine’s Day dance.”

Huh. I did do that. “Fine, but that was just one time.”

She scoff-laughes. “How about when you gave me the board game I’d been wanting, and then asked for my advice on great dates to take the woman from yoga to?”

“But you wanted that board game, and besides, that jackass you were seeing was too cheap to buy it for you,” I add as the sound system shifts to “White Christmas.”

Katie laughs, and after we grab the next round of spiked cocoa, she keeps going. “And how about a couple years ago? When you gave me that shirt that said *I like Coffee, Dogs, and Maybe Three People*. And you wanted my advice on how to ask out the gal who runs the karaoke bar we went to when I was in town for the holidays.”

Hmm. I’m detecting a pattern here. Still, I protest with, “But you’re good with that stuff. Romance and women and all that.” I want to add *and you were seeing that jackass Peter who I couldn’t stand*. And you know what? Thanks to this tequila, there’s no need to keep that important observation to myself. “And you were seeing somebody,” I point out.

She shoots me a look like my comment didn’t compute. “What does that have to do with it?”

That’s an excellent question, and I’m working through the answer right now. “Nothing,” I improvise to cover up the *holy shit, mayday* racing through my head. “I was just remembering details.”

She must buy my excuse since she nods and says, “So, who is she and how can I help this time?”

You. She’s you.

Time stops and I look back at the last several years through new eyes. Did I want to ask her out at the karaoke bar? Was I wishing she were single when I met the woman from yoga? Was there a part of me that was hoping she’d leave Henry sooner than she did?

The answer is as clear as the final score of a hockey game.

But I also need to stick to the game plan. Katie doesn’t think of me like

that. I'm sure this is just the holiday drinks talking. I clear my throat. "I have to do this volunteer thing tomorrow. I know it's totally last minute, but I was so focused on the game this week, and then I looked at my calendar. There's a holiday festival lighting event for the team and Little Friends. Is there any chance you would go with me?"

She smiles wide and bright. "I'm in. That sounds like so much fun," she says. No conditions. No questions. Just a yes.

That's Katie for you. She goes with me to things. She understands me. We laugh, we talk, we share. We trust each other. We always have.

I definitely wanted to ask her out at the karaoke bar. This devil has been perched on my shoulder for a long, long time.

"Thanks, Katie. I'm looking forward to it," I say, earnestly. Maybe tomorrow I can sort through this mess of feelings walloping me.

"Anytime," she says, then takes a deep breath, like it's fuel. "And now there's something I have been dying to tell you. There's something I need to get off my chest."

"That's a little ominous," I say, worried. "Did I do something wrong?"

She laughs. "No. But apparently I did. Do you know what Henry said when he broke up with me?"

I seethe a little at the mention of her most recent ex. That guy was such a jackass. "What the hell did that clown say?"

She draws a sharp breath, her brown eyes fiery, then bites out, "He said I needed some bedroom lessons."

What? Wow. Holy shit. Color me curious as a cat. "Why the hell would he say *that*?"

"Because of something I asked him to do. Apparently"—she stops to sketch air quotes—"I'm 'weird in bed.'"

TEST SUBJECT

Katie

I blame the bracelet. But in a good way. Maybe it gave me the superpowers to get that last bit of breakup bad vibes off my shoulders. Already I feel lighter. Like I've shed a burden. But you know what? I'm not entirely relaxed. I'm still kind of irked.

Fisher stares at me, slack-jawed. "He *said* that?"

He's as confounded as I am.

I nod savagely. "He did," I confirm.

I broke up with Henry because he was using me. He wanted to move in with me to—wait for it—save on rent in Seattle. He actually pitched that as his reason. He said he'd have more free time to pursue his dreams of skateboard design if he didn't have to pay the landlord. I said, "Wow. I'm not interested in being your sugar mama."

But I don't repeat that tonight since Fisher knows the full story. He heard it all when I drowned my sorrows shortly after the relationship ended, and again when I moved back. Yes, Henry was using me, and that hurt. I'd needed a shoulder to cry on.

I have no more tears for Henry. But I'm left with the confidence blow from those last words. I clear my throat, trying to stay strong as I repeat his parting shot. "When he left, he said, 'Good riddance, Katie. By the way, you're weird in bed.'"

I lift my hot cocoa, take another sip, maybe to hide my face. I lift my hot cocoa, take another sip, maybe to hide my face. What will Fisher think of the

you need lessons comment Henry delivered. But Fisher's a friend, and we share our wins and losses with each other. We share our good days as well as our bad days. I blow out a long stream of air, then get a little more off my chest. "I don't miss him one bit. I don't miss a single thing about him. But I'm vexed by this. I don't know what is wrong with me. That's what has been nagging at me. It's not the breakup. I am so over that. Except I don't know if there's actually something wrong with me."

Fisher drags a hand through his golden brown hair, nodding slowly. "I don't think there's anything wrong with you," he says, and there's no sarcasm in his tone, just warmth and support.

Fisher can't truly know, but I appreciate the sentiment. "I mean, look, it's not like I ate a sandwich during sex," I point out, trying to make light of Henry's insult.

He blinks, his green eyes glimmering a little more darkly before he seems to shake it off then says, "And look, if you did, would it really be that weird? Good sex should work up your appetite."

A new kind of calm falls over me. I knew Fisher would make me feel better. Maybe that's all I needed. Just to laugh off that cruel offhand comment that's gnawed away at my confidence.

I'm loving his take on all this. I sit up straighter. "And I didn't sing show tunes in bed."

His smile is a little naughty. "Again, not a problem. Good sex should make you sing and shout."

I crack up. I do feel lighter and better. I'm about to say *Thank you for listening* when the bartender in the Santa hat calls out from behind the bar, "Who's ready for a mistletoe moment for charity?"

Like the lighting festival, this event raises money for charity too.

I jerk my gaze toward the bar where there's a red bucket on the counter. Carter and Rachel are there, smiling mischievously. On the side of the bucket, words in white say: *Singles for Kisses*.

Fisher and I both crane our necks to the ceiling. Oh. Wow. There's a sprig of mistletoe above us.

My breath catches.

The other patrons grab bills then chant: "Kiss her, kiss her, kiss her." Pretty sure Fisher's cousin is chanting the loudest.

My heart speeds up. My skin tingles.

What the hell is happening to me?

Do I want to kiss Fisher? My long-time friend with sexy scruff and bright green eyes? The one with the strong body, and the killer arms?

And, just as important, does he want to kiss me?

He gives a casual shrug but there's a smile on his lips that doesn't look friendly. It's a sexy smile. He looks like a man on a date. "It is for charity," he whispers, and his rich, sexy voice sends a rush of heat down my back.

I don't entirely know what to make of these new sensations, but now's not the time for thought. It's a time for action, and I give in to the moment. "Then be charitable," I say, and wow, that came out flirty and sensual and inviting.

He leans across the table, then dusts his lips to mine. It's a hint of a kiss, barely there, just a tease. And yet, I want more.

I want a kiss that lingers into the night. And then, this one does. For a few hot seconds, it's real and delicious.

I want so much more of it. Of him. But then a bell rings, breaking me from this kiss trance.

As we separate slowly, the crowd cheers again, then stuffs bills into the bucket. "The cats and dogs thank you," the bartender shouts.

I steal a glance at my friend. Fisher looks dazed.

I feel dazed.

Then he scrubs his hand across his jaw, and quietly but clearly says, "I could be your test subject."

My brow knits. No way did he say that. "What?"

But he doesn't relent as he holds my gaze. "If you want to know if you're actually weird in bed. Or if you need lessons. I'd be a very good teacher."

I freeze. Is he for real? "You're hilarious," I say with a bubbly, *you're so funny* smile.

For a sliver of a second, he looks starkly serious, then he erases his expression and his face is full of friendly cheer again. "Good one, right?"

But when I go home that night, I can't stop thinking about how much I want a lesson with Fisher.

And that's a dangerous thought for our friendship.

THE SCARF DID IT

Fisher

As I turn the corner on Octavia Street, heading to Katie's building the next night, the sparkling lights of the neighborhood holiday decorations twinkle in the trees and along the awnings.

They're festive and fun.

And they are *not, not, not* romantic.

I hammer that reminder into my brain as I near her building. So what if we'll be surrounded by thousands of little glowing lights tonight. After dark. In a garden.

No big deal.

Just because we're going to a Christmas lighting festival doesn't mean I'm stepping into one of those holiday flicks I always scroll past on my Webflix queue.

Fine, fine. I watch them sometimes.

But holiday flicks are like a bowl of popcorn. You can't stop once you start. Even though most could use a little more sex.

I bound up the steps to Katie's building, ring the buzzer, and wait for my friend.

"Coming!" Katie calls through the speaker.

I don't even think about alternative meanings for that word.

All right. I do.

Just like I thought about it when I was in the shower thirty minutes ago, getting ready for tonight. I had to get my horniness out of my system, since

the Netflix queue in my head definitely does not run family fare. The theater upstairs shows only filthy holiday flicks—fucking in front of fireplaces, and screwing under the stockings.

Someone should acquire my brand of holiday films that give new meaning to rocking around the Christmas tree.

A few seconds later, Katie's shoes click down the hall of her building, heading toward the door. She opens it, and she's looking...impossibly better than she did last night.

A pink scarf with snowflake illustrations on it is wrapped around her neck. Those soft brown strands of hair curl around her shoulders. Lip gloss shines on her lips. I want to kiss it off. Then, I want to learn exactly what she likes in bed and give it to her all night long.

But I don't want to ruin our friendship. It means too much to me.

"Hey, you," she says, and her pretty voice grabs at my heart, squeezes it.

The full weight of my feelings hits me all at once. I like Katie and I want her.

Great, just great.

"Nice scarf," I say, a little strangled. But I needed to say something. Can't just stare.

She lifts a hand to touch it, almost as if to remind herself that it's there. "Thanks. My sister gave it to me," she says as we head down the steps.

Family. Sisters. Small talk. I'll do that tonight to slow down the naughty holiday reel playing before my eyes. "You enjoying being back in town and seeing Ivy?"

"Yup. And mom and grandma and Ryker," she rattles off.

It's like a snowball's hit me in the groin.

Last night's kiss was simply a one-time-only mistletoe incident and we're back in the friend zone.

But that's fine. It's totally fine. I've spent years being friends with this woman, and I'm not going to ruin it because the troublemaker in me is suddenly thinking about her in new ways.

You've always been thinking of her that way. You just fucking realized it last night, you dumbass.

We head to Yerba Buena Gardens for the festival.

"Now, tell me the deal for tonight," she says. She'll say yes, she'll help out, but she always loves a little debrief. She likes to do her best. I admire that about her. I'm the same damn way. "Are we supposed to be pretending

to be on a date? Are we on a date, or are we friend dating?”

Don't tempt me, universe.

Already my mind is filled with new thoughts like...

Let's have dinner tomorrow.

Can you come to the game in two more nights?

How about I skate over to you after we win? I could give you another kiss or ten.

Would it truly ruin the friendship if I said those things? I don't know, so I focus on the practical answers to her questions about this evening. “Tonight we'll just shoot a couple of fun videos in front of the Christmas tree lights, and we'll be good to go.”

She lifts a finger, an intensely serious look in her eyes. “But you won't deprive me of the sledding hill?”

I pull a face. “Do I look that cruel?”

She gives me a long once-over. “You don't look that cruel.”

“Then you can sled your cute little ass off,” I say and *oops*.

That slipped out.

She shoots me a playful smile. “I will.”

As we near the gardens, something gnaws at me though. She's back in town. She's been single for a bit. “Are you dating again?” I ask in a tight voice.

If she's dating again, I'm totally pucked.

She shakes her head. “I'm not opposed to it. I just have been kind of focused on establishing my career here and getting over what Henry said.”

That pisses me off, what he said to her, but it makes me want to hug her at the same time since that guy did a number on her. “I really wish you wouldn't let him get to you. I guarantee he's wrong,” I say, confidently, hoping to reassure her.

“Honestly, what you said last night really helped. I think I've finally let go of it.” She stops at the light, then sets a hand on my arm and squeezes. “So thank you. It just kind of freed me. And I really appreciate that.”

“Anytime,” I say, glad that she's not letting his cutting remark weigh on her. Glad, too, I could be the one to reassure her.

I'd do well to remember my role in her life. It's not to ask her out to dinner tomorrow. It's not to take her home tonight. It's to be her friend.

We arrive at the gardens, with its ice-skating rink, its bowling alley, and its restaurants all lit up with twinkling, sparkling lights. Bright golds, shiny

silvers, and inviting reds are strung all over the playground, along the trees, and over the fountains.

She gasps. “Oh, this is gorgeous. I love it. Thank you for bringing me,” she says, then throws her arms around me in a warm embrace that knocks me right out of the friend zone.

And back into the *I’m falling for my friend* one.

With her like this, in my arms, everything just feels right. Inevitable. Like we were always headed here.

Maybe I don’t need to stuff my feelings back into a box. Maybe I don’t need to worry about ruining the friendship.

Even if she doesn’t feel the same way I do, we’ll still be friends. Somehow.

I know that in a soul-deep way.

That means I need to find just the right way to tell the woman in the snowflake scarf exactly how I feel about her.

And that my offer last night was no joke.

KRAMPUS IS HOT

Katie

“You can skate your ass off, but you cannot make videos,” I say as I stare slack-jawed at the horror show on Fisher’s phone.

We’re standing in front of the big evergreen tree in the middle of the gardens, lights draped along its branches, checking out the video he just took.

My verdict? “I look like I’m shooting red death rays from my eyes,” I say as I hit stop on the hellscape on his screen.

“What? No way. I fucking rock at shooting videos.” He peers at it again on his phone. “You look like...Oh, hell. You’re right, Katie. You are a Christmas demon.”

I try to wrestle the phone from him, but he tugs it away from me, holding it high above his head. Even with giraffe legs, I can’t reach him. “Troublemaker! You are forbidden from using cameras ever again.”

His eyes spark with mischief. “Maybe I should hold on to this. It might come in handy,” he says, musing like a villain.

“Delete that,” I beg.

He seems to mull that over. “I don’t know. Maybe the team and Little Friends like Christmas demons?”

I growl at him. “No one likes Christmas demons. You’re not shooting a Krampus series.”

Lowering the phone, he tosses his head back and laughs. “Krampus? You’re into Krampus?”

“I’m not *into* Krampus. But I do have a Krampus snow globe. He’s

saying: *I'm having a bad hair day, so fuck off.*"

"That's very you."

"Well, it's my favorite snow globe."

Fisher's jaw drops like he's mortally offended. "Wait. What about the one I got you?"

I point at his phone. "When you delete that video, your squirrel snow globe will rise up in the ranks."

"Fine, I just want to have the number-one ranked snow globe," he says, then makes a show of erasing my demon video from his phone.

My shoulders relax, but I'm not sure Fisher's off the hook. "Thank you. But you are cruel," I say.

"I'm so terrible," he says.

"And that's why I'll Spielberg this video." I grab his phone from his big hand.

"What the lady wants," he says. We walk around the tree as I scout for the right location to show off the twinkle and glow of the lights. As we circle, I hold the phone in front of us to get a good angle, but I can't see Fisher in the frame. "You might need to come a little closer," I say, stopping in place for him to make the adjustment.

He moves next to me, his shoulder bumping mine.

My breath catches.

And wow. He smells good. Soapy and fresh with a hint of pine that's coming from him, not the tree. I'm tempted to bury my face in his neck, rub my cheek against that scruff, inhale him.

"Does this angle work? Or do you want me to get a little closer?" he asks, but I can't answer just yet.

Since I'm enjoying his proximity far too much. It's messing with my head. It's screwing with my heart. I vowed to focus on our friendship tonight. I was sure his comment last night was simply a joke. I swore I wouldn't linger on the kiss.

So I doubled down on friendship.

But now, I'm feeling longing. Want. Heat.

I swallow past a knot of emotions in my throat and do my best to concentrate on the shot and whether it's the right one. Trouble is, he needs to be just a bit closer. "An inch or so," I say, sounding breathier than I should. He slides closer. I shudder slightly.

What is happening? Why am I thinking naughty thoughts about Fisher?

But they're not just naughty. I've been thinking romantic thoughts too. I've been wanting more. Of his lips, of his time, of him.

It's dangerous, especially since our friendship means the world to me. And yet, I'm picturing Fisher's test subject offer, and I'm picturing the next morning too. Maybe another one. And a few more.

That's terrifying and exciting all at once.

But first, we have a video to do.

I clear my throat. "This is good," I say crisply, then hit record, and dive into a fun question for our video. "Quick question for the Golden State Foxes winger. Why are Christmas lights so awesome?"

He rolls with it, answering immediately. "They just make everything feel sort of possible," he says.

His answer sends tingles over my skin. I feel all new possibilities with him. "Yes. They're full of promise," I add.

"Like the night has some good secrets for you," he continues, and holy shit. Is Fisher a Christmas poet? I like the way this is going. I want to tell him my latest secret. That I'm thinking of him in new ways.

"And you want to share those secrets with," I continue, feeling a little bold tonight as I say to the camera, "a lover or a friend."

For a dangerous second, it feels like we're both thinking the same thing.

A lover and a friend—could that be you?

But we're shooting a video for his team, not confessing our feelings on camera. Fisher looks at the screen and flashes his trademark grin, tilting his head as he signs off with, "That's what she said."

I hit end, though I'm a little disappointed neither one of us said another word.

But that's a foolish wish. It's not like we were going to cop to feelings on camera.

Only now that the camera's off, I *could* rewind to last night and ask earnestly if he was joking? Am I willing to do that? Risk our years of friendship over the truth of a kiss? I turn to him, meeting his gaze briefly. His eyes are intense.

I'm not sure what to do with the intensity. Or if now is the time?

I look away, staring at the thousands of lights flashing red, green, pink, and gold in the San Francisco night instead.

But is asking a question such a risk? Every time he's touched me in the last twenty-four hours has felt different than every touch that came before.

These touches hint at possibilities.

My stomach swoops with nerves, but still, I need to do this. I have to know.

Ready for whatever comes my way, I turn to him, but Fisher's grinning at something in the distance. I follow his gaze.

He's staring at the sledding hill. "I promised you sledding, Giraffe. Let's do it."

And he heads off.

I try not to be disappointed.

Really, how can I be as I fly down a small man-made hill, shouting in exhilaration with my best friend.

The man I've felt friendly with for years.

But now, I feel more. I'm pretty sure he does too, and before the night ends, I'm going to take a chance.

MY KIND OF WEIRD

Fisher

I walk Katie home, the clock ticking in my mind the whole way, the night unwinding to its inevitable end when I say goodnight and she heads into her building alone.

The door will close, she'll go into her place, and we'll return to friendship. To hanging out. To long, deep talks about life and dating and other men and women. And when we reach the steps, we could do that tonight. We could stay the wonderful, safe course. But I take risks every time I strap on my skates and step onto the ice, stick in hand, determination in every cell. Katie is worth this risk.

We're ten feet from her building, white lights glittering around her doorframe.

Beckoning me toward possibility. Toward a new future.

When we're at her place, she smiles my way and says, "I had such a great time tonight."

"I had the best time," I say, but that's only the start. I say her name, importantly. "Katie, I need to—"

"—Yes."

I stop. Furrow my brow. "What?"

"Yes," she says, grinning a little nervously, but there's some heat to that grin. A little sexiness.

I step closer, feeling the possibilities, embracing the anticipation. "Yes what?"

“I’d like a lesson please,” she says in a nervous rush, but her eyes look thrilled.

I nearly groan from happiness. “Are you serious?”

“It’s all I can think about.”

I exhale, long and relieved and turned on. But happy too. “Same fucking here. But you need to know something.”

“What is it?”

“I wasn’t joking last night. And I’m not joking when I say this,” I begin, holding her gaze, making sure she knows I mean everything. “I want to kiss you again tonight. And tomorrow. And for a long, long time.”

Her eyes widen, but they’re sparkling too. “Yeah?” She sounds wildly hopeful.

“I sure do,” I say, then shrug, a little helplessly since I feel that way with her. “I don’t want to just give you one lesson.”

She sighs happily. “Good. I don’t want only one either,” she says, her smile lighting me up and turning me on even more. She tips her forehead toward the door. “Inside. Now.”

In no time, we’re in her apartment, hastily locking the door. “You have been turning me on all night,” I say, and it feels great to admit the full truth that I’ve, evidently, kept secret for years. Then I press my body against hers so she can feel how much I mean it. When I seal my mouth to hers, I give her a slow, passionate kiss that makes me shudder. That heats up very, very soon.

We kiss with our whole bodies. With hands in hair, hips locked, lips exploring.

I rope an arm around her, my hand slinking up the back of her sweater, feeling her soft, silky skin.

I moan, needing so much more of her.

At last I break the kiss and say, “All right. I need to know how fucking fantastically weird you are.”

She dips her face then raises it, her brow knitted in worry. But then she shrugs, *fuck it* style. “I like it when you talk dirty to me.”

“Holy shit. That is my kind of weird. And my kind of normal.”

I STAND CORRECTED

Fisher

She's wearing a pink lace bra with a bow between her tits, and panties with candy canes on them.

As if I needed more encouragement to eat her up.

"You are too fucking sexy," I tell her as I unhook that bra, freeing her tits. "And now I gotta taste these beauties," I say, dropping my mouth to tug on one nipple, then the other.

"Ohhh," she says softly as I kiss my way down her soft belly, swirling my tongue around her belly button, then I tug at the top of her panties with my teeth.

"Yes," she whispers, but it sounds almost restrained.

Hmm.

I'll have to keep working on that, on getting her to let go. "Been thinking about kissing you everywhere. Tasting you," I say, as I kiss along the lace, moving down, down, down.

She whimpers, wriggling against me. But she's quiet.

That won't do at all. "You smell fucking incredible," I murmur, then I raise my face and peel her panties off.

She shudders and covers her mouth with her hand.

And yup. I think I've cracked the code on her weird. Before I go down on my best friend, I climb up, bracing myself on my palms, meeting her face. "Are you loud in bed, baby? Because I fucking love noise."

She laughs, then nibbles on the corner of her lips. "I think I want to be."

Damn, she likes dirty talk, and she likes shouting? I am living my best life in my kind of filthy holiday flick. I kiss her once more, then say, "Be as loud as you want. Make some noise. Shout, groan, and please, fucking please, call my name when you come harder than you have before."

She answers in a long, shuddery moan. "God. Yes. Now."

I take orders very well, so I slide between her legs, wrap my hands around her sweet ass, and I kiss her pussy.

"Fuck yes," I murmur, flicking my tongue through her wetness. "Merry Christmas to me."

Then, I shut up so I can lick and kiss my girl. She writhes and moans, growing louder with every flick of my tongue then louder still as I suck on her clit.

"Yes, like that," she urges.

I bury my face between her legs. Soon, she's groaning, louder and louder with every lick. The volume rises higher and higher as I devour her. Her fingers rope through my hair and she shouts. "Yes, god yes, please now."

And I am harder than a marble statue.

She is a dirty, delicious gift in bed as she comes louder than I ever imagined she'd be.

And it's everything I want.

When her cries turn into soft whimpers, I stop, drag a hand across my face, then flop next to her, utterly pleased to have brought her such bliss, but we've only started. "You're so fucking weird, I need you to ride my cock right now, baby."

She turns to me with bright eyes and a filthy grin. "Yes, please."

In seconds, she locates a condom in her nightstand, then rolls it down my hard-on. Her hand on my dick is everything I never knew I wanted in bed.

Because she's everything I want in and out of bed. She's the one. And it's all become crystal clear in the last twenty-four hours.

Soon, she's riding me, her hands pressed to my chest, her face blissed out, her tits bouncing free. She rises up and down with wild abandon, unleashing the sexiest sounds, the neediest moans.

"You want to come again, baby?" I rasp out.

"So badly," she says, and she's not whispering anymore. She's loud and demanding. And I am here for all of it.

"I'll get you there," I say, then grip her hips, slow her pace. "But get on your hands and knees. Need to fuck you like that."

She gasps.

Yup. Had a feeling Katie would want to be taken apart good and hard. She slides off me then scrambles to all fours, lifting that beautiful ass high in the air.

“Damn, woman. Lift that sweet ass for me,” I praise as I kneel behind her, notching the head of my cock against her slick opening.

“Like that?” she asks.

“Just. Like. That,” I say then I sink into her.

She bows her back and unleashes a long, luxurious *ohhh*.

And like that, I fill her and fuck her, sliding a hand between her legs, stroking her, until she’s shaking and shuddering.

Then crying out beneath me. Cresting the hill once again. With a loud, carnal grunt of *coming*, I follow her there.

We collapse together in a hot, sweaty mess. I pull her close. When I recover the power of speech, I say, “You can shout in bed anytime.”

She wriggles against me. “And you can talk dirty to me anytime too.”

“I think we’ll get along just fine in bed. But I’m happy to keep up the lessons, baby.”

I can feel her smile as she says, “So many more lessons.”



Maybe it’ll be weird now that we’ve cleaned up and come down from our orgasm highs. We’re friends who just fucked, hard and loud. But I’ll do everything I can to make sure this—she and I together—feels like our new normal.

Once we get back in bed, I tug her against me. “Katie Samuels, I think I’ve had it bad for you for a long time,” I admit, and...wow.

My chest feels lighter.

My heart feels fizzy.

My mind is happy.

“You have?” she asks, like that’s hard to believe, but like she wants to believe it too.

I nod against her, then kiss the back of her neck, her shoulder, her hair. She shivers as I travel along her skin. “I think I’ve been into you for years,

and it took that kiss under the mistletoe to make me realize you're the one I've been wanting to ask out for a long time."

I should be scared to tell her this. I should be freaking out over what this means. But I'm not. I'm just not.

It's too right having her in my arms like this, curled up with me.

She lets out a long, contented sigh.

I think.

I hope.

Then she turns around, facing me. "It's weird, isn't it?"

I tense. Wait. What? "What's weird?"

She smiles. "Falling for your friend."

I laugh and all the tightness vanishes. I kiss her again. "It sure is," I say, then I yawn. "By the way, I'm spending the night."

She laughs. "I figured."

"Good. But put that Krampus snow globe away. Don't want to look at him when I wake up."

"Hmm," she says, sounding pensive. "If you give me a toe-curling, sheet-grabbing orgasm when we wake up, I'll hide that snow globe."

"Deal," I say, then I kiss my best friend goodnight. Pretty sure she's more than my friend though.

She's *all mine*.



A few nights later, I'm in the zone. On the rink, chasing a puck down the ice, the opponent's net in my crosshairs.

Nothing can stop me, and when I'm there, I slap that puck hard right between the goalie's legs.

I thrust my arms in the air.

And when the game ends and we win, I skate over to the tunnel, and she walks over from the stands. And I kiss the girl who's wearing my jersey—my best friend—in front of everyone.

Eager for more from this cast of characters? Download [Double Pucked](#) for FREE in KU! That spicy MFM roomies to lovers hockey romance

kicks off the My Hockey Romance series! Hayes's story is told in [Puck Yes](#), a fake marriage, spicy MFM hockey rom com, FREE in KU! Carter and Rachel's romance is FREE in KU in [Plays Well With Others](#)!

Here's a sneak peek at Double Pucked!

Trina

What should I do about this...ache? This out-of-nowhere desire to slide one hand through Chase's hair, and run the other along Ryker's bristly jaw? This wish to be sandwiched between them?

Maybe I *have* read too many books. There's no way a night like I'm fantasizing about could happen in real life.

But then I rewind to the moment when I turned the corner and heard Chase say he knew Ryker was into me, and then when Chase admitted the same to Ryker.

Yes, I've heard enough to do this.

Maybe nights like that do happen if you take a chance. Maybe nights like that happen to impulsive people. To women who adopt three-legged dogs, apply for jobs at bookstores when their only prior experience is running an online book club, and who steal ex's VIP tickets.

I never thought I'd want two guys to throw me on a bed. But now I can't get these wild ideas out of my mind.

Do it.

My throat is dry with nerves so I motion that I want to sit down. Chase pops up, and I slide into the booth next to Ryker once more. I take a quick sip of my water. Chase returns in seconds, and once I'm there between them, the air is charged. The energy is crackling. *You're the impulsive one.* "So about my idea," I say, my heart beating so fast.

Chase swallows visibly.

Ryker breathes out hard. "What's your idea?" he rasps, sex in his voice.

You held up a sign at the game. Hold up your own damn sign. Fly your flag, girl.

Deep breath. "I do think you should be my orgasm matchmakers," I blurt out, somehow getting that out without dying of embarrassment.

"Elaborate," Ryker says, surprising me by speaking first. There's fire in

his eyes though. Perhaps that's stoking him.

Me too.

I look to the golden-haired guy, then the bearded one, emboldened by my twin desires for them. "What if...the two of you showed me what it's like to have an everything bagel instead of a plain one?"

Then, so there isn't any confusion, I set my right hand on Ryker's big thigh, then my left hand on Chase's.

Ryker inhales a sharp breath. Chase lets out a low moan.

Then I add, "Both of you."

There's silence for several long seconds. A heady, buzzy silence. Chase covers my hand with his. That has to be a good sign. But he doesn't squeeze my fingers, or thread them together. Instead, he turns his face to me, his eyes serious. "The thing is...Samuels and I made a deal that we won't let a woman come between us," he says.

Oh shit. Oh no.

What was I thinking, putting myself out there like this? *Real bright, Trina. Go to a sports game for the first time and proposition two athletes. They probably get kinky sex offers like this all the time.*

"And we're sticking to it," Ryker says, sealing my fate as a complete and utter idiot. Has anyone ever misread a situation worse than I did?

I lower my gaze, clutch my phone, grab my purse, and get ready to make a quick escape.

"No big deal," I say, forcing out a laugh as I'm staring at my hands, and I get the strange sensation they're mouthing something to each other over my head. Guy code, or whatever. Still, I need to go. "I was just having fun. Sorry I said it. It's nothing. Didn't even mean it."

Ryker cuts in. "Whoa."

"Whoa what?"

He doesn't look at me though. He looks at Chase, and a sliver of a smile forms. "The way I see it, this is one of those logic problems with a very easy answer, Weston."

Chase trades a smile of his own. "What do you know? I was thinking the same thing, Samuels."

What are they talking about? I look to one, then the other, trying to read them.

Chase's grin widens as he mirrors me now, sliding a hand down my thigh, making my skin hotter. I hold my breath, daring to let dirty hope rise again.

“Sharing wouldn’t break that pact, would it, Samuels?”

Their friendship is so important that they prioritize it with a pact. That’s admirable, and sexy too.

“But sharing’s okay?” I ask, on the edge of my seat.

“The way I see it, sharing is caring,” Ryker says, and I go up in flames.

“I mean, you’d definitely be *coming* between us,” Chase says, his voice loaded with heat.

“You good with that, Trina?” Ryker asks, brushing his fingers down my arm, to my wrist, over the top of my palm.

“I’ve never done anything like this before, but I’m very, very good with it,” I say breathily.

What are they doing to me? I feel like I’m vibrating. I’m a tuning fork between them. I wait for them to make the next move...

Read more in [Double Pucked!](#)

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